

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of September 20th 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?

The Delta variant is the dominant variant in most of the European region. 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](#)). ECDC emphasizes that the vaccination program in the EU/EEA region should focus on ensuring that all eligible populations are vaccinated ([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 new variants of the COVID-19 virus ([link](#)).

ASPHER is concerned that countries are adopting different policies on rolling out a third vaccine dose. There should be greater international consensus and shared research to determine the vaccine efficacy and to prioritize age groups for the administration of third jab.

ASPHER recognizes the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving high levels of vaccination uptake. Also, countries should closely monitor new infection rates among both vaccinated and unvaccinated to understand the efficacy of the vaccine.

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-pharmacological 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 autumn. Read our statement [here](#).

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 the 'normal' everyday activity. Countries take several different approaches, with some considering 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).

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 4million lives to date (4,697,099) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two hundred million (228,807,631). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (2).

Table 1: Cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases since 30/12/2019

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	88,207,746
Europe	68,568,504
South-East Asia	42,594,207
Eastern Mediterranean	15,515,094
Western-Pacific	7,995,114
Africa	6,926,202

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 new cases declined by 4% and the number of new deaths rose by 1% compared to the previous week (3)

IHME analysis shows the Delta surges are regressing in Portugal, Italy, France, Spain, Central Asia, and few regions in Eastern Europe. Whereas in Austria, Germany, Sweden and Scotland the Delta variant transmission is progressing. At the moment, 53% of Europe's population is immune to the Delta variant which is expected to increase further by 14% by early January. Post-vaccination studies revealed that immunity acquired through vaccination to prevent infection is less likely and similar effects may also be seen on hospitalization and death. To contain the pandemic, countries should focus on a) enhancing the rate of vaccination through community outreach particularly in Eastern Europe where vaccine hesitancy is high b) imposing mask mandates c) administration of booster vaccine dose particularly to those who are more prone to severe illness d) implementing strict control measures at schools and e) preparation for the winter by improving health resources to avoid burden on hospitals due to COVID-19 and flu epidemic (4)

The following table shows a 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 20/09/2021 (table 2) (5) (6) (7).

Table2:

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 population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Serbia	1027.65	4.89	42.05%*
Montenegro	982.63	12.05	32.43%
Israel	829.06	2.42	63.61%
Georgia	506.53	12.28	18.07%
Slovenia	502.57	2.27	46.68%
United Kingdom	441.02	2.10	65.26%
Lithuania	411.01	5.26	60.18%
Estonia	351.22	1.62	44.44%
Turkey	322.67	2.84	49.72%
Albania	296.76	1.94	25.46%*
Croatia	285.81	2.35	41.01%
Latvia	261.77	2.45	43.39%
Ireland	257.48	0.69	72.62%
Moldova	251.77	2.45	18.77%
Bosnia And Herzegovina	237.17	9.72	N/A
Bulgaria	233.57	10.46	18.59%
North Macedonia	230.68	13.38	N/A
Armenia	230.68	6.02	4.36%
Greece	222.37	3.88	57.46%
Romania	219.57	4.15	27.52%
Austria	218.97	0.89	59.23%
Switzerland	212.97	0.79	53.06%
Belarus	202.84	1.32	N/A
Belgium	178.12	0.54	71.59%
Azerbaijan	170.62	2.70	32.84%
Kazakhstan	156.86	3.55	32.44%
Norway	147.83	0.37	65.13%
Kosovo	139.99	7.10	22.85%
Cyprus	139.48	2.41	N/A
Russia	131.34	5.29	28.08%
San Marino	130.21	0.00	71.65%
Luxembourg	121.97	0.00	N/A
Netherlands	118.75	0.51	N/A
Ukraine	115.35	2.23	11.96%
France	110.88	1.10	N/A
Slovakia	109.30	0.34	40.82%
Germany	105.14	0.62	62.70%
Sweden	97.93	1.01	N/A
Portugal	88.20	0.67	84.06%
Andorra	81.26	0.00	N/A
Iceland	79.88	0.00	N/A
Italy	69.36	0.94	65.89%
Finland	61.95	0.26	58.97%
Spain	61.94	1.55	77.20%
Denmark	58.59	0.39	74.65%
Malta	55.80	1.67	81.36%
Czech Republic	40.61	0.23	55.06%
Hungary	38.94	0.56	57.91%
Monaco	32.53	0.00	N/A
Uzbekistan	17.04	0.14	N/A
Poland	16.55	0.24	50.95%
Kyrgyzstan	11.94	0.34	8.62%
Tajikistan	0.00	0.00	16.05%

*data available at the latest on 19.09.2021

Estonia:

The rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases is 351.22 per mill people which was 310.79 in the previous week (8). A total of 682,830 people in Estonia have completed vaccination and 66.2% of adults received at least one dose of vaccine (9) (10). There are 180 patients in the hospital receiving coronavirus treatment. **Among the hospitalized, the proportion of unvaccinated individuals is double that of vaccinated (71.7% and 28.3% respectively) (10).**

Cyprus:

Between September 20 and 21, Cyprus recorded 117 new coronavirus cases and no deaths. Of 94 patients receiving treatment for COVID-19, 16 patients were intubated. **Among the hospitalized individuals 73.41% are unvaccinated (11).** The Ministry of Health initiated the administration of a third vaccine dose to age olds 86 and above at 7 walk-in centres from September 22. Individuals will receive mRNA as the third vaccine dose irrespective of the vaccine they have received earlier. The Health Ministry will announce the next eligible age group in the order of priority. Citizens who have completed their vaccination schedule by 31st March are eligible to receive the third dose and called upon according to the set age group (12).

Netherlands:

The epidemiological situation is improving in the Netherlands. Between September 14 and 21, the number of people who tested positive for COVID-19 dropped to 79 per 100 thousand inhabitants which was 94 in the previous week. During the same period, the number of new hospital and ICU admissions also decreased by 15% and 20% respectively (13). As of September 21, the reproduction number is 0.91 (14). 81.7% of people (aged 18 and above) have been fully vaccinated and 85.6% received at least one dose of vaccine (15). The Netherlands will start administration of booster vaccine doses to immune-compromised patients from October. From September 25, **the Netherlands is planning to abolish the 1.5mt distance rule and imposing a mandatory corona entry pass system to gain access to all indoor and outdoor events, bars and restaurants.** All the events will be closed from midnight to 6 am. However, wearing a face mask is mandatory in public transport and at airports (16).

Hungary: Between September 21 and 22, 501 new COVID-19 infections and 2 new deaths are reported. The new infections are attributable to the Delta variant. Currently, 406 patients are receiving treatment at the hospital for COVID-19 of which 46 patients are on ventilator support. A total of 646,000 people have had their third vaccine dose (17). **Because of emerging variants the country is planning to continue epidemic control measures until early January 2022 (18).** The government is encouraging all students (above 12years) to get their vaccine jab through school vaccine campaigns to limit the infection transmission also for uninterrupted face to face learning. Vaccine doctors are available at schools for running the campaign (19).

Slovenia:

Between 19 and 20 September, Slovenia recorded 1308new COVID-19 cases, 377 hospitalizations, and 3 deaths (20). As of 20 September, the share of the population who have received a full vaccine course is 47% (21). The vaccination rate among elderly home residents is 95.5%, while it stands at 60.5% among staff (22) **The government has introduced a new Ordinance introducing the recovered/vaccinated rule for the state administration as of 1 October 2021.** This means that the work on the premises of state administration (ministries, bodies within ministries, inspection services, police and armed forces, and administrative units) is only permitted if the recovered/vaccinated rule is met (23)

Croatia:

Between 20 and 21 September, Croatia recorded 1037 new COVID-19 cases and 689 new hospitalizations (24). The share of persons over 18 who have received a full vaccine course is 50%, which is 41% of the whole population. Among the over-65 population, 67% received a full vaccine course. The highest proportion of adults that received a full course is in the capital region of Zagreb (57%), while the lowest is in the rural Bjelovar-Bilogora County (42%) (25). **The Decision on necessary epidemiological measures which limits public events and gatherings will stay in effect until 30 September (26).**

Bulgaria:

Between 20 and 21 September, Bulgaria recorded 2360 new cases and 138 deaths (27). According to an analysis of 552 clinical samples with SARS-CoV-2 conducted by the National Center for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, 548 (99%) were of the Delta variant (28). The proportion of the population who have received a full vaccine course is 19% (29). **Anti-epidemic measures, which limit public gatherings and encourage remote work, will remain in force until 30 October.** Face-to-face education is allowed subject to distancing measures for up to 10 people in a room (30).

Romania:

Between 20 and 21 September, Romania recorded 6789 new cases, of which 80 are from reinfected patients who tested positive for more than 180 days after the first infection. The number of deaths was 129 (31). The proportion of the population who have received a full vaccine course is 27.5% (32). **The state of alert to combat the spread of COVID-19 remains in force, which permits most businesses and services to operate subject to social distancing and capacity restrictions and extends the facemask mandate indoors and in crowded outdoor areas such as fairs, markets, or public transport stations and all indoor public spaces (33).**

Finland: The incidence of COVID-19 is declining in Finland. Between September 6 to 19, the incidence is 107 per 100 thousand inhabitants, which was 146 per 100 thousand inhabitants in the previous 14 days. The number of patients requiring intensive care is also decreasing. **The incidence is high among those unvaccinated and partially vaccinated (34).** 66% of the people aged 12 and above have received two doses of vaccine (35). Finland is planning to administer third vaccine dose to the age olds 12 or above who are immune-compromised. These individuals can receive third jab after a minimum of two month duration from the date of second vaccination (36).

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 20th September 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

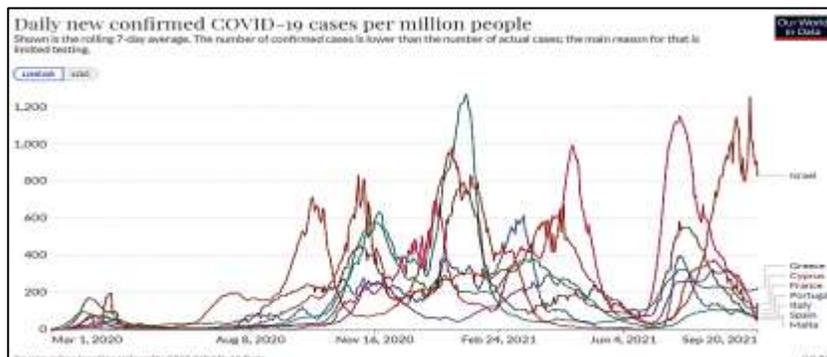
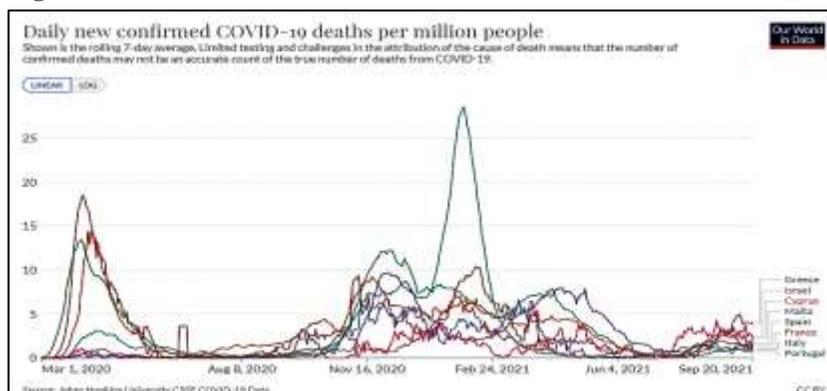


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

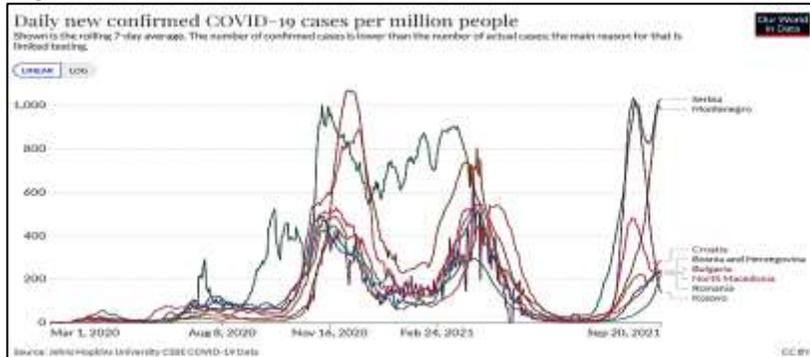
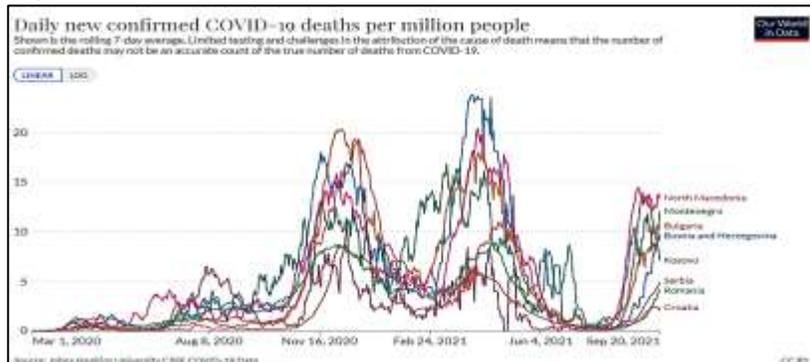


Figure 4:



Central Europe

Figure 5:

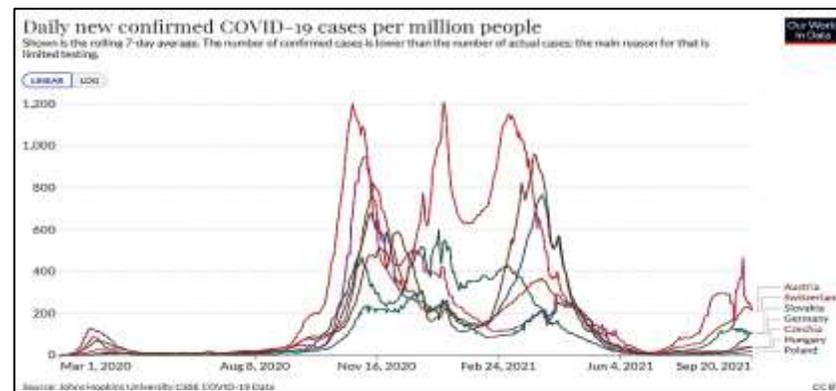
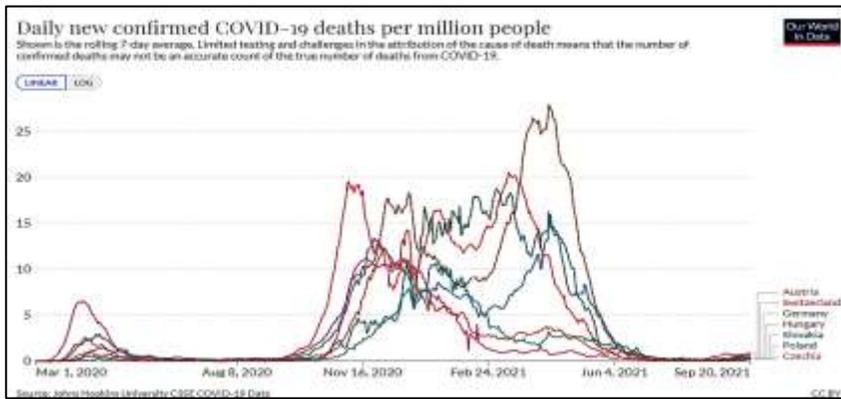


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

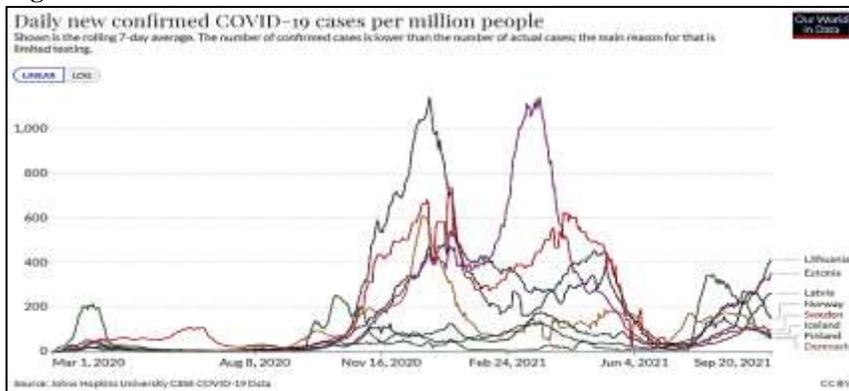
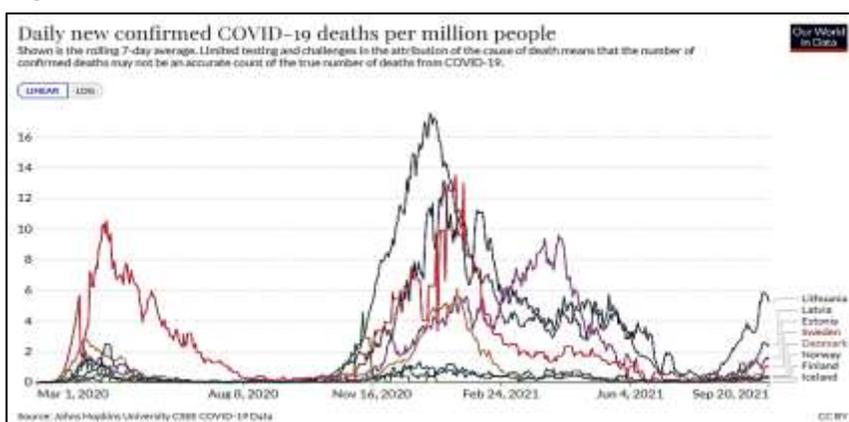


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

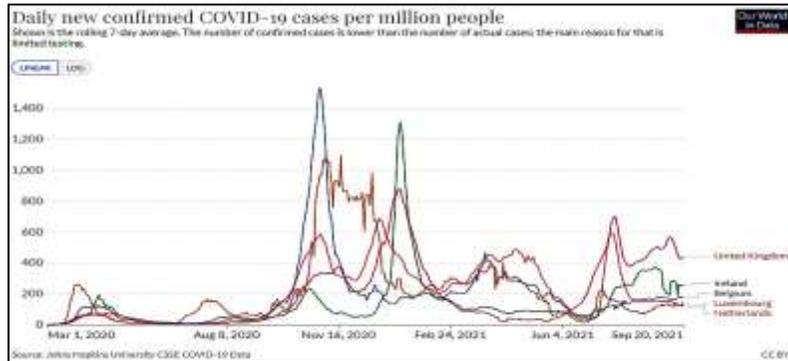
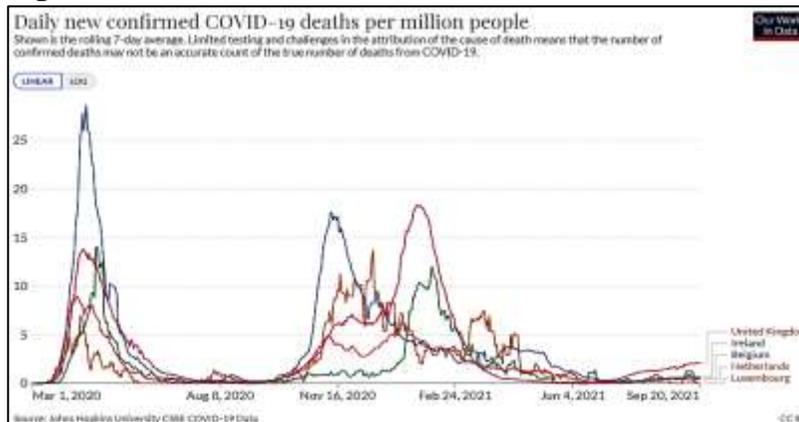


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

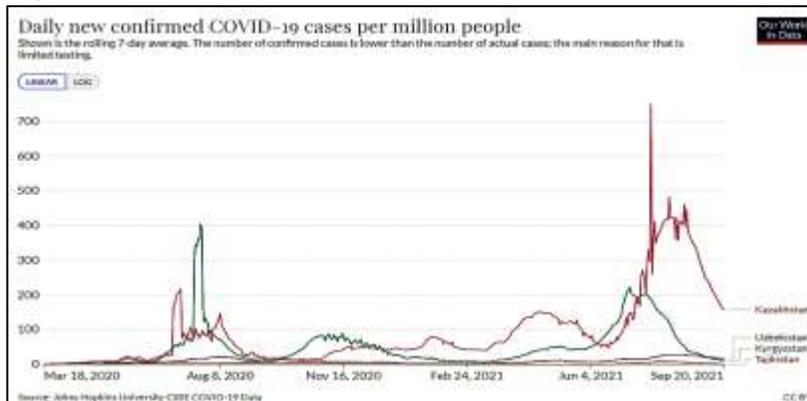
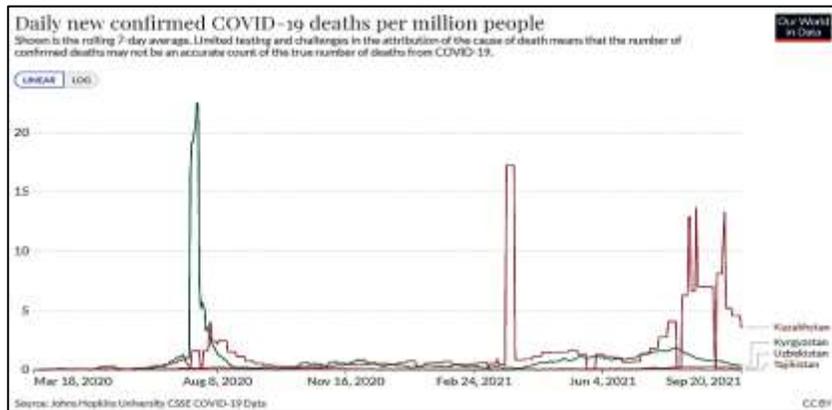


Figure 12:



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