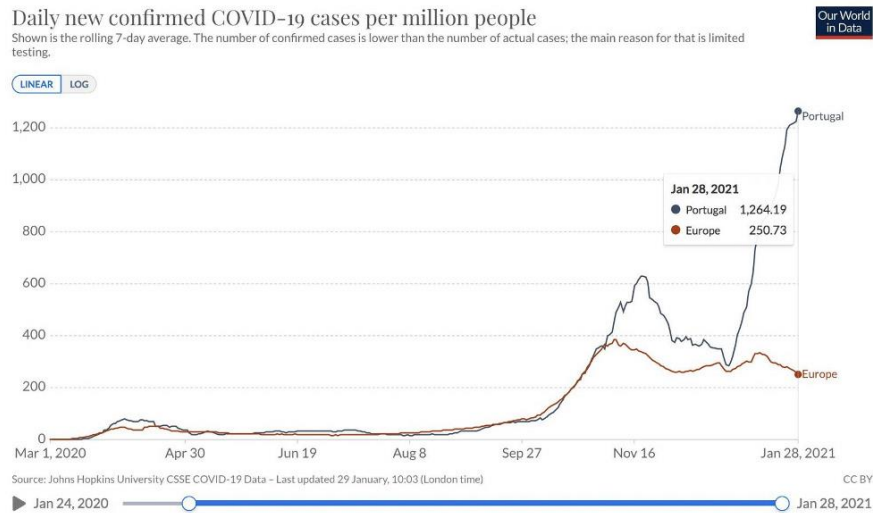


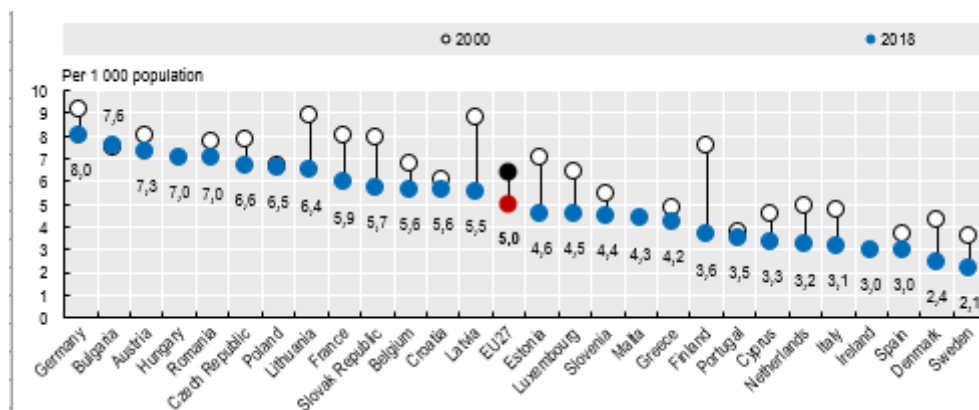
The third wave in Portugal

The current pandemic situation in Portugal is extremely serious, with the count of new cases increasing exponentially since mid-December. The successive days with more than 10,000 daily new infections (more than 1,000 per million inhabitants) and the increasing number of hospitalized and ICU patients are, in addition to the number of deaths, the facts that lead to the conclusion that this third Covid wave is affecting Portugal dramatically.



It is absolutely urgent to break the chains of transmission, test as much as possible and immediately isolate infected people. We must stop the infection, this is the determining factor that will help us manage the system, thus avoiding an aggravation of hospitalizations and associated deaths.

The Portuguese health system is under absolute pressure. It is well known that the situation was not easy from the start since, for example, when compared to the EU average, the ratio of hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants was 3.71 in Portugal and 6.39 in the EU27 (OECD, Health at a Glance, 2020):



In this situation in which demand is increasing in an unusual way (the biggest pandemic crisis in the last 100 years) and in which the resources of the system are very scarce (also the number of health professionals falls short of the current needs, namely nurses whose excellent

academic and scientific training makes them an attractive target for hiring health systems in other countries), Portugal faces the third wave of COVID19 with great difficulties.

From the outset, Private hospitals have been available to participate in the national fight against COVID19 and to collaborate with the NHS under the terms that the authorities deem appropriate. From the North to the South of the country there are private hospitals collaborating with NHS hospitals, as they should be. There are many examples that go far beyond beds and that concern the provision of equipment, the provision of hospitals, the provision of operating theaters for the use of NHS teams, the provision of wards to receive patients from public hospitals, etc., etc., in addition to the continued assistance to the Portuguese people who resort to private hospitals to deal with health issues that cannot be postponed.

The fake news about the insufficient involvement of private hospitals due to the price paid is triply false. They are false because private hospitals are fully involved, as requested by the Ministry of Health. They are false because private hospitals have collaborated to the extent of their possibilities (beds and human resources). Finally, they are false, because at no time were prices discussed: the price set by the Ministry of Health is 2,495 € for inpatient episodes-of-care without the need for ventilation, 6,036 € for inpatient episodes-of-care with ventilation for up to 96 hours and 8,431 € for inpatient episodes-of-care with ventilation longer than 96 hours.

Private hospitals have collaborated at all levels in the fight against the pandemic. Just now, a Portuguese private hospital received the team sent by the German government to help the NHS. At the request of the Portuguese Ministry of Health, German health professionals will be working in a private hospital but receiving patients who come from public hospitals with greater pressure. It is another good example of the collaboration that must exist between all parts of the health system

This is not the time to do the math or look at separate trenches. This is the time to come together to save lives. Portuguese private hospitals, and all of their professionals, are working alongside public hospitals. As a complement to the NHS because we all constitute the Portuguese health system, and this is our commitment to citizens.