

## COVID-19 EU Briefing 22 January 2021

### General

#### European Council

- During the leaders videoconference, **Member states** have unanimously [agreed](#) on a Council recommendation setting a common framework for the use of rapid antigen tests and the mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results across the EU.
  - Moreover, they also [agreed](#) that measures restricting non-essential travel in the EU may be needed to contain the spread of the virus. The Council may need to review its recommendations on intra-EU travel and non-essential travels into the EU.
  - In that context, EC President [proposed](#) a newly introduced category of 'dark red' – a dark red zone that would show that in this zone the virus is circulating at a very high level. Persons travelling from dark red areas could be required to do a test before departure as well as to undergo quarantine after arrival.
  - On the vaccination certificate, leaders agreed to work on a standardised and interoperable form of proof of vaccination for medical purposes. In what circumstances these certificates could be used, that it will be determined later.

### Recovery

#### COVID-19 Vaccine

- Reuters [reported](#) that Pfizer and BioNTech have agreed to supply their COVID-19 vaccine to the World Health Organization co-led COVAX vaccine access scheme.

#### Insolvency

- The European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) has published a [paper](#) on 'Preparing for the post-pandemic rise in corporate insolvencies'.
  - The ESRB argue that the key challenge will be to distinguish between viable firms and 'zombie' firms that have become non-viable in the new economic environment.
  - For viable firms, the ESRB argues that policy should aim to facilitate debt restructuring, relying on formal or informal insolvency procedures
  - Meanwhile, in the case of non-viable firms, policy should seek to facilitate the reallocation of resources to more productive uses.

#### Monetary Decisions

- The Governing Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) has [published](#) its latest monetary policy decisions. The ECB has left rates and purchase targets unchanged, continuing its 'accommodative policy stance. In a press conference, ECB president Christine Lagarde [said](#) "uncertainty remains high" and hoped that the ECB's expansionary policy would avoid the 'tightening of financial conditions'.

## Member States

### Spain

- The health personnel in the 6-million strong “Comunidad de Madrid” had to [stop vaccinating](#) against the coronavirus because the region “has no more (Pfizer) vaccines” available, Madrid Regional Health Minister Enrique Ruiz Escudero of the centre-right Popular Party (PP) warned on Thursday.

### Portugal

- Portugal’s schools [will close](#) for two weeks in an attempt to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, Prime Minister António Costa has announced.

### Bulgaria

- Bulgarian Health Minister Kostadin Angelov [will propose](#) to the government to extend by three months the current emergency situation, set to end at the end of January.

### The Netherlands

- The Netherlands [will impose](#) a curfew on its citizens, beginning Saturday, in an attempt to halt the rapid spread of a new coronavirus variant.

*Source: DeHavillandEU*