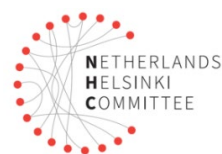




AFEW International's
**COVID-19 situation report in the six countries of
the Eastern Partnership**

Prepared for the COVID-19 Solidarity Programme



This report has been written by Irina Orlova, for *AFEW International*



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Introduction

In the framework of the EU COVID-19 Solidarity Programme for Eastern Partnership, *AFEW International*, People in Need (PIN) and Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) joined forces to propose a set of interventions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute towards longer-term socio-economic resilience of vulnerable groups.

One of the activities in this project is the collection of information on the epidemiology of COVID-19, the measures taken by local governments to contain the epidemic and information on access to health services. This report doesn't give conclusions or recommendations for the next steps; the report functions as an information resource as support for the development of (new) interventions.

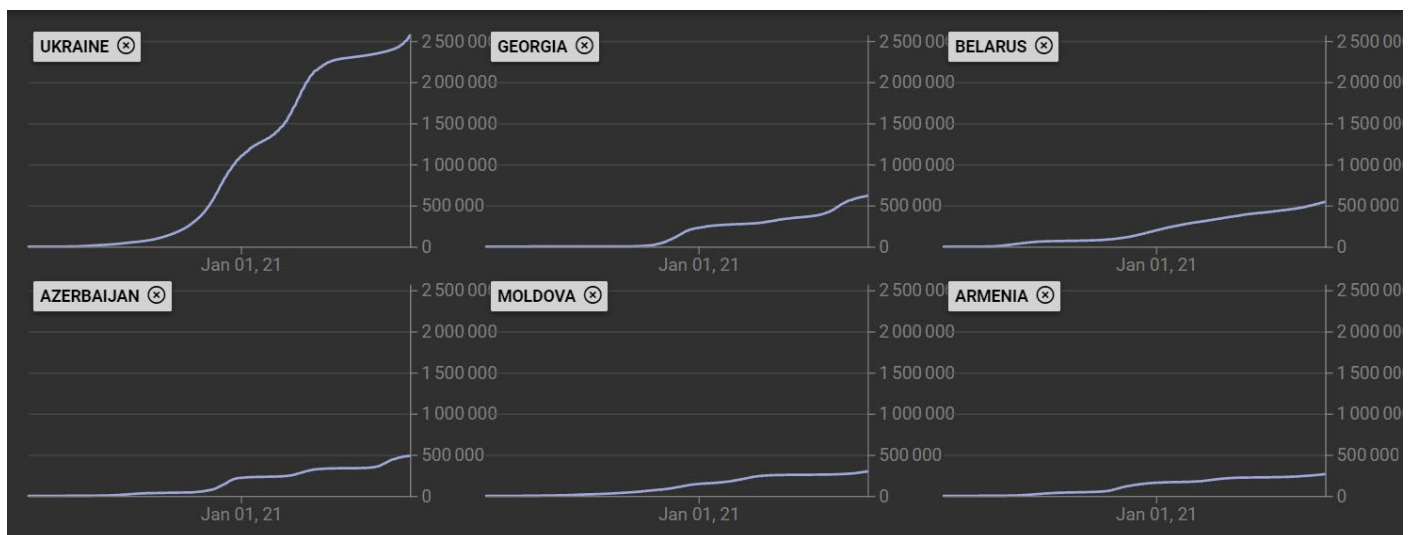
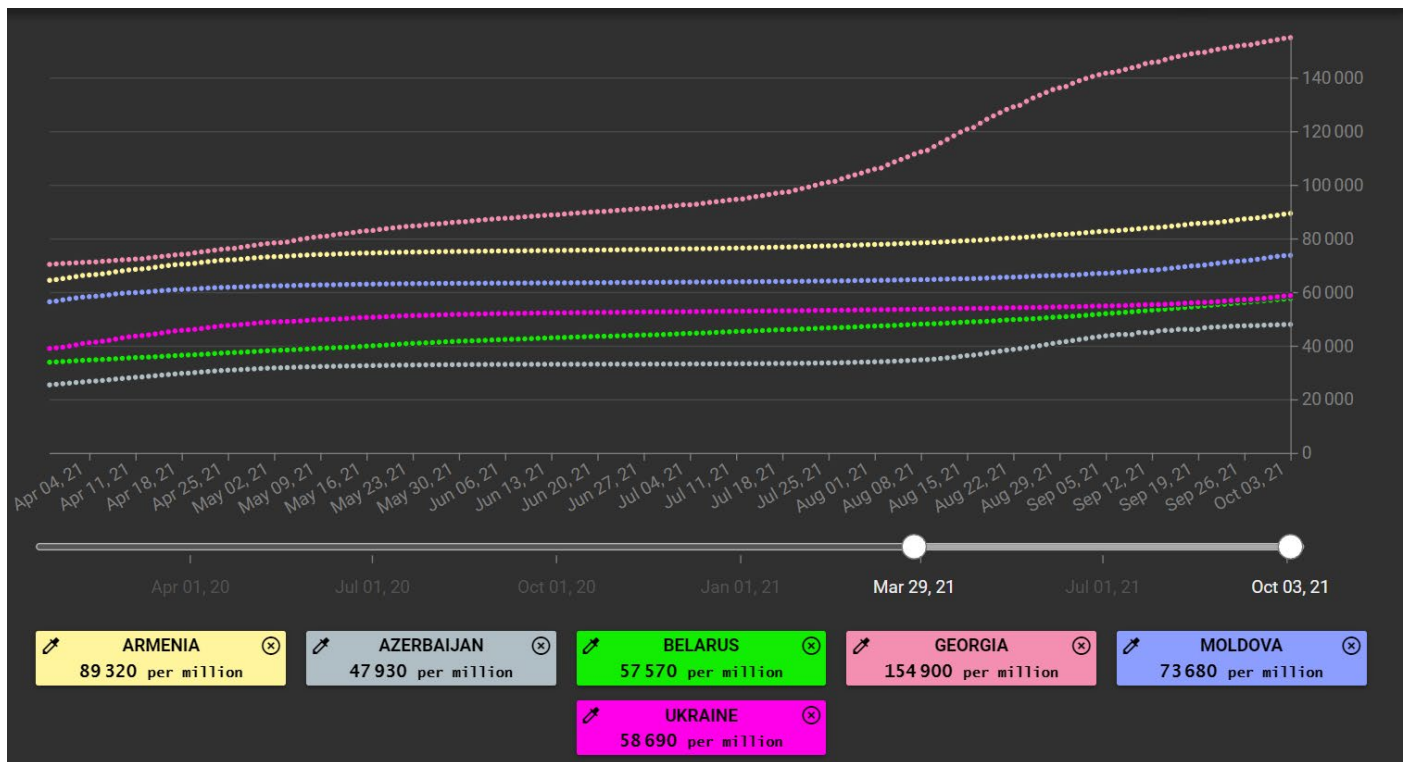
This report gives an overview of the period 1 July – 30 September 2021, the fourth quarter of the implementation period of the project. Such a report will be produced for every quarter of the project duration.

For this report the following sources are used:

- WHO Health System Response Monitor (HSRM);
- Official sources on the coronavirus situation in the countries;
- Reports on the COVID-19 situation prepared by the UNICEF, UN, OECD, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR);
- Global news agencies;
- Local independent media.

Regional overview

Graph 1,2. Total confirmed COVID-19 cases per population ratio since March 29, 2021, in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as of 01.10.2021¹



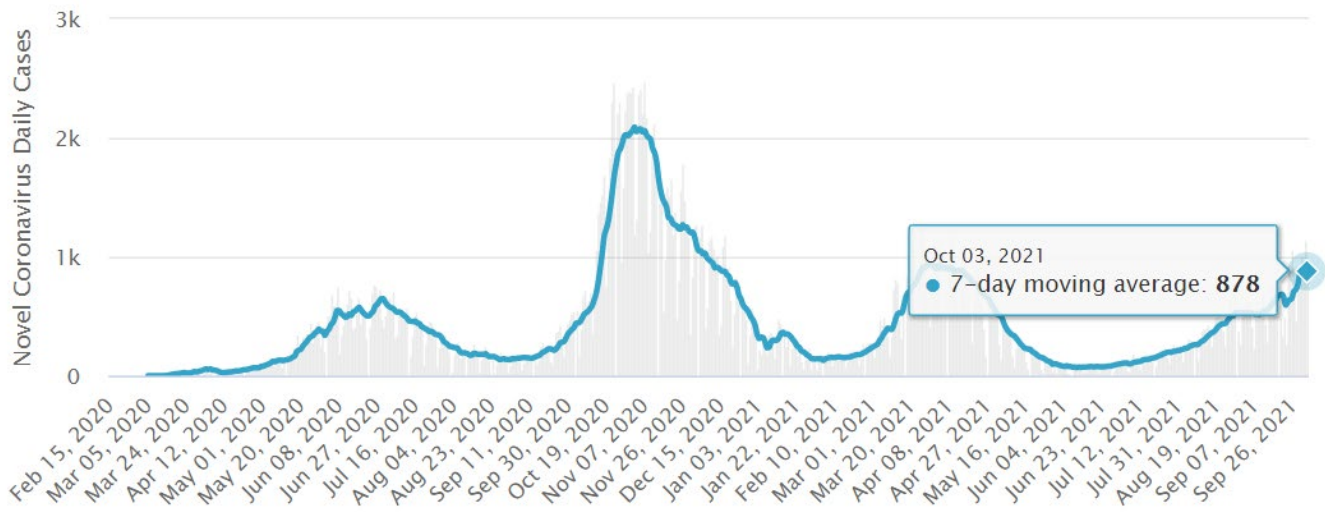
¹ Sciences Po Medialab Coronavirus Country Comparator. <https://boogheta.github.io/coronavirus-countries/> accessed 01-10-2021. COVID-19 Solidarity Programme, COVID-19 situation report in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership

Situation report Armenia

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
265,317	244,842	5,397



Graph 3. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Armenia²

Cases of COVID-19

— On October 1, Armenia recorded 636 new cases and 19 coronavirus-linked deaths, an infection rate about double the month before and the highest [single-day death toll from COVID-19 in months](#).

— Since [May 2020](#), the country has had very few restrictions and what regulations do remain are widely flouted; masks are almost never seen.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— [No curfew or travel restrictions](#) are imposed.

— On August 20, 2021, the Armenian government issued [new regulations](#) mandating that employers must get either a COVID vaccination certificate from each employee or the employee must submit the results of a PCR test every 14 days. The regulations apply to all government workers and a long list of private sector businesses that encompasses nearly all spheres of the economy.

Vaccination

— Armenia's vaccine distribution is the slowest in the region.

— As of October 1, less than 5% of Armenia population [is fully vaccinated](#).

² Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/armenia/> accessed 01-10-2021.

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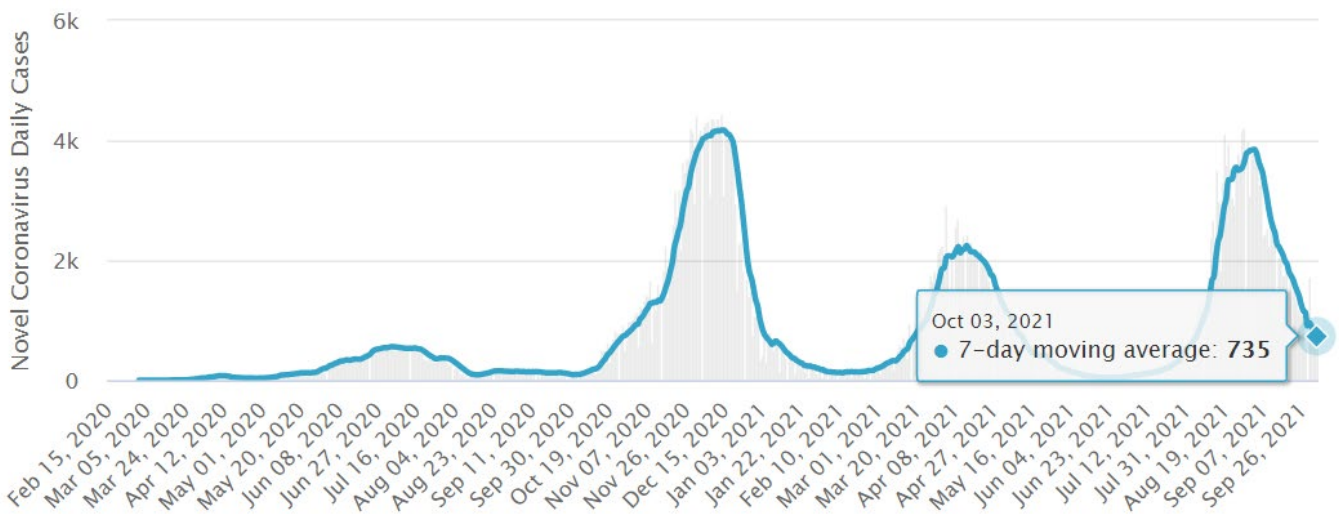
Situation report Azerbaijan

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
485,987	464,611	6,573

Graph 4. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Azerbaijan³



Cases of COVID-19

— COVID-19 infections are decreasing in Azerbaijan, with 49 new infections reported on average each day. That's 1% of the peak — the highest daily average reported on December 14.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— On May 31 2021, many coronavirus restrictions were eased: people are no longer required to wear face masks in public places, Baku Metro and inter-city travel have also resumed on May 31; theaters, cinemas and concert resumed their work but the entrance to these establishments is only available to the owners of Covid passports. Azerbaijan also allowed holding weddings and other family events, however, the number of guests is limited and all guests are required to possess a Covid passport. The Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan has allowed weddings and other mass celebrations from July 1, 2021.

— On October 1, 2021, Azerbaijan further lifted coronavirus restrictions and opened:

- recreation and entertainment centers (including clubs), children's entertainment centers;
- cultural objects, with the condition of filling no more than 50% of the total capacity (including concert halls);
- children's and other entertainment centers at large shopping centers, including cinemas with the condition of filling no more than 50% of the total capacity.

³ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/azerbaijan> accessed 01-10-2021.

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- It is noted that 80% of employees of facilities in these industries must have a certificate of full vaccination or an immune certificate or a document on contraindications to vaccination.

— The government of Azerbaijan has lifted air travel restrictions for citizens of 12 more countries starting from September 6. Citizens of China, Estonia, Finland, France, Hong Kong (special administrative region of China), Croatia, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Japan are [allowed to enter](#).

Education

— On September 15, a new academic year usually begins in Azerbaijan. In 2021, [it was pushed back](#) by one to two weeks due to the deteriorating epidemiological situation in the country. But at any time, the traditional mode of study can be launched online, the Ministry of Education noted.

— To date, 80% of the total number of teachers in the country [have been vaccinated](#). Teachers who refuse to get vaccinated will not be allowed to work. The only exception will be cases when an unvaccinated teacher presents a certificate of contraindication of the vaccine for health reasons.

Vaccination

— According [to official information](#), as of September 24, 46.8% of the total population of the country was vaccinated with at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine in Azerbaijan. The percentage of those vaccinated with both doses of the vaccine is 35.4.

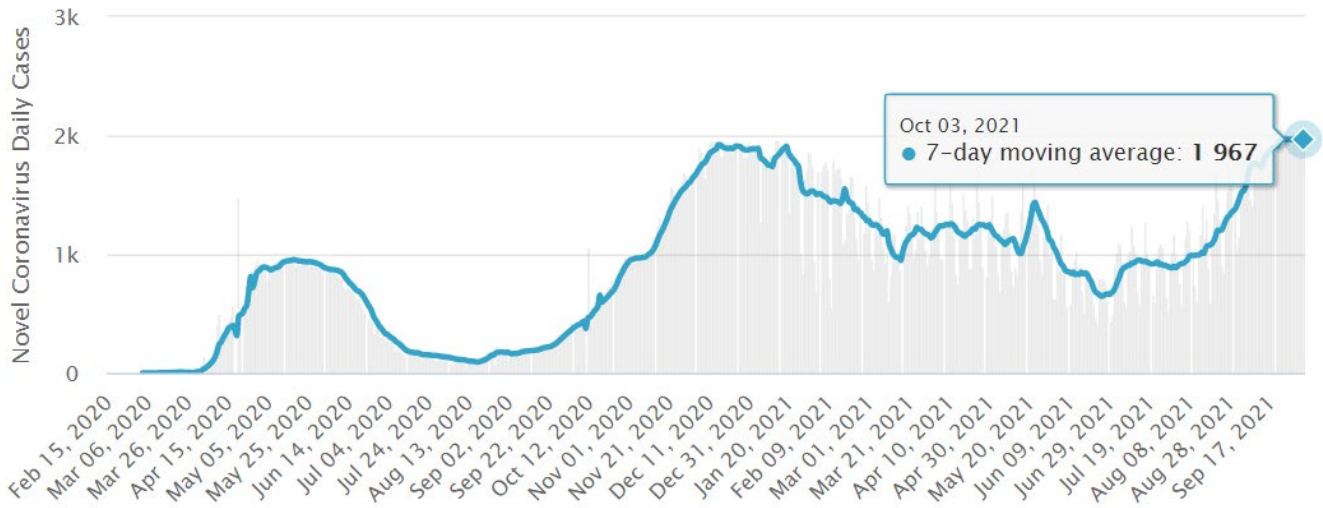
— In exceptional cases, Azerbaijan has allowed children aged 16-18 to get vaccinated against coronavirus with parental consent. Adolescents of this age will be vaccinated with only one vaccine out of four available in the country.

Situation report Belarus

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
543,976	522,886	4,188



Graph 5. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Belarus⁴

Cases of COVID-19

— Belarus reports [its largest number](#) of new COVID-19 infections since the start of the pandemic: 1,900. COVID-19 infections in Belarus are at their peak — the highest daily average reported — now at 1,978 new infections reported each day.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— The Healthcare Ministry's anti-coronavirus recommendations remain the same – social distancing, limiting face-to-face contact, avoiding crowds, wearing masks.

— President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko believes that Belarus is "more successful" in overcoming the coronavirus pandemic than Western countries, he said in [an interview with CNN](#).

Vaccination

— On 5 September, a plane carrying 1.5 million doses of China's Sinopharm coronavirus vaccine arrived in [Minsk](#). The cargo included 500,000 doses that the Chinese side provided Belarus in friendly humanitarian aid, as well as 1 million doses as part of the purchase, the ministry said in a statement on Telegram. Apart from the Sinopharm

⁴ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/belarus> accessed 01-10-2021.



vaccine, [Belarus](#) is currently immunizing its citizens with Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. Earlier in September, Minsk received a batch of the Sputnik Light vaccine.

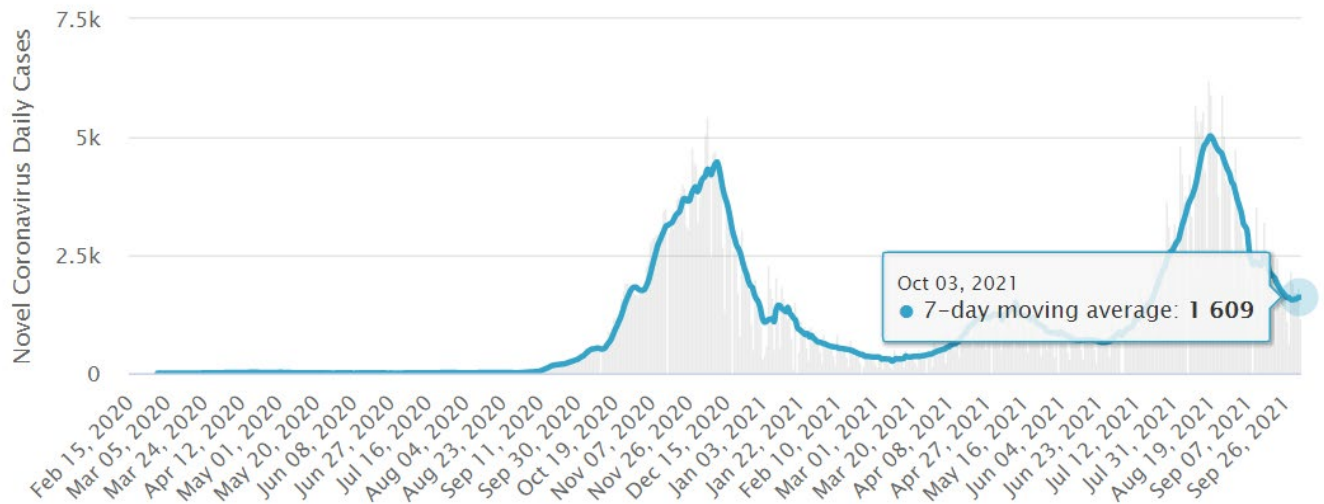
— As of October 4, Belarus [has administered](#) at least 3,389,520 doses of COVID vaccines so far. Assuming every person needs 2 doses, that's enough to have vaccinated about 17.9% of the country's population.

Situation report Georgia

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
618,620	591,668	9,068



Graph 6. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Georgia⁵

Cases of COVID-19

— COVID-19 infections [are decreasing](#) in Georgia, with 1,608 new infections reported on average each day. That's 32% of the peak — the highest daily average reported on August 18.

— Georgian health officials [have warned the public](#) that the next wave of Covid-19 will be 'critically dangerous' for unvaccinated individuals above 60. The Deputy Minister of Health Tamar Gabunia said on September 9 that the mortality and hospitalisation rate is higher amongst individuals over 60 years of age, who are the least vaccinated group in the country.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— On September 13, public transport in all large cities of Georgia [has resumed](#) operations after weeks of suspension.

— On September 13, Georgia has released the application [Covid Pass](#) which allows people to get information about their Covid-19 status online. The Coordination Council decided to allow individuals who recovered from coronavirus in the last six months to attend public events such as conferences, trainings and sports competitions without having a vaccination certificate or a negative test result.

Vaccination

⁵ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/georgia> accessed 01-10-2021.

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- The adult vaccination rate in Georgia stands at 23% as of September 16, [said](#) the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Vaccination against Covid-19 in Georgia is available with Pfizer, Sinopharm, Sinovac and AstraZeneca vaccines.
- Children over 12 years of age with chronic diseases will soon be able to receive Covid-19 vaccines in Georgia, pediatrician and National Immunisation Board member Temur Mikeladze [has stated](#) on September 8.

Education

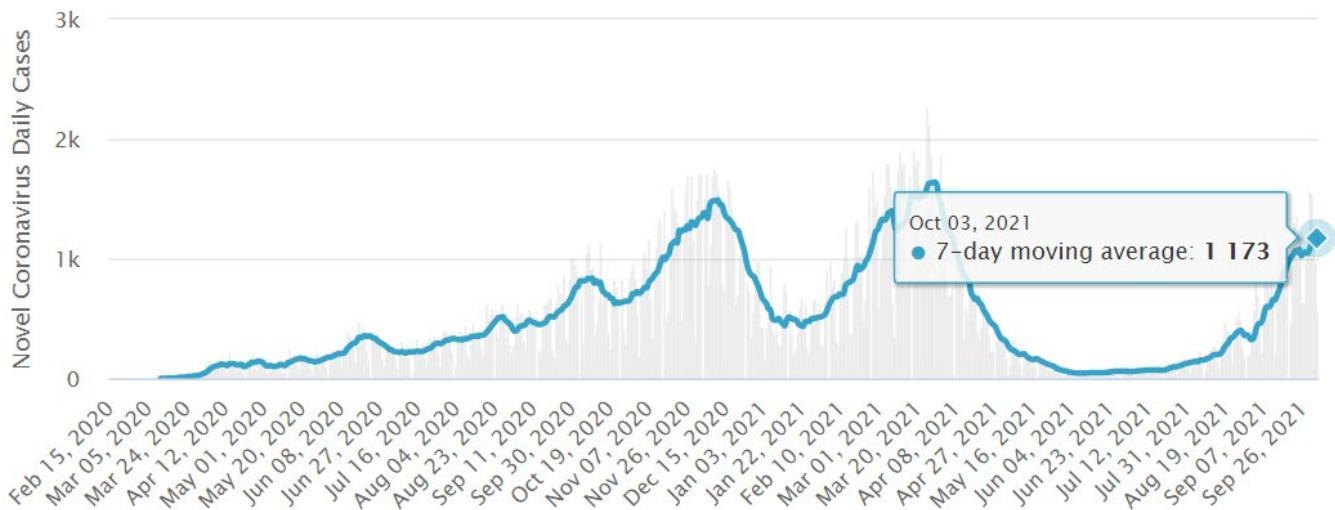
- In-person studies [have resumed](#) in Georgia on October 4 and the Ministry of Education says all public and private schools in the country are ready to receive students. The ministry announced that all schools in Georgia have been provided with disinfectant solutions, thermoscreen devices and disinfection barriers and the supply will be enough for the academic year. The new [academic year began](#) in Georgia on September 15. However, due to the epidemiological situation in the country, the government decided to postpone in-person studies.

Situation report Republic of Moldova

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
297,232	280,754	6,854



Graph 7. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in the Republic of Moldova⁶

Cases of COVID-19

- COVID-19 infections [are increasing](#) in Moldova, with 1,185 new infections reported on average each day. That's 72% of the peak — the highest daily average reported on March 28.
- The Republic of Moldova [is going through](#) a new virulent stage of the pandemic, with the number of deaths from COVID-19 rising by 35%. The rate of vaccination with a completed series at the national level is only 22.5%
- On October 2, an orange COVID-19 alert [was issued](#) at the national level in Moldova given that the number of new cases in the past seven days increased considerably. Epidemiologists say the situation worsened due to three factors: increased contagiousness of the Delta variant, the low vaccination rate among the Moldovans and non-observance of the sanitary rules.

Measures to contain the epidemic

- On September 10, Moldova's extraordinary commission for public health [has declared](#) a nationwide state of healthcare emergency until the end of October in order to contain a surge in coronavirus infections.

⁶ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/moldova> accessed 01-10-2021.

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— Since September 10, people can attend indoor and outdoor mass events only after proving that they are not infected with Covid-19. People wishing to go to concerts, shows, festivals, cinemas, nightclubs must show either a vaccination certificate, a negative PCR test result, or proof that they had been infected with the virus during the last 90 days.

Vaccination

— The highest rate of vaccination with the completed series in Moldova is in the municipality of Chisinau – 34%. The lowest vaccination rates, of 13% – 15%, were recorded in the districts of Leova, Sângerei and ATU Gagauzia. A lower vaccination rate is reported primarily among people aged between 18 and 29.

— Currently, there are five vaccines available in Moldova: AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Sinovac (both doses). Sputnik V and Pfizer remained only for those who received the first dose of these vaccines and are waiting for the second.

Economy

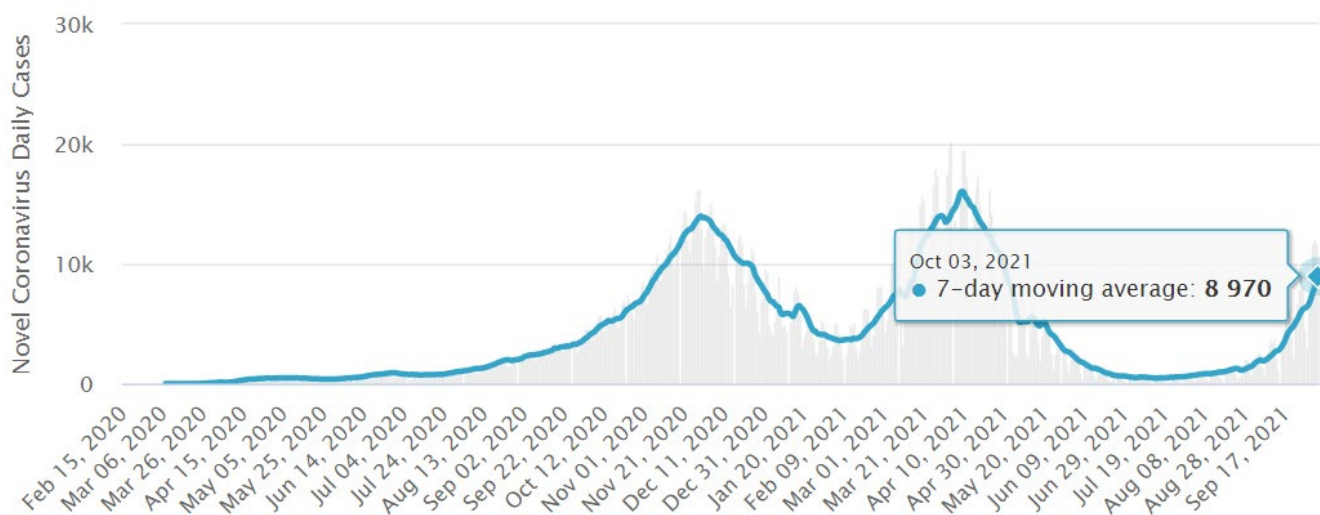
— On September 15, the European Commission (EC) approved a 36 million euro (\$42.6 million) non-reimbursable financing to support Moldova's post-coronavirus economic recovery.

Situation report Ukraine

as of 01.10.2021



Confirmed	Recovered	Deaths
2,460,010	2,264,523	56,889



Graph 8. Daily confirmed coronavirus cases in Ukraine⁷

Cases of COVID-19

— The number of daily new coronavirus infections in Ukraine rose to almost 12,000 over the past 24 hours for the first time since April, health ministry data showed on September 30. Ukraine also reported 194 coronavirus-related deaths. The number of new COVID-19 cases has been growing over the past several weeks and the government has already tightened lockdown restrictions.

— Yuri Ganychenko, head of the Health Economics Centre at the Kyiv School of Economics, said that although the authorities were unable to detect the dominant strain infecting Ukrainians, there was a "high probability" it was the Delta variant. The wave was likely to peak in mid-October and continue into November with 350 to 400 fatalities per day, Ganychenko said, compared to around 220 earlier in the year.

Measures to contain the epidemic

— Ukraine lifted lockdown restrictions as cases dropped over the summer but last week imposed a nationwide "yellow" code, which curbs mass events and limits the occupancy rates of gyms, cinemas and other venues.

Vaccination

— Ukraine is planning compulsory coronavirus vaccinations for some jobs including teachers and employees of state institutions and local governments, Health Minister Oleh Lyashko said on September 22.

⁷ Worldometers. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/ukraine> accessed 01-10-2021.

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— As of September 17, just 12 percent of Ukrainians are fully inoculated with one of four vaccines available in the country, including AstraZeneca and Moderna while anti-vaccine sentiment is high.

Interesting reads

1. JCMS (Journal of Common Market Studies): Territorial Conflict, Domestic Crisis, and the Covid-19 Pandemic in the South Caucasus. Explaining Variegated EU Responses [read](#).
2. Eurasianet: Armenian vaccination mandate faces backlash [read](#).
3. CNN: Transcript: CNN interview with Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko [read](#).
4. Agenda.ge: Georgia starts 2.8 mln GEL lottery to boost Covid-19 vaccination rates [read](#).
5. Agenda.ge: 111-year-old woman recovers from Covid-19 in Georgia [read](#).
6. Radio Free Europe: Ukraine's Booming Black Market In Fake COVID Vaccination Certificates [watch](#).