

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

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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?

European countries should now be on high alert as there is a general increase in cases, hospitalizations and deaths in most countries ([link](#)). Europe is the only region among WHO's six regions that is reporting an increasing number of COVID-19 cases in five successive weeks whilst in other regions the incidence is stable or declining ([link](#)). Globally, the Delta variant is the dominant variant with its high level of transmission ([link](#)). A high level of protection against morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19 and its variants can be attained by completing the vaccination schedule as recommended ([link](#)) and following behavioural measures simultaneously. Those European countries which have low vaccination rate and those who eased the restriction measures are reporting high infection rate now.

The situation has led to the declaration of a state of emergency and lockdown to contain the infection transmission in Latvia ([link](#)) ([link](#)), reimposition of outdoor mask mandates in Armenia, expansion of mandatory COVID-19 certificate to gain access to events in Ireland, and limiting outdoor gathering capacity in Czechia. While few countries choose to tighten the existing restrictions instead of lockdown by implementing 2G rule, new testing policies at work places, educational institutions and mask mandates.

ASPHER recognizes the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving high level of vaccine uptake. Vaccine hesitancy is a major pitfall stemming the improvement in vaccination rate particularly in Eastern parts of the Europe. Mistrust on vaccine and false information are the driving factors for the population's low vaccine uptake. It is vital to address distrust among unvaccinated to combat the burden over health system ([link](#)).

The current situation demands international consensus on a long-term strategy to minimize the transmission of virus variants, not only by rapid vaccination but also by increasing vaccine confidence and improving accessibility to vaccines to prevent further waves. Despite vaccination status, non-pharmaceutical interventions which complement vaccination must be followed.

ASPHER remains concerned that countries are unprepared and complacent about the responses that will be needed by health services and public health authorities this autumn. Read our statement [here](#).

It is a new phase in the pandemic for Europe. Return to a state of emergency, tightening of restrictions, mask mandates, entry with the obligation of COVID-19 certificate is seen in a few European countries. Authorities should be careful in how they address the pandemic keeping in mind the risk of a new wave during autumn combating an increase in hospitalizations due to COVID-19 and flu, vaccine hesitancy, and mitigation strategies at schools and workplaces.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid spread of the virus in almost all countries has resulted in considerable disruption of public health at a global level. The pandemic has cost more than 5million lives to date (5,054,267) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two hundred million (250,154,972). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (1).

Table 1: Cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases since 30/12/2019

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	94,421,743
Europe	79,277,630
South-East Asia	44,160,400
Eastern Mediterranean	16,492,267
Western-Pacific	9,627,397
Africa	6,174,771

According to the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the number of newly reported cases and deaths in the Europe region has increased by 7% and 10% respectively compared to the previous week (2).

IHME analysis shows that virus transmission is increasing in most of the European regions. In particular, the nature of the epidemic trend is concerning in the Russian federation. Estimated cumulative infection rates are very high in this region. The reported number of daily cases, deaths which were expected to decline, but this has not been the case. This could be because of the waning natural immunity, less cross-variant protection or there might be fewer previous infections than estimated. In the Western Europe region, the winter surge is likely to intensify in the coming weeks due to the seasonality and reduced mask usage. With diminishing protective behavioural measures and waning immunity at this moment, plans to combat the winter surge should focus on encouraging vaccination among unvaccinated adults through community outreach, rolling third booster jabs and promoting the usage of face masks (3).

The following table shows a moving 7-day average of daily newly confirmed coronavirus cases, deaths and proportion of people fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in the countries of the WHO-Europe region reported on 08/11/2021 (table 2) (4) (5) (6).

Table 2:

WHO Europe region	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/million people	Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 Deaths/million people	Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19
Slovenia	1385.05	5.98	54.14%*
Georgia	1208.18	15.08	24.00%
Estonia	1132.02	8.30	58.12%
Croatia	1088.32	10.32	44.59%*
Montenegro	979.22	12.74	39.23%
Belgium	960.13	2.53	73.92%
Lithuania	953.90	11.79	64.61%
Latvia	943.95	18.82	57.42%
Slovakia	942.34	5.86	42.42%*
Austria	893.52	2.31	62.78%
Serbia	805.14	9.44	44.09%*
Czech Republic	712.70	3.70	57.30%
Ireland	690.88	1.60	75.45%
Greece	614.97	5.11	61.95%
Bulgaria	612.08	22.77	22.79%
Netherlands	609.80	1.36	68.94%*
Armenia	570.15	15.45	N/A
Ukraine	526.03	15.62	18.81%*
Hungary	524.44	7.67	59.76%
United Kingdom	500.25	2.50	67.26%*
Romania	419.08	21.83	34.34%*
Denmark	396.68	0.66	76.04%
Luxembourg	362.54	1.80	65.91%*
Andorra	349.05	0.00	N/A
Iceland	346.16	0.42	81.27%*
Turkey	335.69	2.50	58.02%*
Germany	335.27	1.52	66.57%*
Poland	307.59	2.83	53.11%*
Moldova	283.69	11.22	22.13%
Switzerland	278.57	0.66	64.05%*
Russia	266.81	7.92	34.22%*
Norway	255.41	0.50	68.77%*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	243.61	10.20	20.90%*
North Macedonia	242.00	6.65	37.47%
Cyprus	239.63	0.32	63.98%
Azerbaijan	223.87	2.68	43.38%
San Marino	214.22	0.00	65.65%*
Belarus	208.11	1.69	N/A
Albania	191.84	1.74	31.53%*
Finland	141.64	0.77	70.87%*
France	108.68	0.62	68.39%
Israel	100.68	0.32	67.85%
Portugal	98.11	0.66	87.39%*
Monaco	90.37	0.00	N/A
Italy	89.48	0.72	72.21%*
Sweden	78.49	0.45	68.38%*
Malta	71.42	0.28	83.27%
Kazakhstan	71.14	1.35	40.40%
Spain	63.90	0.58	80.00%*
Kyrgyzstan	11.96	0.37	11.87%
Kosovo	9.06	0.08	41.52%*
Uzbekistan	8.10	0.06	N/A
Tajikistan	0.00	0.00	N/A

*data available after 31st October

Slovenia: Between 8 and 9 November, Slovenia recorded 4,481 new COVID-19 cases and 20 deaths, with the 7-day average in new cases reaching 150% of the highest recorded since March 2020 (7) (8). As of 9 November, 54.1% of the population has been fully vaccinated with the daily vaccination rate lowest since the start of 2021 (8). **The latest government measures introduced stricter masking requirements (FFP2 masks only), prohibited all public gatherings, public assemblies, and public events, and require regular self-testing for all primary and secondary school pupils** (9). The third vaccine dose is now more broadly recommended including persons aged over 50, persons in regular contact with the public, and all persons with chronic illnesses; however, the booster shot is still made available to all who request it (10).

Croatia: Between 9 and 10 November, Croatia recorded 7,315 new COVID-19 cases and 50 deaths, with both steadily increasing since August 2021 (11) (12). **On 6 November, 44.6% of the population has been fully vaccinated with the vaccination rate has picked up this week** (13). **The government has introduced stricter measures regarding public gatherings** and will require most public sector employees to show a digital COVID certificate to enter their workplace starting 15 November (14). The third vaccine dose is recommended to immunocompromised persons and their households, healthcare workers, all persons over 65, and residents and employees of homes for the elderly (15).

Slovakia: Between 9 and 10 November, Slovakia recorded 2,487 new COVID-19 cases and 53 deaths, both of which have been increasing continuously since September 2021 (16) (17). **As of 9 November, 42.4% of the population has been vaccinated with the rate of vaccination lowest since the start of 2021** (18). The government measures in place remain largely unchanged since May 2021 and include a broad mask mandate as well as entry and capacity limits for most establishments (19) (20).

Belgium: Belgium recorded an increase in the 7-day average in new cases and deaths, now reaching 8,088 daily cases and 22.1 deaths (21). **Since 29 October, uniform rules are in place throughout the country and include a broad mask mandate, a COVID certificate (Covid Safe Ticket) requirement for large public gatherings, and remote working recommendations** (22). A third vaccine dose is recommended for all persons over 65, immunocompromised persons of age 12 years or older, and those in residential care (23) (24).

United Kingdom: The number of people who tested positive for COVID-19 declined by 14.8% between November 3 and 9, compared to the week before. However, during the same period, the number of deaths rose by 2.6% (25). The authorities have introduced vaccine mandates for all health and social care workers including volunteers by November 11 (26). New vaccination centres have been deployed as well as information campaigns to encourage people to receive booster doses (27). The government has updated inbound travel rules and for those under 18 years old. Quarantine obligation linking to their place of residence will be lifted from November 22 (28). **Vaccines under WHO Emergency Usage List will be recognised for travellers who have been fully vaccinated and hold a valid vaccination certificate from other countries** who are exempted from pre-departure testing or self-isolation requirement or test on day 8. However, all passengers must undergo a lateral flow test after their arrival (29).

Germany: By November 8, the 7-day moving average of **daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in Germany increased to more than double that of the 7-day average in early October** (30). The estimated R-value is above 1. As of November 9, the number of new hospitalizations with COVID-19 is more than 1100 (31). **Occupancy of intensive care units with COVID-19 patients is also showing a rising trend** (32). With the development in the epidemiological situation **hospitals in Berlin have received orders to suspend elective treatments** (33). **Saxony, which is reporting high incidence, is the first state in Germany that has introduced 2G rule recently** thereby granting permission to bars, restaurants and venues for those individuals who are vaccinated or recovered (34). A similar ruling is expected in the other federal states particularly in those with high incidence (35). **In Bavaria, 3G (vaccinated/recovered/tested) rule has been introduced at the workplace in response to the rise in new infections and intensive care admissions.** Employees are obliged to submit the test report twice a week (36).

Czechia: As of November 9, the rolling 7-day average of **daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in Czechia is more than 700/million people which is similar to the average in late March this year** (37). Currently, a total of 3295 patients are in hospital being treated for COVID-19 and 486 patients are in severe condition (38). In response to the worsening epidemiological situation, authorities have imposed the following regulations, which enter into force from mid-November: **mask mandates for university students during class** (if there are 50 or more students in the class) and in common rooms. **Weekly testing will be**

carried out for hospital and inpatient staff who have not been vaccinated (39). Limitation of the validity of antigen tests to one day and PCR to three days. From November 22, the **outdoor event capacity is restricted to 1000 people** (same as indoor) (40).

Greece: From early November, Greece is reporting more than 4000 daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases which is the highest since the beginning of the pandemic (41). Due to the surge in new infections, 2G rule was introduced on November 6. This ruling limits the unvaccinated individuals to enter restaurants, cafes, banks and public services (42). However, wearing a face mask is mandatory at both indoor and large outdoor gatherings (43). To date, 62% of the population have been fully vaccinated (41). Notably, recent appointments for the uptake of the first vaccine jab have risen dramatically (43).

Set of graphs: Rolling 7-day average of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths in sub-regions of Europe from the beginning of 1st March 2020 until 8th November 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

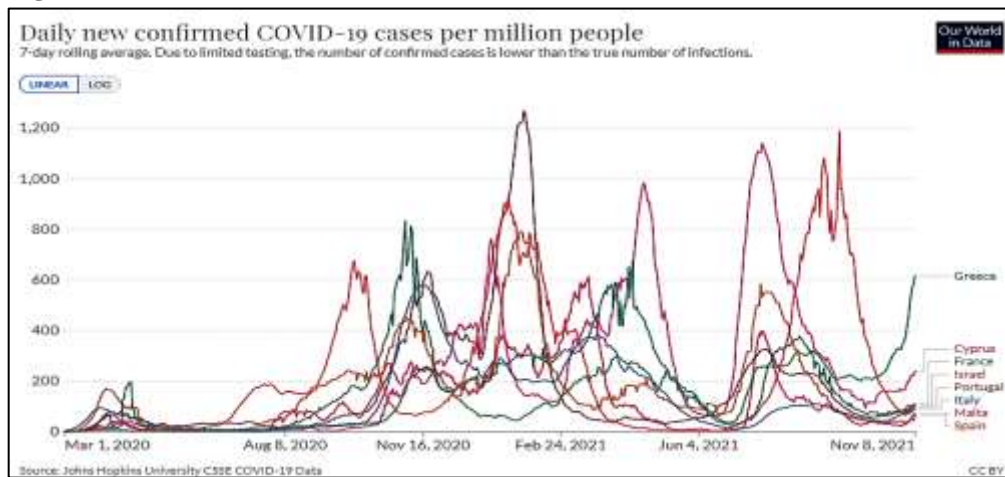
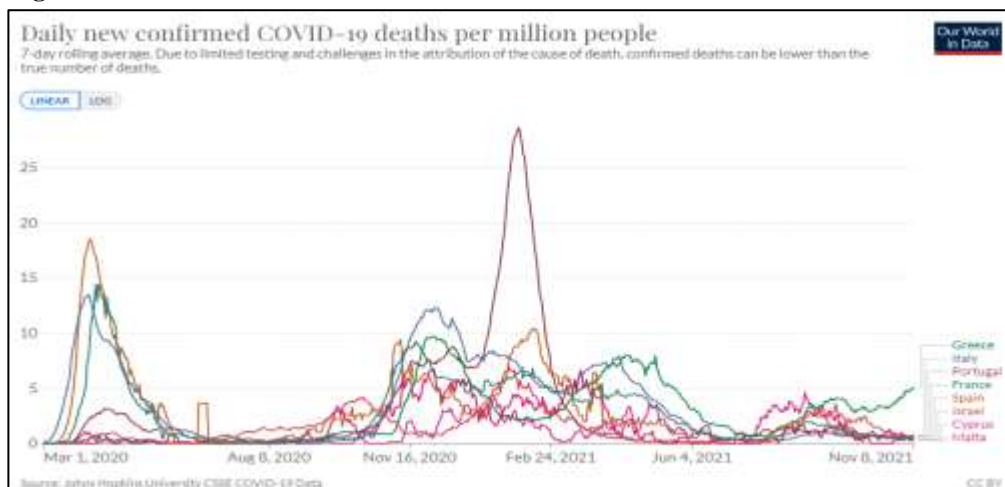


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

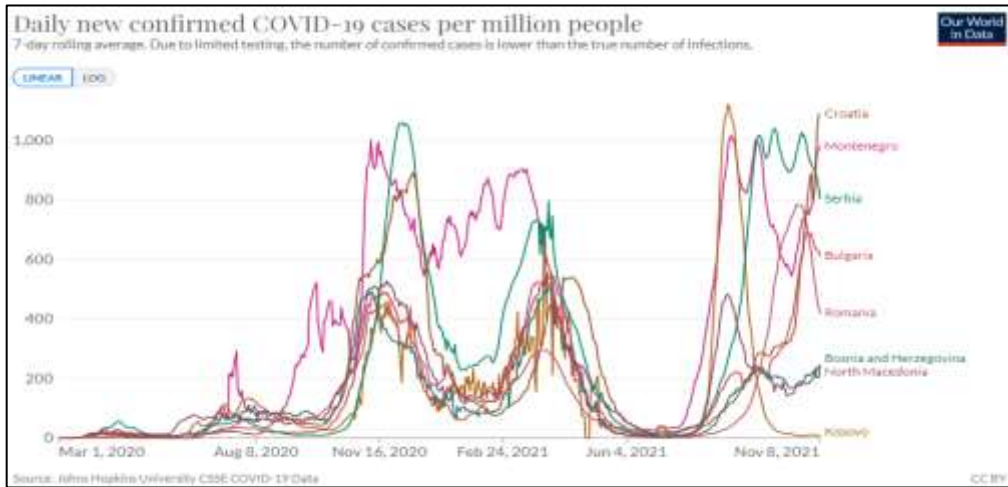
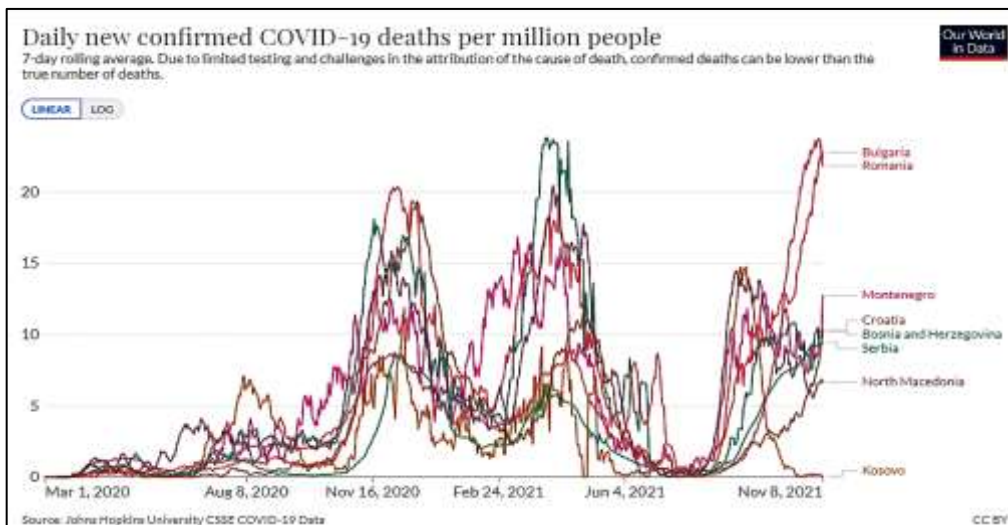


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

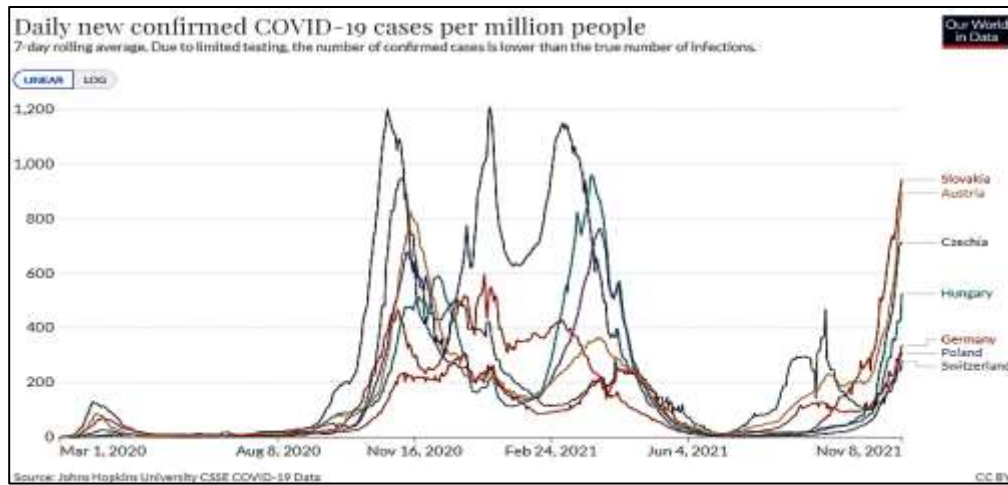
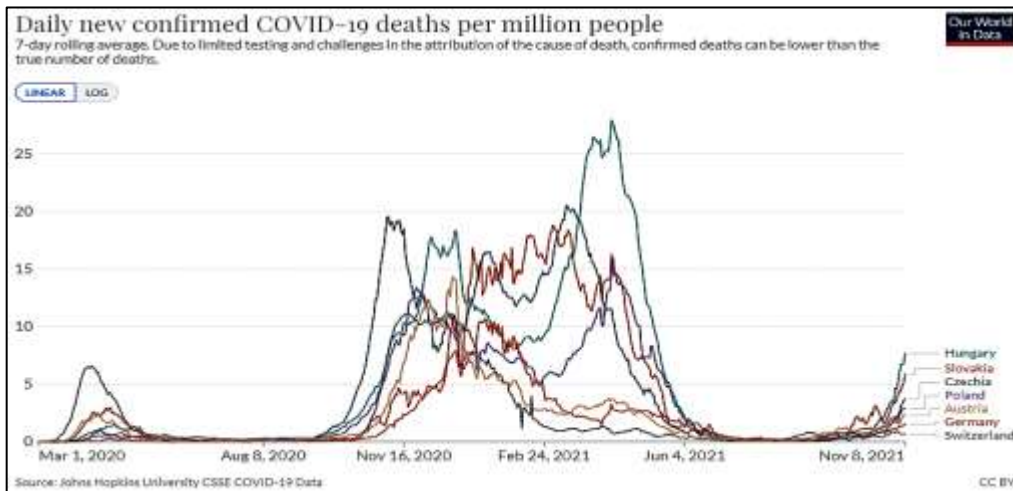


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

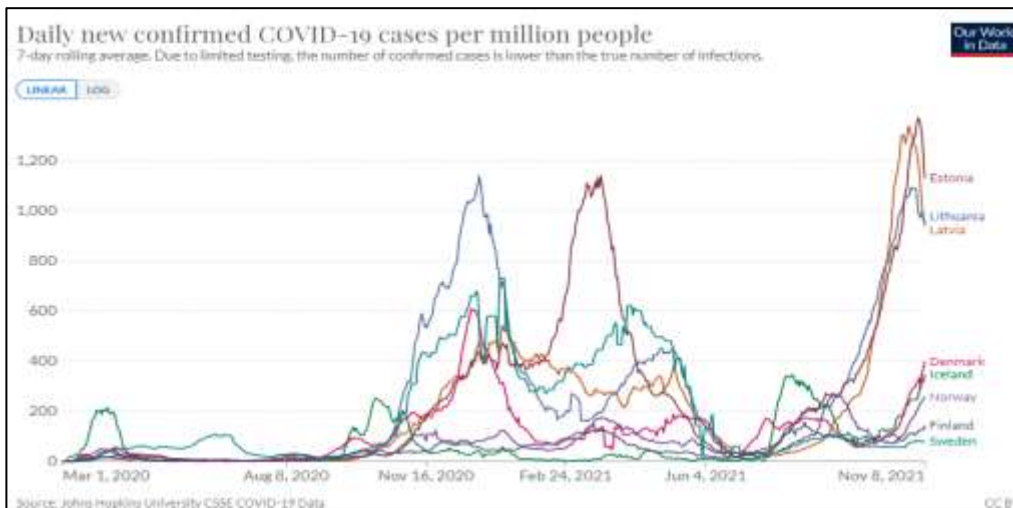
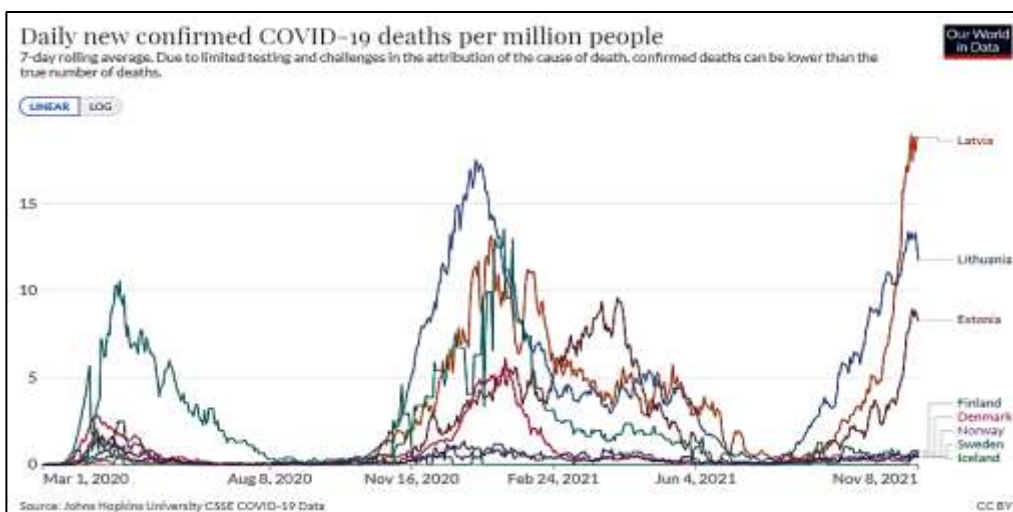


Figure 8:



**North-western Europe:
Figure 9:**

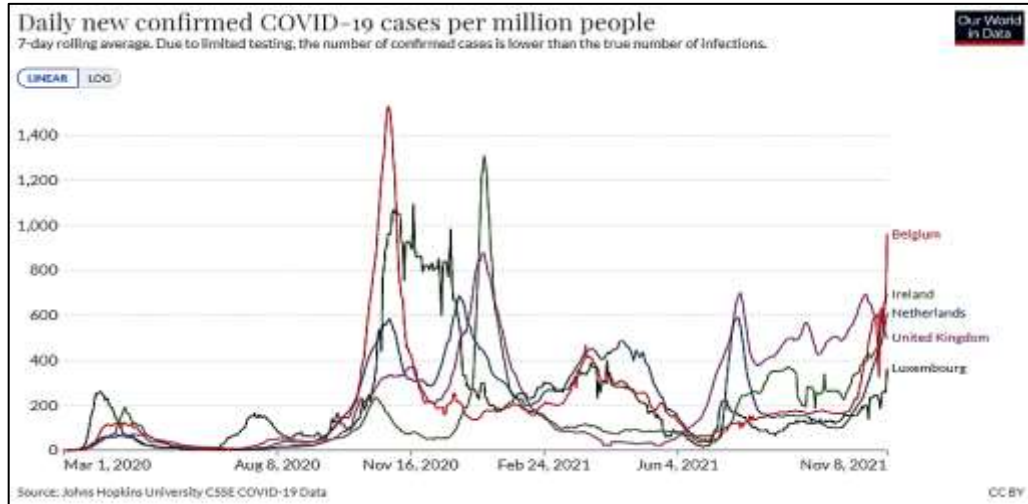
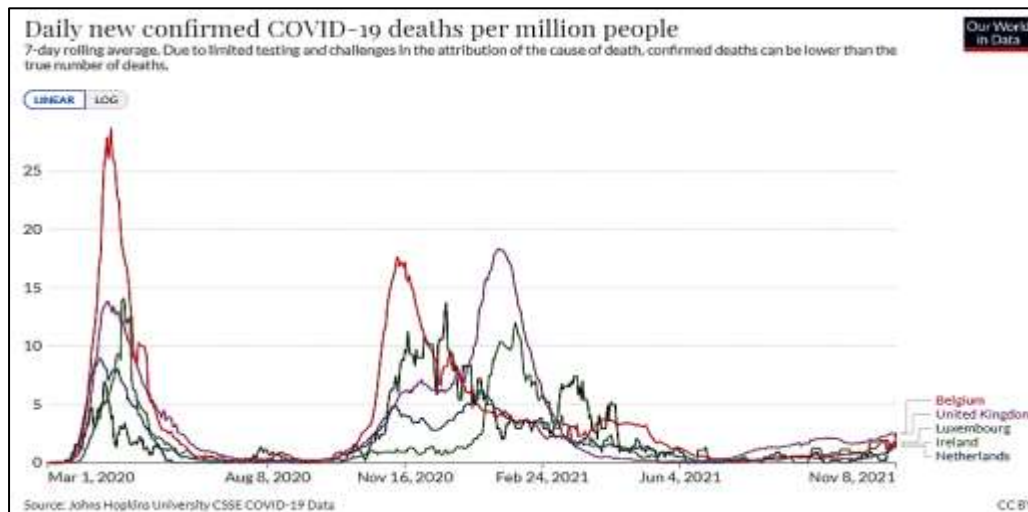


Figure 10:



**Central Asia:
Figure 11:**

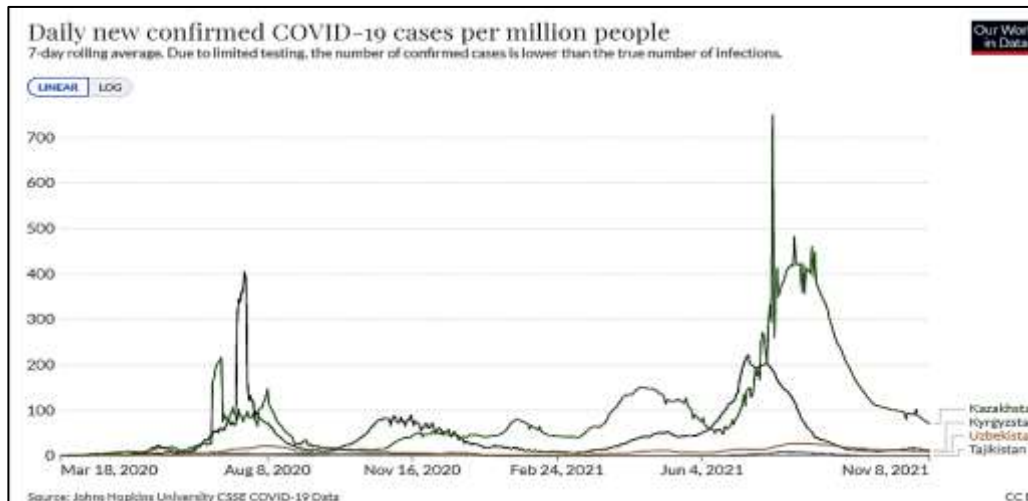
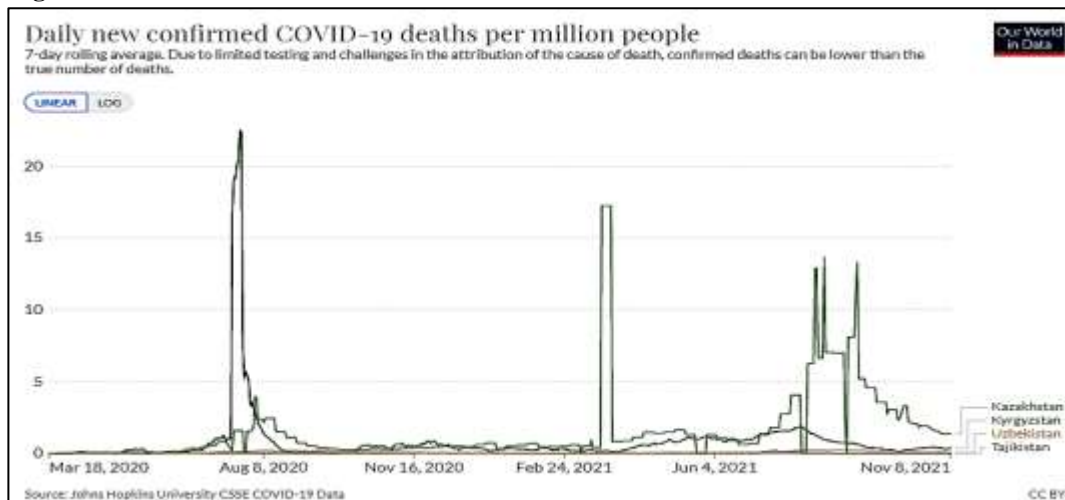


Figure 12:



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