



## COVID-19: Commission rallies Member States to prepare for autumn and winter

Brussels, 2 September 2022

Today, the Commission is proposing [concrete measures](#) to avoid a surge of COVID-19 cases in the upcoming autumn and winter season. The Commission is urging Member States to put the necessary strategies and structures in place, including for COVID-19 vaccination and surveillance, to respond to future outbreaks in a fast and sustained manner. The main aim of the actions proposed by the Commission is to increase the uptake of vaccines, including adapted and new vaccines, and to ensure that all citizens are well protected.

Vice-President for Promoting European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias**, said: *"The past two years have prepared the EU to face another COVID-19 wave this autumn and winter. Our actions now will greatly determine the future of the pandemic and the level of immunity that can be built up in the population. Member States should continue coordination of preparedness efforts across the EU, ahead of the next wave and further rollout of vaccination programmes. Taking action now will limit the pressure on healthcare systems, disruptions of the economies and challenges for the society."*

Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"The pandemic is still very much with us. We must act now, together, in a coordinated and sustained manner to help avoid another surge of serious COVID-19 cases. To do so, it is crucial that all Member States have robust vaccination strategies in place to prepare for the autumn and winter, including for the roll-out of the newly authorised adapted booster vaccines. The vaccination gaps must be closed as a matter of top priority. It is also essential that resilient surveillance systems are set up to monitor the development of the virus, that strategies for the reintroduction of effective public health measures are in place if needed and that the capacity of health care systems is strengthened. To say it clearly, we need to be ready to face another challenging season."*

### Main actions on COVID-19 vaccination

In particular, the Commission encourages the Member States to:

- Improve the **vaccine uptake** of the primary vaccination course and first booster dose among eligible individuals. This is of particular importance for population groups at higher risk of severe outcomes and for countries with lower vaccination rates.
- Prioritise the administration of an **additional booster dose** for specific population groups, notably people aged 60 years and over and other eligible individuals of any age at risk of severe disease.
- Combine **COVID-19 and influenza vaccination** campaigns. Accompany vaccination with regularly updated and clear **communication**, based on epidemiological developments, behavioural insights, and public perception.
- Ensuring **clear communication** to citizens about the benefits of vaccination.

On 1 September, based on the [recommendation](#) of the European Medicines Agency, the Commission [authorised](#) the adapted omicron vaccines from BioNTech Pfizer and Moderna in the EU. Other measures that should be taken in view of new and adapted COVID-19 vaccines becoming available include:

- Developing national vaccination strategies clarifying **which vaccines**, including the new and adapted vaccines, should be administered **to which population groups**, this also in view of the possible emergence of new variants based on the guidance to be issued shortly by the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.
- Ensuring **sufficient logistical capacity** to administer the vaccines as soon as new and adapted vaccines are delivered.

### Other actions beyond vaccination

The surveillance of respiratory viruses such as influenza, COVID-19 and others is essential to better

understand how the virus is spreading and evolving.

Depending on the epidemiological situations, **non-pharmaceutical interventions**, for example face masks or limiting the size of gatherings, to limit the spread of the virus remain a crucial part of the toolbox of Member States. It is important that all Member States are prepared to reintroduce public health measures based on **clear thresholds**. Any measures implemented in **schools** should be adapted to the educational setting and the age group and kept at a minimum to prevent any disruption of education.

The Communication also highlights the importance of strong **healthcare systems** and capacities in all Member States. Health systems' preparedness for infectious disease outbreaks and other types of shocks must be improved. Further measures to support the good **mental health** of healthcare workers and the overall population should also be taken.

Member States are also encouraged to join forces to gather up-to-date evidence on **post-COVID conditions** and to improve the training of health workforce so that long-COVID can be better recognized, especially in primary care.

Furthermore, continued efforts to **facilitate free movement in the EU** during the COVID-19 pandemic remain crucial, both for people and goods. In the context of **travel from third countries**, the Commission intends to propose a revision of the relevant Council Recommendation shortly, in order to take account of the changed epidemiological situation, increased vaccination across the globe and the developments of entry requirements in the Member States.

Finally, to end the pandemic, it remains crucial to support the efforts to fight COVID-19 globally. The EU will continue working with international partners to ensure rapid development, scale-up and equitable distribution of vaccines worldwide.

## **Background**

The COVID-19 summer wave, driven by Omicron BA.4 and BA.5, showed that the pandemic is not yet over as the virus continues to circulate in Europe and beyond. All Member States have lifted most restrictions and their populations are experiencing pandemic fatigue, which could lead to changes in behaviour.

This makes it easier for the virus to circulate rapidly in the EU, opening the door to the emergence of new variants that could evade immunity, spread more easily, or cause more severe disease. It is therefore possible that the costly gains made in response to the pandemic could be lost if the virus is not controlled and further infections are not prevented.

## **For More Information**

[Communication](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Statement by Commission Kyriakides on the authorisation of the first COVID-19 variant-adapted booster vaccines](#)

[Coronavirus response](#)

[Safe COVID-19 vaccines](#)

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