COVID-19 EU Briefing 10 September 2020

Synopsis
The Commission has concluded exploratory talks with another potential vaccine provider while we are seeing the EU average infection rate still increasing.

General

Recovery
European Institutions

- Politico reported that the EPP have postponed an upcoming decision into whether Fidesz can remain a member of the grouping due to COVID-19. EPP President, Donald Tusk told MEPs that a sufficient number of member parties (14) had asked for the exclusion of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz.
- The next EPP Congress has been postponed from June to October 2021.

Transport

- Politico reported that Germany’s train network operator Deutsche Bahn has released a study to demonstrate that taking a train does not come with a high risk of coronavirus infection.
- The IMO have estimated that more than 300,000 seafarers and marine personnel are currently stranded at sea and unable to be repatriated despite the expiry of their contracts, urging crew changes to resolve a “humanitarian crisis”.

Budget

- The EU ambassadors agreed the Council's position on the 2021 EU draft budget. In total, the Council's position for next year's budget amounts to €162.9 billion in commitments and €164.8 billion in payments.
  - The Council is expected to formally adopt its position at the end of September and will submit it to the Parliament on 1 October.
  - The European Parliament is expected to adopt its amendments to the Council's position in the week starting 9 November.
  - If the Council's and the Parliament's positions diverge, a three-week conciliation period will start on 17 November.

Vaccine

- The European Commission has concluded exploratory talks with BioNTech-Pfizer to purchase a potential vaccine against COVID-19. A potential contract will enable the Commission to purchase 200 million doses on behalf of all EU Member States, plus an option to purchase up to a further 100 million doses, to be supplied once a vaccine has proven to be safe and effective against COVID-19.
Recovery

Member States

Infection Rate (measured by positive cases per 100,000 over 14 days)

- Spain (255.9 - 259.8) and France (125.5 – 130.4) recorded a medium increase in the infection rate, as they continue to cover two of the three top places with Luxembourg. On the other hand, smaller decreases were seen for Croatia (92.5 – 92.1), Bulgaria (25.1 -24.6), Poland (23.2 – 22.3) and Germany (21 -20.5), while Malta’s rate (82.9 – 79.8) has also started to decline.

Spain

- Spain will negotiate with Britain, Germany and Scandinavian countries to open travel corridors to the Balearics and Canaries islands, so that travellers will be exempted from self-quarantine.

Austria

- As Austria recorded 563 new COVID-19 cases within the past 24 hours on Wednesday, its daily infection rate has reached a level that was last seen in April.

Czech Republic

- Belgium and Germany decided to place Prague on their lists of high-risk regions.
- At the same time, Czech health minister Adam Vojtěch announced the reintroduction of country-wide obligations to wear face masks in indoor spaces, albeit not in classrooms.

Source: DeHavilland EU