ASPHER Report

COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of March 22nd 2021

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This is ASPHER's weekly surveillance report. We hope it is complementary to other resources such as ECDC and Our World in Data, where the reader can go for more detailed information. Please give us your feedback: is the presentation helpful to you and your colleagues? What other information would you like to see in it ?

ASPHER celebrates the extraordinary and dramatic falls of deaths from COVID in Israel, Spain, UK and urges all countries to address their internal problems with vaccination programmes and get these sorted.

ASPHER is still gravely concerned about the severe undermining of confidence in all COVID vaccination, brought about through the actions of individual European governments in pausing use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. This in direct contradiction to the advice of the international health agencies, World Health Organisation, ECDC and the European Medicines Agency. This is damaging to all efforts of European countries to combat the virus and reduce it to very low levels so that some return to 'new normality' may be possible. No-one will be free from the virus unless we are all free. (see also https://www.aspher.org/download/677/aspher_az_vaccine_statement_en.pdf)

ASPHER is concerned also about contradictory policies on lockdown and travel and urges governments to work together with the World Health Organisation, ECDC and the European Commission to create a coherent framework for control on international movement. We call on all governments to work together to create a coherent strategic approach to suppressing the virus, saving lives, and reopening social and economic life.

ASPHER is concerned that many countries are reducing social restrictions at a time when the incidence of COVID-19 is still very high, much higher than during the first wave, and with the Reproduction number over 1 in many countries. The relaxations are inconsistent between countries and will make international control of spread more difficult.

ASPHER recognises that there were pronounced January peaks of infection in many European countries including UK, Ireland, and Portugal. This is a sad reflection of relaxations of COVID-19 social restrictions during the Christmas holidays.

ASPHER is concerned that governments maintain vigilance in social restrictions to reduce the spread of the virus as we move towards upcoming Easter celebrations.

ASPHER expresses its solidarity and support for colleagues in the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Montenegro particularly and calls on neighbouring countries to provide mutual aid when possible. We are concerned to see the rising death rate in Hungary and the reversal of previous improvements in Austria.

More generally ASPHER is concerned about the recognition of an increasing number of new variants of the SARS-COV2 virus. We believe there should be increasing international collaboration and capacity in the surveillance of the variants of the virus, surveillance of the outcomes of vaccination, resistance to infection and timespan of immunity. There needs to be coordinated global capacity towards anticipating new variants, and adapting vaccinations to meet anticipated changes of the virus. (see also: https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/01/28/we-need-an-equitable-and-coordinated-global-approach-to-covid-19-vaccination/)

Since the beginning of the pandemic COVID-19, the rapid spread of the virus in almost all the countries has resulted in considerable disruption of public health at a global level. The pandemic has cost over two million lives up to the moment (2,719,163) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 0.1billion with the highest number in Americas (54,249,753) followed by Europe (42,870,334), South-East Asia region (14,287,370), Eastern Mediterranean (3,199,413), Africa (3,013,815), and Western Pacific (1,797,635) according to the WHO statistics (1).

As per WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European region is contributing 35% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. Overall, Europe has seen a rising trend in the number of new cases and in new deaths at 13% and 1% respectively. In Poland, France, and Italy high incidence of coronavirus is reported at 401.4, 313.8, 255.5 per 100,000 population respectively (2).

The following table shows the incidence of daily new coronavirus confirmed cases and deaths across European countries as reported on 22/03/2021.

WHO Europe Region	Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people	Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people
Estonia	1,110.09	7.43
San Marino	997.62	8.42
Czech Republic	865.93	19.09
Hungary	834.72	20.23
Montenegro	790.41	16.38
Malta	691.41	6.15
Serbia	647.42	4.60
Poland	587.34	8.15
Cyprus	508.29	0.81
Bulgaria	507.74	14.72
Andorra	473.32	0.00
North Macedonia	473.00	11.18
France	462.37	3.88
Sweden	449.04	1.64
Bosnia and Herzegovina	426.55	15.41
Slovenia	394.30	2.61
Netherlands	387.23	1.73
Moldova	381.40	7.83
Belgium	362.11	2.26
Italy	358.64	6.68
Luxembourg	358.53	5.93
Austria	334.70	2.54
Slovakia	295.90	13.06
Ukraine	285.23	5.58
Romania	283.50	5.22
Latvia	274.70	4.47
Armenia	265.97	4.58
Turkey	237.89	1.06
Croatia	230.19	3.52
Greece	226.82	5.40
Monaco	225.69	0.00

Lithuania	193.95	3.99
Norway	177.74	0.24
Albania	175.08	4.22
Switzerland	172.28	2.00
Germany	158.36	2.23
Denmark	140.73	0.22
Israel	129.58	1.30
Belarus	123.33	0.95
Finland	122.19	0.21
Ireland	110.03	1.56
Spain	103.09	3.42
Georgia	89.60	2.58
Azerbaijan	88.81	1.13
United Kingdom	81.57	1.25
Kazakhstan	65.70	0.08
Russia	64.12	2.79
Portugal	45.74	1.26
Iceland	15.07	0.00
Kyrgyzstan	11.93	0.26
Uzbekistan	3.28	0.00
Tajikistan	0.00	0.00

Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus- daily new confirmed cases and deaths

Northwestern Europe:

In the Netherlands, the number of tests performed increased by 12% and the number of people receiving positive results has raised 16% more than the past week. The newly reported infections were high among 0 to 17 years age groups with minute rise in infection rate among 70 years and older possibly due to vaccination program. The number of people admitted to hospital and ICU with coronavirus is also increasing (3). In Belgium, 14 day incidence of coronavirus is 432.3 (per 100,000 inhabitants) and reproduction number is 1.14 (4). The rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people are high (2.26) in Belgium among other regions (Figure 2). In the UK the total number of people tested positive in the past 7 days (17 to 23rd March) is 38,483, a decline of 3.4% from the previous week and the number of people admitted to hospital in the past 7 days is 3,077 (13 to 19th March) which is also a decreasing trend (21.5% less than the week before). As of 19th March the estimated R is 0.6 – 0.9 (5).

Figure 1

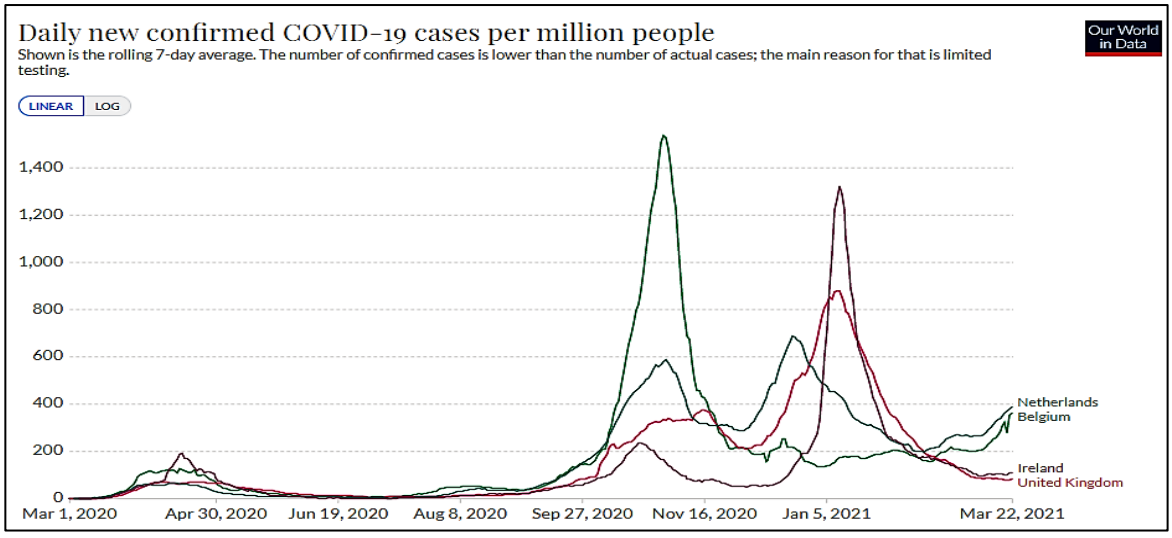
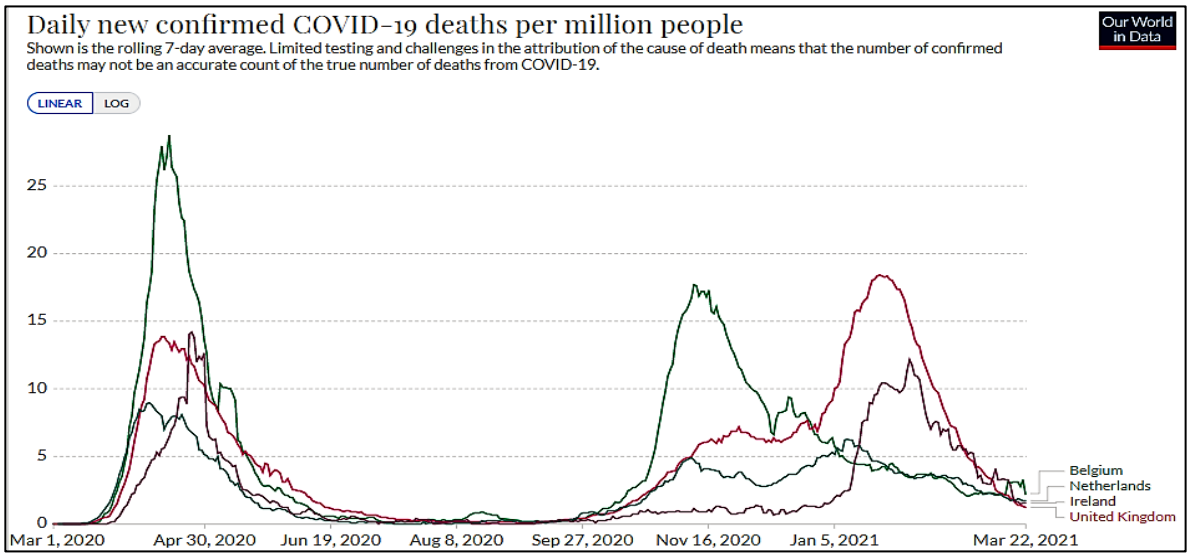


Figure 2



Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus - daily new confirmed cases and deaths (Figure 1,2)

South-East Europe:

In the Republic of Serbia, the number of people hospitalized with coronavirus infection are 6,187, and the mortality rate is 0.89% as reported on 23rd March (6). A weekly report by the National Centre for Infectious and Parasitic Diseases shows that all districts in Bulgaria are in 'red zone' with the infection rate 159/100 thousand population as reported on 21st March (which was 79/100,000 a week before) (7). The death rate in Bulgaria is 173.51/100,000 population standing at the 10th position in worlds high mortality after nine European countries according to Johns Hopkins University mortality analysis (8). In Montenegro, both the daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases (790.41) and deaths (16.38) per million people are high among other regions in South-East Europe (Figure 3,4). A total of 478 people were newly confirmed with coronavirus infection on 23rd March which was 426 on the day before (9).

Figure 3

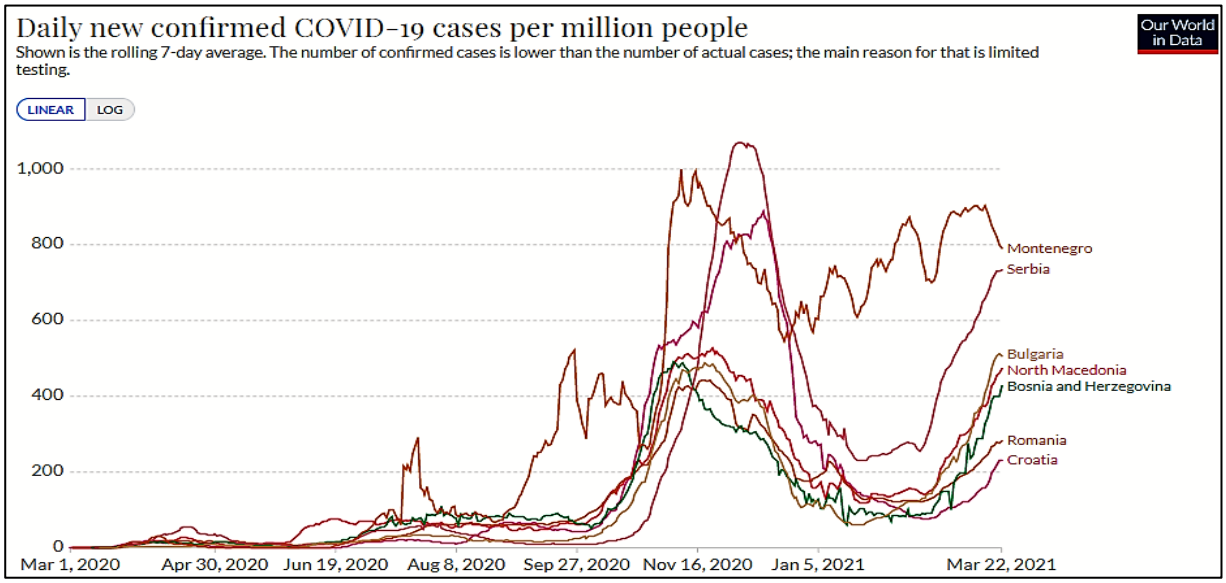
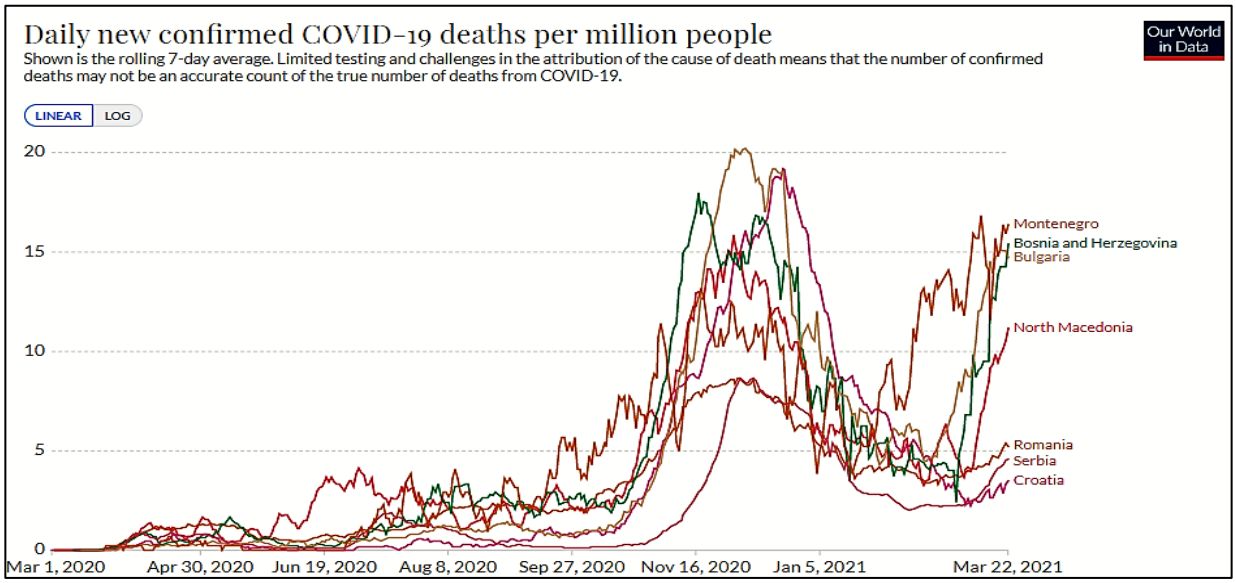


Figure 4



Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus - daily new confirmed cases and deaths (Figure 3,4)

Mediterranean:

In Mediterranean countries the 7-day moving average of daily new COVID-19 confirmed cases per million people are high in France (462.37) followed by Cyprus (449.99) (Figure 5). The number of new cases in France are 14,697 as reported on 22nd March (10) and the case-fatality ratio is 2.13% (11). As per WHO weekly epidemiological report, France and Italy are the regions in Europe reporting high number of new cases and deaths (2). In Israel the rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people are 129.58 (12) and the case-fatality ratio is 0.74% (11). To date the total vaccinated percentage of the population in Israel is 51.70% (13). Despite the successful vaccination in Israel, in the Gaza strip the number of coronavirus cases has doubled compared to the previous week and in the West Bank the number of daily deaths remains high although there is a slight decrease in the number of new cases. Also, there is 100% occupancy of ICU beds with 47% ventilator usage and the hospital bed occupancy is 97% in the West Bank. In response to the current situation lockdown is announced until 3rd April. The vaccination campaign began on 21st March in the occupied Palestinian Territory, taking into priority the medical staff at government and private sector, elderly, and patients suffering from cancer and kidney diseases (14). In Spain, approximately one month after initiation of covid vaccination campaign (28th December, 2020), a substantial reduction in the percentage of daily deaths due to COVID-19 has been seen (15).

Figure 5

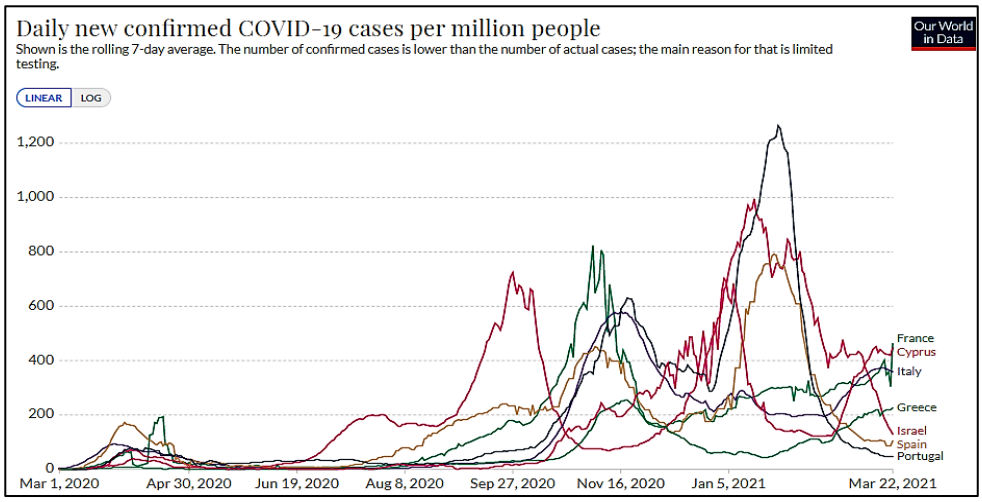
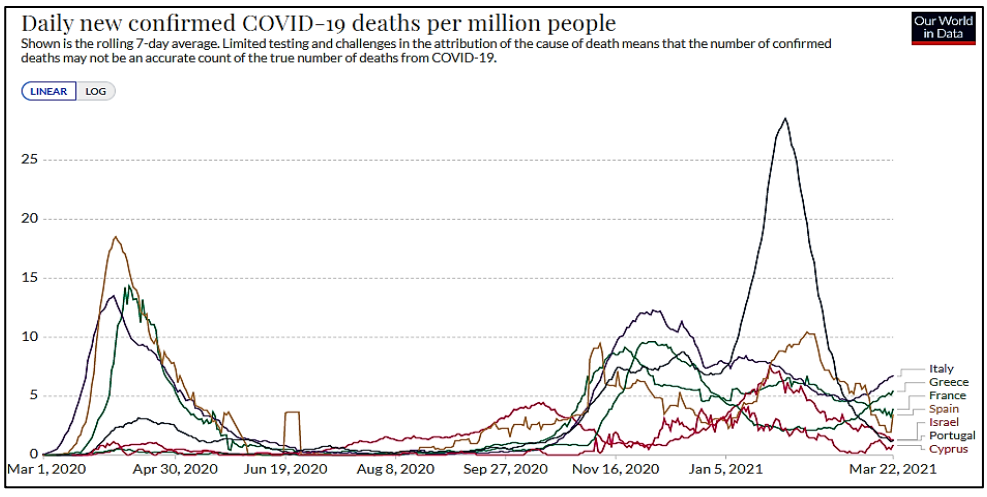


Figure 6



Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus- daily new confirmed cases and deaths (Figure 5,6)

Central Europe:

Currently Hungary is ranked highest with high number of daily new confirmed coronavirus deaths among the Europe Region at 20.23/100,000 people, and the case-fatality ratio is 3.19% (11). As reported on 23rd March 5,481 new COVID-19 cases were confirmed and 1,423 patients required ventilation out of 11,873 hospitalized patients (16). In Czechia, the existing restrictions against spread of coronavirus will be in place until 28th March and the mandatory testing (antigen) of employees by the employers in the private sector is extended (17). In Germany, the rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths are 158.36, 2.23 per million people respectively (12) and the case fatality ratio is 2.8% (8). A continuous increase in the new variant is noted. A total of 72.2% of all cases were found to be new variant (B.1.1.7) according to analysis by the Robert Koch Institute (18). In Austria, the number of new COVID-19 infections is rising each day (19). With an objective of Test-Treat-Isolate strategy, Austria has initiated mass testing during early March 2021. The strategy composed of three pillars-properly commissioned testing (for suspected and contact cases), specific screening programs (for retirement, nursing homes, facilities for people with disability, medical facilities) and population-wide screening programs (for all population) (20).

Figure 7

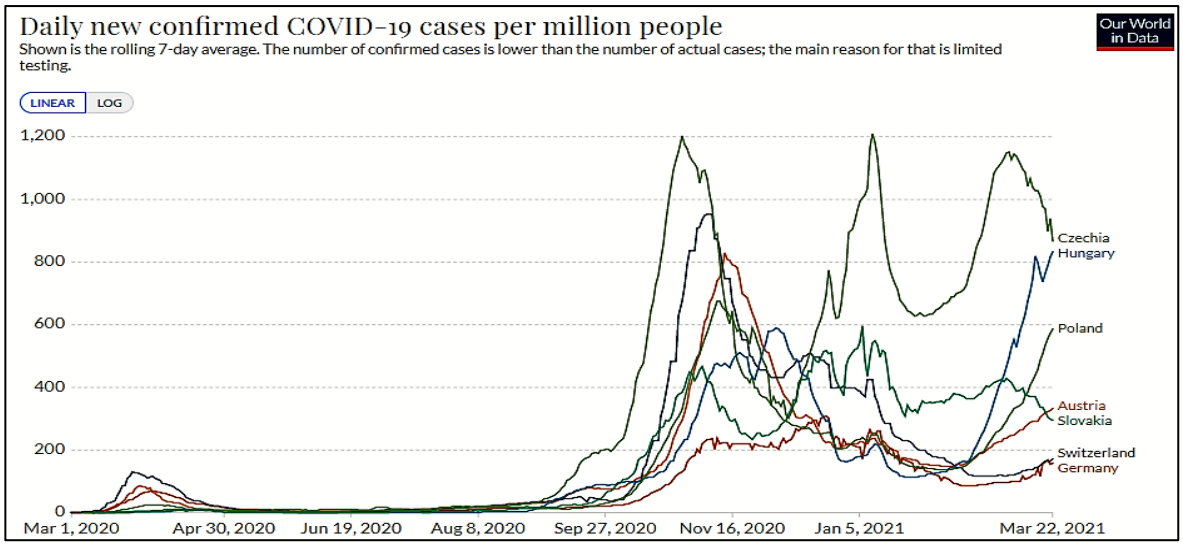
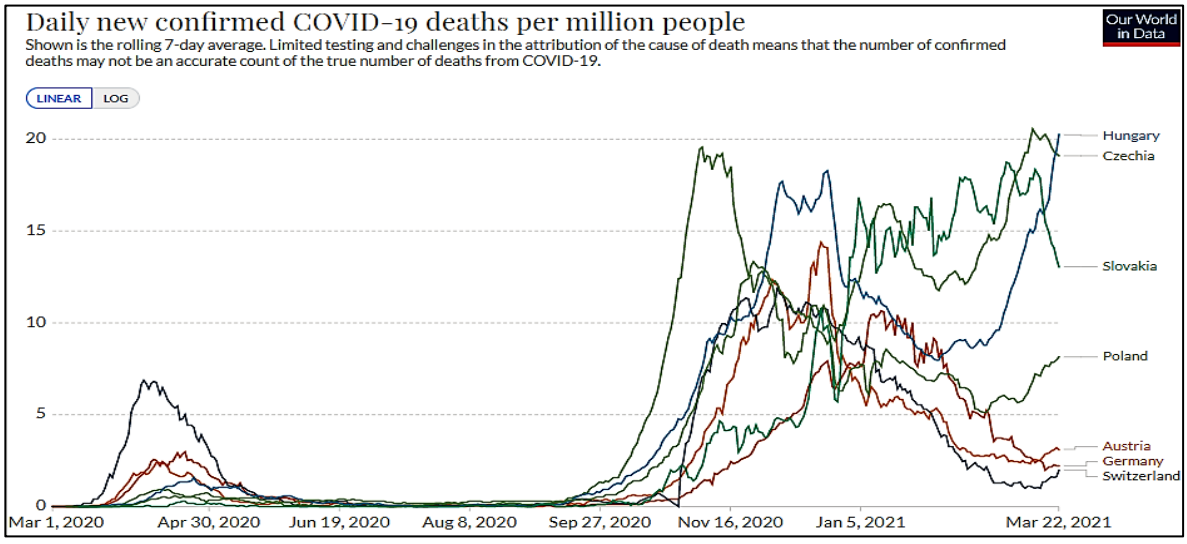


Figure 8



Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus- daily new confirmed cases and deaths(figure 7,8)

Scandinavian Countries:

Among Scandinavian countries, the situation in Estonia remains the same with 7-day moving average of daily new confirmed coronavirus deaths and high number of new cases at 7.43, 1,110.09 per million people respectively (12). The Swedish government has recently introduced a new strategy targeting policy makers in the region and municipalities by extending testing in the event of outbreaks or as screening so that further measures can be taken to contain the pandemic (21). The rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Finland are 122.9, 0.21 per million people respectively (12).

Figure 9

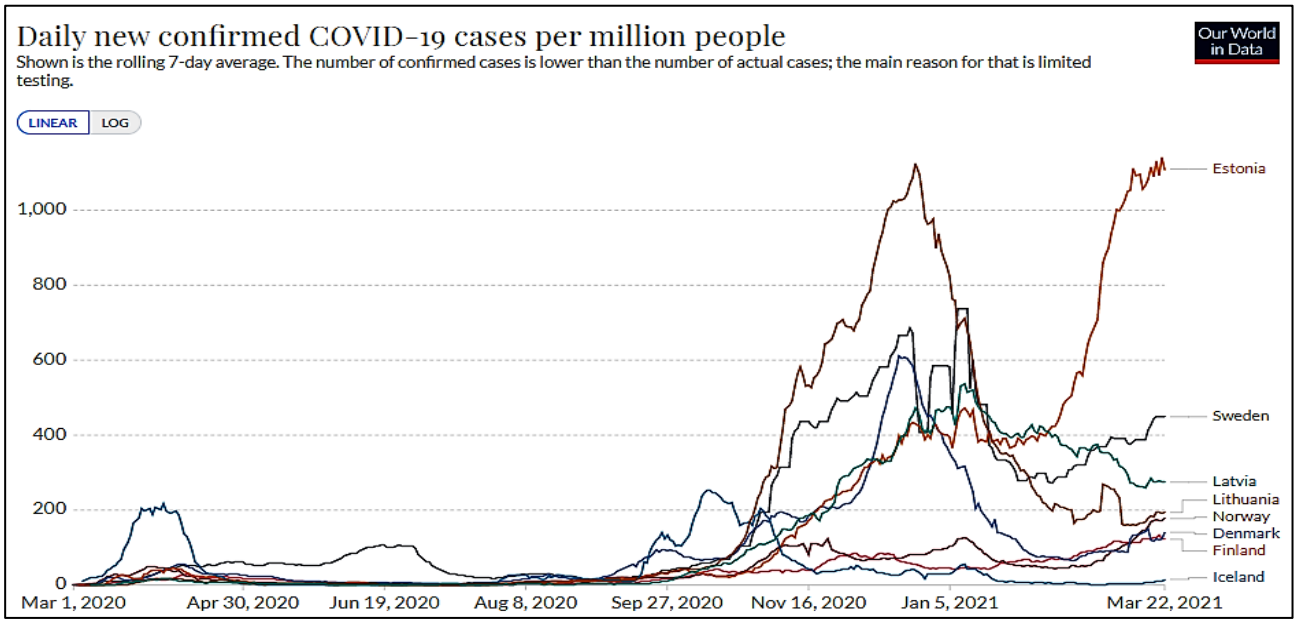
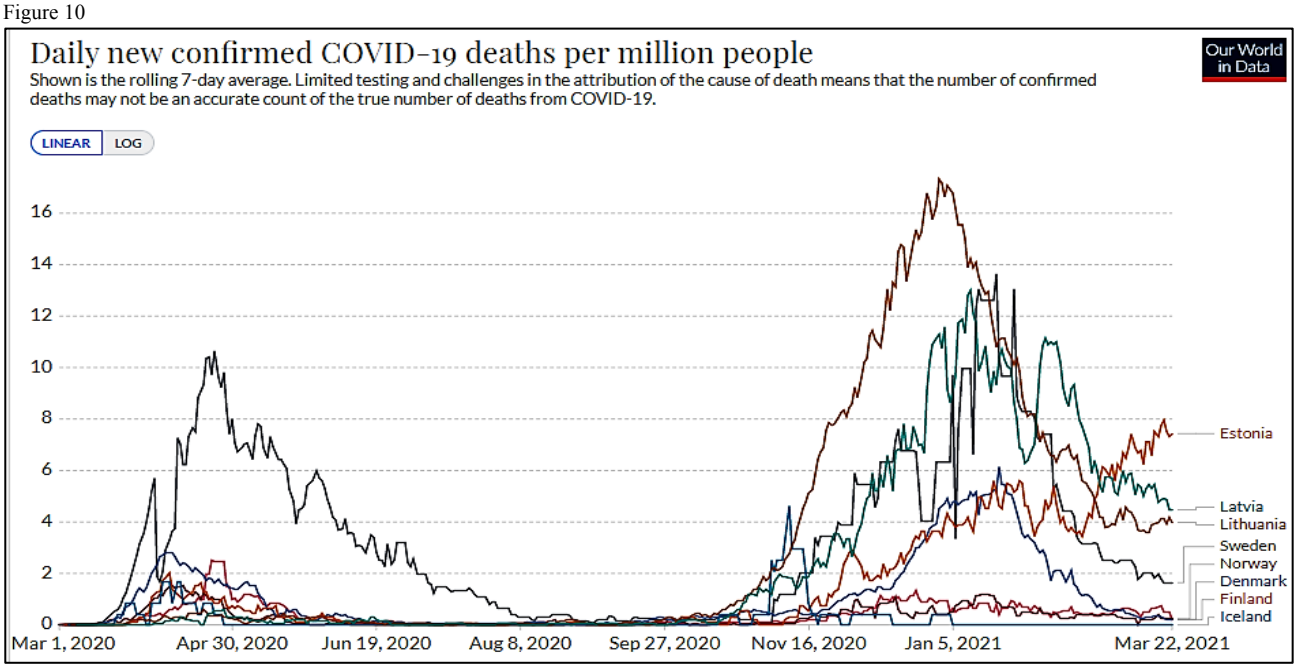


Figure 10



Source: https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus- daily new confirmed cases and deaths (figure 9,10)

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