

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?

ASPHER celebrates the extraordinary and dramatic falls of deaths from COVID-19 in Israel, Spain, UK and urges all countries to address their internal problems with vaccination programmes and get these sorted.

We are concerned about the [disastrous explosion of the pandemic in India](#). We call on the international community to respond to needs identified by the public health authorities in India and offer every feasible support. The situation in India presents an extreme case of need that cannot be met within a country and why we need international health action agencies capable of responding to need, as set out in our [BMJ piece this week](#). It also shows the need for further efforts to promote [internationalism in vaccination programmes](#) for the protection of everyone.

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 effort towards anticipating new variants and adapting vaccinations to meet mutating 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/>)

The data on the transmission of variants is very limited and the criteria for sequencing of samples tested across countries is not yet standardized.

The COVID-19 pandemic has entered its second year since the time WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic on 11th March 2020 (1). From the experiences of initial lockdown, countries have learned to develop strategies to sustain economic stability by imposing strict regulations instead of complete lockdown. Continuing the non-pharmacological interventions alongside vaccine rollout, some countries have significantly reduced the number of deaths and the infection rate (UK, Spain, Israel, Portugal). A few countries in individual European sub-regions have started easing lockdown restrictions (UK, Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Israel, Portugal, France, Denmark). However, some countries are still experiencing a mounting infection rate, which is a major concern (Turkey, France, Germany).

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 over three million lives to date (3,209,109) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed 0.1 billion (153,187,889). Individual WHO regions confirmed COVID-19 cases are as follows (2).

Table 1

WHO Region	Confirmed COVID-19 cases
Americas	62,589,322
Europe	52,099,114
South-East Asia	23,436,216
Eastern Mediterranean	9,230,733
Africa	3,325,467
Western-Pacific	2,506,291

As per the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the European Region is contributing 35% of cumulative COVID-19 confirmed cases worldwide. The number of **new cases and deaths in the past 7 days has reduced by 22% and 12% respectively compared to the previous week**. In Turkey, France and Germany high incidence of coronavirus is reported at 305.9, 251.6, 155.6 per 100,000 population respectively in two consecutive weeks (3). IHME weekly analysis (27th April to 3rd May) shows 24% of the individuals in the Europe Region have been infected (20% last week) with COVID-19 and it is the **top one leading cause of mortality in the Europe Region** with reported weekly number of deaths 57,886. **The cumulative COVID-19 deaths were high in Central Europe, East Europe regions and in Central Asia** indicating the high impact of the pandemic. All through Europe the presence of the variant B.1.1.7 is prevailing. In North Macedonia, Albania and Greece, the confirmed cases of B1.351 appears to be increasing, though the supporting evidence for these observations is lacking (4).

The following table shows daily new confirmed coronavirus cases, deaths and estimate of the effective reproduction rate (R) across European countries as reported on 03/05/2021 (table 2) (5).

Table 2

WHO Europe Region	Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases rolling 7-day average /mill people	Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths rolling 7-day average /mill people	Reproduction rate estimate (R)
Cyprus	644.40	3.26	0.91
Sweden	498.78	1.77	1.05
Lithuania	444.22	5.20	1.09
Croatia	434.49	10.89	0.93
Netherlands	425.67	1.23	0.96
Turkey	394.39	4.20	0.71
Andorra	391.97	5.55	0.91
Latvia	334.54	3.63	1.08
Slovenia	320.49	3.78	0.96
France	318.80	3.93	0.80
Georgia	310.91	4.30	1.10
Estonia	276.23	2.91	0.87
Belgium	256.49	3.17	0.90
Luxembourg	255.83	2.05	0.94
Serbia	241.75	3.67	0.72
Germany	214.04	2.72	0.97
Montenegro	213.58	8.42	0.80
Austria	200.75	2.57	0.83
Switzerland	200.22	1.19	0.94
Greece	193.69	6.85	0.89
Czech Republic	192.27	4.84	0.79
Italy	188.06	4.47	0.84
Hungary	187.17	16.37	0.62
Ukraine	184.41	7.46	0.73
Armenia	170.62	5.25	0.77
Poland	163.94	10.07	0.61
Spain	158.76	1.7	0.97
Kazakhstan	146.78	0.23	1.06
North Macedonia	142.78	16.94	0.61
Bulgaria	134.99	9.19	0.62
Denmark	131.90	0.32	1.14
Belarus	121.72	1.06	0.95
Azerbaijan	112.52	2.51	0.72
Bosnia and Herzegovina	108.42	8.75	0.63
Slovakia	103.17	7.22	0.82
Monaco	94.65	0.00	0.98
Ireland	91.36	0.93	1.06
Norway	82.58	0.55	0.87
Romania	80.33	6.45	0.66
Moldova	70.58	3.72	0.61
Russia	58.27	2.50	1.00
Malta	53.38	0.97	0.77
Kyrgyzstan	50.52	0.83	1.22
San Marino	50.51	0.00	0.52
Portugal	39.49	0.17	0.89
Finland	36.30	0.23	0.81
Albania	33.26	0.99	0.64
United Kingdom	31.45	0.23	0.84
Iceland	22.61	0.00	0.85
Uzbekistan	11.31	0.03	1.18
Israel	8.48	0.23	0.60
Kosovo	0.00	0.00	*0.72
Tajikistan	0.00	0.00	0.00

*the estimated reproduction rate is calculated based on the incidence reported in recent past

Mediterranean Region:

France:

- The rolling 7-day average of **daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases decreased this week** to 318.80 from 435.71 and deaths from 4.35 to 3.93 per million people respectively compared to the previous week (6).
- **France has begun the dissolution of confinement measures from 3rd May.** Curfew hours will be extended to 9 pm and all shops, theaters, cinemas, museums and terraces will be opened from 19th May. From 9th June curfew hours will be extended until 11pm, restaurants, indoor cafes and sports halls can be opened and by 30th June curfew will end (7).

Cyprus:

- On 5th May, 562 new cases and 327 new deaths were reported. A total of 246 patients are hospitalized with COVID-19 and 67 patients are in critical condition (8). Until 9th May all the restrictions such as night curfew from 21hrs to 5 am, mandatory face mask in all public places will be effective, all non-essential stores will be shut. As part of the continuous surveillance among the general population and employees at workplaces, **the government has expanded the testing units for conducting free rapid antigen tests (9).**
- From 10th May, the government is planning to resume trade operations. However, it is mandatory to present a vaccine certificate, or certificate of recovery from COVID-19 within the last 90 days or a negative test report while attending these business services (10).

Figure 1

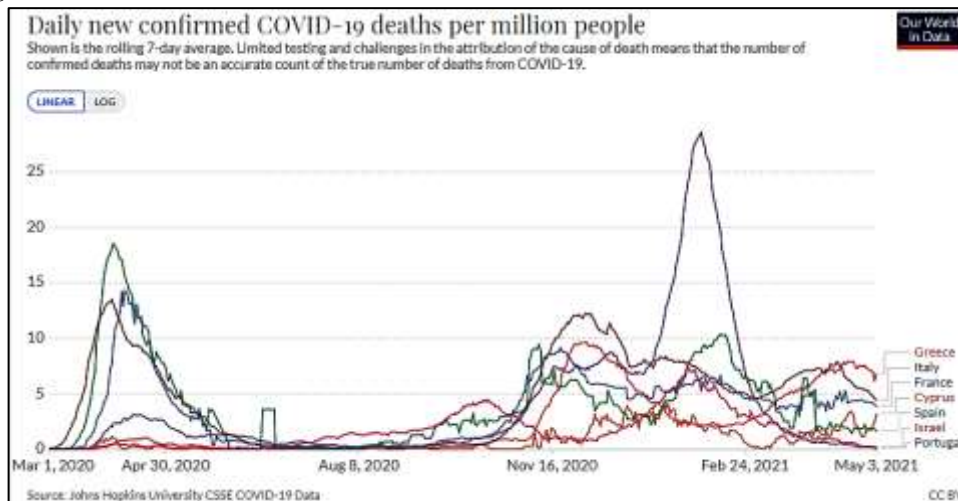
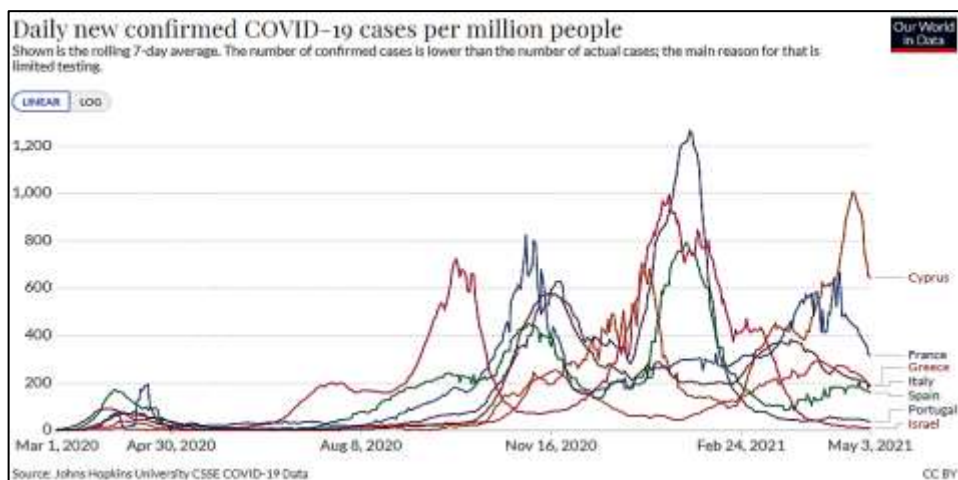


Figure 2



South-East Europe Region

Bulgaria:

- For seven consecutive weeks, all districts in Bulgaria are in COVID-19 "red zones" with an infection rate of 120 or more per 100,000 population (11). From 4th to 5th May, 367 new cases were reported, a reduction of 266 cases compared to the previous day (12).
- **Temporary anti-epidemic measures are effective in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria until 31st May.** Students from 5th to 12th grade can attend classes according to a fixed schedule. Private gatherings are limited to 15 people. Fitness centres, gyms, swimming pools, entertainment and restaurants are allowed to operate with 50% capacity limit (13).
- Until May 5th, a total of 844,643 people have received first dose of vaccine against COVID-19 and 225,387 people have been fully vaccinated (14).

Figure 3

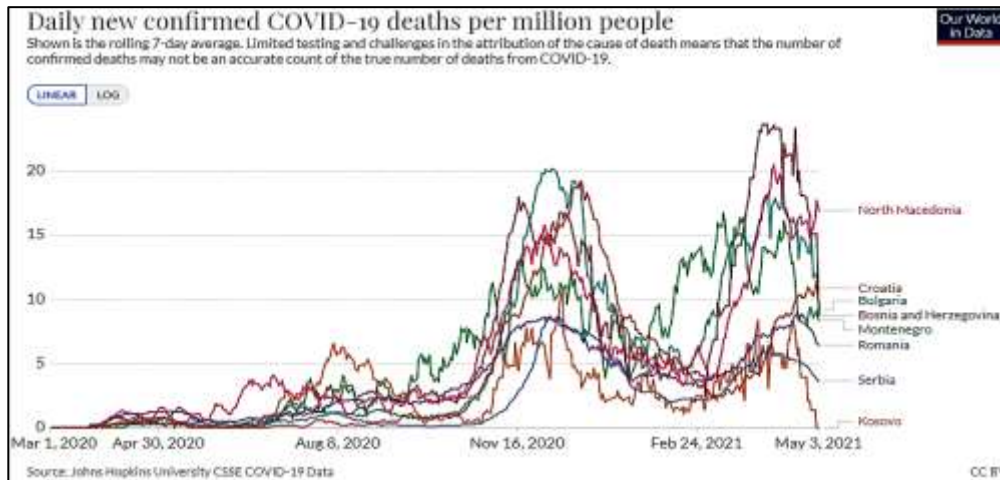
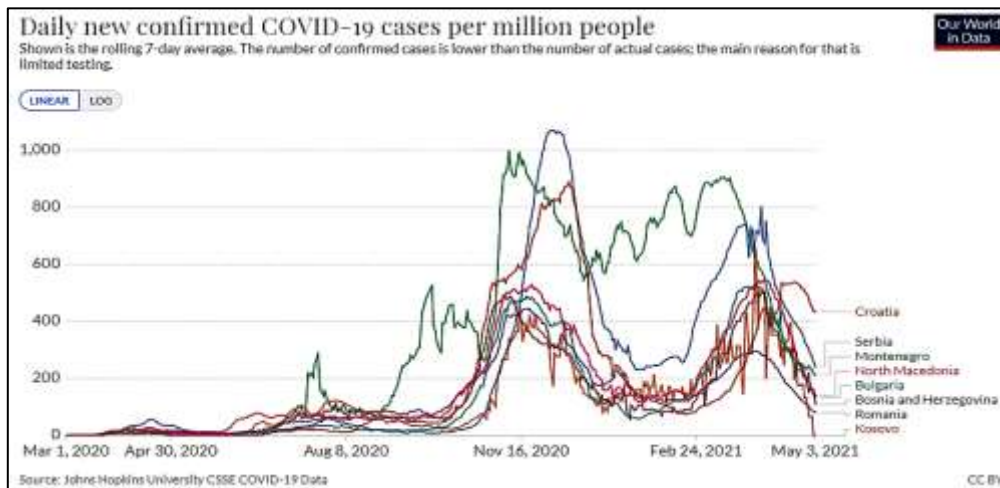


Figure 4



Central Europe:

Czechia:

- **There is declining trend in incidence in Czechia, which recorded a high number of cases during the first week of March.** The number of hospitalizations is also decreasing (15).
- The country has begun stepwise relaxation of measures (with simultaneous monitoring of the epidemiological situation) against COVID-19 from 12th April. From 10th May, all the remaining retail segments are allowed to reopen if the incidence is below 100/100,000 at a national level and students of the second level of primary school can attend classes in the regions where the incidence is below 100/100,000 population along with compulsory negative test and strict hygienic measures (16).

Austria:

- From 4th to 5th May, 1,644 new COVID-19 cases are reported. Currently, 1540 patients are receiving treatment for COVID-19 at hospitals out of which 447 patients are in intensive care units (17). Lockdown measures are effective until 15th May throughout Austria.
- In the state of Vorarlberg, with strict control measures, the lockdown restrictions have been lifted for restaurants, events, sports activities, and kindergartens and primary schools have been opened (18). From 19th May the country is planning to ease restrictions nationwide (19).

Figure 5

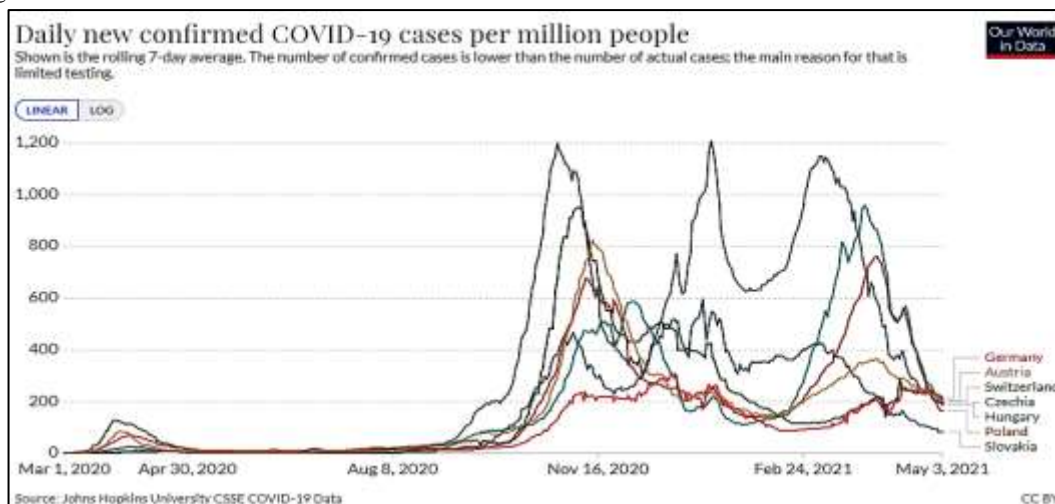
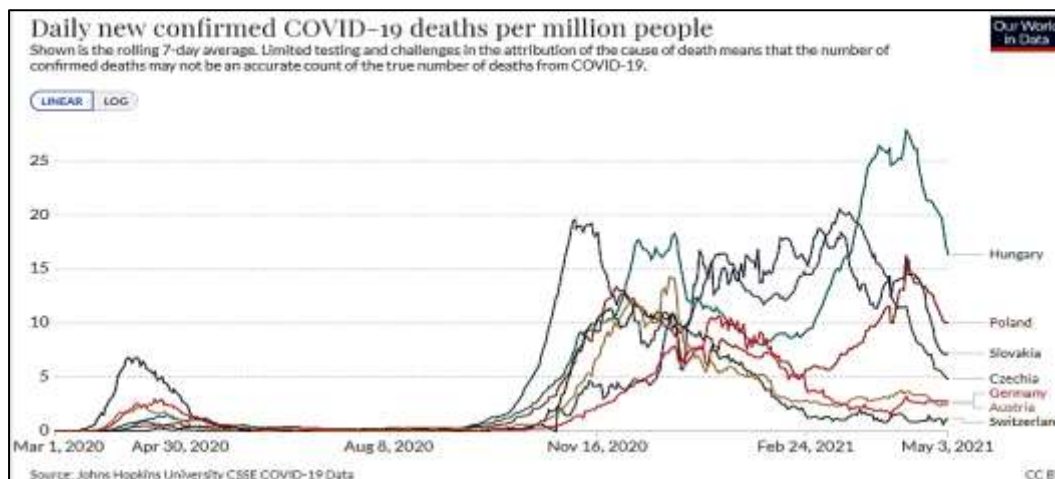


Figure 6



Baltics and Nordic countries:

Estonia:

- **The daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people are declining in Estonia (20).** Using a four-tier system of risk levels, **currently, Estonia is in orange or high-risk level down from red or very high-risk level before.** The risk level is assessed by the government once a week by considering the average number of infections, deaths, positive tests, hospitalized patients and the number of patients on ventilator (21).
- Based on the current risk level, the country eased some restrictions on 3rd May. Students of primary classes 1 to 4 and final grades 9 to 12 and students of vocational training can attend classes in schools. But children are not allowed to attend kindergartens. Indoor sports activities are permitted with 25% occupancy and a group of 10 people are allowed for outdoor activities. All stores are opened with a limit of 25% occupancy (22).

Denmark:

- The rolling 7-day averages of daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths are 131.90, 0.32 respectively per million population (Table 2). Between 3rd and 4th May, 9 new cases and one death were reported. In the same time period, a total of 161 patients were admitted to the hospital with COVID-19 of which 40 patients are in intensive care units and 21 patients are on respirators (23).
- Denmark has vaccinated 24.2% of the population with the first dose and 12.7% are fully vaccinated as of 4th May (24). The country is increasing its vaccination rollout to reach its citizens through mobile targeted local vaccination offer for quick and safe access to the vaccine center (25).

Sweden:

- According to weekly epidemiological reporting (26th April to 2nd May) the overall incidence stands at 342/100,000 inhabitants this week. **Among 0-9 years and 10-19 years age groups the incidence rose by 17% and 8% respectively compared to the week before** and is decreased for age groups 20-29 years, 50 years and above. **The number of new intensive care admissions is also falling (184 this week from 235 in the previous week) which is a positive effect of vaccination.** A follow-up study on people who are vaccinated showed, requirement of intensive care and risk of death are low among those who are fully vaccinated compared to those who are not (26) (27) (28).
- The national scenarios based on the cases reported through 26th April by Sweden's public health agency presented that, the infection spread will continue to rise until mid-June if the level of contacts between people increases. By July and August, the spread of infection could be lowered if the contacts are limited and vaccine rollout is implemented as planned (29).

Figure 7

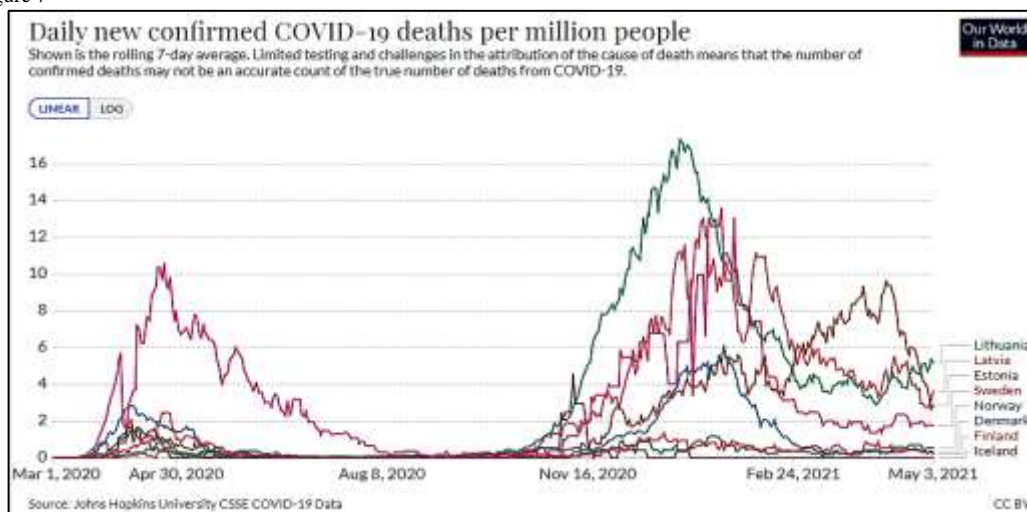
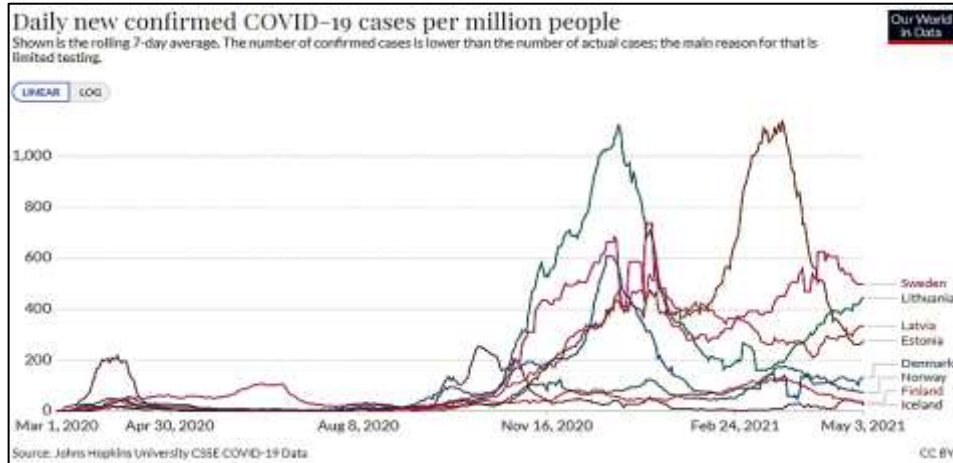


Figure 8



**Northwestern Europe:
United Kingdom:**

- The number of people who tested positive for COVID-19 and the number of deaths within 28 days of positive test during the week 28th April to 4th May was reduced by 13.2% and 37.0% compared to the week before (30).
- The School Infection Survey (SIS) has revealed results of round 4 of the survey conducted in schools from 14 local authorities—from the time of reopening the schools in England in March 2021, **there is a considerable drop in test positivity for COVID-19 infection among secondary school students (0.33%) and staff (0.32%) from the previous study results.** This shows the significance of implementing public health measures in schools, it also adds further knowledge to the evidence that the transmission risk is low in schools (31) (32).

Figure 9

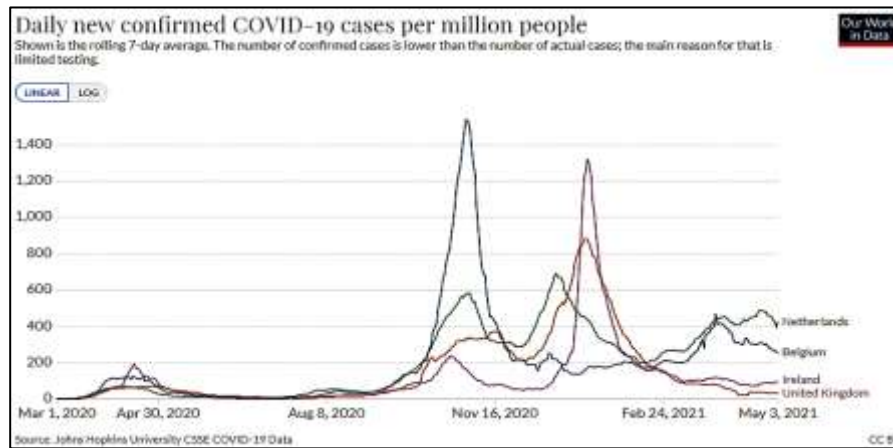
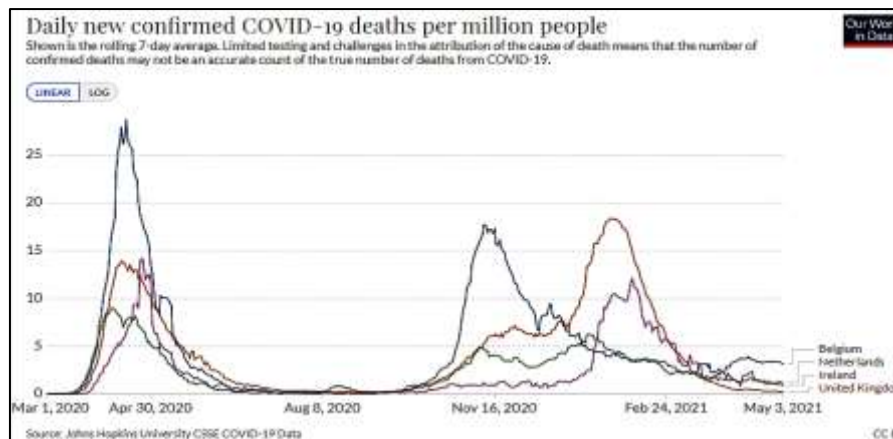


Figure 10



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