COVID-19 EU Briefing 23 September 2020

Synopsis
While the EU Council Summit will not take place as scheduled at the end of this week but one week later, the General Affairs Council has met to be briefed on the MFF and the Recovery Fund. Furthermore, the EP ITRE and ENVI Committees held a public hearing in the state of play of the Covid-19 vaccine development, distribution, and approval within the EU and beyond.

General Recovery Council

- The presidency briefed ministers during the General Affairs Council. Ministers underlined the need to finalise all the procedures on the MFF and the Recovery Fund as soon as possible.
- On COVID-19 coordination, Member states expressed broad support for the proposed approach to the collection and presentation of data by the ECDC and stressed the importance of clear and timely communication between member states.

Medical Reserves

- Denmark, Greece, Hungary and Sweden have joined Germany and Romania as host states of the rescEU medical equipment reserve. EU Member States are building up common European stocks of lifesaving protective and other vital medical equipment that can be distributed across Europe at times of medical emergencies.

Vaccine

- The EP ITRE and ENVI Committees held a public hearing in the state of play of the Covid-19 vaccine development, distribution, and approval within the EU and beyond.
  - There was a debate on the liability aspect, with some arguing that profit seeking companies should take on the risks, while pharma companies noted that the industry could not take the liability for the vaccine, but Governments would have to take on those risks.
  - The EMA representative was very insistent that all safety regulations and guidelines would be followed stringently in any case of approval.
  - A vaccine could be ready in the next six to twelve months. Vaccines Europe hoped to see data from phase 3 studies by the end of 2020.

Minimum wage

- The Civil Society Network, Social Platform, has published its position paper on the need for an EU Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income. The paper highlights that in 2018 21.7% of EU citizens were living at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and therefore calls for a legally binding directive which would lay the foundation for a basic social safety net. It notes
that such a Framework Directive would mitigate the immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Automobile**

- **Data** from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association show that EU-wide production losses due to COVID-19 amounted to 3,649,677 motor vehicles from 1 January to 30 June 2020, or some 20% of total production in 2019.

**Member States**

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

- Denmark’s infection rate has increased significantly from 74.1 to 89.7 (21/09 compared to 22/09).
- Spain (300.5 – 310.9), the Czech Republic (198 – 207), Luxembourg (147.9 – 157.4) and Portugal (75.6 – 84.6) have also recorded increases.
- However, Malta has recorded a substantial decline (120.4 – 112.9).
- There have also been marginal declines in the rates of Romania (91.5 – 91.1), Croatia (72.6 – 71.4), Sweden (26.7 – 26.1) and Finland (13.7 – 13).
- The average infection rate amongst the EU27+1 has risen from 78.5 to 81.2.

**Austria**

- States in Western Austria have decided to force restaurants and bars to close earlier at 10pm rather than 1am as COVID-19 cases increased across the country.

**Spain**

- Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa and Madrid mayor José Luis Martínez-Almeida recommended on Tuesday to limit mobility in the county’s capital “to a minimum”, although it is currently not necessary to declare a “State of Alarm” in Madrid.

**Belgium**

- The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Philippe Goffin, announced that as of Friday 25 September the travel ban to the red zones will be replaced by a negative travel advice, which strongly discourages travel to these zones.

*Source: DeHavillandEU*