

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: Strategies for winter 2022 and BA.2

Country	Topic: Strategies for winter 2022 and BA.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your country taking actions at the moment (or are there plans in place) to anticipate/mitigate a potential spike in COVID-19 infections in autumn/winter 2022? Have any strategies to this effect been developed based on lessons learned in the previous two years? • Have plans and strategies changed in your country since emergence of the BA.2 subvariant? If so, how? Are there any recommendations you would like to share with other countries in this scope?
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different actions have been undertaken from Albania since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the next period the Institute of Public Health is responsible for different measures to be undertaken based on the situation. For the moment the COVID-19 wards have been closed (the majority of them opened for this aim). Strengthen of healthcare system has been done with employment of more personnel and better education of primary healthcare providers who are the first point of contact. Additionally, campaigns for vaccination of the population continue. • Despite the new variant of Omicron 2 strategy has not changed. Till the moment the number are lows. Albania is easing the measures this period.
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for autumn/winter 2022 are currently being developed. • BA.2 started coming up in Austria in mid-January and is now the dominant (sub-)variant. Strategies and containment measures have not been changed specifically in a response to the BA.2 variant. Since January, most restrictions have been lifted, but recently mask mandates for indoor public spaces have been reintroduced due to a new rise in incidence.
Czech Republic	No updates to COVID-19 measures are being enacted at the moment, concentration on Ukraine crisis
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Estonia omicron variant BA.2 emerged more a less at the same time as the B.1.1.529. As the omicron wave is decreasing, in coming weeks measures like an obligation to wear masks indoor, keeping a 2m distance and using disinfectants everywhere will be lifted. Estonia has just started to prepare for the coming autumn season. The autumn plan will be drawn up in cooperation with the various national authorities concerned; Government Office is leading this process involving relevant institutions and government agencies, e.g different ministries, Health Board, the COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Board etc. There have been some plans, but as the new variants have been quite different from the previous ones, these plans were not used in full volume. • Measures may have lasted longer than planned.
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been recognized that COVID-19 will most likely follow the batter of other respiratory infections and number of cases is expected to increase in autumn/winter. There is no specific measures/strategies for 2022 but there is currently discussion about 4th vaccination round for elderly. • There is not specific recommendations in relation to BA.2 subvariant at the moment.
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting from the beginning of the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic, several actions have been settled up in different fields, which, based on the acquired experience, will remain to anticipate/mitigate a potential spike in COVID-19 infections in the next autumn/winter 2022. Just as an example they include the continuation of the surveillance system (at the moment), institution of special health surveillance measures, increasing in the level of financing of the national health standard needs, financing of the fund for the national emergencies, strengthening of hospital intensive care units, simplification of the procedures for acquiring medical-radiological equipment, simplification of drug distribution, etc. • The new Omicron BA.2 subvariant was identified in Italy more than a month ago. At least three highly contagious but less severe variants of the new coronavirus, Omicron, are currently circulating in Italy. According to the latest rapid survey on the prevalence and distribution of multiple variants of the new



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	<p>coronavirus conducted by the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), the Italian Omicron variant is still the most dominant variant, with a prevalence rate of about 99.86%. The prevalence of Omicron BA.2 subvariant accounts for about 44.07%, whereas the BA.1 for about 55.5%.</p> <p>The Omicron BA.2 subvariant is almost identical to the original Omicron, therefore no specific or special plans and strategies, in addition to the existing ones, have developed in Italy for contrasting the BA.2 subvariant diffusion. It was clear that BA.2 was more transmissible than BA.1, combined with the relaxation of restrictions and mitigation measures, increased social gatherings, fewer people wearing masks, and reduced immunity to previous infections and vaccinations, which contributed to the prevalence of current infections surge. Despite the upward trend in positive tests, hospitalizations and deaths have not increased at the same rate. Vaccination remains one of the most effective measures to prevent COVID-19 and the BA.2 subvariant.</p>
Malta	<p>De-escalation of measures is happening at the moment. No formal plans for next autumn/winter yet, but it is looking likely that flu shots/COVID-19 vaccinations will be offered together. In regard to BA.2, there is a rise in infections visible, but no particular measures in regard to BA.2 have been taken yet.</p>
Poland	<p>In Poland there is no special strategy for the fall/winter season as regards Covid-19 measures yet established.</p> <p>The latest strategy is in place (from Jan 20th 2022) https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/strategia-walki-z-pandemia-covid19</p> <p>Recommendations as regards the treatment in the winter season 2022 will be (probably) discussed within the governmental Covid-19 Council.</p> <p>As of 28/03, in Poland all Covid-19 related restrictions have been lifted, except for the obligation of wearing face masks in health centers, clinics, hospitals etc.</p>
Portugal	<p>Portugal are keeping mask mandates in place currently. A governmental assessment is underway at the moment that will try to identify lessons learned and recommendations for future strategies including for autumn/winter 2022.</p>
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary vaccination is considered similarly to regular autumn vaccination against influenza. • Proportion of BA.2 subvariant is 40%. Because the number of hospitalized is constantly dropping it doesn't seem to change any strategy.
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In preparation for the autumn, Slovenia is carrying out activities in terms of improvement or renovation of some covid-19 monitoring systems, activities have begun to establish an Emergency Operating Centre, and regarding the preparation of a vaccination strategy, we are still waiting for possible innovations regarding the development of new vaccines by the European Medicines Agency. Of course, Slovenia is constantly monitoring the epidemiological situation regarding Covid-19 in Slovenia and Europe. • The subvariant BA.2 is noted in Slovenia (https://www.nlzoh.si/objave/sledenje-razlicicam-sars-cov-2-44/). The epidemiological situation in Slovenia is being monitored, the number of people infected with SARS-Cov-2 is still high, and the number of hospitalized and admitted to the intensive units is still declining. From an epidemiological point of view, additional public health measures in terms of tightening the existing ones do not currently make sense.
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, Spain is not planning any special action to mitigate a potential spike in autumn/winter 2022. <p>On March 23, the Public Health commission agreed on the new Strategy for surveillance and control of COVID-19 after the pandemic acute phase. This strategy will be implemented when health services utilisation indicators are at low risk, overall and in more than half of the regions</p> <p>In this new period testing will be mainly focused on vulnerable people, i.e. people over 60, immunosuppressed people and pregnant women, severe cases and people exposed to higher-risk settings such as healthcare premises and social centres. Those confirmed cases asymptomatic or with mild symptoms will not be isolated and their closed contacts will not be quarantined.</p> <p>In this new phase, epidemiological surveillance systems will have to notify all the confirmed cases twice a week, while Information about hospital utilisation will continue to be reported on a daily basis. In addition data about mild cases will be automatically retrieved from primary care electronic health records throughout the, so-called, Surveillance System for Acute Respiratory Infection. Nonetheless, the special surveillance and control mechanism implemented to deal with the pandemic will be maintained to detect any early trend change (Update of the Strategy for surveillance and control of COVID-19 after the acute phase of the pandemic</p> <p>https://www.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/Nueva_estrategia_vigilancia_y_control.pdf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures are taken or implemented according to the epidemiological situation (mostly based on incidence and hospitalization and ICU occupancy rates) and irrespective of the variant in circulation.

