

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of August 23rd 2021

Authors: Pallavi Chatarajupalli^{1,2}, Petra Andelic^{2,3}, Leo Gkekos^{2,4}, Ralf Reintjes^{1,5}, Katarzyna Czabanowska^{3,5}, John Middleton^{5,6,*}

¹ HAW Hamburg University, Germany

² ASPHER Young Professional

³ Maastricht University, the Netherlands

⁴ Department of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institute, Sweden

⁵ ASPHER COVID-19 Task Force

⁶ 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?

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 only one dose is less protective ([link](#)). There is emerging evidence that vaccines are less effective against Delta variant, although very much better than getting the virus. ([link](#)) ([link](#)) We believe there should be international collaboration and capacity in the surveillance of 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 one-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 are taking 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 countries. This has contributed to flattening the epidemic curve in a 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 re-imposition of strict measures in countries – Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, Cyprus.

IHME analysis shows that the transmission of the Delta variant is clearly evident in the Central Europe region as in other parts of Europe. In a few countries such as Netherlands, Portugal, Malta, Cyprus, Spain and the Russian Federation the Delta variant surge is decreasing. In contrast, in the United Kingdom the Delta surge has been rising after a downward trend. The reference scenario suggests that there will be a minor winter COVID-19 surge (disregarding the duration of protection offered by the vaccine and emerging new variants) reflecting the rising trend in infection rate. In view of the current situation, the policies should focus on a) encouraging vaccination through outreach initiatives across the communities with vaccine hesitancy b) addressing proper control measures in schools as they open to limit the transmission of infection c) mask mandates should be reinstated in the areas with high number of COVID-19 hospitalizations and d) strengthening the health care system to cope with the pressure caused by both COVID-19 and flu during winter. Also to accurately monitor the evolution of epidemic, it will be crucial to test the vaccinated as well as the unvaccinated, given the waning immunity from vaccination (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 more than 4 million lives to date (4,439,843) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is now above two hundred thousand (212,357,898). 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	82,261,270
Europe	63,947,231
South-East Asia	40,661,180
Eastern Mediterranean	14,174,810
Western-Pacific	5,994,095
Africa	5,518,548

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 30% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. In the past 7-days, the number of deaths rose by 11% and the number of new cases by 0% compared to the previous week (4).

Table 2: 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 23/08/2021 (5) (6) (7).

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 the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Georgia	1176.18	14.14	7.38%
Kosovo	989.62	4.21	N/A
Montenegro	883.44	7.73	27.50%
Israel	842.60	2.79	62.97%
United Kingdom	483.80	1.48	61.78%
North Macedonia	462.50	9.26	24.16%
Cyprus	388.19	3.70	N/A
Kazakhstan	377.05	7.08	26.70%
Ireland	362.19	0.43	65.98%
Azerbaijan	346.58	2.40	24.24%
France	320.68	1.83	56.11%
Greece	308.04	2.48	54.07%
Switzerland	297.61	0.36	50.59%
Iceland	250.76	0.00	N/A
Monaco	243.90	0.00	N/A
Turkey	233.25	2.44	41.98%
Spain	229.42	2.27	67.70%
Serbia	227.12	0.92	40.91%
Portugal	225.23	1.01	67.48%
Estonia	212.26	0.65	39.92%
Lithuania	205.50	2.20	53.14%
Bulgaria	177.86	3.21	16.11%
Albania	177.42	0.60	20.64%
Belgium	169.15	0.52	68.24%
Denmark	161.92	0.17	70.13%
Netherlands	152.45	0.45	62.20%*
Slovenia	149.80	0.55	42.51%
Armenia	148.05	2.89	2.88%*
Russia	137.82	5.27	23.72%
Austria	128.43	0.10	56.98%
Belarus	127.57	1.18	N/A
San Marino	126.28	0.00	N/A
Malta	125.21	1.39	79.67%
Norway	124.33	0.05	48.14%
Finland	114.35	0.28	46.56%
Italy	105.00	0.80	58.57%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	101.80	1.26	N/A
Luxembourg	100.42	0.46	56.03%
Croatia	96.39	0.63	38.58%
Sweden	91.05	0.14	N/A
Andorra	88.75	1.85	N/A
Moldova	88.61	1.98	15.98%
Germany	84.92	0.21	58.75%
Latvia	71.72	0.45	39.18%
Ukraine	42.45	1.10	7.27%
Kyrgyzstan	39.87	0.83	5.76%
Romania	28.45	0.54	26.33%
Uzbekistan	25.43	0.20	N/A
Czech Republic	17.64	0.13	51.96%
Slovakia	14.57	0.08	39.06%
Hungary	9.12	0.16	56.97%
Tajikistan	5.89	0.01	N/A
Poland	5.07	0.06	48.77%*

*data available at the latest (22/08/2021)

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 23rd August 2021.

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

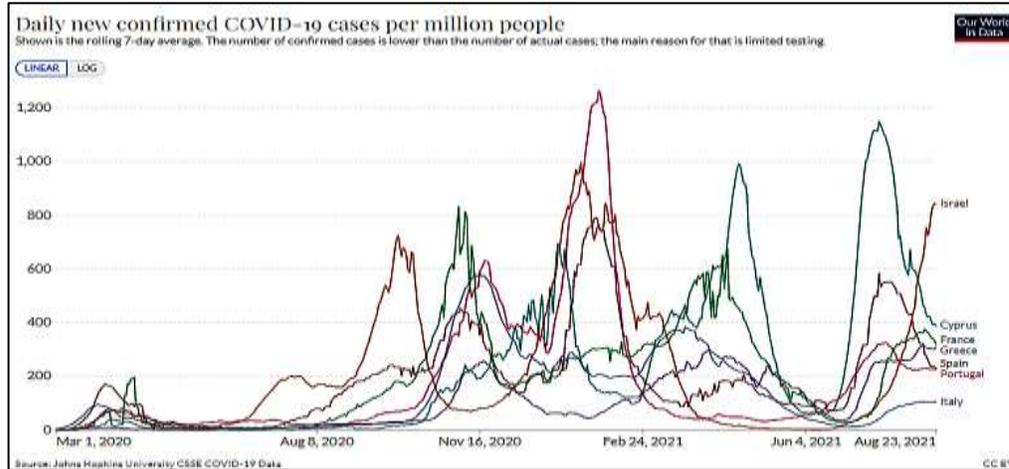
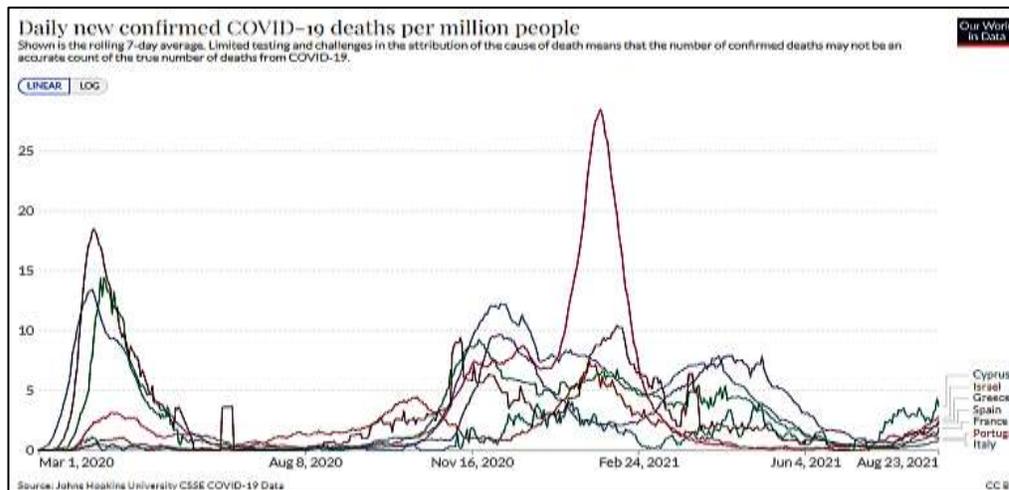


Figure 2:



South-East Region:

Figure 3:

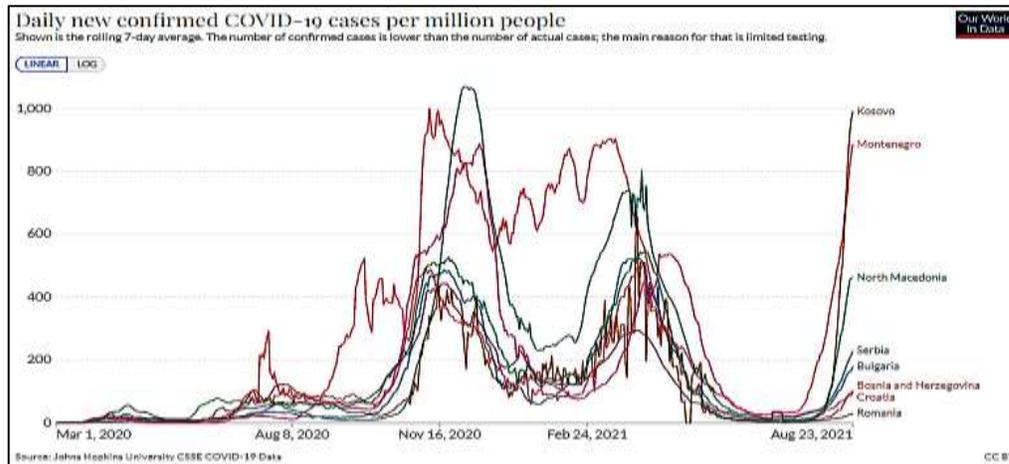
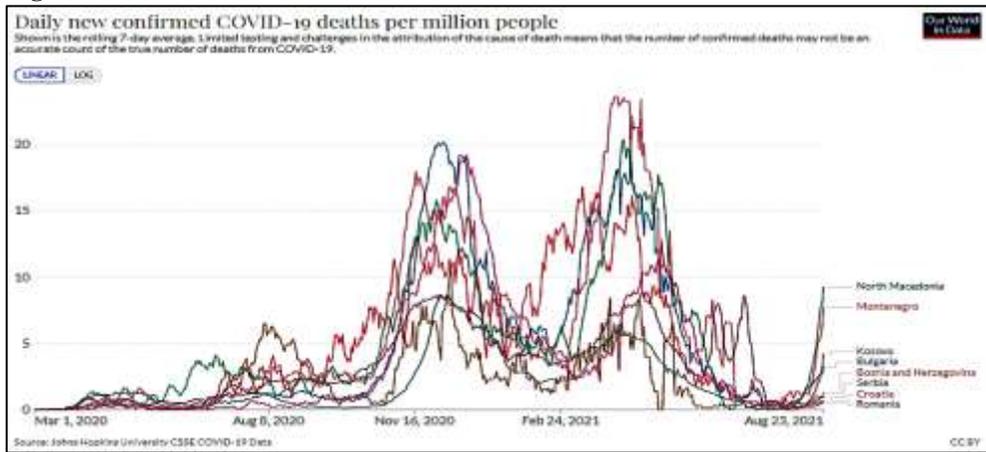


Figure 4:



Central Europe

Figure 5:

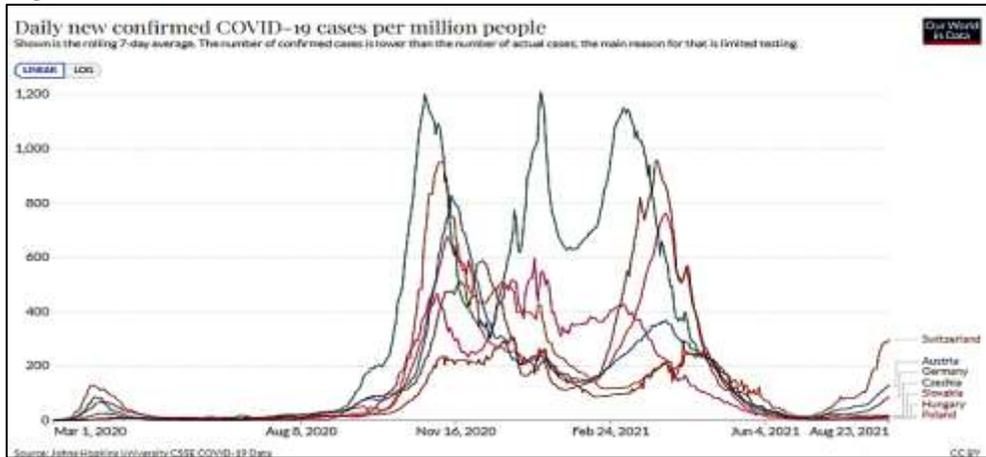
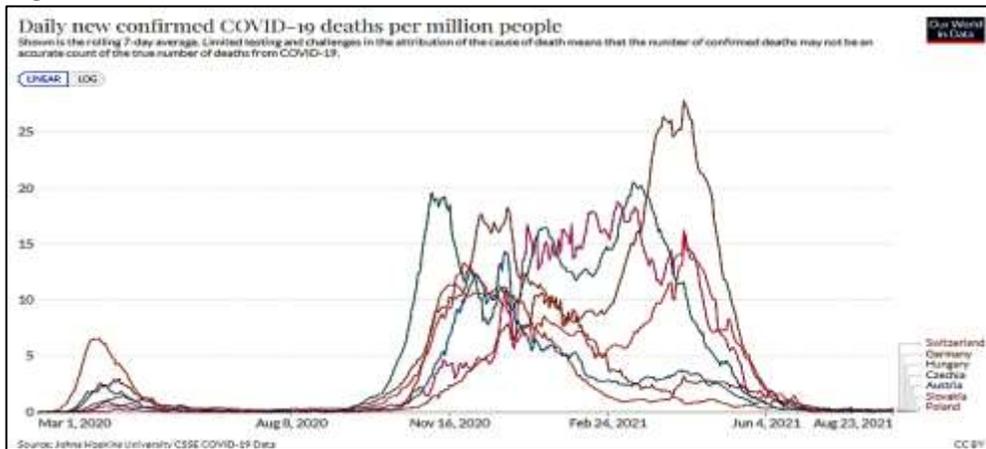


Figure 6:



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

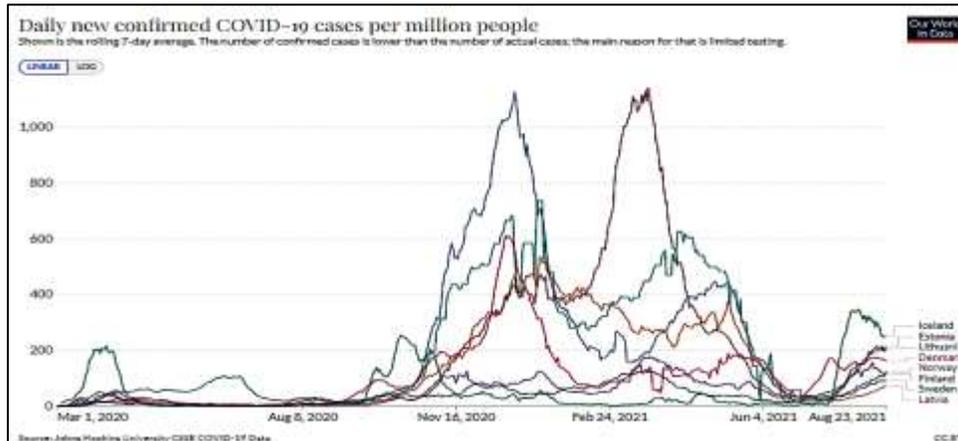
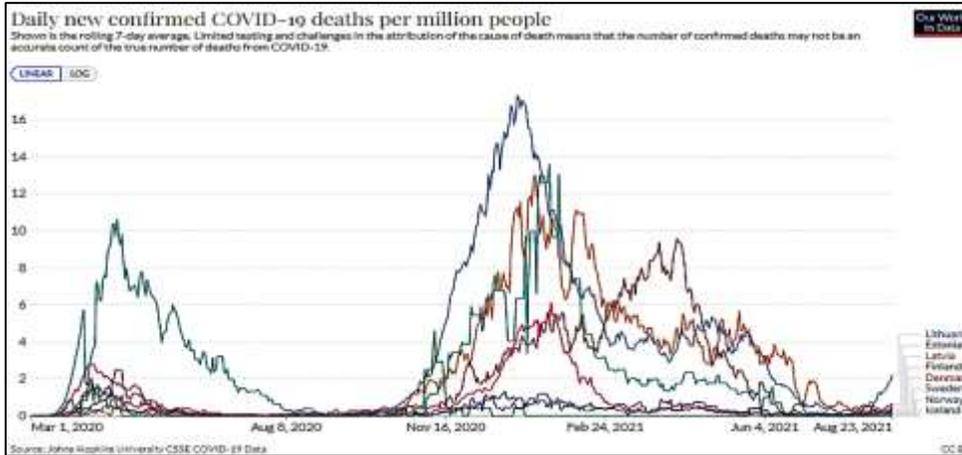


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

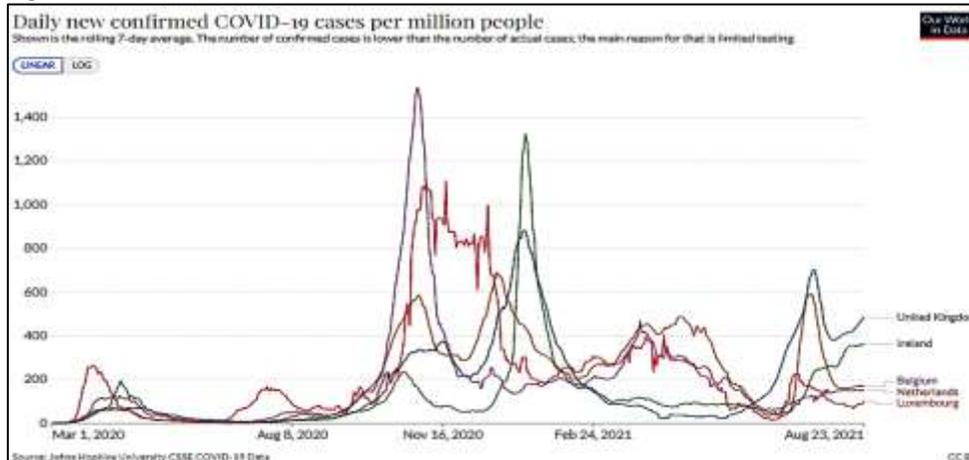
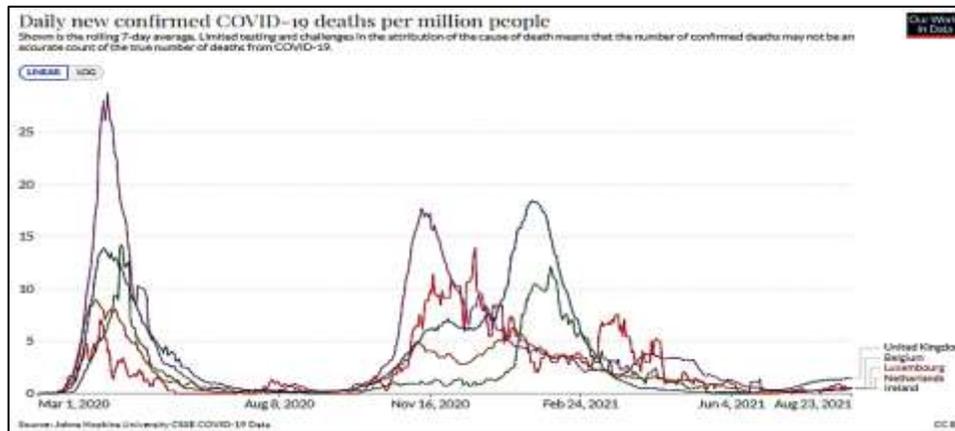


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

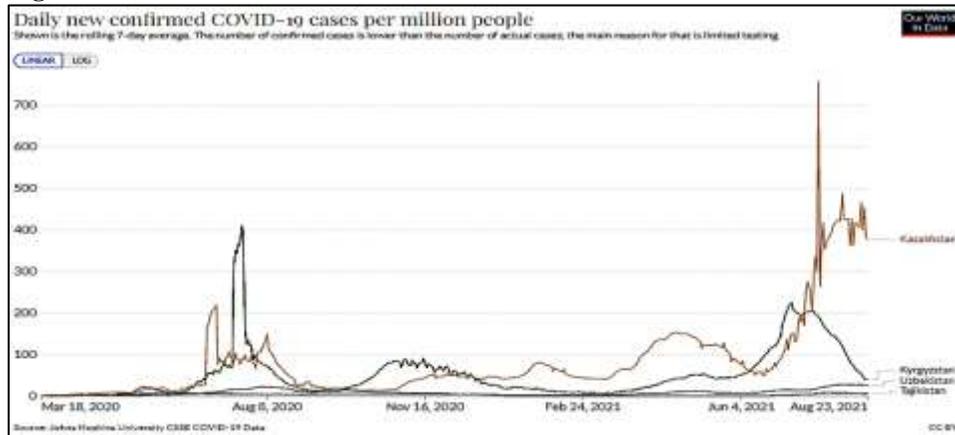
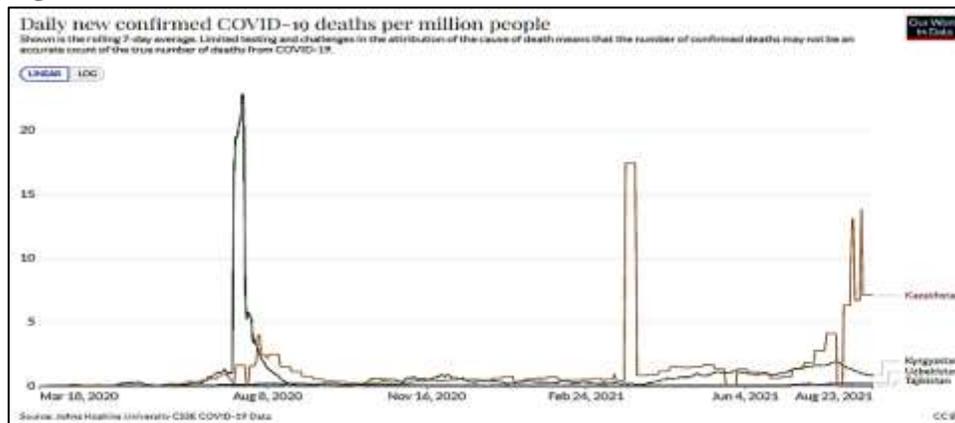


Figure 12:



References:

1. Europe, struggling for balance, surfs 4th coronavirus wave [Internet]. POLITICO. 2021 [cited 2021 Aug 6]. Available from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-coronavirus-cases-restrictions-summer-2021-wave/>
2. 44566_briefing_European_Region_29.pdf [Internet]. [cited 2021 Aug 25]. Available from: http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/Projects/COVID/2021/44566_briefing_European_Region_29.pdf
3. WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard [Internet]. [cited 2021 Aug 25]. Available from: <https://covid19.who.int>
4. Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 24 August 2021 [Internet]. [cited 2021 Aug 25]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19---24-august-2021>
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 25]; Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-cases>
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 25]; Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-deaths>
7. 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 25]; Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>