Governance of COVID-19

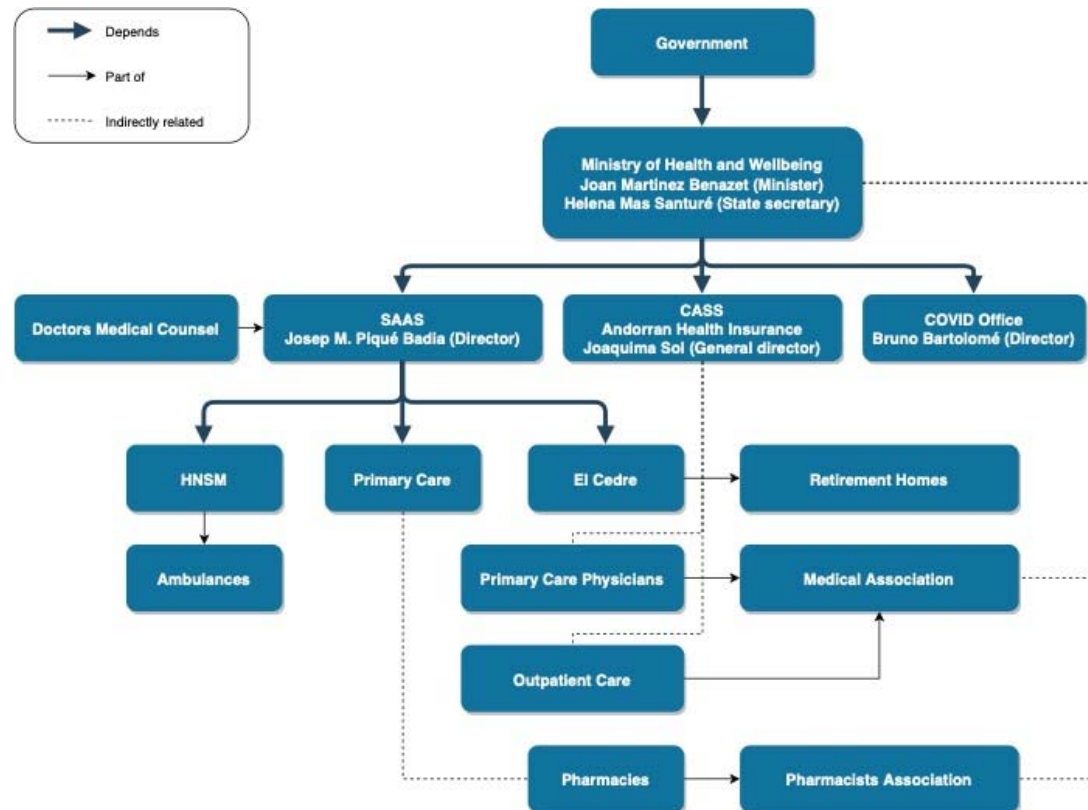**Principality of Andorra**

Aleix Dorca Josa

Characteristics of the governance system

- Andorra is a co-principality. The co-princes are the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell.

- The politics of Andorra take place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democracy.

- Xavier Espot is the current Head of State. The Government of Andorra is an *equal gender* coalition government.

- There are 12 ministers in Andorra.

- The General Council holds the legislative branch and it consists of 28 General Councilors elected every four years.

Governance of the health care system

- The ministry of Health and Wellbeing is responsible for governing the health care system. Currently led by Joan Martinez Benazet.

- Apart from the ministry, the main health actors in Andorra are SAAS and CASS.

- SAAS manages the Hospital, Primary Care Centres and *El Cedre* retirement home.

- CASS manages the public health insurance entity. Covers more than 90% of the population.

- Availability of insurance is related to employment status.

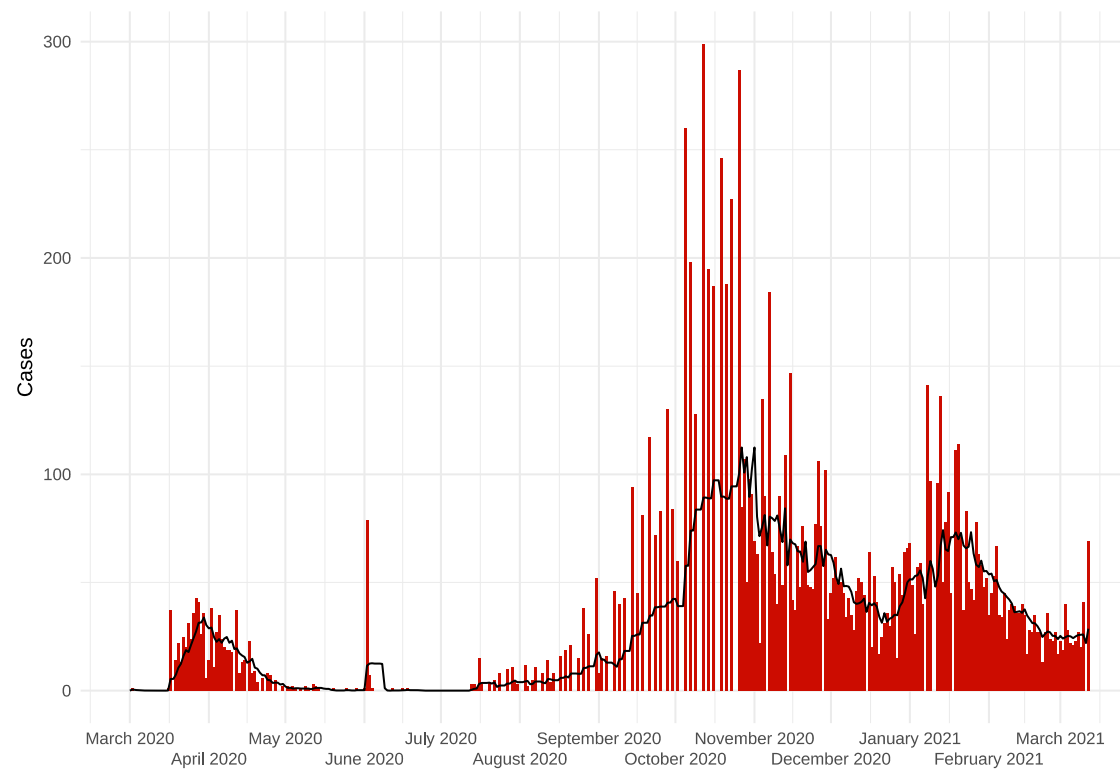- Only one Hospital with access to nearby facilities in France and Spain.

Governance of the health care system

COVID-19 pandemic

- The first wave ranged from the first of March to the first of July.

- The first reported case was on the second of March.

- Hospitalizations peaked on **April 6** with **55** hospitalized cases.

- The highest 14-day per 100,000 people notification with **506**.

- The second wave of the pandemic started mid-July, peaking mid-November with more than **1.500 cases**.

- The highest 14-day notification per 100,000 people for the second wave was **1868** on the **first of November**.

- As of March 10, 2021, the number of deaths stands at **112** people.

COVID-19 pandemic

Governance of COVID-19

- The Ministry of Health and Wellbeing has been the responsible government agency in dealing with the pandemic.

- With access to different advisory committees from outside the public administration (Joel Lopez Bercianos's Laboratory, Oriol Mitjà i Villar and Antoni Trilla i García).

- Andorra also had: a Scientific Committee; a Technical Committee; ACTUA and ACTUA-Tech.

- The COVID Office helps in specific epidemiology and screening tests.

- International cooperation mainly related to the border management and procurement of vaccines.
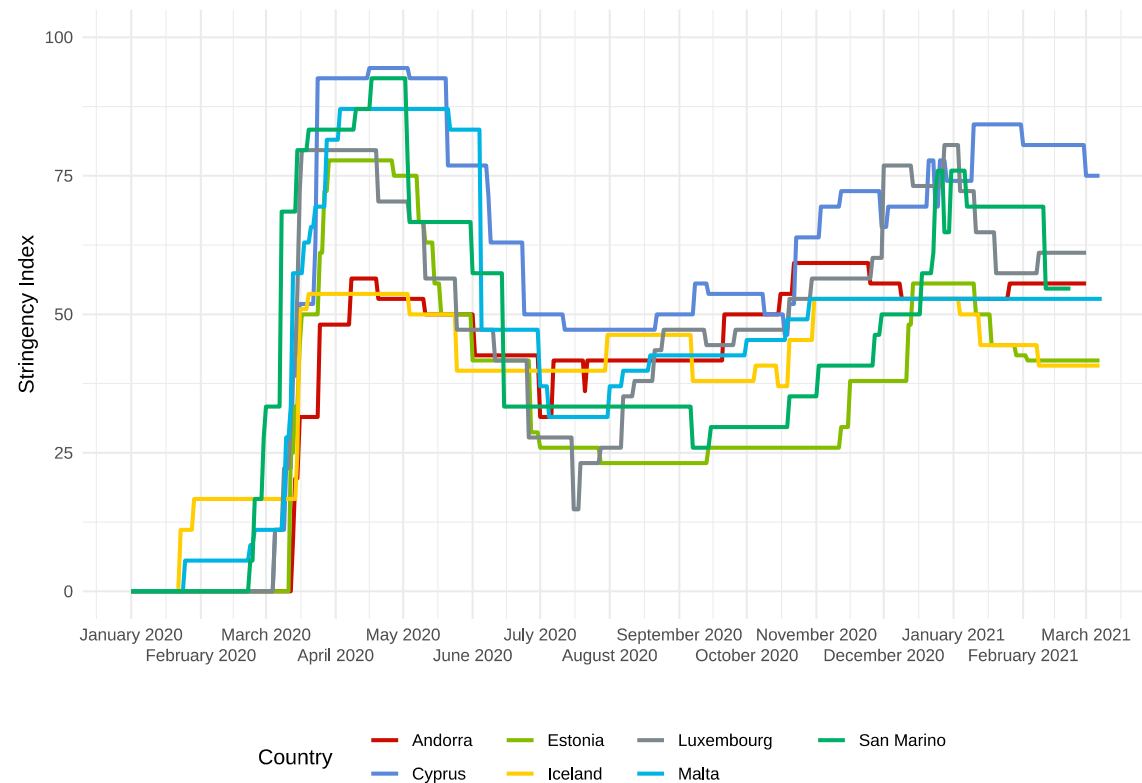
Governance of COVID-19

- During the second wave, frictions between the Ministry of Health and the government were reported by the media. These rumors were quickly denied by the Government of Andorra.

- The Andorran citizens have resignedly accepted the measures proposed by Government (wearing masks everywhere, working from home, personal hygiene, mobility restriction, screening tests…) without much public repercussion.

- Only vaccines have caused certain debate among naysayers.

- No major public demonstrations have occurred on Andorra during the first year of the pandemic.

COVID-19 measures

- Measures towards limiting the spread of the pandemic have mostly been reactive, during both waves.

- During the first wave, restrictions were generally applied. The importance of protecting the public health system was objective #1.

- **No** state of emergency was ever declared, but a general **lockdown** was enforced during the first wave.

- During the second wave, restrictions have been more cautious, and the balance has shifted more towards arguments on social and economic consequences.
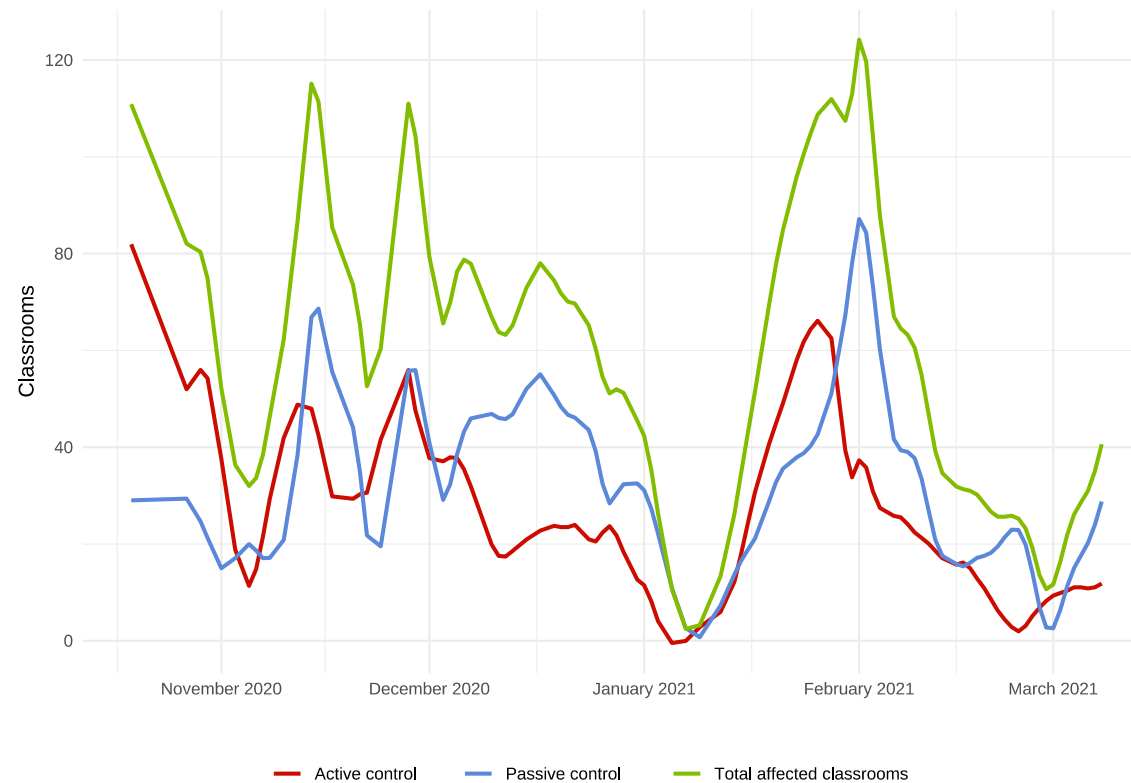
COVID-19 measures

COVID-19 and education

- Starting March 13, 2020 all schools and universities had to close and substitute regular studies with distant learning.

- The UdA implemented Apache's OpenMeetings and quickly adapted to the situation. Classes continued without interruption from day #1.

- During the second wave, schools opened as normally as possible with some confined classrooms following classes using Zoom (primary and secondary levels) or BigBlueButton (university).

- The confinement scheme stablished that after a case in a classroom the whole class would be confined. Later, a more specific approach was introduced confining only smaller groups of students.

COVID-19 and education

COVID-19 and borders

- Andorra has been temporarily restricted access to crossing the borders by neighbouring countries. Andorra **never** closed its borders.

- No access to train stations or airports: no affectations in these cases.

- Screening protocols to visitors during the winter season. Tourists spending three or more nights in the country had to present a test carried out with a maximum of 72 hours before the arrival.

- Currently, Andorra is still affected by mobility restrictions in Catalunya and the South of France. Mobility is allowed in urgent and justified medical or work matters.
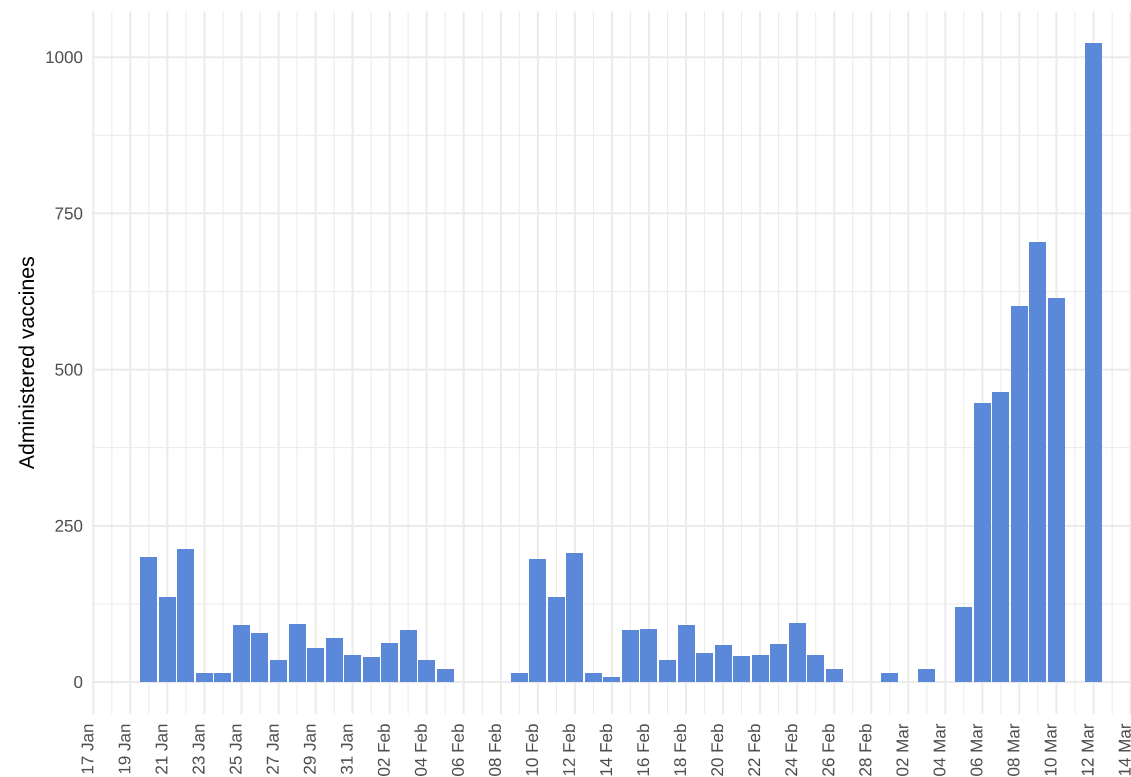
COVID-19 and economies

- In Spring 2020, policies towards relieving the economic impact of COVID-19 were extensive and rapidly implemented.

- A 400 million package of economic measures was introduced. Measures included loans for entrepreneurs, employee income compensations to prevent layoffs etc.

- The economic relief policy during the second wave of the pandemic follows the one started during the first wave. Modifications based on day-to-day evolution.

- The Government ensures minimal wage compensations in many affected situations (temporary layoffs, closings of businesses...).

COVID-19 vaccines

- The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been acquired through Spain. In **January 20, 2021** a partial first batch of 1.000 doses arrived. An additional 5.000 vaccines arrived in **March 9, 2021**.

- France supplied the Moderna vaccine. The first batch of 3.000 doses arrived in Andorra in **March 4, 2021**.

- 26.400 AstraZeneca vaccines acquired through the COVAX Facility.

- The vaccination program has been working non-stop since day one with health care professionals, elder people, special departments...

- Currently in Stage 3 of the program, vaccinating people up to 70 years and first line workers, with more than already 30.000 people registered to be vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccines

Conclusion: Lessons and prospects

- Andorra has shown great resilience and has been able to cope quickly and intelligently against the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The main fear has always been to surpass the capacity of attending ICU cases and saturating health care facilities.

- Trust in government has remained high throughout the pandemic. Fully transparent from day one.

- The impact of the pandemic is most visible in Tourism affectations and restrictions in local businesses.

- Working from home sped up the Andorran digitalization processes already in development. Two years extension to the time the Andorran Digital Certificate will be free of charge.