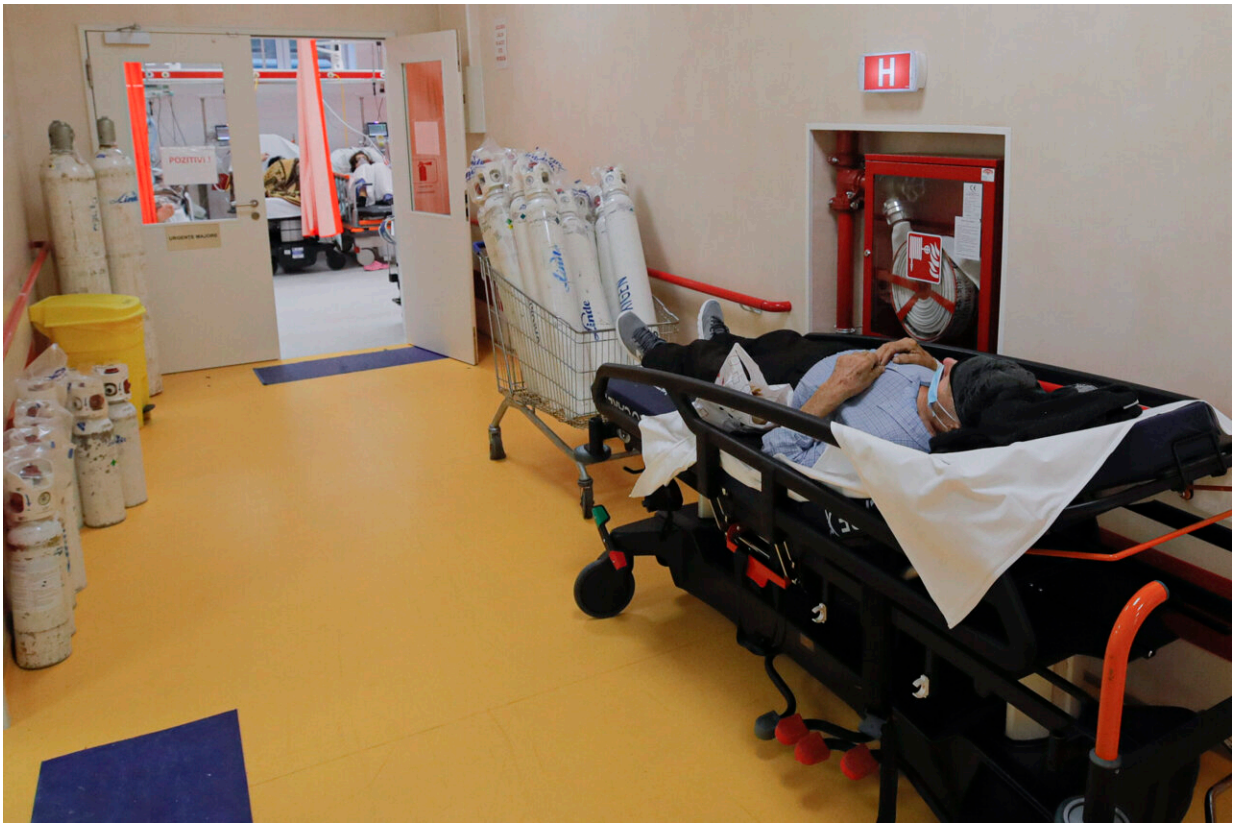


# Romania hits record infections, deaths amid vaccination lag

October 19 2021, by Stephen McGrath

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A man lies on a bed in a corridor of the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due to the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru

Romania on Tuesday hit daily records in both coronavirus infections and deaths as the country grapples with an acute virus surge amid alarmingly low vaccination uptake.

Romania confirmed a record high of 18,863 new COVID-19 infections and 574 deaths in one day. It was the first time the European Union nation of 19 million surpassed 500 deaths in a single day.

Romania has the second-lowest vaccination rate in the EU behind Bulgaria—with just 34% adults fully inoculated against COVID-19, compared to the bloc average of 74%. That is stretching the country's ailing health care system to maximum capacity: more than 1,800 coronavirus patients are now in intensive care.

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis called the situation a "national drama of terrible proportions" and urged Romanians to get vaccinated.

He told in a press conference Tuesday that the "lack of concrete action on the part of the authorities is alarming" and said he has convened a meeting with government officials Wednesday to "establish clear, restrictive measures."

"There are 574 hearts of Romanians that stopped beating because they lost the fight with this deadly virus," Iohannis said. "People who, just a few weeks ago, enjoyed life, dreamed and made plans for the future—(and) now leave behind the tears and despair of those who mourn their death."



Paramedics bring an elderly patient to the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru





Medical staff attend to patients in the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru



Patients lie on beds in the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due to the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru





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A patient lies on a bed in the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due to the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Door sign reads "Red Zone". Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru





Patients speak on mobile phones in the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due to the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Romania reported on Tuesday nearly 17,000 new COVID-19 infections and 442 deaths, the highest number of coronavirus infections and deaths in a day since the pandemic started, as the nation's health care system struggles to cope with an acute surge of new cases. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru



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A man breathes through an oxygen mask in the emergency room, turned into a COVID-19 unit due to the high number of cases, at the Bagdasar-Arseni hospital in Bucharest, Romania, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru

In response to the unfolding disaster, the World Health Organisation said Tuesday it will send a senior expert to Romania to help strengthen the country's pandemic response and it will facilitate the provision of 34,000 rapid COVID-19 diagnostic tests and 200 oxygen concentrators to treat virus patients.

"An urgent priority is to boost vaccination among vulnerable groups, reduce the risk of hospitalization and death, and relieve pressure on the health system," Dr. Heather Papowitz, the WHO expert, said in a



statement.

Last week, as Romania's health care system struggled to cope with the onslaught of COVID-19 patients, several dozen patients were sent to Hungary to receive intensive care treatment and Italy sent 5,200 doses of monoclonal antibodies.

Romania has so far confirmed more than 1.4 million COVID-19 infections and the deaths of 42,616 COVID-19 patients.

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