COVID-19 EU Briefing 22 February 2021

General

COVID-19 Vaccine

- Maltese Prime Minister Robert Abela wrote a letter to European Council President Charles Michel, highlighting that “a genuine Single Market for pharmaceuticals for patients does not exist”.
- Abela urges Member States to oblige pharma companies “to make products available everywhere in the EU within a reasonable time, once a product is marketed in a single Member State”.
- The basis of its letter was the delayed deliveries of vaccines from AstraZeneca, which aggravated the existing problems.

COVAX:

- The European Union has announced an additional €500 million for the COVAX Facility, doubling its contribution to date for the global initiative.
- The President of the European Investment Bank Werner Hoyer welcomed the global engagement to scale up support for the international COVAX vaccine-access facility.

Pfizer:

- BioNTech co-founder Uğur Şahin confirmed that the German company’s first price estimate for the mRNA vaccine was priced at €54 per dose.

Italy:

- British company AstraZeneca announced a 10-15% reduction in vaccine doses planned for delivery in Italy this week because of “the complex production process”. AstraZeneca later assured Italy that it will respect the commitment to supply the country with 4.2 million doses in the first quarter of the year.

Poland:

- Speaking to radio broadcaster Radio Zet on Saturday, Polish Health Minister Adam Niedzielski blamed the EU’s vaccination procurement policy for the third coronavirus wave in Europe.
- According to him, the European Commission should use its weight against pharmaceutical companies, which it had also sponsored through investment grants prior to the start of vaccine production to co-finance research
Member States

Estonia

- A 10-day restriction on the freedom of movement applies on entering Estonia from a country in the European Union, European Economic Area and the Schengen area with an infection rate above 150 persons per 100,000 inhabitants in the past 14 days.
- The restriction on the freedom of movement does not apply to passengers arriving from Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Greece, Liechtenstein, Norway and Finland.

Luxembourg

- Luxembourg’s parliament voted on Friday to extend COVID-19 restrictions for another month, meaning restaurants and bars will remain closed, mask-wearing in shops will remain mandatory and people must continue respecting quarantine measures.

Bulgaria

- Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov announced the establishment of a green corridor for anyone wishing to get the vaccine when people from the pre-set priority groups remain hesitant about it.
- While GPs are expected to start vaccinating Monday, some hospitals have already announced they will vaccinate 24/7, and authorities have promised that an electronic vaccine registration system will be launched in March, while people are now queuing without having set up an appointment. Borissov has set the goal of immunising at least 10,000 people a day.

Belgium

- No significant easing of restrictions should be expected to come out of next Friday’s Consultative Committee meeting, Federal Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke warned on Sunday.

The Netherlands

- The Dutch parliament’s upper house approved late Friday legislation to keep its nighttime curfew in place until at least March 3, in order to comply with a court ruling that the measure lacked legal justification.

France

- Nice’s Mayor has called for a weekend lockdown of the area following a rapid increase in Covid-19 infections.
Ireland

- Taoiseach Micheál Martin has stated that Ireland’s hospitality sector will not reopen prior to mid-summer due to the high level of COVID-19 infections.

International

G7 Statement

- The leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) published a statement following their meeting. They noted their commitment to the COVAX and ACT-A facilities and invited all partners, including the G20 and International Financial Institutions, to join them in increasing support to ACT-A, including to increase developing countries’ access to WHO-approved vaccines through the COVAX facility.

Source: DeHavillandEU