



ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of June 14th 2021

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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?

ASPHER is concerned about the rapid expansion of the [Delta variant of COVID-19, particularly in England](#), and now also in Portugal. The frequency of the infection is doubling every week and hospitalisations are doubling also. Full two dose vaccination still seems to be protective. We believe there should be collaboration and capacity in the surveillance of the variants of the virus, surveillance of the outcomes of vaccination, resistance to infection and timespan of immunity. There needs to be coordinated global effort towards anticipating new variants and adapting vaccinations to meet mutating changes of the virus. (see also: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/28/we-need-an-equitable-and-coordinated-global-approach-to-covid-19-vaccination/>)

ASPHER considers the G7 agreement on global vaccine supply to be inadequate [and a failure of international leadership](#). The promise of 1 billion doses this year is less than the 2 billion already committed to COVAX by October 2021, and less than 1 fifth of the global supply needed. We will be commenting in more detail on this next week. ASPHER has signed the [open letter of the European Society of Medicine](#) calling for the world's 700 million over 65s to be vaccinated.

The situation seen recently in India presents an extreme case of need that cannot be met within a country and why we need international health action agencies capable of responding to need, as set out in our [BMJ piece](#). It also shows the need for further efforts to promote [internationalism in vaccination programmes](#) for the protection of everyone. It remains to be seen if the G7 meeting this week will enable better global responsiveness in the continuing pandemic and in future pandemics.

The current scenario demands international consensus on a long-term strategy to minimize the transmission of variants, not only by rapid vaccination but also by increasing vaccine confidence. Improving accessibility to vaccine must be considered to prevent further waves. Despite vaccination status, the use of face masks and social distancing is still necessary. https://www.aspher.org/download/726/aspher_statement_on_abolition_of_prevention_measu_res.pdf

The COVID-19 pandemic has entered its second year since the time WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic on 11th March 2020 (1). From the experiences of initial lockdown, countries have learned to develop strategies to sustain economic stability by imposing strict regulations instead of complete lockdown. Continuing the non-pharmacological interventions alongside vaccine rollout, most of the countries have significantly reduced the number of deaths and the infection rate. Consequently they have started stepwise lifting lockdown restrictions (UK, Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Israel, Portugal, France, Denmark, Belgium, Germany). However, the transmission of variants of SARS-CoV-2 in a few European countries is a rising concern (England, Wales, Scotland, Southeast Europe, and Central Asia) (2).

Recently, WHO with its expert scientific committee has ascertained a **nomenclature system** for the variants (both Variants of Concern (VOC) and Interest (VOI)) by using Greek alphabet letters – Alpha (B.1.1.7), Beta (B.1.351), Gamma (P.1), Delta (B.1.617.2)-VOC, Epsilon (B.1.427/B.1.429), Zeta (P.2), Eta (B.1.525), Theta (P.3), Iota (B.1.526), Kappa (B.1.617.1)- VOI. The purpose is to make them simple to pronounce for the general public and nonmedical experts and to avoid regional stigma (3).

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid spread of the virus in almost all countries has resulted in considerable disruption of public health at a global level. The pandemic has cost over 3.5 million lives to date (3,830,026) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 0.1 billion (176,303,596). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (4).

Table 1: Cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases since 30/12/2019

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	69,925,926
Europe	55,122,953
South-East Asia	33,682,706
Eastern Mediterranean	10,553,445
Africa	3,704,424
Western-Pacific	3,313,378

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 31% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. The number of **new cases and deaths in the past 7 days reduced by 13% and 17% respectively** (5).

The following table shows a 7-day average of daily new confirmed coronavirus cases, newly confirmed deaths and share of people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region reported on 14/06/2021 (table 2) (6) (7).

Table 2

WHO-Europe countries	Rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases/mill people	Rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths/mill people	Share of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Georgia	174.44	4.51	1.66%
United Kingdom	107.33	0.14	44.50%
Spain	104.63	0.86	27.82%
Latvia	92.10	3.26	22.79%
Andorra	90.60	0.00	N/A
Belarus	89.77	1.03	N/A
Russia	83.70	2.59	9.82%
Denmark	78.36	0.15	26.30%
Netherlands	77.19	0.30	23.59%
Kyrgyzstan	76.51	1.03	N/A
Sweden	76.30	0.72	22.29%
Turkey	71.90	0.92	16.38%
Greece	71.75	1.86	27.16%
Slovenia	71.22	1.10	26.63%
Portugal	70.58	0.15	23.05%
Lithuania	66.59	1.73	29.17%
Monaco	65.52	0.00	38.55%
Belgium	65.43	0.64	27.35%
Cyprus	63.28	1.63	32.25%
Ireland	61.65	0.00	N/A
France	58.10	0.83	21.27%
Kazakhstan	57.60	0.17	7.37%
Luxembourg	43.13	0.00	27.39%
Estonia	41.14	0.21	23.41%
Switzerland	39.05	0.33	27.07%
Croatia	33.86	2.12	18.15%
Ukraine	32.54	1.69	0.60%
Norway	31.91	0.13	24.97%
Montenegro	29.57	1.82	18.84%
Italy	28.55	1.06	23.60%
Austria	26.22	0.35	24.30%
Serbia	24.67	0.97	33.80%
Armenia	24.64	1.21	N/A
Germany	23.57	0.94	26.62%
Czech Republic	20.42	0.87	20.26%
Bulgaria	16.69	1.25	10.14%
Slovakia	15.36	0.71	21.57%
Finland	14.67	0.13	13.15%
Hungary	14.14	0.87	43.89%
Moldova	11.65	0.60	3.79%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	11.23	3.66	1.93%
Poland	8.61	1.56	26.24%
North Macedonia	8.37	0.96	9.27%
Uzbekistan	7.89	0.05	N/A
Azerbaijan	6.33	0.14	9.51%
Romania	6.12	7.30	21.93%
Kosovo	5.62	0.37	N/A
Albania	3.82	0.05	11.63%
Malta	3.56	0.00	60.04%
Israel	1.73	0.17	59.45%
San Marino	0.00	0.00	64.43%
Tajikistan	N/A	N/A	0.14%

The Netherlands:

The Netherlands detected a decrease in newly tested positive cases from 84 cases per 100.000 citizens in week 22 to 53 cases per 100.000 in week 23, which represents a decline of 38%. There has also been a decline of 44% in patients admitted to the hospital and a decrease of 19% in patients admitted to the ICU. Over 12,6 million people have received a vaccination, including first and second jabs (8). **Due to the increase in speed of people getting vaccinated, the Dutch government plans to accelerate the fourth step in its lockdown strategy on the 26th of June.** The decision will expand the opening hours for hospitality businesses to 12 a.m. and will expand the maximum number of people allowed to 100 in these locations. Thereby, it will be permitted to have 8 visitors at home and sports games will continue again (9).

Slovenia:

Approximately 45% of Slovenia's adult population received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and 32% received two jabs. On June 15, the Slovenian government declared the end of the state of emergency after eight months. It will **lift several restrictions, including reopening 75% capacity of cultural and sports events for people who have been vaccinated, recently recovered from COVID-19, or tested negative. Yet, the requirement of wearing a face mask indoors and keeping a safe distance will be maintained** (10).

Italy:

Italy has designated six more regions as white zones, which means that these areas can drop most COVID-19 restrictions. White zones register less than 50 daily cases per 100.000 and only require social distancing and wearing masks indoors or in crowded places. There is no curfew anymore and clubs are open, but it is not allowed to dance. This decision brings 12 of the 20 regions in Italy into this low-risk category (11). In addition, many Italian regions have different vaccine policies regarding the AstraZeneca vaccine and don't follow the national advice to only provide this vaccine to people over 60 years old due to the concerns of the supply expiring. Thus, the government decided to allow 'mix and match' vaccinations of AstraZeneca and Pfizer or Moderna (12).

France:

The number of infections is now falling close to 3,000 per day, currently 3200. The Delta variant was detected for approximately 4% of the cases. There are currently 11,519 people hospitalised for COVID-19, down (-15%) from last week. 1,873 people in intensive care for COVID-19, down (-19%) compared to last week. So far, 16.5 million people have been fully vaccinated in France, which represents approximately 41% of the population. **Due to the positive trends, the French government decided to lift some restrictions 10 days early. The obligation to wear a mask outdoors is abolished as of June 17, as well as the curfew on June 19. Yet, masks will still be mandatory outdoors in public transport, stadiums and other crowded places.** This easing of health constraints is the result of improved indicators, which show decreases in infections (13) (14).

United Kingdom:

The infection rate in the United Kingdom has been increasing over the course of week 23, as the **number of new cases being reported reached its highest level since March** (15). **More than 7,000 new cases are recorded every day since June 9** as well as less than 10 daily fatalities (16) (17). **The Delta variant is responsible for 91% of the new cases,** according to the health secretary (18). The government announced that is delaying the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions, which was supposed to happen on June 21, until at least July 19 (19). Over 87% of the Welsh adult

population has been vaccinated with at least one dose, while England and Scotland have reached 77% and Northern Ireland 76% (20).

Finland:

From 9th to 16th June, there have been 506 confirmed new cases in Finland, the majority of which were of the Alpha variant (21). **On June 16, Finland has vaccinated 52% of its population with the first dose and 13.4% with both doses** (22). The Finnish government is planning on ruling on opening the country's borders to work commuters on Thursday, June 17 (23).

Sweden:

The infection rate in Sweden continues to decline steadily. Over week 23, there have been 4,424 cases reported by the public health agency of the country (24). **As of June 17, 29.1% of the Swedish population has been fully vaccinated whereas 52,4% has received the first dose** (25). Sweden is currently offering vaccines to those who were born in 1986 or earlier and has no plans of vaccinating children at the time of writing this report (26).

Denmark:

As of June 17, 50% of the Danish population has received one dose of the vaccine, whereas 27% is fully vaccinated. Denmark is also inviting **16-18 year-olds to get vaccinated** by informing both the parents and the individual themselves (27).

Norway:

The Norwegian government has announced that starting Friday, June 11, people who have been **fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 will be exempt from quarantining when travelling** to Norway. This does not apply to those who have only received their first dose (28). In addition, a verifiable COVID-19 certificate will become available for both domestic and international use on the same date (29). **As of June 17, 26.10% of the population has been fully vaccinated** and 38.38% has received one dose (30).

Georgia:

Georgia had a COVID-19 third stage wave in April-May, with the maximum daily numbers peaking on May 16-18 and followed by a steady decrease. Newly reported cases in the week 22 decreased from 220 cases per 100.000 citizens to 174.44 cases per 100.000 citizens in week 23, according to the 7-day rolling average of daily confirmed cases, representing a decline of 22%. 14-days Cumulative incidence for the above indicated week was 278 per 100.000 citizens and average decline was 10%. Rt is 0.88 and for the past 2 weeks is not above 1. Daily testing level is 28,588 with 593 tests per 100.000 citizens and 7-day testing positivity rate is 2.33%. COVID-19 vaccination roll-out started on March 15 and the latest rate is 159 inoculations per 100,000 citizens. On June 16, Georgia has vaccinated 5.1% of its adult population and the fully vaccination adult population share was 2.5%. Country policy requires citizens to wear face masks indoors and outdoors and there is a night curfew from 11 pm to 4 am effective (**Natia Skhvitaridze's personal communication**)

Set of graphs: Rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths in sub-regions of Europe since the beginning of the pandemic until 14th June 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

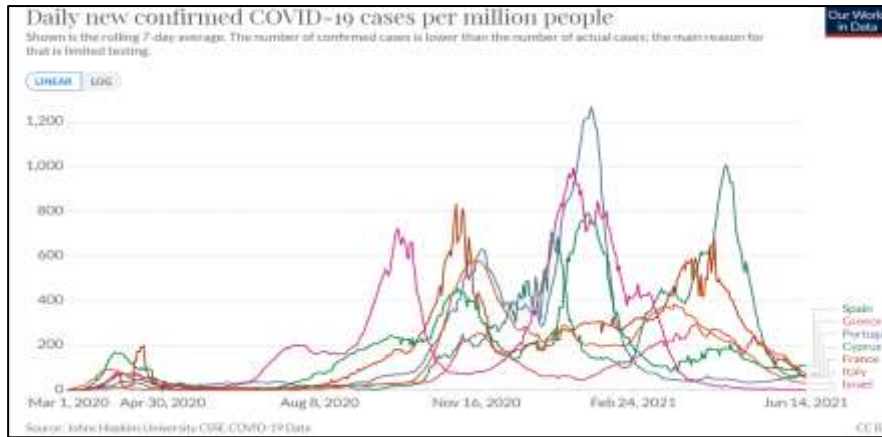
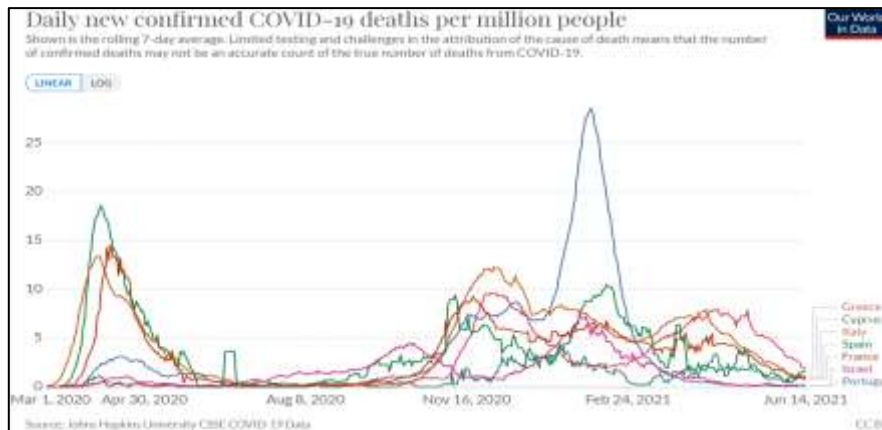


Figure 2:



South-East Europe:

Figure 3:

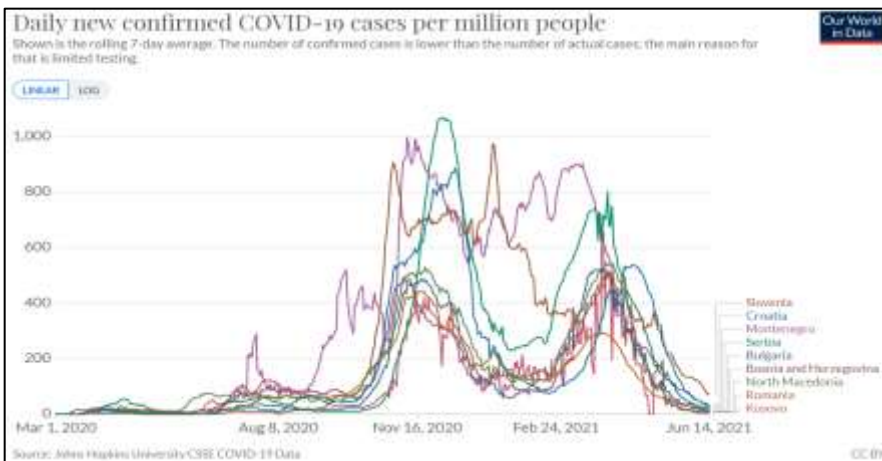
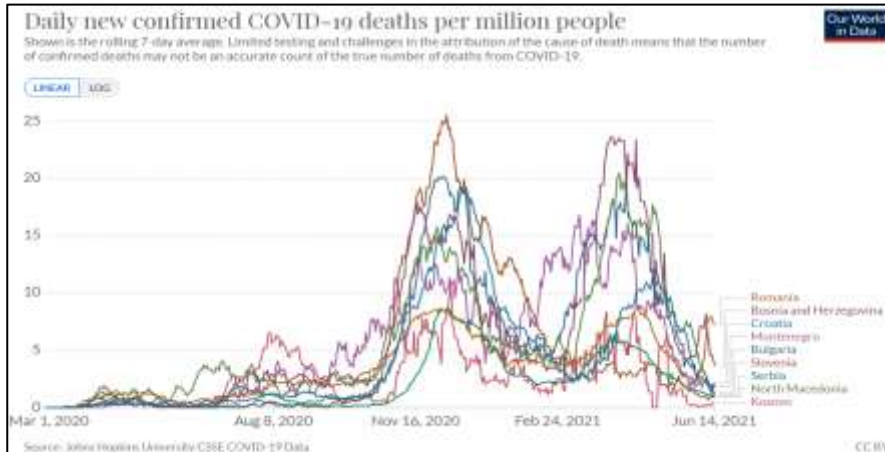


Figure 4:



Central Europe

Figure 5:

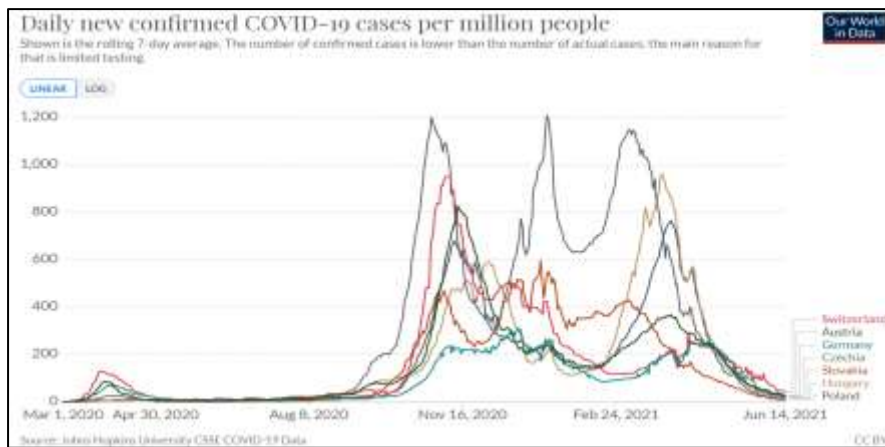
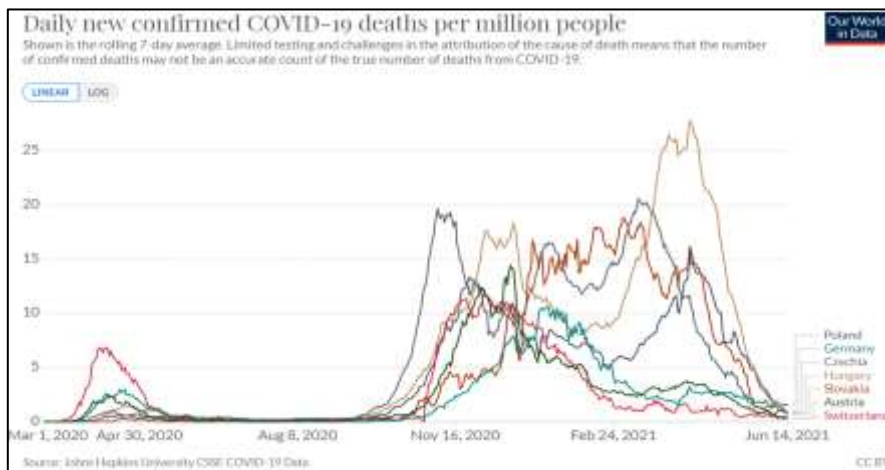


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

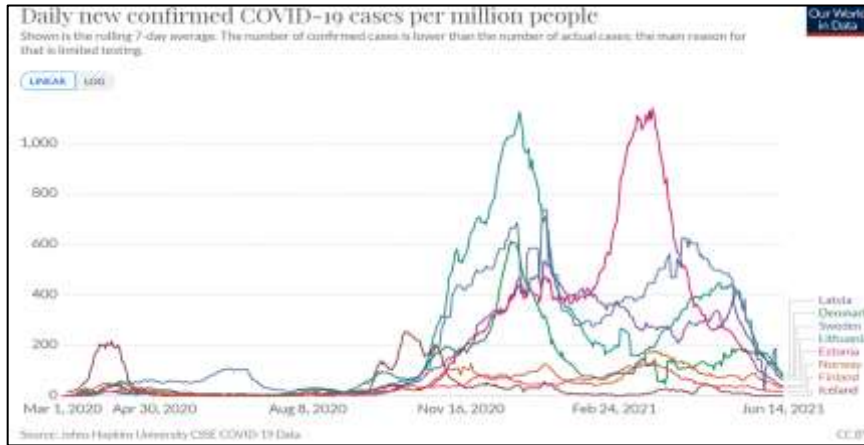
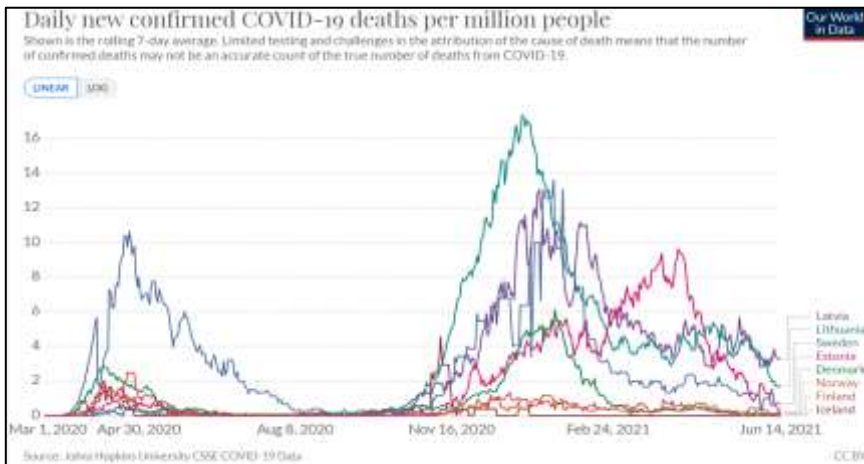


Figure 8:



Northwestern Europe:

Figure 9:

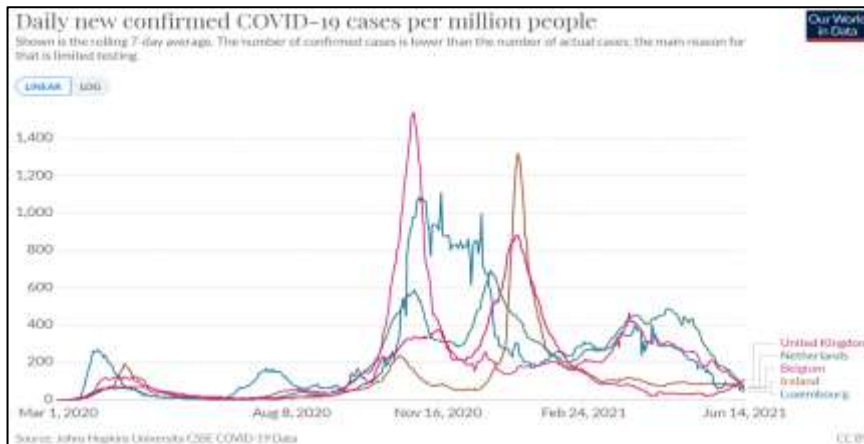
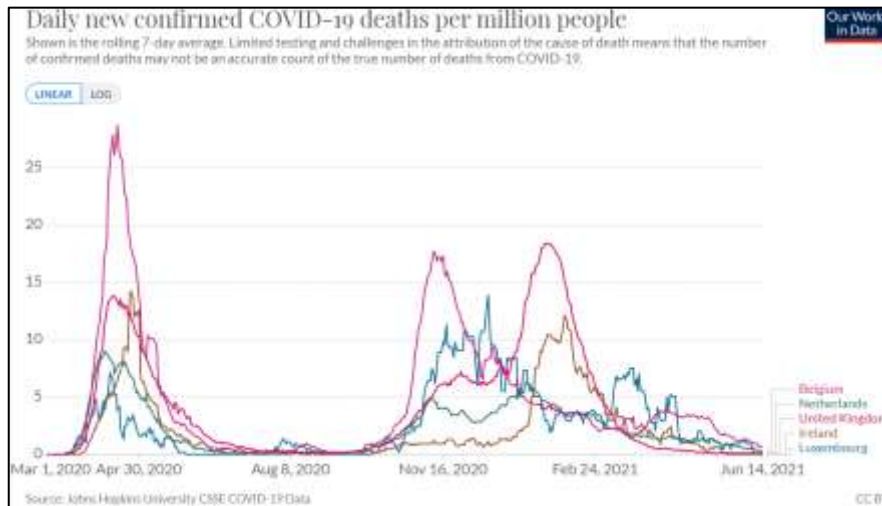


Figure 10:



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