



## Note from the Presidency

Brussels, 03 February 2021

### COVID-19 | IPCR Working Level Roundtable Monday, 8 February 2021 at 10h00

Dear Colleagues,

The next IPCR Working-level Roundtable focusing on health and border issues is scheduled for Monday, 8 February at 10h00 and will be divided between information items and discussion items, as follows:

#### Information items

We will be briefed by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on the **evolution of the epidemiological situation** and on the risk related to the **spread of new SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern in the EU/EEA**.

We will also be **updated by the European Commission on the most recent developments**, including on the measures at the external and internal borders and COVID-19 free movement restrictions, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the COVID-19 Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) Mobility Package. The "Update summary" from the Commission will be circulated as usual.

#### Discussion items

The Commission will **debrief us about the Health Security Committee (HSC) meeting** that took place on 2 February. This presentation will consider the progress made at the HSC level on different work strands.

As you know, on 21 January the Council unanimously agreed on a [Council Recommendation on a common framework for the use and validation of rapid antigen tests and the mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results in the EU \(2021/C 24/01\)](#). Now we must focus on the operationalization of the Council Recommendation. The HSC is working on a **common list of rapid antigen tests**,



which fulfil the minimum standard criteria and have been validated by one or more Member States, as mandated by the Leaders in EUCO on 10-11 December and stated in the Commission Communication "[A united front to beat COVID-19](#)". The HSC is also working on a **standard set of data to be included on the test results form**. In IPCR, the Commission will present the work done so far at the technical level and Member-States will be invited to share their views.

As a follow up to the EUCO on 10-11 December, we have discussed in IPCR on 18 January the **most appropriate approach to vaccination certificates** from a political point of view, with the aim of informing the technical work underway in the HSC and the eHealth Network.

In the [oral conclusions drawn by President Charles Michel following the video conference of the members of the European Council on 21 January 2021](#), it was clear Leaders agreed to work on a **standardized and inter-operable form of proof of vaccination for medical purposes** and will determine at a later stage in what circumstances these certificates could be used. On this basis, on 27 January, the eHealth Network has approved the [guidelines on "proof of vaccination for medical purposes - basic interoperability elements"](#). The guidelines aim to support interoperability between vaccination certificates if MS decide to implement them. Although these guidelines have no binding character, Member-States or other parties are nevertheless recommended to take them into account if and when deciding to set up their technical solutions for proof of vaccination. The Presidency will invite the Commission to present the state of play and plans for the future work at the technical level. Member-States will take stock of the progress achieved so far.

Then, we intend to follow-up with the comments previously made by several Member-States in IPCR and in COREPER regarding a **potential EU medical certificate to attest the full recovery of confirmed COVID-19 cases**, which could exempt individuals to undergo testing for a certain period of time following their full recovery. As ECDC concluded that "*the detection of viral RNA in clinical specimens after becoming symptom-free does not mean that the patient is infectious; (...) there is increasing evidence to support that asymptomatic patients are unlikely to be infectious after day 10*", the Presidency invites the Commission



to elaborate on its plans to advance this work based on scientific evidence. Member-States will be invited to share their views on the subject.

Finally, we will revert to the issue of coordination in **communicating on the safety, efficacy and importance of the COVID-19 vaccines to halt the COVID-19 pandemic** to take note of the "Communication regarding Covid-19 vaccination - options for further coordination", attached to this note. The document was produced by the Working Party on Information, following the IPCR tasking of 7 January and is based on the discussions held in the Working Party on Information meeting on 19 January. It outlines options for enhancing coordination among Member States and EU bodies and ensuring clear and coherent messaging to the public in order to manage expectations. The report identifies the work undertaken by the Commission, the HSC Communicators' Network, EEAS and EMA, gathers the inputs from Member-States on additional communication support needed from the EU and proposes steps forward.

Having concluded the discussion on health issues, we will then turn to the **periodic review of Annex I of the [Council Recommendation 2020/912](#), last amended by [Council Recommendation 2021/89](#), on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction.**

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The Presidency, after having considered the latest updates from ECDC and EEAS on the evolution of the epidemiological situation around the world and taking into consideration the Council Recommendation amending Council Recommendation 2020/912 adopted 2 February, doesn't see the need to propose any further changes. The Presidency will continue to closely monitor the situation in particular

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In line with the Recommendation, the next periodic review will be carried out on 22 February according to the recently amended criteria and adapted data sources. Nonetheless, if it is proven that the epidemiological situation worsens quickly and, in particular, a high incidence of variants of concern of the virus is detected in any of the countries in Annex I, the Presidency will revert to this topic as appropriate.

We are looking forward to meeting you again on 8 February and to the fruitful discussions ahead.

On behalf of the Portuguese Presidency COVID-19 | IPCR Team,

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