

COVID-19 EU Briefing 20 January 2021

General

Eurogroup and ECOFIN

- Following a meeting of the Eurogroup, Commissioner Gentiloni [highlighted](#) concern that there was a risk that Member States may recover from the Covid-19 crisis at different rates.
- He suggested that the roll-out of the Recovery and Resilience Facility will be key to face this challenge.
- He called on Member States RRF plans to get the right balance between investments and reforms.
- The Commissioner also noted that progress is required in regard to the ratification by the Member States of the Own Resources Decision.
- Meanwhile, Eurogroup President, Paschal Donohoe, [reiterated](#) the strong consensus on the need to maintain a supportive budgetary stance, as well as the importance of coordinating our efforts at the euro area level.
- Following the Economics and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Council, European Commission Vice-President Dombrovskis [highlighted](#) the need to get Recovery and Resilience Facility funds *“flowing to regions and people across Europe as a matter of urgency.”*

Recovery

European Commission

- The European Commission published [a communication](#) setting out a number of actions needed to step up the fight against the pandemic.

Key targets:

- **By March 2021**, Member States should have vaccinated a minimum of 80% of health and social care professionals and people over 80 years old.
- **By summer 2021**, Member States should have vaccinated a minimum of 70% of the adult population.
- Member States should update their testing strategies to account for new variants and expand the use of rapid antigen tests

Recovery Plans:

- The European Commission warned on Tuesday that Member States should include more ambitious targets in their recovery plans. In particular, the Commission has warned those who already sent their drafts that they should further strengthen the reform component.
- Governments are finalising their drafts with the aim of sending their final versions by the end of February.

Pfizer and BioNTech

- Reuters [reports](#) that officials and healthcare professionals in France, Germany and Switzerland are drawing fewer than the approved six doses from Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine vials. That means that for 200,000 vials of the two-shot vaccine, 600,000 people can be inoculated at six doses per vial, compared with 500,000 at just five.

CureVac Contract:

- The redacted Advance Purchase Agreement with CureVac has become public. You can read it [here](#).

Member States

Germany

- Germany [extended](#) its COVID-19 lockdown on Tuesday to February 14 over concerns about more transmissible variants. Non-essential shops, gyms and restaurants, as well as daycare centres and the majority of schools, will thus remain closed. Private gatherings remain limited to just one person outside the household.
- Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called on EU partners to agree on measures to halt new variants of coronavirus, otherwise, borders checks will have to be re-introduced.

Belgium

- The Belgian government [is postponing](#) the vaccinations of hospital staff as Pfizer is delivering fewer vaccines to the country than anticipated. The hospitals will be allowed to use the vaccines that they have in the freezer, but may then have to postpone the vaccinations for two weeks.

Poland

- Poland's prosecutors [will be included](#) in the "first group" and receive priority access to the vaccines against COVID-19 under the national vaccination plan, according to which medical staff and the elderly who are part of the "zero group" received the vaccine first.

Source: DeHavillandEU