



Vaccination Process in Kosovo and Protection from the Delta Variant

Purpose

Since the emergence of COVID-19, various variants of this virus have been recorded worldwide. The Delta variant, first detected in India, is more transmissible between humans compared to other variants.¹ For this reason, it is important to examine the prevalence of this variant and the policies that Kosovo should follow to motivate people to vaccinate. The purpose of this short paper is to compare the number of Delta variant cases in countries such as France, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania and to examine the policies introduced by these and other countries to motivate people to seek immunization against COVID-19. Its recommendations will be addressed to the Ministry of Health, the National Institute of Public Health, and the Committee on Health and Social Welfare of the Assembly of Kosovo.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “What You Need to Know about Variants.” Available at <https://dpl.us/gl1>

Number of Delta variant cases and number of people vaccinated in eight different countries

Country	Total Number of COVID-19 Cases ²	Number of Delta Variant Cases ³	Number of Vaccines Administered (by dose) ⁴	Number of People Partly Vaccinated ⁵	Number of People Fully Vaccinated ⁶
France	6,440,082	6,442	78,74 m	45,23 m	34,44 m
Luxembourg	74,545	780	738,057	397,995 m	340,062
Lithuania	288,173	209	2,86 m	1.53 m	1,33 m
Serbia	729,150	5	5,61 m	2,87 m	2,74 m
Albania	134,761	11	1,28 m	720,232	560,007
North Macedonia	159,908	7	982,645	543,597	439,048
Montenegro	104,613	N/A	351,202	191,020	160,182
Kosovo	112,653	N/A	504,817	333,965	170,852

As can be seen from the table, the number of people fully vaccinated in Kosovo compared to the number of people of Kosovo that should be vaccinated, is still small. This is not because there is a lack of doses since the Ministry of Health has secured a considerable number of doses, but this is because of people's reluctance to get vaccinated. This short paper recommends to the Ministry of Health undertaking various steps towards motivating/pushing people to get vaccinated. People should be told that when vaccinated, chances to be sick from covid-19 are much lower, and even if they are sick from covid-19, chances to have serious health problems are lower.

Between Punitive and Motivational Policies

According to health experts, un-vaccinated people are 'variant factories' providing more opportunities for the COVID-19 virus to multiply.⁷ In addition to challenges in achieving equitable distribution of vaccines to the people, their own reluctance to seek immunization against this infection remains a concern. This reluctance may come because of doubts about vaccine efficacy, fake news, and uncertainty about the side effects that the COVID-19 vaccine may produce. According to media news portal <telegrafi.com> in Kosovo, quoting GeoPost

² Johns Hopkins University (JHU) "Coronavirus COVID-19". (As of 12/7/2021). Available at <https://dpl.us/acl>

³ Statista.com "Number of SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant cases worldwide as of August 9, 2021, by country or territory". Available at <https://dpl.us/as8>

⁴ Our World in Data "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations". (As of 11/7/2021). Available at <https://dpl.us/tev>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ CNN "Unvaccinated people are 'variant factories,' infectious diseases expert says". Available at: <https://dpl.us/gq9>

organization, which conducts research on foreign influence in the Western Balkans, Kosovo is affected from the anti-vaccination disinformation campaign of Russia. Moreover, “the founders of the group “[Stop Vaccination](#)” are false profiles that try to divide the Kosovar society in relation to vaccination. Recently, many scientific studies have revealed thousands of Russian accounts on social networks which are spreading messages against the vaccine”.⁸

However, to reduce the level of uncertainty, various countries have introduced measures to promote the vaccination of their citizens.

Some of the policies that countries have introduced to motivate people to vaccinate are:

- In France, citizens are required to have a health pass for access to restaurants, bars, trains, and planes. To get the pass, people must have proof they are fully vaccinated, recently tested negative or recently recovered from the virus.⁹
- In the United Kingdom, some restaurants teamed-up with the government, distributing free pizza and providing free taxi rides as incentives for young people that have been vaccinated or who choose to be vaccinated. Additionally, take-out and delivery businesses offer discounted prices for their services.¹⁰
- Italy has made Covid-19 ‘Green Pass’ mandatory for teachers. The Italian government announced that teachers must have proof of immunity from COVID-19 before entering the classroom. Such a pass is mandatory for travelers on trains and planes, as well as for accessing stores.¹¹
- In the United States, President Joe Biden has called on states to give \$100 to those who opt to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The federal government will also reimburse small and medium-sized businesses for offering paid leave to employees who still need to get vaccinated.¹²
- According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, some European countries have established mass vaccination centers in cooperation with municipalities. They have also deployed mobile vaccination teams to reach those citizens without access to vaccination centers.¹³

In Kosovo, the current number of active cases with COVID-19 is 1,903. Despite the fact that Kosovo has secured enough vaccines at 291,788 units, the reluctance of citizens for immunization against COVID-19 remains worrisome. In some municipalities, e.g., Municipality of Mitrovica, despite booking an appointment through the <e-Kosova > online platform, c

Citizens are crowding in front of the ‘Rexhep Mitrovica’ vaccination site. This is because people are not respecting strictly their appointment (exact time) and therefore appear to the center at different times. In addition, there are people registered in a certain municipality, but live in Pristina, and when they book the appointment through the <e-Kosova> platform, the system leads it automatically to the municipality where the applicant is registered and not where the applicant is currently living.

⁸ Russia with propaganda groups on social media networks against vaccination in Kosovo, Telegrafi.com, available at: <https://dpl.us/ehq>

⁹ Koha.net “Vaccination surge in France following announcement by Macron.” Available at: <https://dpl.us/4zs>

¹⁰ CNN “Pizza and taxi rides used to lure UK youth into getting COVID-19 vaccination.” Available at: <https://dpl.us/10x>

¹¹ Radio Free Europe “Italy makes COVID-19 health pass mandatory for teachers.” Available at: <https://dpl.us/93d>

¹² HuffPost, “Biden Calls On States To Give \$100 To Every Newly Vaccinated Person.” Available at: <https://dpl.us/b4a368>

¹³ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, “Challenges and Good Practices.” Available at: <https://dpl.us/2fdadf>

Some of the recommendations that D+ is addressing to the Ministry of Health and the Kosovo National Institute of Public Health for encouraging people to vaccinate are:

- Establish vaccination sites in villages, as not all people have the opportunity to attend the main vaccination centers;
- Post signs on the floor in vaccination centers, to enforce the physical distance between citizens.
- Establish mobile vaccination teams to deploy in remote areas and reach older patients;
- Impose mandatory vaccination for teachers, store workers, hoteling business, bus, and taxi drivers, as these are categories that have direct contact with people;
- Organize public debates and TV shows with health experts to explain vaccine efficacy and take live questions from the public;
- Produce and broadcast video messages from influential people who have been immunized against COVID-19;
- Vaccination should run uninterrupted including weekends, providing more opportunities to the citizens to vaccinate.

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