COVID-19 EU Briefing 25 February 2021

General

COVID-19 Vaccine

- According to a real world study in Israel, two doses of the Pfizer vaccine cut symptomatic COVID-19 cases by 94% across all age groups, and severe illnesses by nearly as much. The study of about 1.2 million people also showed a single dose was 57% effective in protecting against symptomatic infections after two weeks.

Vaccinations Passports:

- As EU leaders will discuss the coordination of vaccination passports, the European Commission is cautious with EU member states moves to unilaterally issue a certificate.
- The initial Greek proposal is backed mainly by countries whose economies are heavily reliant on tourism, such as Cyprus, Spain, Malta, Portugal, and Italy, Estonia. Romania, Germany and France are opposed to this, saying that Europe cannot have a certificate for travel reasons until all EU citizens have equal access to vaccines.
- Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has proposed to introduce a “green pass” for those who do not pose a health risk. According to Kurz, three categories of people would be granted such a pass: those who already received the vaccine, those who have already been infected, and those who have been tested very recently.

TRIPS Waiver:

- In a declaration the coordination of vaccination passports, a cross-party group of 115 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have urged the European Commission and the European Council to drop their opposition to the TRIPS waiver proposal at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Regdanvimab

- The European Medicines Agency has started a ‘rolling review’ of data on the monoclonal antibody regdanvimab (also known as CT-P59), which is being developed by Celltrion, for the treatment of COVID-19. The rolling review will continue until enough evidence is available to support a formal marketing authorisation application.

Summer Tourism

- Ahead of the 1 March extraordinary meeting of Ministers of Tourism, 15 European stakeholders in aviation and tourism have written to the Portuguese Presidency of the EU to put their efforts into the co-ordination of all restrictive measures related to COVID-19.
- Co-ordination of COVID-19 related measures amongst all EU member states, including co-ordinated travel restrictions, is essential to restore confidence in both the tourism and aviation sector in time for the upcoming season.
Member States

Poland

- Poland has banned covering the mouth and nose with scarves, neckerchiefs, bandanas, or plastic visors, and allowed the use of tight-fitting masks. Under the new ban, people will be allowed to wear cotton masks as surgical masks or masks with filters such as the FFP2 have not been made mandatory.

Belgium

- The Belgian government has recommended that the textile mouth masks which have been distributed free of charge through pharmacists since last June should no longer be used as they may contain harmful substances.

Bulgaria

- Reuters report that the Bulgarian health minister has accused AstraZeneca of failing to deliver the required number of vaccine doses.

Denmark

- Reuters reports that Denmark is planning to reopen shops and some schools to re-open in March – the Prime Minister has called it a ‘calculated risk’.

Source: DeHavillandEU