

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of March 21st, 2022

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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?

Key messages

- Compared to the previous week, the global number of new COVID-19 cases has increased by 7%, while the number of deaths has continued to decline. The European region has experienced a stable caseload and an 18% decline in new COVID-19 deaths. ([link](#))
- In the EU/EEA experienced a break in the previously downward trend in new cases. The 14-day case notification rate has increased by 4.6% overall and by 9.1% increase among people aged 65 years and above. Six countries reported the highest caseloads in the over 65 group to date. The increased transmission among the elderly is resulting in worsening indicators of severity. Increases in hospital indicators were reported by six countries, including two with their highest ever levels of hospital occupancy due to COVID-19. Five countries reported increases in death rates, of which three reached their highest levels to date. At times of such high incidence, some people are likely to be hospitalised or die with, not due to, COVID-19. ICU admission and occupancy, which may give a more reliable indication of severity, remain at relatively lower levels, ranging from 2.7% to 50% of the peak pandemic levels observed in the 24 countries that report these data. ([link](#))
- The IHME modelling for the EU suggests a bifurcation of trends. In Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Cyprus, transmission has started to increase again after many weeks of decline. In the rest of the EU, transmission continues to decline. The increases are associated with the replacement of the BA.1 subvariant by BA.2 and, at the same time, declines in mask use and social distancing. The experience of Denmark and the Netherlands suggests that these BA.2-associated secondary increases should not last long. In fact, much of the secondary surge may be as much due to rapid changes in behavior as compared to somewhat greater transmissibility of BA.2. ([link](#))

ASPHER is concerned about speculative talk about the 'end of the pandemic'. *Pandemic* is not defined by politicians, or by journalists. The *pandemic* is defined by the World Health Organisation, under strict decision-making process and not as mere opinion. A pandemic is "an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people". We are still in the midst of the pandemic. We are also concerned at the misuse of the term *endemic* suggesting that COVID-19 has somehow become less serious. *Endemic* assumes there is a certain degree of predictability in

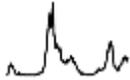
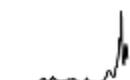
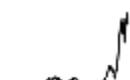
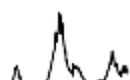
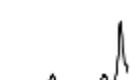
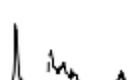
the behaviour of the incidence and prevalence of the disease. Nothing enables us to state that there will be no new SARS-COV-2 variants: there is plenty of experience that there will be new variants. Nothing allows to predict what the characteristics of the new variants will be, or the planetary region or time when they will appear. Therefore, we are not in *endemic* conditions, we continue to be in the *pandemic*.

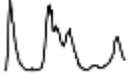
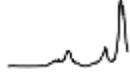
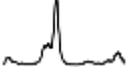
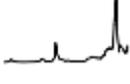
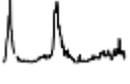
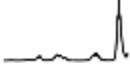
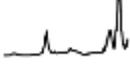
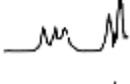
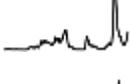
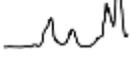
We will not come out of the pandemic until we seriously address the problem globally. We need global solidarity, commitment to [international preparedness](#) and [increased global production of vaccines](#). ASPHER is concerned that many countries are relaxing protections, at a time when there is still substantial transmission of the virus, outbreaks affecting young children, disrupting education and leading to unexpected numbers of children's hospital admissions, and uncertain threats in terms of long COVID manifestations and late serious illness such as strokes and cardiac events. Hospital services continue to be confronted by high levels of serious infection, although intensive care services seem to be affected to different levels, in different areas.

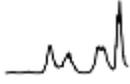
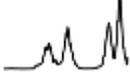
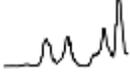
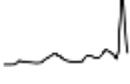
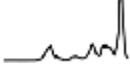
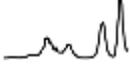
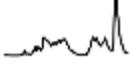
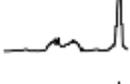
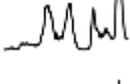
Alongside political initiatives which are throwing away proven measure to control the pandemic, there is the reality with Omicron variant, that primary health care and social care is not coping across Europe. Occupational health services are non- existant in many parts of Europe and therefore unable to address mass sickness absence or support workers in key industries suffering burnout. We urge governments to invest in additional measures to support primary care, social care and occupational health. Protection of our key service workers is a central concern.

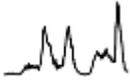
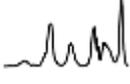
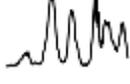
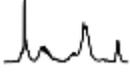
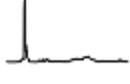
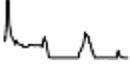
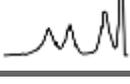
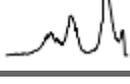
ASPHER supports the [VACCINE-plus approach](#) to pandemic control; or what we have called '[COVID-DO IT ALL](#)'. We recognize the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving a high level of vaccine uptake. Vaccine hesitancy still needs to be understood and addressed especially in Eastern parts of Europe. We need to protect frontline services, protect children, and protect vulnerable people. Current political moves in Europe are adding to the likelihood of increased transmission, creating more pressures on services, more likelihood of additional sickness absence, economic damage, and social disruption. The mindset of the 'pandemic is over' will have the dangerous impact of prolonging it.

Rolling 7-day average of latest daily newly confirmed coronavirus cases, deaths, and proportion of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region ([data](#)).

WHO Europe region	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/million people	30-day trend in cases	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed deaths/million people	30-day trend in deaths	Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (%)
Austria	4,852.06		3.57		72.85
Cyprus	4,342.61		3.03		72.02
Iceland	3,885.27		3.87		78.65
Switzerland	2,996.58		2.65		68.78
Netherlands	2,636.32		0.80		71.99
Germany	2,257.46		1.82		75.17
Greece	2,121.01		4.72		73.13
Slovakia	1,875.09		4.77		50.68
Luxembourg	1,739.77		2.70		71.85
Lithuania	1,538.42		4.89		69.60
France	1,467.42		1.65		77.74
Slovenia	1,370.55		2.20		58.68
Monaco	1,341.09		7.23		64.95

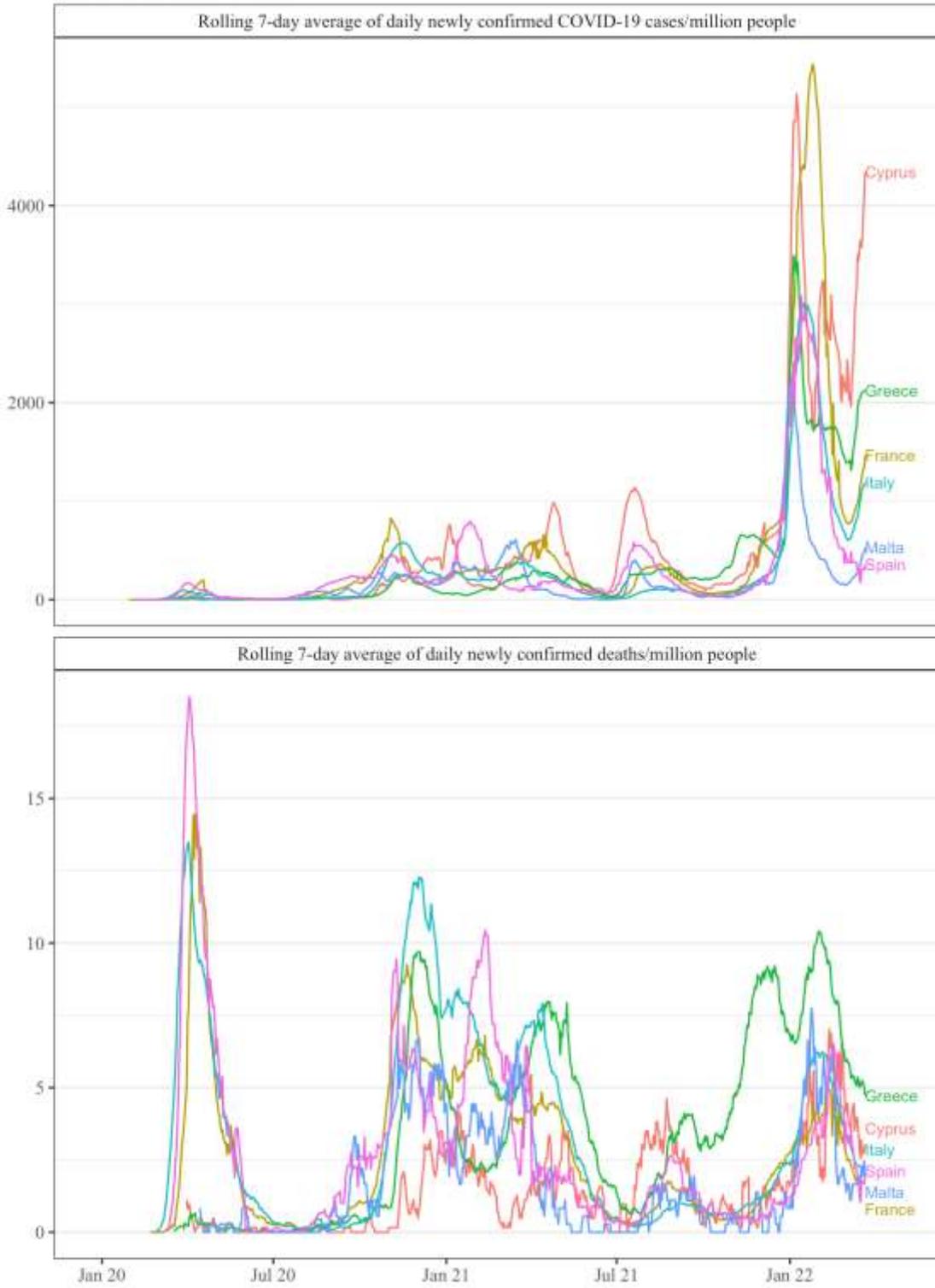
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United Kingdom	1,252.34		1.75		72.32
Denmark	1,206.22		5.60		81.48
Italy	1,189.79		2.19		79.13
Finland	1,158.75		4.22		77.27
Estonia	1,107.01		3.45		63.56
Portugal	1,102.40		1.73		92.60
Ireland	1,085.71		1.26		80.31
Israel	1,061.67		0.77		65.94
San Marino	1,029.11		0.00		69.26
Belgium	1,025.84		1.97		78.40
Andorra	812.59		1.85		68.91
Czechia	716.63		2.69		63.93
Malta	527.86		1.94		90.23
Croatia	379.82		3.15		54.79

WHO Europe region	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/million people	30-day trend in cases	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed deaths/million people	30-day trend in deaths	Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (%)
Spain	362.89		1.95		85.52
Serbia	302.64		1.81		47.58
Poland	260.00		2.77		59.06
Hungary	252.98		7.27		64.19
Bulgaria	218.82		3.19		29.70
Russia	216.55		3.32		49.69
Turkey	210.98		1.18		62.25
Georgia	201.16		3.34		31.53
Romania	182.83		2.23		42.24
Montenegro	149.44		0.23		44.78
Belarus	139.59		0.85		54.08
Sweden	128.09		3.58		74.91
North Macedonia	125.73		2.19		40.05
Moldova	85.03		1.24		26.15

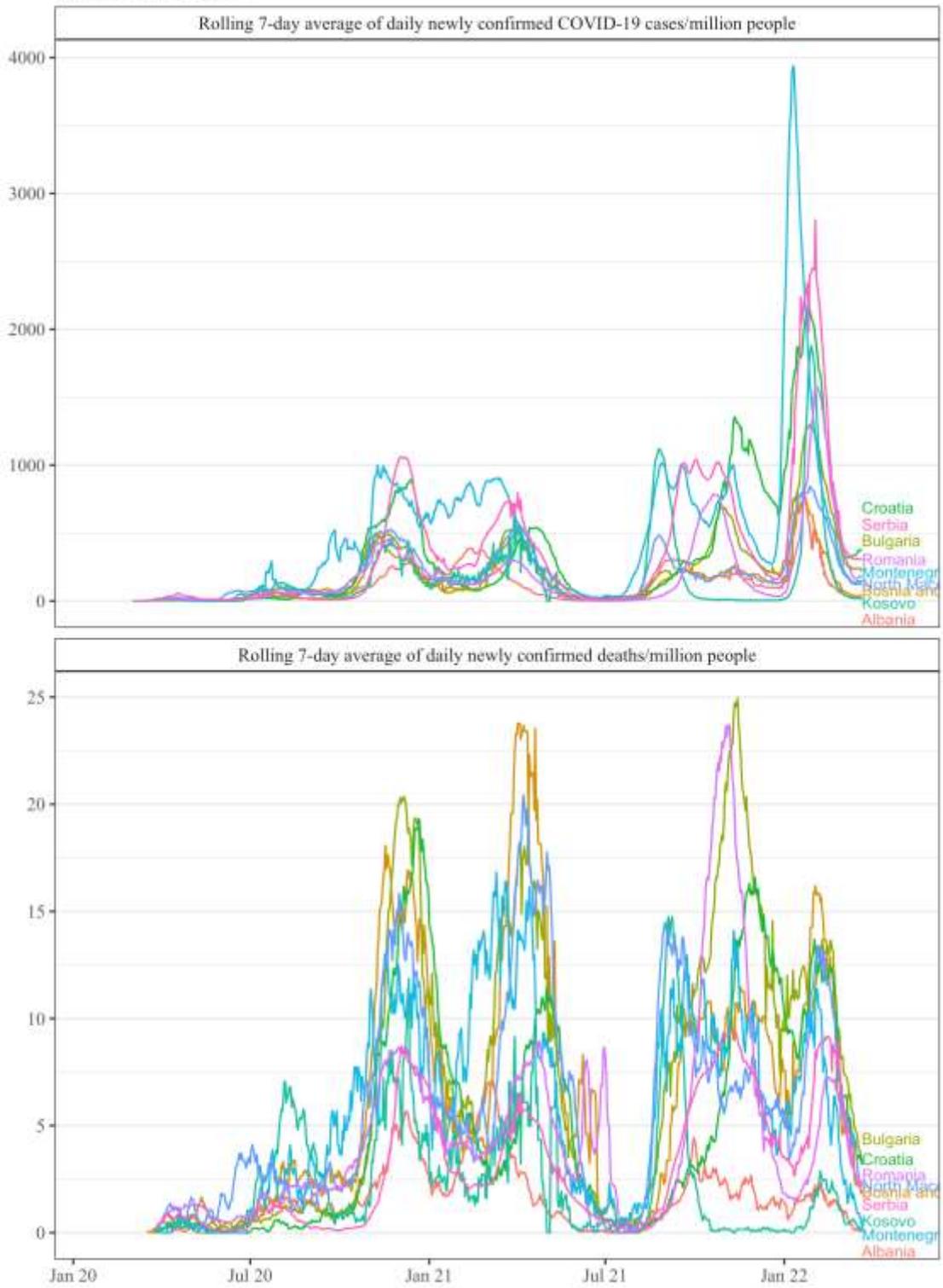
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Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.27		1.93		25.93
Kosovo	21.96		0.32		45.99
Albania	21.63		0.15		42.11
Armenia	13.38		1.06		30.98
Azerbaijan	8.15		0.54		47.09
Kazakhstan	3.84		0.07		48.02
Kyrgyzstan	1.47		0.15		18.47
Uzbekistan	1.01		0.00		39.97
Tajikistan	0.00		0.00		45.94
Ukraine	0.00		0.00		35.02

Rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths in sub-regions of Europe ([data](#)).

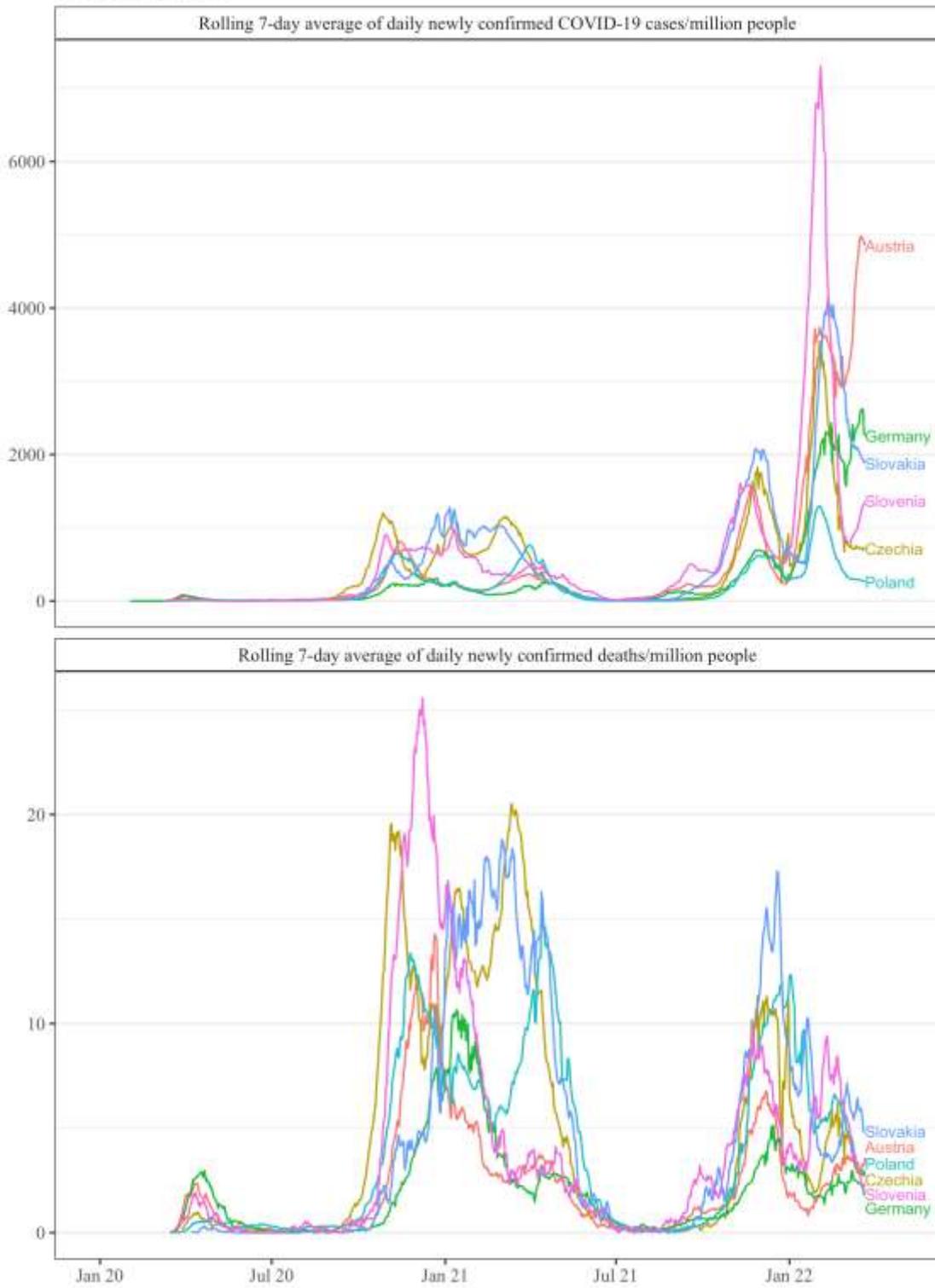
Mediterranean region



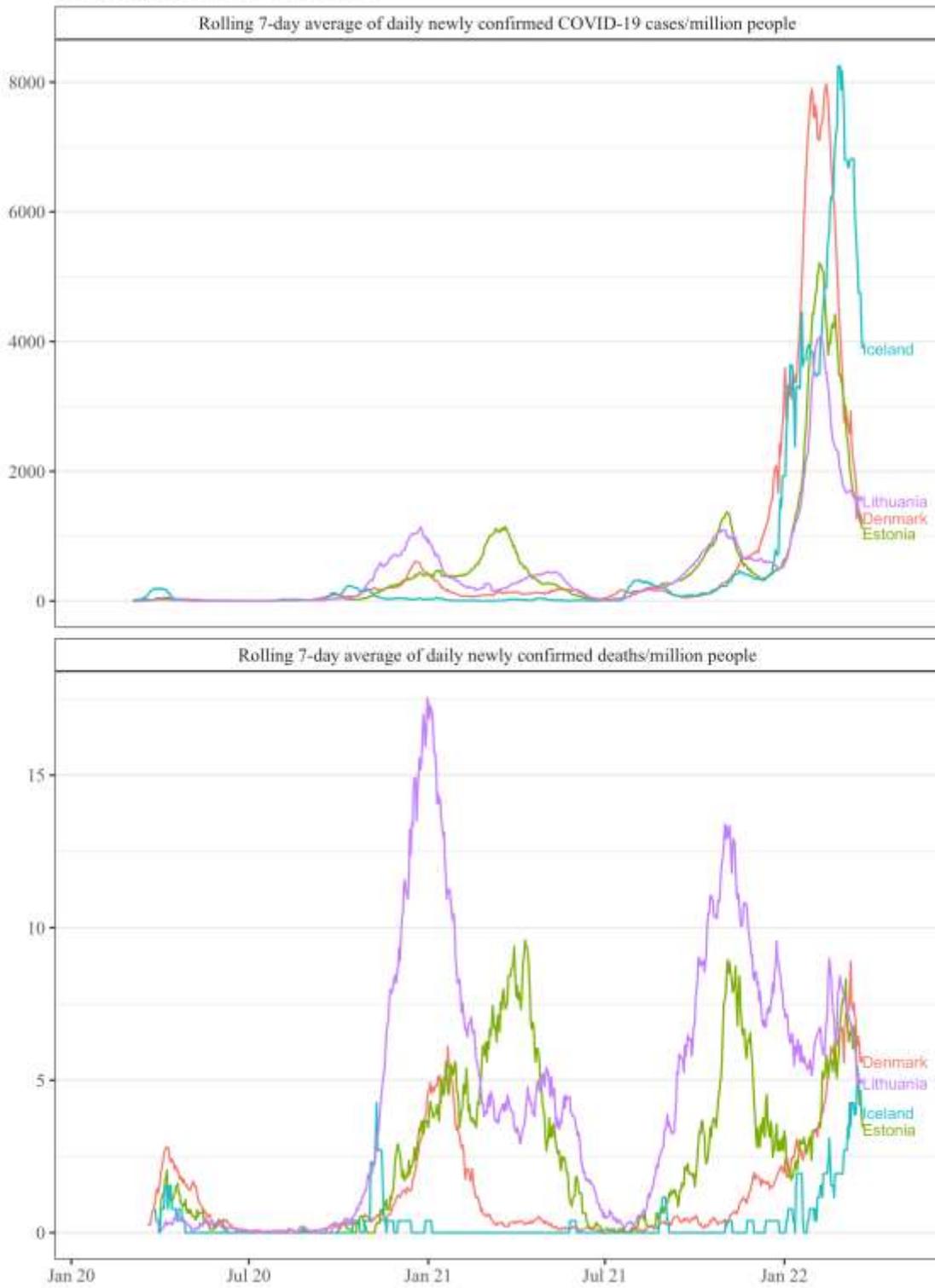
South-East region



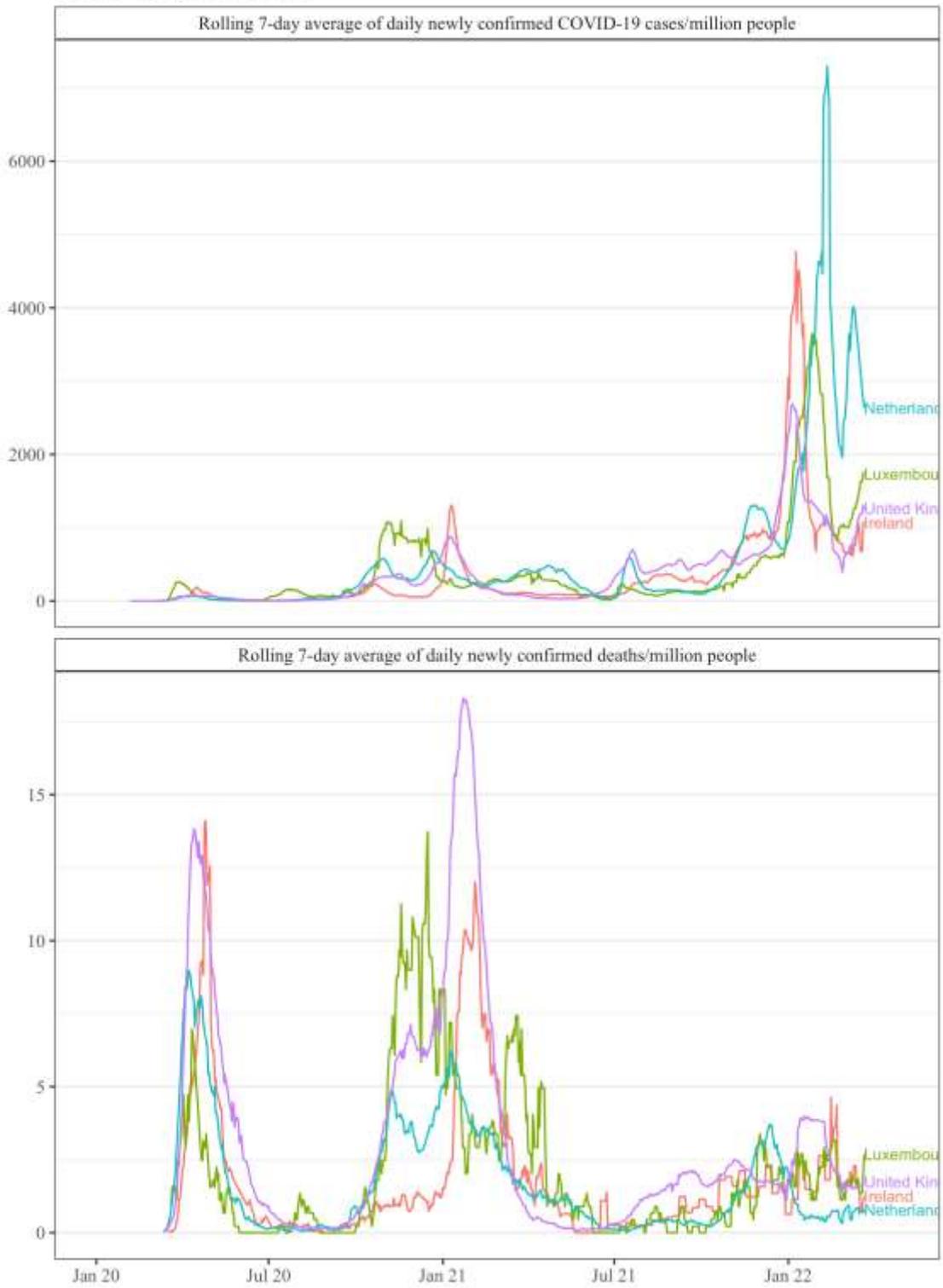
Central Europe



Baltics and Nordic Countries



North-Western Europe



Central Asia

