

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

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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 also 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 ([link](#)). Full two-dose vaccination still seems to be protective, whereas having only received one dose, one is less well protected against infection ([link](#)). 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: [link](#))

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 tournaments 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](#)).

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 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.

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, France).

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 (4,170,155) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 190millions (194,608,040). 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	76,182,529
Europe	59,312,787
South-East Asia	37,755,175
Eastern Mediterranean	12,259,849
Africa	4,813,735
Western-Pacific	4,287,201

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 30% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. In the past 7-days, the number of new cases rose by 3% and the number of new deaths reduced by 1% in respect to the previous week (3).

IHME summarizes the recent situation of COVID-19 in the WHO Europe region concerning the spread of the Delta variant as follows. Earlier infection is contributing to current surges or forthcoming in Russia and a few Central Asia regions. Delta variant transmission is gradually increasing in Central Europe in contrast to rapid transmission in the West and South regions (particularly in the areas of popular tourist attraction). Daily mortality rates may increase by the beginning of September and see a minimal decline by mid-October and due to seasonal variation, starts rising for the second time. This prediction is based on the current rate of vaccination, mask usage and mobility among the public. IHME emphasizes the following policy strategies to control the transmission of the Delta variant by a)improving vaccine confidence thereby the vaccination rate through mRNA and enhance vaccine supply, b) continuing non-pharmacological interventions c) improving surveillance capacity in respect to vaccine status which aids in analysing vaccine efficacy as well as enables prediction of the epidemic trends in the winter this year (4).

The following table shows a 7-day average of daily new confirmed coronavirus cases, newly confirmed deaths and share of population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region reported on 26/07/2021 (table 2) (5) (6) (7).

Table 2:

WHO Europe region	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths	Share of population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Cyprus	1016.24	2.25	N/A
Georgia	562.02	5.30	3.57%
Spain	550.61	0.46	55.93%
United Kingdom	531.11	0.95	55.78%
Malta	465.58	0.00	84.21%
Kazakhstan	417.59	4.12	17.39%
Andorra	403.07	0.00	N/A
Monaco	374.94	0.00	N/A
Netherlands	338.93	0.20	N/A
Portugal	310.03	1.21	52.86%
France	269.96	0.36	N/A
Greece	258.07	0.62	47.42%
Ireland	251.44	0.23	N/A
Iceland	245.32	0.00	N/A
Kyrgyzstan	170.88	1.64	N/A
Israel	161.32	0.18	61.48%
Russia	159.76	5.27	15.73%
Turkey	137.25	0.67	28.59%
Denmark	133.09	0.03	52.02%
San Marino	130.49	0.00	N/A
Belgium	129.29	0.18	54.57%
Luxembourg	129.17	0.23	46.95%
Montenegro	117.59	0.91	23.76%
Belarus	95.79	1.04	N/A
Switzerland	80.52	N/A	46.88%
Finland	75.47	0.05	N/A
Italy	73.25	0.23	31.61%
Estonia	69.14	0.00	36.50%
Armenia	66.92	1.01	N/A
Lithuania	65.60	0.32	44.69%
Norway	41.19	0.08	N/A
Austria	40.99	0.05	48.70%
Croatia	36.02	0.24	33.98%
Sweden	35.53	0.07	N/A
Slovenia	32.64	0.21	38.08%
Serbia	32.25	0.44	39.31%
Azerbaijan	30.00	0.21	18.84%
Ukraine	25.47	0.65	4.03%
Moldova	25.00	0.64	11.13%
Latvia	24.24	0.45	35.39%
Uzbekistan	21.43	0.16	N/A
Germany	19.13	0.29	49.38%
Czech Republic	18.70	0.25	43.39%
Bulgaria	16.47	0.45	N/A
North Macedonia	10.63	0.27	16.87%
Albania	9.63	0.00	N/A
Kosovo	9.24	0.07	N/A
Bosnia And Herzegovina	7.92	0.35	N/A
Tajikistan	7.43	0.09	N/A
Slovakia	6.57	0.18	35.53%
Hungary	5.89	0.04	55.80%
Romania	5.16	0.12	25.01%
Poland	2.75	0.10	45.03%

Cyprus:

Between July 26 and 27, Cyprus recorded 791 new COVID-19 cases and 6 new deaths (8). 291 patients are hospitalized and 80 patients are in critical condition. Cyprus fully vaccinated 50.7% of the population (9) (10). The authorities will decide this week about vaccinating the young age group 12-15 years against COVID-19 (11). **Universities have declared that SafePass is mandatory for all the students, employees and guests to enter the campus for the winter semester 2021-2022 (12). Travellers PCR testing protocol is updated** which enters into force from 1st August and now PCR test is required by those who received one dose of vaccine (approved by the Cyprus authorities), young age group 12-15 years and those individuals who cannot take vaccine due to other medical conditions. **If the passenger is entering Cyprus from a region under a red category, they must self-isolate for 72 hours and should confirm a negative PCR test to end self-isolation.** EU Digital Covid Certificate holders (fully vaccinated/recovered) are freed from quarantine or testing obligation (13).

France:

The 7-day incidence (18th to 24th July) is 189 per 100 thousand inhabitants (180.2 in the previous week) (14). Between 26th and 27th July, newly admitted patients to hospital and ICU with COVID-19 are 557 and 121 respectively (a decline of 50 and 14 respectively compared to the day before) (15) (16). French authorities have authorized new rules to control the pandemic. **Now it is compulsory to show health pass to enter restaurants, cafes, night catering, grocery stores, entertainment venues and all modes of transport and mandatory vaccination among all health care workers (by mid-September 2021). Both the decisions were landed up in a debate.** By the end of September, a similar rule will be applied to all citizens above 12 years of age and will continue until mid-November depending on the epidemiological situation (17). Education Minister is planning a new health rule for students above 12 years, if any positive case is noted in the class, those who are fully vaccinated can attend a face to face lecture and those who are unvaccinated must isolate themselves for a week (18).

Spain:

Spain's vaccination campaign is running successfully. **The government is encouraging vaccination among the public by arranging mobile vaccination units for single jab vaccines (Janssen vaccine) without an appointment and by sending a message or giving a phone call to receiving the jab for those who are not vaccinated.** The goal of the local authorities in most regions of Spain is to improve the vaccination rate among unvaccinated age olds above 40 years (19). Increasing interest to get vaccinated in the young age group is observed (20). The infection rate and rate of hospitalization are increasing significantly however, the rate of transmission is showing a declining trend. Due to the increased burden on hospitals in Catalonia, all unimportant services are held up (19). As part of the Universal Access Plan, the Spain government has allocated 7.5 million vaccine doses to Latin America (21).

Israel:

The number of new coronavirus cases is increasing sharply in Israel. On 27th July the number of newly confirmed cases are 2,284 and 149 patients are in critical condition (1407 new cases and 61 in critical stage a week ago) (22) (23). **The majority of the new infections are attributable to the young age group also those who received vaccine jabs twice (24).** Israel has initiated home speed tests by making the test kits available at pharmacies (from this week). However, a negative home test is exclusively for personal use and does not guarantee access to the services (25). **Israel is planning to vaccinate 5 to 11 year age olds who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19 due to certain chronic illnesses (26).** A comparative age-stratified study with a focus on severe morbidity by the Israel Ministry of Health using data from 2021 January to July involving age groups 40 and above revealed the **unvaccinated people without risk factors are at more risk of coronavirus disease compared to the vaccinated individuals with comorbidities (27).**

The Netherlands:

The Netherlands decided to ease COVID-19 restrictions to allow travel to all EU countries. Dutch travel recommendations will no longer be based solely on infection rates, but will also be based on the manageable hospital occupancy rates. The Minister of Health announced that they will be more lenient in designating other countries in an orange or red travel advice (28). Yet, the Covid test requirements to enter the country will be tightened. Every country designated by the Netherlands as being at risk will be required

to prove a negative test taken no more than 48 hours before departure to the Netherlands (29). In addition, **authorities planned to extend the ban on multiple-day festivals at least till the end of August**. No decision has yet been made on one-day festivals, which already include restrictions on attendance and seating capacity (28).

Ireland:

The Irish COVID-19 vaccination programme is to be extended to include 12 to 15 year-olds. The vaccination in this age group will require parental consent and parents will have to be present for the jabs. Thereby, **walk-in vaccine centres will be added over the holiday weekend to facilitate further vaccinations**. Standard measures including social distancing and wearing masks indoors will remain essential even when a significant amount of people gets vaccinated (30).

Germany:

The German Health Ministry is planning to expand obligatory testing to all travellers entering the country, even from low-risk areas. The new proposal will likely not include those fully vaccinated or being recovered from coronavirus. It aims to curb the recent rise in infections and the move of the delta variant of the virus. Currently, almost 50 % of the population has been fully vaccinated, but the infection rate increased from 4.9 per 100,000 on July 6 to 14.5 per 100,000 in the last 7 days (31). The German authorities are discussing if restrictions for unvaccinated people may be necessary if case numbers reach new heights in the coming months. Another lockdown is not expected, but unvaccinated people may be barred from entering restaurants, stadiums or movie theatres (32).

Croatia:

The Croatian government has announced stricter COVID-19 restrictions in five coastal counties, due to the first significant rise in positive cases in 9 weeks. Any gatherings in one place with more than 50 people will require a COVID vaccination certificate, while the maximum number of people in one place will remain 1,000. Thereby, wedding celebrations involving more than 15 people will require a COVID certificate. These measures are aimed to prevent the introduction of restrictions for travellers going to Croatia. In addition, the national coronavirus response team has also extended the validity of COVID vaccination certificates from 210 days to 270 days (33).

Latvia:

The factor of reproduction of COVID-19 infection (R) increased from 1.0 last week to 1.14 in Latvia, which indicates that the spread of the virus is increasing (34). Latvia will purchase a new effective but expensive drug for the treatment of severely ill COVID-19 patients. The medicine is monoclonal antibody preparation "REGN COV2". The purchase of the drug is 200,000 euros that can be used for 100 ill patients. The medicine would not be used as a common treatment, but for special cases where there is a high risk to life or serious side effects. The new drug is currently being evaluated by the European Medicines Agency (35).

Bulgaria:

For two months, the Bulgarian authorities have been miscalculating the number of vaccinated people. People who received a single-dose vaccine of Janssen were not reported in the information system. When the error was addressed, 73,000 more vaccinated people were added. After correcting the error, Bulgaria remains last in the EU regarding vaccinated citizens with only 18.5%. The daily number of new positive cases has doubled since last week, which could be the beginning of a new wave (36).

United Kingdom:

As of July 28, 88.3% of the adult population has received the 1st dose whereas 71.1% is fully vaccinated (37). The United Kingdom reports 23,511 daily cases in seventh daily drop in a row and half compared to last week. Daily deaths hit highest since March (38). Meanwhile, the COVID-19 apps of the country led to more than 600,000 key workers to self-isolate. The government outlined plans to end this so-called 'pingdemic', including increasing daily testing for those in the food sector so they can continue even after being 'pinged' (39). In Wales, 33,800 pupils (8.6%) of pupils were absent from school for Covid-related reasons between 12 and 16 July, according to Welsh government data (40).

Finland:

As of July 28, Finland has vaccinated 65.3% of the population with first dose and 32.2% fully (41). Entry travel restrictions eased on July 26 for arrivals from countries in the Schengen area. Restrictions on external border traffic are still valid for several countries. However, people who have an approved certificate that shows they are fully vaccinated can arrive freely in Finland from all countries (42).

Norway:

As of July 28, 32.45% of the population is fully vaccinated and 63.69 % has received the first dose (43). Stage 4 of reopening is postponed by at least two weeks due to concern over the spread of the Delta variant. Full re-opening is still expected in the Autumn (44). Starting July 28, a series of adjustments to the current measures will apply until August 2, including adults being able to attend sports and cultural events and companies needing to comply with the rules on private events when organising social events for their employees (45).

Sweden:

As of July 28, 77.3% of the population has received the first dose, while 49.7% has received the second one as well (46). The Public Health agency of Sweden reported no new COVID-19 associated deaths on July 28 (47). In fact, during weeks 27 and 28, Sweden had 0.19 deaths per one million inhabitants, one of the lowest mortality rates in Europe (48).

Denmark:

As of July 28, approximately 80.5% of the population has received one dose of the vaccine, whereas approximately 59.3% is fully vaccinated (49). There have been reports that nurses have been fired in multiple occasions because they took a long-term sick leave due to COVID-19 (50). In addition, Denmark is will start monitoring the country's waste water for COVID-19 after a successful experiment by the Danish State Serum Institute (51). Several Danes who have been infected with COVID-19 on holiday abroad have defied the requirement for self-isolation and instead flew back to Denmark (52).

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 from the beginning of 1st January 2021 until 20th July 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

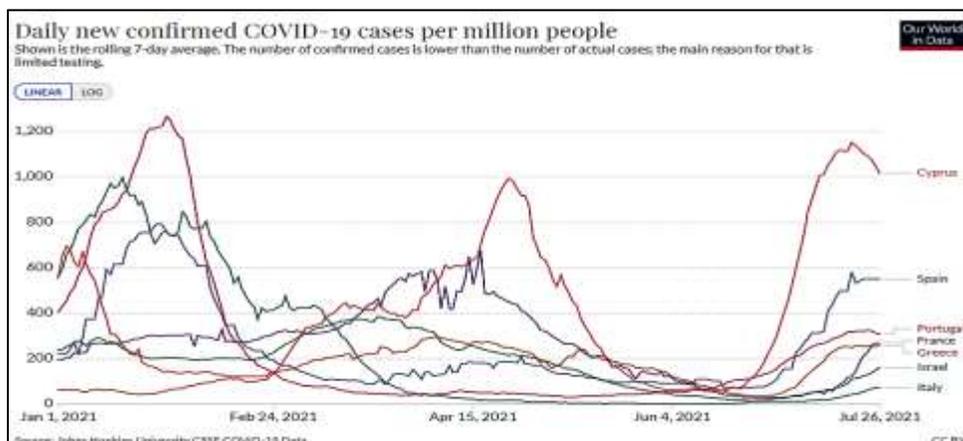
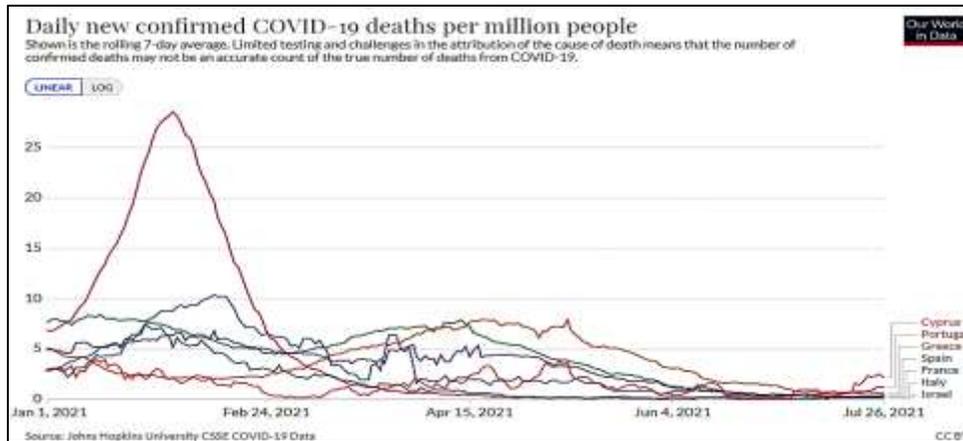


Figure 2:



South-East Region:

Figure 3:

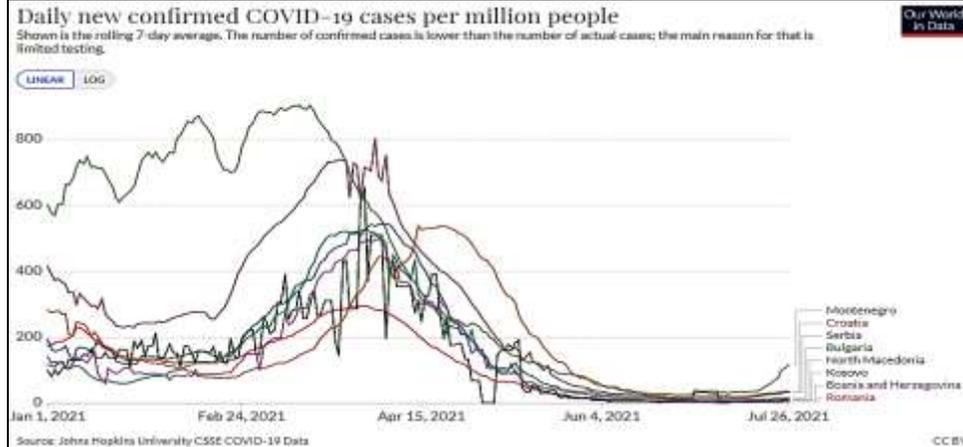
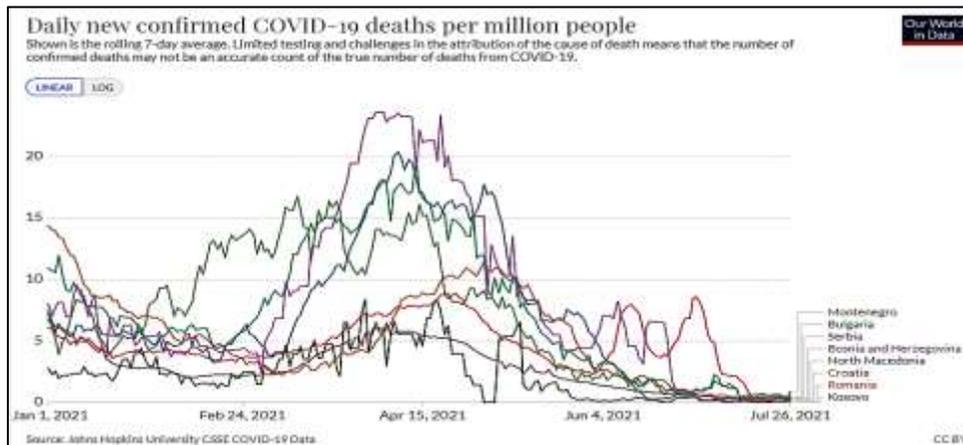


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

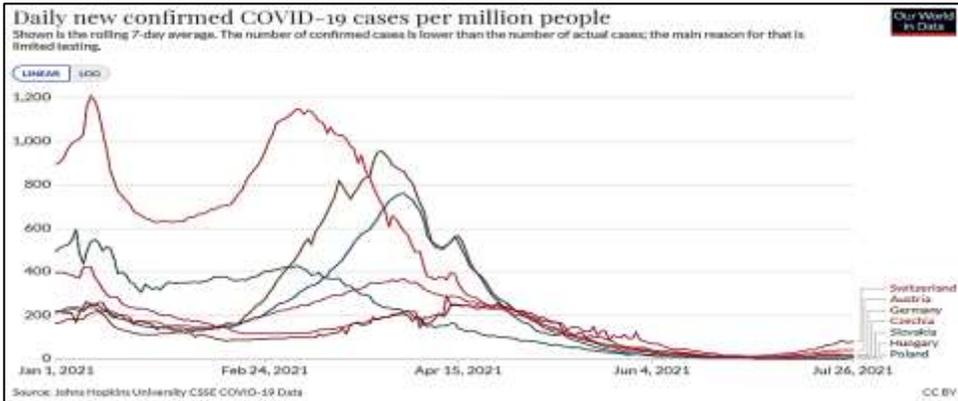
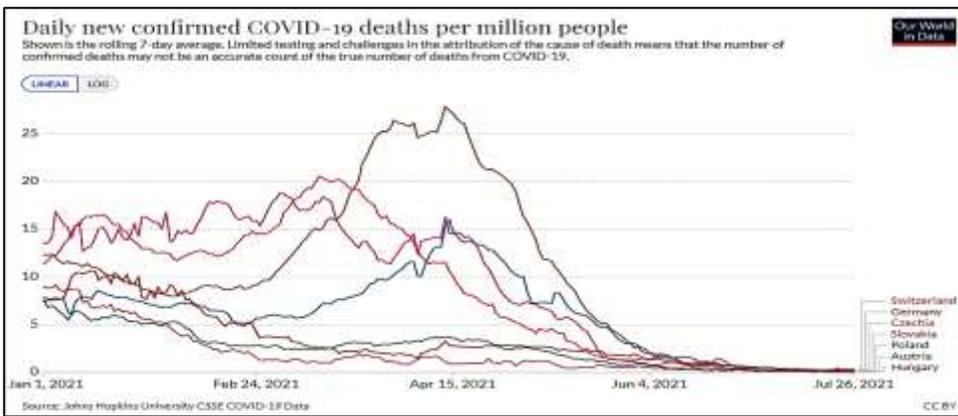


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

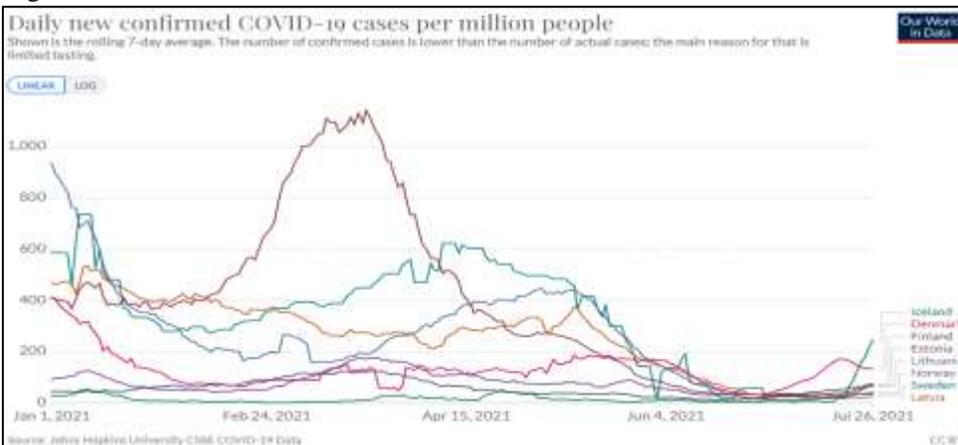
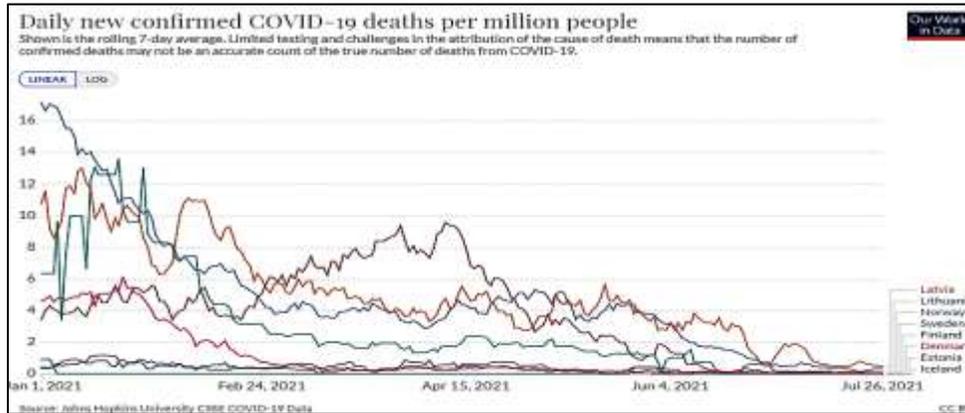


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

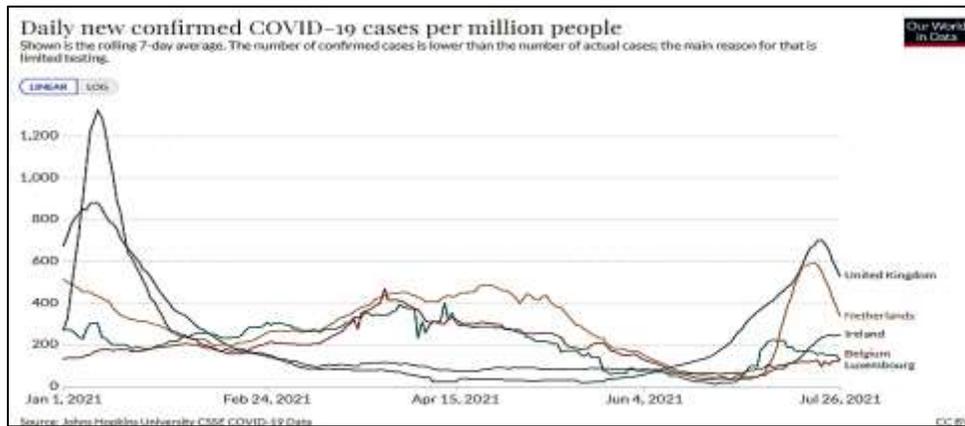
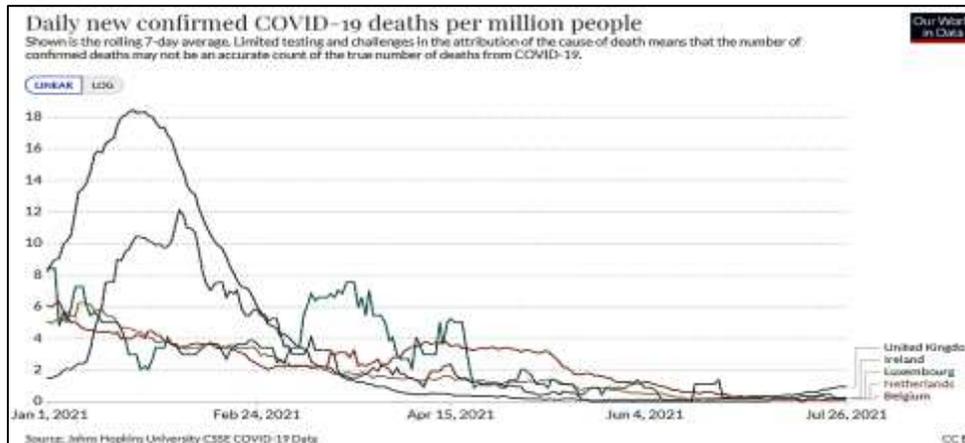


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

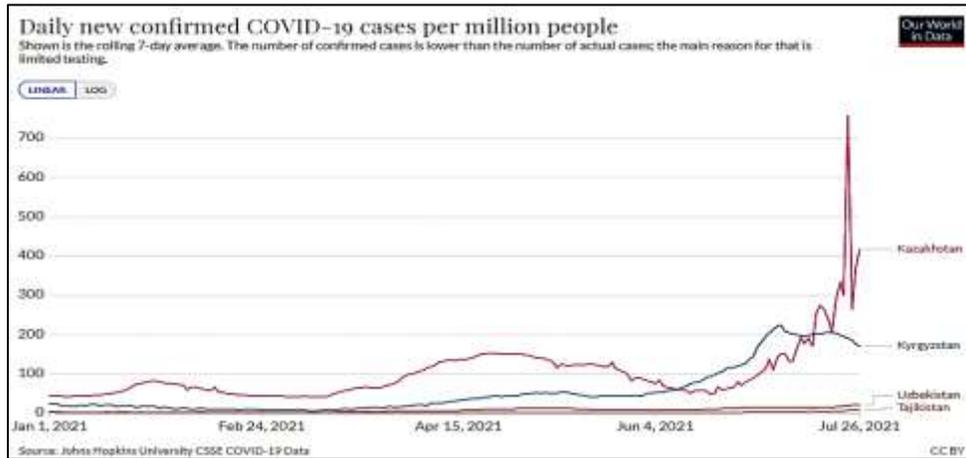
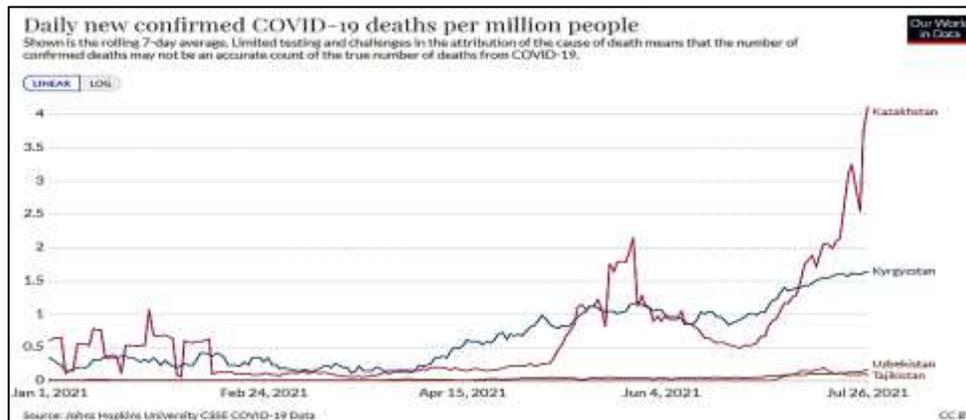


Figure 12:



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