

COVID-19 – PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9 April – 14 April 2020

Summary

<p style="text-align: center;">The European Union</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">France</p> 
<p>Number of cases: 803,175 <i>(including the UK)</i> Number of deaths: 77,786</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The European Medicines Agency (EMA) organised a regulatory workshop on collection of evidence for COVID-19, with national delegates from 28 countries, as well as the WHO and the Commission. They have established a COVID-19 EMA pandemic Task Force (COVID-ETF), published a guidance document on regulatory requirements, and updated EU actions on availability of medicines. • The EMA’s EU Executive Steering Group on Shortages of Medicines Caused by Major Events announced the setting up of an online platform for pharmaceutical industries to report issues in availability of crucial medicines, named the i-SPOC (industry single point of contact) system. • The Health Security Committee held a meeting on the outbreak of COVID-19 on 8 April. Information was also exchanged on exit strategies, and criteria for the lifting of measures were discussed, and the ECDC also presented a few of their points of action such as their update of the rapid risk assessment and their technical report on face masks for the public 	<p>Number of cases: 98,076 Number of deaths: 14,967 (including retirement homes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French President Emmanuel Macron announced on 13 April that strict confinement measures will last until 11 May. • On 11 May, schools, high-schools, nurseries will reopen. However, universities will remain closed until September. • Restaurants, bars, and every place gathering people will remain closed. • Elderly people and individuals suffering from chronic diseases will have to remain quarantined. • The Minister for Economic Affairs, Bruno Le Maire, announced that a special financial assistance of EUR 5,000 will be allocated to very small companies facing a risk of bankruptcy. • He announced also that the GDP may decrease by 8% in 2020. • French Minister of Public Action and Accounts Gérald Darmanin foresees a public deficit of around 9% by the end of the pandemic



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the European Parliament have been actively submitting questions for written and oral answer from the European Commission regarding COVID-19. Topics revolve around economic measures, solidarity between Member States, measures to ensure availability of medicines, the effect of the pandemic on agriculture and livestock, and measures to control transportation of live animals. • Digital solutions are enabling collaboration in the fight against COVID-19. The European Commission and EU Member States launched a call for participation in a pan-European Hackathon and a free virtual partnering event will also take place online between 4-6 May to enable a joint fight against COVID-19. The Commission also issued a recommendation to prepare a digital toolbox to fight the pandemic. 	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Germany</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Italy</p> 
<p>Number of cases: 130,072 Number of deaths: 3,194</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 13 April, the independent German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina published a scientific proposal that could shape the German exit strategy on COVID-19 measures which is expected to be announced this week. According to the experts, there are three general requirements for loosening current measures. Firstly, the numbers of new infections must be stabilised. Secondly, respiratory and protective capacity in the health sector are increased. Thirdly, known precautionary measures such as the wearing of masks as well as the respect of social distancing are widely respected. 	<p>Number of cases: 159,516 Number of deaths: 20,465</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lock down will be extended until 3 May. However, the government decided to allow the re-opening of some activities, such as bookshops, stationery stores and children's clothes shops. Regions however are allowed to derogate from these measures. This is the case, for example, in Lombardy and Piedmont which did not allow the re-opening of bookshops. Several scientific experts have developed guidelines suggesting the best way to face the weeks and months to come while safely managing the transition from pandemic to endemic.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Spain</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">The United Kingdom</p> 
<p>Number of cases: 172,541 Number of deaths: 18,056</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 9 April the Spanish Congress approved, as expected, a second extension of the state of emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis. The decree foresees the same lockdown conditions as present until 26 April. A third extension until 10 May appears likely, although confinement measures might be lifted gradually during this period. Non-essential workers whose tasks cannot be undertaken remotely have resumed their activities. The “recoverable paid leave” scheme is no longer valid and therefore non-essential businesses have resumed their work. As a result, transport services have increased as to cover transportation needs and ensure adequate social distancing in public transports. The Ministry of Health has published an order allowing autonomous communities to use private diagnostic centres to test for COVID-19. Those centres are also urged to share their test results with competent authorities within their regions which in turn might inform the Ministry. 	<p>Number of cases: 88,621 Number of deaths: 11,329</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prime Minister Boris Johnson came out of hospital on Sunday (12 April). First Secretary of State Dominic Raab continues to deputise where necessary. He is expected to announce this week the lockdown measures through early May after an expert review of measures. Health Secretary Matt Hancock unveiled a three-point plan on Friday (10 April) to deliver personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline staff. The plan will pinpoint where PPE is required, detail a distribution plan, and outline support for the UK industry to ensure future supply. The Government is falling short on a number of COVID-19 fronts: none of the newly built mechanical ventilators have obtained regulatory approval, while daily testing is hovering at around 15,000 and remains low for frontline health staff. The Government has been accused of underplaying the total number of UK deaths by excluding care home deaths from official figures. Figures published by the Office for National Statistics for the total number of UK deaths up to 3 April show there were 15% more deaths resulting from COVID-19 than NHS figures suggest, and 13.5% of care homes have reported COVID-19 outbreaks. Parliament is set to return a week from today although only Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker, is likely to be in the Commons, with everyone else dialling in via webcam.
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I. EUROPEAN UNION

- On 9 April the European Medicines Agency (EMA) [published](#) a note on the outcome of a workshop held on 2 April, emphasising that robust evidence is needed on COVID-19 treatments, as well as a harmonised approach to evidence collection. Delegates from 28 medicines regulatory authorities from more than 25 different countries, as well the World Health Organisation and the European Commission attended the workshop.
- On 9 April the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has also [announced](#) the establishment of a COVID-19 EMA pandemic Task Force (COVID-ETF) to coordinate regulatory action regarding COVID-19 medicines. This follows the EMA [plan](#) for emerging health threats, published on December 2018 based on responses to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and the Ebola outbreak in 2014-2016.
- The Health Security Committee held a meeting on the outbreak of COVID-19 on 8 April, and a [report](#) was published on 12 April by the European Commission. During the meeting, the ECDC presented their 8th update of the [rapid risk assessment](#) and will provide a solid modelling of the epidemic in Europe. Information was also exchanged on exit strategies and on the necessary criteria for the lifting of restrictive measures. The ECDC also presented a technical [report](#) on face masks for the public according to which the general use of face masks can be considered but healthcare workers must be given priority. It was also agreed that the ECDC will review the approaches used regarding assessment of COVID-19 mortality and provide a guidance on assessment and monitoring of COVID-19.

- It was announced on 10 April that Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the [Joint Procurement Agreement](#) to procure medical countermeasures. This is an initiative by the European Commission that was approved in 2014 after the H1N1 pandemic to ensure preparedness in case of a serious cross-border health threat.
- On 10 April the EMA has [published](#) a guidance on regulatory requirements in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, developed in collaboration with the European Commission and the European medicines regulatory network, and was endorsed by the EU Executive Steering Group on Shortages of Medicines Caused by Major Events. The Q&A document outlines areas where regulatory flexibility is possible to address some of the constraints marketing authorisation holders may be faced with in the context of COVID-19 including marketing authorisations and regulatory procedures, manufacturing and importation of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and finished products, quality variations, and labelling and packaging requirements. This guidance will be continuously updated.
- On 10 April the EMA has [updated](#) EU actions on availability of medicines further. The EMA is collaborating with the pharmaceutical industry to set up the i-SPOC (industry single point of contact) system, which will allow for direct reporting to the Agency of issues regarding availability of crucial medicines.
- The European Parliament has also demonstrated a high interest in COVID-19 measures. In particular, Members of the European Parliament have tabled a number of questions for the European Commission to answer. Notable questions surround the topics of [Parallel trading and medicine shortages during the outbreak of COVID-19](#), [protection of disabled persons from COVID-19](#), and many surrounding the issue of solidarity among Member States. Many questions were also asked regarding [agriculture](#) and the [farming sector](#) during the pandemic. The outbreak of the virus has also raised issues surrounding [live transport of animals](#), as well as its impact on [European livestock breeding](#).
- On 8 April the European Commission issued a [recommendation](#) on a common EU toolbox for the use of technology and data to combat and exit from the COVID-19 crisis. This focuses on using technology to support health authorities in monitoring spread of the virus but also informing citizens and facilitating patient follow-up. The toolbox was recommended to include a pan-European approach to the use of mobile applications for COVID-19, as well as a common scheme for anonymised and aggregated data. This calls on the eHealth Network, the Health Security Committee, the European Data Protection Board and the Commission to produce such a toolbox.
- On 14 April the European Commission and EU Member States [launched](#) a call for participation in a pan-European Hackathon. This initiative aims to connect European stakeholders to develop innovative solutions to the coronavirus. This will take place on 24, 25, and 26 April. Interested parties can register through the official [EUvsVirus](#) website.
- A free [virtual partnering](#) event will also take place online to enable a joint fight against COVID-19. This event is open to any organization that provides product, knowledge, or technologies that can help in the effort to develop testing, treatment, or prevention solutions to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants can already [register](#) in the platform to develop a profile and can then send meeting requests from 20 April onwards. Meetings will be scheduled for 4-6 May.

II. ITALY

- Prime Minister Conte announced on Friday 10 April that the lockdown would remain in place until 3 May. Nonetheless, the Italian government has partially agreed to re-open some parts of the economy. Some shops such as bookshops, stationery stores and children's clothes shops will be allowed to reopen from Tuesday 14 April. The government has also decided to extend the list of productive activities that are allowed. This includes: the use of forest areas and forestry, computer manufacturing, activities linked to gardening, hydraulic works, wholesale trade in paper and cardboard.
- However, those who reopen shops and businesses must follow stringent rules, as keeping the social distancing, cleaning twice per day, provide hand disinfection systems next to keyboards, touch screens and payment systems; provide face masks in closed spaces or environments where social distancing cannot be ensured.
- Against this background, some Regions decided to deviate from the decision of the Government. For example, in Lombardy and Piedmont the reopening of bookshops and stationery stores has not been allowed yet.
- Several scientific experts, including virologist Roberto Burioni, developed some [guidelines](#), from an epidemiological and virological perspective, providing recommendations on how to 'reopen' activities in the future, while safely managing the transition from pandemic to endemic.
- The document suggests the creation of a flexible monitoring and response structure with capacity and resources to perform a very high number of both virological and serological tests and an enhanced Central Surveillance Structure at the National Health Institute (ISS). The document has been endorsed by the National Federation of the Orders of Surgeons and Dentists (Fnomceo), National Board of Social Security and Assistance for Doctors and Dentists (Enpam), and the Italian Federation of Family Doctors.

III. FRANCE

- In a public broadcast on 13 April, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that the confinement measures will be extended until 11 May, however, outlined timelines for ending the quarantine.

On 11 May, schools, high-schools, nurseries will reopen. However, universities will remain closed until September.

- Going to work will be also possible from 11 May. The government will establish some rules to protect salaries during that period.
- Restaurants, bars, and every place gathering people will remain closed. Big festivals and events are cancelled at least until mid-July.
- Masks will be made available for every citizen from 11 May. Its use will be systematic, especially in public transports.
- From 11 May, every individual with symptoms will be tested, and quarantined if necessary. Today, up to 150,000 tests are available every week. The Health Minister Olivier Véran indicated that up to 200,000 tests will be available weekly from 11 May.

- Elderly people and individuals suffering from chronic diseases will have to remain quarantined until a date which will be communicated in the following weeks.
- An exceptional financial assistance will be delivered to disadvantaged families and students. The government will specify the amount and the concerned population in the following weeks.
- The Minister of Internal Affairs announced on 14 April that almost 704,000 fines were recorded because of violations of confinement measures, since the beginning of the quarantine on 16 March, and he called for respect of the rules.
- French President Emmanuel Macron confirmed that tracking systems will be used at the end of the quarantine to help contain the virus and avoid new infections. He specified that the system will be used on a voluntary basis.
 - Called StopCovid, this app would inform a given individual if he has been in contact with an infected other individual, without giving his/her identity, in order to enable the individual to be tested, and quarantined if necessary. The data will be collected by Bluetooth tracking technology.
- The Minister of Labour, Muriel Pénicaud, announced on 9 April that 6,9 million employees were concerned by the partial unemployment plan, which will affect 620,000 companies. The Minister for Economic Affairs, Bruno Le Maire announced that the partial unemployment plan will cost the state EUR 24 billion.
 - The partial unemployment plan enables a given company to reduce its activities, or even stop it during a given time period. This plan was created to avoid massive dismissals. The employees will be paid by the government (70% of their normal salary) during the time of the plan.
- The Minister for Economic Affairs, Bruno Le Maire, announced that a special financial assistance of EUR 5,000 will be sent to every company facing a risk of bankruptcy – this measure primarily concerns very small – micro – companies.
- The French GDP is forecasted to decrease by 6% in Q1 2020, according to Banque de France (central bank of France). The Minister for Economic Affairs announced on 14 April that the GDP may decrease by 8% in 2020.
- French Minister of Public Action and Accounts Gérald Darmanin foresees a public deficit of around 9% at the end of the pandemic.

IV. GERMANY

- On 14 April, head of the Robert-Koch Institute Lothar Wieler explained that two crucial milestones in the fight against COVID-19 have been reached. On the one hand, the influenza season has not exacerbated the current COVID-19 developments. On the other hand, the amount of respiratory equipment among hospitals in Germany has been significantly increased. Consequently, this would be evidence of the efficacy of measures currently implemented that are now recommended to be maintained.

- With respect to the possible loosening of precautionary measures against COVID-19, Federal Minister of Education and Research, Anja Karliczek, underlined the importance of a harmonised implementation of loosening the measures between the German federal states. A “patchwork framework” due to state specific instruments must be prevented.
- On 13 April, the independent German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina published [a scientific proposal](#) that could shape the German exit strategy on COVID-19 measures that is expected to be announced this week. According to the experts, there are three general requirements for loosening current measures. Firstly, the numbers of new infections must be stabilised. Secondly, respiratory and protective capacity in the health sector are increased. Thirdly, known precautionary measures such as the wearing of masks as well as the respect of social distancing are widely respected.
- Hence, it is recommended to gradually re-open primary schools and kindergarten. Secondary schools shall follow given the fact that it is easier to implement distance learning for children of higher age. Hereby, the teaching of pupils who are about to graduate should be given preference. Furthermore, the wearing of mouth and nose protectors in the general public as well as the public transport will be obligatory. Depending on the beforementioned three requirements, the gradual opening of small businesses, gastronomy and hotels is also possible. Thereafter, the public life including cultural events will follow.
- With respect to the proposal, the leader of the Green party, Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, wrote an open letter in which the gradually opening of schools and kindergarten is demanded. Hereby, children of parents that are working in essential professions shall be preferred.

V. SPAIN

- On 9 April the Spanish Congress approved, as expected, a second extension of the state of emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis. The [decree](#) foresees the same lockdown conditions as present until 26 April. Although the decree acknowledges a decrease of cases and hospitalisations, the Health Ministry is cautious and claims for an extension of strict measures to eventually lift them gradually. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez sees a third extension of the state of emergency likely, until 10 May.
- As of 9 April, non-essential workers are no longer under the “[recoverable paid leave](#)” scheme, as initially set. As a result, non-essential activities that cannot be remotely undertaken have restarted. [Transport services](#) are now running under the same conditions as two weeks ago, before the Easter period. Public transport services have increased during rush hours in Madrid, Barcelona and other major population centres, mainly to ensure an adequate social distancing. Regional and local authorities have adapted their transport services accordingly. Mobility restrictions still apply nevertheless and only justified exceptions are allowed. Moreover, for those individuals unable to work remotely or can’t avoid using public transport, the government has approved the distribution of [10 million masks](#) to the regions to prevent contagion.
- On 14 April, the Ministry of Health has released an [order](#) allowing autonomous communities to have access to private clinical diagnosis centres, services and establishments as well as their staff, if these facilities are not being used within the National Healthcare System. The regions are entitled to adopt

measures as to regulate prices for diagnostic COVID-19 tests. Besides, any diagnosis centre, regardless of the ownership, must notify the competent authority about diagnosed cases and about any material purchased for diagnosis. This order will be in force as long as the state of emergency applies.

VI. UNITED KINGDOM

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson came out of hospital on Sunday (12 April) after three nights in intensive care, and is expected to recover through next week in his private residence. First Secretary of State Dominic Raab continues to deputise where necessary and will lead the government review into extending social distancing measures as the UK enters its fourth week of lockdown.
- Raab is expected to extend measures and awaits today's (14 April) review from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) on public compliance with social distancing measures. Reports from a preliminary conference call suggest SAGE will recommend the lockdown remain in place through early May, with a view to gradually easing measures through a range of criteria including age, vulnerability or job sector.
- Fresh from last week's five-pillar plan to scale-up testing, Health Secretary Matt Hancock unveiled a three-point plan on Friday (10 April) to deliver personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline health staff. The plan seeks to pinpoint exactly where PPE is required, details a 'herculean' distribution effort, and outlines support for the UK industry to ensure future supply. The Government will launch a central portal where health workers can request PPE. The plan stresses PPE is a 'precious resource', and recommends that PPE be used only when care professionals work within two metres of a patient suspected to have COVID-19, or where a clinician is carrying out a task that could generate airborne droplets. Beyond these roles, the plan recommends regular handwashing instead of PPE use. Critics have argued the plan masks a shortage of equipment and that an emphasis on priority need will leave thousands of frontline workers, particularly those working in supply chain and outside healthcare settings, without equipment. Prioritisation of certain clinical settings comes after Chris Hopson, chief representative of hospital trusts in England, warned of critical shortages of protective gowns in care units in some parts of the country.
- The Government continues to struggle to reach its target number of ventilators of at least 18,000 to meet the peak number of cases expected by late April. None of the newly built mechanical ventilators have obtained regulatory approval, with thousands of ventilators commissioned from Formula One teams found unsuitable for treating COVID-19.
- Daily testing is hovering at around 15,000, short of one informal government target of 25,000 by mid-April. Testing remains low for frontline health staff, and Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, has conceded the Government was too slow to scale-up testing at the beginning of the crisis.
- Over twenty frontline healthcare workers have died amid PPE shortages, and the first ten NHS doctors to die were all of minority ethnic background. More than a third of critically ill patients in the UK are of minority ethnic background, and the Labour Party has called for an immediate government inquiry into COVID-19 related health inequalities.

- The Government has been accused of underplaying the total number of UK deaths by excluding deaths occurring in care homes and at home from official figures. 13.5 percent of care homes in the UK have now reported outbreaks, while Care England, a charity representing the care sector, has warned that 1,000 people may already have died in care homes. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the total number of deaths in England and Wales up to 3 April show there were 15 percent more deaths resulting from COVID-19 than NHS figures suggest. The ONS uses the cause of death stated on death certificates as its dataset and as such includes deaths occurring outside of hospitals.
- Parliament is set to return a week from today although only Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker, is likely to be in the Commons, with everyone else dialling via webcam.