COVID-19 EU Briefing 24 February 2021

General

Economy

- **Eurogroup President**, Paschal Donohoe, addressed an Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee meeting during the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU.
- He noted the Commission's forecast of an unprecedented economic contraction of 6.8% in the Eurozone.
- Donohoe highlighted the importance of maintaining emergency COVID-19 economic support.
- He outlined the need to gradually shift to targeted fiscal support measures and focus on a sustainable economic recovery in line with EU green and digital transition priorities.
- Donohoe stressed the requirement for structural reforms aimed at fostering sustainable growth and mobilising private and public investment.

COVID-19 Vaccine

- As AstraZeneca expects to deliver less than half the COVID-19 vaccines it was contracted to supply in the second quarter, the **prime ministers of Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Poland and the President of Lithuania**, on the initiative of Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, sent a letter to Charles Michel, calling for immediate action and support to European-based vaccines manufacturers to address the ongoing vaccines’ shortage.

EU Leaders meeting:

- President Charles Michel invited EU leaders to a videoconference on 25-26 February to discuss the actions against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Their priority will be to speed up vaccinations across the EU and will require looking at solutions to bring manufacturers across supply chains together in order to scale-up production in the EU, Michel said.
- A common approach to vaccination certificates will be also discussed in the meeting.

COVID-19 Treatment

- The **European Medicines Agency** has started evaluating an application to extend the use of Veklury (remdesivir) to include treating adults with COVID-19 who do not require supplemental oxygen.

Airlines

- The RENA - Association of Portuguese Airlines on Tuesday insisted on the implementation of rapid tests for Covid-19 at airports, stressing also that there is an urgent need for a harmonised reduction of imposed restrictions and the end of quarantines.
Member States

Restrictions

- Politico reported that the European Commission has criticised EU member states who have imposed travel restrictions on other EU countries. The EC has sent a letter to Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Sweden which requests them to lift their restrictions.

Cyprus

- Cyprus has achieved its first target of vaccination coverage of the elderly, ranking 2nd among EU member states, in terms of vaccination of people aged 80 and over.
- Therefore, the Ministry of Health announced that 16,904 vaccination appointments will be available for people aged 71 and over, in all Vaccination Centres in the whole of Cyprus.

Finland

- Finland is in the process of preparing a digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate. The certificate would show that the person has been vaccinated against COVID-19. The digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate would include at least the following information:
  - Necessary information about the person who has been vaccinated
  - Information about the vaccine that has been administered
  - Information about the administration of the vaccine
  - Identification data, such as details of the organisation that administered the vaccine

Italy

- Municipalities in the province of Brescia, in Lombardy, went the “enhanced orange” zone, which implies the closure of schools and non-essential shops, as well as teleworking wherever possible.

Ireland

- Ireland is to extend its third coronavirus lockdown until April 5 but will partially reopen schools from March 1, Prime Minister Micheal Martin said on Tuesday.

Source: DeHavillandEU