



Presidency summary of the Informal Video Conference of the EU Ministers of Health

Berlin, 30 October 2020, 10 am – 1 pm

Executive Summary

On 30 October 2020, the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union held an informal video conference of the EU Ministers of Health. The main topic was the draft Council Conclusions on the role of the EU in strengthening the World Health Organization (WHO). All Member States expressed their support and political approval for these Council Conclusions. The Conclusions will now be formally adopted by written procedure until 6 November 2020. The discussion during the video conference also contained a fruitful exchange on how Member States can contribute to a successful implementation of the Council Conclusions. Through the political approval of the Council Conclusions, the EU has reached a common position on the role of the EU in strengthening the WHO which can be promoted in international bodies and fora like the World Health Assembly in November or during G7 and G20 meetings. Under *Any Other Business*, the Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) gave an overview of the current pandemic situation in the EU, followed by the Commission and the Presidency informing about the implementation of the “Council recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restrictions of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”. Finally, the Commission presented the Communication “on additional COVID-19 response measures” and the “Commission recommendation on COVID-19 test strategies, including the use of rapid antigen tests”.

Main Messages and Results

- The Presidency emphasized that the pandemic has shown that a strong global health cooperation is crucial for securing the health of people worldwide and that the strengthening of WHO is needed while recognizing the challenges the organisation currently faces e.g. in terms of transparency, synergies, financing and accountability.



- All Member States supported the Council Conclusions on the role of the EU in strengthening the WHO and welcomed the commitment of the EU to play a coordinating, proactive and leading role therein. They also welcomed the objective to continue to take a leadership role in global health more generally.
- As measures for reflection, Member States brought forward *inter alia* the revision of the current alert system, the full implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and an independent epidemiological assessment on-site in high risk zones in close collaboration with concerned state parties. They also called for pursuing the “One Health” approach to achieve better public health outcomes.
- The Council Conclusions constitute a common position on strengthening the WHO to be promoted in international fora like the resumed World Health Assembly on 9 -14 November 2020. The Presidency called for this position to be jointly represented by the EU internationally and stressed the importance of winning other actors to join the EU’s position.
- Under *Any Other Business*, 5.1.2e 5.1.2e, presented recent figures and numbers as well as the common EU maps for risk area classification, thus illustrating the current pandemic situation. It became clear that the 14-day notification rate is increasing rapidly in all countries and that all other indicators used for monitoring the spread of the virus are on the rise as well. In view of the lack of a vaccine, non-pharmaceutical measures remain crucial.
- The Commission and the Presidency informed ministers about the “Council recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”. Commissioner Kyriakides stressed the benefit of the EU’s common risk area classification ensuring more transparency and predictability and thus facilitating travelling for citizens in the EU. The Commission promised further support for the Member States and presented the new package of COVID-19 response measures published on 28 October 2020. Commissioner Kyriakides called on the Member States to improve the data exchange with the ECDC and underlined the importance of using contact tracing apps and their interoperability.