

European Commission's advisory panel on COVID-19

Report – audioconference Tuesday 21/04/2020 at 20:00

The discussed focused on its key agenda point:

1. Roadmap towards de-escalation of COVID-19 containment measures

Commissioner Kyriakides outlined the roadmap towards de-escalation of COVID-19 containment measures published last week. As a document that needs to evolve considering the latest developments, she invited the Panel to provide feedback and signal areas where further work needs to be done.

The Panel asked to increase the communication and outreach efforts from the EU side so that the roadmap would be considered by all Member States and the public. The need to establish a frequent dialogue with Member States on de-escalation was raised.

As outlined in the roadmap, the Panel highlighted the need to ensure that there is sufficient testing and contact tracing capacity. It stressed the importance of already preparing now for the future phases when the re-implementation of certain measures might be needed.

The Panel suggested that further updates take place (e.g. by adding technical annexes) so that there is a higher level of granularity (age, geographical considerations, etc.) and key issues can be tackled in more detail (e.g. guidance on school re-openings, childcare specific arrangements, etc.).

The issue of how to organise testing of asymptomatic people was raised as was the need to have clear ways to organise isolation and quarantine of those diagnosed with COVID-19 (e.g. how to ensure home quarantine without infecting the whole household).

The importance of communicating on the consequences of relaxing certain containment measures. The Panel agreed that the current phase requires political and societal decisions in a context of high uncertainty and limited evidence. It is important to continue to rely on science, evidence and maintain public health as the key decision factor.

The Panel asked to organise an EU call for data to fill knowledge gaps (e.g. COVID-19 and children, role of serological tests, feasibility of immunity passports, strategy for nursing homes, evidence of transmission from asymptomatic cases, etc.).

Finally, the Panel requested that surveillance is as coordinated as possible and ideally harmonised at EU level so that there is comparable information and decisions are taken on basis of the same benchmarks.

Possible topics for forthcoming meetings:

- State of play of serological tests and surveys
- EU guidance on preparing for summer holidays and travel
- EU framework for surveillance (common EU approach data gathering, reporting and analysis)

Participants in the audioconference:

- European Commission: Commissioner Kyriakides, I. Juhansone, R. Reig Rodrigo
- Peter Piot (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Christian Drosten (Charité)
- Marion Koopman (Erasmus MC)
- Arnaud Fontenot (Institut Pasteur)
- Maria Capobianchi (National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome)
- Kåre Mølbak (Statens Serum Institute, Copenhagen)

Excused:

- Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)

Observers:

- Andrea Ammon (ECDC Director)
- Guido Rasi (EMA Director)