

COVID-19 Lockdown Exit Analysis

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Overnight NewsRoundUp

'Vaccine policy is economic policy,' IMF chief stresses

Both the IMF managing director and World Bank president expressed alarm over growing economic inequality on Wednesday after a second day of their organisations' spring meetings.

Unprecedented policy response and speedy vaccine development helped pull the global economy back from the brink last year, but the outlook is still marked by severe uncertainty and increasingly lopsided access to wealth and opportunity, the IMF managing director said.

'There is light at the end of the tunnel,' IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said, 'this could have been another Great Depression.' The IMF lifted its global growth forecast to 6% in 2021 and 4.4 percent in 2022, but the upgrade is driven primarily by rebounds in the USA, China and India.

'Economic fortunes are diverging dangerously,' Georgieva said, as she presented the IMF's Global Policy Agenda, which urges governments to ensure people have a fair shot at COVID-19 vaccines, economic recovery and stable futures. With more economic scarring possible as job losses, bankruptcies, extreme poverty and hunger swell in some countries, Georgieva said that getting back to business requires ramping up vaccine distribution and ensuring that surplus vaccines are transferred to poorer countries. 'Faster progress in ending the health crisis could add almost \$9 trillion to global gross domestic product by 2025' she said.

Boosting investment in green projects and digital infrastructure both in health and education will require sufficient public funds, Georgieva added, explaining this may lead to progressive taxation and an agreement on minimum taxation for companies and international tax rates.

More external concessional financing and a further extension of the debt service suspension initiative will help poorer countries deal with the multi-pronged crisis.

World Bank Group President David Malpass said the G20 welcomed the acceleration of the 20th replenishment of the International Development Association - the World Bank's method of providing financing to low-income nations, known as the IDA20 process. G20 leaders have also been keen to discuss transparency in debt contracts and mend unsustainable debt situations, Malpass said.

Malpass touched on several factors exacerbating inequality worldwide, including uneven vaccine access, higher interest rates for poor countries and no bankruptcy option for sovereign nations, which means poorer countries get saddled with burdensome debt.

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Unprecedented policy response and speedy vaccine development helped pull the global economy back from the brink last year, but the outlook is still marked by severe uncertainty and increasingly lopsided access to wealth and opportunity, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) managing director said on Wednesday. "There is light at the end of the tunnel," IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva

said at a virtual news conference on the second day of the World Bank and IMF's week-long spring meetings. "This could have been another Great Depression."

<https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/4/7/vaccine-policy-is-economic-policy-imf-chief-stresses>

Africa needs £9bn to buy enough vaccines to stop Covid-19 spread, say World Bank and IMF

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Africa needs around £9bn (\$12bn) to buy and distribute Covid-19 vaccines to reach enough people to stop the coronavirus spreading, according to a new paper by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The world's rich G20 countries should also extend a debt moratorium until the end of the year to help the poorest countries through the pandemic, the paper said. The money needed by Africa roughly is roughly the same as debt repayments already deferred by 45 of the poorest countries, the bodies said. Meanwhile a new Rockefeller Foundation report found that moves to bolster the IMF's emergency reserves could provide billions for poor countries to vaccinate, at no added cost to rich countries.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/africa-needs-9bn-buy-enough-vaccines-stop-covid-19-spread-say/>

'We failed the test' of COVID-19, says human rights champion

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Agnès Callamard is best known for her investigation into the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and has made a career uncovering extrajudicial killings. The French human rights expert's focus on rights abuses is taking on new dimensions as she assumes leadership of Amnesty International and turns her attention to what she says is one of the world's most pressing issues — vaccine equity to end the coronavirus pandemic, which has eroded freedoms globally.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ap-interview-human-rights-champion-turns-to-vaccine-equity/2021/04/06/17e69954-973a-11eb-8f0a-3384cf4fb399_story.html

China's vaccine diplomacy stumbles in Southeast Asia

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In May last year, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese President Xi Jinping declared that his country would soon provide safe and effective vaccines as a "global public good", especially to the developing world. To this end, the Chinese leader launched a massive state-backed campaign, allocating large amounts of subsidies and corralling up to 22 firms and research institutes to work on as many as 17 vaccine projects.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/4/5/chinas-vaccine-diplomacy-stumbles-in-southeast-asia>

Scientists call for new probe into COVID-19 origins: with or without China

A joint China-World Health Organization (WHO) study into COVID-19 has provided no credible answers about how the pandemic began, and more rigorous investigations are required - with or without Beijing's involvement, a group of international scientists and researchers said on Wednesday. The joint study, released last week, said the likeliest transmission route for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, involved bats and other wildlife in China and southeast Asia. It all but ruled out the possibility it had leaked from a laboratory. In an open letter, 24 scientists and researchers from Europe, the United States, Australia and Japan said the study was tainted by politics. "Their starting point was, let's have as much compromise as is required to get some minimal cooperation from China," said Jamie Metz, senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, who drafted the letter.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-china-idUSKBN2BU2J2>

Infection rates still rising, new regulation continuing

COVID-19 in Brazil: Country records 4,195 deaths in a single day as commuters pack trains

More than 4,000 COVID deaths have been recorded in a single day in Brazil, with one doctor comparing the country's crisis to a "biological Fukushima". The outbreak is overwhelming hospitals in the South American nation - and scientists are forecasting that the surge in fatalities will soon surpass the worst of a record January wave in the US. Even though Brazil's population is two-thirds that of America's, the country's overall death tolls from COVID-19 now stands at 337,000 - second only to the US on 555,000.

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-a-biological-fukushima-hospitals-overwhelmed-as-brazil-records-4-195-covid-deaths-in-a-single-day-12268068>

India Covid-19: 'No end in sight' as doctors battle second wave

It was the middle of January when Dr Lancelot Pinto realised he would be able to spend some quality time with his family after nearly a year. The pulmonologist had spent most of 2020 battling successive surges in Covid-19 cases at his hospital in Mumbai city. But by January this year daily infections across India had fallen to less than 20,000 from a peak of over 90,000 in September, and he could "see some light at the end of the tunnel". The situation took a turn for the worse in March as cases started to rise sharply. On 4 April, India breached the 100,000 daily caseload mark for the first time since the pandemic began. More than half of those cases were confirmed in Maharashtra, which has India's largest city, Mumbai, as its capital. Now Dr Pinto's phone is ringing every few minutes, mostly from desperate families looking to find a bed for Covid patients. "We are already overrun. All Covid-19 beds in my hospitals are full," he says.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-56645701>

France's COVID-19 hospitalisations at a near five-month high

France's hospital system is under heavy pressure from the pandemic, with the number of people treated in intensive care units for COVID-19 at the highest in almost a year, even though the country has just entered its third lockdown. The health ministry reported on Tuesday that the number of people in ICUs with COVID-19 had increased by 193 over 24 hours to 5,626, a peak since April 20 2020, when France was in its first March-May 2020 lockdown. And that figure is also rising further above the 4,919 high reached during country's second lockdown from Oct. 30 to Dec. 15.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-infections-idUSKBN2BT2IE>

Canada's Ontario issues stay-at-home order as COVID surges

Canada's most populous province is imposing a stay-at-home order, nearly one week after medical and public health experts recommended such a measure as COVID-19 cases and hospitalisations are surging. Ontario Premier Doug Ford on Wednesday defended his government's decision-making process, saying he is "listening to health and science" but could not predict such a steep rise in coronavirus variants and intensive care admissions.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/7/canada-ontario-issues-stay-at-home-order-as-covid-surges>

German govt welcomes calls for tougher COVID lockdown

BERLIN, April 7 (Reuters) - Any demands for a short, tough lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus are correct as infection rates are too high, a German government spokeswoman said on Wednesday, adding the number of patients in intensive care is rising.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-germany-lockdown-idUSS8N2E808S>

Kim Jong-un says North Korea is facing 'worst-ever situation' as coronavirus lockdown piles on economic misery

Kim Jong-un has warned North Korea is facing the "worst-ever situation" as he addressed thousands of grassroots members of his ruling party during a major political conference in Pyongyang. The ruler's comments come as North Korea's coronavirus lockdown unleashing further shock on an

economy devastated by decades of mismanagement and crippling US-led sanctions over his nuclear weapons programme

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/kim-jongun-north-korea-coronavirus-workers-party-cell-secretaries-pyongyang-g-b928194.html?itm_source=Internal&itm_channel=section_trending_article_component&itm_campaign=trending_section&itm_content=5

Argentina curtails leisure, public transport use after hitting new COVID-19 record

Argentina tightened movement restrictions on Wednesday including curtailing the leisure industry and blocking nonessential workers from using public transport after the country hit a record number of COVID-19 infections as it struggles with a second wave of the virus. President Alberto Fernandez announced a curfew between midnight and 6 a.m., the closure of bars and restaurants at 11 p.m. and the suspension of operations for casinos, bingo halls and nightclubs in areas of the country with the highest infection rates. Sports in enclosed spaces with the participation of more than 10 people were also banned and in the Buenos Aires area, where cases have increased 53% in seven days, all but essential workers along with teachers and those with special authorisation are prohibited from using public transport.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-argentina/argentina-curtails-leisure-public-transport-use-after-hitting-new-covid-19-record-idUSKBN2BU3KI?il=0>

Brazil's Bolsonaro ignores calls for lockdown to slow virus

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said on Wednesday there would be “no national lockdown,” ignoring growing calls from health experts a day after the nation saw its highest number of COVID-19 deaths in 24 hours since the pandemic began. Brazil’s Health Ministry registered 4,195 deaths on Tuesday, becoming the third country to go above that threshold as Bolsonaro’s political opponents demanded stricter measures to slow down the spread of the virus. “We’re not going to accept this politics of stay home and shut everything down,” Bolsonaro said, resisting the pressure in a speech in the city of Chapeco in Santa Catarina state. “There will be no national lockdown.”

<https://apnews.com/article/health-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-coronavirus-pandemic-latin-america-6c6b7954d7d10cbc77a4a70c90d0cfc8>

Czech PM taps fourth health minister amid deadliest COVID wave

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis on Wednesday installed his fourth health minister during the COVID-19 pandemic as a lagging vaccination campaign heightened pressure to use Russia’s Sputnik dose. Babis has gone back-and-forth on potentially buying the Sputnik V vaccine prior to European Union approval, an issue other EU nations are pondering due to shortages of registered vaccines. President Milos Zeman, who backs closer Russian and Chinese ties, had sought the sacking of Jan Blatny for his opposition to Sputnik.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-government/czech-pm-babis-to-appoint-new-health-minister-ctk-news-agency-idUSKBN2BU110>

AstraZeneca COVID-19 shot tagged with new warning in EU, highlighting rare blood clot risk

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Europe’s drug regulator has been probing cases of rare blood clots in AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine recipients since mid-March—and now it has confirmed a possible link. The agency stressed that the benefits of the shot still outweigh the risks. Unusual blood clots with low blood platelets should be listed as a “very rare” side effect of the vaccine, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said Wednesday. Incidents have mostly been reported within two weeks of vaccination in women below the age of 60. With cases piling up over the past month, several countries have stopped using the

shot altogether. The EMA's safety arm, the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC), specifically noted clots in the brain, abdomen and arteries associated with thrombocytopenia, or low levels of blood platelets.

<https://www.fiercepharma.com/pharma/astrazeneca-s-covid-shot-should-list-blood-clots-as-rare-side-effect-ema-says>

In rare instances, AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine linked to blood clots, regulators say

Covid-19 vaccine and "very rare" but dangerous clotting events reported in a number of countries where the vaccine has been used, events which in some cases have been fatal. A safety committee, the agency said Wednesday, concluded that "unusual blood clots with low blood platelets should be listed as very rare side effects" of the vaccine. Regulators stressed that the benefits of the vaccine, which was shown to be 76% effective at preventing Covid infections in a large U.S.-based study, still outweigh its risks. "This vaccine has proven to be highly effective to prevent severe disease and hospitalization," said Emer Cooke, the EMA's executive director. "And it is saving lives."

<https://www.statnews.com/2021/04/07/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-linked-to-blood-clots/>

COVID-19: Why concerns over AstraZeneca jab are unlikely to derail UK's vaccine programme

The ongoing safety concerns about the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine do not seem to have crossed the channel. At least not yet. The possible link with a rare type of blood clot has been around for a few weeks now. Some governments in Europe have decided that they will not administer the jab to younger people. That is against the advice of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-why-concerns-over-astrazeneca-jab-are-unlikely-to-derail-uks-vaccine-programme-12268162>

People urged to continue accepting Oxford coronavirus vaccine after trial paused amid blood clot probe

Scientists and ministers today said the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is "safe" and appealed to the public to take it when offered. They spoke ahead of an expected statement from the official medicines regulator over a possible link between the jab and a rare form of blood clots in a small number of adults. Trials on children in the UK were paused yesterday while parts of Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and France have restricted the roll-out to younger people pending further announcements.

https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/oxford-astrazeneca-vaccine-covid-jabs-trial-children-paused-blood-clot-b928162.html?itm_source=Internal&itm_channel=section_banner&itm_campaign=breaking-news-ticker&itm_content=3

European countries may have to mix COVID-19 shots amid AstraZeneca crisis

Several European countries are considering mixing up COVID-19 vaccines for citizens who received a first dose of AstraZeneca's shot, an unprecedented move that highlights challenges for governments struggling to tame fresh rises in infections. Vaccination programmes have been upset after a small number of reports that recipients of the AstraZeneca inoculation have suffered extremely rare blood clots, leading some countries worldwide to suspend its use out of caution. A senior official for the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said in an interview published on Tuesday there was a link between the vaccine and rare blood clots in the brain but the possible causes were still unknown.

<http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/european-countries-may-have-to-mix-covid-19-shots-amid-astrazeneca-crisis/ar-BB1fogM0>

Spain limits AstraZeneca vaccine to 60 years and up

Spain joined other European nations on Wednesday in limiting the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine to the elderly due to concerns over links to extremely rare blood clotting. Spanish Health Minister Carolina Darias announced after meeting with regional health chiefs that authorities would limit shots to those over 60 years old. Until now, Spain has used AstraZeneca on its younger population,

limiting it those under 65 years old. Darias said that authorities would now consider lifting that upper limit on the shot that forms a key pillar of the nation's vaccination scheme.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-spain-coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-760e317fab776973fd926aca5daec422>

EU agency: Rare clots possibly linked to AstraZeneca shot

British authorities recommended Wednesday that the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine not be given to adults under 30 where possible because of strengthening evidence that the shot may be linked to rare blood clots. The recommendation came as regulators in the United Kingdom and the European Union emphasized that the benefits of receiving the vaccine continue to outweigh the risks for most people — even though the European Medicines Agency said it had found a “possible link” between the shot and the rare clots. British authorities recommended that people under 30 be offered alternatives to AstraZeneca. But the EMA advised no such age restrictions, leaving it up to its member-countries to decide whether to limit its use.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-coronavirus-pandemic-coronavirus-vaccine-1ec87a9b7f14f98e29962e9d055d27ed>

AstraZeneca vaccine comes under further pressure in EU, UK

The embattled AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine came under further pressure on Wednesday, as the European Union's medicines regulator found a possible link between the shot and rare cases of blood clots, while the United Kingdom announced it would offer young people an alternative jab due to such risks. The European Medicines Agency's (EMA) widely anticipated verdict on Wednesday followed a review of dozens of reports of an extremely rare clot in the brain, known as cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST), among recipients of the jab.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/7/ema-says-possible-link-between-astrazeneca-shot-and-blood-clots>

Vaccination Campaign Push

Summoning seniors: Big new push to vaccinate older Americans

The first hurdle was getting on the bus. Seventy-four year old Linda Busby hesitated outside a community center where older people were loading up to go get the coronavirus vaccine. “I was scared, I'm not afraid to say that,” she said Wednesday after getting her shot of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine after encouragement from a staff member and her brother. “I thought I wasn't going to get it at first. Nobody likes getting shots.” Busby's hesitance is just what the Biden administration and its allies in the states are combating, one person at a time, as the White House steps up appeals to seniors to get inoculated. The vaccination rate for this top-priority group is reaching a plateau even as supplies have expanded.

<https://apnews.com/1dff49b197c3226b5df0515162604981>

The Latest: Puerto Rico to vaccinate anyone 16 and older

Puerto Rico's governor says officials will start vaccinating all those 16 years and older beginning Monday, prompting celebrations across a U.S. territory facing a spike in coronavirus cases. Currently, only people 50 years and older as well as anyone 35 to 49 with chronic health conditions are authorized to receive a vaccine. Gov. Pedro Pierluisi also announced Wednesday that he is implementing more stringent measures to fight a recent spike in coronavirus infections. A 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew will go into effect Friday, and businesses will be forced to close by 9 p.m. That is two hours earlier than has been allowed. Puerto Rico has recorded more than 199,000 coronavirus cases and more than 2,000 deaths related to COVID-19.

<https://apnews.com/a4afc7010f78d79e240eb56b965bc182>

Dubai to offer COVID-19 shots to country representatives at Expo 2020: state news agency

Dubai will offer COVID-19 vaccines to all official representatives of countries participating in Expo

2020, due to be held from October 2021 to March 2022, the United Arab Emirates's state-run news agency WAM reported, citing Dubai Crown Prince Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-dubai-expo/dubai-to-offer-covid-19-shots-to-country-representatives-at-expo-2020-state-news-agency-idUSKBN2BU1QB>

Spain's Covid-19 vaccination drive maintains pace despite Easter break

The regions are administering nearly all the doses that have arrived, meaning speeding up the rollout will depend on the production capacity of pharmaceutical companies. Spain's regions managed to administer nearly 1.3 million Covid-19 vaccines between March 30 and Tuesday, according to the Health Ministry. That figure is similar to that of the seven previous days, when 1.25 million shots were injected, which suggests that the campaign was not slowed down by the Easter break. But this pace will not be enough to hit the central government's targets: the current speed is equivalent to 600,000 people a week, while 1.4 million will be necessary if 70% of the adult population is to be vaccinated by September

<https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-04-07/spains-covid-19-vaccination-drive-maintains-pace-despite-easter-break.html>

Covid-19: First Moderna vaccines given in UK

Under-30s are to be offered an alternative Covid jab to the AstraZeneca vaccine, the UK's vaccine advisory body says. Advice for younger people is changing after an investigation into cases of blood clots in people who have had the jab. The vaccination programme has been "a most enormous success" but needs a "course correction", Prof Jonathan Van-Tam says. The blood clots are extremely rare, MHRA chief Dr June Raine says

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-56659036>

Boat, snowmobile, camel: vaccine reaches world's far corners

After enduring 40-knot winds and freezing sea spray, jostled health care providers arrived wet and cold on two Maine islands in the North Atlantic late last month to conduct coronavirus vaccinations. As they came ashore on Little Cranberry Island, population 65, residents danced with excitement. "It's a historic day for the island," said Kaitlyn Miller, who joined a friend in belting out "I'm not giving away my shot!" from the Broadway show Hamilton when the crew arrived. Around the world, it is taking extra effort and ingenuity to ensure the vaccine gets to remote locations. That means shipping it by boat to islands, by snowmobile to Alaska villages and via complex waterways through the Amazon in Brazil. Before it's over, drones, motorcycles, elephants, horses and camels will have been used to deliver it to the world's far corners, said Robin Nandy, chief of immunization for UNICEF.

<https://apnews.com/article/us-news-alaska-immunizations-coronavirus-pandemic-maine-7f12a1789c096b4a7d883c9dff315157>

Covid-19: Vaccine supply to increase to 3.9m doses by end of June

The Department of Health has said that it expected to receive 3.9 million Covid-19 vaccine doses in the next three months, in a significant increase of supply. In figures to be published on Wednesday afternoon, the department has outlined its projected deliveries for the next three months, a period which is expected to see a dramatic increase in the number of vaccines administered. The department said however that the numbers are contingent on suppliers fulfilling their commitments - something that has repeatedly not happened with the Astrazeneca vaccine. Sources said that the Government's pledge will remain to administer three million shots by the end of June, though if the programme accelerates as planned, there will be scope to administer significantly more doses.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/covid-19-vaccine-supply-to-increase-to-3-9m-doses-by-end-of-june-1.4531031>

Philippines allows use of Sinovac's COVID-19 vaccine for senior citizens

Philippine health authorities on Wednesday allowed the use of Sinovac's COVID-19 vaccine for some senior citizens after initially limiting coverage to people aged 18-59 years, as the country battles one of Asia's worst coronavirus outbreaks. The Department of Health and the Food and Drug Administration said they made the decision after receiving the recommendation of the Department of Science and Technology's vaccine expert panel. Senior citizens can now receive CoronaVac shots provided there is stringent evaluation of the person's health status and exposure risk, they said in a statement.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/philippines-allows-sinovacs-covid-19-115340123.html>

Reopening slowly restarting

Netherlands to ease lockdown by reopening museums and zoos - ANP News

The Dutch government will begin opening museums and zoos this month by offering coronavirus tests before entry, ANP news reported on Tuesday, citing the Health Ministry, in a first easing of far-reaching lockdown measures. Under current measures, public gatherings of more than two people are banned, restaurants are allowed to serve only takeaway food, and there is an evening curfew.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-netherlands-lockdown/netherlands-to-ease-lockdown-by-reopening-museums-and-zoos-anp-news-idUSS8N2JJ06H>

Survey: Even as schools reopen, many students learn remotely

Large numbers of students are not returning to the classroom even as more schools reopen for full-time, in-person learning, according to a survey released Wednesday by the Biden administration. The findings reflect a nation that has been locked in debate over the safety of reopening schools during the coronavirus pandemic. Even as national COVID-19 rates continued to ebb in February, key measures around reopening schools barely budged. Nearly 46% of public schools offered five days a week of in-person learning to all students in February, according to the survey, but just 34% of students were learning full time in the classroom. The gap was most pronounced among older K-12 students, with just 29% of eighth graders getting five days a week of learning at school.

<https://apnews.com/article/survey-schools-reopen-many-students-still-learn-remotely-e4d47c469e5bbd96868766771064f620>

Coronavirus: Irish teachers could strike over vaccine priority

Teaching unions in the Republic of Ireland have said members will be balloted for industrial action, potentially involving strike action, if the profession is not re-prioritised for Covid-19 vaccination. The Irish government has changed its strategy to focus on age groups. The Minister for Education Norma Foley said she understood the news was difficult for teachers. She said evidence showed schools to be areas of low transmission. The Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI) have been holding their annual conferences online.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-56659569>