

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?

Europe is one of WHO's six regions that is reporting an increasing number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in five successive weeks ([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](#)) and following behavioural measures simultaneously. Those European countries which have low vaccination rates and those that eased the restriction measures are reporting high infection rates now.

The situation has led to the declaration of a state of emergency and lockdown to contain the infection transmission in Latvia ([link](#)) ([link](#)) and Austria ([link](#)), the reimposition of outdoor mask mandates in Armenia and expansion of mandatory COVID-19 certificate to gain access to events in Ireland, limiting outdoor gathering capacity in Czechia. While few countries choose to tighten the existing restrictions instead of lockdown by implementing the 2G rule, new testing policies at workplaces, educational institutions and mask mandates.

ASPHER recognizes the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving a high level of vaccine uptake. Vaccine hesitancy is a major pitfall stemming the improvement in the vaccination rate particularly in Eastern parts of Europe. Mistrust in vaccines and false information are the driving factors for the population's low vaccine uptake. It is vital to address distrust to better handle the low vaccination rate. Decision regarding the idea of implementing mandatory vaccine passports and validation of these certificates should be made more clearer for smooth operation of the process.

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](#).

Europe is experiencing a new wave of coronavirus pandemic at the moment which prompted the governments to return to a state of emergency, lock down, tightening of restrictions, mask mandates, entry with the obligation of COVID-19 certificate, mandatory vaccination. Health care systems are overwhelmed with increasing hospital and ICU admissions compelling them to postpone treatments which do not require immediate intervention. To fight the surge in new infections, ease the burden on hospitals, countries are encouraging their unvaccinated population to receive their jab through vaccination campaigns alongside continuing rolling out third vaccine dose.

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 5million lives to date (5,104,899) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two hundred million (253,640,693). 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	95,222,009
Europe	89,512,948
South-East Asia	44,307,603
Eastern Mediterranean	16,592,039
Western-Pacific	9,817,045
Africa	6,188,285

According to the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the number of newly reported cases and deaths in the Europe region has increased by 8% and 5% respectively compared to the previous week (2).

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 15/11/2021 (table 2) (3) (4) (5).

Table2:

WHO Europe region	7-day rolling average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/million people	7-day rolling average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/million people	Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Georgia	1107.92	19.67	24.35%
Slovenia	1560.16	7.56	54.47%
Croatia	1306.12	13.65	45.56%*
Austria	1255.52	3.68	63.60%
Slovakia	1093.39	8.61	42.62%
Czech Republic	1024.58	6.50	57.80%
Belgium	904.42	2.49	74.15%
Netherlands	846.73	1.40	N/A
Lithuania	830.63	11.10	65.13%
Montenegro	776.55	12.05	39.67%
Hungary	753.95	11.46	59.97%
Ireland	742.57	2.12	75.62%
Estonia	724.86	7.87	58.55%
Greece	641.71	6.57	62.41%
Serbia	567.08	8.81	44.42%
United Kingdom	565.39	2.29	67.51%
Denmark	555.20	0.89	76.22%
Ukraine	487.14	15.75	20.49%
Iceland	486.79	0.00	81.41%*
Germany	468.28	2.14	67.01%
Bulgaria	431.31	23.76	23.69%
Switzerland	404.16	1.06	64.62%
Armenia	389.76	17.09	N/A
Poland	387.37	4.23	53.34%*
Andorra	373.05	0.00	N/A
Luxembourg	324.95	1.80	N/A
Turkey	289.80	2.41	58.45%
Norway	285.47	0.78	69.10%
Cyprus	276.94	1.75	64.22%*
Russia	260.74	8.21	35.21%
Romania	248.73	16.94	36.06%
Moldova	236.90	14.38	22.48%
San Marino	235.22	0.00	N/A
Bosnia And Herzegovina	229.21	10.29	N/A
North Macedonia	220.60	6.52	37.68%*
Belarus	203.59	1.56	24.34%*
Albania	194.62	1.54	32.17%*
Azerbaijan	186.32	2.49	43.83%
Monaco	169.90	0.00	N/A
France	151.24	0.54	68.74%
Finland	149.16	0.77	71.52%
Portugal	145.23	0.79	87.56%*
Italy	124.63	0.94	72.62%
Malta	89.68	0.00	83.48%
Spain	76.09	0.48	80.18%
Sweden	75.60	0.35	68.55%
Kazakhstan	65.88	1.51	41.16%
Latvia	65.57	19.13	59.99%
Israel	46.36	0.29	61.96%
Kyrgyzstan	11.70	0.39	12.44%
Uzbekistan	7.35	0.08	N/A
Kosovo	5.77	0.16	42.05%
Tajikistan	0.03	0.00	21.92%*

*data available from 7th November

Netherlands: During the week between November 9 and 16 the number of people who tested positive for COVID-19, new hospitalizations and ICU admissions increased by 44%, 12% and 3% respectively compared to the previous week. The incidence has been increased among all age groups, particularly in the 4 to 12years age group. From early October to the first week of November, the average number of people who tested positive for COVID-19 (per day) among unvaccinated was high at 58/100 thousand people compared to the fully vaccinated (19/100 thousand people) population of the same age group (6). On November 6, the Dutch government has regulated mask mandates and mandatory coronavirus entry pass at more locations. Wearing a face mask is mandatory in all publicly accessible places, at vocational and higher educational institutions. At outdoor dining, cafes, bars, outdoor sporting, and cultural events it is mandatory to show coronavirus pass (7). Further, strict restrictions will enter into force from November 16 (until December 4). In addition, the COVID-19 booster vaccine campaign will be initiated on November 19 for age olds 80 and above, health care workers, care home residents of age group 18 and above (8)

Austria: Currently Austria is reporting the highest ever case numbers since the beginning of the pandemic with over 15,000 cases per day reported on the 16.11.2021 with the 7-day rolling average of a daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases at 972 per 100,000 people (9) (10). However, one has to note that with 11,603,318 tests per 1mill. population, the country is third in terms of testing frequency globally (11). Booster vaccination is now possible for anyone with a second vaccination older than 6 months (in some cases even earlier), while Vienna has also started off-label vaccination of children aged 5-12. The latest ICU care distribution figures between vaccinated and unvaccinated persons show a 1:11 ratio with ICU bed occupancy by COVID-19 patients reaching a critical over 30% in some provinces such as Upper Austria and Salzburg (Prof. J.simon's personal communication). At the latest, the government has announced full lockdown from November 22 and will be continued for the next 20days. Further, mandatory vaccination will enter into force from February 1, 2022 (12) (13).

Hungary: By November 15, the daily number of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people in Hungary is 753.95 which is its second-highest peak in this year (the first peak was at the end of March) (14). To curb this new wave of the epidemic, authorities are conducting Vaccination Action Week from November 22 to 28. Citizens will be offered the first vaccine dose also booster shot at hospital vaccination points and specialist clinics during this week (15). Those who are above 18years old and have completed their full course of vaccination 4months earlier are advised to take a booster jab (16).

Czechia: The number of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases continue to rise in Czechia (17). The government will implement the "Bavarian" model from November 22. According to this model, only vaccinated or recovered individuals are allowed to enter public facilities, cultural events, bars and restaurants. Negative antigen and PCR testing will no longer be considered (18) excluding hospital staff and employees at social facilities (19). To identify asymptomatic positive cases at schools Government has endorsed comprehensive testing for students using antigen test which takes place from November 22 to 29 (20). Number of COVID-19 patients at the hospital is increasing, including the ICUs with the majority of non-vaccinated patients. Anti-vaxxers activities continue, including demonstrations on 17th November 2021, the national holiday. However, increase in interest of some people to be vaccinated is visible such as long waiting lines at the vaccination centres without registration (Pro. A. Petravoka's personal communication).

Slovenia: Between 15 and 16 November, Slovenia recorded 4,257 new COVID-19 cases and 19 deaths, with the 7-day average in new cases remaining as high as the previous week (21) (22) As of 16 November, 54.5% of the population has been fully vaccinated with the daily vaccination rate stagnating at a level comparable to early 2021 (22). The government has activated Civil Protection staff to continue providing health and social care. The minister for health reported that all non-emergency medical interventions are cancelled or being cancelled and has called on persons with any level of healthcare experience to help (23) (24). Third dose of the vaccine is now more broadly recommended including persons aged over 50, persons in regular contact with the public, and all persons with chronic illnesses; however, the booster shot is still made available to all who request it (25).

Croatia: Between 16 and 17 November, Croatia recorded 6,670 new COVID-19 cases and 64 deaths, both similar compared to last week (26) (27). On 16 November, 45.9% of the population has been fully vaccinated with the vaccination rate continuing to increase (28). The government has started to require

biweekly testing or the possession of a recovered/vaccinated certificate for most public sector employees to enter their workplace starting 15 November (29). The third vaccine dose is recommended to immunocompromised persons and their households, healthcare workers, all persons over 65, and residents and employees of homes for the elderly (30).

Belgium: Belgium recorded an increase in the 7-day average in new cases and deaths, now reaching 10,283 daily cases and 25.6 deaths. As of 16 November, 75% of the population has been fully vaccinated and new vaccination doses administered currently are booster doses (31). **Since 29 October, uniform rules are in place throughout the country and include a broad mask mandate, a COVID certificate (Covid Safe Ticket) requirement for large public gatherings, and remote working recommendation (32). Third vaccine dose is recommended for all persons over 65, immunocompromised persons 12 or older, and those in residential care (33) (34).**

Slovakia: **Between 16 and 17 November, Slovakia recorded 8,342 new COVID-19 cases and 43 deaths, both of which have been increasing continuously since September 2021 (35) (36).** As of 16 November, 42.6% of the population has been vaccinated with the rate of vaccination lowest since the start of 2021 (37). The government measures in place remain unchanged since May 2021. The government will meet on 18 November to discuss new measures, including broad restrictions for the unvaccinated population (38) (39) (40).

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom continues to run with very high levels of new infections averaging 40000 cases per day with 8000 people in hospital. This high plateau of cases has been seen since July 2021, when all social restrictions were removed in England. COVID rates have started to rise again 2 weeks after the end of half-term school holidays. There is marked [criticism from health organisations](#) on the failure to move to ‘plan B’ of the winter plan – which would introduce COVID passes, reintroduce the face mask mandate and encourage more home working. The complex nuances of different UK rules can be found [here](#). At a time when other European countries are acting decisively to control a new wave, the inaction from the Westminster government seems inexplicable.

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 15th November 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

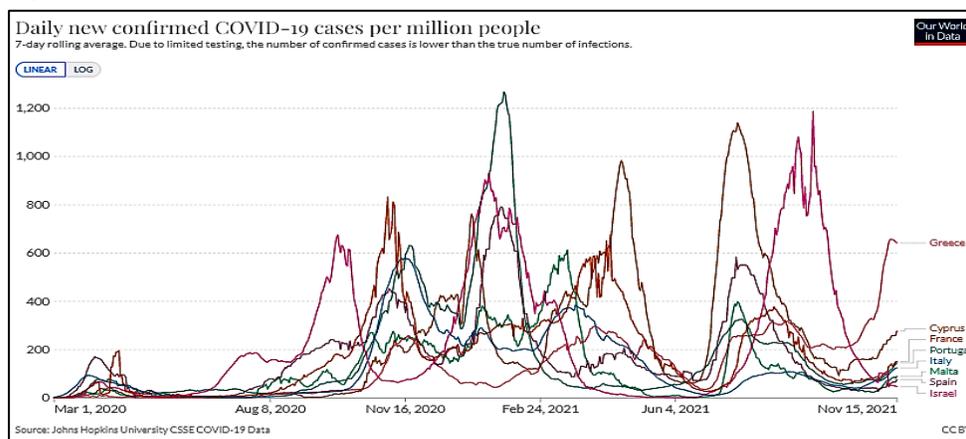
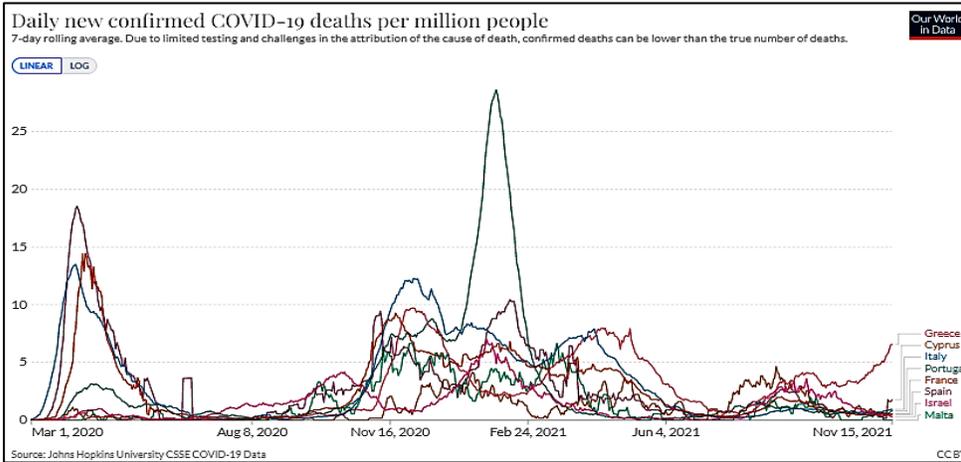


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

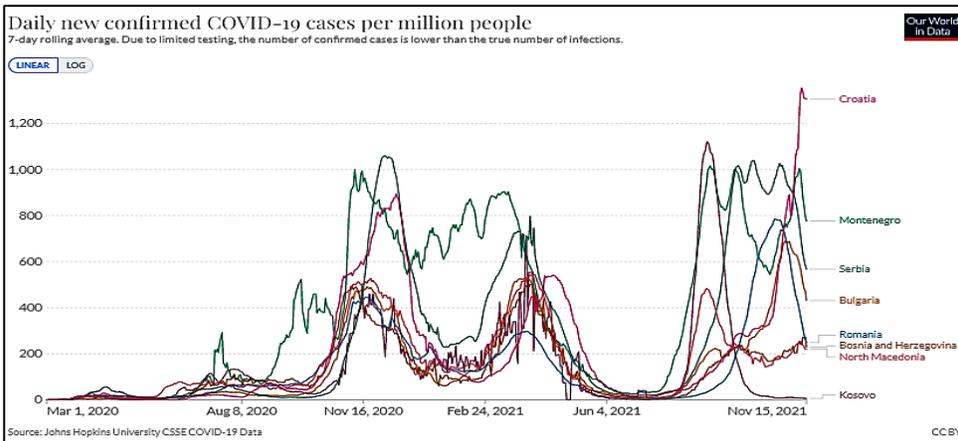
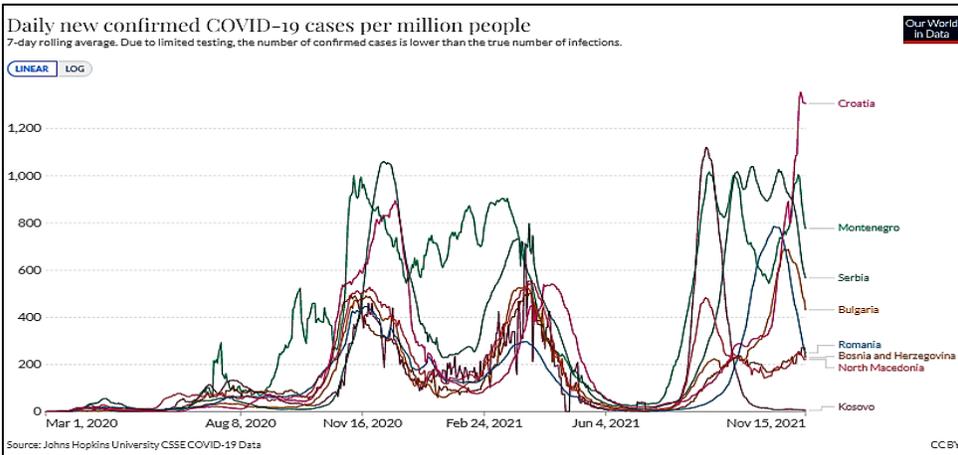


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

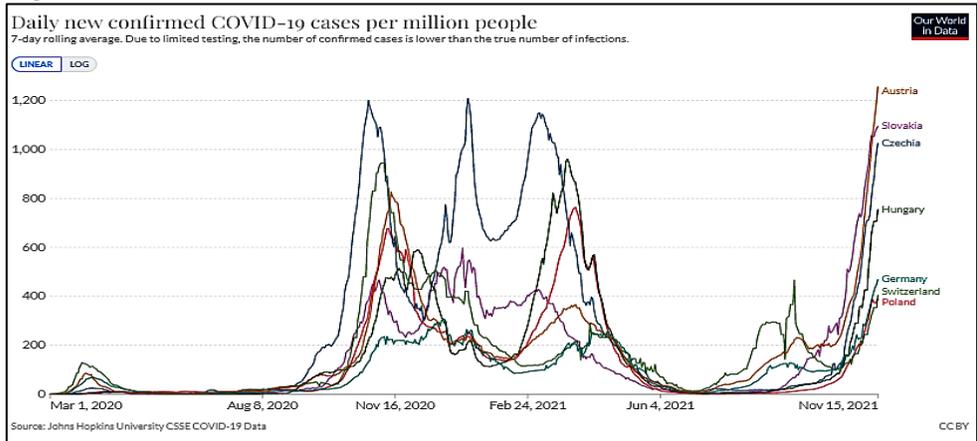
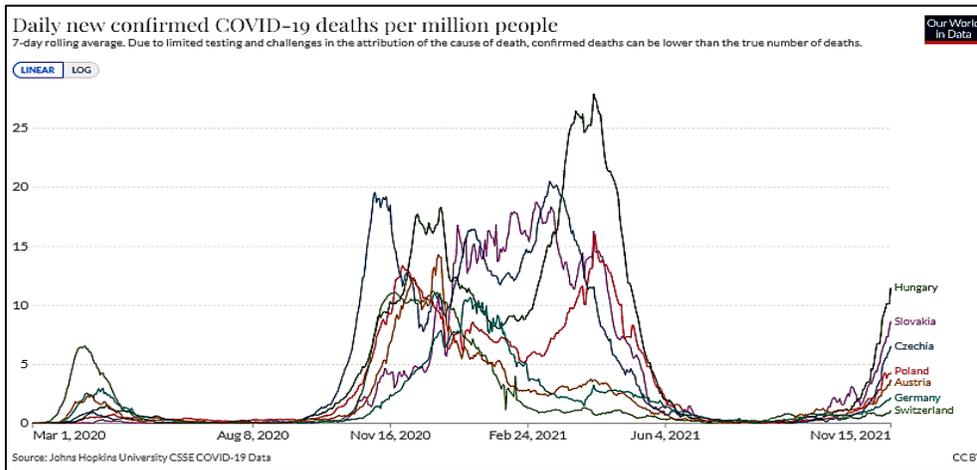


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

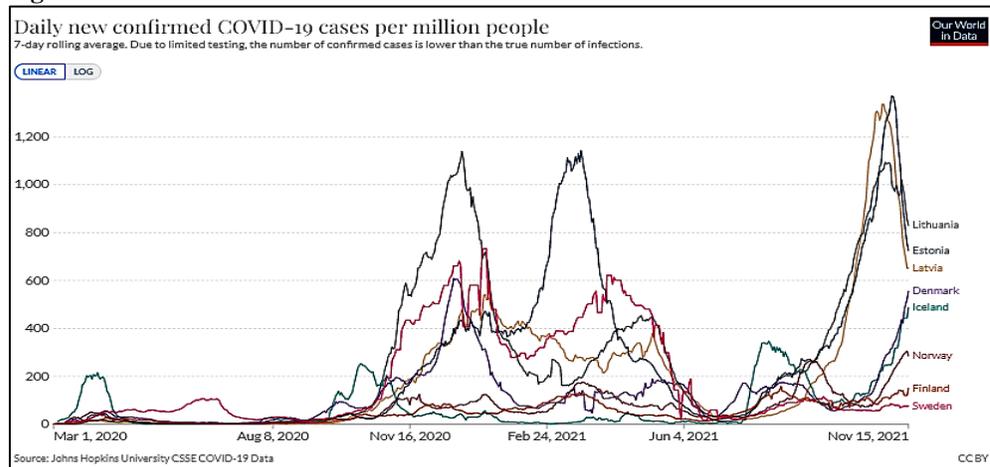
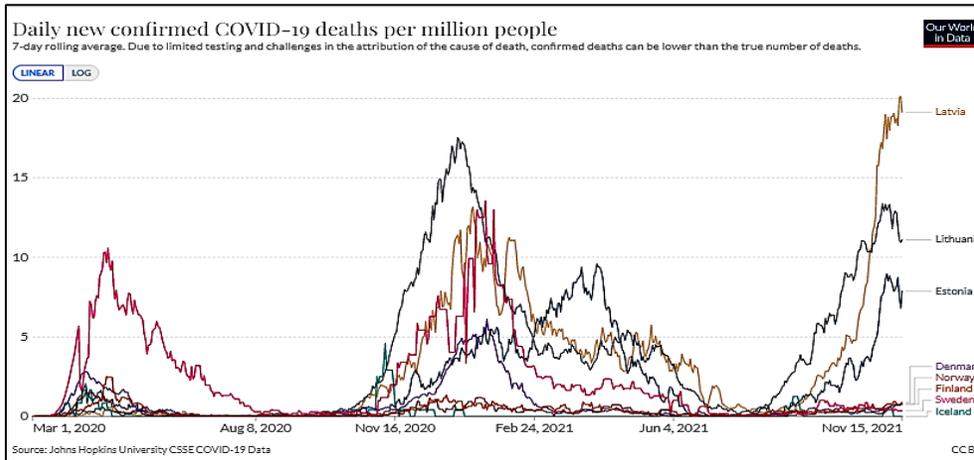


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

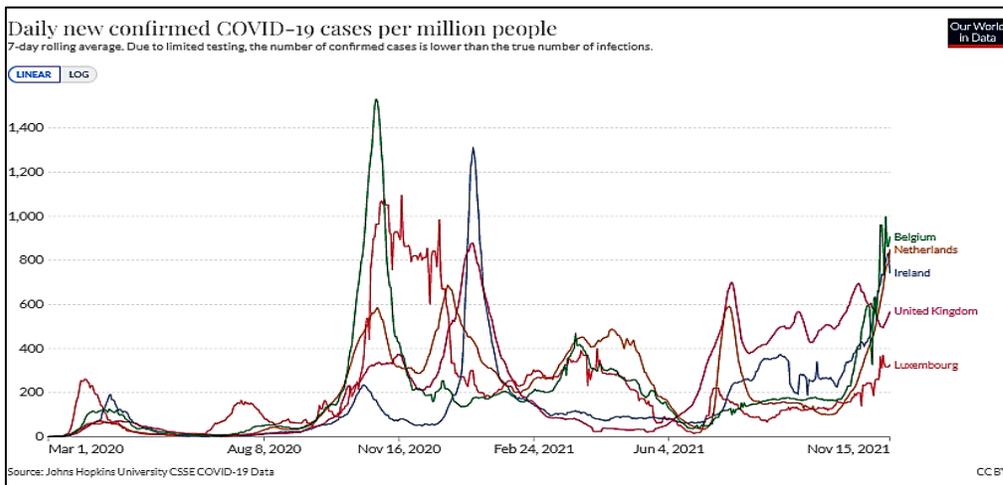
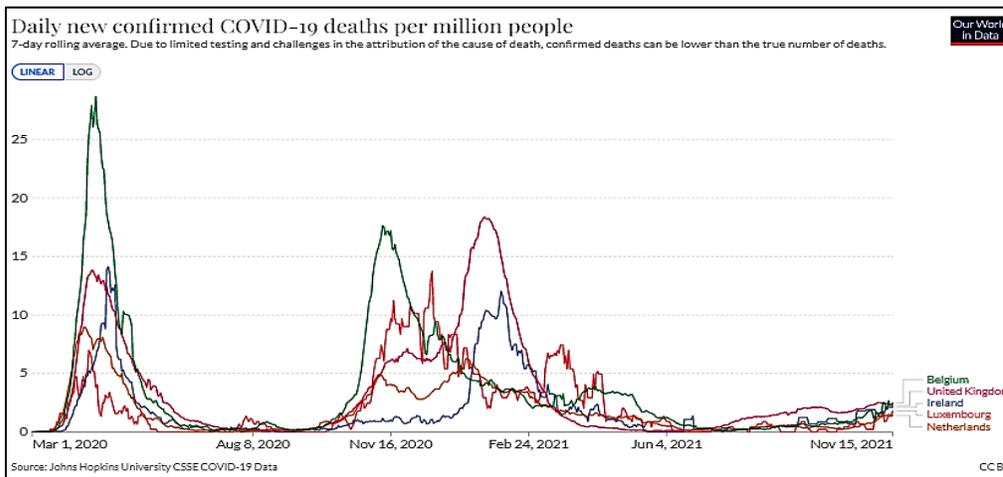


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

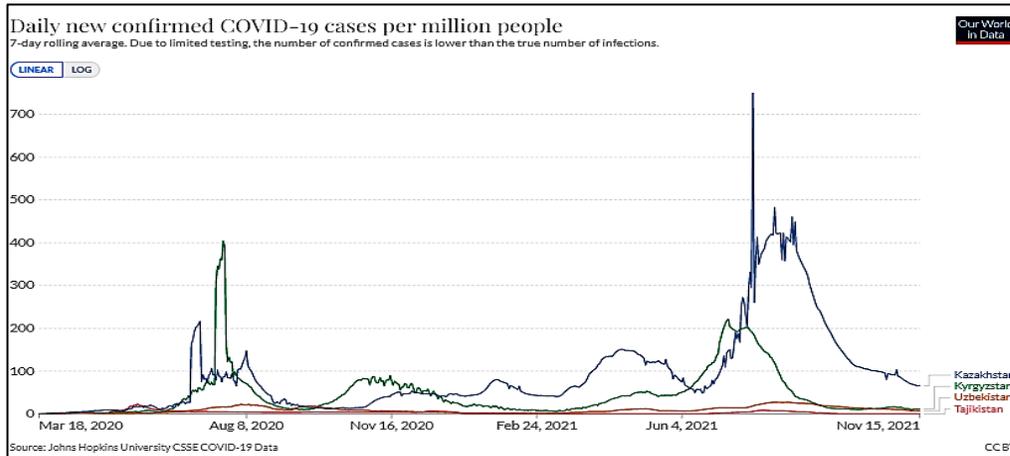
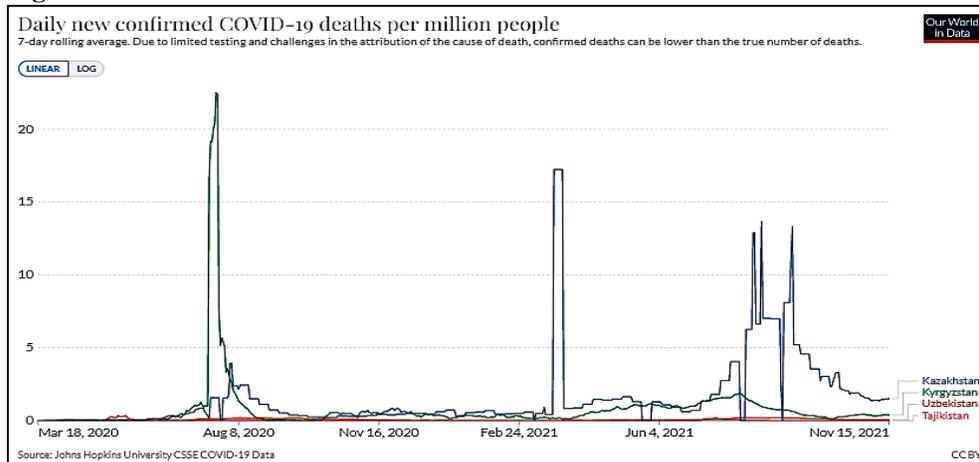


Figure 12:



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