

Press release – COVID-19: EU countries should harmonise testing procedures and frequency



On Wednesday, the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety held a debate with Dr Andrea Ammon, Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), after she gave an update on the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the EU and the ECDC's work to address it.

Dr Ammon highlighted the [most recent data](#) related to COVID-19 in the EU including:

- Notification rate at EU level on the rise in the last five weeks to currently 46 COVID-19 infections per 100.000 inhabitants per week
- Epidemiological situation different across the EU ranging from 2 to 176 cases per 100.000 inhabitants
- Testing for COVID-19 range from 173 to 6.000 per 100.000 inhabitants per week which has a direct impact on the notification rate
- Second infections of COVID-19 very rare and with milder symptoms
- A protocol on winter and seasonal flu is being established by ECDC with member states for 1 October, including increased flu vaccination for vulnerable groups

Many MEPs highlighted the need to achieve a common approach in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and replace the current tendency for many member states to designate other EU countries as red zones and close borders.

COVID-19 testing must be harmonised at EU-level

MEPs also deplored that there is still no common modality for counting

COVID-19 cases or for testing as each country follows the recommendations of its own scientific agencies without coordination.

This was echoed by Dr Ammon, who said harmonising testing procedures and frequency is key to achieving better and more comparable data on infection levels in Europe. Dr Ammon furthermore welcomed talks to expand the ECDC's mandate to also issue recommendations, which currently is only the competence of member states, as well as to increase its resources. The issue of misinformation about COVID-19 vaccinations and vaccine-hesitancy including by some young people was raised as a challenge and Dr Ammon said the ECDC is doing what it can to inspire trust.

Committee Chair [Pascal Canfin](#) (Renew, FR) informed that there will be a debate with the Commission on COVID-19 vaccines on 7 September as well as a public hearing planned for 22 September.

Watch the full recording of the debate [here](#).

Background

The ECDC is the EU agency monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak and issuing regular epidemiological updates and risk assessments. The [ECDC Risk assessment on COVID-19](#), released on 10 August 2020 shows that a recent increase in COVID-19 cases has been reported in many EU/EEA countries following the relaxation of certain rules to allow for a more normal life while the virus is still in circulation.