

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 and date of last update 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.

Date: 04.07.2022

Last update: 11.07.2022

Table 1: Country responses: Protecting vulnerable groups

Country	Topic: Protecting vulnerable groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your country currently taking any actions to protect vulnerable groups (i.e. groups who are, due to their own health status, highly susceptible to severe COVID-19)? For example, if no obligatory mouth nose protection needs to be worn, are there e.g. specific train compartments where masks are worn or similar measures? • How do you define vulnerable groups? (Are these primarily groups who define themselves as vulnerable or are defined as vulnerable based on existing evidence?)
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP2 masks are mandatory for everyone in hospitals and nursing homes. All visitors to these facilities need to have a COVID certificate (vaccination, recovery or test). <p>Infected individuals must isolate for 5 days. After the isolation, if they don't have a Ct-value above 30, they have to follow further restrictions for another 5 days – these include no access to health care settings or nursing homes. Close contacts who do not have a valid vaccination or recovery certificate need to follow these restrictions for 10 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups are defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People 65 years or older - People of any age with certain conditions (e.g., diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases), see https://coronavirus.wien.gv.at/unterstuetzung-fuer-risikogruppen/
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, anyone over the age of 80 and who lives in a residential care centre can receive a second booster against COVID-19. Previously, immune-weakened persons could receive a booster after they had already received an extra dose of basic vaccination. For example, almost 400,000 people have already received a second booster or fourth dose. You can now also follow that number on our vaccination counter. https://www.laatjevaccineren.be/boostervaccinatie • Definition in evolution based on the most up to date scientific knowledge. <p>Vulnerable groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People older than 65 years (Age is the most important risk factor for a severe form of COVID-19) - Pregnant women - Adults with severe obesity - Adults with diabetes, especially type 2 - Adults with chronic cardiovascular, pulmonary or renal disease - People who are immunocompromised and/or have cancer <p>Please find in the document below specific recommendations for people at increased risk of experiencing severe health consequences due to COVID-19 and how these groups of people are defined. https://covid-19.sciensano.be/sites/default/files/Covid19/COVID-19_measures-for-high-risk-groups_FR.pdf</p>
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 8 of July there is recommendation for people from vulnerable groups not to delay vaccination against COVID-19. The recommendation says that people falling into vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, suffering from chronic heart, lung, liver, kidney and other diseases, incl. children, persons with



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101018317

www.phiri.eu

Gesundheit Österreich
GmbH

	<p>weakened immunity and pregnant women are at increased risk of severe course of COVID-19 and subsequent health complications and the probability of hospital treatment (including intensive care) is significantly higher for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In connection with the increasing number of cases of COVID-19 and the spread of the new subvariant BA.5 of Omicron in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Health calls on people falling into these vulnerable groups not to postpone their vaccination, informing them once again that vaccination against COVID-19 remains the safest way to protect against severe illness, hospitalization and long-term health consequences. • The Ministry of Health, together with the expert councils of the relevant medical specialties, has developed digital brochures regarding various health conditions and the indication of vaccination against COVID-19 in them. https://plusmen.bg/%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B05 • COVID-19 vaccination in women of reproductive age: https://plusmen.bg/%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B06 • COVID-19, vaccines and vaccination in children and young people: https://plusmen.bg/%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B07 • Information about COVID-19, vaccines and vaccination can be found on the website https://plusmen.bg/ and on the Facebook page „Плюс мен“ - part of the initiative of the Ministry of Health to popularize the benefits of vaccines and vaccination against COVID-19 . • Cardiovascular complications and vaccination against COVID-19: Сърдечно-съдови усложнения и ваксинацията срещу COVID-19 • COVID-19 and vaccination in people with neurologic disorders: COVID-19 и ваксинацията при страдащите от нервни заболявания • Long-term health consequences from COVID-19: Дългосрочни последици за здравето след COVID-19 • Chronic lung disease, COVID-19 and vaccination against coronavirus infection: Хроничните белодробни заболявания, COVID-19 и ваксинацията срещу коронавирусната инфекция • Children, COVID-19 and vaccines against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus: Деца, COVID-19 и ваксините срещу коронавируса SARS-CoV-2 • Women's health, COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2 vaccines: Женското здраве, COVID-19 и ваксините срещу SARS-CoV-2
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination strategy for vulnerable groups https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/-/thl-recommends-a-fifth-dose-of-the-coronavirus-vaccine-for-the-severely-immunodeficient Instructions for elderly care (in Finnish) https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiotaudit-ja-rokotukset/taudit-ja-torjunta/taudit-ja-taudinaiheuttajat-a-o/koronavirus-covid-19/koronavirustartuntojen-torjunta-pitkaaikaishoidon-ja-hoivan-toimintayksikoissa include hygiene guidelines, use of face masks in close contacts, avoiding transfer of patients between units unless necessary, ensuring good information flow between staff, patients and their relatives • In Finland risk groups are defined as listed in https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases-and-vaccinations/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/risk-groups-for-severe-coronavirus-disease
Ireland	<p>The current core public health messages are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate until 48 hours after symptoms have substantially or fully resolved – please do not attend any social events, work, school or college if you have symptoms. • Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should self-isolate for 7 days from date of onset of symptoms, or if asymptomatic, date of first positive test. Anyone exiting self-isolation at day seven should continue to adhere to other public health protective measures. • Continue to practice good hand and respiratory hygiene by washing and sanitising hands regularly and coughing/sneezing into your elbow. Maintain a physical distance where possible. • Meet up outdoors if possible. When meeting indoors, avoid poorly ventilated spaces and keep windows open. • We don't always know who's at risk from COVID-19 or other viruses, but we do know how to protect them.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mask wearing is no longer mandatory in Ireland. However, mask wearing is advised on public transport and in healthcare settings. Mask wearing is also advised based on individual risk assessment, particularly while disease incidence is high. Individuals who are vulnerable to COVID-19 are further advised to be aware of the risk associated with activities they may choose to engage in and to take measures to optimally protect themselves. Vulnerable individuals are advised to consider wearing masks in crowded indoor settings, for example, to social gatherings or other activities and events. • People aged 65 years and over are now eligible for their second COVID-19 booster vaccine. Those with a weak immune system aged 12 and over can also get their second booster, when it is due. The HSE and the Department of Health continue to encourage immunocompromised and those aged 65 and over to come forward for their second booster vaccine using radio/TV/digital/print advertising, ongoing media relations, and direct calls from the HSElive team to immunocompromised people. • The HSE has also developed a new advertising campaign, in collaboration with the Department of Health, that encourages people to keep up public health behaviours in order to slow the spread of viruses, like COVID-19, and help protect others from serious illness. The campaign has two themes: 1. You never know who is at risk, and 2. Your actions help to protect them. The 'You Never Know' campaign has also been running since May this year on TV, radio, social media, outdoors, and in cinemas. • The TV ad is available here, and the radio ads can be accessed here. • Based on the advice of the National Therapeutics Advisory Group (TAG), a number of therapeutics have been made available within Ireland for use by vulnerable cohorts of high-risk patients. However, the primary course of action by which people can protect themselves from the effects of COVID-19 remains through the National vaccination programme and following public health advice. • The Health Service Executive lists the following groups as being at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19: https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/people-at-higher-risk/
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the structure of the Extraordinary Commissioner for the COVID emergency, Agency of Treatments-AIFA, Istituto Superiore di Sanità-ISS and the National Agency for Regional Health Services-AGENAS has developed the document 'Ad interim recommendations on the target groups of anti-SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 vaccination' (https://www.trovanorme.salute.gov.it/norme/renderPdf.spring?seriequ=SG&dataqu=24/03/2021&redaz=21A01802&artp=1&art=1&subart=1&subart1=10&vers=1&prog=002; in Italian language), which updates the categories to offer vaccination and the order of priority for the implementation of the second phase of Italy's Strategic Plan for vaccination against SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19, adopted with the Ministerial Decree of January 2nd, 2021, based on the evolution of knowledge and information on available vaccines (https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus/dettaglioNotizieNuovoCoronavirus.jsp?menu=notizie&id=5319; in Italian language). <p>For what concerns the second booster dose or the fourth dose, with Circular of 8th April 2022, the Ministry of Health recommended the administration of a second booster dose (second booster or fourth dose) for the following categories, after a minimum interval of at least four months (120 days) from the first booster dose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - people aged 80 and over - guests of residential centers for the elderly - people aged 60 and over with high frailty motivated by concomitant/pre-existing pathologies (see annex 2 Circular of 8th April 2022). <p>The administration of the first booster dose (booster or third dose), recommended starting from 27th September 2021 for the most frail people (over 80, RSA guests, healthcare personnel, people with pre-existing diseases), was then gradually extended to all people over 12 years from January 5th, 2022. The third dose falls within the vaccination obligations established by law.</p> <p>For what concerns the vaccination obligations, until 15th June 2022 they remained obliged to vaccinate against Covid-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teachers and non-teaching staff of schools and universities - personnel of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies, personnel of prisons



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public rescue personnel - staff of the National Cybersecurity Agency - people aged 50 and over. <p>In addition, the vaccination obligation has been extended to 31st December 2022 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - operators of health professions and health professionals - all workers employed in social-health and social-welfare residential structures - personnel who carry out their work in any capacity in the structures referred to in art. 8-ter of the Legislative Decree December 30th, 1992, n. 502 (for example hospitals, assisted healthcare residences, clinics, medical and dental offices, diagnostic centres), excluding external contracts - students of degree courses engaged in internships for the qualification to exercise the health professions. <p>https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus/dettaglioContenutiNuovoCoronavirus.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=5452&area=nuovoCoronavirus&menu=vuoto (in Italian language)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups were identified according to the 2017-2019 National Vaccine Prevention Plan (PNPV) "the category of population groups at risk for disease consists of individuals who have certain characteristics and particular morbid conditions (cardiovascular, respiratory, metabolic, immunosuppression, etc.) they expose them to an increased risk of contracting invasive infectious diseases and in this case developing serious complications ». The PNPV provides a list that shows for each vaccine, the health conditions for which immunization is indicated, given the increased risk in case of infection for these subjects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population groups at risk for disease - Women of childbearing age - Subjects at risk for occupational exposure - Subjects at risk for certain behaviours or conditions. <p>https://www.epicentro.iss.it/vaccini/GruppiRischio (in Italian language)</p>
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 30th of May, Lithuania is providing vaccination for immunosuppressed people. • In long-term care facilities, the managers have established a procedure of wearing medical masks for patients, visitors must wear medical masks. Persons at risk are recommended to wear medical masks everywhere. • Recommendations for elderly care are also available: https://sam.lrv.lt/lt/koronavirusas/informacija-visuomenei/rekomendacijos • In Lithuania, there are defined risk groups as listed in the Regulation of Ministry of Health: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/f735b430469711ebb394e1efb98d3e67/asr
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no official obligation to wear face masks except in medical facilities and pharmacies. There are no separate rooms/areas for the people from risk groups, they are advised to use personal measures of protection (distancing, face masks, disinfection). Elderly people with reduced immunity or comorbidities are advised to protect themselves in the form of targeted medical interventions, including: specific monitoring of chronic diseases, taking measures to protect against the risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 virus, administration of booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine (in some groups, earlier administration of an additional dose) and, in the case of illness, implementation of effective therapy reducing the risk of developing acute disease. • Poland generally follows the ECDC rules as regards high risk groups for COVID-19. The high-risk group includes people aged 65 and older (65+), residents of social care homes and long-term medical facilities, and, regardless of age, people with underlying diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate or severe chronic lung disease or asthma - serious heart disease - diabetes - severe obesity (BMI> 40) - chronic kidney disease and people on dialysis; with chronic liver disease



	- with reduced immunity by pharmacology (antineoplastic drugs, corticosteroids), transplant suppression, HIV infection.
Portugal	The 2nd booster was introduced (June 2022) as an open house for older than 80 - about half million already vaccinated: https://eco.sapo.pt/2022/06/24/casa-aberta-ja-da-segundo-reforco-da-vacina-covid-a-maiores-de-80/
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons at risk are recommended to wear medical masks everywhere • In Romania, risk groups were determined in the Regulation of the Ministry of Health: Strategia-vaccinare-02-12-2020-CL-FINAL-cu-COVID-19-tabel-2_CUPRINS-UPDATE-1.pdf (gov.ro)
Serbia	According to the "Regulation On Measures For The Prevention And Control Of The Infectious Disease Covid-19" (Section 12): "Employees in healthcare institutions and institutions for the accommodation of the elderly, as well as persons entering and staying in these institutions, except users in institutions for the accommodation of the elderly, must wear protective masks." Source (In Serbia): https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/uredba-o-merama-za-spreccavanje-sirenja-zarazne-bolesti-covid-19.html
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vulnerable groups are recommended to wear face masks. Masks remained mandatory in healthcare facilities, social care facilities, and pharmacies, both employees and visitors. All population is recommended to wear face masks in airports and other travelling environment with high density of people. • Senior 65+, Pregnant, Breast-feeding, Immuno-suppressed from all reasons (chemotherapy, immunotherapy, biological therapy, diabetes, transplanted,...)
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for surveillance and control of COVID-19 after the pandemic acute phase. The objectives of this update are the surveillance, prevention, and control of the active SARS-CoV-2 infection, with special follow-up of the epidemiological evolution in vulnerable groups and scopes. In vulnerable scopes, specific measures for isolation and control could be implemented. https://www.sanidad.gob.es/en/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/Nueva_estrategia_vigilancia_y_control.pdf <p>'Vulnerable groups' electronic code There is an electronic code named 'Vulnerable groups' published in the website of the Official State Gazette (last update 28 June 2022). It includes a section with national and regional regulations related to COVID-19 and vulnerable groups. This Electronic Code aims to compile, in a permanently updated, all those regulations aimed for the protection of these groups and regulate the health emergency situation caused by COVID-19. https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=359_COVID-19_Colectivos_Vulnerables&modo=2</p> <p>Vaccination strategy for vulnerable groups: The last update of the document was on 8th February 2022. There is a priority in completing booster administration in nursing home residents and other socio-sanitary centres beyond the age, people with Janssen and Vaxzevria vaccines and people older than 40, as well as sanitary and socio-sanitary workers. The 9th of June 2022 has been approved a new booster for people older than 80 years old and those who lives in long term facilities or nursing homes. https://www.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/prevPromocion/vacunaciones/covid19/Actualizaciones_EstrategiaVacunacionCOVID-19.htm</p> <p>Ministry of Health website In the webpage of the Ministry of Health, there is a section of technical documents that includes those related to vulnerable social groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the 'Strategy for surveillance and control of COVID-19 after the pandemic acute phase', there are included the following definitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerable scopes: Health care centres, socio-sanitary centres, day care centres, penitentiary centres and other centres with residents. - People related to vulnerable scopes: people who lives or attend the types of centres described above, people hospitalised or those who works in vulnerable scopes or those workers who take care of vulnerable people. - Vulnerable groups: people over 60, immunosuppressed people and pregnant women. https://www.sanidad.gob.es/en/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/Nueva_estrategia_vigilancia_y_control.pdf



<p>Sweden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is mainly unvaccinated people who become seriously ill due to covid-19, therefore the Public Health Agency of Sweden (PHAS) continues to encourage vaccination and to get the recommended booster doses against COVID-19. In Sweden, everyone who is 12 years and older is offered free vaccination against covid-19. • Stay at home if ill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PHAS recommends that you stay home and avoid close contact with others if you are ill and have symptoms of COVID-19. • Face masks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional or local measures, such as wearing face mask, may be issued. In order to protect individuals with the greatest risk of serious consequences of COVID-19, it is important to take risk-reducing measures in health care and elderly care. The measures are, for example, source control (face mask), testing if symptoms of infection, contact tracing and screening. The measures need to be adapted to regional and local risk assessments. Due to the increased spread of COVID-19, some regions and municipalities have now for example recommended wearing face mask for health care staff in hospitals and in the elderly care. Visitors are also recommended to wear face mask in some hospitals and elderly care homes. <p>Links:</p> <p>https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/nyhetsarkiv/2022/juli/okningen-av-bekraftade-covid-19-fall-fortsatter/ https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/vaccination-mot-covid-19/om-vaccinerna-mot-covid-19/vaccination-mot-covid-19-ar-viktig/ https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/information-till-varden/personal-inom-halso--och-sjukvard/anpassa-atgarder-efter-smittlaget/ https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/lokala-rekommendationer/</p> <p>Define vulnerable groups</p> <p>The definition of vulnerable groups is based on existing evidence. The risk of becoming seriously ill gradually increases with increasing age. The risk is greatest for those over 80 years of age. Certain diseases or medical conditions, in addition to increasing age, can increase the risk of becoming seriously ill. A list of risk groups and information for risk groups about COVID-19 is published on PHAS webpage, see link: https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/skydda-dig-och-andra/rad-och-information-till-riskgrupper/</p>
<p>United Kingdom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups are protected by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4th vaccination (2nd booster) - Availability of monoclonal antibody and anti-viral therapies. <p>NPIs are the same for the entire population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups are defined by the QCOVID algorithms -derived from routine data analysis (See Lyons J, Nafilyan V, Akbari A, Davies G, Griffiths R, Harrison E, Hippisley-Cox J, Hollinghurst J, Khunti K, North L, Sheikh A, Torabi F, Lyons RA. Validating the QCOVID risk prediction algorithm for risk of mortality from COVID-19 in the adult population in Wales, UK, IJPDS 2022 5:4:13 (published 16/02/22). https://doi.org/10.23889/ijpds.v5i4.1697; Hippisley-Cox J, Coupland CAC, Mehta N, Keogh RH, Diaz-Ordaz K, Khunti K, Lyons RA, Kee F, Sheikh A, Rahman S, Valabhji J, Harrison EM, Sellen P, Haq N, Semple MG, Johnson PWM, Hayward A, Nguyen-Van-Tam JS. Risk prediction of covid-19 related death and hospital admission in adults after covid-19 vaccination: national prospective cohort study. BMJ 2021;374:n2244 http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2244)

