

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

### **Report – audioconference Wednesday 25/03/2020 at 18:00**

The President outlined the current situation from a political point of view. The European Council will meet tomorrow as will the G20. There is growing agreement on the importance of designing a common strategy to eventually lift the social distancing measures.

The discussed moved on to the agreed agenda:

#### **1. Diagnostics and testing**

The Panel stressed the difficulties in greatly extending testing due to limited testing reagents. It was agreed that testing would be one of the key points of any future exit strategy and a coordinated approach to testing capacity would be required. A systematic testing approach depends on the availability and feasibility of rapid testing.

The high number of new tests arriving in the market makes difficult assessing their quality and effectiveness. It was suggested that there could be an EU approach with minimum requirements for tests.

The President referred to the on-going efforts to establish a detailed overview of the situation in all Member States regarding ventilators, Personal Protective Equipment and testing kits. This overview will help in determining the different situations across the EU and inform the design, and timing, of any exit strategy. The panel asked to what extent the current needs assessments is reliable. The required quality and availability of tests would depend on the different stages of the pandemic as well as the gradual phasing out of community measures.

The industry can be expected to ramp up production of testing kits to address growing demand but this demand should be guided by a science-based but implementable strategy for moving from suppression to mitigation. The widespread availability of testing kits will allow determining acquired immunity and this will in turn inform the lifting of measures (e.g. focussing on those taking care of vulnerable populations, etc.).

The Panel concluded by agreeing on the importance of serological testing, the need to have sufficient production capacity, the role of coordinated procurement and the desire to have a coordinated approach in the EU. Three guiding questions were highlighted: 1. Level of immunity in the population per region, 2. What is that level in people taking care of vulnerable populations? 3. Whether testing can be rolled out for all the population?

#### **2. Therapeutics**

The President reminded the Panel that the European Commission is working to avoid fragmentation of funding for vaccines and stressed the importance of existing mechanisms such as CEPI or GPMB.

The Panel noted that no major breakthroughs occurred since last Sunday's discussion but pointed at plasma treatments as a possible promising avenue. The past difficulty to find effective anti-viral therapies for respiratory infections was raised. More could possibly be expected from combination therapies and prophylactics.

**Possible topics for forthcoming meetings:**

- Criteria for lifting the measures – Second discussion

**Follow-up:**

- Next phone conference on Sunday 29/03/2020 at 18:00
- ECDC/JRC to prepare a presentation of the latest modelling
- ECDC to prepare a first draft of the exit strategy checklist

**Participants in the audioconference:**

- European Commission: President von der Leyen, Commissioner Kyriakides, I. Juhansone, K. Vandenberghe, R. Reig Rodrigo
- Peter Piot (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Marion Koopman (Erasmus MC)
- Arnaud Fontenot (Institut Pasteur)
- Christian Drosten (Charité)
- Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)
- Maria Capobianchi (National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome)

**Excused:**

- Kåre Mølbak (Statens Serum Institute, Copenhagen)

**Observers:**

- Andrea Ammon (ECDC Director)