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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health  
Health security and Vaccination

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Email transmission only.

Dear Mr van de Kamp,

I would like to thank you very much for your letter of 8 February 2021, on behalf of the European Police Union (EPU).

The Commission is aware that police officers have played, and continue to play, a key role in our fight against COVID-19. We are also aware that police officers, like other frontline workers, could be particularly exposed to infection with SARS-CoV-2 and even transmit the virus further.

New vaccines are likely to be a key element of our exit from the pandemic. By means of the EU Strategy for COVID-19 vaccines<sup>1</sup>, the Commission has secured access for EU citizens to such vaccines as soon as they become available. Three vaccines – from BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca – have now been authorised for the EU market, and vaccination is ongoing in Member States.

The prospect of new COVID-19 vaccines was the reason why the Commission, before the first vaccines were authorised, published a Communication on preparedness for COVID-19 vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment<sup>2</sup>.

In this Communication, we invited Member States to make decisions on which groups should have priority access to COVID-19 vaccines. We included police officers in a list of priority groups for countries to consider in this respect. However, it is important to be aware that the responsibility for vaccination policies, programmes and services lies with Member States, and that the list, in accordance with this, constituted a recommendation only. The Commission is not in a position to call on Member States to pay special attention to police officers – or other specific groups – in their COVID-19 vaccination plans.

Having said this, we have closely followed Member States' development of COVID-19 vaccination plans, and together with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1597339415327&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0245>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020\\_strategies\\_deployment\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020_strategies_deployment_en.pdf)

Control (ECDC), we are now monitoring the vaccination in countries by the numbers, via the ECDC COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker<sup>3</sup>. Concerning the groups that Member States have given priority access to COVID-19 vaccines, it could be of interest for you to consult the following overview published by the ECDC: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/overview-implementation-covid-19-vaccination-strategies-and-vaccine-deployment>.

It is also relevant that the Commission has published Recommendation 2003/670/EC concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases. Article 1.1 of this Recommendation states that "it is recommended that Member States introduce as soon as possible into their national laws, regulations or administrative provisions concerning scientifically recognised occupational diseases liable for compensation and subject to preventive measures, the European schedule in Annex I". Annex I includes in its section 4 "Infectious and parasitic diseases" a specific item 407 "Other infectious diseases caused by work in disease prevention, health care, domiciliary assistance and other comparable activities for which a risk of infection has been proven". This item can certainly cover COVID-19.

The Recommendation is non-binding and it is up to Member States to introduce relevant national provisions, as recognition of occupational diseases is closely linked to national social security schemes, and falls under the remit of the competent national authorities. However, the Commission agrees that frontline workers such as police officers deserve to benefit from recognition of the occupational origin of this disease. The Commission is currently assessing which Member States recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease including professions and the scope of recognition.

I would like to thank you once again for your letter and for your continuous support.

Yours faithfully,

Wolfgang Philipp  
Head of Unit

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html#vaccine-tracker-tab>