

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of October 18th 2021

Authors: Pallavi Chatarajupalli^{1,2}, Rok Hrzic^{2,3}, Ralf Reintjes^{1,4}, Katarzyna Czabanowska^{3,4}, John Middleton^{4,5,*}

¹ HAW Hamburg University, Germany

² ASPHER Young Professional

³ Maastricht University, the Netherlands

⁴ ASPHER COVID-19 Task Force

⁵ ASPHER President

* Corresponding Author: john.middleton@aspher.org

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?

Europe is the only region among WHO's six regions which is reporting an increasing number of COVID-19 cases since three successive weeks whilst other regions are showing a declining trend ([link](#)). Globally, the Delta variant is the dominant variant with its high level of transmission ([link](#)). A high level of protection against morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19 and its variants can be attained by completing the vaccination schedule as recommended ([link](#)). ECDC emphasizes that the vaccination program in the EU/EEA region should focus on ensuring that all eligible populations are vaccinated ([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 new variants of the COVID-19 virus ([link](#)).

ASPHER is concerned about the situation in Latvia and Russia which have reported a high incidence in recent weeks. The situation has led to the declaration of a state of emergency and lockdown to contain infection transmission ([link](#)) ([link](#)). The new Delta variant mutant has been reported in the UK and is attributed to 6% of new cases according to the latest report on SARS-CoV-2 variants. The features of this new variant are under investigation at the national level ([link](#)). In Hungary, the existing testing capacity has been expanded in response to a sharp rise in the Delta variant mutant ([link](#)). ASPHER recognizes the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving high levels of vaccination uptake. Also, countries should closely monitor new infection rates among both vaccinated and unvaccinated to understand the efficacy of the vaccine.

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, non-pharmaceutical interventions which complement vaccination must be followed.

ASPHER remains concerned that countries are unprepared and complacent about the responses that will be needed by health services and public health authorities this autumn. Read our statement [here](#).

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.

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 more than 4.5 million lives to date (4,903,911) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two hundred million (240,940,937). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (1).

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

| WHO Region | Confirmed COVID-19 cases |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Americas | 92,247,781 |
| Europe | 73,675,493 |
| South-East Asia | 43,637,191 |
| Eastern Mediterranean | 16,144,985 |
| Western-Pacific | 9,117,507 |
| Africa | 6,117,216 |

According to the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the number of newly reported cases and deaths in the Europe region has increased by 7% and 4% respectively compared to the previous week (2).

IHME analysis shows that the **level of transmission has been increased in most of the European regions and R value is above 1**. The increase in the current level of infection can be attributed to Delta surges. Reopening of schools, workplaces and seasonality may have contributed to this rising trend. 55% of the population in the European region have attained immunity to the Delta variant which is expected to increase by nearly 10% by early January. The overall vaccine acceptancy level is at 71.6% ranging from 34% in Moldova to 93% in Portugal. Analysis based on the IHME forecasts indicates that the combined effect of flu and COVID-19 on the hospitals could be relative (3).

The following table shows a moving 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 18/10/2021 (table 2) (4) (5) (6).

Table2:

| WHO Europe region | Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/million people | Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/million people | Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Latvia | 1116.50 | 6.96 | 50.36% |
| Georgia | 1049.23 | 8.65 | 22.8%* |
| Serbia | 918.74 | 7.63 | 42.46%* |
| Lithuania | 893.83 | 11.05 | 61.17% |
| Estonia | 861.33 | 3.13 | 55.02% |
| Romania | 758.90 | 18.02 | 29.74% |
| United Kingdom | 639.49 | 1.83 | 66.56% |
| Montenegro | 571.80 | 10.01 | 36.84% |
| Armenia | 492.18 | 11.07 | 5.73% |
| Slovenia | 471.24 | 1.65 | 51.31% |
| Bulgaria | 440.48 | 13.98 | 20.13% |
| Moldova | 380.46 | 7.99 | 20.68% |
| Croatia | 357.17 | 4.51 | 43.05% |
| Turkey | 350.08 | 2.47 | 55.80% |
| Ireland | 349.08 | 0.74 | 55.80% |
| Ukraine | 330.10 | 7.38 | 15.12% |
| Slovakia | 313.07 | 3.11 | 41.82% |
| Belgium | 275.97 | 1.04 | 73.14% |
| Greece | 246.24 | 3.32 | 60.84% |
| Austria | 239.19 | 1.17 | 61.24% |
| Israel | 233.58 | 1.58 | 64.89% |
| Belarus | 215.25 | 1.71 | 18.53%* |
| Russia | 211.87 | 6.66 | 32.43% |
| Netherlands | 208.06 | 0.41 | 68.31%* |
| Luxembourg | 176.88 | 0.45 | N/A |
| Bosnia And Herzegovina | 168.75 | 10.33 | N/A |
| Cyprus | 159.12 | 0.80 | 62.97%* |
| Iceland | 154.36 | 0.00 | 80.92%* |
| North Macedonia | 150.56 | 7.89 | 36.51% |
| Albania | 150.42 | 2.59 | 29.94% |
| Czech Republic | 128.80 | 0.67 | 56.24% |
| Denmark | 123.34 | 0.42 | 75.66% |
| Germany | 111.08 | 0.70 | 65.23% |
| Andorra | 110.81 | 0.00 | N/A |
| Switzerland | 102.82 | 0.47 | 61.25%* |
| Hungary | 102.80 | 1.47 | 59.20% |
| Finland | 100.67 | 0.52 | 67.07% |
| Kazakhstan | 98.82 | 1.80 | 37.53% |
| Monaco | 97.60 | 0.00 | N/A |
| Norway | 82.65 | 0.34 | 67.86% |
| France | 70.85 | 0.56 | 67.29% |
| Poland | 67.36 | 0.93 | 52.20% |
| Portugal | 62.63 | 0.73 | 86.82% |
| Sweden | 57.80 | 0.72 | 66.84%* |
| Italy | 41.79 | 0.59 | 70.15% |
| Spain | 34.93 | 0.62 | 79.34% |
| Malta | 29.43 | 0.00 | 82.67% |
| San Marino | 21.00 | 0.00 | 65.33%* |
| Azerbaijan | 14.99 | 1.41 | 41.38% |
| Kyrgyzstan | 12.39 | 0.34 | 10.48% |
| Kosovo | 11.35 | 0.08 | 37.53%* |
| Uzbekistan | 11.26 | 0.08 | 10.37% |
| Tajikistan | 0.00 | 0.00 | 20.64%* |

*data available at the latest in October, not corresponding to 18/10/2020

Latvia: Between October 18 and 19, Latvia recorded 1853 new cases and 23 new deaths (7). By October 18, half of the population (50.5%) in Latvia has been fully vaccinated (8). **Lockdown will enter into force from October 21 and lasts until November 15 with night curfew (8 pm to 5 am).** To secure beds in hospitals, the authorities have stopped most scheduled operations (9). **Restrictions during the entire lockdown period will be the same for both vaccinated and unvaccinated.** Grade 1 to 3 pupils will return to school (after the current holiday period) from November 1. Whereas, remote teaching will be in place for grades 4 to 12 until mid-November (10). **The government is planning to set up module-type buildings, sanatoriums and unused hospital buildings to provide services to COVID-19 patients.** It is also planned to expand the workforce by involving volunteers in the care of COVID-19 patients (11).

Ireland: Between October 18 and 19, 2399 new coronavirus cases were confirmed up from 1576 on the previous day (12). A total of 464 patients are in the hospital receiving treatment for COVID-19, 74 are in the ICU (13). **From October 22, Ireland is set to reopen its hospitality sector, entertainment and night catering under strict measures. A COVID-19 pass is mandatory for all indoor events.** The capacity restriction has been lifted for all indoor entertainment events, religious services, weddings and funerals. However, face mask rules will be in place until February 2022 as advised by the National Public Health Emergency Team (14) (15).

Hungary: The fourth wave of the epidemic is on pace in Hungary (16). By October 18, the rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases is at 102.80/mill people which is almost double the 7-day average in early October (17). The number of new cases is attributed to the new delta variant mutant. By October 19, the number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 is 999. Of them, 144 patients are on ventilator support (18). **Authorities have notified that the number of GP referrals with seasonal respiratory symptoms is increasing and hence planned to enhance the testing capacity.** To differentiate those patients with COVID-19 from a chest cold and seasonal flu, **GP's will be provided nearly 800,000 antigen testing kits.** However, a PCR test can also be performed (by ambulances and designated health services) if required (19) (16).

Romania: Between 19 and 20 October, Romania recorded 17,158 new COVID-19 cases and 423 deaths, which is a new record since the pandemic started (20) (21) As of 18 October, 29.7% of the population has been fully vaccinated (21) The **government recently considered designating the entire metropolitan area of Bucharest a quarantine zone but rejected the measure in favor of intensifying existing efforts** (22). Starting 11 October, the third vaccine dose is recommended for severely immunocompromised persons over 12 years of age as determined by the attending physician, specialist, or family physician (23).

Montenegro: Between 18 and 19 October, Montenegro recorded 560 new COVID-19 cases and 6 deaths, a similar number compared to the previous week (24). As of 18 October, 37.1% of the population has been fully vaccinated (25). On 3 October, the National Expert Advisory Body on Immunizations proposed administration of a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to the entire adult population (26). No changes to policy have been reported on official websites since last week's report as the digital COVID certificate remains a requirement to enter all shopping and business centres (27).

Georgia: Between 19 and 20 October, Georgia recorded 5,219 new COVID-19 cases and 42 deaths, an increase since last week and on track to exceed the all-time high of new cases recorded mid-August this year (28) (29). As of 19 October, 22.8% of the population has been fully vaccinated (29). No changes to containment measures have been announced via official websites since last week's report and government officials have spoken out against mandatory vaccination (30) (31). **A third vaccine dose is recommended for those aged over 50 and those aged 16 and above in a high-risk profession or with a chronic condition, (32) as well as for children with chronic diseases aged 12-15 (33).**

Slovenia: Between 18 and 19 October, Slovenia recorded 2,145 new COVID-19 cases and 9 deaths, with the 7-day average in new cases showing a rebound in infections over the past week while the death count continues to decline (34) (35). As of 19 October, 51.4% of the population has been fully vaccinated (35). No changes to containment measures have been announced via official websites since last week's report as all employees as well as all users of services or activities must show proof of either recovery, vaccination, or a negative test (36). **A third dose of the vaccine is recommended for elderly home residents, persons aged over 70, and persons with chronic illnesses;** however, the booster shot is made available to all who request it (37).

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 18th October 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

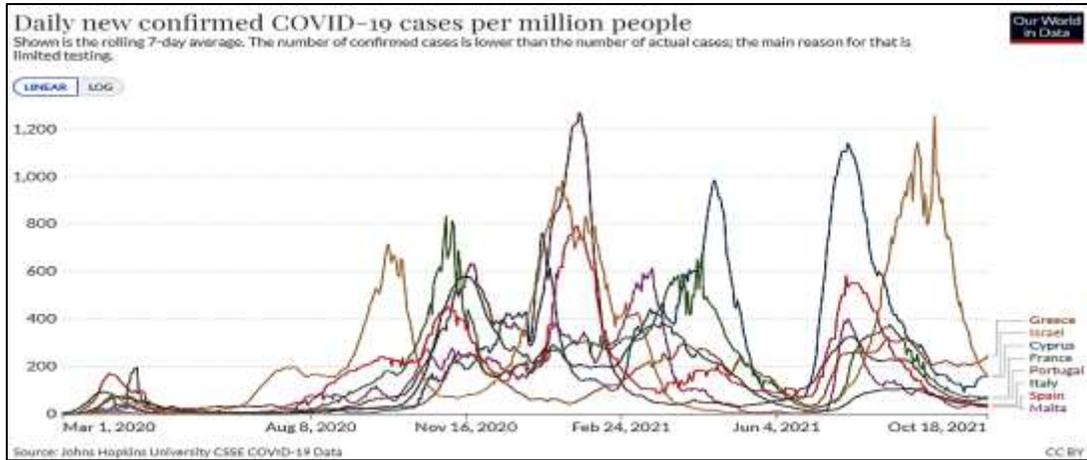
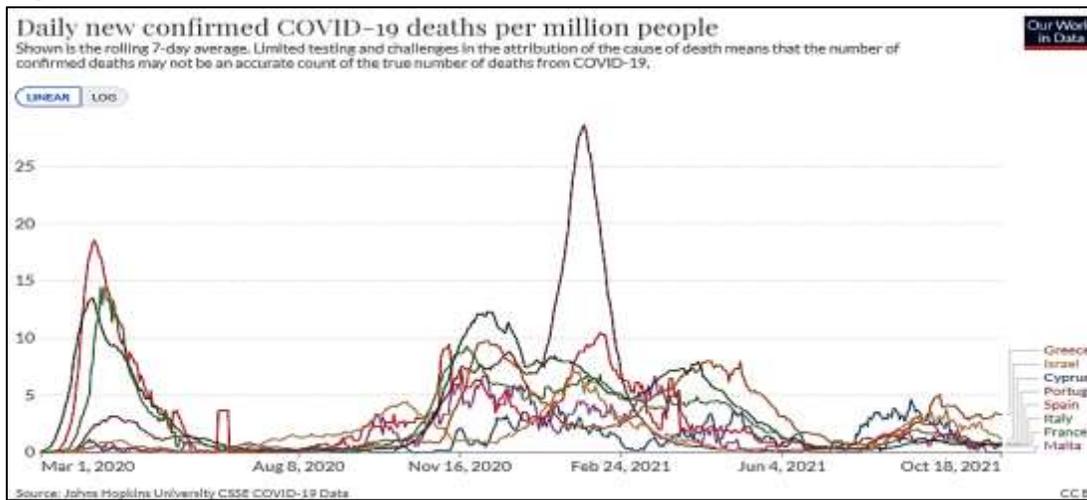


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

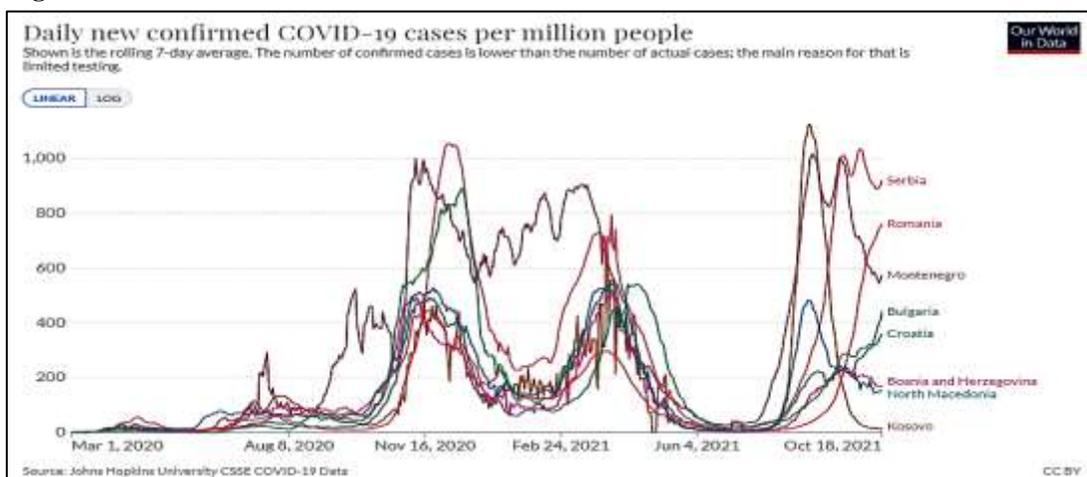
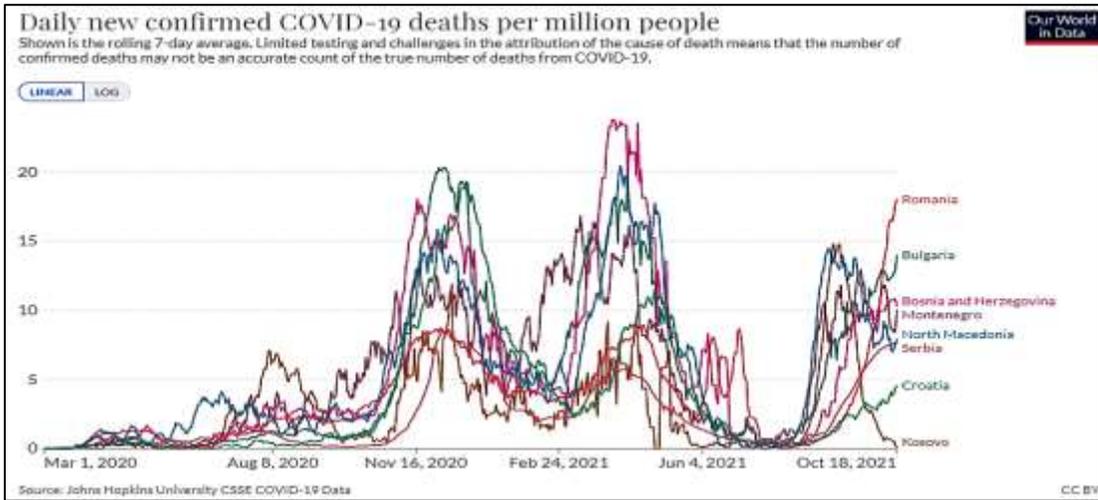


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

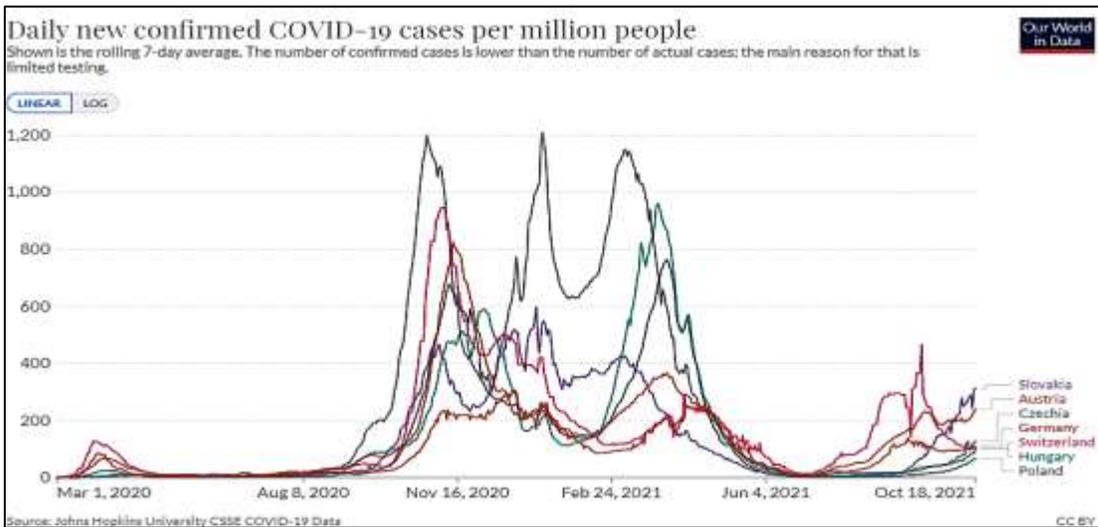
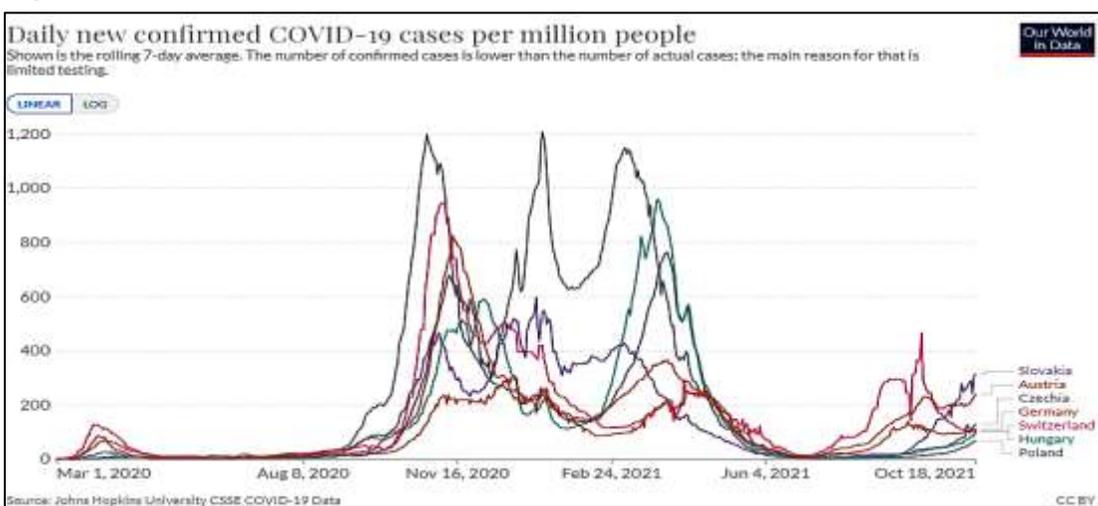


Figure 6:



**Baltics and Nordic Countries:
Figure 7:**

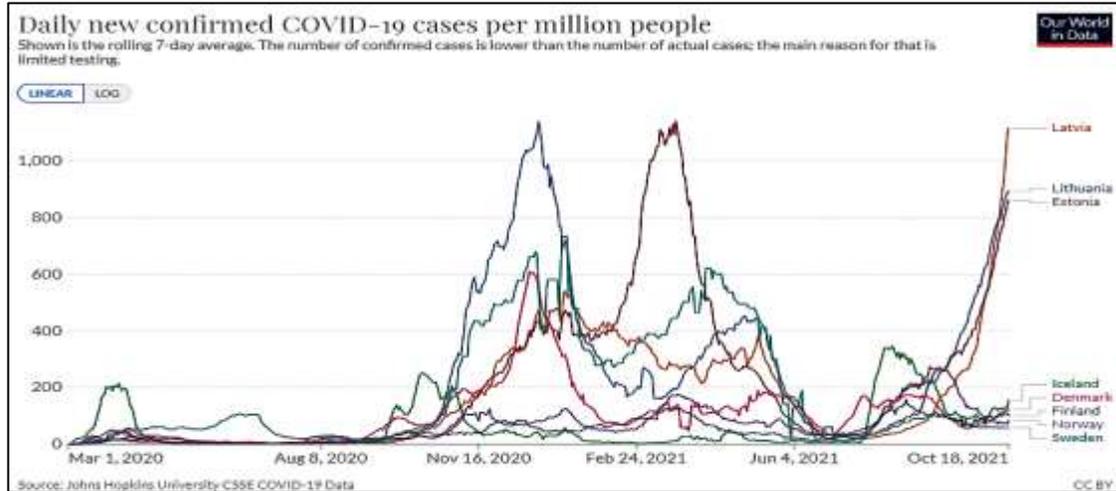
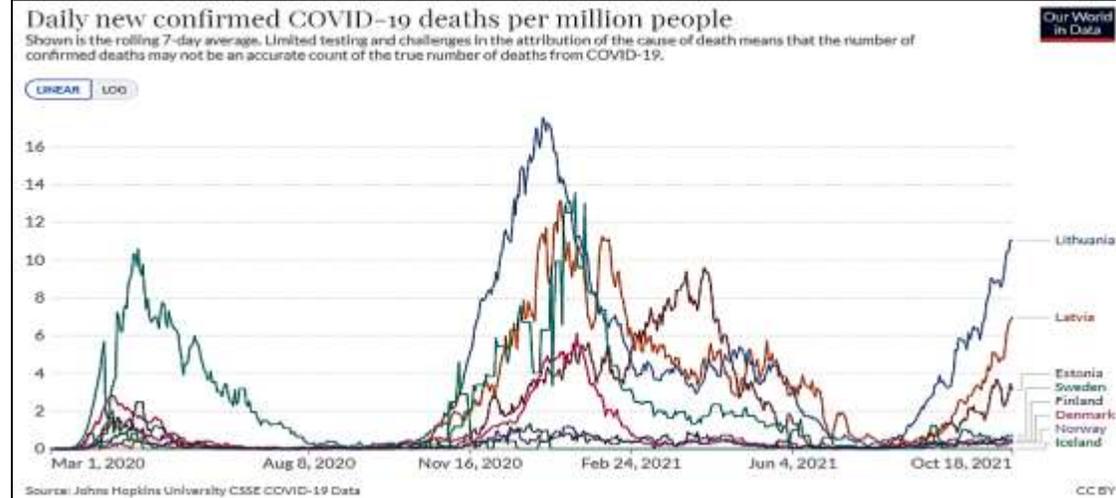


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

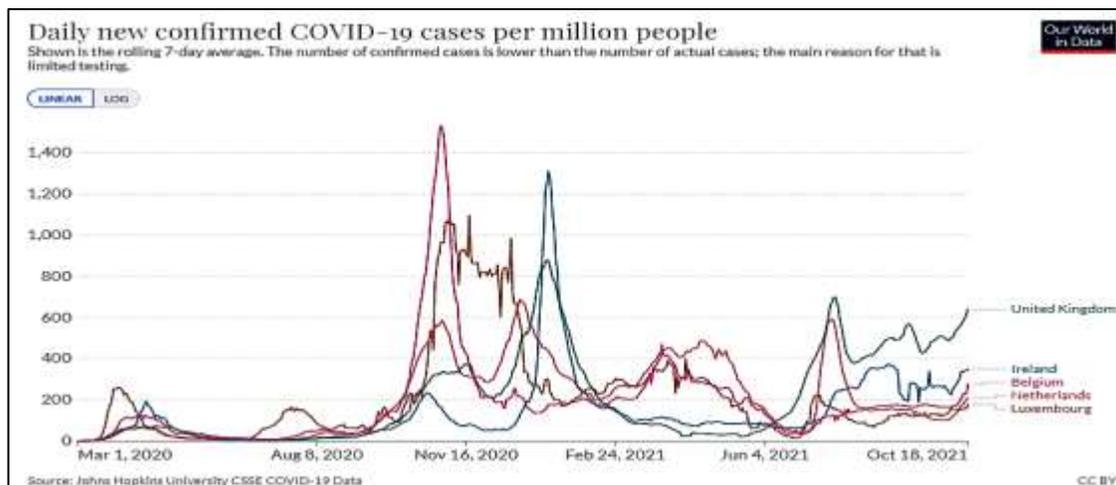
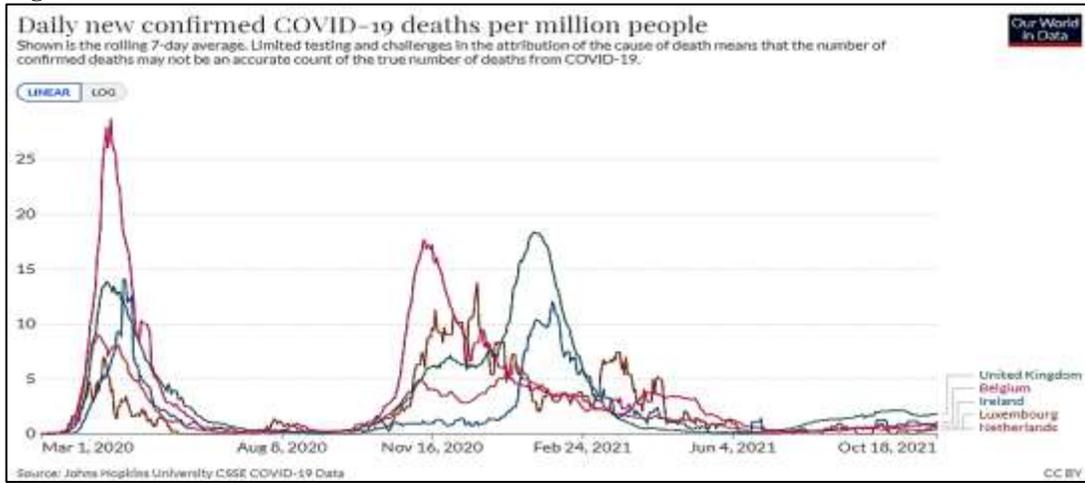


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

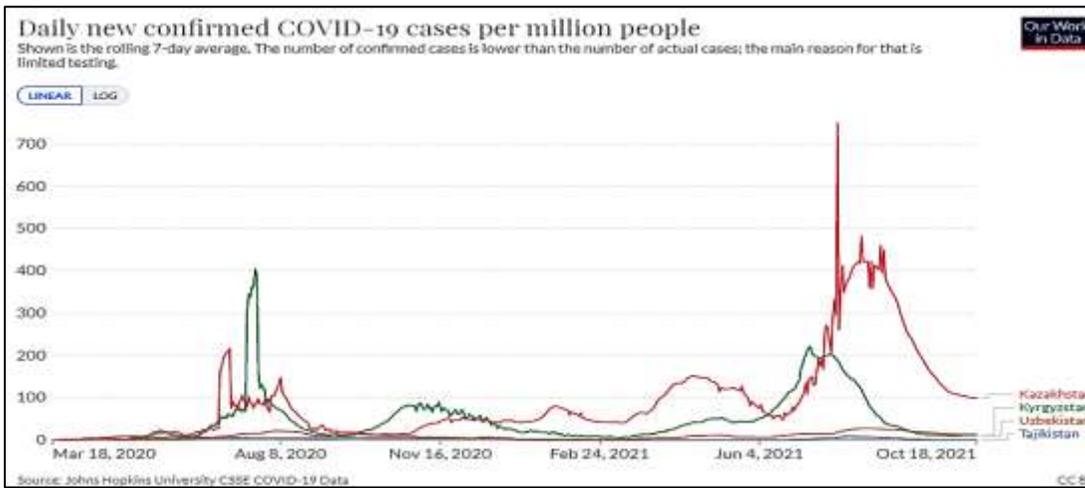
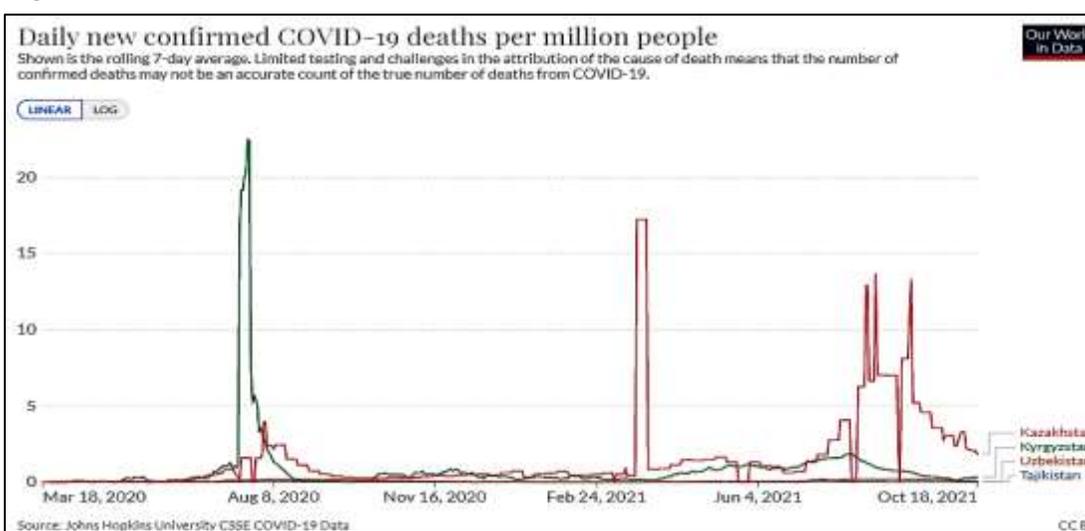


Figure 12:



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