

COVID-19

EU CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

27 March 2020
#Coronavirus

1 Health measures



Advisory group and what they produced

The European Commission launched in March a panel of **7 independent epidemiologists and virologists**, chaired by President von der Leyen, with Commissioner Kyriakides as vice-chair. The aim is to give **guidelines** on science-based and coordinated risk management measures and advise on:

- **response measures** for all Member States
- **gaps in clinical management**
- **prioritisation of health care, civil protection and other resources**
- policy measures for **long-term consequences of coronavirus**

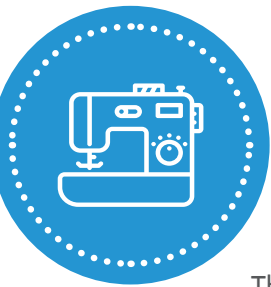
Based on scientific advice of the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control**, and following feedback from the panel, the Commission published on 19 March recommendations on community measures (such as social distancing) and on testing strategies.



Ramping up production of personal protective equipment (PPE)

The Commission is taking all necessary steps to help ensure adequate supply of PPE across Europe. It is working closely with the Member States to assess the available **stock of PPE** in the EU, the **production capacity** and **anticipated needs**.





The Commission also adopted a **Recommendation on conformity assessment and market surveillance**. This will increase the supply of certain types of PPE, such as disposable facemasks, to civil protection authorities, without compromising health and safety standards.

The Commission is discussing with industry how to **convert production lines** to supply more PPE. For example, textile manufacturers may be able to produce masks.

At the Commission's urgent request, the European Standardisation bodies and their national members made **European standards for medical supplies freely available**. This will allow producers to get high-performing devices on to the market more quickly.

Export authorisations required for personal protective equipment

Exports of personal protective equipment outside of the EU are now subject to **an export authorisation by Member States**. Under this temporary measure, Member States may grant authorisations where no threat is posed to the availability of such equipment in the Union, or on humanitarian grounds. Several European countries have been exempted from the authorisation requirement.



The Commission has launched **4 joint procurements of personal protective equipment** with Member States:

- **28 February:** a call for masks
- **17 March:** two calls, the first covering face masks, gloves, goggles, face-shields, surgical masks, overalls and the second for ventilators
- **19 March:** a joint procurement on testing kits

As of 24 March, producers have made offers covering, and even exceeding, the quantities requested by the 25 Member States taking part in the first two calls mentioned above.

The Commission will build up a **stockpile of medical equipment** such as ventilators and protective masks, which would be distributed where they are most needed. This would be done through the EU's **RescEU** civil protection mechanism.

2 Border and mobility measures



European guidelines for **border management measures** to protect health and ensure availability of goods and essential services

> *Endorsed by EU leaders on 17 March*

Temporary restriction on **non-essential travel to the EU** (30 days) with exemptions for specific categories of travellers.

> *Endorsed by EU leaders on 17 March*





Guidelines on green lanes

On 23 March 2020, the Commission issued guidelines on 'green lanes' to Member States to ensure **speedy and continuous flow of goods across the EU** and to avoid bottlenecks at key internal border crossing points.

Repatriation of EU citizens

So far, **several thousands citizens have been brought home** from China, Japan, USA, Morocco, Tunisia and Georgia with more destinations coming, thanks to EU logistical and financial support, and repatriations continue.



Support to airlines

The EU has agreed legislation so that airlines will not operate '**ghost flights**' to comply with the "use-it-or lose-it" rule – whereby air carriers must use at least 80% of their airport slots to keep them for the next year.

On 26 March, the Commission issued **guidance inviting EU Member States to support air cargo** operations during the coronavirus crisis. The guidance recommends operational and organisational changes to **keep essential transport flows moving**, including medical supplies and personnel.



3 Economic measures

Mobilising the EU budget and the European Investment Bank to save people's jobs and to support companies hit by the crisis

Liquidity measures to help hard-hit SMEs

The EIB Group will aim to create an additional **€20 billion** of investment in **small and medium-sized businesses**, partly using its own capital and partly backed by the EU budget

The Commission will make available **€1 billion** in an EU budget guarantee to the **European Investment Fund (EIF)**, so it can provide liquidity to **SMEs**, mobilising **€8 billion** in all to help at least **100,000 companies**



The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative

The Commission's proposal for an investment initiative of **€37 billion** has been approved. It consists of unused cohesion policy funds, and it involves the bringing forward of expenditure and redirecting it to the fight against the coronavirus:



● About **€8 billion** of unspent EU cohesion money that Member States can keep instead of reimbursing to the EU

● **€29 billion** of co-financing from the EU budget

In addition, the Commission proposes to allow Member States to use for coronavirus-related expenditure up to €28 billion that had been allocated for spending under 2014-2020 structural funding, but not yet awarded to projects.



EU Solidarity Fund

After a proposal from the European Commission, the **EU Solidarity Fund** would now be able to provide support to Member States affected by public health crises like the one caused by the coronavirus.



State aid

The main **fiscal response** to the coronavirus will come from Member States' national budgets. The Commission has adopted temporary **state aid rules** so governments can provide liquidity to the economy to **support citizens and companies**, in particular SMEs, and **save jobs in the EU**.



Within days of the new temporary rules coming into force, the Commission has adopted **numerous decisions** approving national measures by different Member States, such as **guarantee schemes for companies** and funds to **support the production and supply of medical devices and masks**.

Flexibility of the European fiscal framework

The European Commission has triggered the 'escape clause' to allow exceptional fiscal support. This will allow **applying the maximum flexibility to our budgetary rules** to help national governments financially support healthcare systems and businesses, and to keep people in employment during the crisis.



European Central Bank response to coronavirus emergency

The Commission's economic measures will complement the European Central Bank's **€750 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme** of private and public securities during the crisis, in addition to the €120 billion programme decided earlier.

Screening of foreign direct investment

On 25 March, the Commission issued guidelines to help Member States screen foreign direct investments and acquisitions of control or influence. The aim is to protect **critical European assets and technology** in the current crisis.



4 Promoting research, including for a vaccine



The Commission has mobilised up to **€140 million** to develop vaccines, new treatments, diagnostic tests and medical systems to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and **save lives**.

17 projects involving **136 research teams** were selected to receive **€47.5 million** from the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation funding programme.

The **Innovative Medicines Initiative** launched an emergency call funded by up to **€45 million** from Horizon 2020, to be matched by the pharma industry.

The Commission has offered **CureVac**, a highly innovative European vaccine developer, up to €80 million of support in the form of an EU guarantee of an EIB loan. The company aims to launch clinical testing of a vaccine by June 2020.

An European Innovation Council Accelerator call of **€164 million** has attracted a significant number of start-ups and SMEs with innovations that could also help tackle the pandemic.

5 Fighting disinformation



The Commission is in close contact with **social media platforms**. All big platforms took measures to **promote authoritative content** and to demote or take down misleading, illegal and harmful content, for instance conspiracy theories about the origin of the virus or its alleged intended spread.

Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová is meeting Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and others to discuss measures taken and further action.

So far more than **110 disinformation narratives** on the coronavirus were exposed, published and updated on www.EUvsDisinfo.eu.

The Commission and the European External Action Service are working closely with other EU institutions and Member States, including through the **Rapid Alert System** set up in March 2019, as well as with **international partners** from the G7 and NATO.

Up-to-date, verified information is available on the Commission's [coronavirus response website](http://www.EUvsDisinfo.eu).