

## World Health Organization: Topic 1

# International Cooperation in Response to Covid-19

### Background:

Corona-Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a newly infectious disease that has caused a worldwide pandemic. Over the past year it has spread rapidly in 213 countries and territories<sup>1</sup>, causing the world to shut down and stay in lock down. Symptoms of Covid-19 include respiratory illnesses that for the elderly and people suffering from cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer, are more likely to experience<sup>2</sup>. At time of writing, the current outbreak has affected more than 51 million people and killed more than 1 million people. The disease has not only been a health issue, but has proven to pose economic, social, and environmental challenges as well. Countries are struggling to restrict the spread by implementing lockdowns, contact tracing, testing, treatment centers, and bans on large gatherings, as well as quarantines for suspected carriers<sup>3</sup>.

### Current Situation:

Coronavirus cases have been increasing over the last months in various different regions of the world and more than half a million cases have been reported in the last 24 hours, as of writing. The US in particular has registered the most amount of cases and deaths, and is experiencing a “third wave”. Whereas in Europe, lockdowns have been returning, as hospital admissions are rising with the hit of a “second wave”<sup>4</sup>. However, a Covid-19 vaccine appears to be within reach as the Pfizer/BioNTech’s trial shows 90% efficacy in protecting people from spreading and receiving the virus. The trial run will continue through December, and if all goes well the vaccine will be accessible to the most vulnerable as well as doctors in the front line around January. Pfizer stated that they are expecting to supply 50m doses in 2020 and up to 1.3bn in 2021 worldwide<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> “What Is the Global Impact of the New Coronavirus Pandemic?” Medical News Today. MediLexicon International. Accessed November 12, 2020. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-global-impact-how-the-coronavirus-is-affecting-the-world> .

<sup>2</sup> “Coronavirus.” World Health Organization. World Health Organization. Accessed November 12, 2020. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus/coronavirus>.

<sup>3</sup> Chakraborty, Indranil, and Prasenjit Maity. “COVID-19 Outbreak: Migration, Effects on Society, Global Environment and Prevention.” Science of The Total Environment. Elsevier, April 22, 2020. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0048969720323998>.

<sup>4</sup> The Visual and Data Journalism Team. “Covid-19 Pandemic: Tracking the Global Coronavirus Outbreak.” BBC News. BBC, November 9, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-51235105>.

<sup>5</sup> Boseley, Sarah, and Philip Oltermann. “Covid-19 Vaccine Candidate Is 90% Effective, Says Pfizer.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, November 9, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/09/covid-19-vaccine-candidate-effective-pfizer-biontech>.



## Important bloc positions:

- EU member states have declared a state of emergency in their March 26 2020 conference.<sup>6</sup> In response to the crisis, most EU countries shut down their borders<sup>7</sup>
- State of Hong Kong had the most effective measures given by the fact that with a population of 7.5 million people there were only five deaths, measures included:
  - Swift surveillance,
  - Quarantine and social distance measures,
  - Face masks,
  - School closures.<sup>8</sup>
- While the **governments disagree**, some groups in Germany, France, and Italy sustain that the pandemic has weakened arguments in favor of the EU, claiming that the bloc has not done enough to protect the countries.
- The United States prevented a vote in the UN Security Council on a resolution calling to end worldwide hostilities amid the pandemic. The US unemployment rate was raised by 14.7% because of Coronavirus and lockdown damaging the economy.<sup>9</sup>

## Possible solutions:

- Implementing smart working and forced lockdowns until cases decrease.
- Close borders and stop travelling.
- Invest in start-ups that promote social distancing, but allow services to be made from home.
- Support online education to prevent missed schooling.
- Consider monetary programs to combat the economic harm of the pandemic.

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<sup>6</sup> “Joint European Roadmap towards Lifting Covid-19 Containment Measures.” Europa Info, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> Tidey, Alice. “COVID-19 Has ‘Weakened’ the Case for the EU, Finds Euronews Poll.” euronews, May 27, 2020. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/05/26/covid-19-has-weakened-the-case-for-the-eu-say-germans-french-and-italians>.

<sup>8</sup> Gibney, Elizabeth. “Whose Coronavirus Strategy Worked Best? Scientists Hunt Most Effective Policies.” Nature News. Nature Publishing Group, April 27, 2020. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01248-1?sf233300303=1>.

<sup>9</sup> Aziz, Saba, Ted Regencia, and Usaid Siddiqui. “US Blocks UN Security Council Vote on Coronavirus: Live Updates.” Asia Pacific | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, May 8, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/8/us-blocks-un-security-council-vote-on-coronavirus-live-updates>.



## **Suggested reading:**

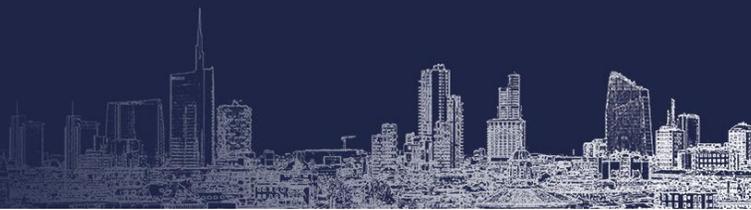
- <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/06/17/much-of-the-world-thinks-the-response-to-the-pandemic-has-been-poor>
- <https://www.economist.com/international/2020/05/23/covid-19-is-undoing-years-of-progress-in-curbing-global-poverty>
- <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/10/08/the-pandemic-has-caused-the-worlds-economies-to-diverge>
- <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/11/11/are-governments-following-the-science-on-covid-19>
- <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/07/15/tracking-covid-19-excess-deaths-across-countries>
- <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/11/14/the-promise-of-the-new-covid-19-vaccine-is-immense>

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