



# HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

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30 September 2020

Matt Hancock  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

Dear Matt,

**COM(2020) 318: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: Short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks**

Thank you for your Explanatory Memorandum (EM) on the above Communication, which was considered by our Environment Sub-Committee on 30 September 2020.

You note that COVID-19 apps may need to be interoperable in the future. What steps have you taken to ensure that the NHS COVID-19 app could be interoperable with other countries', both in the EU and internationally? And when do you expect that interoperability may begin to take effect?

Contact tracing is particularly challenging at points of entry to the UK, and this may be exacerbated by the new immigration procedures which will take effect at the end of the transition period. What measures are you taking to ensure that contact tracing can take place at international airports, railways stations and ports in the UK, both before and after 1 January 2021?

We note that the EU is making plans to support the cross-border transfer of healthcare workers to help manage the pandemic. What steps are you taking to ensure the UK can access the healthcare staff required (particularly intensive care specialists) to manage the coincidence of COVID-19 surges and the influenza season, despite the ending of free movement from next year?

The Commission's Communication references several COVID-19 data sharing platforms used to share intelligence on, for example, the effectiveness of certain interventions, as well as clinical, epidemiological and virological data. Please clarify what access the UK currently has

to those data sharing platforms; and if that access will be lost from 1 January 2021, how the Government intends to replace the intelligence therein.

Finally, in light of the Commission's statement that cooperation with the EU's neighbours is vital in managing new outbreaks, please set out the ways in which you are currently cooperating with the EU to contain and manage new outbreaks of the pandemic, and the ways you intend to do so after 1 January if there will be any changes.

The Committee continues to take an active interest in this matter and we would therefore welcome being kept updated on developments. We look forward to a response within ten working days.

I am copying this letter to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the Commons European Scrutiny Committee; Jessica Mulley, Clerk to the Commons Committee; Les Saunders, Cabinet Office; and Rebecca Diment, Departmental Scrutiny Coordinator.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Kinnoull', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Kinnoull  
Chair of the European Union Committee