



## Virtual meeting of EU Health Ministers | 4 September 2020

### Summary

#### Preliminary remarks

On the initiative of the German Presidency, the Health Ministers of the EU met in a virtual format to hold an Informal Meeting on 4 September 2020 chaired by German Federal Minister of Health, Jens Spahn. The EU Commission, the ECDC and the EMA also participated in the meeting.

The Presidency had convened this extraordinary meeting given the current developments with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, including an increase in cases in many European countries, which highlight the need to continue the close cooperation and joint efforts among Member States to fight the virus.

Against this background, on 4 September 2020, the participants discussed the following topics:

1. **A coordinated approach to quarantine- and test regimes**
2. **Procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and its financing**

#### Content of the meeting

The discussion was based on a discussion paper containing two guiding questions circulated by the Presidency prior to the meeting. Concerning topic 1, the meeting's aim was to find a basic understanding on how a common quarantine- and test regime within the EU could be achieved and look like. In the context of topic 2, the objective was to ensure the financing of the current activities of the vaccines initiative through an increase of the ESI budget.

In his introductory remarks, the Presidency clarified in relation to the two agenda items that the discussion should focus on the recommended measure of quarantine for travellers coming from higher risk areas and the possibility to shorten the quarantine period by undergoing testing. In relation to topic 2, the Presidency stressed the urgency to find a solution allowing to close the financing gap for the upfront payment for the required COVID-19 vaccines.

On the invitation of the Presidency, the Co-Chair of the Steering Board of the vaccine initiative in which all Member States are represented informed participants on the proceedings of the negotiation procedure and the underlying guiding rules and principles. Both Presidency and Commission stressed that negotiations were fully transparent to all Member States.

## Results of the meeting

1. In relation to agenda item 1, there was a vast majority of Member States who agreed that a common approach for cross-border travellers coming from high-risk areas based on scientific advice from the ECDC and other experts is required. Some Member States mentioned the need for national exceptions. It became clear from the various statements that it is necessary to find a proportionate solution for quarantine- and test regimes. In addition, many Member States expressed their support for the idea for a common framework addressing minimal standards that can be adapted to national legal and policy systems and leaving flexibility for Member States to adapt to specific circumstances.
2. Concerning the quarantine- and test regime proposed in the discussion paper, it became clear that there was vast support among Member States for a coordinated approach to a quarantine- and test regime, also taking due account of the principle of reciprocity. Of the Member States that were in support of a minimum level, no Member State advocated for a quarantine- and test regime of less than ten days.
3. In relation to agenda item 2, a significant number of Member States already made a concrete financial commitment to increase the ESI budget during the meeting. In many cases, Member States expressed their willingness to increase the ESI budget subject *inter alia* to internal governmental procedures. As requested by some Member States, the Commission and the Co-Chair of the Steering Board of the vaccine initiative recalled the shared information and the state of play of the ESI budget expenditures.
4. The Presidency stressed that at least those Member States interested in a broad portfolio of vaccine candidates should contribute to the necessary additional top-up of the ESI budget. The Presidency also emphasized that it will, together with the Commission, define a procedure to obtain approval by those Member States for their binding commitment for the top-up. Based on the discussion, the Presidency announced that it would, by way of an official Presidency letter, ask the Commission to implement today's informal meeting results and to continue the process for the remaining vaccine candidates in order to conclude contracts quickly.