









# ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

# Week of June 21st 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 init?

ASPHER is concerned about the rapid expansion of the Delta variant of COVID-19, particularly in England, and now also in Portugal. The frequency of the infection is doubling every week and hospitalisations are doubling also. Full two-dose vaccination still seems to be protective. We believe there should be 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 effort towards anticipating new variants and adapting vaccinations meet mutating changes the virus. (see also: https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/28/we-need-an-equitable-and-coordinated-global-approachto-covid-19-vaccination/)

ASPHER considers the G7 agreement on global vaccine supply to be inadequate <u>and a failure of international leadership</u>. The promise of 1 billion doses this year is less than the 2 billion already committed to COVAX by October 2021, and less than 1 fifth of the global supply needed. We will be commenting in more detail on this next week. ASPHER has signed the <u>open letter of the European Society of Medicine</u> calling for the world's 700 million over 65s to be vaccinated.

The situation seen recently in India presents an extreme case of need that cannot be met within a country and why we need international health action agencies capable of responding to need, as set

out in our <u>BMJ piece</u>. It also shows the need for further efforts to promote <u>internationalism in vaccination programmes</u> for the protection of everyone.

The current scenario demands international consensus on a long-term strategy to minimize the transmission of variants, not only by rapid vaccination but also by increasing vaccine confidence. Improving accessibility to vaccine must be considered to prevent further waves. Despite vaccination status, the use of face masks and social distancing is still necessary. <a href="https://www.aspher.org/download/726/aspher\_statement\_on\_abolition\_of\_prevention\_measures.pdf">https://www.aspher.org/download/726/aspher\_statement\_on\_abolition\_of\_prevention\_measures.pdf</a>. Political decision making continues to be arbitrary, nationalistic and inconsistent. ASPHER continues to be concerned at the failure to achieve international consensus and action on travel restrictions, social prevention measures and mass gatherings. This has been particularly evident in the management of the EURO2020 football matches.

The COVID-19 pandemic has entered its second year since the time WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic on 11th March 2020 (1). The battle against the current pandemic is continuing with emerging virus variants challenging the usefulness of the vaccine. From the experiences of initial lockdown, countries have learned to develop strategies to sustain economic stability by imposing strict regulations instead of complete lockdown. Continuing the non-pharmacological interventions alongside vaccine rollout, most of the countries have significantly reduced the number of deaths and the infection rate. Consequently, governments have began stepwise lifting of lockdown restrictions (UK, Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Israel, Portugal, France, Denmark, Belgium, Germany). However, the transmission of variants of SARS-CoV-2 in a few European countries is a rising concern (UK and Portugal) (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 over 3.5 million lives to date (3,880,450) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 0.1 billion (178,837,204). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (3).

|--|

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	71,055,452
Europe	55,473,875
South-East Asia	34,262,347
Eastern Mediterranean	10,759,857
Africa	3,852,707
Western-Pacific	3,432,202

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 31% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. The number of **new cases and deaths in the past 7 days reduced by 6% and 12% respectively** (4).

According to IHME analysis, although the overall infection rate shows a declining trend, it is increasing in few European countries (Portugal, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom). Particularly in the UK and Portugal, the outbreaks are related to the Delta variant. IHME prediction shows the reduction in infection rate will persist until the end of August despite regional variations. The transmission of the Delta variant may contribute to a rise in infections and deaths earlier than expected. Nonetheless, there could be lower death rate this winter than last year. To avoid the winter surge, IHME is emphasizing policy strategies such as increasing vaccine confidence, mandatory face mask and social distancing and imposing travel restrictions to control the spread of the Delta variant (2)

The following table shows a 7-day average of daily new confirmed coronavirus cases, newly confirmed deaths and share of people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region reported on 21/06/2021 (table 2) (5) (6). Table2:

Table2:	Rolling 7-day average of	Rolling 7-day average of	Share of the
	daily new confirmed	daily new confirmed	population fully
	COVID-19 cases/mill	COVID-19 deaths/mill	vaccinated against
WHO-Europe region	people	people	COVID-19
Georgia	174.22	4.12	2.06%
United Kingdom	141.28	0.16	46.33%*
Portugal	108.35	0.29	28.74%
Russia	107.95	2.90	10.54%
Kyrgyzstan	104.80	0.83	N/A
Andorra	90.60	0.00	N/A
Monaco	83.72	0.00	N/A
Denmark	78.36	0.12	28.33% *
Sweden	76.30	0.00	N/A
Cyprus	75.51	0.00	N/A
Belarus	72.46	1.00	N/A
Spain	69.92	0.53	30.87%*
Ireland	66.98	1.10	N/A
Turkey	66.94	0.75	17.25%
Kazakhstan	57.60	0.17	8.88%
Latvia	56.60	3.03	26.22%
Netherlands	50.50	0.13	27.76%*
Greece	43.13	1.67	30.47%
Belgium	37.73	0.59	30.69%
Slovenia	36.70	0.62	28.83%
France	35.04	0.69	24.91%*
Norway	33.41	0.03	26.87%*
Lithuania	31.22	1.31	32.87%
Estonia	30.15	0.21	27.24%
Montenegro	29.11	0.68	20.43%
Armenia	25.55	0.53	N/A
Ukraine	24.12	1.24	0.83%
Croatia	20.98	1.04	22.13%*
Switzerland	20.78	0.23	N/A
Luxembourg	20.54	0.00	30.73%
Italy	18.15	0.60	26.56%
Serbia	17.34	0.71	36.04%*
Austria	14.88	0.29	28.05%
Finland	13.64	0.08	15.37%*
Bulgaria	13.55	1.75	10.84%
Moldova	12.64	0.67	5.89%
Czech Republic	12.59	0.68	24.40%
Uzbekistan	11.26	0.04	N/A
Germany	11.00	0.91	31.36%
Hungary	8.65	0.50	47.15%
Bosnia And Herzegovina	8.36	6.44	N/A
Slovakia	7.54	1.44	24.96%
North Macedonia	5.97	0.34	9.78%
Kosovo	5.32	0.07	0.92%*
Israel	4.95	N/A	59.52%
Poland	4.65	0.96	29.26%
Azerbaijan	4.58	0.11	10.26%
Romania	3.76	3.94	10.72%
Malta	2.59	0.32	65.74%
Albania	1.44	0.05	12.87%
San Marino	0.00	0.00	65.68%

<sup>\*</sup>data represents share of fully vaccinated people reported on 20/06/2021

#### **Switzerland:**

The 7-day rolling average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths are 20.78, 0.23 per million people respectively which was 39.05, 0.33 a week before. Given the declining trend in infection rate and increasing vaccination rate (47.2% of adults have received at least one dose whereas 30.6% of adults are fully vaccinated) the Federal council of Switzerland announced further relaxation of measures valid from 28<sup>th</sup> June such as, no more obligation to wear a mask outdoors, people are allowed to attend disco and dance halls with a COVID certificate, rule of a fixed number of people at the terrace of bars, restaurants is abolished (for indoor dining the limit is set to a maximum of 6 people per table). However, the mask requirement is mandatory in restaurants and retail stores. Also, the quarantine requirement is lifted for Schengen areas, and for third-country nationals, who are vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 are allowed to enter Switzerland (7). The Swiss Health Regulator Swissmedic has approved Pfizer/Bio-NTech vaccine for the age group 12 to 15 years starting from mid-July (8) (9).

#### **Hungary:**

Between 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 54 new cases and 4 new deaths were reported (which were 202 and 9 on the day before) (10). From 10<sup>th</sup> June the country has initiated vaccinating 12 to 15 year olds with consent from their parents (11). Nearly 5.5 million people received the first dose of the vaccine and just above 4.5 million people received the second dose of the vaccine (12). The launch of the COVID EU Vaccine Passport is expected by end of June in Hungary (13). The Hungarian authorities are expanding the scope of vaccination service by offering vaccine jabs to certain executive divisions at adjoining nations close to the Hungary border. However, there is no choice of vaccine for those who take the vaccine at these campaigns (14).

#### Portugal:

On 21<sup>st</sup> June, the incidence of COVID-19 in Portugal (national level) was 119.3 per 100.000 inhabitants which was 84.5 a week before and the reproduction number is above 1 (15). More than 60% of new infections are linked to the Delta variant particularly in the region of Lisbon and Tagus Valley (16). The authorities are planning to ramp up the vaccination among young adults to control the spread of the infection (17).

#### Bulgaria:

More than 1.6 million vaccine doses have been administered in Bulgaria. Yet, Bulgaria's Roma minority is facing a low rate of vaccinations, only about 10% is vaccinated against COVID-19. The main reason is the amount of misinformation that creates fear within this group to get vaccinated, such as myths that vaccinations will result in monitoring and chipping them. To address this misinformation, the government decided to make vaccinations free of charge and easy to access, as well as to start a campaign to emphasise the advantages of being vaccinated (18).

#### The Netherlands:

Newly reported COVID-19 infections decreased in the Netherlands from 53 per 100.000 to 34 per 100.000 last week. New hospital admissions also declined from 247 to 160 and more than 14 million vaccine doses have been administered so far (19). On June 26, the country will relax most COVID-19 measures, including wearing a face mask indoors and the advice to work at home. In addition, the Dutch government has announced offering free-of-charge COVID-19 tests for travellers during July and August. 3.5 million tests will be set aside for travellers who are not yet vaccinated but still wish to travel during summer. Both PCR and rapid antigen tests will be available and can be accessed through companies that are contracted by the Government (20).

#### **Ireland:**

Over the past 2 weeks, the cumulative incidence rate per 100.000 has slightly decreased from 103.7 to 93.1 (21). However, there is a concerning increase in transmission of the Delta variant of COVID-19 in Ireland. The variant now accounts for up to 20% of the cases last week and several outbreaks have been detected. Therefore, the country is focussing on vaccinating people as soon as possible with 340.000 vaccinations last week (22). Up to now, almost 1,5 million 1<sup>st</sup> dose vaccines have been administered in Ireland (23).

#### **United Kingdom:**

The increasing trend in the infection rate of the virus that was observed during week 23 continues into week 24, even with an incomplete dataset. On June 14, 10,099 new cases were reported, up from the 7,716 that were reported a week earlier (June 7) (24). As of June 21, 81.9% of the adult population has received the 1<sup>st</sup> dose whereas 59.8% is fully vaccinated (25). Most COVID-19 related restrictions are planned to be lifted on August 9 in Scotland, due to the success of vaccinations in reducing the burden on the national healthcare system (26).

#### Finland:

From June 15 to June 22, there have been 478 confirmed new cases in Finland, indicating a decreasing trend of infection. On June 22, Finland has vaccinated 55.5% of the population with the first dose and 15.4% fully (27). Starting June 21, Finland has lifted the restrictions on business travellers arriving in Finland from other parts of the EU and Schengen Area by land or sea. The same rules also apply to leisure travellers from the same group of countries who have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus or recovered from the coronavirus disease in the past six months (28).

#### Norway:

Norway is moving to Step 3 of 4 of its reopening plans. People are allowed more guests at home, working from home is not a requirement, and more people can attend events (29). In addition, starting July 5, Norway is increasing cross-border travel with the EEA, UK and EU's third country "safe list" (30). As of June 23, 27.33% of the population is fully vaccinated and 41.43% has received the first dose (31).

#### Sweden:

The infection rate in Sweden decreased over week 24. The Alfa variant remains dominant, although cases of the Delta variant increased in many regions (32). As of June 23, 54.5% of the population has received the first dose of vaccine, while 32.3% has received the second one as well (33).

#### Denmark:

At least five people tested positive for Covid-19 after attending the Euro 2020 games in Copenhagen, while the authorities urged those present on June 17 to get checked (34). As of June 24, approximately 55% of the population has received one dose of the vaccine, whereas approximately 29.9% is fully vaccinated (35).

#### Kazakhstan:

The rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Kazakhstan are 57.60 and 0.17 per million people respectively. In the capital region of Nur-Sultan, there is a sudden increase in the incidence rate due to the Delta variant for which the region remains in COVID-19 'red zone'. The presence of the Delta variant rose to 23% amongst the total samples tested (36) (37). In order to encourage people to receive their vaccine jabs, the capital city's industrialists are drawing the public's attention by offering discount coupons, household and computer equipment for vaccinated citizens (38). As on 21<sup>st</sup> June, the share of population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is 8.88% (table 2).

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 since the beginning of the pandemic until 21st June 2021:

## **Mediterranean Region:**

## Figure 1:

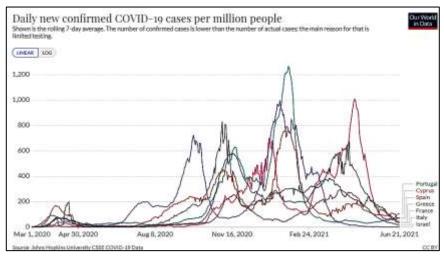
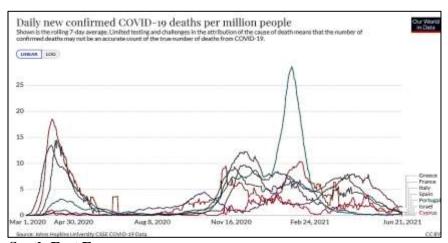


Figure 2:



## **South-East Europe:**

Figure 3:

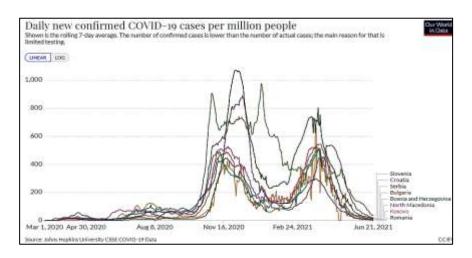
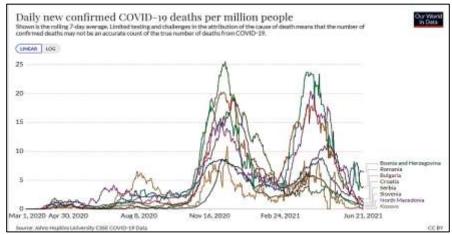


Figure 4:



# **Central Europe**

Figure 5:

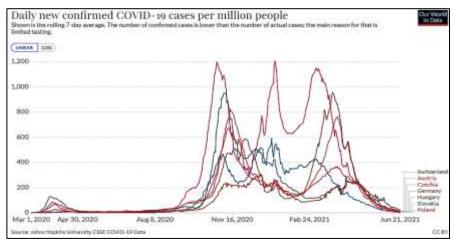
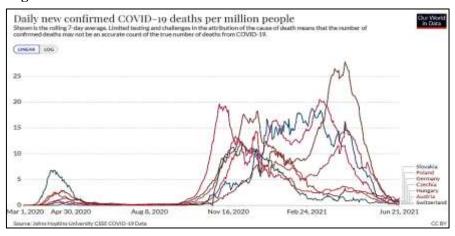


Figure 6:



## **Baltics and Nordic Countries:**

## Figure7:

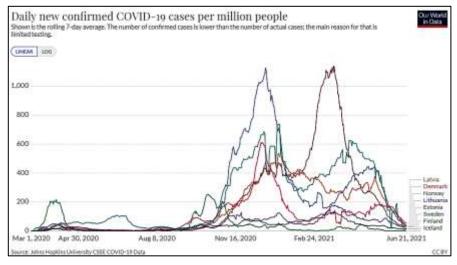
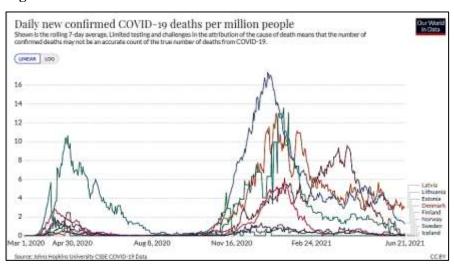


Figure 8:



# **North-western Europe:**

## Figure 9:

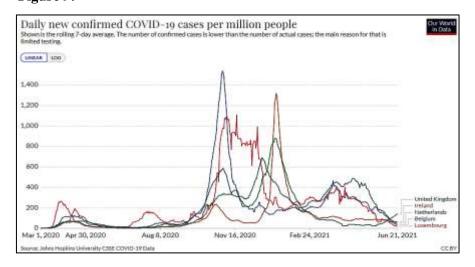
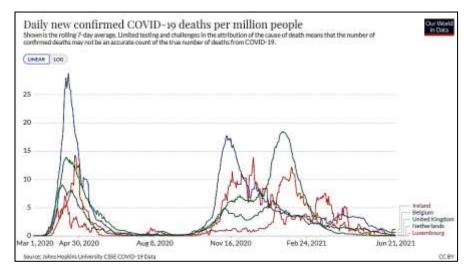


Figure 10:



## **Central Asia**

## Figure 11:

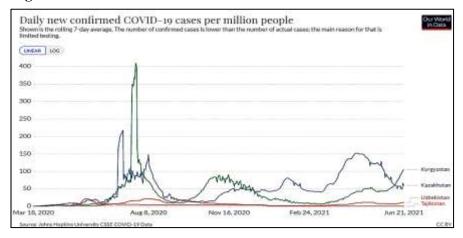
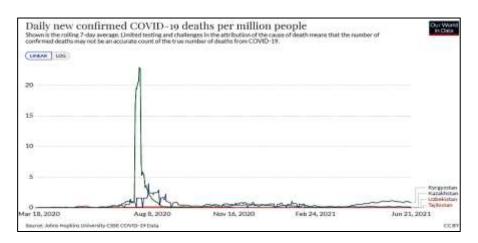


Figure 12:



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