

Epi Weeks 43–44 (19 October–1 November 2020)

Current global situation:

As of 1 November, nearly 46 million cases of COVID-19 and 1.2 million deaths have been reported globally to WHO. In the past week, over 3.3 million new cases were reported; while many countries around the world have brought COVID-19 under control, in some countries in Europe, the Americas and the Eastern Mediterranean, the incidence continues to rise. The European Region, which reported half of the global new cases and a third of new global deaths in week 44, saw the most significant increase in cases, with over 1.7 million new cases reported. Moreover, the Region also reported a substantial rise in the number of new deaths, with Europe and the Americas now each reporting over 17 000 new deaths over the past 7 days.

Please refer to the [WHO Weekly Epidemiological Updates](#) for further information.

Current situation in the Region:

At the end of Week 44, over 11 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 287 000 deaths have been reported from across the Region – a 22% and 43% increase from week 43, respectively.

Transmission has continued to increase exponentially as many countries in Europe are seeing community-level transmission, with significant increases in test positivity, new hospitalizations due to COVID-19 and related mortality.

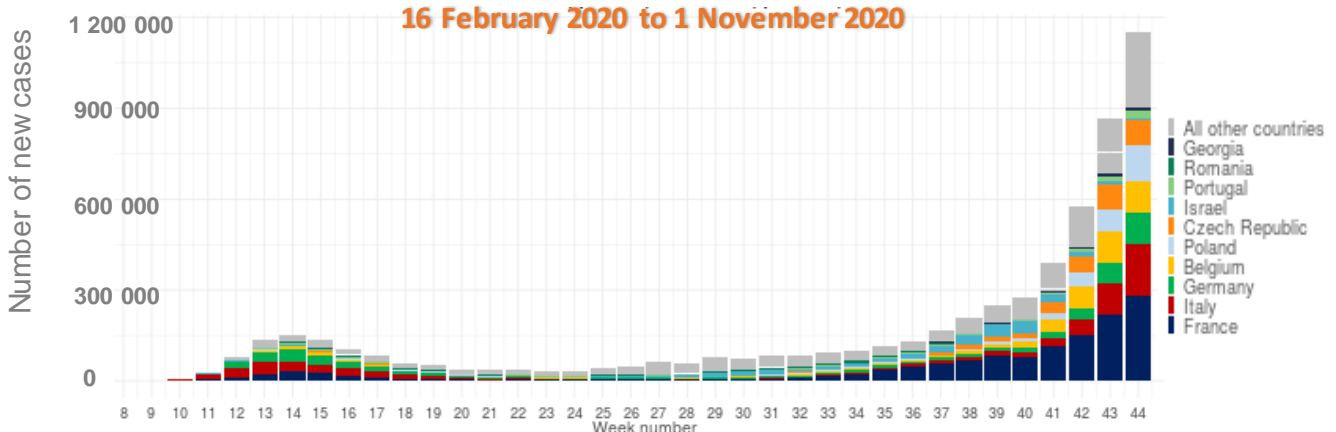
Increased spread is noted among all age groups, with some countries seeing significant increases in the older age groups at the end of week 43.

Week 44 EPI Snapshot*

- **71%** of cases were reported from nine countries: France, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Russian Federation, Poland, Germany, Belgium and Czech Republic.
- **88%** of deaths were in people aged >65 years and **56%** of all deaths were in males.
- **96%** of deaths were in people with at least one underlying condition, with cardiovascular disease as the leading comorbidity (83%).

*based on total records with available data

Number of COVID-19 cases reported by Epi-Week in the WHO European Region, 16 February 2020 to 1 November 2020



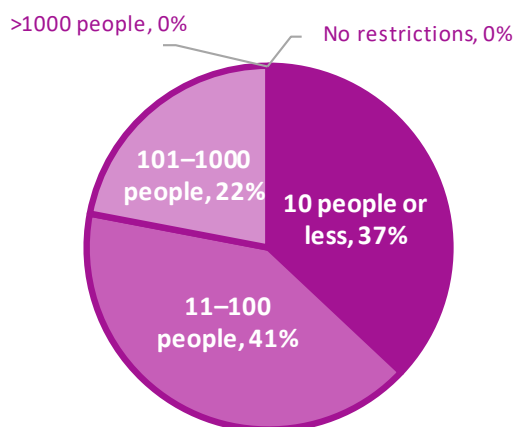
Please refer to the [WHO European Region Dashboard](#) and the [WHO European Region Surveillance Bulletin](#) for further information.

Emergency public health measures taken across the Region:

As cases continue to surge, countries across the European Region are implementing new restrictions, curfews and lockdowns at regional and national levels.

The resurgence of cases that most countries have experienced since the summer has led many to re-implement or strengthen existing restrictions on gatherings as part of their response. As of 1 November, all countries in the Region have some form of restrictions in place on gatherings at a national or regional level. *79% of countries have banned gatherings completely, limited gatherings to 10 people or fewer, restricted gatherings to between 11 and 100 people or restricted certain types of gatherings.*

Proportion of European Member States implementing restrictions on gatherings, n=53



Initially, many countries took the approach of re-introducing restrictions on gatherings at a subnational level, often based on specific epidemiological indicators and thresholds for regions or municipalities (e.g. *France, Germany, Montenegro*). With a further increase in infection rates, however, a number of countries have fallen back on nationwide measures. This is particularly so in countries that have recently implemented full or partial lockdowns, which most of the time accompanies stricter restrictions on private and public gatherings, and often a complete ban on events (e.g. *Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, the United Kingdom*).

The majority of countries allowing gatherings to take place have implemented sanitary measures alongside, such as physical distancing, the use of face masks, or a risk assessment when organizing mass gatherings. Please see [COVID-19 Health Systems Response Monitor \(HSRM\)](#).

WHO Regional Office for Europe's response to COVID-19:

The WHO Regional Office for Europe's response is built around a [comprehensive strategy](#) to prevent the spread of the pandemic, save lives and minimize impact by targeting four areas: **prepare and be ready; detect, protect and treat; reduce transmission; innovate and learn.**

Key figures: Responding to COVID-19 in the WHO European Region

WHO has conducted 145 missions and deployments to 22 countries and territories in the Region

99

In-country technical support missions

16

Rapid support teams



3

Virtual country missions



1

Intra-action review mission

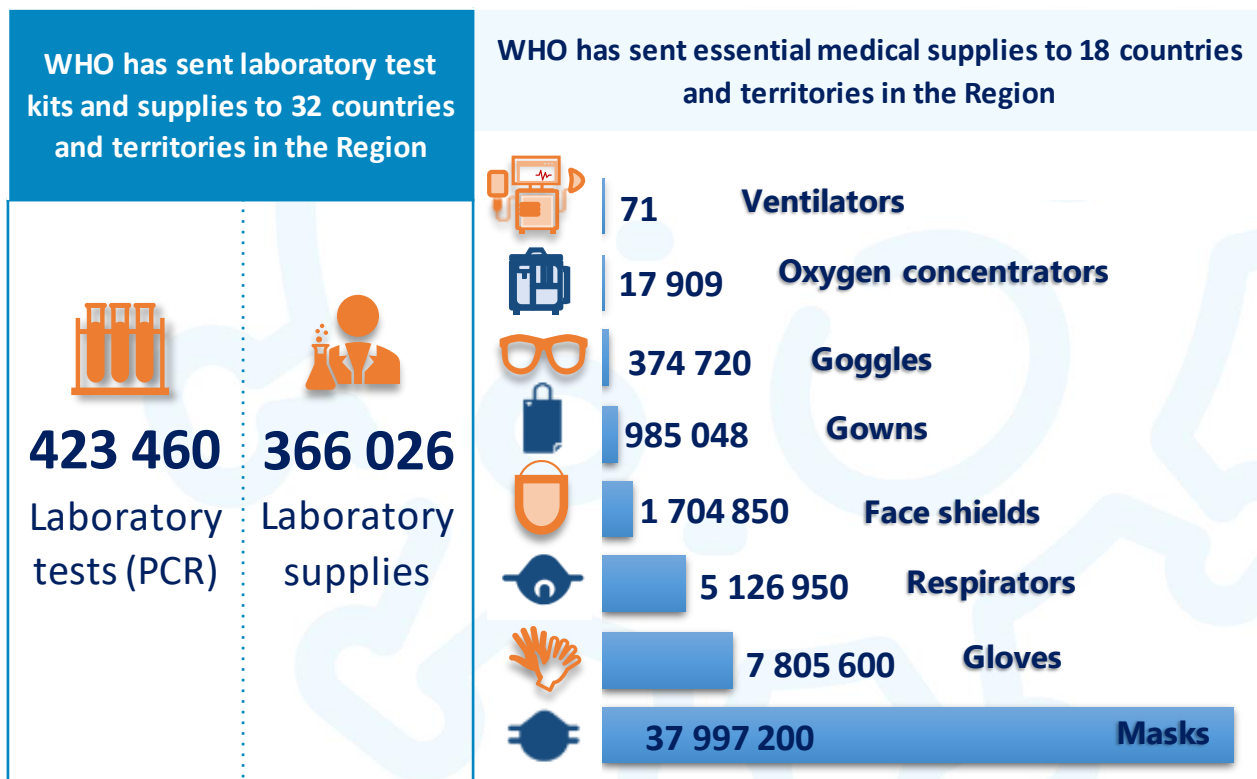


26

Operational partner deployments



For additional information on missions and deployments, please see the WHO/Europe COVID-19 Country Support Dashboard for [Pillar 1: Country-level coordination, planning and monitoring](#).



For additional information on essential supplies delivered, please see the WHO/Europe COVID-19 Country Support Dashboard for [Pillar 8: Operational Support and Logistics](#).

New WHO technical guidance published in Weeks 43 and 44

Health system considerations: when influenza meets COVID-19

Seasonal influenza affects approximately 5–15% of the population in the northern hemisphere, often causing substantial mortality, and thus putting a strain on national health systems in any given year.

As COVID-19 will continue into the autumn and winter, the impending threat of seasonal influenza, influenza-like infections and pneumonia will further challenge already overstretched health systems, raising new issues in managing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and resulting COVID-19. These challenges are expected to continue until effective vaccines and antiviral treatments become available.

Guidance on preparedness and response measures when COVID-19, influenza and acute respiratory infections coincide in the WHO European Region is now available [here](#).

Guidance for the European Region

[Factsheet – Vulnerable populations during COVID-19 response – addressing vulnerability upfront in the WHO European Region](#)

Published in October 2020

Global COVID-19 guidance

[Continuity of essential health services: facility assessment tool](#)

Published on 20 October 2020

[Considerations in the investigation of cases and clusters of COVID-19](#)

Published on 22 October 2020

[Laboratory assessment tool for laboratories implementing SARS-CoV-2 testing](#)

Published on 23 October 2020

[Prevention, identification and management of health worker infection in the context of COVID-19](#)

Published on 30 October 2020

Target 1: Prepare and be ready

The WHO Regional Office for Europe supported Member States as they prepared for their first cases of COVID-19 and continues to provide support in preventing transmission.

In Uzbekistan, WHO, jointly with the University of New Mexico and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), continues to provide support through the global webinar series on infection prevention and control (IPC), held with Russian interpretation. On 29 October, the topic of the webinar was “COVID-19 isolation precautions and persons of medical institutes and staff use of protective equipment supplies”. National IPC experts and clinicians in Uzbekistan joined the webinar.



As of Week 44, **12 594** health-care workers in the Region were reached by WHO virtual capacity-building webinars.

As of Week 44, **109 888** individuals completed OpenWHO courses related to IPC and case management of COVID-19 patients.



For further information on the types of support provided, please refer to the WHO/Europe COVID-19 Country Support Dashboards for [Pillar 6: Infection Prevention Control](#) and [Pillar 7: Case Management](#).

WHO also continues to support countries in maintaining essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing guidance and technical assistance to ensure the continuity of services, including those addressing sexual and reproductive health and HIV treatment.



From 20 to 22 October, a joint WHO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) subregional web conference was held in Tajikistan to outline key sexual and reproductive health service disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, looking at the main challenges faced by the health sector and what technical assistance is being provided from both the WHO Country Office and UNFPA to ensure an effective response in the coming weeks and months. The conference allowed Central Asian countries to present their findings from an assessment of sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in the context of primary health care services.

In Ukraine, a series of webinars jointly provided by the WHO Country Office, the Public Health Centre of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, and the regional HIV antiretroviral testing and treatment services, continues to provide support in assessing, delivering and maintaining essential HIV services during COVID-19. Two webinars were carried out, in the Zakarpattia Region on 20 October and Chernivtsi Region on 22 October as part of the series.

Target 2: Detect, protect and treat patients with COVID-19

WHO continues to work with national authorities to strengthen capacity for COVID-19 detection and contact tracing to rapidly identify cases and break chains of transmission.

In North Macedonia, from 26 to 27 October, an online workshop was organized by the WHO Regional Office for Europe to support training of medical students to assist in contact tracing. The Minister of Health of North Macedonia also held a meeting with students from the Medical School in Skopje, who will be assisting the Public Health Center of Skopje, the National Public Health Institute, and the State Sanitary and Health Inspectorate to carry out contact tracing and information management.



In focus: WHO Regional Office for Europe Clinical Management Mission to Montenegro: 18–23 October 2020

A WHO team to support the clinical management of patients with severe COVID-19 was deployed to Montenegro to review clinical management practices in primary health care clinics and general hospitals. Recommendations were provided within the broader context of the national COVID-19 response. The mission, carried out from 18 to 23 October, consisted of WHO experts from the WHO Regional Office for Europe in the areas of country-level coordination, planning and monitoring, and COVID-19 clinical management, as well as the head of the WHO Country Office in Montenegro.

During the mission, several health-care facilities were visited, including general hospitals and primary health care clinics in Berane, Plejvlja and Niksic as well as the Brezovik hospital for lung diseases in Niksic and the Clinical Center in Podgorica. The team also met with the Chair of the National Medical Crisis Team (NMCT), responsible for managing the entire health system during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Thermal screening at the primary health care clinic in Niksic, Montenegro

Credit: Peter Sousa Hoejskov, WHO European Region

The mission identified areas for improvement as well as examples of good COVID-19 clinical management practices in Montenegro, including separated pathways and triage of COVID-19 cases, clear IPC routines and practices, a general high level of competence and engagement in the care of patients, and a high level of commitment and dedication of the staff. In the follow up to the mission, it is recommended that the Montenegro national guidelines and protocols for the management of COVID-19 be aligned with WHO recommendations and the latest research findings. WHO looks forward to further joint work with Montenegro to support its nationally coordinated public health response to the pandemic.

Target 3: Reduce transmission

In the context of COVID-19, WHO is committed to ensuring that national public health emergency operation centres are equipped with the capacity to carry out an effective response.



On 31 October, the WHO Country Office in Tajikistan conducted a training with representatives from the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population in Tajikistan. The main objectives of the training were to build national capacities and discuss the physical infrastructure and human resources for PHEOC.

In focus: Training on the COVID-19 response at points of entry in the Republic of Moldova

From 21 to 22 October, the WHO Regional Office for Europe conducted a training in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, to train selected participants on the use of WHO guidance for the safe resumption of operations at points of entry (POEs) in the context of COVID-19, and discuss the measures being put in place at airports and ground crossings across the country – to prevent imported cases from increasing transmission in the community.

The activity targeted 14 selected participants from the health, transport, law enforcement and customs sectors, including national health authorities and authorities at airports and ground crossings.

During the two-day training, participants were presented with various WHO technical guidance on:

- how to control COVID-19 at airports and ground crossings;
- the process of designating POEs under the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005);
- WHO tools available to assess capacities at POEs for the prevention, preparedness and response of public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC).



*WHE Balkan Hub Coordinator Abeyayehu Assefa Mengistu during the POE training in the Republic of Moldova.
Credit: WHO Country Office in the Republic of Moldova*

Participants at the training also reviewed and discussed the plans, protocols, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and public health and social measures implemented at POEs through two table-top exercises (TTX). The TTX simulated the arrival of a suspected case of COVID-19 both at the airport and at a ground crossing to test and review the measures in place and coordination mechanisms among the different sectors involved. The exercise resulted in the identification of priority actions to further strengthen response capabilities for COVID-19 as well as other communicable diseases at POEs in the Republic of Moldova. Different experiences on the control of COVID-19 in Poland and Germany were also presented, thanks to the participation of a representative from the European Union Joint Action Healthy Gateways.

Target 4: Innovate and learn

WHO, together with its partners, is supporting countries in improving health financing and strengthening health systems resilience and recovery, in order to build back towards a healthier, safer, fairer and greener world.

In Serbia, on 29 October, the WHO Country Office presented the key findings of the UN Social Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in the health sector context to development partners and the international community. WHO presented key short-, medium- and long-term recommendations for further response and recovery in Serbia.



The WHO Regional Office for Europe continues to offer support to countries monitoring public knowledge, risk perceptions and behaviours related to COVID-19 to convey targeted messaging and tailored prevention approaches.



COVID-19 awareness workshop in Kmjaca Asylum Centre held on 23 October 2020

On 20 October, the WHO Country Office in Serbia kicked off a series of COVID-19 awareness workshops in migrant and refugee camps. The goal of the workshops is to understand risk awareness and attitudes towards COVID-19 among the migrant population and to convey messages related to the prevention of COVID-19 tailored to these vulnerable populations. The Country Office organized the first two workshops on COVID-19 in an asylum centre in Banja Koviljaca. In total, 28 workshops are planned to be held by the end of November 2020 and will cover 14 camps.

As part of the training, 6000 leaflets will be distributed in centres in 7 languages covering COVID-19 prevention and the prevention of skin parasitosis. In parallel, the WHO Country Office in Serbia, together with the International Organization for Migration, will distribute an additional 500 posters with messages related to COVID-19 prevention in all migrant camps.

As of Week 44, **27 countries** in the Region are implementing the findings of behavioural insights research using WHO tools.

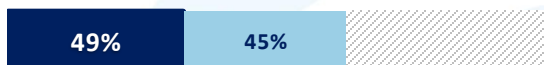


As of Week 44, **8 countries** in the Region and **4 000 000** participants are engaged in pilot studies on message testing to understand how different audiences respond to different messages on COVID-19.

Continuously monitoring regional readiness:

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is monitoring readiness and response capacities in the Region. Indicators are used to monitor the global and regional situation, priority countries with operational support provided by the international community, and WHO's response.

Countries with long-term care facilities (LTCFs) that have a national policy and/or guidelines on IPC for COVID-19 in LTCFs (target:100%)



Countries with a national IPC programme and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards within all health-care facilities (target:100%)



Countries with COVID-19 laboratory test capacities (target:100%)



Countries with an active COVID-19 hotline number system (target:100%)



Countries with a functional multisectoral, multipartner coordination mechanism for COVID-19 preparedness and response (target:100%)



Countries with a clinical referral system in place to care for COVID-19 cases (target:100%)



Countries with a COVID-19 national preparedness and response plan (target:100%)

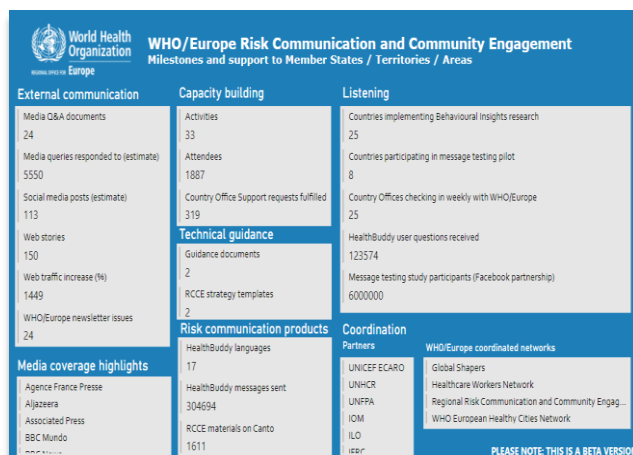
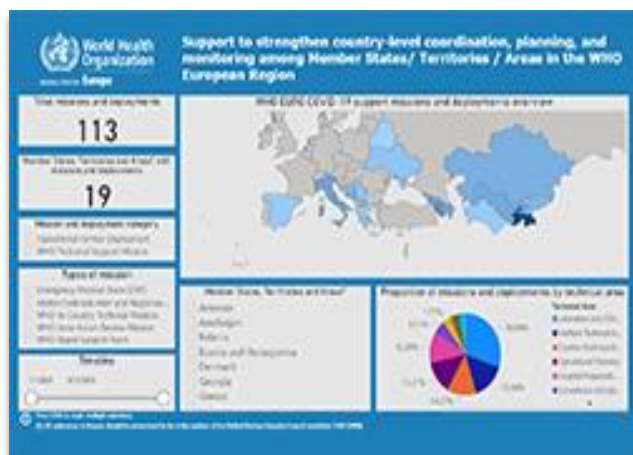


Countries with a COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement plan according to the transmission scenario (target:100%)



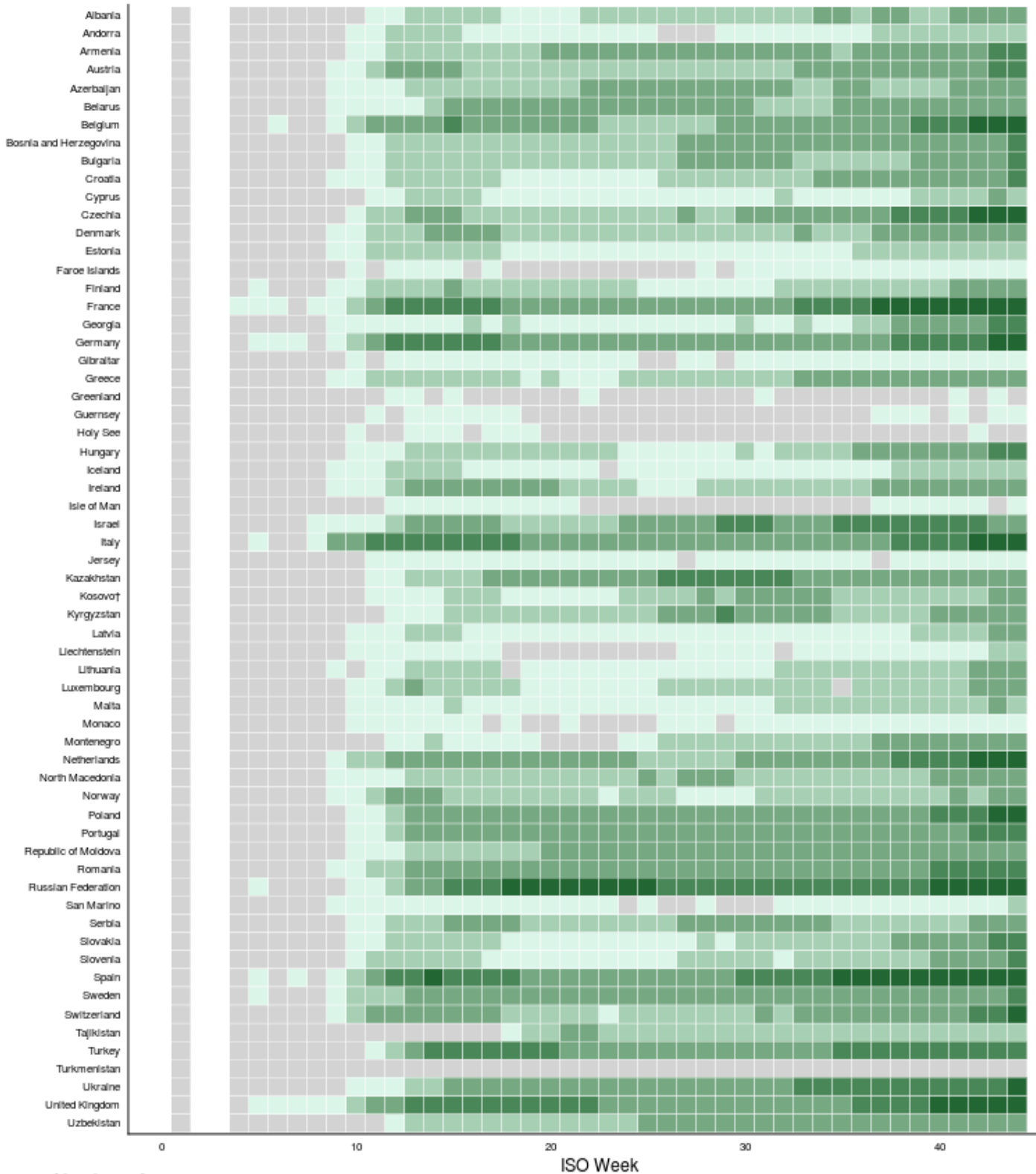
■ On 20 September ■ On 1 November

To allow for transparent communication, coordination and consistency, and to better monitor the WHO Regional Office for Europe's response to COVID-19, a [COVID-19 Country Support Dashboard](#) has been developed which, in its beta form, provides a dynamic overview and real-time display of the support that has been provided to Member States across the Region since January 2020 and throughout the response to the pandemic – aligned to the 9 pillars of the [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan \(SPRP\)](#).



COVID-19 heatmap of the WHO European Region:

New cases by ISO week



Number of new cases

