

ASPHER Report

COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of March 16th 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 ?

ASPHER is gravely concerned about the severe undermining of confidence in all COVID vaccination, brought about through the actions of individual European governments in pausing use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. This is in direct contradiction to the advice of the international health agencies, World Health Organisation, ECDC and the European Medicines Agency. This is damaging to all efforts of European countries to combat the virus and reduce it to very low levels so that some return to 'new normality' may be possible. No-one will be free from the virus unless we are all free. (see also The ASPHER Statement on the AstraZeneca Vaccine: https://www.aspher.org/download/677/aspher_az_vaccine_statement_en.pdf)

ASPHER is concerned also about contradictory policies on lock down and travel and urges government to work together with the World Health Organisation ECDC and the European Commission to create a coherent framework for control on international movement. We call on all governments to work together to create a coherent strategic approach to suppressing the virus, saving lives and reopening social and economic life.

ASPHER is concerned that many countries are reducing social restrictions at a time when the incidence of COVID-19 is still very high, much higher than during the first wave, and with the Reproduction number over 1 in many countries. The relaxations are inconsistent between countries and will make international control of spread more difficult.

ASPHER recognises that there are pronounced January peaks of infection in many European countries including UK, Ireland and Portugal. This is a sad reflection of relaxations of COVID-19 social restrictions during the Christmas holidays.

ASPHER is concerned that governments maintain vigilance in social restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus as we move towards upcoming Easter celebrations.

ASPHER expresses its solidarity and support for colleagues in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Montenegro particularly and calls on neighbouring countries to provide mutual aid to the Czech health services when possible.

More generally ASPHER is concerned about the recognition of an increasing number of new variants of the SARS-COV2 virus. We believe there should be increasing international collaboration and capacity in the surveillance of the variants of the virus, surveillance of the outcomes of vaccination, resistance to infection and timespan of immunity. There needs to be coordinated global capacity towards anticipating new variants, and adapting vaccinations to meet anticipated changes of the virus.(see also: <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/28/we-need-an-equitable-and-coordinated-global-approach-to-covid19-vaccination/>)

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 over two million lives up to date (2,656,822) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 0.1 billion with the highest number in the Americas (53,040,381), followed by Europe (41,350,283), South-East Asia region (13,949,629), Eastern Mediterranean (6,933,453), Africa (2,958,224), and Western Pacific (1,727,985) according to the WHO statistics (1).

As per WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 34% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. Overall, Europe has seen a rising trend in the number of new cases and decline in new deaths at 6% and 1% respectively. In Poland, Italy and France high incidence of coronavirus is reported at 295.2, 256.5, 246.9 per 100,000 population respectively (2). According to IHME COVID-19 projections, (as on March 8th) 13% of the European population have been infected with coronavirus. The transmission of coronavirus started to rise again in most of the countries in the Europe Region and the cause can be attributed to transmission of new variant (B.1.1.7), decrease in usage of facemasks as well as increased mobility. Projections showing that there will be very high or high pressure on hospital beds (at some point from March through 1st July) and ICU capacity in some parts of Europe. IHME also forecasts, through vaccination nearly 100,000 lives could be spared by 1st July (3).

The following table shows the incidence of daily new coronavirus confirmed cases and deaths across European countries as on 14/03/2021

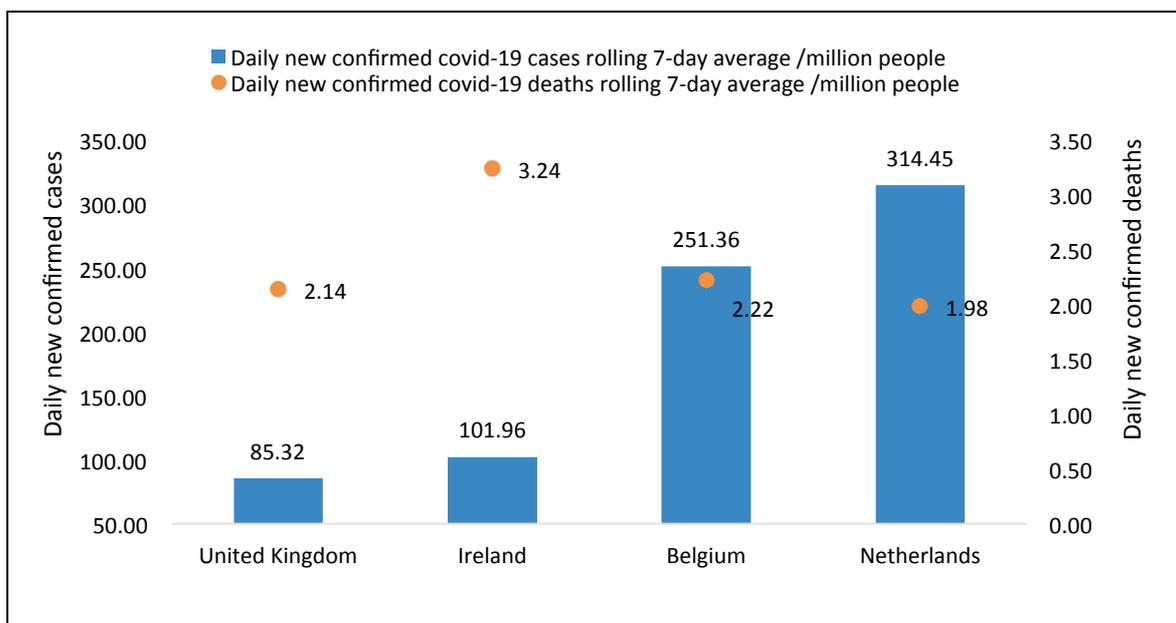
WHO Europe Region	Daily newly confirmed covid-19 cases rolling 7-day average/million people	Daily newly confirmed covid-19 deaths rolling 7-day average/million people
Estonia	1,055.81	7.11
Czech Republic	1,037.14	20.13
Montenegro	891.40	14.10
San Marino	858.71	4.21
Hungary	746.39	15.96
Malta	691.41	5.50
Serbia	647.42	3.30
Cyprus	452.27	1.14
Poland	421.69	7.14
Andorra	414.16	1.85
Sweden	389.93	2.02
North Macedonia	375.97	8.50
Bulgaria	375.19	13.79
Slovakia	369.28	18.11
Italy	367.78	5.58
France	367.24	4.06
Slovenia	337.12	2.96
Moldova	326.19	7.76
Netherlands	314.45	1.98
Monaco	305.78	3.64
Austria	293.41	2.54
Bosnia and Herzegovina	289.43	9.49
Israel	287.21	1.98
Luxembourg	275.46	6.62
Latvia	269.30	5.45
Belgium	251.36	2.22
Romania	233.37	4.33
Albania	227.21	5.26
Greece	219.66	4.56
Ukraine	196.78	4.35
Armenia	178.67	1.64
Turkey	167.65	0.78
Lithuania	166.40	3.57

Croatia	157.67	3.03
Norway	144.88	0.18
Denmark	138.68	0.30
Switzerland	137.91	1.06
Finland	123.91	0.49
Germany	119.67	2.52
Spain	106.00	3.42
Belarus	102.98	0.86
Ireland	101.96	3.24
United Kingdom	85.32	2.14
Georgia	76.56	2.58
Russia	66.70	2.88
Portugal	58.32	2.02
Azerbaijan	49.69	0.56
Kazakhstan	47.28	0.08
Kyrgyzstan	6.57	0.26
Iceland	5.44	0.00
Uzbekistan	1.67	0.00
Tajikistan	0.00	0.00

Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>- daily new confirmed cases and deaths

Northwestern Europe:

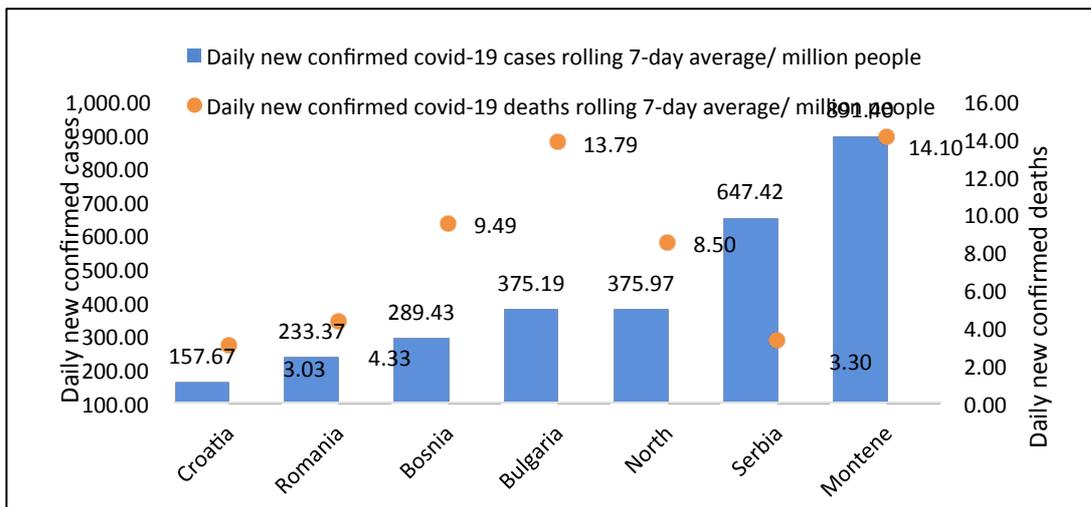
In Netherlands, the number of people admitted to hospital with coronavirus infection remains high and current reproduction number is above 1 (1.06) also the prevalence of the UK variant is high (3/4th of the samples tested) among other regions. In concern for current situation the lockdown has been extended until 30th March (9). In Ireland, a total of 4,552 covid-19 deaths were reported (dated 16th March) (10) and the rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed covid-19 deaths is 3.24 which is high among Northwestern regions (6).



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus> - daily new confirmed cases and deaths

South-East Europe:

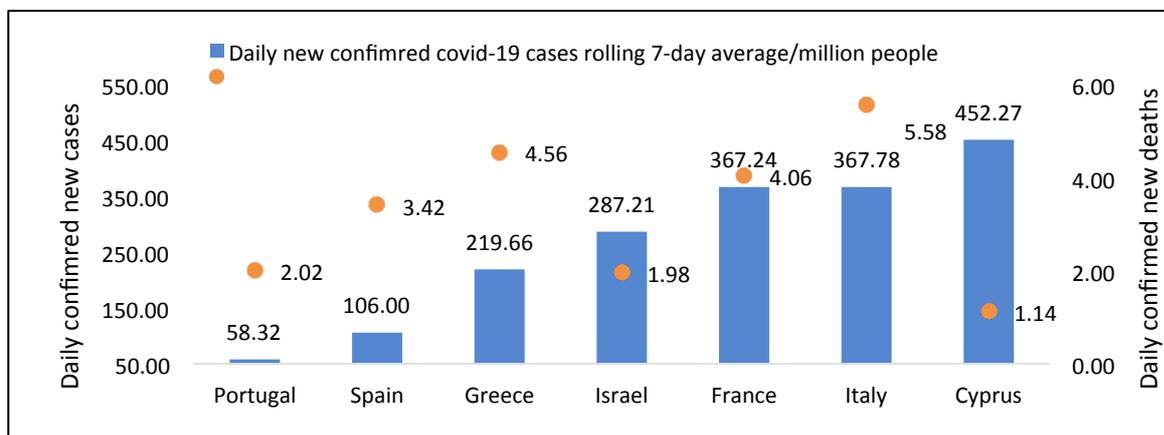
As reported on 17th March in Montenegro the incidence rate of coronavirus is 13,9485.93 per 100,000 population (4) and the rolling 7-day average of daily new COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths per million people are peaking among other regions (891.40 and 14.10 respectively). Next to Montenegro, in Bulgaria the daily new confirmed covid-19 deaths are high at 13.79 (moving 7-day average) and the case fatality ratio is 4.03% (on 17th March) (4). A number of 4,637 individuals are newly confirmed with coronavirus on 16th March and the people admitting to hospital with coronavirus is increasing (7,101, 7,200, 7,600 in three consecutive days-15/16/17th March) (15).



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-daily-new-confirmed-cases-and-deaths>

Mediterranean:

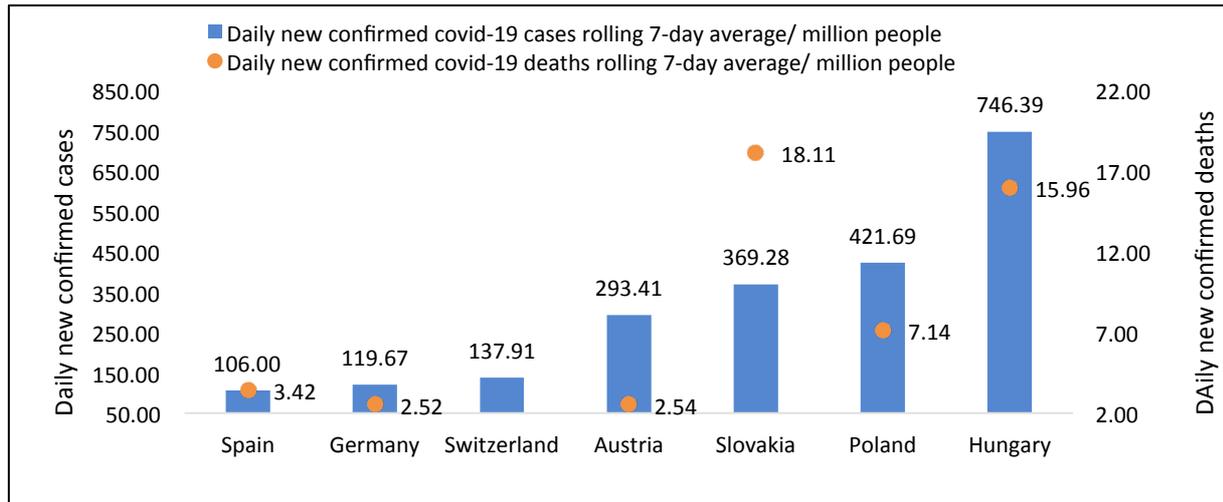
In Mediterranean countries the 7-day moving average of daily new COVID-19 confirmed cases per million people is high in Cyprus (452.27). As reported on 17th March the incidence rate is 3,341.50/100 thousand people (4). The government of Cyprus has extended the emergency decree until 31st March (curfew from 23:00 – 0:500, gatherings up to six people irrespective of age, catering services only outdoors and business operations with possibility of maximum 30% of employees physical presence) (5). In Italy, the rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed covid-19 deaths are high at 5.58 (6) and the case fatality rate is 3.1% (7). As per WHO weekly epidemiological report, Italy is one of the regions in Europe reporting high number of new cases and deaths (2). In response to rising number of coronavirus infections, the Ministry of Health, Italy has announced a new ordinance, stating the restrictions will be in force until 6th April 2021 (8). In Israel, COVID-19 case rates, severe case rates and death rates have been declining steadily. Nearly six million people have received a first dose of vaccine which represents about 80% of the eligible population. More than five million people are fully vaccinated with two doses (Manfred S Green, personal communication). In France, in view of increased infection rate and burden on hospitals, new restrictions have been imposed in 16 departments (including Paris and parts of the North) for the next four weeks starting from 19th March. However, essential business and schools remain open (Laurent Chambaud, personal communication).



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-daily-new-confirmed-cases-and-deaths>

Central Europe:

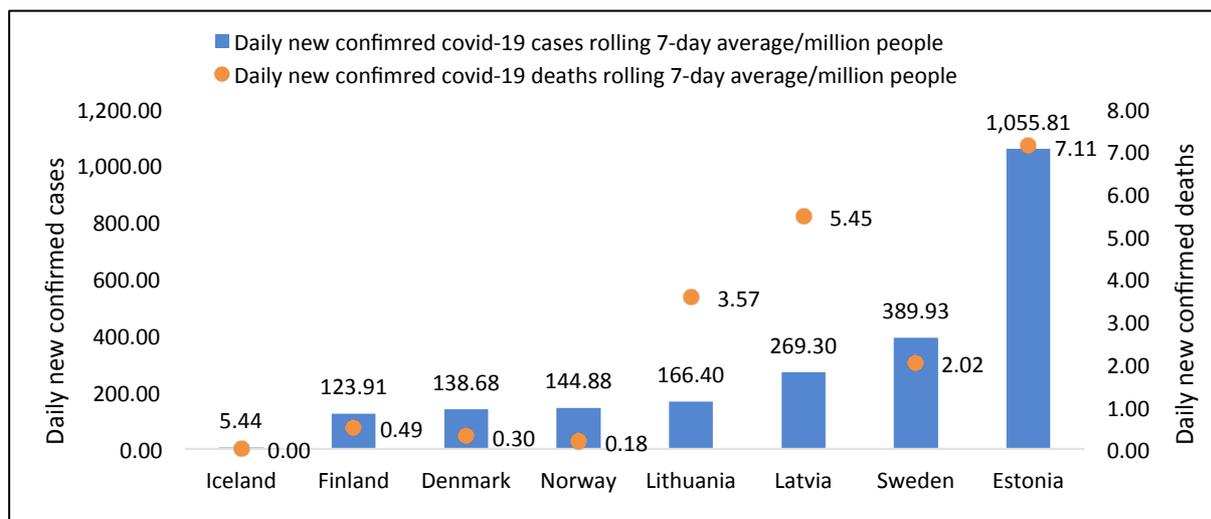
As reported on 16th March in the Czech Republic the number of people with newly diagnosed COVID-19 disease was 13,934 which is nearly 3000 more than compared to the previous day (11). In view of the unfavorable epidemiological situation in Czechia, along with existing restrictions such as compulsory facemasks in public areas, night curfew, the Ministry of Health has passed extraordinary measures stating that the employers of small business should offer antigen tests for their employees by 19th March (12) (13). In Germany, the 7-day (13th to 17th March) incidence of coronavirus and new deaths is 89 and 0.2 for each 100 thousand people respectively and the prevalence of new variant (B.1.1.7) is 40% (as in week 8) (14).



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-daily-new-confirmed-cases-and-deaths>

Scandinavian Countries:

Among Scandinavian countries, the 7-day rolling average of daily new confirmed coronavirus deaths and cases is exponentially high in Estonia at 7.11, 1055.81 respectively and the case-fatality ratio is 0.83% (4). On 5th February 2021 the government of Latvia has extended its state of emergency until 6th April in view of constant rise in number of coronavirus infections. To date there are 95,420 cumulative covid-19 cases present in Latvia and the case fatality ratio is 1.87% (4). In Sweden, to drop the increasing number of covid-19 infections, the government has introduced new restrictions under a temporary law until September 2021 (16).



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-daily-new-confirmed-cases-and-deaths>

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