

## *Position Paper: France*

### *Introduction to the topic*

First, we would like to introduce the topic of the Covid-19 pandemic in the world and specifically then in the European Union. The pandemic was first discovered in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Taylor, 2021). It was followed by the official Chinese government's confirmation on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 that the Chinese health services are dealing with dozens of severe cases. The first death related to the Coronavirus virus was reported and confirmed in China on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (Taylor, 2021). The first confirmed cases outside the People's Republic of China (PRC) were reported in Japan, South Korea and Thailand. Just a day later, first confirmed case occurred in the United States, where a 30-year-old man developed symptoms after a returning trip from Wuhan, China (Taylor, 2021). The WHO declared a global health emergency, which was the first serious warning that the pandemic might be truly dangerous to the entire world. As can be rather obvious from the statement presented before, it got serious, the first death was reported outside of China on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2020. Furthermore, the first death reported in Europe was in France on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 (Taylor, 2020) and therefore you can imagine how serious this topic from the French perspective.

### *Country's position to the Topic*

The European Union is facing new challenges, but also new opportunities during COVID-19 crisis. As we can see, the EU and its member states have not developed a common approach to this crisis and have acted differently - so different political restrictions have created different consequences. Covid-19 has clearly shown us what the shortcomings of the European Union are when it comes to dealing with crises and has also revealed the limitations of the EU integration. Now, the question is what could be changed to make the EU's capability to cope with similar situations more efficient in the future. However, there are still a lot of different scenarios and options and just as responses to the Corona crisis vary from country to country and are mainly national, so is the answer to the question of the future of the European Union and its future crisis management policies. France believes that now is the time to find a common ground on correct stimulus measures – both in the EU and countries. Europe should move towards the creation of a common European goal of overcoming the crisis. COVID-19, despite a huge variety of political reactions, have also shown that Europe has common values and common cultural background compared to other regions in the world. France wants to create a stronger Europe (and the EU) which will cope with the crisis by implementing the good measures from the different countries on a European level but does not only look at the national perspective. Europe should act together even in social distancing and it should look forward to be more united and stronger in the future.

### *Coronavirus in France (the country's relation to the topic)*

We assume that it is rather obvious how important and relevant topic it is for France, as was already mentioned that the first reported death related to the Coronavirus pandemic took a place in France. So let's talk about the numbers first. The total Coronavirus cases reported in France until today is 4,55 million. The pandemic accounts for nearly 100k deaths in the country (WHO/Worldmeter, 2021). As you can imagine, the situation in the country was rather serious as the situation was getting worse and worse every single day. The first

confirmed case in France took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> December 2019 (BBC, 2020). As the Coronavirus was spreading across the country, certain measures had to be undertaken. The schools and universities were closed on the 12<sup>th</sup> March, which was followed by the closure of restaurants, pubs and bars on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March. The first country's lockdown was put into a place on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This was followed by a second French lockdown in fall. This was followed by French president testing positive on COVID on 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 (DW, 2020). The current situation is following: now, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all but essential travel to France (including Corsica); 19 areas of France are under a month-long lockdown from midnight on Friday 19 March; an 7pm-6am curfew is currently imposed, meaning people must stay at home between these hours apart from essential reasons; most shops and services are currently open; working from home is encouraged wherever possible; children aged six and over will now have to wear masks at school. Homemade face masks are no longer allowed to be worn; all travelers arriving in France will be tested for Covid-19; lateral flow tests are no longer be valid for travelers arriving in France from non-EU countries from 18 January (Parkinson, 2021). This is, we believe, a clear evidence on how important the topic is to the country of France and we strongly encourage all other countries to be actively contributing to the process of improving the Coronavirus situation in France.

### *Pre-Policy Proposals Talk*

Before we start the discussion on some policy proposals it is important to mention that France's leadership, headed by Emmanuel Macron is of the general opinion that EU is best united and that the actions should lead us in that direction. (France Diplomacy, 2021)

With this in mind, COVID crisis presented an opportunity for EU pillars, most notably Germany & France to showcase their ability to navigate as a strong united body.

It could be safely assumed that they failed quite remarkably, with EU infection rates being some of the highest in the world and vaccination going very slow, especially compared to other non-EU countries – USA or the ones closer such as Israel, UK and Serbia who reached outstanding numbers of vaccinations without EC and other EU centralized organs which could be blamed for poor progress within the EU. (Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations - Statistics and Research, 2021)

It could be said that UK's success might prove to be very damaging to the EU reputation considering recent Brexit.

With that in mind, EU is looking forward to redeem itself in the future and prove that they can manage future crises of the similar magnitude.

### *Proposals of Policies to Pass in a Resolution*

**1) Introduction of covid passports according to common rules (including the prerequisite of vaccination by vaccines approved by the EMA).**

We can start by discussing part of the solution which is already in motion. It concerns the green certificates or so-called “vaccine passports”. This measure appears to have support throughout Europe both in wealthier Western countries such as UK, Germany, France & Italy (Hospitality Net, 2021) but also in smaller ones such as Greece, who see this move as their only hope to salvage the summer season and get some economic boost they so desperately need. (Euro News, 2021)

In accordance with the EU philosophy of freedom of choice, vaccination won't be mandatory however this gives place for an argument to be made against it with regards to the possible discrimination of the portion of the population which will decide not to take the vaccine. EU has reassured the public that this won't be the case. (Europarl.europa.eu, 2021)

In addition, EC has proposed a solution to this problem by applying “Green Certificates” which can be obtained both through vaccination, getting a negative test or proof of having recovered from COVID therefore alternative will be presented. (COVID-19: Digital green certificates, 2021)

In addition, Israel's introduction of the green pass appears to have tremendous success. (The Guardian, 2021)

This policy is something that France will be willing to work with each country in order to establish common rules and somewhat ease the flow of people within the EU.

## **2) Recovery stimulus grants (not included in the policy preference map) & EU4Health proposal.**

As early as May last year, France was cooperating with Germany to propose recovery plan and boost EU economy. (BBC, 2020)

Similar to the aftermaths of other crisis, economies will need financial injection to start up their economies. Following success of many similar programs throughout the history (most notably the Marshall plan) case can be made that providing grants will assist the recovery of the EU economy.

In addition, under presumption that people are ready to go back to work, this financial boost will be just what is needed for them to start operating.

The recovery plan initiated by France & Germany include total of 1.8 bill euros to help rebuild Europe. (Recovery plan for Europe, 2021)

France sees itself as one of the strongest pillars of the united EU and will continue to support initiatives like this. Most notably, France will support EU4Health initiative that aims to strengthen health systems for future crises. (EU4Health, 2021)

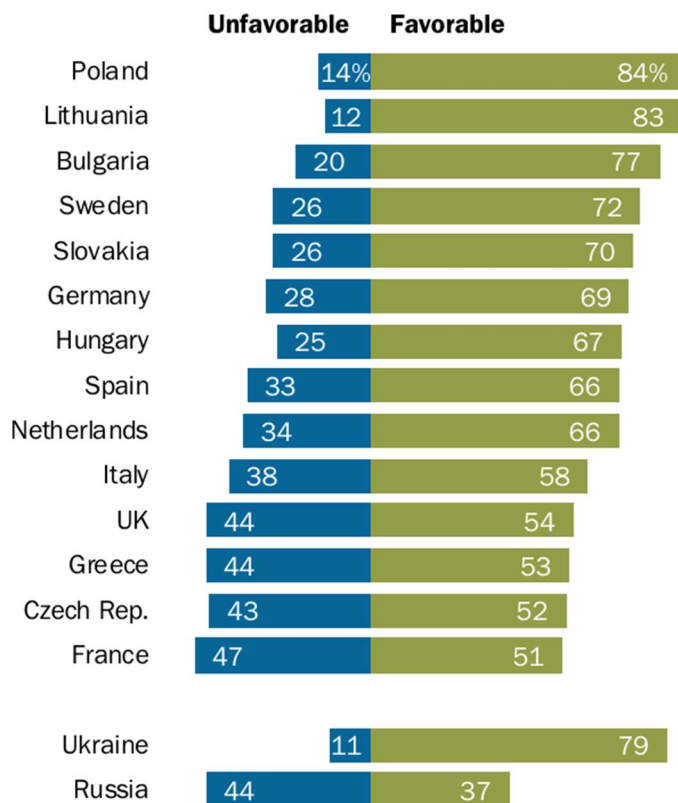
France is willing to work tightly with all countries in need for such financial grants.

**3) The European Commission shall be entitled to intervene directly in the most afflicted regions, and to interfere with the member states' health policies, due to large differences in mitigating the pandemic across the EU member states.**

Whilst the France supports the strong EU and EC this policy is something that could prove to be seen as too much intervention in nation-states internal policies. It could potentially be used by anti-EU politicians in order to score political points by pointing it out. Furthermore, failure of an all-in intervention can further embody above-mentioned politicians and anti-EU sentiment present in many countries.

As of 2019, France itself is battling with 47% of unfavorable opinion on the EU and Macron's leadership has to keep that in mind when deciding whether to enable more centralized decision making in the EU. (Pew Research Center, 2019)

*% who have a \_\_\_ opinion of the European Union*



Note: Don't know responses not shown.  
Source: Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey. Q8d.

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France will be looking to strike a consensus by respecting member states right to conduct their own health policies but will also encourage EC to oversee the process and provide useful advices when deemed necessary. In addition, it will also encourage member states to listen to said advices when they are deemed correct.

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