



## Coronavirus: Commission lists key steps for effective vaccination strategies and vaccines deployment

Brussels, 15 October 2020

As Europe learns to live with the pandemic, the development and swift global deployment of safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 remains an essential element in the eventual solution to the public health crisis. In this context, the Commission is working to ensure that there will be access to safe vaccines across Europe, and encourages a coordinated approach of vaccination strategies for deployment of the vaccines. Today, ahead of the discussion of EU Leaders, the [Commission is presenting the key elements](#) to be taken into consideration by Member States for their COVID-19 vaccination strategies in order to prepare the European Union and its citizens for when a safe and effective vaccine is available, as well as priority groups to consider for vaccination first.

President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, said: *"A safe and effective vaccine is our best shot at beating coronavirus and returning to our normal lives. We have been working hard to make agreements with pharmaceutical companies and secure future doses. Now, we must ensure that once a vaccine is found, we are fully prepared to deploy it. With our Vaccination Strategy, we are helping EU countries prepare their vaccination campaigns: who should be vaccinated first, how to have a fair distribution and how to protect the most vulnerable. If we want our vaccination to be successful, we need to prepare now."*

Vice-President for Promoting the European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias**, said: *"While the evolution of the pandemic is getting back to March levels, our state of preparedness is not. Today we are adopting a milestone in the ongoing EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the aim is to ensure safe, affordable and accessible COVID-19 vaccines for all in the EU, once they will become available. It is only by acting together that we will avoid the cacophony and be more efficient than in the past."*

Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"It is with great concern that I am witnessing the increasingly rapid rise of infection rates all across the EU. Time is running out – everyone's first priority should be to do what it takes to avoid the devastating consequences of generalised lockdowns. And we must all prepare for the next steps. The vaccine will not be a silver bullet, but it will play a central role to save lives and contain the pandemic. And when and if a safe and efficient vaccine is found, we need to be prepared to roll it out as quickly as possible, including building citizens' trust in its safety and efficacy. Vaccines will not save lives – vaccinations will."*

In line with the 17 June EU Vaccines Strategy, the European Commission and Member States are securing the production of vaccines against COVID-19 through Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers in Europe. Any vaccine will need to be authorised by the European Medicine Agency according to regular safety and efficacy standards. Member States should now start preparing a common vaccination strategy for vaccine deployment.

Member States should, among others, ensure:

- capacity of vaccination services to deliver COVID-19 vaccines, including skilled workforce and medical and protective equipment;
- easy and affordable access to vaccines for target populations;
- deployment of vaccines with different characteristics and storage and transport needs, in particular in terms of cold chain, cooled transport and storage capacity;
- clear communication on the benefits, risks and importance of COVID-19 vaccines to build public trust.

**All Member States will have access to COVID-19 vaccines at the same time on the basis of population size.** The overall number of vaccine doses will be limited during the initial stages of deployment and before production can be ramped up. The Communication therefore provides examples of unranked **priority groups to be considered** by countries once COVID-19 vaccines become available, including:

- healthcare and long-term care facility workers;
- persons over 60 years of age;
- persons whose state of health makes them particularly at risk;
- essential workers;
- persons who cannot socially distance;
- more disadvantaged socio-economic groups.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of approved vaccines against COVID-19, and in parallel to safeguarding the continuation of other essential healthcare and public health services and programmes, the EU must **continue mitigating the transmission of the virus**. This can be done through the protection of vulnerable groups and ensuring that citizens adhere to public health measures. Until then and most likely also throughout the initial vaccination rollout phases, non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as physical distancing, closure of public places and adapting the work environment, [1] will continue to serve as the main public health tools to control and manage COVID-19 outbreaks.

## Background

As Europe moves to the next stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is even more imperative that countries follow common vaccination strategies and approaches. At the **Special European Council meeting of 2 October**, Member States called on the Council and Commission to further step up the overall coordination effort and the work on the development and distribution of vaccines at EU level[2].

On 24 September, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) published its **updated risk assessment** regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside a set of guidelines for non-pharmaceutical interventions (such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, cleaning and ventilation).

As stressed by **President von der Leyen in the State of the Union 2020 Address**, Europe needs to continue to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with extreme care, responsibility and unity, and use the lessons learnt to strengthen the EU's crisis preparedness and management of cross-border health threats.

On 15 July, the Commission adopted a **Communication on short-term EU health preparedness**, calling on Member States to have prevention, preparedness and response measures ready in case of future COVID-19 outbreaks. The Communication made a set of recommendations to achieve this, in the areas of e.g. testing, contact tracing and health system capacities. The effective implementation of these measures requires coordination and effective information exchange between Member States. The recommendations provided in the Strategy are still relevant and Member States are encouraged to follow them.

One of the main action points necessary for Europe to overcome the coronavirus pandemic is accelerating the development, manufacturing, and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19. **The EU's vaccines strategy published in June charts the way forward.**

**Vaccine safety, quality and efficacy** are the cornerstones of any vaccine development and authorisation process, and vaccine developers are required to submit extensive documentation and data to the European Medicines Agency through the EU Marketing Authorisation procedure. After authorisation, EU law requires that the safety of the vaccine as well as its effectiveness be **monitored**. Further evidence will need to be centrally collected to assess the impact and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines once rolled out in the population from a public health perspective. **This will be key to overcoming the pandemic and instilling confidence in Europeans.**

## For more information

[Communication on preparedness for COVID-19 vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment](#)

[Coronavirus: towards a common vaccination strategy](#)

[EU Coronavirus response factsheet](#)

[Communication on short-term EU health preparedness for future COVID-19 outbreaks](#)

[Coronavirus Vaccines Strategy](#)

[EU Coronavirus Response](#)

[Timeline of EU Action](#)

[ECDC Risk Assessment and preparedness for increased COVID-19 transmission](#)

## [Recommendations for a common EU testing approach for COVID-19](#)

[1] These include use of masks, stay-at-home orders and recommendations, closure of public places, limitations of the number of people allowed at indoor and outdoor gatherings, teleworking and adaptation of workplaces.

[2] <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45910/021020-euco-final-conclusions.pdf>

IP/20/1903

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