



Commission sets out key actions for a united front to beat COVID-19

Brussels, 19 January 2021

Two days ahead of the meeting of European leaders on a coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission set out a number of actions needed to step up the fight against the pandemic. In a [Communication](#) adopted today, it calls on Member States to accelerate the roll-out of vaccination across the EU: by March 2021, at least 80% of people over the age of 80, and 80% of health and social care professionals in every Member State should be vaccinated. And by summer 2021, Member States should have vaccinated a minimum of 70% of the adult population.

The Commission also calls on Member States to continue to apply physical distancing, limit social contacts, fight disinformation, coordinate travel restrictions, ramp up testing, and increase contact tracing and genome sequencing to face up to the risk from new variants of the virus. As recent weeks have seen an upward trend in case numbers, more needs to be done to support healthcare systems and to address "COVID-fatigue" in the coming months, from accelerating vaccination across the board, helping our partners in the Western Balkans, the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood and in Africa.

Today's Communication sets out key actions for Member States, the Commission, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) which will help reduce risks and keep the virus under control:

Speeding up the roll-out of vaccination across the EU

- By **March 2021**, at least **80%** of people **over the age of 80**, and **80%** of **health and social care professionals** in every Member State, should be **vaccinated**.
- **By summer 2021**, Member States should have **vaccinated 70% of the entire adult population**.
- The Commission, Member States and the EMA will work with companies to use the EU's potential for **increased vaccine manufacturing capacity** to the fullest.
- The Commission is working with Member States on **vaccination certificates, in full compliance with EU data protection law**, which can support the continuity of care. A common approach is to be agreed **by the end of January 2021** to allow Member States' **certificates** to be rapidly useable in health systems across the EU and beyond.

Testing and genome sequencing

- Member States should **update their testing strategies** to account for **new variants** and expand the use of **rapid antigen tests**.
- Member States should urgently **increase genome sequencing to at least 5% and preferably 10% of positive test results**. At present, many Member States are testing under 1% of samples, which is not enough to identify the progression of the variants or detect any new ones.

Preserving the Single Market and free movement while stepping up mitigation measures

- Measures should be applied to further **reduce the risk of transmission** linked to the means of travel, such as **hygiene and distancing measures** in vehicles and terminuses.
- All **non-essential travel should be strongly discouraged** until the epidemiological situation has considerably improved.
- **Proportionate travel restrictions, including testing of travellers, should be maintained** for those travelling from areas with a higher incidence of variants of concern.

Ensuring European leadership and international solidarity

- To ensure early access to vaccines, the Commission is to set up a **Team Europe mechanism to structure the provision of vaccines shared** by Member States with partner countries.

This should allow for sharing with partner countries access to some of the 2.3 billion doses secured through the EU's Vaccines Strategy, paying special attention to the Western Balkans, our Eastern and Southern neighbourhood and Africa.

- The European Commission and Member States should continue supporting **COVAX**, including through early access to vaccines. Team Europe has already mobilised €853 million **in support of COVAX**, making the EU one of COVAX's biggest donors.

Members of the College said:

President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, said: *"Vaccination is essential to get out of this crisis. We have already secured enough vaccines for the entire population of the European Union. Now we need to accelerate the delivery and speed up vaccination. Our aim is to have 70% of our adult population vaccinated by summer. That could be a turning point in our fight against this virus. However, we will only end this pandemic when everyone in the world has access to vaccines. We will step up our efforts to help secure vaccines for our neighbours and partners worldwide."*

Vice-President Margaritis **Schinus**, responsible for Promoting our European Way of Life, said: *"The emergence of new variants of the virus and substantial rises in cases leave us no room for complacency. Now more than ever must come a renewed determination for Europe to act together with unity, coordination and vigilance. Our proposals today aim to protect more lives and livelihoods later and relieve the burden on already stretched health care systems and workers. This is how the EU will come out of the crisis. The end of the pandemic is in sight though not yet in reach."*

Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"Working together with unity, solidary and determination, we can soon start to see the beginning of the end of the pandemic. Now in particular, we need swift and coordinated action against the new variants of the virus. Vaccinations will still take time until they reach all Europeans and until then we must take immediate, coordinated and proactive steps together. Vaccinations must accelerate across the EU and testing and sequencing must be increased – this is how we can ensure that we leave this crisis behind us as soon as possible."*

Background

Today's Communication builds on the '[Staying safe from COVID-19 during winter](#)' Communication of 2 December 2020.

For More Information

[Communication: A united front to beat COVID-19](#)

[Safe COVID-19 vaccines for Europeans](#)

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