



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

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25 November 2020

Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

Dear Ed,

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 letter dated 21 October on the above Communication, which was considered by our Environment Sub-Committee on 25 November 2020.

Regarding COVID-19 app interoperability, we note that you are “currently evaluating emerging interoperability standards” to understand how the UK may be able to align with other countries’ apps. As this is the subject of another ongoing scrutiny correspondence,¹ we will not pursue it further here to avoid duplication.

Your letter said that NHS Test and Trace tests are not available for testing to reduce self-isolation periods for international arrivals, but this does not directly address our question. To clarify: our interest is in what measures are in place at EU and international points of entry (such as international airports, railways stations and ports) to support contact tracing efforts, should they be required in the days after a passenger’s travel due to a later positive COVID-19 test. Please provide a response on that matter.

Thank you for explaining the Health and Care Visa route, and your view that it will help to ensure the UK can access the healthcare staff required to manage the coincidence of COVID-19 surges and the influenza season.

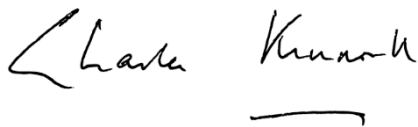
Thank you for your explanation of the clinical, epidemiological and virological data sharing platforms that the UK currently has access to, and those it both will and may have access to from 1 January. What assessment have you made of the relative merits of the Early Warning Response System (EWRS) and the Epidemic Intelligence Information System (EPIS) compared to the international information-sharing methods? And please inform us of the outcome of the

negotiations regarding the UK's continued access to EWRS and EPIS, if an agreement has been reached by the time you respond.

We note your statement that the UK is participating in several joint procurement exercises with the EU including those relating to intensive care medicine, Remdesivir, COVID-19 medical equipment and influenza vaccination equipment; that the UK will receive over 17,000 vials of Remdesivir through the EU's Emergency Support Instrument, to supplement those it has secured independently; and that the UK is attending the EU Health Security Committee meetings related to COVID-19, and shares information through the EWRS. We welcome these cooperative actions to contain and manage new outbreaks of the pandemic.

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.

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

Lord Kinnoull
Chair of the European Union Committee