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Dear Minister,

In parallel with our joint efforts to secure access to safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 as quickly as possible, we also need to ensure preparedness for the deployment of such vaccines. Planning ahead is of crucial importance to ensure efficient, effective and targeted rollouts of the vaccines. I know that you are all actively working on national COVID-19 vaccination deployment strategies.

To support you in this work, on 15 October we presented the necessary steps to ensure preparedness for successful and coordinated COVID-19 vaccination strategies<sup>1</sup>, to ensure efficient and targeted deployments.

In particular, I would encourage you to consider a number of key elements for a successful implementation of these strategies, starting with ensuring the capacity of vaccination services to administer COVID-19 vaccines. At a time of unprecedented pressure on healthcare systems, we must have the necessary staff with the necessary skills and equipment to do this. We must ensure that there is easy and safe access to vaccination services for priority and target populations. Physical distance must not be an obstacle to access vaccines, and the same applies to price. This is why we recommend making COVID-19 vaccines free of charge and easily accessible, to ensure they reach every person in the EU.

As the COVID-19 vaccines Steering Board has discussed on several occasions, the availability of storage and transport facilities that are tailored to the different characteristics of the vaccine that may become available is essential to the success of this endeavour.

EU Health Ministers

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020\\_strategies\\_deployment\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020_strategies_deployment_en.pdf)

This includes cold or cooled storage options to protect the vaccines. All Member States must put in place the necessary transport and storage capacities.

The pandemic has also shown the importance of data and monitoring. It will be crucial that you have in place electronic registration of vaccination processes via the Immunisation Information System. These data can play a key role in safety and effectiveness studies and its availability across the EU will be important.

We must make sure that there is a pro-active and clear communication with all citizens and in particular the target populations on COVID-19 vaccines. The European Medicines Agency will ensure that any COVID-19 vaccine reaching the EU market has been thoroughly assessed to ensure safety, high quality and effectiveness. This needs to be communicated in a transparent and factual manner to citizens to combat vaccine hesitancy and gain trust in what can be a key tool to overcome the pandemic. The Commission is ready to support your efforts in this area with specific measures to counter misinformation, exchange of good practices and coordination of messages.

We will also support you to ensure that the vaccines, once available, can be deployed in a timely fashion. We will develop specific elements for a common deployment strategy, including for example checklists for different stages of the deployment chain in order to ensure a coordinated deployment, in collaboration with the Health Security Committee and the National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) network coordinated by European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

I have asked the ECDC to provide information based on mathematical modelling to help decisions making regarding vaccine deployment.

In the EU COVID-19 vaccines Strategy, the Commission has committed to ensuring safety above all other aspects. The European Medicines Agency, together with the ECDC, will coordinate large-scale EU-wide post-marketing studies to assess the safety and the effectiveness of future COVID-19 vaccines. Your support will be crucial to deliver on this commitment and to ensure that essential, real-world data on the effects and safety aspects of the vaccine reaches the European level and all other Member States in real time.

We will collaborate with the European Regional Office of the World Health Organization and the ECDC in order to collect data on vaccine coverage and implementation of national vaccination strategies, fully respecting the protection of personal data. This will allow us to have a comprehensive view on the COVID-19 vaccination status in the EU.

Finally, I would also like to remind us all of the need for a precise plan for safe stock-piling and efficient and effective logistics, in the midst of a pandemic, for vaccines that will require in the majority of cases two injections. This is a challenge that requires careful planning and I can only reiterate the Commission's standing offer to help Member States in this undertaking.

We will not be able to turn the tide from one day to another, not even with a vaccine. But it is absolutely essential everyone must get ready. It is not vaccines that save lives: vaccinations do.

In the coming days and weeks, we will be monitoring our collective preparedness on COVID-19 vaccination, through a continuously updated monitoring document, which I will be able to share with you in our future correspondence.

I would like to thank you for your continued support and collaboration on these complex but extremely important aspects of our joint work to fight the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,

