The Omicron-variant COVID-19 wave, which has recently hit mainland China, has seen the national daily case level at its highest since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Shanghai is the epicentre of the outbreak, but other cities, including Beijing, are severely affected too. The Commission, together with the EU Delegation in China, closely monitors the situation, assessing the possible impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions in affected areas in China. The negative effects of the prolonged lockdown in Shanghai are well-documented, and include mandatory centralized quarantine in case of a positive test in facilities with conditions that often do not meet basic standards of hygiene, comfort and privacy, problems to get access to medical care in cases of emergency, as well as limited numbers of flights and difficulties to access airports. The EU and its Member States have, in a coordinated effort, expressed their concerns to the Chinese authorities regarding the impact of these restrictions on EU citizens in China, and urged them to address these issues.

The pandemic has had and is still having unprecedented effects on both the demand and supply of maritime transport services. On 3 May 2022, the Commission organised a fact-finding meeting with the representatives of maritime and landside transport service providers to discuss the latest developments in the functioning of supply chains. Shippers, freight forwarders, carriers, port and land-side operators presented their assessment of the current situation, providing an overview of the possible impacts on cargo flows to and out of the EU. The participants welcomed the Commission’s initiative and indicated that they will monitor developments with the aim to hold a follow-up meeting soon.