

# ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of July 12<sup>th</sup> 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 throughout Europe. According to a threat assessment brief by ECDC, 70% of all new cases of COVID-19 in the EU-EEA will be of the Delta variant by early August and up to 90% by the end of that month ([link1](#)). Full two-dose vaccination still seems to be protective, whereas having only received one dose, one is less well protected against infection ([link1](#)). We believe there should be international 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/>)

In addition to the threats posed by the spread of the Delta variant, ASPHER is concerned about the choice of many countries to ease restrictions or even abolish them. The Netherlands abolished COVID-19 related measures but saw an increase in the incidence of the disease, which meant they had to reimpose many of the restrictions ([link2](#), [link3](#)). Now the United Kingdom is set to lift all their COVID-19 restrictions as well on July 19, a decision which raises many concerns considering the state of the Delta variant in the country and the region ([link4](#)).

Political decision making continues to be arbitrary, nationalistic and inconsistent. ASPHER continues to be concerned at the failure to achieve international consensus and action on travel restrictions, mass gatherings and other prevention measures. This is particularly evident in the management of the EURO2020 football tournament where thousands of positive cases have now been linked to people who attended football venues. Freedom is all good however, it matters more to weigh the public health risk by the (local) authorities. Unlike EURO2020, the summer Olympic Games in Tokyo will take place without spectators and overseas fans are barred from attending the venue given the rise in the number of new cases and concerns over the more infectious Delta variant ([Link 5](#)).

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. 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 presented 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.

*The current situation 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 and improving accessibility to vaccines 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\\_measures.pdf](https://www.aspher.org/download/726/aspher_statement_on_abolition_of_prevention_measures.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). The battle against the current pandemic is continuing with emerging virus variants challenging the usefulness of the vaccine and delaying the end of the pandemic. 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, began stepwise lifting lockdown restrictions (UK, Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Israel, Portugal, France, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Czechia, Austria). With the increase in transmission of the Delta variant, now there is an increase in incidence in few European countries forcing them to reimpose strict measures (Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus).

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 above 4million lives to date (4,049,372) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 180millions (187,519,798). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (2).

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

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	74,091,960
Europe	57,327,765
South-East Asia	36,196,974

Eastern Mediterranean	11,587,414
Africa	4,465,623
Western-Pacific	3,849,298

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 31% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. In the past 7-days, the number of **new cases rose by 20% and deaths decreased by 1%** (3).

IHME analysis shows, in many regions- the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan infection transmission is high due to the Delta variant which led to an increase in the number of cases also hospitalizations. In Central Asia and the Russian Federation, the number of deaths is increased. The transmission is high among particularly among the young age group reported in many regions. Given the current vaccination rate and high transmissibility of the Delta variant, it is likely that there could be a further peak in infection rate during late autumn or winter. Considering the Delta variant driven surges and increase in hospitalizations and mortality among unvaccinated, IHME emphasizes the governments to undertake all the efforts to improve vaccine confidence and rate of vaccination, to follow strict measures in the event of mass gatherings, indoor dining at restaurants and bars which may end in an increased number of positive cases and to mandate social distancing and face mask (despite vaccination status) (4).

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 12/07/2021 (table 2) (5) (6) (7).

Table2:

WHO Europe region	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 the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Cyprus	1012.70	0.00	46.47%
United Kingdom	477.06	0.42	51.55%
Andorra	438.19	0.00	N/A
Netherlands	386.40	0.08	N/A
Spain	319.75	0.26	47.35%
Georgia	283.80	3.40	N/A
Portugal	268.78	0.66	42.54%
Kyrgyzstan	195.05	1.47	N/A
Greece	190.63	0.77	41.56%
Luxembourg	188.96	0.23	38.85%
Malta	186.36	0.00	79.58%
Kazakhstan	177.48	0.24	N/A
Russia	166.31	4.95	13.07%
Monaco	127.41	0.00	N/A
Denmark	111.41	0.05	41.50%
Ireland	110.61	0.17	42.20%
Belgium	106.82	0.18	43.31%
Belarus	100.25	1.09	N/A
turkey	63.51	0.54	21.11%
France	57.04	0.33	38.26%
Israel	47.24	0.15	60.04%
Finland	42.44	0.08	24.53%
Armenia	41.12	0.96	N/A
Montenegro	34.12	0.46	22.93%
Switzerland	32.72	0.08	N/A
Norway	32.44	0.05	29.48%
Estonia	32.41	0.00	33.38%

Slovenia	30.65	0.34	35.78%
Sweden	23.48	0.17	N/A
Ukraine	21.81	0.64	N/A
Croatia	20.70	0.35	31.07%
Latvia	20.00	0.61	33.03%
Italy	19.77	0.26	38.97%
Czech Republic	19.42	0.27	36.45%
Moldova	17.49	0.50	7.77%
Lithuania	16.32	0.47	42.03%
Austria	15.66	0.16	41.80%
Serbia	14.36	0.29	N/A
Uzbekistan	14.29	0.10	N/A
Azerbaijan	11.89	0.13	16.11%
Germany	9.25	0.34	42.73%
Bulgaria	8.10	0.39	12.27%
North Macedonia	5.90	0.07	11.93%
Bosnia And Herzegovina	5.83	N/A	N/A
Slovakia	5.36	0.21	33.11%
Kosovo	4.36	0.22	N/A
Hungary	4.10	0.16	53.86%
Tajikistan	3.67	0.14	N/A
Albania	2.98	0.00	N/A
Romania	2.20	1.83	N/A
Poland	2.10	0.28	40.37%
San Marino	0.00	0.00	67.18%
Iceland	0.00	0.00	N/A

#### Portugal:

- The number of new cases and the number of patients admitting to hospitals with COVID-19 are increasing in Portugal (8). **At a national level, the 14day incidence per 100 thousand inhabitants rose to 315.6 (12<sup>th</sup> July) in a single day from 272(11<sup>th</sup> July) and the rate of reproduction is above 1 (1.16) as of 12<sup>th</sup> July (9) (10).**
- **The government of Portugal embraced certain new measures with an increase in the number of councils under the list of very high risk (33 total) and high-risk categories (27 in total). Most of the measures are similar in both the categories except the limit on the number of people at restaurants (4 people indoor and 6 outdoor at very high-risk councils, whereas in high-risk councils the dining at the terrace is limited to 10 people and 6 people indoor) and the venue occupancy for weddings and Baptism (25% for very high-risk areas and 50% for high-risk areas) (11).**
- With the availability of vaccines and fixing the time interval to receive the second dose of AstraZeneca, a high vaccination rate (one million doses have been administered) is noted in the previous week (5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> July) (12).

#### Italy:

- Currently, **all the regions in Italy are in low-risk ‘White’ Areas (13).** However, it is still mandatory to maintain social distance and venue capacity limit during gatherings also wearing a face mask is compulsory at public places both indoors and outdoors especially if there is a huge crowd (14).
- **The recent epidemiological data shows an increase in the number of new cases overall because of the Delta variant yet the impact on the hospitals is low (15).** In the past two weeks, the share of the Delta variant of all sequenced samples is 51% followed by the Alpha variant 35% (14).
- Predicting a further increase in incidence in the next couple of months, **the measures at schools during reopening in September 2021 will remain as in the previous year** such as face mask

for above 6years age olds, single desk for each student, quarantine rule for those classes with positive cases and digital classes will be conducted based on the infection rate in the local areas (16).

- As of 14<sup>th</sup> July, the proportion of people who completed the vaccination course is 45.92% (17).

#### Switzerland:

- Switzerland has relaxed further lockdown measures from 26<sup>th</sup> June, the obligation to wear a face mask outdoors has been lifted also events can be conducted to an extent of more than ten thousand people with mandate Digital Covid Certificate to enter the venue (18).
- **The number of new cases started rising (since the beginning of July) and there is a decline in the vaccination rate (19). This increase in incidence is due to the Delta variant, attributed to 71% of total new infections.**
- As of 14<sup>th</sup> July, 52.8% of the Swiss population have received one dose of vaccine and 41.7% fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (18). **The Federal government will take care of the vaccination cost for those individuals living in Switzerland who do not hold compulsory health insurance. Also for those who are working in Swiss health care facilities and cross-border workers can get the vaccine free of cost (19).**

#### Spain:

- The average 7-day incidence in Spain is 319.75 per mill people. **72% of the analysed COVID-19 sequences represent the presence of the Delta variant (20). The incidence is high particularly among 20-29year age olds (1000 per 100 thousand adolescents) which could be because of the low vaccination rate and great engagement in social life. However, the overall hospitalization rate is lower (3.5%) compared to the previous waves.** In response to the current epidemiological situation, the nightlife is banned in the region of Catalonia which recorded high incidence than Spain's average (21).
- **The Ministry of Health is planning to establish barrier-free (without doctor's prescription) access to the self-diagnostic test of COVID-19 to the public (22).**
- As of 14<sup>th</sup> July, 47.82% of the population are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (23).

#### France:

- The rate of vaccination has slowed in France with 400,000 injections daily in May to 165,000 injections per day currently. Approximately 40% of the population is fully vaccinated, while 53.1% has received one dose. French President Macron announced further measures in his country to slow down the surge of the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. **Vaccination will be mandatory for all health workers from September 15th. After this date, unvaccinated health workers will not be able to work or get paid.** The vaccine passport will be mandatory for attending different establishments in France from August 1, including cafes, restaurants, shopping centres. Thereby, **PCR tests will no longer be free of charge from September 15th to encourage people to get a vaccine (24).**

#### Croatia:

- In Croatia, 1,562,081 people have received one dose and 1,317,827 have received both shots (25). **On the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, Croatian citizens who don't have health insurance can for the first time receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.** There is no booking or invitation needed in advance and the vaccinated people can enjoy a concert afterwards. However, they still can't receive a covid certificate for travel (26).

#### Serbia:

- **Serbia will become the first European country to produce China-developed COVID-19 vaccines with the Chinese company Sinopharm.** The goal is to produce 10 million doses of

Sinopharm's vaccine to provide it to the local Serbian market. Every month, three million doses will be produced to fight against the pandemic (27). In addition, Serbia cancelled the opportunity to vaccinate tourists until further notice after more than 40,000 foreigners benefited (28).

#### **Netherlands:**

- The number of infections has heavily increased over the past two weeks due to lifting most Covid-19 restrictions. Last Friday, the **Dutch government decided to close the nightclubs and put a midnight curfew on bars and restaurants again. The seven-day moving average increased up to 8,444, the most since January 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8 times more than the infection rate before June 30.** As a result, **seven regions will be moved to the highest "very serious" risk level and 13 to the second-highest "serious" level** (29). Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologized for easing the restrictions too early (30). The number of hospitalizations is still stable (29).

#### **Belgium:**

- **The number of COVID-19 infections rose in Belgium with more than 1,000 cases daily. This infection rate is three times more than three weeks ago.** Most infections occur in the younger age groups, but there is a slight increase detected in all age groups. It is expected that this trend will continue for a while, but not with a significant effect (31). **Hospitalizations are decreasing by 4% compared to the previous week. The Belgian government will wait another month before implementing any further relaxation of COVID-19 measures** (32).

#### **United Kingdom:**

- As of July 15, 87.5% of the adult population has received the 1st dose whereas 67.1% is fully vaccinated (33).
- **The quarantine rules for those who got vaccinated in the United Kingdom will be relaxed on July 19. A plan to allow vaccinated people to travel into the UK is believed to be revealed in the coming weeks** (34).
- A new poll suggests that one in five adults of any age, or one in three in younger ages, deleted their NHS Covid-19 app potentially to avoid self-isolating obligation (35).

#### **Finland:**

- **As of July 15, Finland has vaccinated 63.1% of the population with the first dose and 25.7% fully** (36).
- **Laboratories Finland Oy has received €9 Million to develop a covid-19 vaccine that will be administered as a nasal spray.** The funding will ensure the first and second phases of human testing, which will start this year (37).

#### **Norway:**

- As of July 7, 30.31% of the population is fully vaccinated and 58.46 % has received the first dose (38).
- **A new study, which is not yet published, found that healthcare use increased significantly in those vaccinated with AstraZeneca after various media reports of a few fatal or severe side effects of that particular vaccine** (39).
- Also, Oslo will start drop-in covid-19 vaccinations on July 19, while Bergen did so on July 13 (40).

#### **Sweden:**

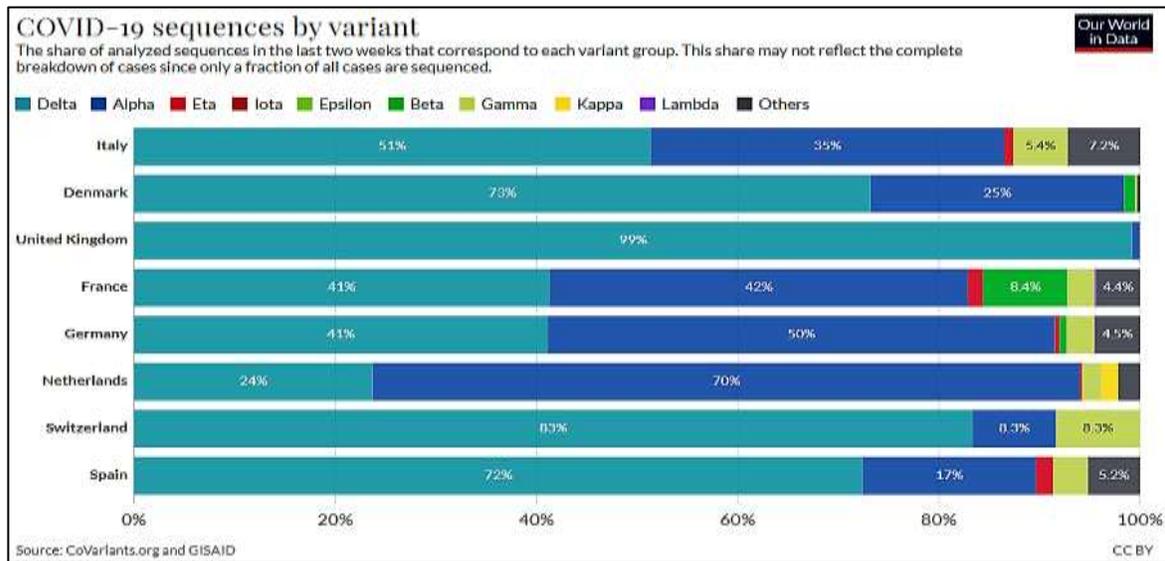
- As of July 7, 71.1% of the population has received the first dose, while 45.4% has received the second one as well (41).
- According to the State epidemiologist, **10-15% of all new cases have been imported from**

abroad. Everyone who has travelled outside the Nordic region is now recommended to take a PCR test when returning to Sweden (42) (43). Lastly, the first case of a dog being infected with covid-19 has been reported (44).

**Denmark:**

- As of July 7, approximately 74.0% of the population has received one dose of the vaccine, whereas approximately 48.5% is fully vaccinated (45).
- Young people occupy first place among all age groups in the country when it comes to hospitalisations due to covid-19 (46).
- The Danish Patient Safety Agency showed that only 152 people were infected with covid-19 concerning the European Championship football matches at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen. These events were therefore not considered super-spreader events (47).

Chart showing the share of COVID-19 sequences corresponding to each variant in the (available) European countries analysed in the past two weeks from 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021: (48)



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 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021:

## Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

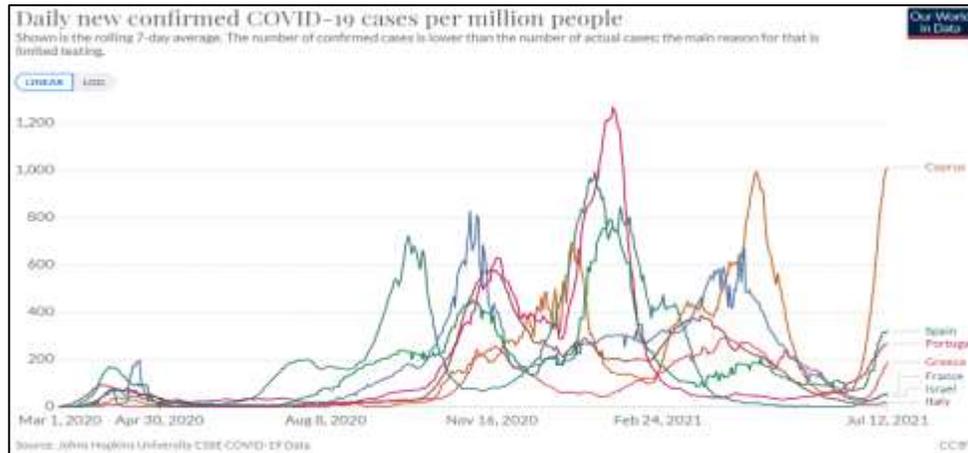
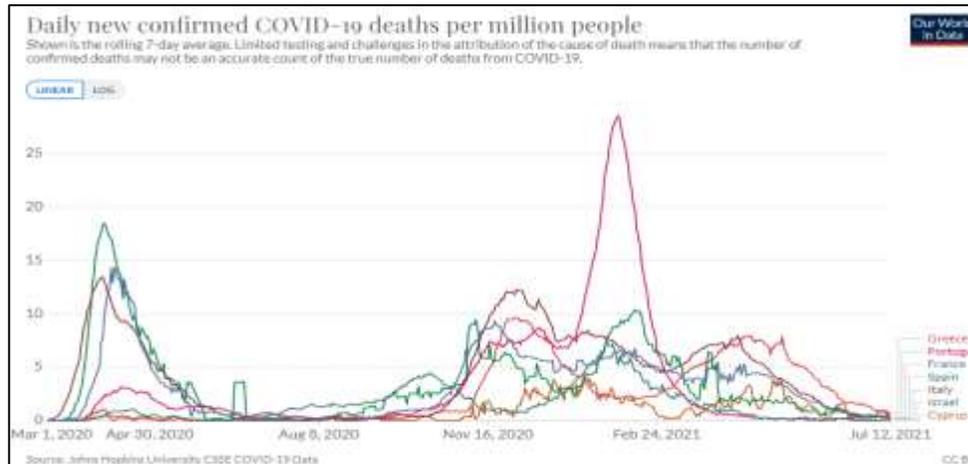


Figure 2:



## South-East Europe:

Figure 3:

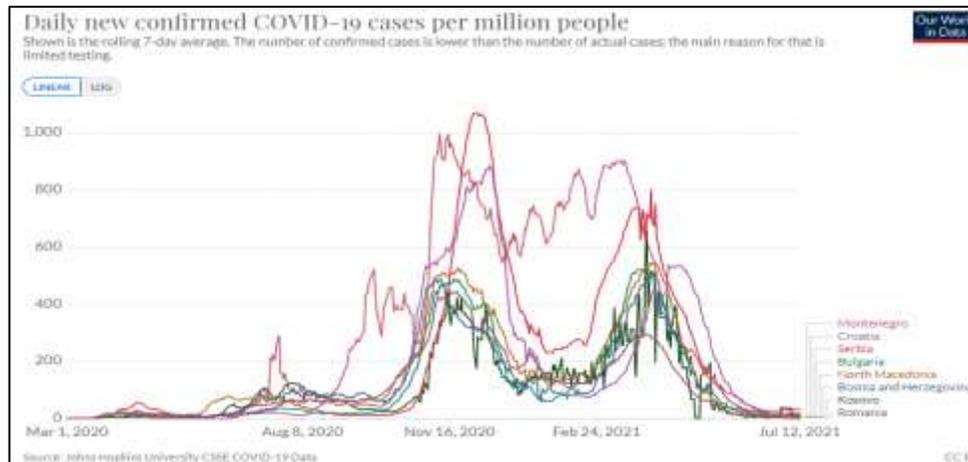
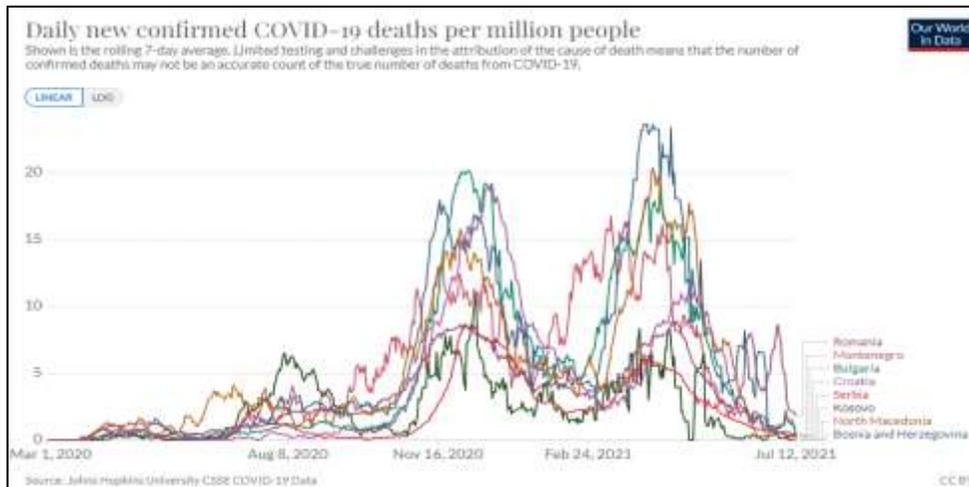


Figure 4:



## Central Europe

Figure 5:

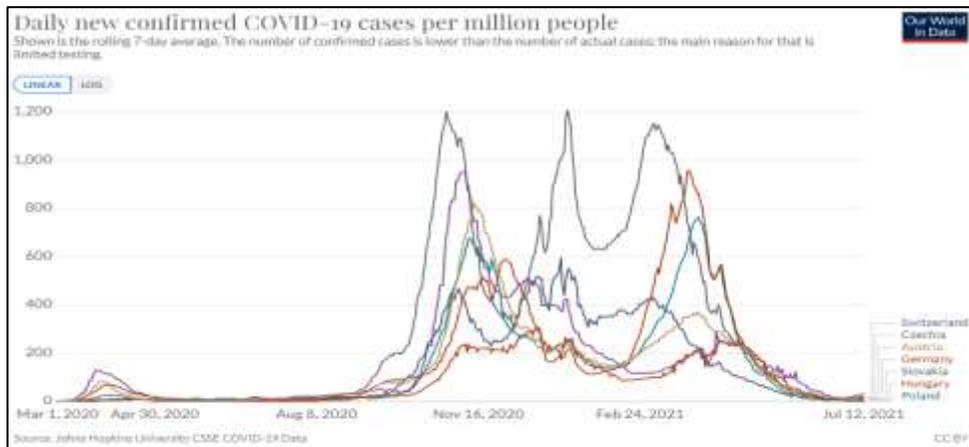
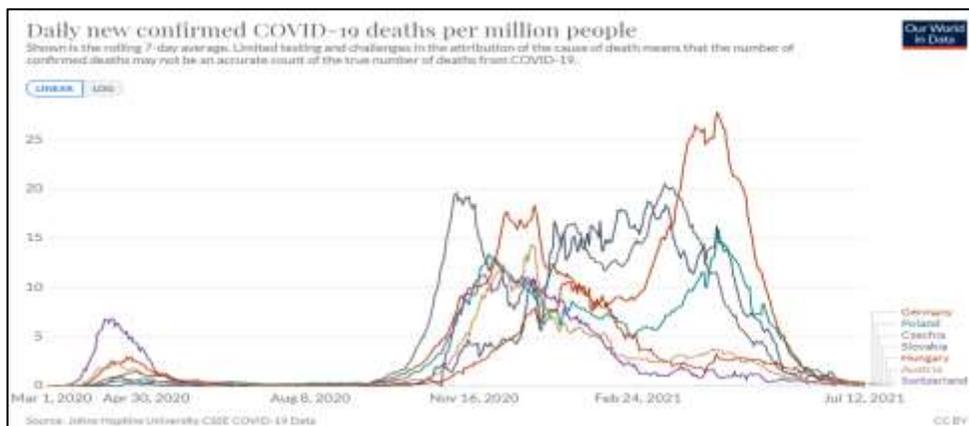


Figure 6:



## Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

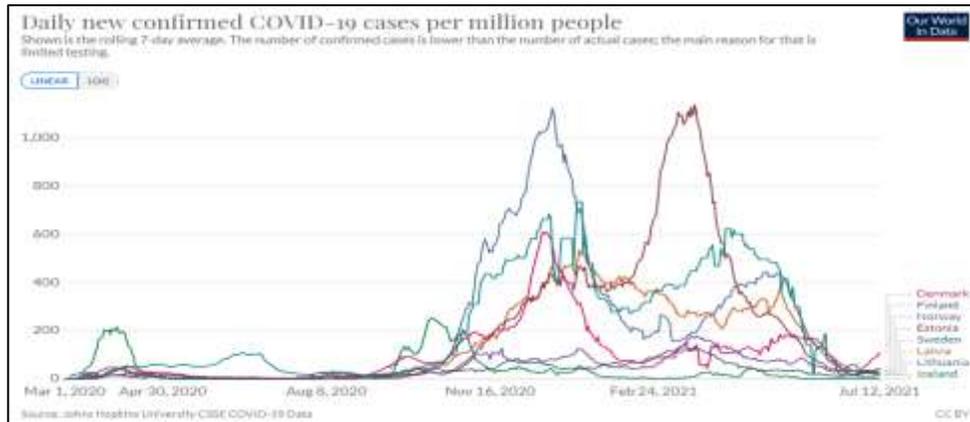
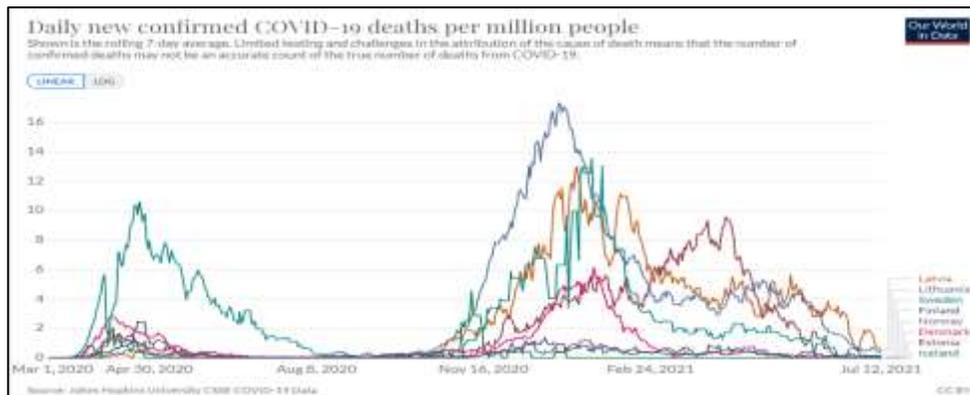


Figure 8:



## North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

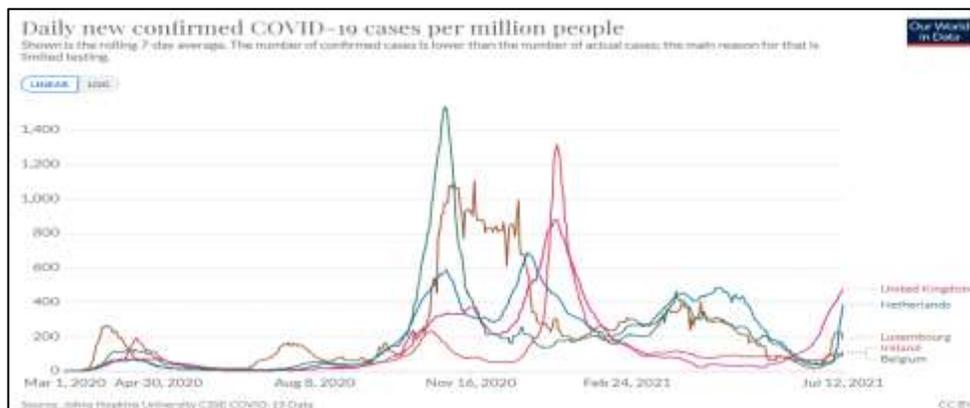
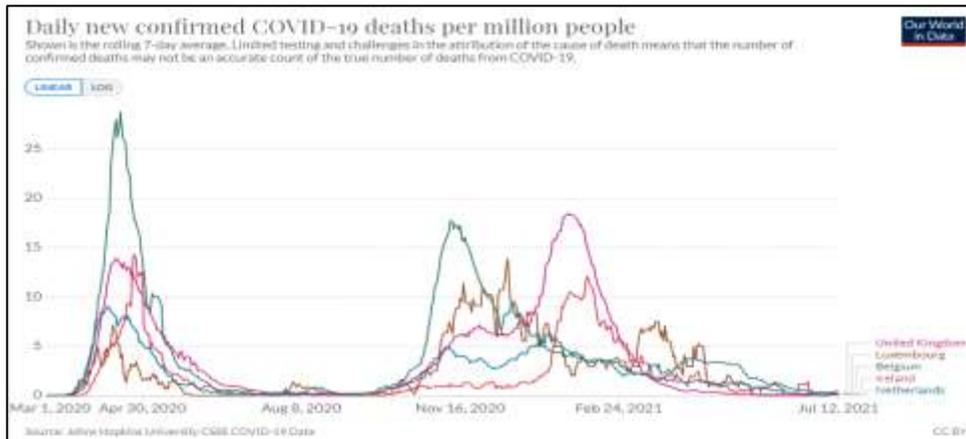


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

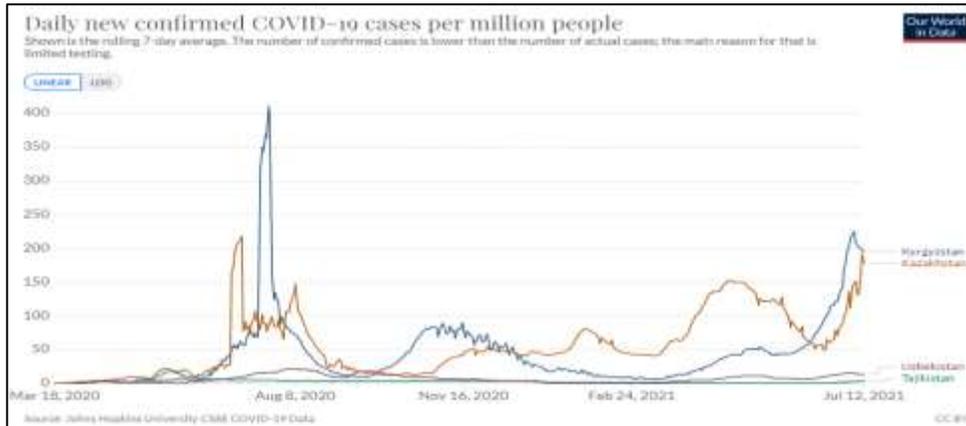
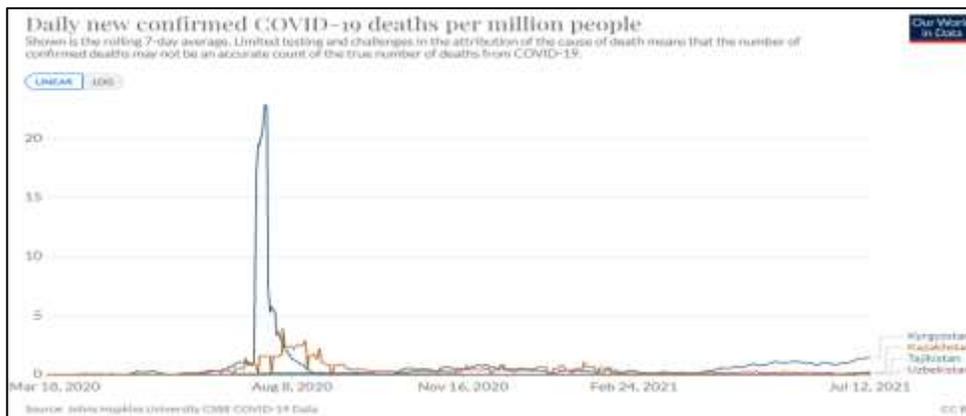


Figure 12:



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