# Summary of replies by Members of the Scientific Advice Platform on COVID-19 to the questionnaire

This document provides an overview of the feedback received by Members of the Scientific Advice Platform on Covid-19 in reply to the questionnaire circulated on 23 February. It is intended to provide a basis for discussions under agenda item 4 during the meeting on 18 March, and reactions by the members on the below are most welcome.

To date, replies were received from 13 Members (AT, CY, CZ, DE, ES, GR, HU, LV, MT, NL, RO, SE, SK).

Overall, Members highly appreciate the added value of the Scientific Advice Platform on COVID-19 ('the platform') and strongly encourage its continuation. Two Members foresee an even reinforced role of the platform in the context of closer cooperation and harmonisation in the EU regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some suggestions were received regarding format and content of the meetings.

## 1) Content

**Most of the Members (9) who replied state that the most important issues are addressed in the meetings.**

While acknowledging time constraints and the need to focus on the most urgent matters, some additional items are suggested for discussions, such as:

- A more detailed discussion on the framework for the easing of COVID-19 measures developed and presented by ECDC as well as the green certificate;
- General scientific reflections on the virus' biology, epidemiology and non-pharmaceutical interventions for more harmonised views amongst the experts;
- Epidemiological: description of clusters and where they occur, and mathematical modelling;
- Contact tracing and mass use of free antigen testing;
- Vaccines: exchange of current knowledge, including on early signs of their effects, and up-dates on vaccine contracts, purchase and delivery times;
- Clinical aspects: clinically recovered COVID-19 patients who test positive again (nucleic acid amplification) after readmission for unrelated conditions; end of isolation of clinically recovered patients in hospital who still test positive;
- Capacity and supply issues: concerning specific COVID-19 countermeasures e.g. monoclonal antibody use, and differences in response capacities in Member States.

One member suggested to look at the **quality of evidence** underlying some statements, for example regarding the impact of variants (on which there is contradictory information), rather than discussing new issues.

Members acknowledge that it is challenging to address **long-term issues** in times of a pandemic/ crisis and under time constraints. Yet, they are considered important by several Members, and a possible solution suggested by some is to **discuss such aspects at certain intervals**, for example the socioeconomic effects of public health measures, recovery, the potential long-term harm of COVID-19 - direct and indirect on other health-related issues -, increasing the resilience of health systems after the pandemic, and HERA.

**The majority of the Members who replied (12) states that it would be useful to cover also selected international aspects in the meetings.** In view of limited time, this could be done for example in

every 2nd or 3rd meeting. Members consider the following aspects relevant for this forum: the role of the EU in the global control of the pandemic; global access to vaccines; the dynamics of the pandemic at global level, including surveillance of variants of interest and concern; travel issues outside the EU; risk of transmission of COVID-19 by seasonal workers and travellers; limited access of neighbouring countries to diagnostics and therapeutics as well as limited epidemiological data flow; sharing best practices for non-pharmaceutical measures and laboratory testing strategies, therapeutic management; coordination of joined research efforts; the treaty on pandemics proposed by WHO and EU Council as well as aspects related to the WHO reform for increased coordination.

In this regard, Members suggest inviting occasionally experts from countries with specific experiences, e.g. from Israel, Japan etc. as well as representatives of FDA, CDC, and WHO (Europe) or from other scientific panels/ expert groups outside the EU for first-hand information and exchange on their ongoing work.

2) **Added value**

There is wide agreement amongst the Members that the **first-hand information on policies, measures, and challenges in other MS is particularly beneficial. Networking and the exchange of knowledge, experiences, opinions and best practices** between the Members is considered equally important, and the **regular up-dates provided by ECDC and EMA are much appreciated.**

According to the received replies, the platform provides a useful framework for reflections on policies and measures taken in the Members' respective countries in light of comparable situations in other Member States. Finding common scientific grounds with the Members of the platform is a **good backing for supporting policies and control measures at country level**.

The sharing of data and best practices from the platform can have a **direct or indirect influence** on national policy-making. The real-time up-dates help inform briefings of the governments/ heads of state and national competent authorities for adjusting actions or monitoring specific issues. The rapid distribution of the flash reports from the meetings is important in this regard. The information is also analysed at local and national level by national scientific platforms, which have an impact on political decisions.

One Member observes a better coordination of control measures since the platform is operational.

Two Members suggest **making greater use of the scientific knowledge of the platform Members** by channelling it into Commission documents or by creating specific recommendations on serious public health issues, e.g. the delayed vaccine strategy. In addition, one Member suggests the establishment of **platform position documents** (with the caveat that Members may not have sufficient time to dedicate to this). One Member proposes to **streamline the platform agenda with the agenda of EU leaders** to complement their discussions with scientific experience. A regular presentation of the current and forthcoming COVID-19 relevant EU initiatives, as for the HERA Incubator, would be appreciated.

3) **Operational aspects**

Members widely agree that the **current format of the meetings is suitable,** and the **up-dates by EMA and ECDC are considered very important**. One Member suggests that these up-dates could be more detailed, but focussed on specific current problems and challenges.

On the length of the meetings/ discussions there are some diverging opinions: while a few members suggest lengthening the meetings occasionally to give more room for discussions, other seem to prefer rather shorter meetings. **The majority, however, considers the length of one hour to be appropriate**. Some Members suggest to enable rapid mutual consultations/ discussions on specific issues online or by e-mail, and to present relevant scientific work like the study on the vaccination of health care workers in Croatia in between meetings.

Two Members suggest **structuring the exchange of experience from Member States** by focussing on specific issues, and inviting a few Members per meeting to present on a rotating schedule, including on important scientific research projects, instead of consulting all Members on all issues at each meeting.