

ASPHER Report: COVID-19 Situation Reporting across Europe

Week of October 25th 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?

Europe is the only region among WHO's six regions that is reporting an increasing number of COVID-19 cases since three successive weeks whilst other regions are showing a declining trend ([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](#)). ECDC emphasizes that the vaccination program in the EU/EEA region should focus on ensuring that all eligible populations are vaccinated ([link](#)). In addition, genomic surveillance is emerging as a vital necessity to achieve containment of the virus in this pandemic. It would facilitate greater early anticipation as well as initiation of effective strategies to mitigate outbreaks of new variants of the COVID-19 virus ([link](#)).

ASPHER is concerned about the situation in Latvia and Russia which have reported a high incidence in recent weeks. The situation has led to the declaration of a state of emergency and lockdown to contain the infection transmission ([link](#)) ([link](#)). The new Delta variant mutant has been reported in the UK and is attributed to 6% of new cases according to the latest report on SARS-CoV-2 variants. The features of this new variant are under investigation at the national level ([link](#)). In Hungary, the existing testing capacity has been expanded in response to a sharp rise in the Delta variant mutant ([link](#)). ASPHER recognizes the importance of following [non-pharmacological interventions](#) as well as achieving high levels of vaccination uptake. Also, countries should closely monitor new infection rates among both vaccinated and unvaccinated to understand the efficacy of the vaccine.

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 and authorities should be careful in how they address the pandemic, keeping in mind the risk of a new wave during autumn.

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 nearly 5million lives to date (4,953,246) and the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases are now above two hundred million (243,857,028). 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 | 92,930,797 |
| Europe | 75,402,101 |
| South-East Asia | 43,830,719 |
| Eastern Mediterranean | 16,267,384 |
| Western-Pacific | 9,288,583 |
| Africa | 6,136,680 |

According to the WHO weekly epidemiological report, the number of newly reported cases and deaths in the Europe region has increased by 18% and 14% respectively compared to the previous week (2).

IHME policy briefs show, there has been an increase in the reported number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, indicating the deterioration of the epidemiological situation. In the Central and Eastern Europe regions, an increase in virus transmission has been reported and the situation in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Russia and the Netherlands is more concerning. This could be because of relaxation of the measures, schools reopening and decline in mask usage at workplaces, the transmission of sub-lineages of the Delta variant also seasonality. Analysis of the current trends shows that the winter months will likely be very challenging for the health system planners, due to the likelihood of COVID-19 and flu spreading widely. Efforts towards managing the epidemic should focus on the probability of an increase in the number of hospitalizations this winter through encouraging vaccination by various means in parallel to imposing mandatory vaccination and mask usage (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 25/10/2021 (table 2) (4) (5) (6).

Table2:

| WHO Europe region | Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases/mill people | Rolling 7-day average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 deaths/mill people | Share of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 |
|------------------------|---|--|---|
| Latvia | 1269.54 | 11.63 | 52.51% |
| Estonia | 1076.40 | 4.31 | 56.78% |
| Lithuania | 1057.52 | 10.89 | 61.08%* |
| Georgia | 1054.52 | 9.98 | 22.79%* |
| Serbia | 1009.58 | 8.56 | 43.19%* |
| Slovenia | 832.86 | 3.57 | 53.54% |
| Romania | 774.60 | 21.94 | 31.23% |
| Montenegro | 738.11 | 7.96 | 38.05% |
| United Kingdom | 656.52 | 1.99 | 66.83% |
| Armenia | 643.46 | 12.03 | 7.08%* |
| Croatia | 622.02 | 5.36 | 43.55% |
| Bulgaria | 615.37 | 17.15 | 21.01% |
| Slovakia | 509.95 | 1.65 | 42.06% |
| Belgium | 481.04 | 1.34 | 73.40% |
| Ukraine | 479.59 | 11.73 | 16.24% |
| Ireland | 430.96 | 1.81 | 78.11%* |
| Moldova | 404.54 | 9.30 | 21.12%* |
| Austria | 375.62 | 1.28 | 61.78% |
| Turkey | 329.16 | 2.53 | 56.56% |
| Greece | 320.43 | 3.64 | 61.20% |
| Netherlands | 308.07 | 0.62 | 68.31%* |
| Czech Republic | 287.34 | 0.95 | 56.51% |
| Russia | 240.83 | 7.03 | 32.83%* |
| Iceland | 219.68 | 0.00 | 81.04%* |
| Belarus | 216.16 | 1.71 | N/A |
| Denmark | 215.74 | 0.27 | 75.79% |
| Hungary | 209.43 | 2.45 | 59.39% |
| Azerbaijan | 200.52 | 1.91 | 42.29% |
| Albania | 187.56 | 2.54 | 30.48%* |
| Bosnia And Herzegovina | 186.79 | 8.58 | N/A |
| North Macedonia | 185.48 | 6.72 | 36.94%* |
| Germany | 164.92 | 0.73 | 65.69% |
| Cyprus | 158.64 | 0.96 | 63.42% |
| Switzerland | 143.44 | 0.51 | 62.69% |
| San Marino | 142.81 | 4.20 | N/A |
| Luxembourg | 139.75 | 0.68 | N/A |
| Poland | 131.36 | 1.25 | 52.51% |
| Norway | 117.98 | 0.26 | 68.17% |
| Monaco | 112.06 | 3.62 | N/A |
| Andorra | 107.11 | 0.00 | N/A |
| Israel | 102.10 | 0.84 | 65.06% |
| Finland | 94.78 | 0.77 | 68.51% |
| Kazakhstan | 93.11 | 1.83 | 38.58% |
| France | 79.53 | 0.47 | 67.71% |
| Portugal | 75.22 | 0.53 | 87.16% |
| Italy | 57.33 | 0.64 | 70.92% |
| Sweden | 57.13 | 0.52 | 67.37%* |
| Spain | 40.77 | 0.48 | 79.69% |
| Malta | 27.76 | 0.28 | 82.93% |
| Kyrgyzstan | 15.43 | 0.41 | 10.89% |
| Uzbekistan | 11.01 | 0.07 | 17.33%* |
| Kosovo | 7.80 | 0.16 | 39.84% |
| Tajikistan | 0.03 | 0.00 | 21.61%* |

*data available after 18th October

Romania: Between 26 and 27 October, Romania recorded 14,950 new COVID-19 cases and 512 deaths, which is a slight decrease since last week (7) (8). As of 26 October, 31.6% of the population has been fully vaccinated (8). Starting 25 October, the government is limiting access to non-essential shops to those fully vaccinated (9). Since 22 October, there will be a 30-day curfew in place during 22.00-5.00 exempting those fully vaccinated or on urgent business and most entertainment venues will close for the duration. There will also be a two-week break for primary and secondary in-person education until 5 November (10). Starting 11 October, the third vaccine dose is recommended for severely immunocompromised persons over 12 years of age as determined by the attending physician, specialist, or family physician (11).

Montenegro: Between 25 and 26 October, Montenegro recorded 474 new COVID-19 cases and 7 deaths, an increase compared to the previous week (12) (13). As of 26 October, 38.2% of the population has been fully vaccinated (13). Since 3 October, the National Expert Advisory Body on Immunizations recommends the administration of the third dose of COVID-19 vaccine to the entire adult population (14). No changes to policy have been reported on official websites since last week's report as the digital COVID certificate remains a requirement to enter all shopping and business centres (15).

Serbia: Between 26 and 27 October, Serbia recorded 6,948 new COVID-19 cases and 64 deaths, which is close to the previous all-time high in early December 2020 (16). As of 24 October, the share of persons who have received a full vaccine course is 43.2% (17). On 20 October, the government announced that covid passes (proof of vaccination, recovery, or negative test) will be required to enter restaurants, cafés, and bars, as well as the stricter enforcement of this requirement (18) (19). This complements previous measures, which includes retail stores operating without restrictions, mandatory masks indoors, indoor venues operating with limited capacity, and restricted public gatherings (20) (21).

Czechia: The current 7-day rolling average of daily newly confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people is more than double (287.34) compared to the previous week (128.38) (22). Given the epidemiological situation, from October 27, the self-isolation of travellers from red and dark red zones has been lifted. However, PCR or antigen testing, wearing a respirator is still mandatory. The testing requirement does not apply for vaccinated and recovered individuals (23). Unvaccinated students of both primary and secondary education will be tested from November 1 to 8. A similar rule applies to employees of the school. They will be exempted from testing upon providing a vaccinated/tested/recovered certificate (24). Regulating the use of respirators at all indoors also at the workplace was introduced by the authorities on October 25 (25) (26). Free PCR testing is no longer available unless it is ordered by a doctor or public health authorities from early November (27) (28). The validity of the PCR test and antigen test certificate is reduced to 72hours and 24hours respectively (29).

Austria: Between October 25 and 26, 3369 new COVID-19 cases and 18 new deaths have been reported in Austria (30). By October 25, the proportion of the population fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is 61.8% (31). The authorities have now introduced a new ruling for employees which enter into force from November 1. It is mandatory to provide vaccinated/tested/recovered certificate if there is physical contact between the colleagues at workplace. If the employee does not comply with the rules then they must wear a face mask after mid-November (32). Currently, the occupancy of ICU beds in Austria is 240 (12%) (33). The existing rules will be tightened if the occupancy of the ICU exceeds 400 (34).

Netherlands: Between October 19 and 26 the number of people tested positive for COVID-19, new hospital and ICU admissions rose by 50%, 24% and 31% respectively compared to the week before. More than half the people who tested positive were not vaccinated. However, the hospital and ICU admissions between August and October 2021 were less compared to the similar weeks in the year 2020 (when strict measures were in place and the vaccination was not yet started) (35). In response to the current situation, the authorities are planning to introduce new restrictions which will be released in early November (36).

Croatia: Between 26 and 27 October, Croatia recorded 4,571 new COVID-19 cases and 26 deaths and is on track to exceed the previous peak caseload from December 2020 (37) (38) On 25 October, 43.5% of the population has been fully vaccinated (39). The general measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 remain largely unchanged since June 2021 (40). Since 5 October, employees in social welfare and healthcare are required to undergo mandatory testing (41) (42). On 12 October, 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 (43).

Set of graphs: Rolling 7day 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 25th October 2021:

Mediterranean Region:

Figure 1:

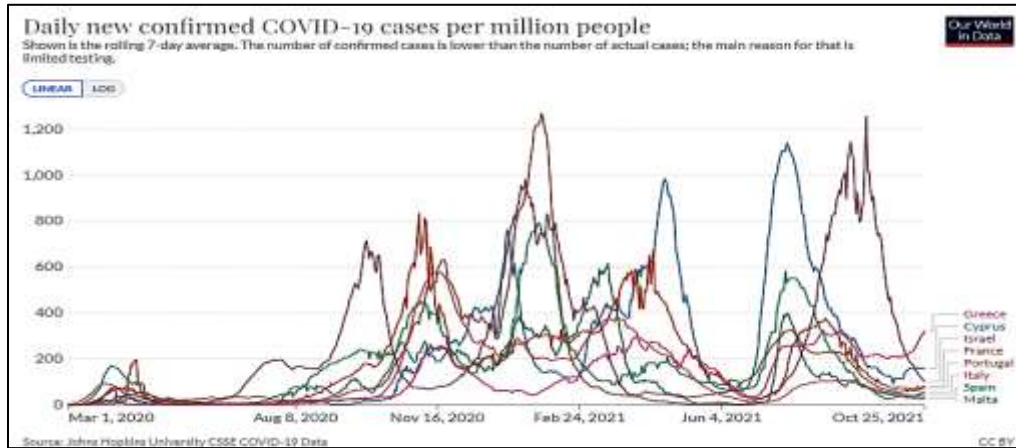
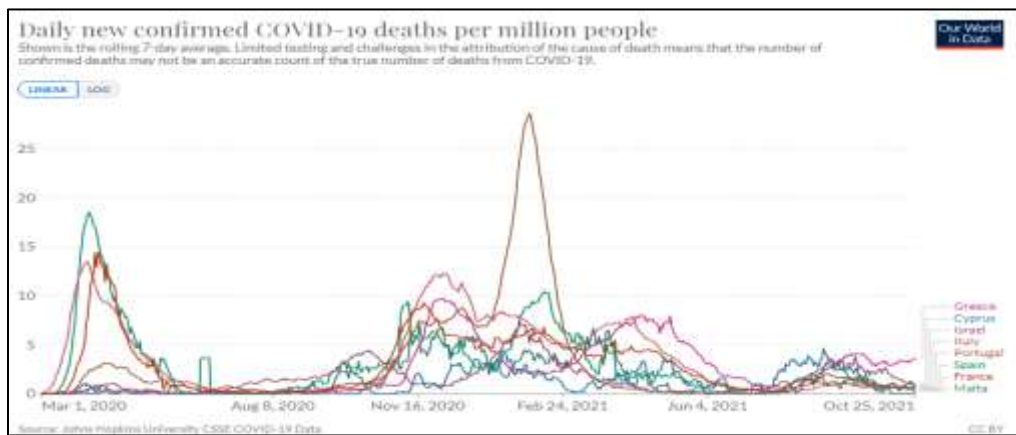


Figure 2:



South-East region:

Figure 3:

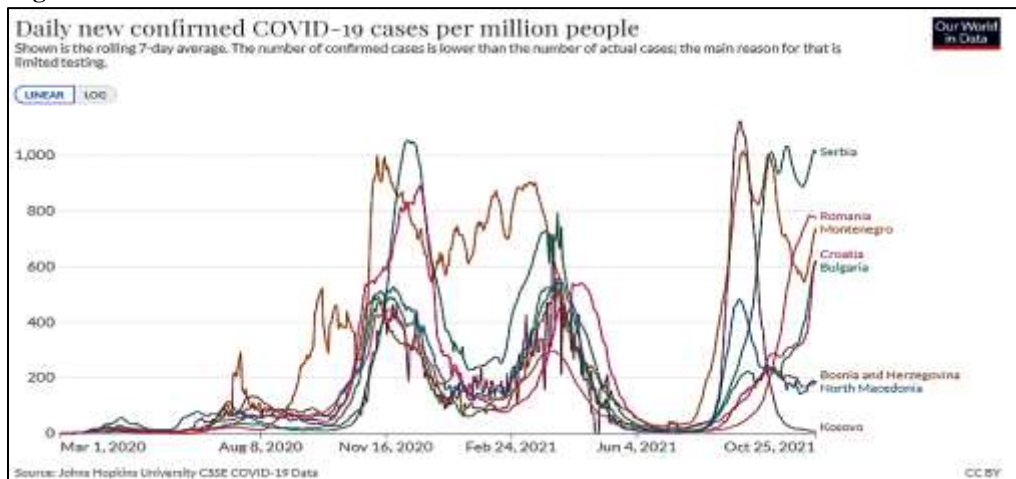
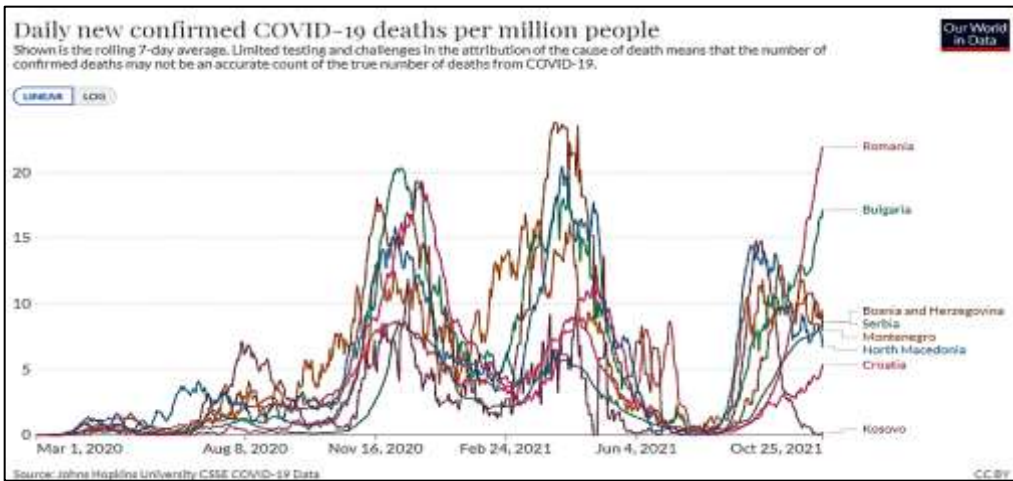


Figure 4:



Central Europe:

Figure 5:

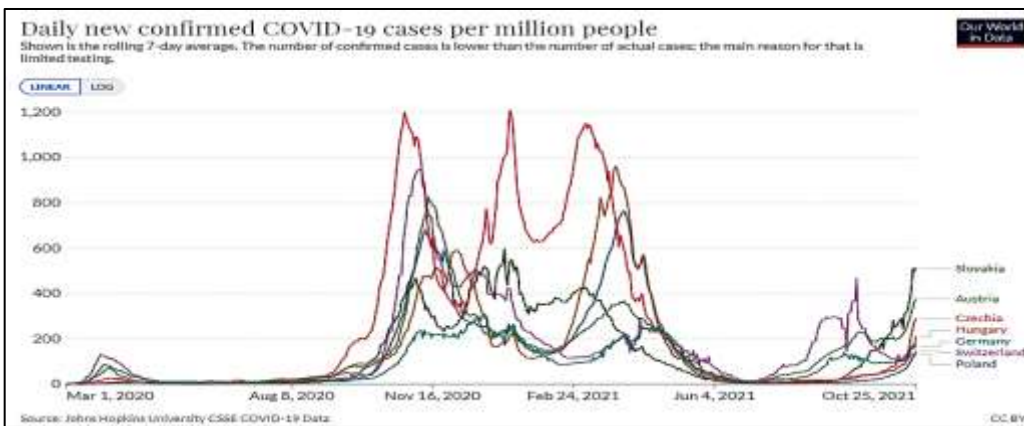
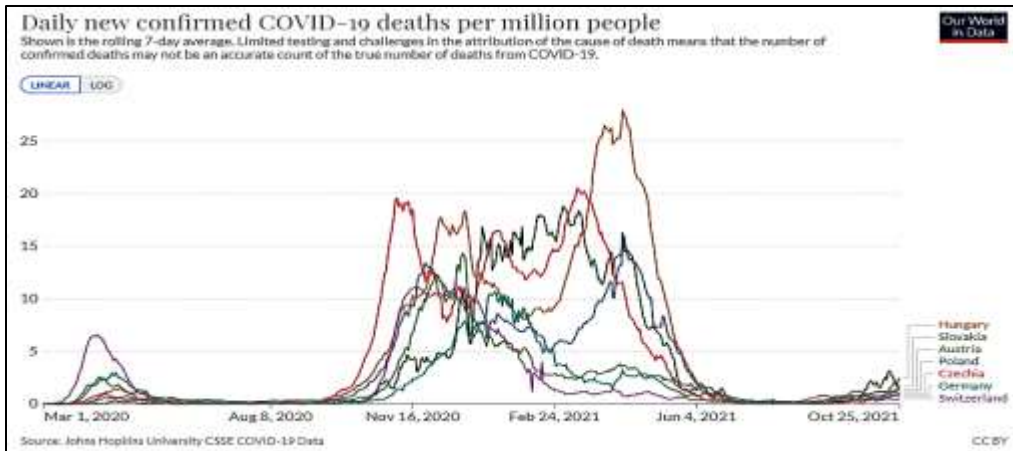


Figure 6:



Baltics and Nordic Countries:

Figure 7:

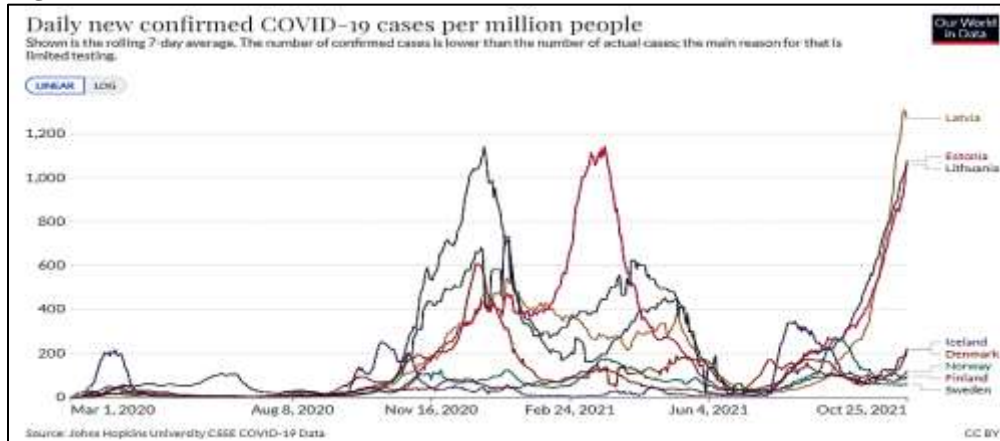
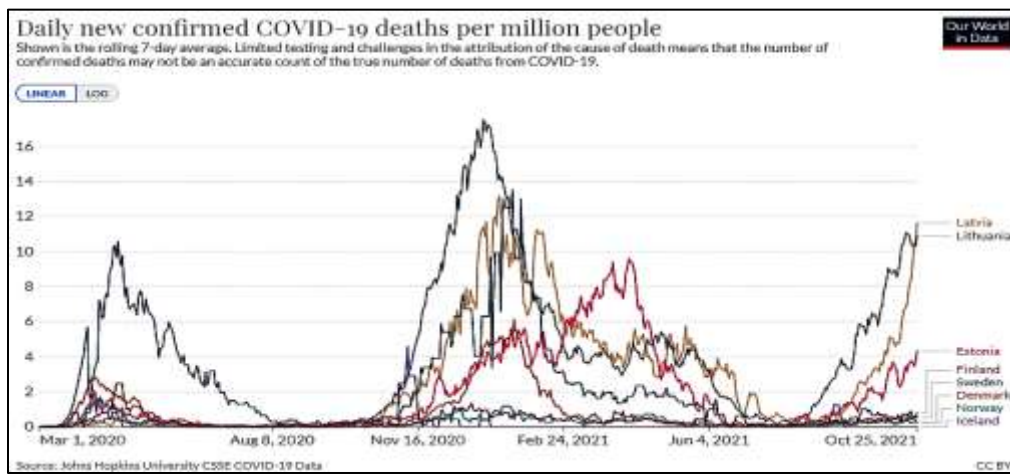


Figure 8:



North-western Europe:

Figure 9:

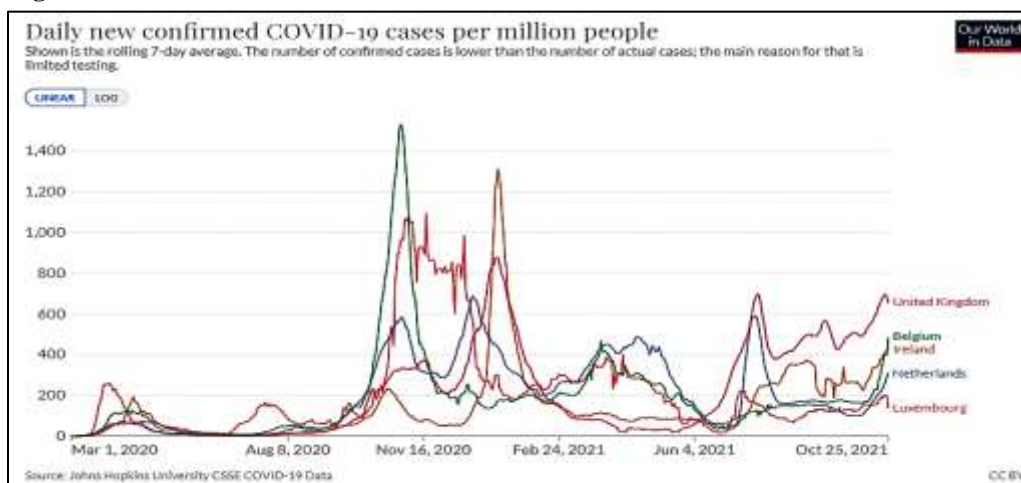
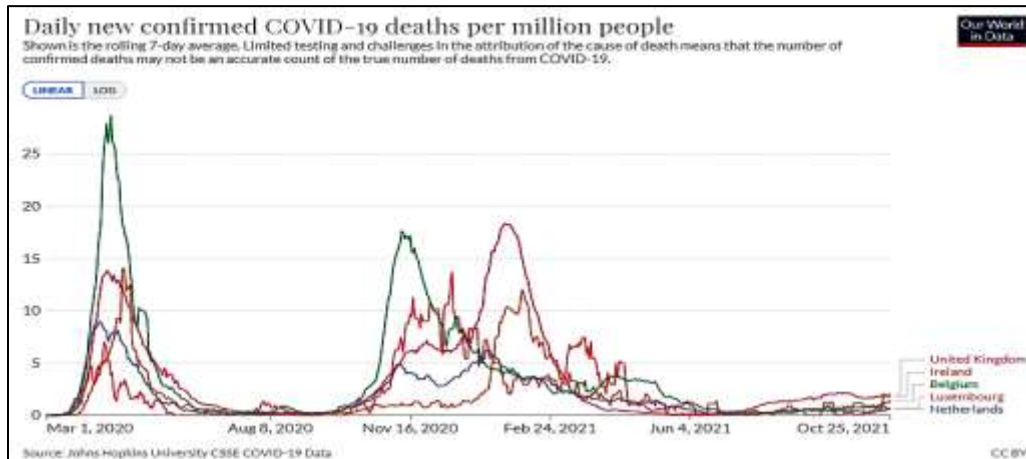


Figure 10:



Central Asia:

Figure 11:

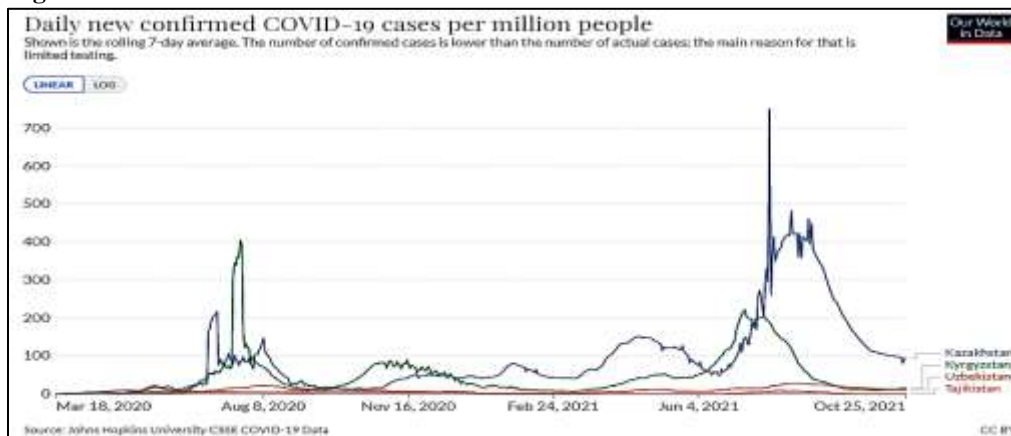
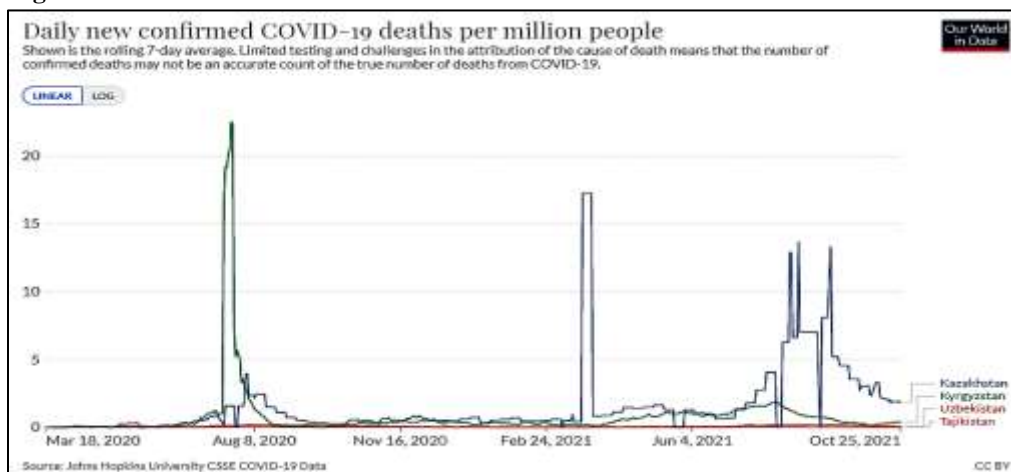


Figure 12:



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