First Overview of Policy & Impact Measures

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Executive summary

This deliverable presents the continuous activities and hitherto results from Task 8.5 - Monitor COVID-19 Policy and Impact Measures of the Population Health Information Research Infrastructure (PHIRI) Work Package 8. (Lead by UNL/DGS (Portugal), with partners GÖG (Austria) and Ministry of Health Malta (Malta). The project started in November 2020 and the basis for this task is a mapping exercise of policy and impact measures literature and reports related to the COVID- 19 pandemic in EU member states by web search. The results will be (continually) feed into a catalogue and published on the Health Information Portal (HIP), which is currently being established.

To monitor the impact of the health policies, a set of health impact indicators were chosen to lead the exercise and provide information for the countries during the current COVID-19 pandemic and to contribute to the Rapid Exchange Forum (REF).

Key points

- This report presents the hitherto results and structure of a mapping exercise (first version), that would include regular monitoring of policy and impact measures research papers and reports related to the COVID-19 pandemic in EU-member states.
- The indicators used are based on websites like Oxford Stringency Index and the Imperial College platform, plus a set of a new ones that emerged from the Rapid Exchange Forum topics demand. Policy and impact measures of relevant supranational organizations and national bodies were identified with web search.
- The team of task 8.5 presents the state of the art related with specific topics bi-weekly, using data from the web search. The review results found the basis for a catalogue in the Health Information Portal (HIP) that will be regularly maintained throughout the project duration and fed into the metadata catalogue of WP 4.1. The contents of the catalogue will feed into the sustainability plan developed by Task 3.3 (e.g. Fact Sheets) to ensure maintenance of the catalogue beyond project duration.

PHIRI: First Overview of Policy & Impact Measures available

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I. Introduction

The Population Health Information Research Infrastructure (PHIRI) on COVID-19 seeks to lay the foundation of a federated research infrastructure on population health to support research across Europe to underpin public health policy decisions in current and future pandemics or crisis. PHIRI offers a European mechanism for structured exchanges and research to facilitate and generate the best available evidence for research on health and well-being of populations (1).

PHIRI is composed by nine work packages. Particularly, Work Package 8 (WP8) aims to establish a sustainable infrastructure to support rapid exchange between actors from competent authorities, their advisors, researchers, and stakeholders in the joint efforts to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. The emphasis is to collect and disseminate existing information and generate new (evidence-based) information as needed. The WP 8 represents a central contact point for the partners, and it provides evidence-based policy support with the specific objectives:

- To provide rapid response to research and policy questions that are raised in countries (also contributing to the REF events(1)).
- To promptly disseminate internationally agreed guidelines, standards, reports, and initiatives via the Health Information Portal (HIP) (2).
- To exchange (best) practices among countries regarding COVID-19.
- To provide a link with policy: the shifting landscape of evidence for policy.

At task 8.5 - Monitor COVID-19 Policy and Impact Measures, we aim at reporting and monitoring the health policies and impact measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic in EU member states by web search on the HIP on a regular base. The results will be linked into a catalogue on the HIP that will be regularly maintained throughout the project duration (2). Up to date, all the results of our task are presented at SharePoint while we are still working on launching the catalogue on HIP, as mentioned (see here).

II. Aim

This deliverable aims at reporting on the following activities, within the task 8.5:

- Rapid Exchange Forum.
- Selection of policy and measurement indicators.
- Oxford Stringency Index.
- Additional indicators.
- Building a database of scientific resources.
- Designing the public webpage for Policy and Impact Measures of COVID-19.

III. Approach

This deliverable is a description of the ongoing activities and results so far accomplished by Task 8.5 members to achieve the highlighted objectives.

IV. Results

A. Rapid Exchange Forum (REF)

As part of the Work Package 8, we are present in all bi-weekly REF meetings presenting scientific literature and publications on the topic of discussion. Up to date, there have been 26 REF meetings and we have started the presentations on the 8th REF meeting. Listed below are the topics of the presentations covered (until December 2021):

- **8th REF**: Monitor COVID-19 Policy and Impact Measures
- **9th REF**: Mental health
- **10th REF**: Vaccines prioritization
- **11th REF**: Long-COVID-19
- **12th REF**: Reopening of business
- **13th REF**: Digital green certificates
- **14th REF**: Digital green certificates
- **15th REF**: Evidence of Digital certificate features
- **16th REF**: Vaccines
- **18th REF**: Vaccines
- **19th REF**: Vaccine hesitancy
- **20th REF**: Vaccinated vs unvaccinated hospitalizations
- **21st REF**: Verification of vaccines certificates
- **22nd REF**: Effect of COVID-19 on tourist travel
- **23rd REF**: Healthcare workers wellbeing during the pandemic
- **25th REF**: COVID-19 vaccination in children
- **26th REF**: OMICRON - SARS CoV 2 B.1.1.529 variant of concern
- **27th REF**: OMICRON travel bans
- **28th REF**: COVID-19 digital vaccination and recovery passes
- **29th REF**: Long-COVID-19

The presentations contributed to the bi-weekly REF meetings comprise between three to five scientific papers, depending on the pre-selected topic of the respective REF-meeting. Every meeting there are around 20 countries participating and guests from European organizations as the ECDC.

PHIRI
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B. Selection of Policy and Impact Measurement Indicators

In order to continuously map the COVID-19 health-related polices we identified the indicators and impact measures with direct impact in the epidemiological curve of the pandemic. We have identified relevant scientific literature to support decision-making and countries requests, organized by non- pharmaceutical interventions (indicators).

Oxford Covid-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) collects systematic information on policy measures that governments have taken to tackle COVID-19. The different policy responses are tracked since 1 January 2020, cover more than 180 countries, and are coded into 23 indicators.

We have selected the majority of our indicators from the Oxford Stringency Index Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) that was developed by the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford (3). The OxCGRT collects publicly available information on 23 indicators of government response to containment and closure policies, such as school closures and restrictions in movement; economic policies, such as income support to citizens or provision of foreign aid; health system policies, such as the COVID-19 testing regime, emergency investments into healthcare and most recently, vaccination policies, such as a country's prioritization list, eligible groups, and the cost of vaccination to the individual (3) (**Figure 1**).
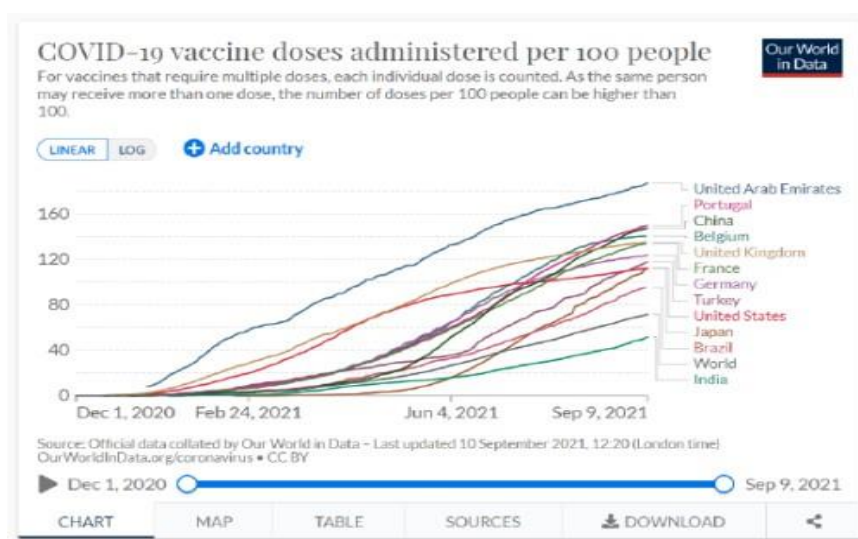

Figure 1 – Oxford Stringency Index (example from vaccination levels in a set of countries).

During the selection of the indicators the research team felt the need of including four additional indicators based on the literature search and the topics presented at the REF meetings which are based on countries requests. The indicators selected are listed below.

1. Oxford Stringency Index Indicators

- Closure of schools
- Workplace closure
- Cancel public events
- Restrictions on gatherings (< 10)
- Close public transports
- Public information campaigns

- Stay at home
- Restrict internal movement
- International travel control
- Testing policy (anyone with symptoms)
- Contact tracing
- Face covering
- Vaccination policy (all vulnerable groups)
- Case isolation at home
- Voluntary quarantine
- Social distancing

2. Additional Indicators

- Nursing homes
- Postponement on non-urgent care
- Human behavior (compliance to PH measures)
- Monitoring - Health Information Systems

C. Building a Database of Scientific Resources

The database of scientific resources has been built based on the 20 non-pharmaceutical interventions indicators mentioned previously. It provides peer-reviewed scientific publications on the impact of each measure and information from international and organizational websites, like the OxCGRT, the COVID-19 Health System Monitor Response, a joint undertaking of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, the European Commission, and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, and the European Center for Diseases Control (ECDC).

D. Accessibility of WP 8 Task 8.5 Results

Results of task 8.5 are partly already available are accessible at SharePoint and will be available at a catalogue on HIP and at PHIRI website.

1. As a Database of Scientific Resources

We have started to design and develop the webpage (Mock-ups) for policy and impact measures related to COVID-19. This will be available at both HIP and PHIRI main pages. **Figure 2** demonstrates the preliminary organization of the information flow and an overview of its content. The information and resources are organized by COVID-19 health-related indicator, its title, type of resource (peer-reviewed scientific publication, organization website), and web link.

This important outcome of our task is aligned with the WP 4, Task 4.1 and the sustainability plan developed by the WP 3, Task 3.3.

At the Oxford Stringency Index part direct access to the webpage will be available for quick utilization.
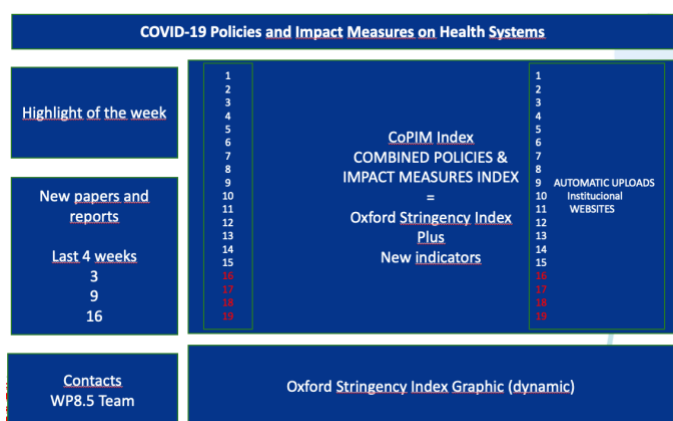
Figure 2 - *Webpage preliminary display of contents*

2. Task 8.5 REF at the SharePoint

The results are provided to the whole WP 8 PHIRI Network at the SharePoint. Results currently published are the presentations of the REF meetings as well as the supplementary information to sustain the presentations. This can be accessed at any time at the following link (only for PHIRI project members).

3. Task 8.5 at the European Health Information Portal

The results will be presented at the HIP, under the "Search COVID-19 Measures ", "Policies and Impact Measures", displayed by COVID-19 health-related indicators (please see point B1 and B2 of this deliverable, page 7-8). It is important to point out that all these nomenclatures are constantly being updated.

V. Implications and Limitations

So far, monitoring the impact of COVID-19 related policies is based on scientific studies and organizational websites. We have been collecting and providing reports and papers - that - - will be available to the interested public, as soon as the IT infrastructure (at the HIP and the PHIRI webpage) is developed.

The data will include the indicators from the OxCGRT as reference and additional ones, as mentioned previously. If necessary, other indicators can be considered (e.g. human resources for health). The biweekly REF discussions are a crucial part of this task work, providing the opportunity to further extend our search to new topics, and also to listen to the health information users about their specific needs.

In terms of search a collaboration with PHIRI WP5 – Research Methodologies needs to be established.

In terms of limitations, although the search includes papers produced around the world, the main target are papers and reports related with European Members states.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

The task 8.5 has fulfilled the aims for the first year, by participating in the Rapid Exchange Forums and sharing the information with the internal member teams of the PHIRII at SharePoint. Soon the European Health Information Portal will provide access on COVID-19 policy and impact measures related with European Member States.

B. Recommendations

The PHIRI SharePoint is a basis for sharing all the information between the PHIRI partners and members. It is fundamental to have the HIP providing updated information that's been collected. Once the specific section at the Health Information Portal for providing information collected in task 8.5 to the public is launched, it will be possible to facilitate the access to important decision-making for European Members States, as well it will constitute a catalogue of value research and policy-making documents related with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 has put enormous pressure at the health systems worldwide and its response has impacted population health at all levels. The quick access to information in times of rapid evolving situations, as it is the COVID-19 pandemic, is fundamental for policy-makers of the different European Member States.

Although the topic had been already discussed with PHIRI WP5, it is important to formalize the collaboration process between the other WPs.
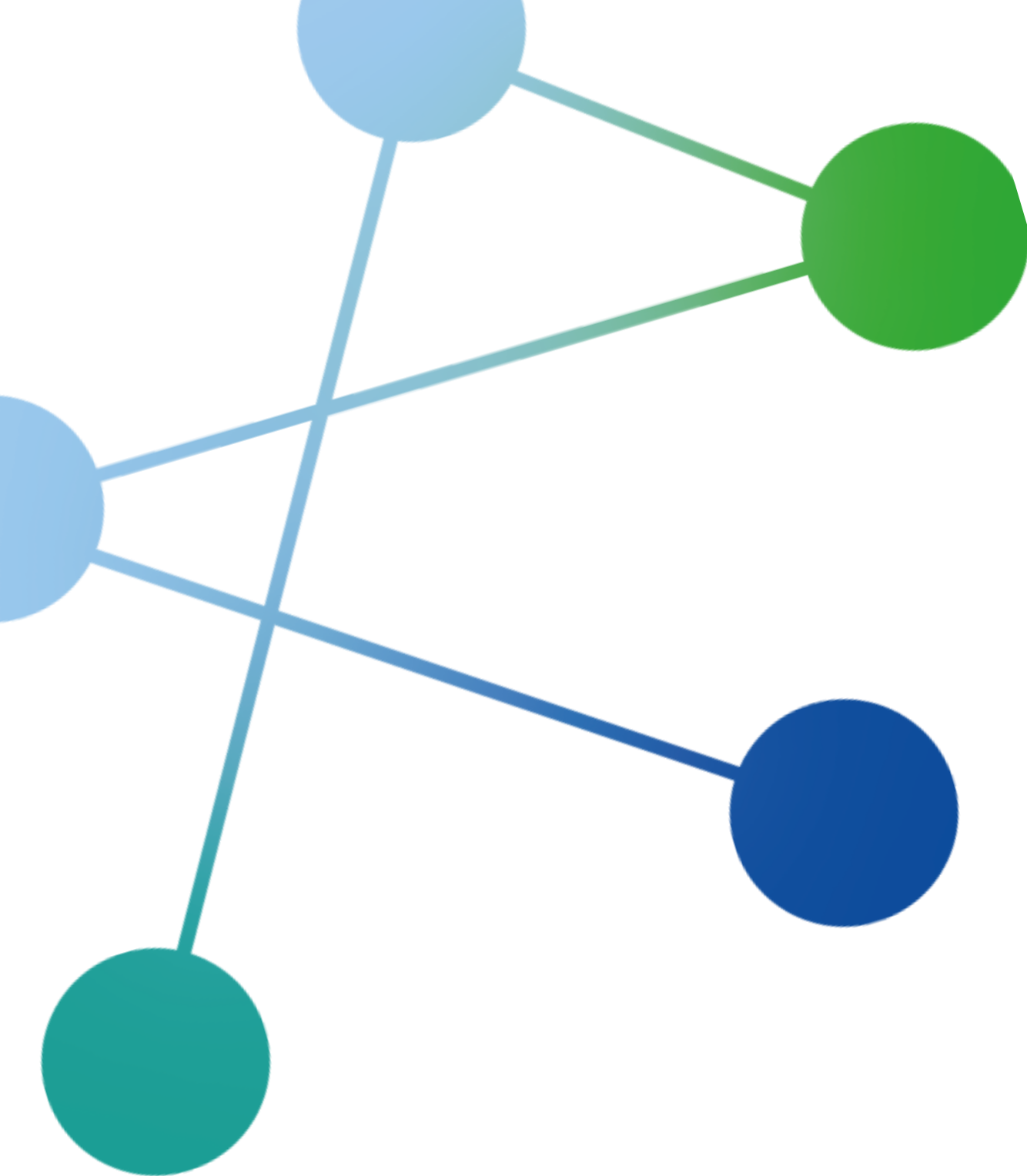
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