

European Commission's advisory panel on COVID-19

Report – videoconference Thursday 9/07/2020 at 18:00

The discussion focused on its key agenda point:

1. EU Communication on short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks

The President introduced the Communication and asked the Panel for their views on the text, any possible gaps and their remarks on outstanding issues to be tackled during the summer.

The Panel unanimously welcomed the draft Communication and underline the importance of using the summer period to increase preparedness. They asked to include certain elements such as molecular typing to follow the epidemic and increased measures to identify vulnerable locations and populations.

The Panel stressed the importance of testing and contact tracing. The need to ensure that capacity can be scaled up in case of outbreaks was signalled as essential to avoid generalised lockdowns. However, they also mentioned the need to maintain the testing and surveillance activities for other diseases (e.g. influenza). The experts agreed on the need to maintain certain basic measures such as wearing masks, washing hands, keeping social distance, etc.

The need to address the increased concerns among society regarding lockdowns, social distancing measures and scientific aspects (e.g. vaccine hesitancy) were discussed as key elements in ensuring an effective response to the pandemic.

The Panel asked for further efforts to ensure that there are cross-border exchanges of lessons learnt and Member States can learn from each other. While looking for ways to further strengthen these discussions, the ECDC networks were seen as very useful as was the Health Security Committee.

The President concluded by thanking the Panel for the discussion and noting the importance of preparedness for future outbreaks.

Participants in the audioconference:

- European Commission: President von der Leyen, Commissioner Kyriakides, G. Rossides, A. Bucher, S. Gallina, K. Vanderberghe, R. Reig Rodrigo
- Peter Piot (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Marion Koopman (Erasmus MC)
- Arnaud Fontenot (Institut Pasteur)
- Maria Capobianchi (National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome)
- Kåre Mølbak (Statens Serum Institute, Copenhagen)

Observers:

- Andrea Ammon (ECDC Director)

Excused:

- Lothar Wieler (Robert Koch Institute)
- Christian Drosten (Charité)