

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of November 22nd, 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?

Europe is one of WHO's six regions that are 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 social behaviour measures simultaneously. Those European countries which have low vaccination rates and those that eased the restriction measures are reporting high infection rates now. **As we write, a new variant of concern, the [B.1.1.529 variant](#) is emerging in Southern Africa, which will need to be watched very closely and appropriate control measures implemented rapidly as more is learned.**

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; expansion of mandatory COVID-19 certificate to gain access to events in Ireland; and limiting outdoor gathering capacity in Czechia. While few countries choose to tighten the existing restrictions instead of lockdown by implementing the 2G rule (vaccinated or recovered) ([link](#)), 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 proving a major barrier to improving vaccination rates 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. The decision to implement mandatory vaccine passports and validation of these certificates has been a factor in increasing vaccination rates in several European countries where hesitancy has been a problem.

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 winter. Read our statement [here](#).

Europe is experiencing a severe upturn of the coronavirus pandemic at the moment which has prompted the governments to return to measures including a state of emergency, lockdown, 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 that 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 doses.

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 (5,166,192) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is now above two hundred million (258,164,425). 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	96,253,896
Europe	84,498,420
South-East Asia	44,458,509
Eastern Mediterranean	16,698,128
Western-Pacific	10,048,864
Africa	6,205,844

According to the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the number of newly reported cases and deaths in the Europe region has increased by 11% and 3% 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 22/11/2021 (table 2) (3) (4) (5).

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 deaths/million people	Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Slovakia	1851.38	8.40	42.79%
Czech Republic	1625.03	10.16	58.45%
Austria	1562.02	4.68	64.60%
Slovenia	1520.10	8.73	54.80%
Belgium	1364.25	3.27	74.47%
Netherlands	1258.66	2.06	73.74%*
Croatia	1113.69	15.4	46.56%
Ireland	1036.29	1.23	75.89%
Georgia	1011.76	17.80	24.63%*
Hungary	961.65	14.84	60.22%
Andorra	723.94	0.00	N/A
Denmark	668.47	1.13	76.40%
Greece	652.70	8.09	62.89%
Lithuania	650.27	10.78	65.63%
United Kingdom	614.99	2.16	67.72%
Germany	608.50	2.47	67.43%
Switzerland	607.46	0.98	65.03%
Montenegro	591.40	8.42	40.15%
San Marino	571.26	4.20	N/A
Estonia	558.09	6.04	58.97%
Poland	543.28	7.37	53.66%
Cyprus	463.49	0.48	64.67%*
Iceland	440.60	0.00	81.56%*
Serbia	440.28	8.00	44.96%
Latvia	436.39	15.46	61.63%
Luxembourg	427.35	0.68	N/A
Norway	418.01	1.33	69.47%
Ukraine	395.76	15.34	23.11%
Bulgaria	370.37	19.72	24.69%
Monaco	292.80	0.00	N/A
Turkey	276.15	2.50	58.90%
France	274.26	0.73	69.16%
Russia	244.08	8.35	36.20%*
Armenia	240.94	12.18	10.86%*
Portugal	214.91	1.04	87.78%*
Bosnia And Herzegovina	208.15	10.24	N/A
North Macedonia	200.71	7.68	37.93%
Belarus	191.35	1.57	25.69%*
Finland	184.20	0.72	71.98%
Moldova	180.31	11.36	22.83%
Azerbaijan	179.90	2.60	44.26%
Albania	166.18	2.59	32.82%*
Italy	158.15	1.01	72.67%
Romania	147.96	13.81	37.73%
Malta	142.83	0.55	83.61%
Spain	120.97	0.35	80.34%
Sweden	88.08	0.39	68.82%*
Kazakhstan	58.84	1.13	41.83%
Israel	51.59	0.52	62.07%
Kyrgyzstan	9.89	0.43	12.97%
Uzbekistan	6.99	0.08	N/A
Kosovo	5.13	0.16	42.40%*
Tajikistan	0.07	0.00	N/A

*data available from 14th November

Netherlands: The number of **new hospital and ICU admissions has been increased by 19% and 26% respectively** between November 16 and 23, in comparison with the previous week (6). The incidence is high among the age olds 0 to 12 (7). The reproduction number is above 1 (8). Strict measures introduced by the government remain unchanged since November 13 which includes mandatory social distancing, the limit on visitors to the home to 4 people (excludes children below 13years), remote working is recommended (unless it is compelling to attend office). These measures will continue until December 4 (9). By November 21, 84.9% of the age group above 18 have been fully vaccinated (10).

Belgium: Belgium is reporting an increasing number of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases which are almost close to the highest peak during the previous year. By November 22, the proportion of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is 74.5% (11). **The Consultative Committee has introduced new measures (instead of lockdown) on November 17 to limit the spread of infection which continues until the end of January 2022.** The new regulation includes following social distancing of 1.5meters, mandatory face masks at all publicly accessible areas for age- 10 and above. Individual communities can decide whether to impose mask mandates for the students below 12years at educational institutions. **Covid Safe Ticket (proof of vaccination, recovered or negative PCR test) is mandatory to access the events along with a face mask. Enforced teleworking unless it is impossible to continue** (12).

Czechia: Between November 22 and 23, 25,864 new infections have been reported in the Czech Republic. The trend of labor COVID-19 is going upward since late October (13). By November 22, 58.5% of the population in Czechia were fully vaccinated (14). **The authorities have endorsed regular weekly testing regulations for staff at social establishments, self-employed, and schools.** Those who are vaccinated or recovered or had a negative RT-PCR test for not less than 7days are excluded from this ruling. A similar rule applies to those employees who do not come in contact with any other at the workplace. **At schools, tests will be conducted every Monday or every first day of the week** (15). Negative PCR tests are no more valid from November 22. However, testing will be available for the age olds 12 to 18 who are not able to receive their vaccine jab due to some medical conditions (16). The government has declared a state of emergency from November 26 till December 25 thereby the Advent and Christmas markets set-up has been prohibited. Also, imposed a ban on alcohol consumption in public (17).

Croatia: Compared to the previous week, Croatia reported fewer new cases but an increase in deaths (18) (19) The daily vaccination rate has been declining over the past week (20) **The government continues to require biweekly testing or the possession of a recovered/vaccinated certificate for most public sector employees to enter their workplace, and maintains a mask mandate in public spaces and limits on public gatherings** (21). 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 (22). Data on the prevalence of third or booster dose vaccinations are not available.

Slovakia: Compared to the previous week, Slovakia continues to report rapid increases in new cases while the number of new deaths remained unchanged (23) (24). The daily vaccination rate remained low (25). **The government introduced a so-called ‘lockdown for the unvaccinated’, likely complemented with a general two-week lockdown and 90-day state of emergency. Mobility of the unvaccinated population is limited to essential shops only and they are required twice weekly to enter their workplaces.** Mass gatherings and access to non-essential shops and other establishments are allowed only for those vaccinated or recovered. In many parts of the country, restaurants have been asked to close for in-house patrons (26) (27) (28) (29).

France: The **number of cases is evolving quickly.** Between November 24 and 25, the country has reported more than 30000 new cases and an incidence rate near 200/100.000 (193, +83% in one week). The health minister announced **no confinement or travel restriction.** However, 3rd booster dose will be now 5 months after the last dose for all eligible persons (no expansion to children up to now). **Reinforcement of the “pass” will be controlled more often. The validity of PCR will be only 24 hours.** Face masks will be compulsory in all indoor activities. Schools will remain open even if one student is tested positive for coronavirus (all classmates should be tested) (Pro. L. Chambaud’s personal communication).

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 22nd November 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

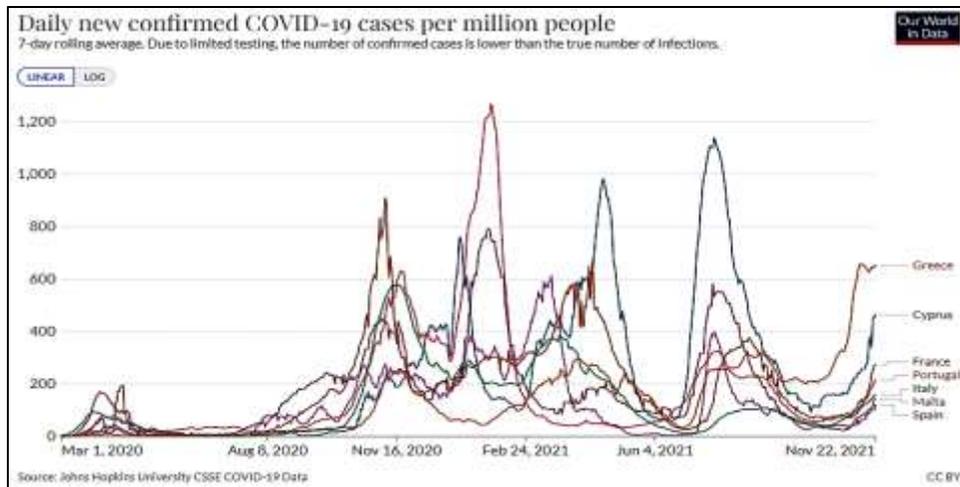
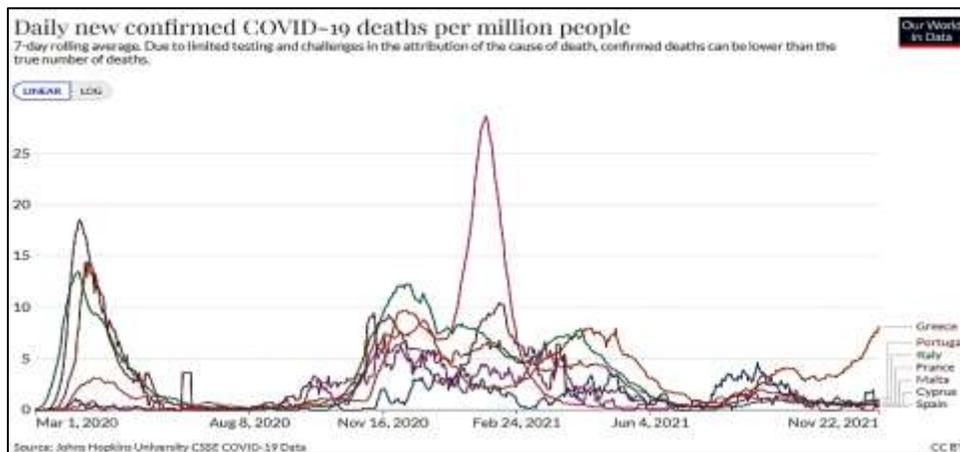


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

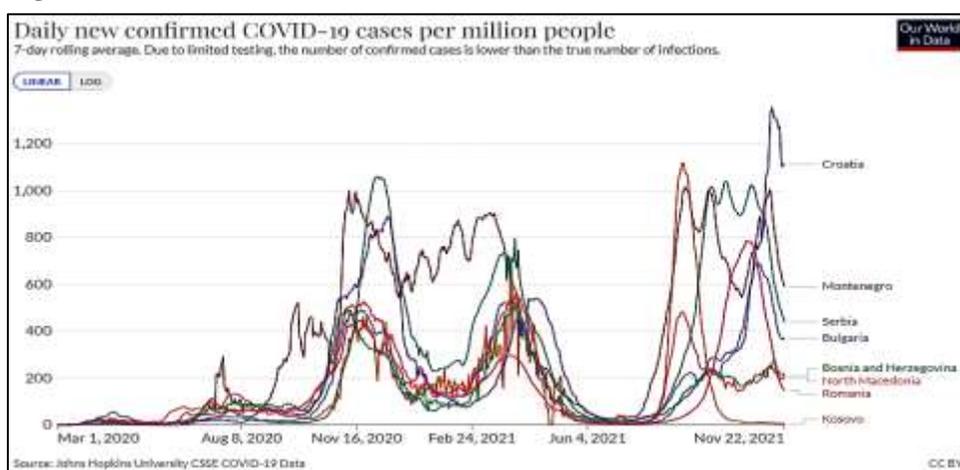
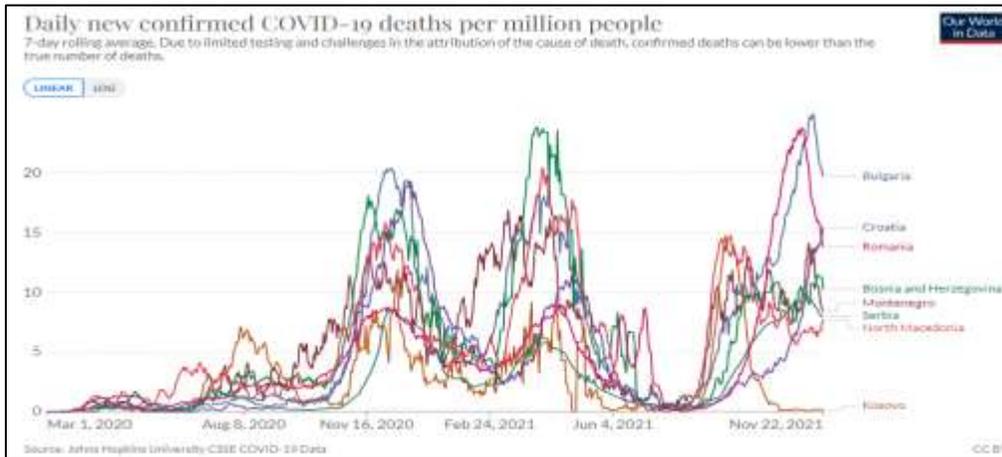


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

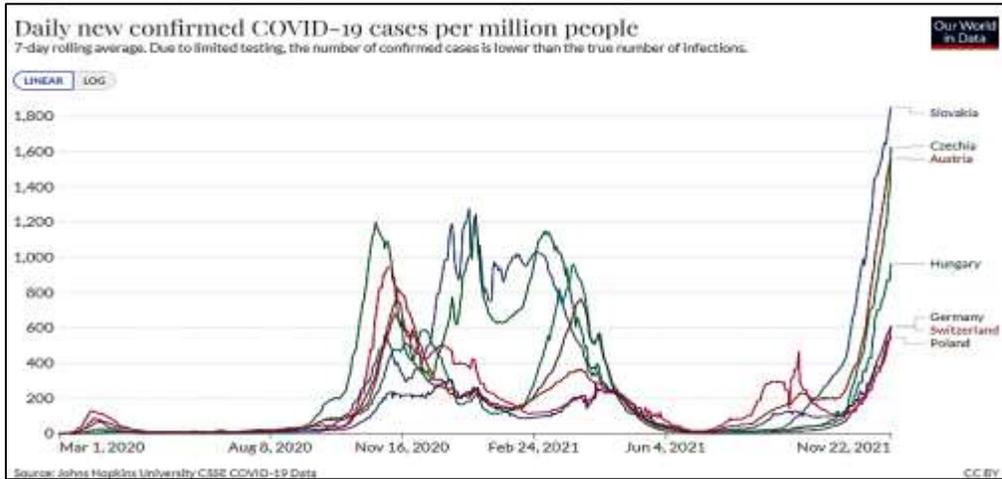
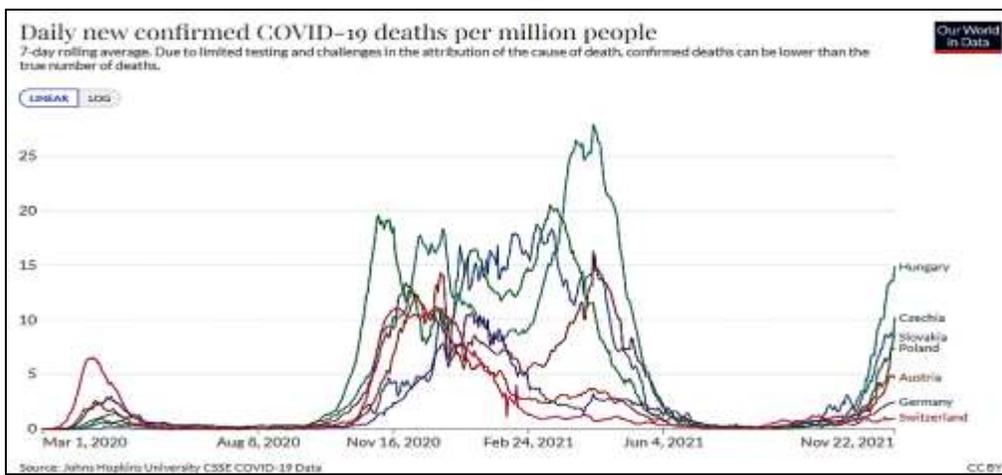


Figure 6:



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

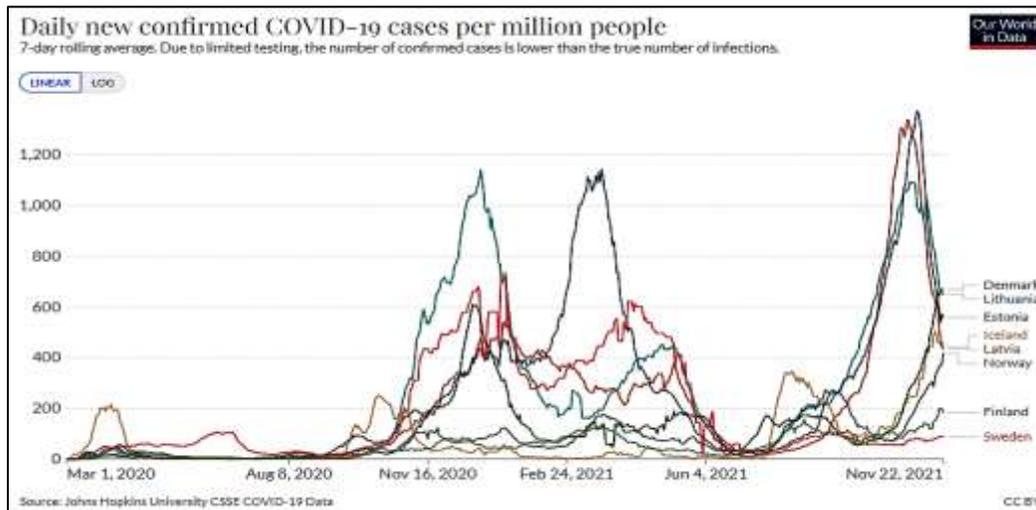
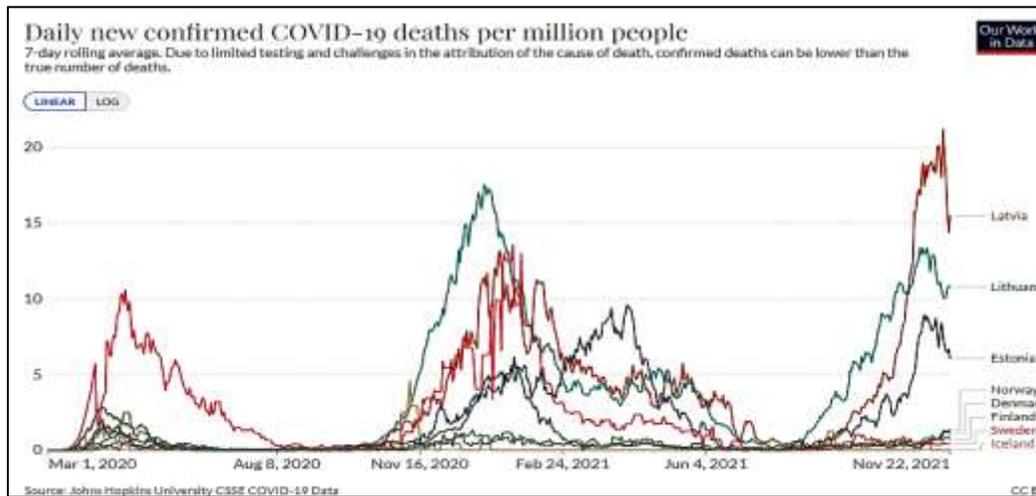


Figure 8:



**North-western Europe:
Figure 9:**

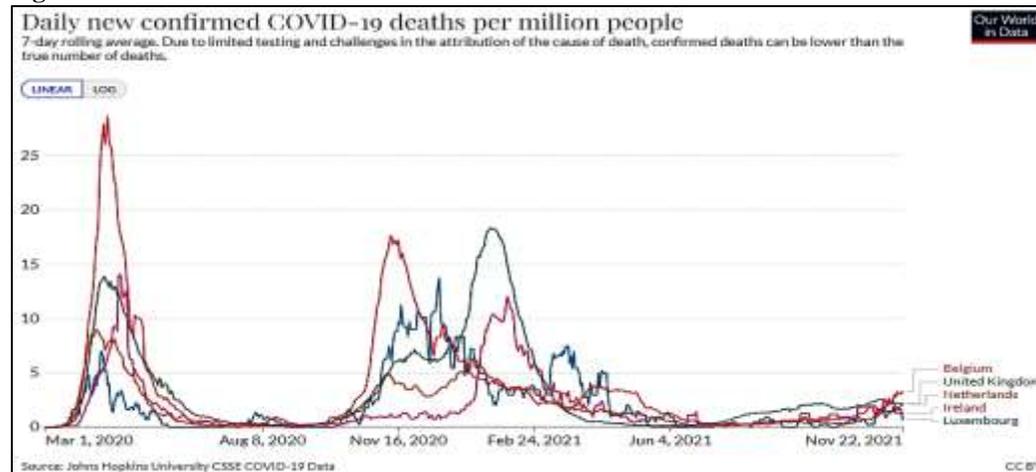
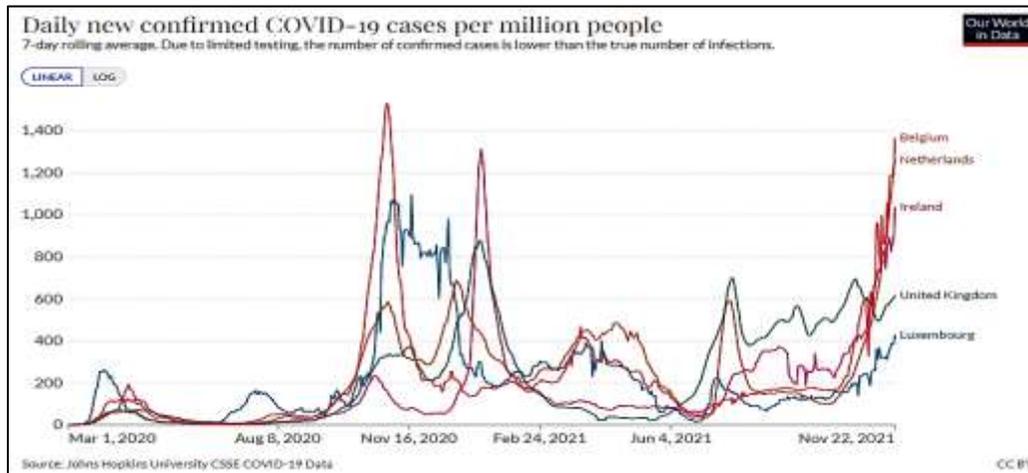


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

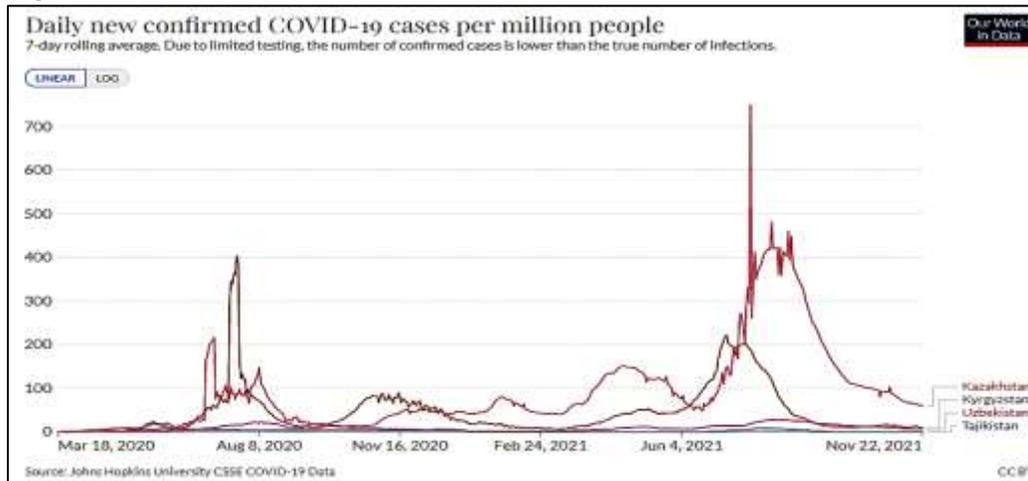
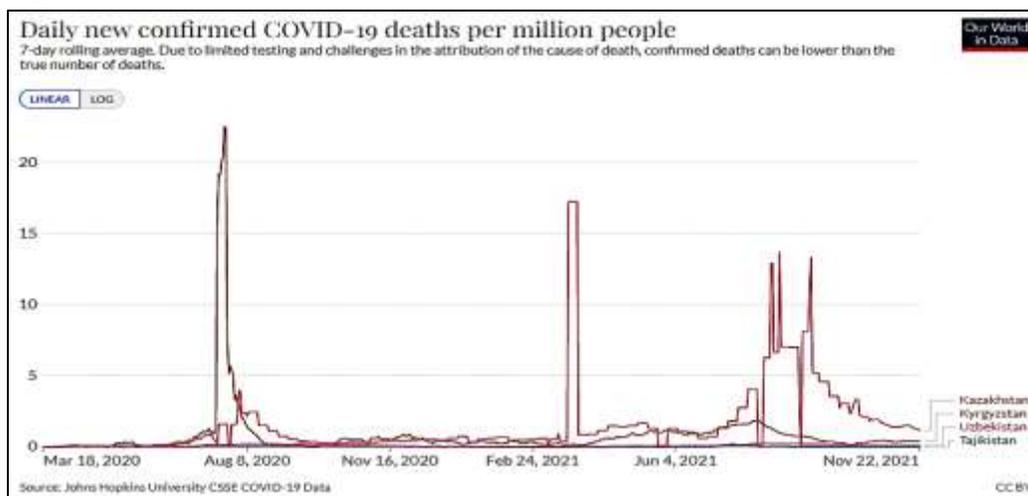


Figure 12:



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