

COVID-19 EU Briefing 15 September 2020

Synopsis

The average EU infection rate continues to rise mainly due to the increased cases recorded in Belgium, while Spain still holds the first place among EU countries. In an attempt to respond to the pandemic, the European Commission has started testing the interoperability of the contact tracing apps and the Parliament will hold a hearing on how to secure an effective vaccine.

General

COVID-19 Vaccine

- On Tuesday 22 September, ENVI and ITRE Committees will be holding a [joint public online hearing](#) on the critical issue of securing access to COVID-19 vaccines. Representatives of the pharmaceutical industry, academia, civil society and the European Medicines Agency will participate in the debate.

Recovery & Contact Tracing

- The **European Commission** has [announced](#) it is setting up an interoperability gateway service linking national apps across the EU. The gateway, a digital infrastructure that ensures the communication of information between national apps' backend servers, will ensure that apps will work seamlessly cross-borders. Users will only need to install one app.

Health Response

- During the [70th WHO Regional Committee for Europe](#), **European Commissioner for Health Stella Kyriakides** advocated for stronger cooperation in Europe against COVID-19.
- She also highlighted the need to join forces in promoting existing vaccines and fighting disinformation and vaccine hesitancy.

European Institutions

- **European Parliament President David Sassoli** said that the decision to relocate this week's plenary session from Strasbourg to Brussels was taken "“on the basis of information provided by the French medical services and authorities”".
- Representatives for European Parliament's political groups will [present](#) their priorities to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen today at 1600 (CEST), ahead of tomorrow's speech from the Commission President.

Development

- **Politico** cited the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [report](#) which highlighted that 25 years of progress in international development has been wiped out in “25 weeks” due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The news comes with the [publication](#) of the 2020 Goalkeepers Report.

Member States

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

- Belgium’s infection rate has increased dramatically - rising from 55.5 to 70.6 (13/09 compared to 14/09).
- The Czech Republic (106.2 – 111), the Netherlands (65.8 – 69.2) and Ireland (41 – 45.4) have also recorded increases.
- Spain has not recorded a rise in the past 24hrs (270.6). However, it remains the highest among the EU27+1.
- Meanwhile, Croatia (86 – 83.7) and Portugal (57 – 53.9) have recorded declines in their infection rates.
- The average among the EU27+1 has risen from 56.7 to 58.5.

France

- The **Financial Times** [reported](#) that Bordeaux and Marseille have cut the number of people that can gather in public places to 10, banned drinking outside and dance parties, extended the mandatory wearing of masks and said drinking and eating in bars is only permitted while sitting down.

Austria

- Austrian Health Minister Rudolf Anschober presented the revised version of the country's new COVID-19 law, which would give the government the power to order citizens to only leave their homes for certain reasons, such as grocery shopping or sports.

Luxembourg

- EU citizens [will be allowed](#) to travel to the country if they want to visit relatives as long as they are the spouse, registered partner, children (under 21), a direct descendant of an EU citizen or their spouse.

Slovakia

- Bratislava has [become](#) a so-called "red zone" following a spike of cases of COVID-19.
- From 14 September, a maximum of 100 people will be allowed to attend outdoor events, while no more than 50 will be permitted to take part in interior events.

Romania

- The Romanian government extended its state of alert by a further 30 days from 15 September.

Source: DeHavillandEU