

COVID-19

EU CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

28 October 2020

#StrongerTogether #NextGenerationEU

The European Commission is working on all fronts to contain the spread of the coronavirus, support national health systems and counter the socio-economic impact of the pandemic with unprecedented measures at both national and EU level.

1 Economic measures

EU leaders have agreed to a **recovery package of €1.8 trillion** that combines the EU budget for 2021-27 and [#NextGenerationEU](#). Under the agreement, the Commission will be able to borrow up to €750 billion on the markets.

The European Commission had adopted other measures of support, such as:

-  ● **economic measures** that complement the European Central Bank's €1,350 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme in addition to the €120 billion programme decided earlier;
-  ● **temporary state aid rules** so governments can provide liquidity to the economy to support citizens and save jobs in the EU;
-  ● **triggering the 'escape clause'** that allows maximum flexibility to our budgetary rules. This will help EU countries support healthcare systems and businesses, and secure people's jobs during the crisis;
-  ● **screening of foreign direct investment.** The Commission has issued guidelines to help Member States protect critical European assets and technology in the current crisis.



Providing economic guidance to Member States

The European Semester Spring Package provided **economic policy guidance** to all EU Member States in the context of the pandemic. The recommendations focus on cushioning the impact of the crisis in the short term and building growth in the long term, in line with our green and digital goals.

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

The Commission's [Temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency \(SURE\)](#) is designed to help people **keep their jobs during the crisis**.

SURE support is issued as social bonds, to make sure each euro has a clear social impact. Money will soon flow to 17 EU countries, to keep people employed. Spain, Poland and Italy will be the first EU countries to receive support under SURE.

In addition, the Commission presented guidelines [to ensure the protection of seasonal workers in the EU](#) during the pandemic. It provides guidance to national authorities, labour inspectorates, and social partners to guarantee the rights, health and safety of seasonal workers, and to ensure that seasonal workers are aware of their rights.

Financial support for hard-hit small and medium businesses

- The EIB Group aims to invest an additional €20 billion in small and medium-sized businesses.
- The Commission is already mobilising €8 billion to help at least 100,000 companies, together with the EIB Group.

The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative

The Commission tabled an investment initiative to provide Member States with immediate liquidity. It consists of [unspent cohesion policy funds](#) and includes:

- new methods to reach the most vulnerable under the [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived](#), such as home deliveries and the use of electronic vouchers to reduce the risk of spreading the virus;
- support to fishermen and farmers.

To support farmers and the agriculture sector, the Commission has

- launched [exceptional measures](#) to support and stabilise agricultural markets;
- adopted an [additional package of exceptional measures](#) to support the wine sector. On 4 May, the Commission adopted another [package](#) of measures to further support the agricultural and food sectors most affected by the coronavirus crisis, such as the wine sector.

2 Supporting research for treatment, diagnostics and vaccines

The [Coronavirus Global Response](#) pledging marathon raised funds for universal access to coronavirus treatments, tests and vaccines. It started in May and culminated in a Global Pledging Summit and concert in June 2020.

The Commission will participate in the [COVAX Facility](#) for equitable access to affordable COVID-19 vaccines and contribute €400 million in guarantees.

The Commission has mobilised more than **€660 million** under Horizon 2020 since January to **develop vaccines, new treatments, diagnostic tests and medical systems** to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and save lives.

The Commission has offered **CureVac**, a highly innovative European vaccine developer, financial support by backing a €75 million European Investment Bank loan.

The European Investment Bank also signed a €100 million financing agreement with immunotherapy company **BioNTech SE** to develop a vaccine programme. The EIB financing is backed by both Horizon 2020 and the Investment Plan for Europe.

€16 billion

in pledges from donors worldwide.

This includes a pledge of €1.4 billion from the Commission.



The Commission's [Vaccines Strategy](#) is designed to accelerate the development and availability of vaccines. It aims to:

- secure the production of vaccines within the EU;
- ensure sufficient supplies for its Member States through **Advance Purchase Agreements** with vaccine producers;
- adapt the EU's regulatory framework to the current emergency;
- use the flexibility of our rules to **speed up the development, authorisation and availability** of vaccines while respecting strict safety standards.

So far, the Commission has concluded:

- an agreement with [AstraZeneca](#) for the purchase of 300 million doses of the vaccine, with an option to purchase 100 million more, on behalf of EU Member States;
- an agreement with [Sanofi-GSK](#) for the purchase of 300 million doses, on behalf of all EU Member States;
- an agreement with [Johnson and Johnson](#) for the initial purchase of 200 million doses on behalf of all EU Member States, and could further purchase up to an additional 200 million vaccine doses;
- exploratory talks with [CureVac](#) for the initial purchase of 225 million doses on behalf of all EU Member States;

- exploratory talks with [Moderna](#) and have a contractual framework in place for the initial purchase of 80 million doses on behalf of all EU Member States, plus an option to purchase up to a further 80 million doses;
- exploratory talks with BioNTech-Pfizer for the initial purchase of 200 million doses on behalf of all EU Member States, plus an option to purchase up to a further 100 million doses.

The **Vaccination Strategy** presented by the Commission helps identifying vulnerable groups which should benefit from vaccination.

It also makes recommendations regarding vaccination services and infrastructure, vaccines deployment, availability and affordability of vaccines, and communication to ensure public confidence.

The Commission will put in place a common reporting framework and **a platform to monitor the effectiveness of national vaccine strategies**.

The Commission has launched a new **joint procurement** for medical equipment for vaccination.

The Commission also proposed that hospitals and medical practitioners should not have to pay VAT on vaccines and testing kits.

3 Public health

The Commission has allocated €3 billion from the EU budget, matched with €3 billion from Member States, to fund the **Emergency Support Instrument** and **RescEU's common stockpile** of equipment.

Medical guidance for EU countries

The Commission's panel of 7 independent epidemiologists and virologists provide science-based guidelines and advise upon:

- 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 from this panel as well as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Commission took the following steps:

- **19 March:** Published recommendations on community measures, such as physical distancing
- **8 April:** Issued guidelines to optimise the supply and availability of medicines as well as antitrust guidance on allowing limited cooperation among businesses, especially for critical hospital medicines. The Commission also set up a 'Clearing house for medical equipment' that helps identify available supplies, including testing kits, and accelerate their matching with national demands.
- **15 April:** Issued guidelines on testing methodologies, to support the efficient use of testing kits by Member States, in particular when confinement measures are lifted.
- **16 April:** Published guidance on how to develop tracing mobile apps that fully respect EU data protection rules, in the context of the gradual lifting of containment measures.
- **16 June:** EU Member States, with the support of the Commission, have agreed on technical guidelines to ensure a safe exchange of information between contact tracing apps and interoperability.
- **19 October:** A European Gateway Service was launched to interlink those apps. By the end of November, 19 apps should be connected to the service.



Personal protective equipment (PPE)

To aid the production and availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), the Commission is:

- working closely with Member States to assess the available stock of PPE in the EU, the production capacity and anticipated needs;
- ensuring conformity assessment and market surveillance to increase the supply of PPE without compromising health and safety standards;
- discussing with industry how to convert production lines to supply more PPE and providing manufacturers with guidance to increase production of PPE, hand sanitisers and disinfectants.

Tests

The Commission issued a recommendation on testing strategies, including the use of **rapid antigen tests**. €100 million from the Emergency Support Instrument is invested in the purchase and delivery of such tests in the Member States. In parallel, the Commission is launching a joint procurement to help EU countries get more of these tests.



4 Borders and mobility

During the pandemic, the Commission has issued:

- **guidelines for border management measures** to protect health and ensure availability of goods and essential services;
- **temporary restriction on non-essential travel** to the EU;
- **guidance to ensure the free movement of workers**, especially in the health care and food sectors;
- **guidance on health, repatriation and travel arrangements** for cruise ship passengers and cargo vessel crews;
- proposal to ensure that any measures taken by Member States that restrict free movement due to the pandemic are **coordinated and clearly communicated at the EU level**, with a single set of colours to represent risks and a single set of rules to follow. The Commission will also work with Member States on a common approach to quarantine practices.
- guidance on travellers to be exempted from the temporary travel restrictions;
 - a testing protocol for aviation and an EU Passenger Locator Form are in the making, to facilitate safe travel.



Re-open EU provides essential information regarding the safe relaunch of free movement and tourism across Europe. A Re-open EU **app** will launch in the coming weeks. You can find:

- real-time information on borders;
- available means of transport;
- travel restrictions;
- public health and safety measures;
- a map with a clear colour code.

5 Fighting disinformation

The Commission is in close contact with **social media platforms** regarding measures to **promote authoritative content**, improve users' awareness, and limit coronavirus disinformation and advertising related to it.

So far more than 600 disinformation narratives on the coronavirus have been exposed, published and updated on www.EUvsDisinfo.eu. The Commission's [fighting coronavirus-disinformation](#) page also provides materials for myth busting and fact checking.

The European Commission is deploying all available tools and [funding research](#) to help in the fight against coronavirus-related misinformation and disinformation.

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**.

On 10 June, the Commission presented a [series of actions](#) it will take to **step up fighting disinformation around the coronavirus pandemic**, such as strengthening strategic communications and public diplomacy in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and around the world as well as its support to independent media and journalists.

The actions proposed will feed into future EU work on disinformation, notably the **European Democracy Action Plan** and the **Digital Services Act**.



Up-to-date, verified information is available on the Commission's [coronavirus response website](#).

© European Union, 2020

Reuse of this document is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license). For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

All images © European Union, unless otherwise stated. Icons © Flaticon – all rights reserved.

Print ISBN 978-92-76-23295-7 doi:10.2775/83147 NA-02-20-879-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-76-23293-3 doi:10.2775/123854 NA-02-20-879-EN-N