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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera
on behalf of the European Commission
(8.4.2025)

The Commission communicated transparently throughout the COVID-19 pandemic¹²³⁴.

Despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, the joint response of the EU and Member States successfully led the EU out of the emergency. The EU set up NextGenerationEU⁵ as a groundbreaking temporary recovery instrument to support Europe's economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and build a greener, more digital and more resilient future.

Critical to the pandemic period was the achievement to make safe and effective vaccines available. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that the vaccines saved at least 1.4 million lives in WHO European region⁶.

The EU Digital COVID Certificate facilitated travel for millions of EU citizens and third-country nationals. The Commission adopted three reports on its implementation, including an assessment of the impact on free movement within the EU, fundamental rights and non-discrimination⁷. The setting up of green lanes for goods to continue cross borders allowed companies to continue business and supplies to reach consumers.

Member States are responsible for the definition of their national health policy and the organisation of their health services and medical care. National governments therefore decided on specific measures based on each country's epidemiological and social situation. The response measures taken by the EU and by the Member States to protect people from the virus had a major impact on preventing its spread.

The measures taken to mitigate the impact could not prevent all costs in terms of human life and well-being. An impact on mental health was one of the consequences. Mental health fluctuated with the intensity of the pandemic and containment measures, with young people being particularly affected⁸. The comprehensive approach to mental health adopted in 2023⁹ set out a variety of measures to address the issue.

¹ Drawing the early lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic (COM/2021/380).

² COVID-19 - Sustaining EU Preparedness and Response: Looking ahead (COM/2022/190).

³ EU response to COVID-19: preparing for autumn and winter 2023 (COM/2022/452).

⁴ See also the timeline here: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/timeline-eu-action_en

⁵ Council Regulation (EU) 2020/2094 of 14 December 2020 establishing a European Union Recovery Instrument to support the recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

⁶ <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/16-01-2024-covid-19-vaccinations-have-saved-more-than-1.4-million-lives-in-the-who-european-region--a-new-study-finds>

⁷ COM(2021) 649, COM(2022) 123, COM(2022) 753.

⁸ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3f9d55be-9e36-43d9-99ad-b96ac63a5b9b_en?filename=2022_healthatglance_rep_en_0.pdf

⁹ COM(2023) 298 final.