

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of August 16th 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 which is currently the dominant strain in the region. The EMA and ECDC strongly encourage those who are eligible for vaccination but have not yet been vaccinated to complete the recommended COVID-19 schedule on time ([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](#))

In addition, genomic surveillance is emerging as a vital necessity to achieve containment of the virus in this pandemic. It would facilitate greater early anticipation as well as initiation of effective strategies to mitigate outbreaks of the COVID-19 virus ([link](#)). However, the process is marred by a lack of data, lack of capacity, and inequities between countries. As a result, the concern arises of insufficient rates of sequencing across the globe. It is important to address the factors that hold back surveillance to prevent uncontrolled viral outbreaks ([link](#)).

Given the fact that there is great variability in access to vaccines across countries, it is important to improve vaccine production. There should be coordinated global effort to enhance vaccine production, and supply to low-income countries. Considering the duration of the effect of the vaccine, the countries need to act promptly to increase the supply and availability of vaccines. This includes [implementing the vaccine waiver](#). Several countries have announced administering booster doses in September including France,

Germany, the United Kingdom and Israel. WHO has called for the postponement of the administration of booster doses at least till the end of September to enable a more equitable global approach to vaccination: enabling at least 10% of the population of every country to be vaccinated (“sprint to September”) ([link](#)) ([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 virus variants, not only by rapid vaccination but also by increasing vaccine confidence and improving accessibility to vaccines to prevent further waves. Despite vaccination status, following public health and social measures is still necessary.

Europe is currently in [a third wave of the pandemic](#), fuelled by the Delta variant. Countries are struggling to find a balance in controlling the virus and going back to ‘normal’ everyday activity. Countries take several different approaches, with some taking more cautious strategies and others trying to ‘live with the virus’. It is a new phase in the pandemic for Europe and authorities should be careful in how they address the pandemic, keeping in mind the risk of a new wave during autumn (1).

By increasing the vaccination rate with the simultaneous introduction of the EU Digital Covid Certificate, lockdown restrictions were eased and testing requirements were modified across and within the countries. This has contributed to flattening the epidemic curve in few regions. However, despite the immunization program, there is a resurgence in the number of new cases due to the transmission of the Delta variant in Europe, requiring the reimposition of strict measures in countries – Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, Cyprus.

According to IHME analysis, **50% of the population in Europe are immune to the Delta variant** and estimates an increase of 17% by early December. Unlike the previous week, the reported number of cases have been increasing in most of the regions in Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia regions except Poland and Czechia and the Russian Federation. Also in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Cyprus, and Malta, the speed of transmission is decelerating. Compared to the reported mortality the number of cases and hospitalizations are high in Europe, which may further worsen by late October or early November. Considering the divergent transmission trends across the region, the strategic policies for the current situation are: a) increase the vaccine confidence thereby the vaccination rate; b) reimposing face mask and social distancing mandates irrespective of vaccination status concerning intensifying hospitalizations and deaths; c) excluding vaccination status, a comprehensive reporting of all major metrics-cases, hospitalizations and deaths should be maintained which helps in remarking the efficiency of the vaccine in individual countries (2).

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 4 million lives to date (4,370,424) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two billion (207,784,507). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (3).

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

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	80,425,346
Europe	62,746,017
South-East Asia	40,079,450
Eastern Mediterranean	13,732,622
Africa	5,461,229
Western-Pacific	5,339,079

The following table shows a 7-day average of daily newly confirmed coronavirus cases, deaths and proportion of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region reported on 16/08/2021 (table 2) (4) (5) (6).

Table2:

WHO Europe region	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/mill people	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/mill people	Share of population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Georgia	1221.34	11.03	6.15%
Israel	687.42	2.11	62.64%
Montenegro	582.52	2.27	26.20%
Kosovo	502.09	1.11	N/A
Cyprus	454.47	2.73	55.61%
United Kingdom	425.80	1.32	77.2%
Kazakhstan	415.15	13.82	25.13%
France	376.21	1.07	N/A
Ireland	356.20	0.43	N/A
Greece	309.10	1.86	53.00%
Monaco	298.50	0.00	N/A
North Macedonia	294.37	3.50	N/A
Iceland	283.83	0.00	N/A
Spain	279.56	1.44	N/A
Turkey	261.77	1.71	39.29%
Azerbaijan	238.50	1.38	23.42%
Portugal	229.89	1.23	64.75%
Switzerland	228.47	0.12	N/A
Andorra	218.17	1.85	N/A
Estonia	208.06	0.21	39.16%
Lithuania	197.42	1.15	50.62%
Denmark	174.79	0.20	N/A
Belgium	166.41	0.31	N/A
San Marino	155.75	0.00	N/A
Malta	154.65	0.97	91.67%
Netherlands	149.28	0.52	N/A
Serbia	144.40	0.65	N/A
Russia	144.28	5.41	22.33%
Finland	137.32	0.31	42.90%
Armenia	121.34	2.36	N/A
Bulgaria	117.44	2.02	15.53%
Belarus	113.73	1.09	N/A
Albania	107.52	0.30	N/A
Italy	103.30	0.51	57.24%
Norway	97.00	0.13	N/A
Austria	94.76	0.11	55.69%
Slovenia	91.26	0.00	41.07%
Sweden	79.34	0.01	N/A
Croatia	68.87	0.42	N/A
Luxembourg	67.32	0.69	55.27%
Kyrgyzstan	61.90	0.96	4.38%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	54.60	0.74	N/A
Germany	54.15	0.16	57.08%
Latvia	53.70	0.30	38.31%
Moldova	50.89	0.96	14.49%
Ukraine	36.52	0.98	6.38%
Uzbekistan	27.43	0.20	N/A
Romania	17.89	0.25	N/A
Czech Republic	17.17	0.16	49.99%
Slovakia	12.48	0.08	38.45%
Hungary	7.29	0.06	56.94%
Tajikistan	6.01	0.01	N/A
Poland	4.90	0.05	48.10%

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 March 2020 until 16th August 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

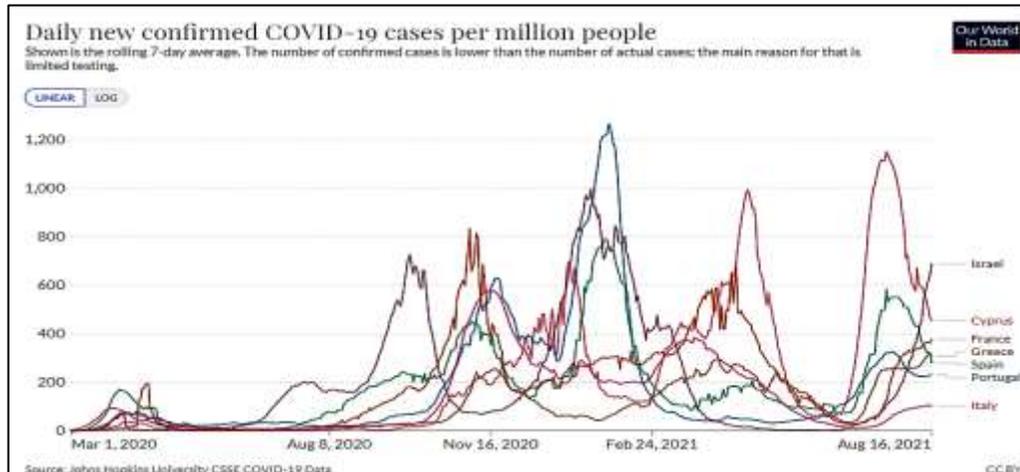
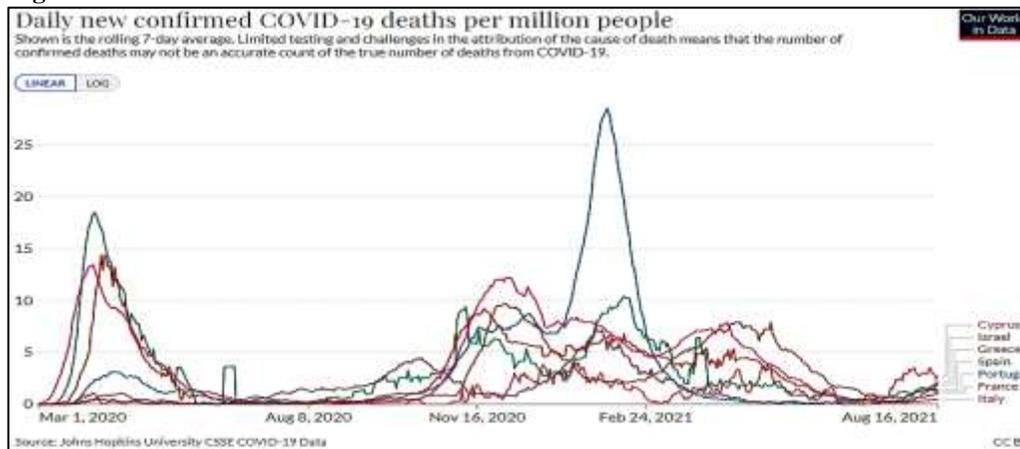


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

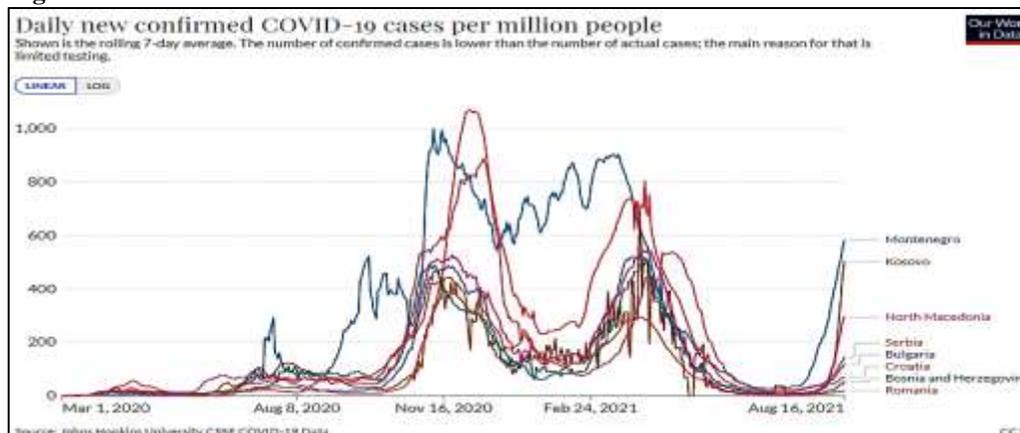
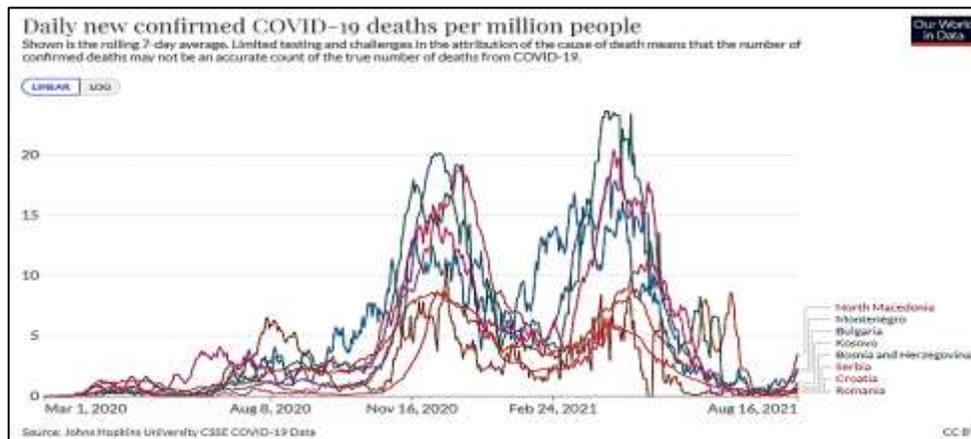


Figure 4:



Central Europe

Figure 5:

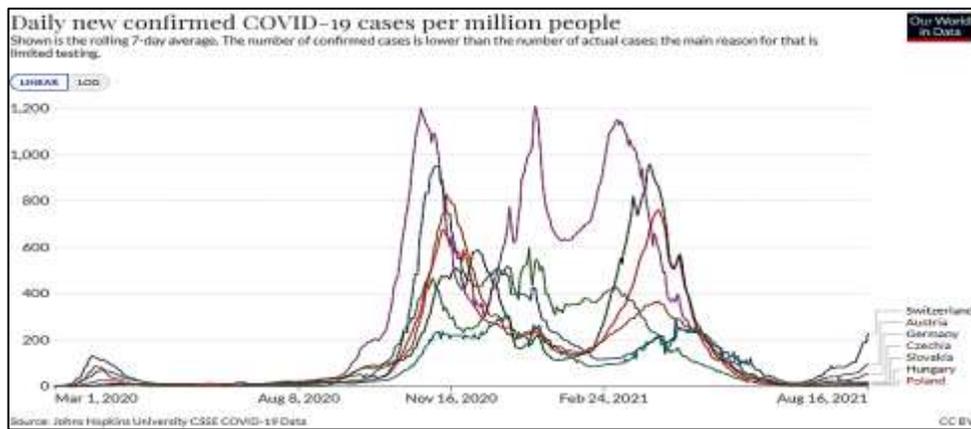
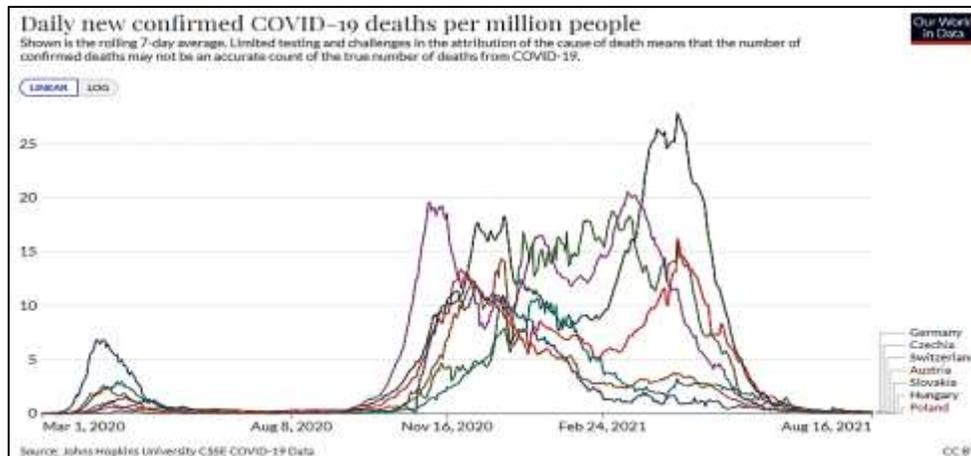


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

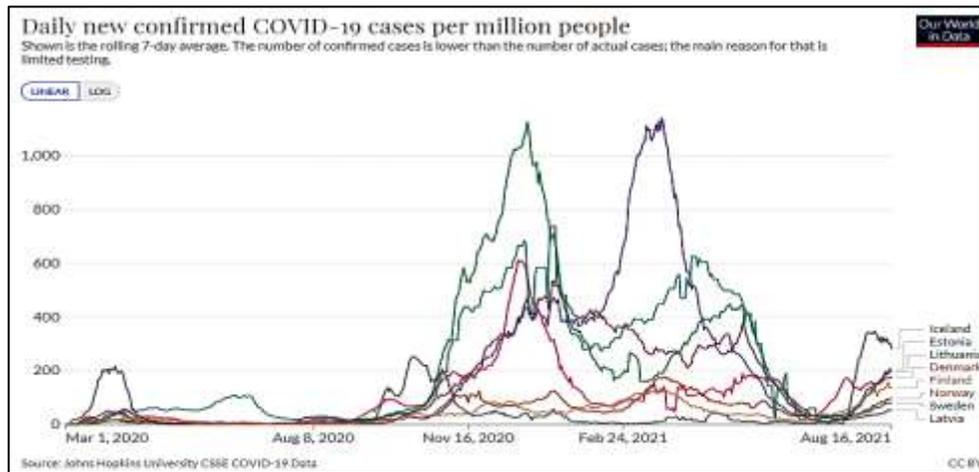
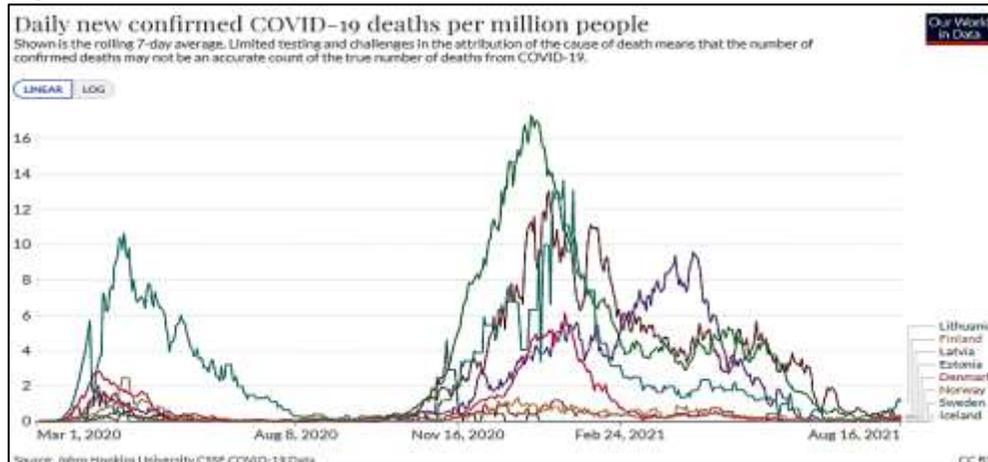


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

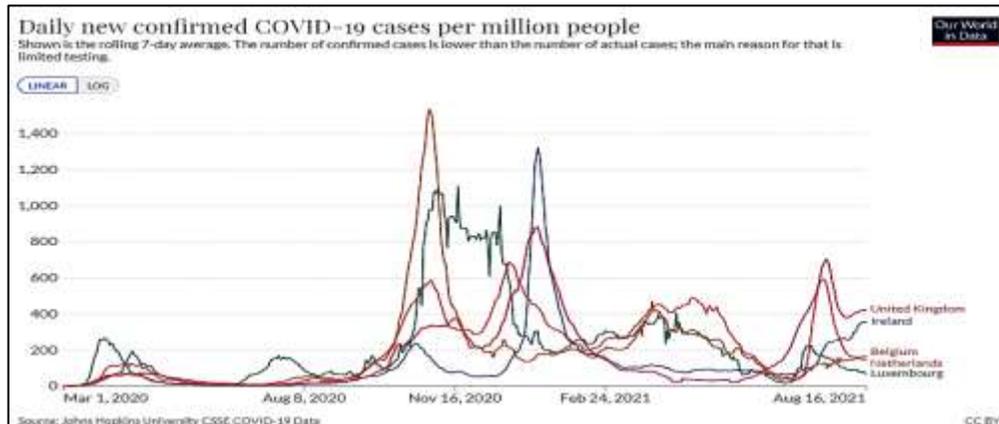
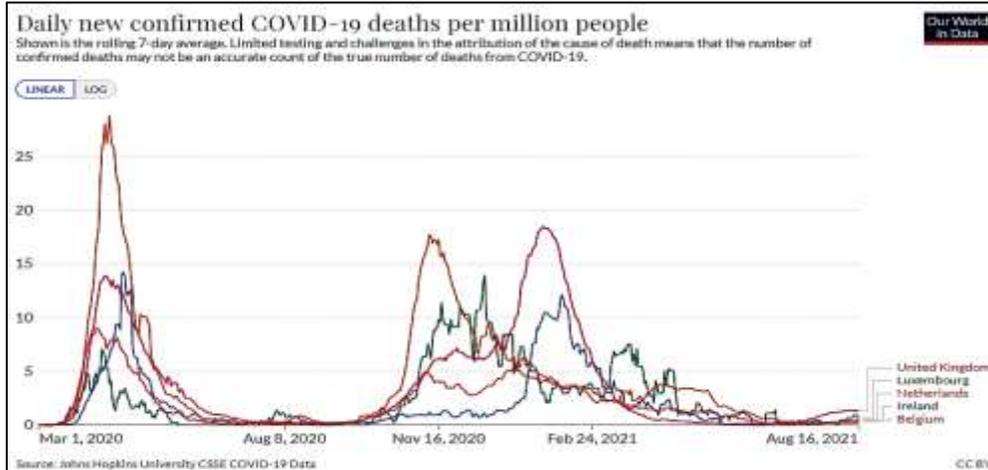


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

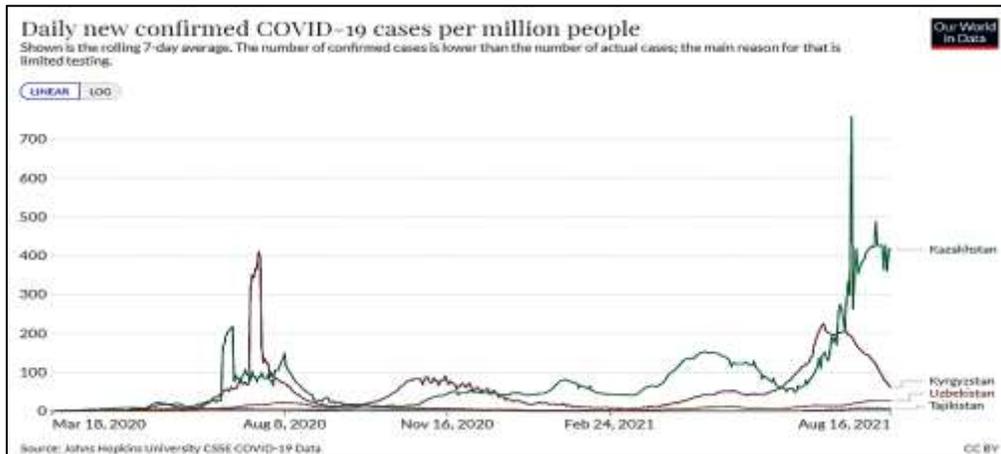
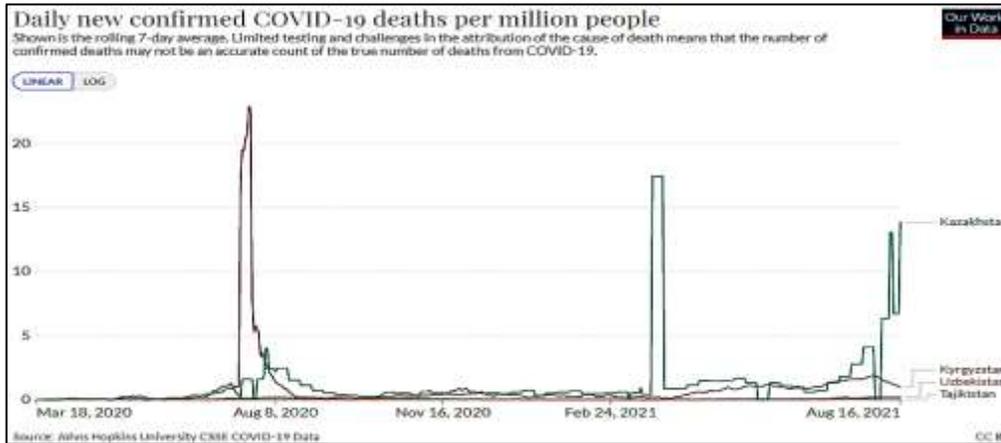


Figure 12:



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3. WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard [Internet]. [cited 2021 Aug 17]. Available from: <https://covid19.who.int>
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5. Ritchie H, Ortiz-Ospina E, Beltekian D, Mathieu E, Hasell J, Macdonald B, et al. Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). Our World in Data [Internet]. 2020 Mar 5 [cited 2021 Aug 17]; Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths>
6. Ritchie H, Ortiz-Ospina E, Beltekian D, Mathieu E, Hasell J, Macdonald B, et al. Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). Our World in Data [Internet]. 2020 Mar 5 [cited 2021 Aug 17]; Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>