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From:	The Commission
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Informal videoconference of the Ministers of Research on 27 November 2020 AOB item - Latest joint scientific opinion on 'Improving pandemic preparedness and management' - Information from the Commission

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Delegations will find attached a note from the Commission on *Latest joint scientific opinion on 'Improving pandemic preparedness and management'* with a view to the AOB items at the Informal videoconference of the Ministers of Research on 27 November 2020.

## **AOB – Latest joint scientific opinion on ‘Improving pandemic preparedness and management’**

### *Information from the Commission*

In the last months, the EU and the Member States have been facing challenges regarding COVID-19, and scientific advice has been indispensable in these efforts. It was also highlighted in the context of the ERAvsCorona Action Plan. The existing advisory bodies in the R&I area have joined forces in examining the evidence on the response to the COVID-19 and, in part, to previous pandemics. This joint effort of the Commission’s independent Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE), and Prof. Peter Piot, special advisor to President Ursula von der Leyen on COVID-19, has resulted in an opinion “Improving pandemics preparedness and management”, which contains a range of recommendations summarised below:

#### Prevent and pre-empt

- Support multifaceted efforts to investigate, map and reduce the risk of emerging infectious diseases globally.
- Support a combination of complementary approaches for accelerating the research on and development of responses to pathogens with epidemic and pandemic potential; strengthen multi- and cross-disciplinary research on pandemic prevention, preparedness, responses and impacts.

#### Enhance coordination across Member States and at international level

- Establish a standing EU advisory body for health threats and crises, including epidemics and pandemics.
- Ensure that monitoring efforts are comprehensive, evidence-based, rapidly shared and well-coordinated across the EU.
- Establish a joint early-response mechanism to contain epidemics and pandemics, including a toolbox of strategies, such as testing, tracing, isolating as well as containment measures.
- Coordinate research and the development and implementation of medical countermeasures during a pandemic or other health threats.
- Coordinate research and the development and evaluation of social measures to mitigate harm and to increase resilience in case of pandemics or other public health crises.

#### Strengthen systems for preparedness and management

- Encourage Member States to provide healthcare for all, respecting the principles of justice and solidarity, fundamental rights, social rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure robust and equitable access to critical products and services for all EU citizens and demonstrate global solidarity.
- Encourage Member States to strengthen public health infrastructure as an essential part of efficient and equitable health services.
- Establish systems for effective risk communication and tackling disinformation and misinformation during crises, and strengthen the ECDC’s role also in this regard.

- Together with EU Member States, develop strategies to sustain education in all sectors and in accordance with the Digital Education Plan 2021-2027.
- Encourage Member States to strengthen efforts in community involvement and organisation and support civil-society organisations.
- Foster appropriate engineering and other controls in public buildings to limit infection risk indoors for airborne diseases.

#### Uphold fundamental rights and strengthen social justice

- Uphold highest standards in the protection of fundamental rights and civil liberties during pandemics.
- Implement the European Pillar of Social Rights.

#### Find solidarity-based and sustainable ways of living

- Take action in a cross-cutting manner based on the increasing body of knowledge about unsustainable ways of living, which also contribute to the emergence of epidemics and pandemics.