ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of February 20th, 2023

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This is ASPHER's weekly surveillance report. We hope it is complementary to other resources such as ECDC and Our World in Data, where the reader can go for more detailed information. Please give us your feedback: is the presentation helpful to you and your colleagues? What other information would you like to see in it?

Key messages

- The WHO weekly epidemiological update highlights that globally, nearly 5.3 million new cases and over 48 000 deaths were reported in the last 28 days (23 January to 19 February 2023), a decrease of 89% and 62%, respectively, compared to the previous 28 days. As of 19 February 2023, over 757 million confirmed cases and over 6.8 million deaths have been reported globally.
- The ECDC country overview report highlights that by the end of week 6, 2023 (week ending 12 February), there was an improvement in the overall COVID-19 epidemiological situation in the EU/EEA based on the data reported. Pooled rates of case notification (all-age and among those aged 65 years and above), hospital, ICU admissions and COVID-19-related deaths have declined, currently remaining at the lowest levels observed in the past 12 months.

Highlighted COVID-19 paper

Jorgensen, S. C. J., et al. (2023). Maternal mRNA covid-19 vaccination during pregnancy and delta or omicron infection or hospital admission in infants: test negative design study. In BMJ (p. e074035). BMJ. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2022-074035

Danino, D., & Youngster, I. (2023). Protecting infants through covid-19 vaccination during pregnancy. In BMJ (p. p241). BMJ. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.p241

- The study and the associated editorial highlight that maternal covid-19 vaccination with a second dose during pregnancy was highly effective against delta and moderately effective against omicron infection and hospital admission in infants during the first six months of life

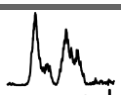
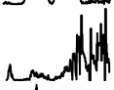
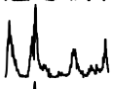
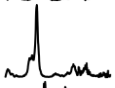
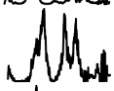
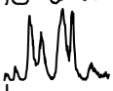
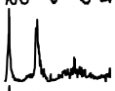
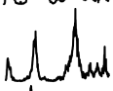
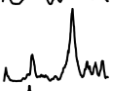
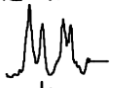
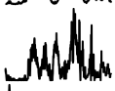
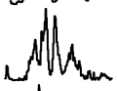
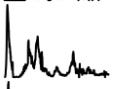
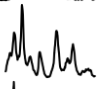
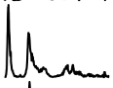
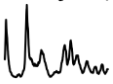
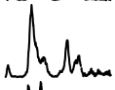
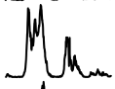
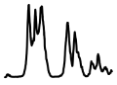
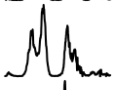
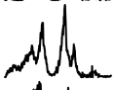
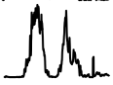
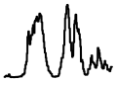
ASPHER statement on the pandemic

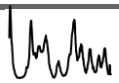
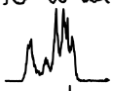
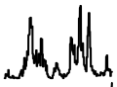
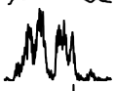
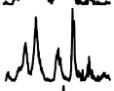
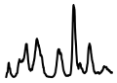
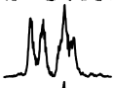
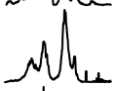
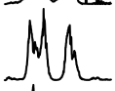
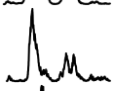
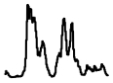
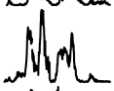
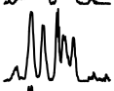
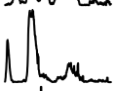
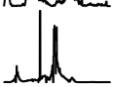
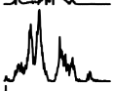
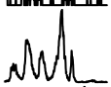
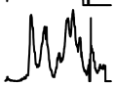
ASPHER is concerned about talk of the 'end of the pandemic'. *Pandemic* is not defined by politicians, or by journalists. The *pandemic* is defined by the World Health Organisation, under strict decision-making process and not as mere opinion. A pandemic is "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people". We are still in the midst of the pandemic.

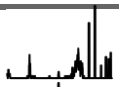
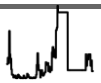
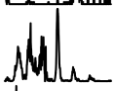
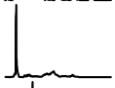
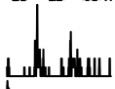
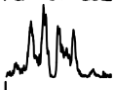
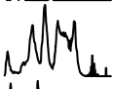
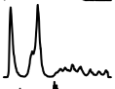
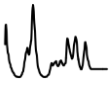
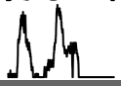
We are concerned with the rapid dismantling of non-pharmaceutical interventions against COVID-19 across Europe. In a recent opinion paper, we advocate for European governments' continued recommendation for the use of face masks in high-traffic public areas like public transport. The reality remains that the future evolution of the pandemic is highly uncertain. Primary health care and social care provision across Europe are not yet restored to pre-pandemic levels due to the burden of ever-new variants of the virus. Occupational health services are non-existent in many parts of Europe and therefore unable to address mass sickness absence or support workers in key industries suffering burnout. We urge governments to invest in additional measures to support primary care, social care, and occupational health. The protection of our key service workers is a central concern. We will not come out of the pandemic until we seriously address the problem globally. We need global solidarity, commitment to international preparedness and increased global production of vaccines.

ASPHER supports the VACCINE-plus approach to pandemic control; or what we have called 'COVID-DO_IT_ALL'. We recognize the importance of following non-pharmacological interventions as well as achieving a high level of vaccine uptake. Vaccine hesitancy still needs to be understood and addressed especially in Eastern parts of Europe. We need to protect frontline services, protect children, and protect vulnerable people. Current political moves in Europe are adding to the likelihood of increased transmission, creating more pressures on services, more likelihood of additional sickness absence, economic damage, and social disruption. The mindset of the 'pandemic is over' will have the dangerous impact of prolonging it.

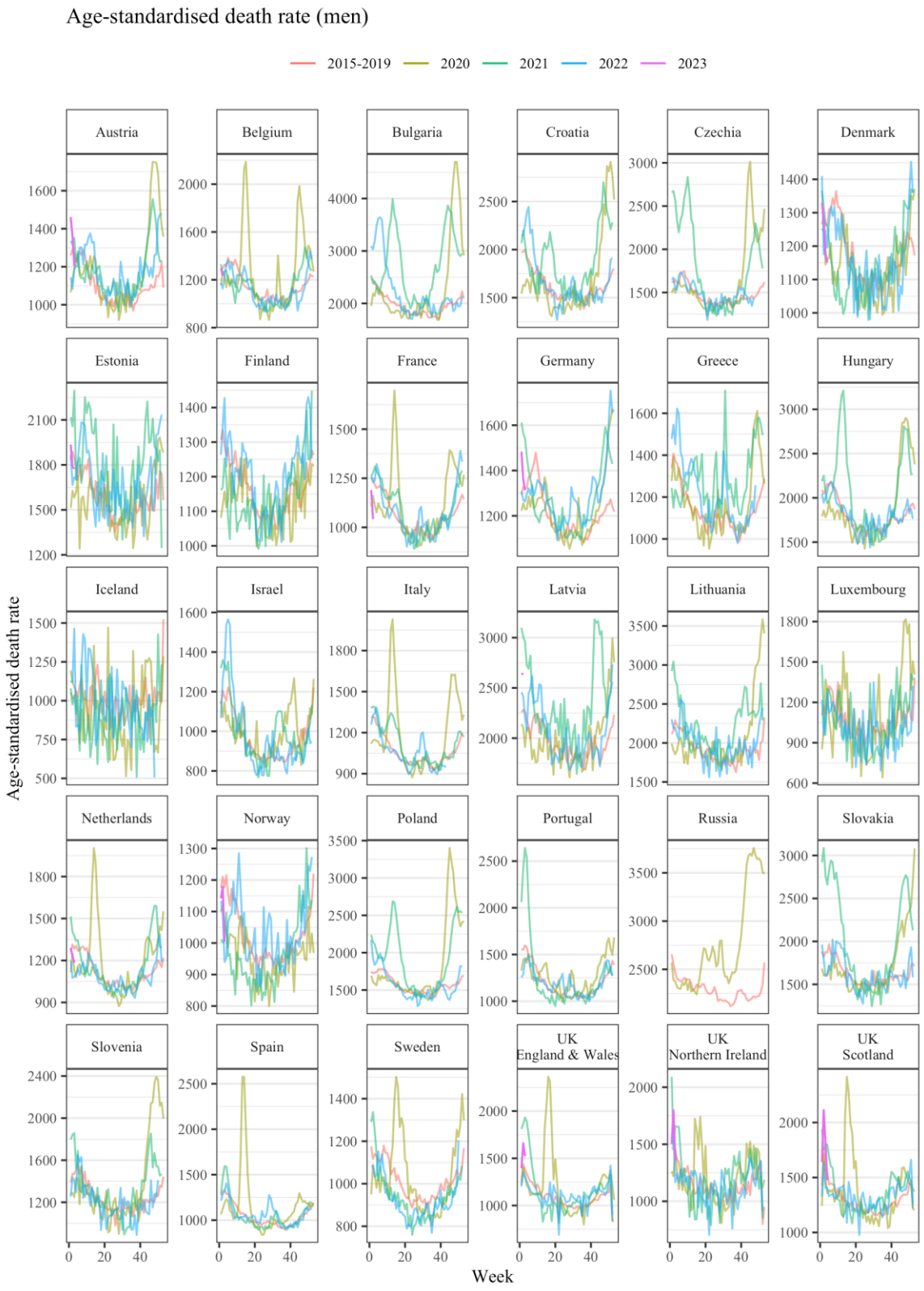
Rolling average of latest COVID-19 death and hospitalization rates in the countries of the WHO-Europe region (Source: Our World in Data).

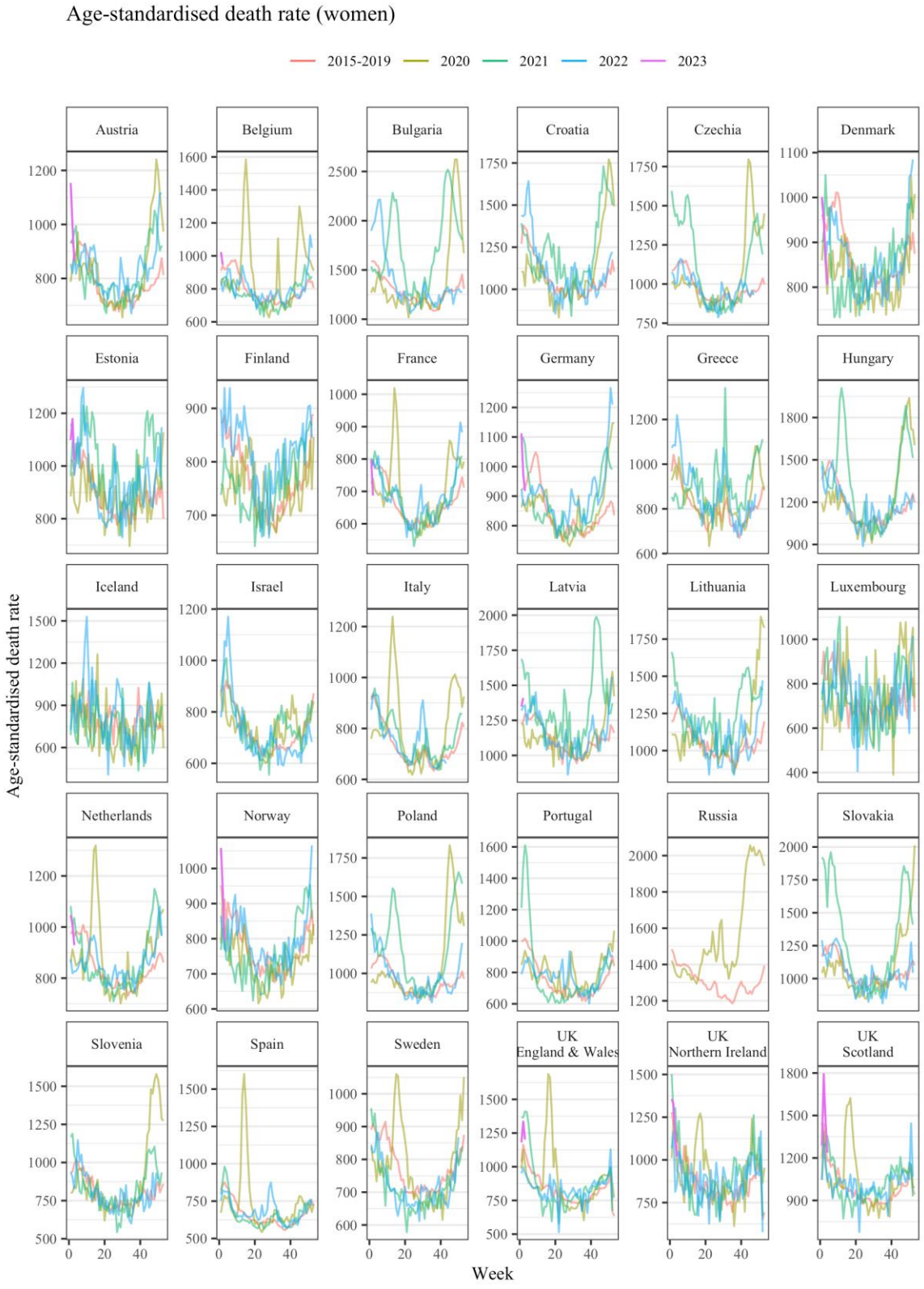
WHO Europe region	Daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/million people	30-day trend in deaths	Weekly hospital admissions/million	30-day trend in weekly hospital admissions
Lithuania	0.99			
Finland	0.98			
Sweden	0.96			
Portugal	0.90			
Estonia	0.86		84.96	
Germany	0.84		81.38	
Serbia	0.81			
Ireland	0.77		42.95	
Italy	0.72		21.05	
Denmark	0.68		29.75	
Croatia	0.64		127.84	
Cyprus	0.64		7.81	
Spain	0.63		29.29	
Belgium	0.58		52.76	
Austria	0.48			
Czechia	0.45		58.03	
Hungary	0.44			
Moldova	0.44			
Slovakia	0.43		36.81	

WHO Europe region	Daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/million people	30-day trend in deaths	Weekly hospital admissions/million	30-day trend in weekly hospital admissions
France	0.36		27.56	
Georgia	0.34			
Malta	0.27		21.31	
Russia	0.24		64.58	
Montenegro	0.23			
Israel	0.21		25.40	
Bulgaria	0.19			
Romania	0.18			
Ukraine	0.18			
Poland	0.17			
Slovenia	0.14		11.38	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.09			
Azerbaijan	0.08			
Switzerland	0.02		23.68	
Kazakhstan	0.01			
Albania	0.00			
Andorra	0.00			
Armenia	0.00			
Belarus	0.00			
Greece	0.00		79.97	

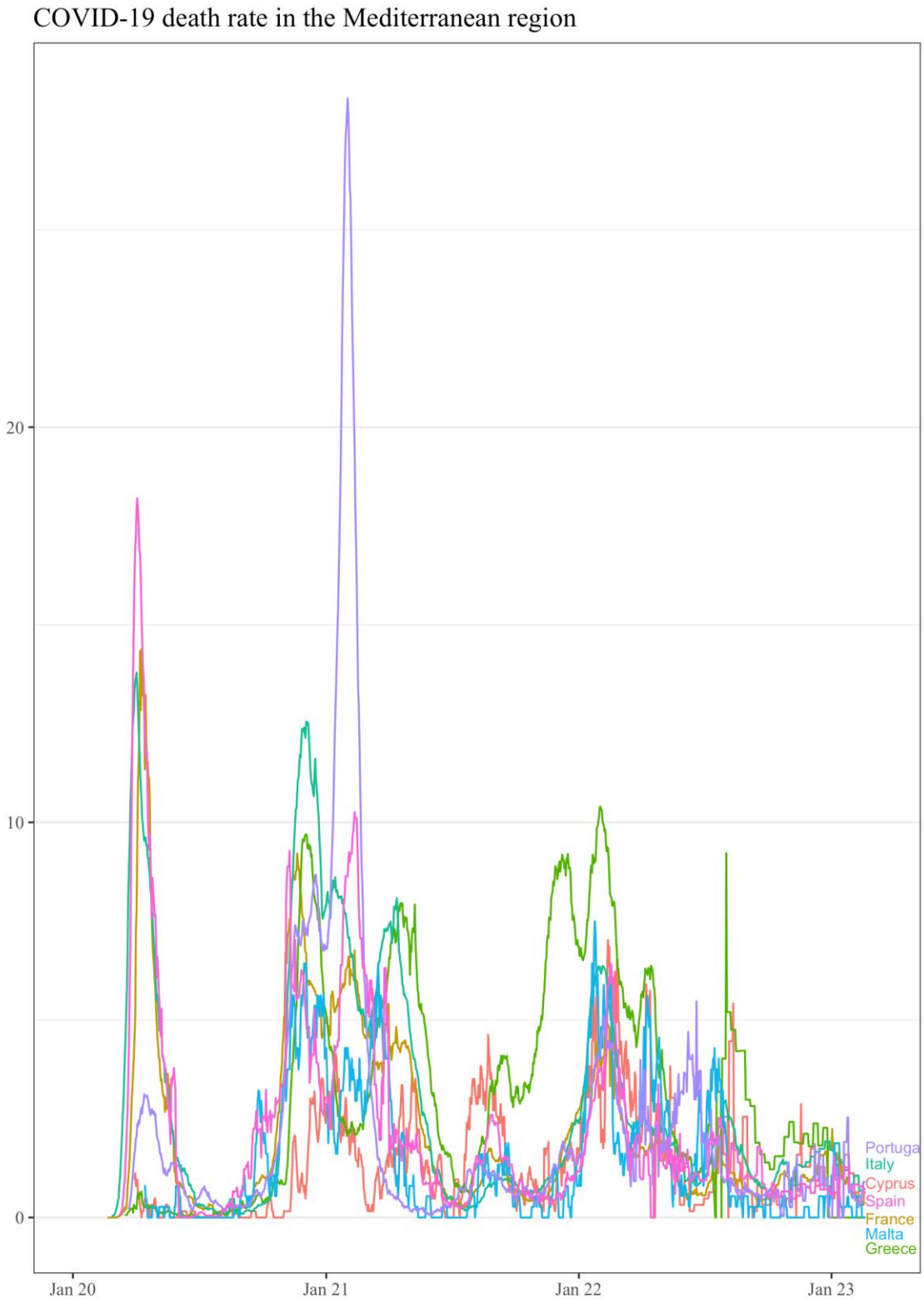
WHO Europe region	Daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/million people	30-day trend in deaths	Weekly hospital admissions/million	30-day trend in weekly hospital admissions
Iceland	0.00		21.69	
Kosovo	0.00			
Kyrgyzstan	0.00			
Luxembourg	0.00		18.91	
Monaco	0.00			
Netherlands	0.00		36.38	
North Macedonia	0.00			
San Marino	0.00			
Tajikistan	0.00			
Turkey	0.00			
United Kingdom	0.00		58.70	
Uzbekistan	0.00			

The age-standardised all-cause death rates in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and the 2015-2019 average by week and sex in selected countries of the WHO-Europe (Source: Human Mortality Database).

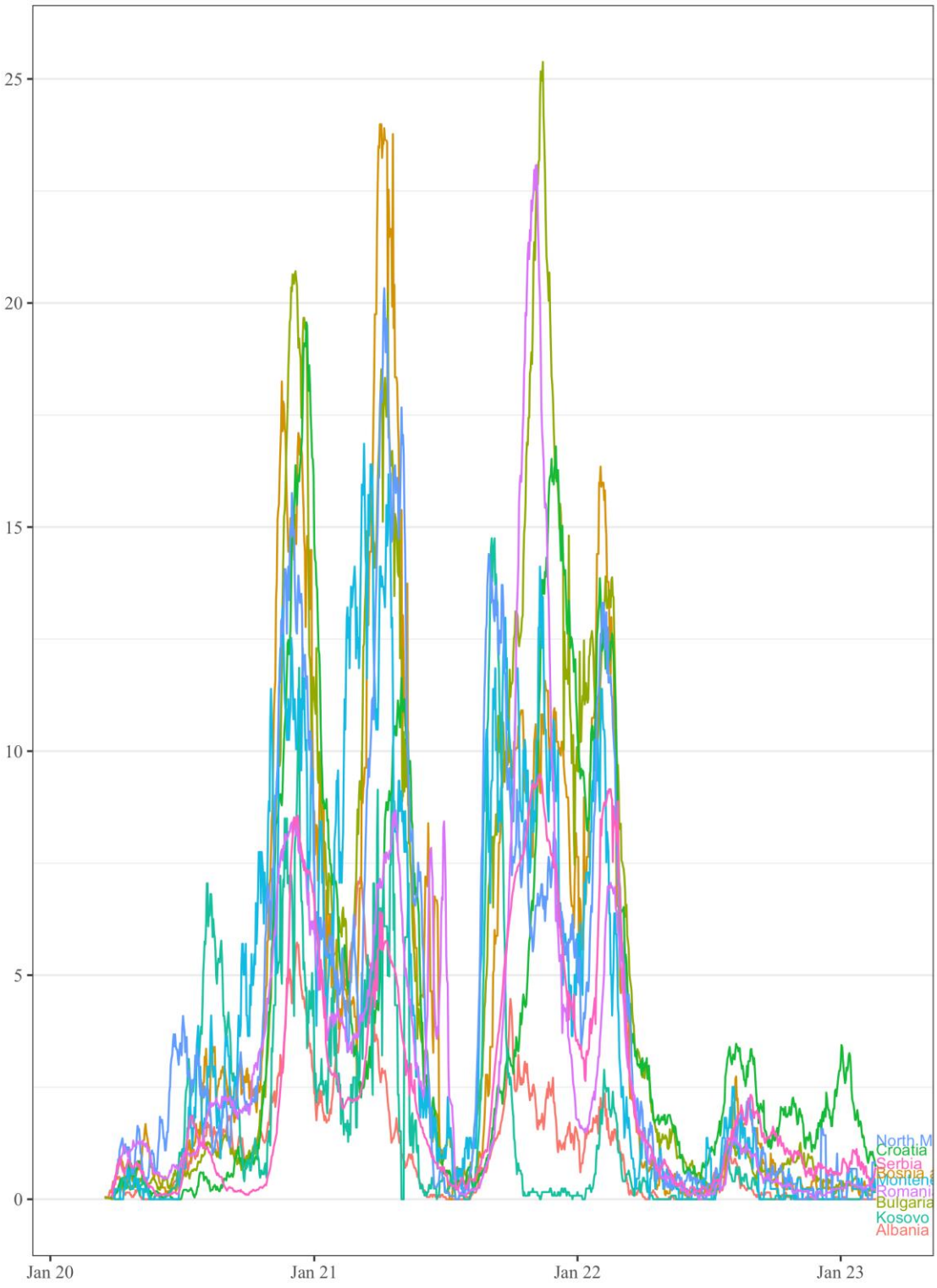



Age-standardised death rate (women)
2015-2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czechia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Israel
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Russia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
UK England & Wales
UK Northern Ireland
UK Scotland
Age-standardised death rate
Week

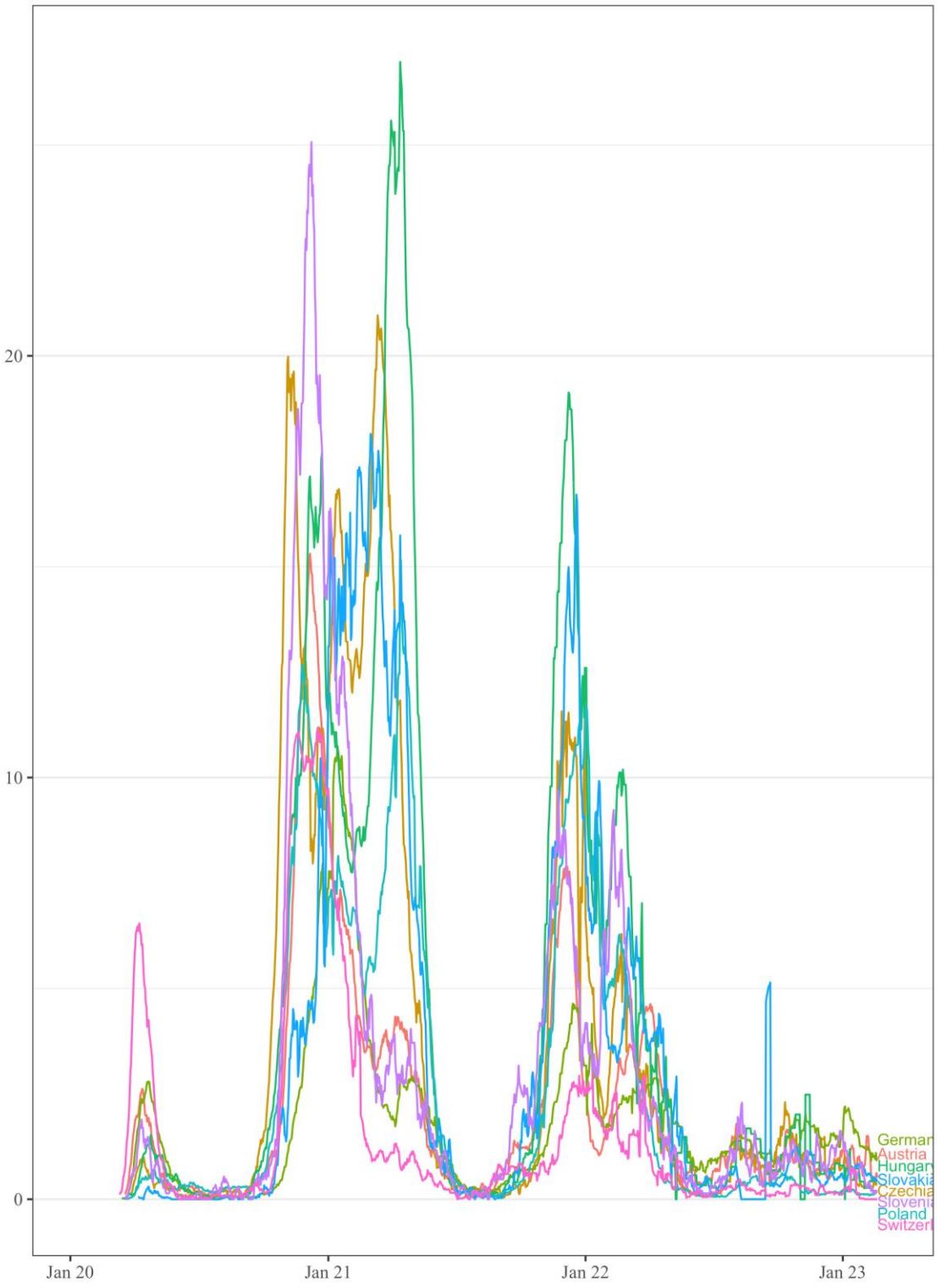
Rolling 7-day average of daily confirmed COVID-19 death rates (per million) in sub-regions of Europe (Source: Our World in Data).



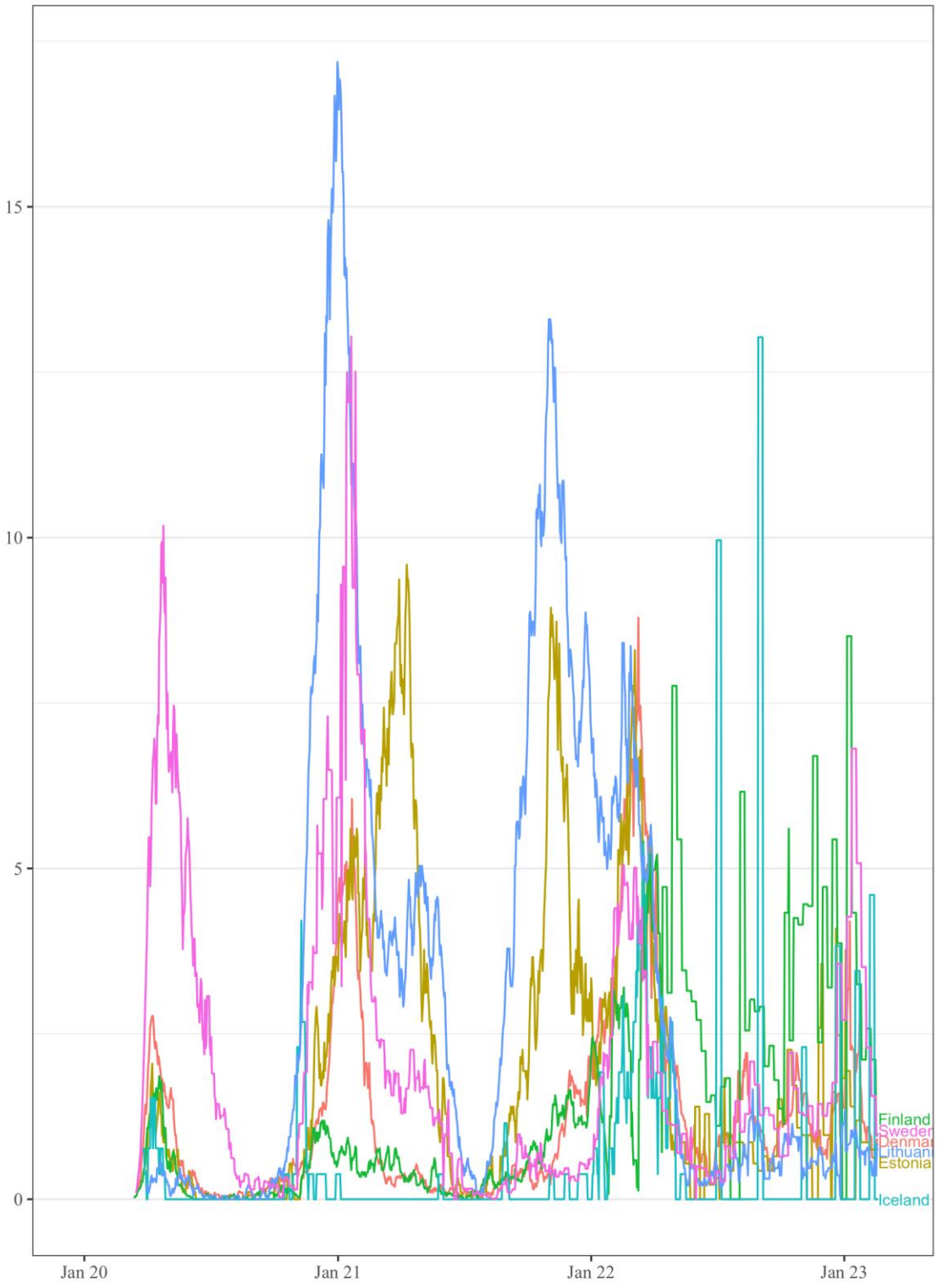
COVID-19 death rate in the South-East region



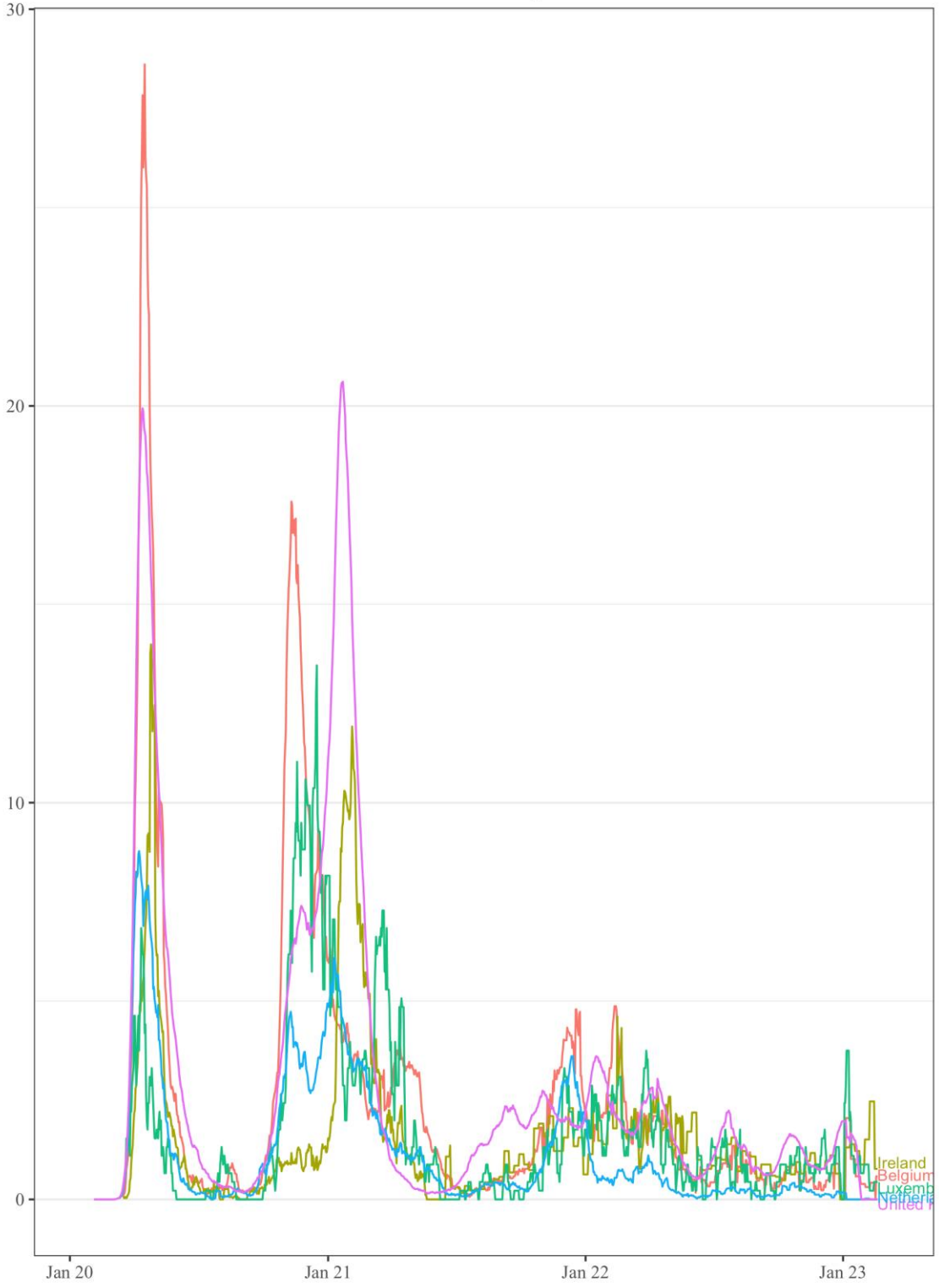
COVID-19 death rate in Central Europe



COVID-19 death rate in Baltics and Nordic Countries



COVID-19 death rate in North-Western Europe



COVID-19 death rate in Central Asia