

*Disclaimer: We kindly ask to acknowledge that due to the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the questions and the dynamic pandemic situation some of the information might be incomplete or only correct for the time being. Thus, please consider the date with the below information. All available information was provided by a country representative from the PHIRI network during or in connection to the respective meeting.*

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Table 1: Country responses: Comparing Summer 2020/21 to 2022

Country	<b>Topic: Comparing the European COVID-19 situation at the beginning of Summer 2020 and 2021 with Summer 2022</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the overall COVID-19 situation in your country right now present similarly to the start of the previous two summer seasons, or is it markedly different? Have expectations that were held during previous summer seasons regarding the European pandemic status in Summer 2022 come true, or has the trajectory been much different than expected?</li> <li>• What would we expect for the 2022 Autumn season?</li> </ul>
<b>Austria</b>	<p>According to the Austrian modelling group, the situation is markedly different from previous summers, because due to the high case numbers that we experienced in the Omicron wave, immunisation levels have reached close to herd immunity. Since then, they oscillate above or below that threshold due to waning immunity and mutational changes in the circulating virus variants.</p> <p>Previous long-term expectations were not accurate due to the unforeseen emergence of the Omicron variants.</p> <p>For the coming autumn, the modelling group expects a distinct infection wave with increase in both, case numbers and hospitalisations, but at levels manageable by the health care systems.</p>
<b>Belgium</b>	<p>The situation regarding Covid-19 is different from previous summers, with a higher number of cases and hospitalization. This is mainly attributable to the Omicron variant. Belgium will start a Booster campaign for everyone 18+ years old (for free). The campaign will be only in September because the government wants to get as many people to get their second Booster shot in a short period so the benefits of the second booster vaccination can be maximized.</p>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<p>Also, in Bulgaria, the situation is different than the previous summers. For about three weeks, the number of infections has been going up. From today (18.07.2022), new measures (obligatory masks in hospitals and social houses for older adults) are in place. Furthermore, there is a special multi-step plan in case the number of hospitalizations rises.</p>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<p>The current wave is different than previous waves because people are not tested that frequently. There are no free PCR tests. Case numbers are high right now. The wave will peak soon, but it is estimated that the decline will be slower than in previous waves. The mortality rate is high, but not as high as in the first wave, for example, because on the one hand, immunity is higher in the population, but on the other hand, people are not as well protected as in previous waves. Additional vaccinations have started. The situation is hoped to be better this autumn than in previous years.</p>
<b>Estonia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current wave started 4 weeks ago and is slightly rising. 2021 summer wave started about one month later than the current wave. This summer more people are vaccinated and due to the intensive omicron wave during winter-spring 2022 there are lot of people who had the COVID-19 disease</li> <li>• People expected the pandemic to be more under control than it is now.</li> <li>• Society would not be closed and the movements limited. COVID-19 is a seasonal disease. Infection rate might be high but people would not need hospital care.</li> </ul>
<b>Finland</b>	<p>The number of cases is much higher than in the previous two summers, but the number of hospitalisations was low, especially in intensive care. There have been deaths, but there is some discussion about whether these were mainly caused by Covid or with Covid. This remains to be clarified when more information on mortality is available. The average age for Covid 19 mortality is 80+ years. For this reason, a second booster vaccination has been recommended for the 80+ population since May 2022. Today, the second booster vaccination is recommended for all those over 60 years of age and for high-risk groups. Cases are expected to increase in the coming months, especially when school starts in August. However, hospitals remain confident that</p>



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	<p>their capacity will not be overloaded. The manifestation of the disease has changed at this point, as it is no longer as severe, and the number of hospitalisations is lower than in previous years.</p>
<b>Italy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The current overall COVID-19 situation in Italy presents some differences to that at the beginning of the two previous summer seasons (2020 and 2021); in summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- this summer the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is increasing dramatically with a peak (by the moment) of about 31,000 cases on the last 4th of July in comparison to about 600 cases in the same day of the last year or to about 80 cases in the same day of 2020;</li> <li>- fortunately, this high number of infections does not proportionally translate in ICU hospitalization and deaths: for example, on the 4th of July 2022 deaths were 77; coming back to a day with a similar number of infections in 2022 (e.g., on the 1st of February), deaths were about 380 and it was on winter season. We have to take into account that in November 2020 a similar number of deaths (362) resulted from a lower number of cases (about 20.000).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) We had not explicit expectations about summer 2022 but considering the huge vaccination campaign implemented in Italy during the 2021, even though the infections consistently increased in this summer, less deaths and hospitalizations were expected.</li> <li>3) A new wave of pandemic is highly probable in Italy on the next autumn; this is the reason why the 4th dose of vaccination is highly recommended not only to fragile categories but also to all over 60 years of age in the population.</li> </ol>
<b>Ireland</b>	<p>The Covid-19 situation in Ireland this summer has differed notably from the summer periods of 2020 and 2021 with higher case numbers, hospitalisations and ICU admissions. This has been attributed to the emergence of the BA.4 and BA.5 variants as the dominant variant in Ireland with BA.5 the dominant variant. As of Week 28, there is an S-gene target failure of 97.4% indicating the dominance of these variants.</p> <p>14-day incidence rates:</p> <p>Limited testing capacity in early 2020 and a significant change to testing policy in Ireland in late 2021/early 2022 makes comparisons of incidence rates between the summer periods incomplete. However, for PCR confirmed cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2020: Range of 3 per 100,000 to 19 per 100,000</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2021: Range of 86 per 100,000 to 238 per 100,000</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2022: Range of 171 per 100,000 to 621 per 100,000</li> </ul> <p>Covid-19 cases in Hospital: The key indicator for comparison of these periods has been the number of Covid-19 patients in hospital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2020: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in hospital was 53 with a range of 10-194</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2021: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in hospital was 62 with a range of 38-101</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2022: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in hospital was 653 with a range of 191-1,055</li> </ul> <p>The peak in hospital numbers for summer 2022 (to date) was on 11th July with 1,055 cases in hospital. The numbers are currently declining.</p> <p>Covid-19 cases in ICU: Another key indicator is the number of Covid-19 cases in ICU:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2020: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in ICU was 18 with a range of 9-37</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2021: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in ICU was 19 with a range of 13-34</li> <li>• 1st June – 20th July 2022: Mean number of Covid-19 cases in ICU was 30 with a range of 18-46</li> </ul>



	While the number of Covid-19 cases in ICU is higher this summer than previous summers, the scale of the difference is less than seen for Covid-19 cases in hospital. Projections for Autumn are not currently available.
<b>Lithuania</b>	The situation is different from previous summers. The number of cases is increasing. The incidence rate is about ten times higher than in the last two summers, yet the number of hospitalizations is now lower than before. No changes in Covid19 management are planned at present. The situation is being closely monitored. Communication about recommended measures (use of face masks) has been increased again. We have different testing strategies than before - we only test symptomatic individuals. As of 1 August, vaccination will be available for groups at higher risk of severe disease as recommended by ECDC and EHMA. Persons over 60 years and those with chronic diseases will be eligible for a second booster. The prepared Covid management plan for the autumn season will depend on incidence rates and hospitalised patients. The criteria for declaring an epidemic at the municipal and national levels are currently under review. Most of the planned measures are recommendatory.
<b>Malta</b>	Covid-19 peaked in June and July - it was the same in 2020 and 2021. The reasons for these peaks always seem to be different. In 2020, the measures were lifted, and in 2021, the Delta variant emerged and coincided with the travel season (Malta allowed people to come to Malta with either a vaccinated or a recovered person). In 2022, the start of travel season in June coincided with the spread of the BA5 and BA4 variants, resulting in the highest infection rate. Although there were spikes before, the positivity rate never exceeded 7% before 2022. The Omicron variant led to higher peaks in January, April and June. In April and June, the positivity rate was 24-30%, much higher than in other European countries. In April and June, most pandemic-related restrictions were lifted. The number of intensive care units and hospitalisations remained low and within tolerable limits. This is due to the high uptake of the booster vaccine. We expect an EMA-approved updated vaccination to be available in the autumn. This could accompany the flu vaccination for vulnerable populations this autumn. As a government, we are waiting for the EMA and WHO to present an autumn strategy.
<b>Portugal</b>	It is a very dry season, which is worrying. There are also more and more deaths due to the heat. Covid-19 is also increasing a bit. A month ago, they started vaccinating people over 80 again. Regarding the measures, you see on the streets and in the shopping malls that mostly older people wear masks. In general, about 10-20% of people still seem to wear masks. The use of masks will probably have to be increased next winter.
<b>Slovakia</b>	The situation is different. There are fewer infections, fewer hospitalisations, and fewer deaths this summer. We are also optimistic about expectations for autumn 2022. A general comment: the number of people cured and vaccinated is increasing in all groups (infected, hospitalised and dying). This should come as no surprise, as it is only natural for Covid to find protected groups as well. Recovery and vaccination do not protect people 100%, only 80-19%. Therefore, all people are still vulnerable to some extent.
<b>Spain</b>	The current summer season is very different from the previous ones. Looking at the evolution <a href="https://cnecovid.isciii.es/covid19/#evoluci%C3%B3n-pandem">https://cnecovid.isciii.es/covid19/#evoluci%C3%B3n-pandem</a> , this one is, by far, the greatest one. At this moment, there is not official report already published about this topic.

