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I. SUMMARY

EUROPEAN UNION

Population: 514,503,016 (including the UK)

Number of cases: 2,196,336 (including the UK)

Number of deaths: 181,592

- On 24 August, the European Commission [presented](#) proposals to the Council for decisions to grant the financial support of €81.4 billion to 15 Member States under the SURE instrument.
- Following exploratory talks with AstraZeneca on 14 August, a [contract was signed](#) on 27 August. This marks the first contract negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of the Member States.
 - The contract ensures that Member States will be able to purchase 300 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, with an option for a further 100 million doses.
 - The Commission is discussing similar contracts. In fact, previous exploratory talks took place with [Sanofi-GSK](#) on 31 July, [Johnson & Johnson](#) on 13 August, [CureVac](#) on 18 August and [Moderna](#) on 24 August.

For more information, please get in touch with **Charline Quillérou, Associate Director EU** at c.quillerou@rpp-group.com

FRANCE



Population:	67,063,703
Number of cases:	277,943
Number of deaths:	30,606 <i>(including retirement homes)</i>

- Prime Minister Jean Castex, together with Health Minister Olivier Véran and Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, held a press conference on 27 August to review the current COVID-19 situation in their respective ministerial domains.
- The number of COVID-19 tests is steadily rising, putting pressure on the 1000 laboratories authorised to analyse samples.
- With the new scholastic year starting as of 1 September, doctors are calling for compulsory mask use for students aged 6 and above, whilst stating that the schools are not prepared for the unique situation posed by the pandemic.
- The rate of positive tests has continued to increase. COVID-19 positive individuals have shown a recurring tendency of producing less names for contact-tracing, making it more difficult to control the spread of the virus.
- With 30 to 40% of people refusing to systematically follow preventative measures, the spread of the epidemic has become “exponential”. In view of this, the real number of COVID-19 cases could potentially be 2 to 4 times higher than those currently estimated.

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GERMANY



Population:	83,042,200
Number of cases:	243,373
Number of deaths:	9,303

- On 29 August, demonstrations were held against the current COVID-19 measures. Out of approximately 30,000 participants (some of which carried extreme right-wing ideals), around

300 were arrested. The demonstration was initially not allowed, however this decision was overturned by the Berlin Higher Administrative Court since the organiser had submitted a hygiene concept note. When this and other COVID-19 protective measures were not adhered to, the police disbanded the demonstration.

- At her summer press conference, Chancellor Merkel announced three goals for the coming months. She stated that in the context of the pandemic, it is crucial to: support day-care centres and schools with a digital procurement programme; preserve companies and employment; and lastly, ensure that the principle of social cohesion is maintained.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs added Andorra, Gibraltar and some regions of the Caribbean on its list of high-risk areas.

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ITALY

Population:	60,453,573
Number of cases:	268,218
Number of deaths:	35,477

- An increase in new cases was seen between the 17 and 23 August, for the fourth consecutive week in a row. The majority of cases were contracted through local transmission, whilst around 21% of diagnosed cases were imported from abroad. Authorities confirm that in Italy (as is the case for the rest of the world), there has been a change in the median age for COVID-19 infections, dropping to a median age of 29. It was observed that the virus is spreading at a more frequent rate amongst younger people, particularly as a result of the re-opening of commercial activities and increased mobility.
- The first clinical trial for an Italian-made COVID-19 vaccine, produced by biotechnology firm ReiThera, started on 24 August. The testing took place at the Rome Spallanzani Hospital.
- Tensions have increased between the Governor of Sicily Nello Musumeci and the Italian government over a recent increase in migrants coming to Sicily. The Governor of Sicily fears that with the island becoming a new hotspot for migrants, it could also rapidly turn into a COVID hotspot as well.

- The Italian government held a summit on 26 August about the reopening of schools scheduled for 14 September. The aim was to draw up and agree on protocol guidelines to manage the reopening and organise school transport in relation to COVID-19.

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SPAIN



Population:	47,329,981
Number of cases:	439,286 (PCR-based test)
Number of deaths:	29,011

- The Spanish Agency for Medicines and Health Products has authorized the first clinical trial for a vaccine against COVID-19. The study will test the product on 550 volunteers, 190 of which will be in Spain.
- The Ministry of Health has also launched a clinical trial to prevent COVID-19 infections amongst health professionals. The study will start in Spain, but it is expected to also include professionals from other countries.

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UNITED KINGDOM



Population:	66,796,807
Number of cases:	334,467
Number of deaths:	41,499

- On 28 August, the UK Government launched a campaign to encourage workers to return to offices. The Government is urging companies to roll out routine COVID-19 tests, which may prove key in enabling offices to stay open even under local lockdown restrictions.

- Health Secretary Matt Hancock has promised workers £182 each for the 14 days they are required to self-isolate after a positive COVID-19 test. The payments will initially only apply to areas subject to local lockdown restrictions.
- Prime Minister Boris Johnson has reversed government policy to now stipulate that secondary school pupils in schools in areas subject to local lockdown measures must wear face coverings in corridors. Schools outside local lockdown areas will be able to implement their own rules on face coverings and distancing.
- Travellers arriving from Switzerland, Jamaica and Czech Republic have been required to self-isolate for 14 days from Saturday (29 August), following sustained spikes in infection rates across the countries.

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II. EUROPEAN UNION

- On 24 August the European Commission [presented](#) proposals to the Council for decisions to grant the financial support of €81.4 billion to 15 Member States under the SURE instrument, including Belgium (€7.8 billion), Spain (€21.3 billion), and Italy (€27.4 billion). Once approved, the financial support will be provided as loans granted on favourable terms.
- The European Commission held exploratory talks with several companies regarding the purchase of potential vaccines against COVID-19. Following the exploratory talks with AstraZeneca on 14 August, a [contract was signed](#) on 27 August. This marks the first contract negotiated by the European Commission on behalf of the Member States.
 - The contract ensures that Member States will be able to purchase 300 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, with the option for a further 100 million doses to be distributed on a population-based pro-rata basis.
 - The Commission is discussing similar contracts. In fact, previous exploratory talks took place with [Sanofi-GSK](#) on 31 July, [Johnson & Johnson](#) on 13 August, [CureVac](#) on 18 August and [Moderna](#) on 24 August.

III. FRANCE

- Prime Minister Jean Castex, together with Health Minister Olivier Véran and Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, held a press conference on 27 August. On this occasion, Jean Castex

insisted that a new national lockdown would be not considered by the Government, but rather, explained that local lockdown measures could be taken if necessary.

- Olivier Véran told the press that France has one of the best testing capacities in the world. With 840,000 tests being conducted per week, France has the potential to reach the one million mark in September.
- More people are being tested for COVID-19, increasing the queues in front of laboratories. Union of Biologists (SDB) President François Blanchecotte estimated that the “Demand is growing by about 15% per week since the beginning of August”. This is enough to put more pressure on the 1,000 medical biology laboratories capable of analysing the tests. Obstacles impeding the efficiency have also been noted, notably at the level of the personnel authorised to take samples.
- During this press conference, Jean-Michel Blanquer also reminded the audience that the new school year will start on 1 September, and that preventive health measures will be applied in schools. However, with the start of the scholastic year, the prospect of children wearing masks remains hotly debated. A group of doctors signed a petition calling for the compulsory donning of masks from the age of 6, which contrasts with the current limit of 11.
- The rate of positive tests continues to increase, reaching 4.1% from the 4% reported on 29 August and the 3.6% on 26 August. At the same time, people who test positive have shown a tendency to produce fewer contact-tracing names, which is unequivocally problematic for the effectiveness of contact tracing particularly in the context of increased viral spread. According to public health agency Santé Publique France, only one prevention measure, the systematic wearing of masks, is being applied at a progressively better rate (where 61% of individuals declare to respect it), while other measures tend to be a little more neglected than before. Overall, between 30 and 40% of those questioned said that they do not follow the recommended preventative measures.
- On 28 August, the Directorate General of Health also described the progression of the epidemic as “exponential”, announcing more than 7,300 new cases of COVID-19 between Thursday and Friday – an unprecedented figure since lockdown measures were lifted.
- Epidemiologist Renaud Piarroux estimates that the real number of cases of COVID-19 in France would be two to four times higher than those currently measured. He also fears the impact of the new school year: “People are going to go back to work, change their circle of relations, take transport. That will encourage transmission. The epidemic is growing, by nature, exponentially”. If there is no overload in hospitals today, “it could happen in the next few months. It will then be difficult to turn back the clock”.

IV. ITALY

- [According to number released by Italian authorities on 29 August](#), the week of 17-23 August has seen an increase in new cases for the fourth consecutive week in a row. Many of the new cases are likely to have been contracted in the first half of August. The majority of cases are contracted through local transmission, whilst around 21% of diagnosed cases are imported from abroad. Authorities confirm that in Italy (as is the case for the rest of the world), there has been a change in the median age for COVID-19 infections, dropping to a median age of 29. It was observed that the virus is spreading at a more frequent rate amongst younger people, particularly as a result of the re-opening of commercial activities and increased mobility. 36% of new cases diagnosed were identified through screening activities, and 32% through contact tracing activities. There is however also a lower clinical severity of the cases diagnosed, with several asymptomatic cases. None of the Italian regions are reporting any signs of overloaded health care services.
- The [first human-testing of an Italian-made COVID vaccine produced by biotechnology firm ReiThera, started on 24 August](#). The testing took place at the Rome Spallanzani Hospital. Governor of the Lazio Region Nicola Zingaretti, who helped fund the vaccine together with the Italian government, stated that “Today, an historic phase in research begins”. Doctors from the Spallanzani Hospital said they hoped to produce an approved vaccine by next spring.
- [Tensions have increased between the Governor of Sicily](#), Nello Musumeci, and the Italian government over a recent increase in migrants coming to Sicily. The Governor of Sicily fears that with the island becoming a new hotspot for migrants, it could also rapidly turn into a COVID hotspot as well. Musumeci has attempted to tackle the issue himself by emptying migrants camps, and claims that the regional government has precedence over the national government in dealing with migration policy. Musumeci has his own right-wing political party and is allies with Matteo Salvini’s the League party and Brothers of Italy. The governor has issued an ordinance requiring all hotspots and reception centers to be closed by Tuesday. The national government has criticized the governor’s policy and has underlined that public health remains the national government’s prerogative. Several COVID cases have been reported on the Lampedusa island, but the island’s mayor has assured everyone that all COVID-positive migrants have been isolated.
- The [Italian government held a summit on 26 August](#) about the reopening of schools scheduled for 14 September. The aim was to draw up and agree on protocol guidelines to manage the reopening and organise school transport in the context of the pandemic. Ministers, regional governors, the heads of local government and mayors took part in the meeting. It was stated that more than 70,000 additional teachers and teaching assistants have been hired to cope with the reopening. The Minister of Health, Roberto Speranza, said that the government would leave it up to the Italian

Higher Health Institute to draw up detailed instructions on the proposed operations. Moreover, the government said that school pupils will have to maintain social-distancing and wear facemasks, at least in the corridors.

V. GERMANY

- On 29 August, demonstrations were held against the current COVID-19 measures. Out of approximately 30,000 participants (some of which carried extreme right-wing ideals), around 300 were arrested. The demonstration was initially not allowed, however this decision was overturned by the Berlin Higher Administrative Court since the organiser had submitted a hygiene concept note. When this and other COVID-19 protective measures were not adhered to, the police disbanded the demonstration. Nevertheless, this took several hours.
- In the evening, a group of violent people, including many right-wing extremists, continued to try to enter the Reichstag. The police were able to intervene and stop the people with pepper spray.
- As a reaction to the riots, the events in the Berlin Senate being reviewed today. Berlin's Interior Minister Andreas Geisel expressed the need to address issues related to police tactics and security.
- The riots also caused disastrous outcomes in the Bundestag. Noting this in an interview, Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag and former Minister of Finance called the events abhorrent. The governing parties announced that they would request a special session to the Council of Elders (Ältestenrat) to examine the establishment of a security zone around the parliament.
- At her summer press conference, Chancellor Merkel announced three goals for the coming months. She stated that in the context of the pandemic, it is crucial to: support day-care centres and schools with a digital procurement programme; preserve companies and employment; and lastly, ensure that the principle of social cohesion is maintained.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs added Andorra, Gibraltar and some regions of the Caribbean on its list of high-risk areas.

VI. SPAIN

- The Spanish Agency for Medicines and Health Products (AEMPS) has [authorized](#) the first clinical trial for a vaccine against COVID-19. The vaccine, promoted by the pharmaceutical company Janssen and named “Ad26Cov2s”, is now in phase 2 in Germany, Belgium, and Spain. This week, the vaccine will be tested on 190 volunteers, categorised into two age groups (18 to 55 years old

and 65 years old and over), in the hospitals of La Paz and La Princesa in Madrid and in Marqués de Valdecilla in Cantabria.

- The Ministry of Health launched a clinical trial to prevent COVID-19 infections amongst health professionals. The project, called “ÉPICOS”, has recruited 646 professionals from 14 autonomous communities and aims at including another 2,080 professionals from Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela in the upcoming months. Three presumably preventive treatments will be tested on participants: hydroxychloroquine, antiretrovirals (emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate) and a combination of both.

VII. UNITED KINGDOM

- On 28 August, the UK Government launched a campaign to encourage workers to return to offices. The Government has asked employers to implement health and hygiene precautions in the workplace and to reassure employees workplaces are safe to return to by highlighting health measures in place. The Government is urging companies to roll out routine COVID-19 tests, which may prove key in enabling offices to stay open even under local lockdown restrictions.
- The initiative comes after ministers including Transport Secretary Grant Shapps have warned of the damage elicited to businesses in city centres and along commuter routes relying on office workers for business. Health Secretary Matt Hancock contradicted fellow Cabinet ministers in arguing performance mattered more than work location, and ministers in the devolved nations continue to advise people to work from home if possible.
- To aid low-paid workers required to self-isolate, Matt Hancock has promised workers £182 each for the 14 days they are required to self-isolate after a positive COVID-19 test. The payments will initially only apply to areas subject to local lockdown restrictions, and the scheme will be trialled across lockdowns in North West England from this week, ahead of a potential nation-wide rollout should a second wave of COVID-19 materialise
- Committing to ensuring all school pupils will be able to return to school later this week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has reversed government policy to now stipulate that secondary school pupils in schools in areas subject to local lockdown measures must wear face coverings in corridors. Schools outside local lockdown areas will be able to implement their own rules on face coverings and distancing, though the Department of Education will continue to recommend against using face coverings. The Scottish Government has mandated the donning of coverings in all secondary schools for all pupils over the age of 12, where social distancing is not possible, from today (31 August).

- Travellers arriving from Switzerland, Jamaica and Czech Republic have been required to self-isolate for 14 days from 29 August, following sustained spikes in infection rates across the countries. Despite consistently high infection rates across the United States, the UK and US governments are drawing up plans for regional ‘air bridges’ to enable travel between the UK and areas with lower COVID-19 incidences, to be implemented by Christmas. Plans for air bridges with regions of countries such as Spain with low infectivity have previously been rejected for complexity.
- The Scottish Government last week set up the first of eleven planned walk-through COVID-19 testing sites. The semi-permanent centres, which offer both indoor and outdoor testing facilities, support efforts to raise UK testing capacity to 3.5 million a week by winter. Testing capacity currently stands at 350,000 daily tests, while the average daily number of tests issued or carried out stands just below 200,000.