# **European Health Care News**



Newsletter No.57 – Spring 2021

# 1 Public health

- Council of the EU: conclusions on Covid-19 lessons learned in health
- European Council: the 27 Member States call for an acceleration of vaccination against Covid 19
- European Commission: key actions for a united front to beat Covid-19
- European Commission: preparing Europe for the increased threat of coronavirus variants
- European Commission: green paper on ageing
- European Ombudsman: recommendations to the ECDC concerning greater openness about its work during the Covid-19 pandemic
- EXPH: Opinion on the organisation of resilient health and social care following the Covid-19 pandemic
- EXPH: request for an opinion: European solidarity in public health emergencies
- EXPH: request for an opinion on supporting the mental health of the health workforce and other essential workers
- European Commission: Europe's Beating Cancer plan

## 2 Medicines, protection equipment and medical devices

- European Ombudsman: letter to the European Commission regarding the transparency of negotiations for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca
- Italy: delivery of Covid-vaccines to Australia blocked
- European Commission: public consultation on blood, tissues and cells used for medical treatments and therapies
- European Commission: action plan on the sharing of intellectual property rights in public health emergencies
- European Commission: public consultation on the European rules governing medicines for children and patients with rare diseases
- European Commission: a pharmaceutical strategy for Europe
- European Commission: 200 disinfection robots for European hospitals
- European Commission: publication of the second Counterfeit and Piracy Watch List
- Council of the EU: agreement on VAT relief for Covid-19 vaccines and test kits
- Israel, Denmark and Austria will work together to develop a Covid-19 vaccine
- European Commission: four more countries to host rescEU medical supplies
- Council of the EU: recommendation on a common framework for the use and validation of rapid antigen tests and the mutual recognition of Covid-19 test results
- OLAF: warning against fraudsters offering Covid-19 vaccines

- European Commission: exports of Covid-19 vaccines outside the EU subject to an authorisation mechanism
- Council of the EU: proposal for a regulation on health technology assessment
- European Commission: publication of contracts signed with pharmaceutical companies for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines
- European Commission: strategic agenda for medical ionising radiation applications (SAMIRA)
- European Parliament: the committees on Budgets and Budgetary Control call on the Commission to release funds for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines

## 3 Health care services in the internal market

- European Commission: public consultation on the directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare
- European Commission: mobilisation of a medical team in Slovakia and supply of medical equipment to Serbia in response to the pandemic

# 4 Social policy

- Council of the EU: adoption of conclusions on the employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021
- European Commission: European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan
- European Commission: action plan on integration and inclusion of migrants
- European Parliament: report calling for integration of the European Pillar of Social Rights into the European treaties
- European Commission: proposal for a joint employment report
- European Commission: attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU
- European Commission: an opinion poll on European social policies
- Social Protection Committee: 2020 annual report
- European Commission: study supporting the 2020 evaluation of promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by the ESF

#### 5 e-Health

- eHealth Network: guidelines on proof of vaccination for medical purposes
- EDPS: preliminary opinion on the European Health Data Space
- European Commission: public consultation on a European Health Data Space
- ENISA: report on securing cloud services for health
- European Commission: assessment of the EU Member States' rules on health data in the light of GDPR

# 6 Economic policy

 European Parliament and Council of the EU: agreement on the technical support instrument for implementation of reforms

# 7 Competition

- Spain: several pharmaceutical companies fined for their strategy for supplying radiopharmaceutical products to hospitals
- United Kingdom: green paper 'Transforming public procurement'
- European Commission: formal investigation into possible anti-competitive conduct by the company Teva
- European Commission: Commission fines Teva and Cephalon for delaying the market entry of cheaper generic medicine
- European Commission: the company Aspen must reduce its prices in Europe for six essential cancer medicines
- European Commission: Commission clears acquisition of Varian by Siemens Healthineers

# 8 European funding

- European Parliament and Council of the EU: agreement on EU funding for cross-border projects
- Council of the EU: provisional agreement with the European Parliament on the EU civil protection mechanism and the RescEU strategic reserve
- European Commission: Spain receives money from the cohesion funds to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic
- European Commission: 2020 results of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative
- European Commission: 24 projects selected to increase the collection of plasma in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic
- European Commission: updated guidance on the national recovery and resilience plans
- Belgium: federal government agreement on the use of European recovery funds

### 9 Court of Justice of the European Union

- Judgment: a nutrition monitoring service in sports facilities is not covered by the directive on the common system of VAT
- Judgment: the directive on combating late payment in commercial transactions applies to public works contracts
- Judgment: a collective agreement may reserve additional maternity leave for mothers alone
- Judgment: European law does not preclude legislation allowing for the possibility of partial access to the professions covered by the mechanism for automatic recognition of professional qualifications

# 10 Infringement proceedings

 Italy should do more to protect public sector workers against abusive successive fixed-term contracts and discriminatory employment conditions

# 11 Publications

- The Lancet: Call for pan-European commitment for rapid and sustained reduction in SARS-CoV-2 infections
- CoR and OECD: The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on regional and local governments
- Politico: Belgian law makes it harder for the EU to enforce vaccine contract
- EuroHealthNet: A new portal for information and resources regarding health inequalities in Europe
- Health Policy: Gaps in coverage and access in the European Union
- Politico: how Europe fell behind in Covid-19 vaccination
- Eurofound: Education, healthcare and housing: how access changed for children and families in 2020
- European Parliament Think Tank: Covid-19 vaccination campaigns: the public dimension
- OECD and European Commission: Health at a glance: Europe 2020
- ESN: Putting quality first. Contracting for long-term care
- European Court of Auditors: The EU's initial contribution to the public health response to Covid 19
- PGEU: Results of the survey on medicine shortages, 2020
- Eurofound: Long-term care workforce: employment and working conditions
- KCE and European Observatory on health systems and policies: Health systems in transition (HiT): The Belgian health system
- EuroHealthNet and JAHEE: Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring health equity
   The role of the European Semester
- CEO: When the market becomes deadly

#### 12 Miscellaneous

- Politico: What is the Conference on the Future of Europe?
- European Commission: review of EU trade policy
- UNHCR: the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights calls for changes to EU socio-economic governance
- Council of Europe: resolution calling for Covid-19 vaccines to be treated as a public good, accessible to all
- Council of Europe: The Committee on Bioethics issues recommendations on equitable access to vaccines during the pandemic
- Brexit: EU-UK trade and cooperation agreement
- Brexit: Citizens of five EU countries will have to pay more for a UK work visa than other EU nationals
- European Parliament: adoption of the directive on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers

- ETUC: Covid-19 vaccines: people must come before profit
- European Parliament: resolution on the de facto ban on abortion in Poland
- WTO: five Latin American countries oppose European restrictions on the export of Covid-19 vaccines
- European Health Union: Manifesto for a European health union
- Council of Europe: recommendations on how to protect the right to health effectively
- Belgium: Eva De Bleeker accidentally tweets the price of Covid-19 vaccines
- 13 Member States call for rapid access to Covid-19 vaccines in the Eastern Partnership countries

#### Council of the EU: conclusions on Covid-19 lessons learned in health

The Council adopted conclusions identifying four areas for improvement and development in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic: strengthening the EU health security framework, particularly through a possible new contact-tracing mechanism; ensuring the EU supply of medicines; improving access to and sharing of health data; and strengthening the EU's role in global health.

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#### European Council: the 27 Member States call for an acceleration of vaccination against Covid-19

The 27 EU Heads of State supported the Commission's 'HERA incubator' initiative, which aims to identify and stop new variants of Covid-19. They particularly welcomed the work being done by the Commission to increase vaccine production capacity in the EU, to secure access to the raw materials needed to produce the vaccines and to support research and development. With this meeting in mind, Heads of State of five Member States, including Belgium, had signed a joint letter to the President of the European Council and their counterparts, calling for vaccination in the EU to be boosted and accelerated.

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### European Commission: key actions for a united front to beat Covid-19

In a Communication, the Commission published a series of actions to be completed by the Member States, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to stem the pandemic. These actions involve speeding up the vaccine roll-out and an increase in contact tracing and genome sequencing, while ensuring that the single market and free movement continue to function properly. The Commission also called for a strengthening of the EU's role globally in combating the pandemic.

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#### European Commission: preparing Europe for the increased threat of coronavirus variants

The aim of this new European plan, 'HERA incubator', is to structure international collaboration between researchers, businesses and public authorities in order to strengthen the detection of new variants, develop vaccines against them, speed up the authorisation process for these vaccines while increasing production capacity.

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#### European Commission: green paper on ageing

This green paper looks at the issues surrounding demographic changes in the EU, and addresses, in particular, the issue of how to strengthen national health and care systems to meet the needs of an ageing population.

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## European Ombudsman: recommendations to the ECDC concerning greater openness about its work during the Covid-19 pandemic

Following an inquiry into the performance of the ECDC during the Covid-19 pandemic, the EU Ombudsman has made a series of recommendations, including greater transparency as to the data underlying its risk assessments and on exchanges with its international partners, a better communication strategy and systematic publication of ECDC survey results.

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# EXPH: Opinion on the organisation of resilient health and social care following the Covid-19 pandemic

In this opinion, the Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (EXPH) explores the elements and conditions for capacity building to strengthen health care systems and social services in the Member States. The experts also address the conditions necessary to sustain healthcare provision for vulnerable patient groups in a system under stress, and set out an approach to develop and implement 'resilience tests' of Member States' health systems.

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#### EXPH: request for an opinion: European solidarity in public health emergencies

The European Commission has asked the expert panel to perform an analysis and make recommendations concerning European solidarity in the area of health. The expert panel is requested to, in particular, identify the limitations to EU-level actions in the field of health, and set out actions to be taken at European, national and regional level to boost European solidarity in public health emergencies.

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# **EXPH:** request for an opinion on supporting the mental health of the health workforce and other essential workers

The European Commission has asked the EXPH to draw up an opinion examining, notably, the factors influencing mental health of the health workforce, effective interventions to address mental health support needs, and a cost-effectiveness assessment of mental health interventions. The opinion should also make proposals for EU actions in this area.

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#### European Commission: Europe's Beating Cancer plan

The Commission presented a European plan to beat cancer. It focuses on four key areas for action: 1) prevention; 2) early detection; 3) improved diagnosis and treatment, particularly through better integrated care and by addressing unequal access to care and 4) improved quality of life for cancer patients and survivors. The plan sets out ten flagship initiatives and multiple supporting actions.

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# 2 Medicines, protection equipment and medical devices

## European Ombudsman: letter to the European Commission regarding the transparency of negotiations for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca

The European Ombudsman had launched an inquiry into the transparency of the contract negotiated between the European Commission and AstraZeneca for the advance purchase of Covid-19 vaccines. In this context, the European Commission has finally published the agreement and the name of the Director-General negotiating on behalf of the Commission. However, it has not released the names of the other steering board experts, nor of the negotiating team. The Ombudsman is calling on the Commission to give more details explaining its refusal to provide this information, and is asking the Commission to consider disclosing certain details, such as the individuals' titles or the Member State public service to which they belong.

#### Italy: delivery of Covid-vaccines to Australia blocked

Under the European transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of Covid-19 vaccines, the Italian government asked the European Commission for authorisation to deny the export of 250,700 doses of vaccines to Australia. The Commission approved the request. Australia is asking it to reconsider this decision.

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# European Commission: public consultation on blood, tissues and cells used for medical treatments and therapies

This consultation concerns a possible revision of the European safety and quality rules on the use of blood, tissues and cells for medical treatments and therapies. The main aim is to update the legislation in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and to adapt it to 'the increasing commercialisation and globalisation of this sector'.

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# European Commission: action plan on the sharing of intellectual property rights in public health emergencies

By means of this action plan, the Commission intends to upgrade a series of intellectual property tools and make them fit for the digital age, boost the uptake of IP by SMEs and facilitate the sharing of IP in times of crisis, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commission, in this context, is in favour of voluntary granting of intellectual property licenses for treatments and vaccines against Covid-19.

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## European Commission: public consultation on the European rules governing medicines for children and patients with rare diseases

The aim of the consultation is to identify ways of boosting the development of medicines specifically destined for children and patients with rare diseases, to facilitate access to treatments for these key groups and to make the evaluation and authorisation procedures for these medicines more efficient.

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### European Commission: a pharmaceutical strategy for Europe

The Commission has published a new pharmaceutical strategy for Europe. This strategy is intended, in particular, to ensure access to affordable medicines, to address unmet medical needs, support the competitiveness of the sector and to improve the EU's response capacity in the case of a public health emergency. The strategy also emphasises the need for secure and diversified supply chains, to reduce the risk of shortages of pharmaceutical products.

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#### European Commission: 200 disinfection robots for European hospitals

The Commission has purchased 200 disinfection robots through the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI), to be distributed around the EU. This follows an expression of interest from European hospitals, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### European Commission: publication of the second Counterfeit and Piracy Watch List

This list names websites and operators outside the European Union which are involved in counterfeiting and piracy. One focus area of the document is on online pharmacies and agents facilitating the sale of fraudulent medicines.

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### Council of the EU: agreement on VAT relief for Covid-19 vaccines and test kits

This option for to the Member States to exempt Covid-19 vaccines and in vitro test kits from VAT, to make them more affordable, will only apply during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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#### Israel, Denmark and Austria will work together to develop a Covid-19 vaccine

At a press conference, the Israeli, Austrian and Danish governments announced that they will work together to develop and produce new vaccines against Covid-19. The initiative was criticised by, notably, the French government, which called for this type of project to be carried out within an EU framework.

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#### European Commission: four more countries to host rescEU medical supplies

Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovenia will now host part of the EU's strategic medical reserve, rescEU. Nine countries in all host part of this reserve, which is to be distributed across the EU if health care systems come under pressure.

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## Council of the EU: recommendation on a common framework for the use and validation of rapid antigen tests and the mutual recognition of Covid-19 test results

This recommendation is intended to ensure recognition of rapid antigen tests and RT-PCR tests within the EU, to improve the sharing of data on these tests between Member States and to determine a common list of rapid antigen tests. This list is liable to evolve as variants of Covid-19 emerge.

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#### OLAF: warning against fraudsters offering Covid-19 vaccines

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has included vaccines in its on-going inquiry on fraudulent products related to Covid-19. The Office intends to clamp down on the importation and resale of counterfeit vaccines in the EU.

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# European Commission: exports of Covid-19 vaccines outside the EU subject to an authorisation mechanism

By means of an implementing act, the European Commission has introduced a system requiring prior authorisation for exports of Covid-19 vaccines to countries outside the EU. This implementing act applies to all companies with which the Commission has concluded advance purchase agreements. The authorisation regime will apply until the end of March 2021.

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#### Council of the EU: proposal for a regulation on health technology assessment

The Council of the EU published a compromise text on the proposal for a regulation on health technology assessment. According to this document, the regulation would be based on non-binding joint clinical assessments, and Member States could carry out national assessments in parallel. The text also contains a list of the documents to be submitted by the health technology developer for the purposes of a joint assessment. These joint assessments would initially only apply to cancer treatments, but could be extended later to cover orphan and advanced therapy medicines.

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European Commission: publication of contracts signed with pharmaceutical companies for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines

The companies Sanofi-GSK and AstraZeneca have agreed to the European Commission publishing the contracts negotiated for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines.

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European Commission: strategic agenda for medical ionising radiation applications (SAMIRA)

As part of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission published a working document on the SAMIRA action plan. This plan is intended, in particular, to ensure a secure supply of medical isotopes, to enhance the quality and safety of medical ionising radiation applications and to encourage innovation and research in this field.

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European Parliament: the committees on Budgets and Budgetary Control call on the Commission to release funds for the purchase of Covid-19 vaccines

In a letter sent to the Commissioner for the Budget and the Commissioner responsible for health, the Chairs of the parliamentary committees on Budgets and on Budgetary Control ask for a dedicated amending budget to be adopted to boost the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines. They ask for the margins left under the various headings of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to be used for this purpose.

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- 3 Health care services in the internal market
- European Commission: public consultation on the directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

The Commission organised a public consultation as part of an evaluation of the directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. The aim was to identify any challenges faced by patients, health authorities, other interested parties and citizens in connection with access to healthcare in another Member State, and to the reimbursement of the related costs.

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European Commission: mobilisation of a medical team in Slovakia and supply of medical equipment to Serbia in response to the pandemic

Following a request by Slovakia via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, a medical team will be deployed in the country to help treat Covid-19 patients in intensive care. Romania has already announced that it would send 5 doctors and 9 nurses specialised in intensive care. 600,000 FFP2 masks and 650,000 pairs of gloves will be sent from the EU reserve of medical supplies, RescEU, to Serbia.

## Council of the EU: adoption of conclusions on the employment and social aspects of the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021

As part of the European Semester, the Council adopted conclusions encouraging the Member States to include in their national recovery plans 'essential reforms and investment' in social policy and healthcare. It also emphasises that these national recovery plans will require a global multilateral surveillance process, particularly regarding social policy and healthcare reforms.

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## European Commission: European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

This action plan is designed to further implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and sets employment and social protection objectives for 2030. With regard to the aim of health promotion and guaranteed access to healthcare, the Commission will propose an initiative on long-term care in 2022 and will make a proposal to set up the European Health Data Space. It encourages Member States to invest in health and care staff, to pursue digitalisation of national health systems and to address unequal access.

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#### European Commission: action plan on integration and inclusion of migrants

This action plan is designed to support national measures in favour of integration and social inclusion of migrants. The plan focuses on four main areas: 1) inclusive education and training; 2) improving employment opportunities and skills recognition; 3) promoting access to health and 4) adequate and affordable housing.

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## European Parliament: report calling for integration of the European Pillar of Social Rights into the European treaties

In this report, entitled 'A strong social Europe for just transitions' and adopted by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the MEPs underline the need to integrate the European Pillar of Social Rights into the European treaties. They also advocate inclusion in the treaties of a protocol granting social rights the same status as economic freedoms. The report also calls for the adoption of a binding Sustainable Development and Social Progress Pact.

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#### European Commission: proposal for a joint employment report

This proposal for a report analyses the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences for the labour market. In it, the Commission emphasises, among other things, that the public health crisis has exacerbated the structural challenges faced by health systems in relation to financing, coordination and integration of care, and unmet needs for medical care.

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# European Commission: attitudes towards adequacy and sustainability of social protection systems in the EU

This study is intended to map the attitudes of EU citizens towards the various elements of the social protection systems, such as social assistance, healthcare, long-term care and disability care. One of the authors' conclusions is that ideological beliefs often outweigh the impact of self-interest.

#### European Commission: an opinion poll on European social policies

A Eurobarometer survey carried out in the 27 Member States at the request of the Commission's Directorate General for Employment finds that 88% of respondents consider a social Europe to be important to them personally, and 41% say that 'access to quality healthcare' is one of the most important issues for the EU's economic and social development.

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#### Social Protection Committee: 2020 annual report

The annual report of the Social Protection Committee analyses the key measures taken by the Member States with regard to employment, income and access to services. The Committee underlines that strengthening the resilience of healthcare systems and developing adequate, affordable and high-quality long-term care should be political priorities for the Member States.

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# European Commission: study supporting the 2020 evaluation of promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination by the ESF

This study takes stock of the achievements made with regard to the European Social Fund (ESF)'s Thematic Objective 9, 'social inclusion', up to 2018. This thematic objective is structured around six priority investment areas, one of which is improving access to affordable and good-quality services, including healthcare and social services of general interest.

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## 5 e-Health

#### eHealth Network: guidelines on proof of vaccination for medical purposes

The Member States and the Commission adopted guidelines for developing future uniform vaccination certificates, setting out the minimum data required for each certificate. These guidelines mainly apply to vaccination against Covid-19 but could also be used for other vaccines.

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#### EDPS: preliminary opinion on the European Health Data Space

In its preliminary opinion, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) analyses the implications of establishing a European health data space. The Supervisor highlights, among other things, that transparency concerning the data processing will be essential, that state-of-the-art technical security measures will be needed to protect the data, and that special attention will have to be paid to the ethical use of data.

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#### European Commission: public consultation on a European Health Data Space

This consultation concerns the potential proposal for a Commission regulation establishing a European Health Data Space. The purpose of this is, in particular, to promote the exchange of patients' data, support research, support digital health services and to clarify the safety and liability of artificial intelligence in health.

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#### ENISA: report on securing cloud services for health

The EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) published a report presenting cybersecurity guidelines for healthcare organisations. The report assesses, in particular, the risks of using cloud services and sets out good practices for its use by the sector.

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## European Commission: assessment of the EU Member States' rules on health data in the light of GDPR

This assessment analyses national and European rules concerning the processing of health data in the light of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The purpose of the study is to highlight possible differences in implementation and to identify elements that might affect the cross-border exchange of health data in the EU. The study also examines the potential for EU-level action to support health data use and re-use.

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# 6 Economic policy

## European Parliament and Council of the EU: agreement on the technical support instrument for implementation of reforms

This instrument will allow the Commission to provide expertise to the Member States on the public investment and reforms to be carried out under the national recovery and resilience plans, including in the fields of healthcare and social policy.

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# 7 Competition

## Spain: several pharmaceutical companies fined for their strategy for supplying radiopharmaceutical products to hospitals

The Spanish competition authority imposed total fines of 5.76 million euros on several pharmaceutical companies including Novartis Groupe France and Glo Holdco, S.C.A., as well as on two executives working for these companies. The companies had formed a cartel to divide up the market in supplying radiopharmaceutical products to private and public hospitals.

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### United Kingdom: green paper 'Transforming public procurement'

This green paper, published by the UK government in the context of Brexit, sets out proposals to reform public procurement procedures in the United Kingdom. This document addresses various areas, including the issue of public procurement in the healthcare sector.

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# European Commission: formal investigation into possible anti-competitive conduct by the company Teva

The investigation intends to determine whether the company Teva delayed the market entry of products competing with Copaxone, its blockbuster multiple sclerosis drug.

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European Commission: Commission fines Teva and Cephalon for delaying the market entry of cheaper generic medicine

The two companies had agreed to delay for several years the market entry of a cheaper generic version of modafinil, a drug for sleep disorders, after Cephalon's main patents had expired. The European Commission fined the two companies 60.5 million euros.

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European Commission: the company Aspen must reduce its prices in Europe for six essential cancer medicines.

Aspen had acquired cancer medicines from another company and had then gradually increased the price of these in the EU. In a legally-binding decision, the Commission requires Aspen to reduce the price of 6 essential cancer medicines by 73% on average.

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European Commission: Commission clears acquisition of Varian by Siemens Healthineers

The European Commission made the approval conditional on assurances that the company would ensure interoperability of the radiotherapy and medical imaging systems developed by the two companies.

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# 8 European funding

European Parliament and Council of the EU: agreement on EU funding for cross-border projects

8 billion will be allocated to cross-border cooperation projects between 2021 and 2027 through the Interreg instrument. More of these resources should be invested in projects helping to strengthen healthcare systems as well as in climate action and social programmes.

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Council of the EU: provisional agreement with the European Parliament on the EU civil protection mechanism and the RescEU strategic reserve

According to this provisional agreement, 1.263 billion euros will be allocated to the EU civil protection mechanism for the period 2021-2027, supplemented by 2.056 billion euros from the EU recovery instrument. In total, the civil protection budget would then be five times higher than the budget allocated during the period 2014-2020.

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European Commission: Spain receives money from the cohesion funds to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic

The Commission approved the mobilisation of 1.11 billion euros from the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) to help tackle the pandemic in Spain. These funds will be used, in particular, to finance the recruitment of additional healthcare staff, to purchase protective equipment and to purchase and construct new laboratory equipment for coronavirus testing.

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European Commission: 2020 results of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative

Through the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII et CRII+), the EU has invested nearly 18 billion euros to support national healthcare systems and to alleviate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. The funding was used, among other things, to support the purchase of medical equipment, to set up laboratories and to finance several million Covid

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European Commission: 24 projects selected to increase the collection of plasma in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

The European Commission, via the Emergency Support Instrument, provided 36 million euros in funding to 24 projects aiming to collect plasma from donors who have recovered from Covid-19, in order to treat new patients. These 24 projects will take place in 14 Member States (including Belgium) and the United Kingdom.

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European Commission: updated guidance on the national recovery and resilience plans

The purpose of this guidance is to assist Member States in the drafting of their national recovery and resilience plans. The Commission has updated the guidance in order to better reflect the importance of the six pillars around which EU recovery will be structured: 1) green transition; 2) digital transformation; 3) smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs; 4) social and territorial cohesion; 5) health and resilience 6) policies for the next generation, children and youth.

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Belgium: federal government agreement on the use of European recovery funds

The Belgian government has reached an agreement on allocation of the 900 million euros to be awarded to Belgium from the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This funding is to be used, among other things, to finance certain social inclusion policies, to support research and development and to boost digitalisation of the healthcare sector, including the creation of more efficient eHealth platforms.

DOC FR - NL HTML

9 Court of Justice of the European Union

tests.

Judgment: a nutrition monitoring service in sports facilities is not covered by the directive on the common system of VAT

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) found that pursuant to the directive on the common system of VAT, a nutrition monitoring service provided by a certified and authorised professional in sports facilities constitutes a separate and independent supply of services, separate from physical well-being and fitness services, and cannot fall under the VAT exemption laid down in that directive (case C-581/19).

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Judgment: the directive on combating late payment in commercial transactions applies to public works contracts

In case C-299/19, the CJEU found that the directive on combating late payment in commercial transactions applies to public works contracts. This judgment follows a dispute between the company Techbau SpA and a public body responsible for the public health service in Alessandria, Italy, concerning the payment of default interest on the amount due for performance of a contract to build an operating block for a hospital.

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Judgment: a collective agreement may reserve additional maternity leave for mothers alone
The CJEU found, in case C-463/19, that the directive on implementation of the principle of
equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and
occupation does not preclude a collective agreement reserving an additional period of
maternity leave to mothers alone.

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Judgment: European law does not preclude legislation allowing for the possibility of partial access to the professions covered by the mechanism for automatic recognition of professional qualifications

In case C-940/19, the Court rules that the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications does not preclude national legislation which introduces the possibility of partial access to one of the professions falling under the mechanism for automatic recognition of professional qualifications, as is the case for certain professions in the health sector.

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# 10 Infringement proceedings

Italy should do more to protect public sector workers against abusive successive fixed-term contracts and discriminatory employment conditions

The Commission notified Italy that some public sector workers, including healthcare workers, are not sufficiently protected against abusive successive fixed-term contracts. Italy, moreover, does not have sufficient safeguards in place to prevent discriminatory employment conditions in these sectors.

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# 11 Publications

The Lancet: Call for pan-European commitment for rapid and sustained reduction in SARS-CoV-2 infections

The signatories to this call advocate a strong and coordinated EU response, with common European goals for reductions in Covid-19 case numbers in the Member States.

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#### CoR and OECD: The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on regional and local governments

This survey of representatives of sub-national governments in the EU shows, inter alia, that the Covid-19 pandemic may reshape priorities in regional development policy, with greater emphasis on affordable and accessible quality basic services, including health services.

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#### Politico: Belgian law makes it harder for the EU to enforce vaccine contract

This article discusses the contracts for the purchase and supply of Covid-19 vaccines signed by the European Commission and the United Kingdom with the company AstraZeneca. The Commission contract is subject to Belgian law, the spirit of which is partly based on interpretation and the good faith of the signatories, unlike British law, based on the explicit setting out of obligations.

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## EuroHealthNet: A new portal for information and resources regarding health inequalities in Europe

One of the purposes of this platform is to encourage European public health professionals to exchange information, policies, and research concerning health inequalities.

DOC EN/FR/NL HTML

### Health Policy: Gaps in coverage and access in the European Union

This study, based on a questionnaire sent to the Health Systems and Policy Monitor network of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, identifies gaps in health coverage in the EU.

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#### Politico: how Europe fell behind in Covid-19 vaccination

This article analyses the advantages and limitations of the European strategy for the joint purchase of Covid-19 vaccines, which aimed to put solidarity between EU countries ahead of giving individual governments greater room for manoeuvre in negotiations with pharmaceutical companies.

DOC EN HTML

# Eurofound: Education, healthcare and housing: how access changed for children and families in 2020

This policy brief documents changes in the accessibility of education, healthcare and housing in the EU between 2018 and the summer of 2020, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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### European Parliament Think Tank: Covid-19 vaccination campaigns: the public dimension

This note discusses vaccine-scepticism among European citizens and the communication strategies used by the public authorities to increase support for vaccination among the general public and to counter disinformation.

#### OECD and European Commission: Health at a glance: Europe 2020

This biennial publication presents a set of key indicators to analyse, in particular, health status, health determinants, quality of care, health expenditure and financing, in the EU, the United Kingdom, five candidate countries and three countries in the European Free Trade Association.

DOC EN HTML

#### ESN: Putting quality first. Contracting for long-term care

In this report, the European Social Network (ESN) analyses to what extent public procurement policies can ensure better access to quality long-term care services. The report also lists a series of recommendations to improve the quality of long-term care.

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## European Court of Auditors: The EU's initial contribution to the public health response to Covid-19

In this document, the European Court of Auditors analyses the EU's initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic and flags the challenges encountered by it, particularly in its support to national public health measures.

DOC 1 EN HTML | DOC 2 EN - NL - FR PDF

#### PGEU: Results of the survey on medicine shortages, 2020

The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) published the results of its annual survey of medicine shortages, from the community pharmacists' perspective. The survey was carried out among its members, and emphasises that in 65% of the 26 EU countries covered by the survey, the situation worsened compared to 2019.

DOC EN HTML

#### Eurofound: Long-term care workforce: employment and working conditions

This report analyses the working conditions of the long-term care workforce, and the role of social dialogue in the sector. It also addresses the issue of staff shortages, and examines ideas to improve the well-being of workers in this sector.

DOC EN HTML

## KCE and European Observatory on health systems and policies: Health systems in transition (HiT): The Belgian health system

This report published by the Belgian Healthcare Knowledge Centre (KCE) and the European Observatory on health systems and policies, provides an analysis and detailed description of the Belgian healthcare system, and of the reforms and policy initiatives underway in the sector.

DOC 1 EN PDF | DOC 2 EN/FR/NL HTML

# EuroHealthNet and JAHEE: Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring health equity – The role of the European Semester

This analysis by EuroHealthNet and the Joint Action on Health Equity Europe (JAHEE) concerns the 2020 cycle of the European Semester. It highlights the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on inequalities in access to healthcare. The document sets out a series of recommendations for strengthening the resilience of national health systems by means of the European Semester and European recovery funds.

## CEO: When the market becomes deadly

This report from the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) examines the consequences of privatisation and sub-contracting in the health sector, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

DOC EN HTML

# 12 Miscellaneous

#### Politico: What is the Conference on the Future of Europe?

This article discusses the Conference on the Future of Europe, to be held in the course of 2021. It makes the point that while MEPs, in a 2020 resolution, had proposed that the Conference be followed by a possible amendment to the European treaties, this option was explicitly ruled out by the Council in its draft joint declaration on the Conference.

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#### European Commission: review of EU trade policy

The European Commission published a communication aimed at setting out EU trade policy for the coming years. One of the points emphasised in the communication is the need to secure diversified and stable supply chains in critical sectors, including the health and pharmaceuticals sector.

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## UNHCR: the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights calls for changes to EU socio-economic governance

The United Nations (UN) special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights called for greater investment in the fight against poverty and a strengthening of social protection, health and education.

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# Council of Europe: resolution calling for Covid-19 vaccines to be treated as a public good, accessible to all

The Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution calling for the barriers and restrictions arising from patents and intellectual property rights to be overcome, in order to ensure production and general distribution of Covid-19 vaccines.

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# Council of Europe: The Committee on Bioethics issues recommendations on equitable access to vaccines during the pandemic

The Council of Europe's Committee on Bioethics emphasises that strategies must be put in place to ensure access to vaccines for vulnerable people. It also recalls the need to guarantee transparency and clear information to boost confidence in the vaccine.

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#### Brexit: EU-UK trade and cooperation agreement

In the context of Brexit, the European Commission has concluded a trade and cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom. This agreement covers various areas including the arrangements for trade in medicines, medical products, medical services and social security coordination.

# Brexit: Citizens of five EU countries will have to pay more for a UK work visa than other EU nationals

With regard to Brexit, nationals of 21 Member States would be eligible for a reduction in the costs linked to a work visa, including for healthcare staff and researchers. Employers would also be exempt from paying the costs linked to issuing a certificate of sponsorship for nationals of these countries. Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia would be excluded from this preferential system, a situation to which the European Commission is objecting.

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### European Parliament: adoption of the directive on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers

This directive will require all Member States to put in place at least one procedural mechanism enabling the bringing of representative actions to protect the collective interests of consumers. The text covers representative actions against violations of EU law, including the Community code relating to medicinal products for human use and the regulation on medical devices.

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#### ETUC: Covid-19 vaccines: people must come before profit

In a statement, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) calls for the production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to be based on the needs of people, for vaccines to be given free of charge, and for patents and intellectual property rights to remain public.

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#### European Parliament: resolution on the de facto ban on abortion in Poland

The resolution underlines that the Polish legislation aiming to make abortion illegal in cases involving severe and irreversible foetal defects could result in a significant increase in the numbers of illegal abortions. MEPs also recall that this decision was made by judges elected by the Polish government.

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# WTO: five Latin American countries oppose European restrictions on the export of Covid-19 vaccines

At a meeting of the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Uruguay signed a joint statement calling on the EU not to impose export restrictions on Covid-19 vaccines. The signatories underline that such measures could negatively impact fair access to vaccines for all members of the WTO.

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#### European Health Union: Manifesto for a European health union

This initiative was launched by a series of academics and politicians. The Manifesto is an appeal to European political leaders to build a long-term vision for a European Health Union, in which life-long good health for citizens would be at the heart of policies.

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### Council of Europe: recommendations on how to protect the right to health effectively

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights published a paper intended to help public authorities put in place 'more inclusive and resilient' healthcare systems.

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Belgium: Eva De Bleeker accidentally tweets the price of Covid-19 vaccines

Belgium's budget state secretary, Eva De Bleeker, accidentally published on the Twitter platform the list of prices negotiated by the EU for Covid-19 vaccines. The European Commission had insisted that this information be kept confidential, and called the secretary of state to order.

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13 Member States call for rapid access to Covid-19 vaccines in the Eastern Partnership countries

Thirteen Member States, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Sweden, sent a letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the Commissioner for Health and the Commissioner responsible for the Neighbourhood policy, calling for development of a Covid-vaccination support mechanism for countries in the Eastern Partnership, similar to that launched for the countries of the Western Balkans.

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