



Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council **Brussels, 29 March 2022**

The Council meeting will take place on Tuesday 29 March. The meeting will be chaired by Olivier Véran, Minister for Solidarity and Health.

The Council will start at 10.00. The morning session will be opened by a Commission information point on the European response to the health challenges arising from the war in Ukraine.

Following their informal meeting via videoconference on 15 March, ministers will discuss the health consequences of the war in Ukraine and the coordinated and inclusive response to it.

The Commission will present the health aspect of its communication on EU support to member states to meet the needs of refugees. This includes a solidarity mechanism to enable emergency hospital treatment of patients from Ukraine, the provision of vaccines, as well as targeted mental health measures.

The presidency will present several information points on ongoing legislative and non-legislative work and on the outcome of ministerial conferences held in the field of health since January.

Over lunch, ministers will be able to exchange views on the European response to rare diseases.

During the afternoon session, starting at 15.00, ministers will hold a policy debate on the upcoming challenges of the EU's vaccine solidarity strategy.

A press conference with minister Olivier Véran is scheduled for 17.00 and will also be attended by Commissioner Stella Kyriakides.

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

The next challenges of the EU's strategy on COVID-19 vaccine solidarity (policy debate)

In May 2021, EU member states pledged to donate at least 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to countries around the world before the end of 2021. This commitment has been increased to provide 700 million doses by mid-2022 to meet the WHO target of 70 % of the world's population being vaccinated by the same deadline.

At the international level, the ACT-A and COVAX mechanisms have been the main tools for multilateral action in response to COVID-19. Thus, in early February 2022, COVAX reached the symbolic volume of one billion doses shipped. Thanks to their joint commitment, member states have made a major contribution to making COVAX a reality. The doses given by the EU now account for 50 % of the doses available to COVAX.

Recent developments - vaccination of a large part of the European population, differentiated vaccination strategies of member states, updating of the overall vaccine target, weakening demand from third countries, etc. - require an update of the member states' strategy on vaccine procurement and donations.

Thus, the presidency proposed to structure the discussions around two questions, on how to better coordinate the scientific expertise guiding vaccine procurement strategies and on the levers identified to strengthen the European vaccine donation strategy.

The debate will be held in the presence of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) representatives.

Other business

The Commission will inform delegations about the health and humanitarian situation in Ukraine. Representatives of ECDC and EMA will be present at this item.

The presidency will inform about the recently adopted Council decision authorising the opening of negotiations for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as the negotiation of further amendments to the International Health Regulations. On 1 December 2021, the member states of the World Health Organisation (WHO) reached a consensus to start the process of drawing up and negotiating an international convention, agreement or other instrument under the WHO constitution in order to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The Union participates, alongside its member states, in the negotiations.

The Presidency will provide information on its ministerial meetings in the field of health.

Finally, the presidency will inform ministers about the ongoing negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament with a view to reaching an agreement on a common position on a regulation on serious cross-border threats to health. The regulation on cross-border threats to health is about ensuring a coordinated response to threats from communicable diseases but also those from chemical, biological and environmental origin.