

## **European Commission's advisory panel on COVID-19**

### **Report – videoconference Friday 05/11/2021 at 19:00**

The President provided a short update on the recent G20 Summit and its commitment to vaccinate 70% of the global population by summer 2022. The G20 also established a Task Force to work towards a 'Health and Finance Board' as proposed by independent panels and experts. The President referred to the recent the launch of the HERA.

The Panel reviewed the current epidemiological situation characterised by an increase in case numbers as well as slower increase of hospitalisation and mortality rates compared to previous rises in infections. The experts indicated that vaccination was very effective in protecting against severe disease and emerging evidence did not provide signs of waning protection, despite some breakthrough infections observed.

Key outstanding issues related to gathering more evidence on waning effectiveness of vaccines (as well as natural immunity after disease), deciding on boosters' policy and undertaking childhood vaccination. The extent of influenza and RSV outbreak during the coming winter adds a factor of uncertainty.

The President outlined current vaccination figures. More than 900m doses have been delivered in the EU while more than 1.2bn doses have been exported to 150 countries around the world. Commissioner Kyriakides recalled the success of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, as outlined in its recent implementation report, and presented the state of play on COVID-19 therapeutics.

The experts explained that while antibody count may decrease over time, this does not automatically equate with lower protection from severe disease. It is essential to continue conducting thorough studies on vaccination effectiveness. The ECDC recalled its work on vaccination campaigns, especially in Member States with lower vaccination rates, as well as on monitoring vaccination effectiveness. Similarly, studies on heterologous vaccination would be useful to decide on boosters. The EMA confirmed it is currently working in this area.

The Panel reflected on the possible behaviour of influenza this winter. Due to a lack of exposure to the virus, the reservoir of susceptible people may increase. This is the natural consequence of the non-pharmaceutical measures and greater mobility. It was deemed important to maximise vaccination coverage against the flu.

The Panel concluded by stressing the importance of continuing the vaccination efforts against COVID-19, highlighting hospitalisation and death rates, recommending non-pharmaceutical protection measures like masks and social distancing and facilitating global vaccination efforts. The President recalled the important Team Europe pledges for vaccine sharing and confirmed that the rate of donations is steadily increasing.

The work of the Advisory Panel on COVID-19 will soon be recognised with an award by "Aquí Europa".

**Participants in the videoconference:**

- European Commission: President von der Leyen, Commissioner Kyriakides, K. Vandenberghe, G. Rossides, R. Reig Rodrigo, P. Delsaux
- Andrea Ammon (ECDC)
- Emer Cooke (EMA)
- Prof Peter Piot (London School of Tropical Medicine)
- Prof Arnaud Fontanet (Institut Pasteur)
- Dr. Miklós Szócska (Director of The Health Services Management Training Centre of the Semmelweis University)
- Prof Marion Koopmans (Erasmus MC)
- Dr. Fernando Simon (Coordination Centre for Health Alerts and Emergencies, Spain)

**Excused:**

- Prof Christian Drosten (Charité)
- Prof Maria-Rosaria Capobianchi (National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome)
- Prof Kåre Mølbak (Statens Serum Institute, Copenhagen)
- Prof Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)