

COVID-19 EU Briefing 19 November 2020

General

Recovery

MFF

- The Conference of Presidents [reaffirmed](#) the European Parliament's position regarding the deal reached with the Council on the MFF regulation and the regulation on Rule of Law conditionality. They asked the Council to adopt the package and begin the ratification process as soon as possible, as all agreements reached are a closed deal and can in no way be reopened.

Vaccine

- **Pfizer** and **BioNTech** [announced](#) that, after conducting the final efficacy analysis in their ongoing Phase 3 study, their mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine candidate is 95% effective against COVID-19 beginning 28 days after the first dose.
 - Observed efficacy in adults over 65 years of age was over 94%, while no serious safety concerns observed; the only Grade 3 adverse event greater than 2% in frequency was fatigue at 3.8% and headache at 2.0%
- EMA's human medicines committee (CHMP) [has started](#) a 'rolling review' of data on a vaccine for COVID-19 known as mRNA-1273, which is being developed by Moderna Biotech

Treatment

- Five research organisations from the EU and South Korea [signed](#) a letter of intent (LOI) for international joint research on COVID-19 treatment, using the repurposed Raloxifene molecule.
- The **European Commission** adopted a [recommendation](#) on the use of rapid antigen tests for the diagnosis of COVID-19. The recommendation provides guidance on how to select rapid antigen tests, when they are appropriate and who should perform them.

General considerations:

- Most of the currently available rapid antigen tests show a lower sensitivity compared to RT-PCR tests.
- Rapid antigen tests can offer a significant advantage over RT-PCR tests **in terms of simplicity of equipment needed, lower demands of highly skilled operators, price and timeliness of results.**
- Regarding the possibility to use of antigen tests in asymptomatic persons, it should be noted that, until now, very limited data is available regarding the performance of rapid antigen tests in this context.
- The European Commission recommended **the use of rapid COVID-19 antigen tests mostly on people already showing symptoms.**

- The Commission has launched a **joint procurement with Member States to facilitate the fair and equitable access to rapid antigen tests.**

REACT

- The **German Presidency of the Council** and the **European Parliament** [reached](#) a political agreement on REACT-EU. It is intended primarily to bolster health services, jobs and small and medium-sized enterprises while stimulating the twin green and digital transitions.

The additional resources will be available over two years:

- €37.5 billion in 2021
- €10 billion in 2022

Institutions

- Politico reported that the decision to discourage MEPs from coming to the European Parliament “had immediate positive effects” according to European Parliament President David Sassoli. He added that: “the data is clear: the curve is falling ... The measures adopted were thus necessary, proportionate and have proved effective.”

Member States

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

- The Netherlands’ infection rate has reduced from 488.6 to 468.7 (17/11 compared to 18/11).
- Luxembourg (1301.7 – 1241.6), the Czech Republic (1076.3 – 1002.7) and Belgium (755 – 657.9) have also recorded a decline.
- However, Sweden (511.9 – 556.5), Croatia (806.1 – 818.8) and Portugal (767 – 785.1) have noted an increase in their infection rates.
- The average infection rate amongst the EU27+1 has declined from 586 to 582.

Portugal

- Portugal [has set up](#) a taskforce to come up with a COVID-19 vaccination strategy and hopes to be prepared to start distributing shots as early as January.

Germany

- The German government adopted amendments to the Infection Protection Act which outlines the regulations and rules and restrictions of how wearing masks and other measures can be made mandatory.

Greece

- **Health Minister Vasillis Kikilias** [outlined](#) the government's plan for the vaccination of the country's population against the novel coronavirus.
- There will be 1,018 vaccination centres designated to serve some 2,117,440 citizens per month: health system workers will receive it first, followed by vulnerable groups and the general population.
- Vaccination for the general population will be carried out by appointment in the mornings and afternoons every day except Sundays.

Source: DeHavillandEU