The EU response to the coronavirus crisis

#NextGenerationEU #StrongerTogether

5 August 2020
The European Commission is coordinating a common European response to the coronavirus outbreak. During these times of crisis, across the European Union, countries, regions and cities are stretching out a helping hand to each other and to our neighbors, in solidarity between nations, between people, but also between generations.

“In many ways, Europe's motto has always been not only 'united in diversity' but also 'united in adversity'.”

-European Commission-
Additional resource – video of President von der Leyen on the EU’s coordinated action to fight the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences >
Elements of Response

1. Health and emergency response
2. Economic response
3. Research and funding
4. Coordinated exit

Health + Fighting disinformation
Economy and recovery plan
Open borders & mobility
Research
Coordinated exit strategy
1. We directly support the healthcare systems of the EU countries, with €3 billion from the EU budget, to fund the Emergency Support Instrument and RescEU’s common stockpile of equipment. It helps secure vital equipment, from ventilators to personal protective equipment and help mobilise medical teams for assistance for the most vulnerable, including in refugee camps.
2. The Commission is working with others to make sure patients and frontline health care workers get the equipment they need.
3. The EU is joining forces – using both EU and national budgets - to maximise purchasing clout and secure necessary medical supplies, as quickly as possible.
4. To beat coronavirus, we need treatments and vaccines. So the Commission is investing in top quality research bringing Europe’s leading scientists together.
5. We are listening to experts and acting on their advice: panel of 7 independent epidemiologists and virologists to give guidance on response measures for MS; gaps in clinical management prioritisation of health care; civil protection and other resources policy measures for long-term consequences of coronavirus + work of European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).
EU cooperation in the health response has been gaining strength.

EU countries have speedy access to the first ever RescEU stockpile of medical equipment, such as ventilators and protective masks. In addition, the EU has launched four large international tenders allowing member states to make joint purchases of equipment and testing kits.

The EU is facilitating the sending of medical teams through the EU Medical Corps so that teams from different member states can come to support the health-care systems hardest hit by the crisis.

In a spirit of solidarity, member states have come to each other’s aid. For example: Austria, Germany and Luxembourg have made their intensive care units available to Dutch, French and Italian patients in critical condition. Poland and Romania and Germany have sent teams of doctors to help treat patients in hospitals in Italy. Denmark is sending ventilators and field hospital equipment to Italy.

The EU also approved new rules allowing member states to request financial assistance from the EU Solidarity Fund to cover health emergencies. With the newly
broadened scope of the fund, up to €800 million will be made available for member states this year to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Additional resources:
Video ‘Romanian medical team helps Italy’:
Video ‘Snorkeling mask becomes ventilator’:
1. Keeping The Commission is helping EU residents to return home from abroad. EU member states have come together in providing consular support and repatriating EU citizens from third countries. By mid-April 2020, more than half a million citizens had been brought home, with efforts underway to reach and repatriate more Europeans.

Joint repatriation flights to bring back EU citizens can be co-financed from the EU budget at up to 75%.

More than 78,000 Europeans stranded around the world by the outbreak have been brought home thanks to the EU civil protection mechanism.

Additional resources:

2. 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 checkpoints.

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Keeping Europeans moving

**Getting people home**
More than 550,000 citizens.

**Green Lanes**
Supplies moving over borders.

**Helping cross-border workers get to work**
Including those working in the healthcare and food sector.

**Adjusting rules**
Ending ghost flights.
internal border crossing points

3. The Commission worked with Member States to limit the impact of the reintroduction of internal border controls on the internal market, protect citizens' health, ensure the right treatment of people who do have to travel, and make sure essential goods keep moving across the EU through the introduction of green lanes.

4. 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.

Finally, to limit the transmission of the virus in Europe and beyond, the EU has closed its external borders to non-essential travel, while ensuring essential goods keep moving across the EU through the introduction of green lanes. The travel of European citizens outside the EU is also discouraged.

Furthermore, the European Commission has worked to keep the Europeans connected online. To prevent network congestion and to allow everyone the enjoyment of digital entertainment, the Commission called upon and met with the CEOs of streaming platforms and telecom operators. Streaming platforms offered standards rather than high definition content, telecom operators took mitigating measures to allow for continued traffic.
First and foremost, our greatest weapon against disinformation is a strong communication environment – we work to make sure the EU is present, sharing accurate information on the EU response in a compelling way. Unfortunately, this is not always enough.

All member states and the EU as a whole are threatened by the deliberate spread of fake news around the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU helps to detect, expose and challenge disinformation by providing accurate and updated information. It also works with online platforms to promote reliable sources, demote fake news and remove illegal content.

In a Joint Communication (adopted 10 June), the European Commission and the High Representative propose concrete actions for a stronger and more resilient EU. They will feed into future EU work on disinformation, notably the European democracy action plan, as well as the Digital Services Act.

Understand (define the issue)- False or misleading narratives come in different forms that require different responses
- content may not be illegal as defined by law, but still harmful
- it can range from disinformation (defined as intentional) to misinformation
- it can include misleading healthcare information, consumer fraud, cyber-crime, illegal hate speech as well as targeted influence operations by foreign actors.
- the motivation behind it can range from economic gain (online scams) causing public harm, to political purposes
- foreign actors and certain third countries, in particular Russia and China, have engaged in targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns in the EU, its neighbourhood, and globally.

Communicate
Europeans need to have access to verifiable authoritative health information. The EU shares information from official and other verifiable sources with citizens and cooperates with international partners.

Cooperate
The European Commission is working with its partners across the globe and within the EU (Member States, WHO, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, or NATO)

Transparency
The Commission has closely monitored the actions of online platforms under the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Results of working with platforms
-more than 3.4 million suspicious accounts challenged
- directed more than 2 billion people to resources from health authorities
- YouTube reviewed over 100,000 videos

Ensuring freedom of expression and pluralistic democratic debate
The EU’s approach to fight disinformation is based on respect for fundamental rights. The coronavirus cannot be used as a pretext to undermine freedom of expression, reduce the accountability of public authorities or unduly limit access to information and transparency

Empowering citizens, raising citizens awareness and increasing societal resilience
The Commission will support and promote media literacy projects, critical thinking and digital skills, as well as civil society organisations

Additional resources:
President von der Leyen video on disinformation during the Coronavirus crisis: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/l-187719
Example of rebuttal on disinformation linking Coronavirus with 5G:
1. To help repair the economic and social damage brought by the coronavirus pandemic, kick-start European recovery, and protect and create jobs, the European Commission is proposing a major recovery plan for Europe based on harnessing the full potential of the EU budget. To mobilise the necessary investments, the Commission put forward a two-fold response, approved by the European Council on 21 July:
   a) Next Generation EU a new recovery instrument of €750 billion which will boost the EU budget with new financing raised on the financial markets for 2021-2024; b) A reinforced long-term budget of the EU for 2021-2027

2. 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.
3. 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.

4. The Commission put forward Temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency – SURE – to help people keep their job during the crisis. SURE provides funding to Member States of up to €100 billion by covering part of the costs related to the creation or extension of national short-time work schemes.

5. The Commission tabled the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative an investment initiative to provide Member States with immediate liquidity. It consists of unspent cohesion policy funds (Flexibility to redirect funding between programmes and regions to fund corona-related actions; A 100% financing rate by the EU for measures to fight the crisis, so Member States don’t have to frontload money; support to fishermen and farmers)

6. 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.

Additional resources:
- Executive Vice-President Vestager video on Temporary Framework to enable Member States to further support the economy: [https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004593](https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004593)
Supporting Member States to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the crisis
Public investment has a vital role to play in a balanced and sustainable recovery. The bulk of the funding from Next Generation EU (more than 80%) will therefore be used to support public investment and key structural reforms in the Member States, concentrated where the crisis impact and resilience needs are greatest.

Kick-starting the economy and mobilising private investment
Urgent action is needed to kick-start the economy and create the conditions for a recovery led by private investment in key sectors and technologies. This investment is particularly crucial to the success of Europe’s green and digital transitions. The Commission estimates that investment needs amount to at least €1.5 trillion in 2020-2021. Investment in key sectors and technologies, from 5G to artificial intelligence and from clean hydrogen to offshore renewable energy, holds the key to Europe’s future.

Learning the lessons of the crisis and addressing Europe’s strategic challenges
The crisis has both underlined the value of European cooperation and demonstrated vividly that the Union must urgently build up its capacity to respond to crises and build resilience to future shocks.
To mobilise the necessary investments, the Commission is putting forward a two-fold response:
- Next Generation EU to boost the EU budget with new financing raised on the financial markets for 2021-2024
- Reinforced long-term budget of the European Union for 2021-2027

Next Generation EU of €750 billion (of which €390 billion will be distributed in the form of grants and €360 billion in loans) as well as targeted reinforcements to the long-term EU budget for 2021-2027 will bring the total financial firepower of the EU budget to €1.824 trillion.

Together with the three important safety nets for workers, businesses and sovereigns approved by the European Council on 23 April 2020 and amounting to a package worth €540 billion, these exceptional measures taken at the EU level would reach more €2.364 trillion.
Supporting Member States to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the crisis

EU leaders agreed a recovery package and the 2021-2027 budget that will help the EU to rebuild after the pandemic and will support investment in the green and digital transitions. More information: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/07/17-21/

1. **European Recovery and Resilience Facility, embedded in the European Semester Mechanism:**
To be used for investments, reforms, including in green and digital transition. **Mechanism:** Grants and loans by implementing Member States’ national recovery and resilience plans defined in line with the objectives of the European Semester, the National Energy and Climate Plans and the Just Transition Plans including in relation to the green and digital transitions and the resilience of national economies. **Budget:** €672.5 billion of which €312.5 billion for grants and €360 billion in loans. **Distribution key:** available to all Member States, focus on the most affected countries

2. **REACT-EU – Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe Mechanism:**
To be used employment subsidies, short time work schemes and youth employment measures, liquidity and solvency for SMEs. **Mechanism**: Flexible cohesion policy grants for municipalities, hospitals, companies via Member States’ managing authorities. No national co-financing required **Budget**: €47.5 billion of additional cohesion policy funding between 2020 and 2022. Distribution key: focus on the most affected countries and regions, taking into account the level of youth unemployment and the relative prosperity of Member States.

3. **Supporting the green transition to a climate-neutral economy via funds from Next Generation EU**

A proposal to strengthen the **Just Transition Fund** up to €10 billion, to assist Member States in accelerating the transition towards climate neutrality.

A €7.5 billion reinforcement for the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development** to support rural areas in making the structural changes necessary in line with the European Green Deal and achieving the ambitious targets in line with the new Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies.

**Kick-starting the economy and helping private investment**

1. **Enhanced InvestEU Programme, including a Strategic Investment Facility**

**Mechanism**

To be used for investments in sustainable infrastructures, R&I and digitalization, SMEs and midcaps, social investment and skills across the EU. The New Strategic Investment Facility will aim to develop strong and resilient independent value chains, to support critical infrastructure, green and digital technologies and healthcare, and to enhance the autonomy of the Union’s single market. **Mechanism**: Provisioning of an EU budget guarantee for financing of investment projects via the EIB group and national promotional banks. **Budget**: provisioning from EU budget of €5.6 billion. **Distribution key**: demand driven and available to all Member States.

**Learning the lessons of the crisis and addressing Europe’s strategic challenges**

1. **New health programme, EU4Health, to help equip Europe against future health threats**

To be used for: investments in EU healthcare systems with a focus on: a) health security and capacity to react to crises; b) long-term disease prevention and surveillance, health access, diagnosis and treatment, cross-border collaboration in the health domain. **Mechanism**: grants directly to beneficiaries by the European Commission, centrally managed procurements by the European Commission. **Budget**: the Commission’s budgetary proposal is subject to change after the ongoing discussions with the European Parliament and the Council, following the outcome of the European Council meeting of 21 July. **Distribution key**: centrally managed programme benefitting all Member States.
2. Horizon Europe will have a budget of €75.9 billion with a top up of €5 billion from Next Generation EU, which brings the total to €80.9 billion to increase European support for health and climate-related research and innovation activities.

3. Reinforcing rescEU, the EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism, to respond to large-scale emergencies

To be used for: health emergencies response infrastructure: storage capacity, systems to transport medicines, doctors and patients within the EU or to bring them in from outside the EU. Mechanism: Grants and procurements managed by the European Commission. Budget: A total of €1.9 billion. Distribution key: centrally managed programme benefitting all Member States.

Global partners:
A total of €84.5 billion for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development to support partners – in particular in the Western Balkans, the Neighbourhood and the rest of Africa – in their efforts to fight and recover from the impact of the pandemic; An increase of €5 billion for the Humanitarian Aid Instrument, reflecting growing humanitarian needs in the most vulnerable parts of the world.

The Commission is also proposing to reinforce other programmes to allow them to play their full role in making the Union more resilient and addressing challenges brought along by the pandemic and its consequences. These are, among others, Digital Europe Programme, Connecting Europe Facility, Common Agricultural Policy, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), etc.

Additional info: https://europa.eu/!Hj93DF
1. 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.

2. The EU also approved new rules allowing member states to request financial assistance from the EU Solidarity Fund to cover health emergencies. With the newly broadened scope of the fund, up to €800 million will be made available for member states this year to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

3. 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. The COVID-19 crisis is a global challenge that requires global solutions. The EU has set out plans to support partner countries' efforts in fighting the virus providing €20 billion in financial support to address the immediate health crisis and resulting humanitarian needs. The EU also supported the freezing of debt for
developing countries, freeing much needed resources to spend on improving health systems and fighting the pandemic.

Additional resources:
- President von der Leyen video on guidelines to protect critical European assets and technology in current crisis: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004610
- President von der Leyen video on the global EU response to the Coronavirus pandemic: https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004668
The recovery plan turns the immense challenge we face into an opportunity, not only by supporting the recovery but also by investing in our future: the European Green Deal and digitalization will boost jobs and growth, the resilience of our societies and the health of our environment.

The European Green Deal as the EU's recovery strategy:
- Meeting the existing 2030 climate and energy targets can add 1% of GDP and create almost 1 million new green jobs.
- Investing more in circular economy has the potential to create at least 700,000 new jobs by 2030.
- New funds can be used for investment in projects that will deliver quickly new jobs while contributing to long-term climate neutrality:
  - A massive renovation wave of our buildings and infrastructure and a more circular economy, bringing local jobs;
  - Rolling out renewable energy projects, especially wind, solar and kick-starting a clean hydrogen economy in Europe;
  - Cleaner transport and logistics, including the installation of one million charging points for electric vehicles and a boost for rail travel and clean mobility in our cities and regions;
- Strengthening the Just Transition Fund to support re-skilling, helping businesses create new economic opportunities.
Europe needs to invest more in better connectivity, and its industrial and technological presence. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data and cloud infrastructure, 5G and 6G networks, super- and quantum computers, as well as blockchain technologies will have spillover effects and increase Europe’s strategic autonomy.

Boost of internet shopping and online business, new clear rules for online platforms (it will offer greater security for consumers online, prevent the abuse of market power by platforms and ensure a fair market place with equal opportunities for smaller businesses), and digitisation of public procurement.

As Europe sets off on its recovery path towards a greener and digital economy, the need to improve and adapt skills, knowledge and know-how becomes all the more important. The Commission will come forward with a Skills Agenda for Europe and a Digital Education Action Plan.

Together with the ongoing work on cybersecurity as part of the EU Security Union, the EU will increase capabilities within Member States and boost the EU’s overall cybersecurity.
1. Europe is helping to keep goods flowing, supermarket shelves stocked and components reaching factories.

2. The Commission is making sure governments can do everything possible to save jobs and businesses, especially SMEs. Almost €3600 billion have been mobilised by the Member States, the Commission, the ECB and the EIB.

3. The EU is mobilising all available resources from the EU budget to invest in the economy on a massive scale.

4. Millions of Europeans rely on EU funds in normal times. The Commission is adapting funding programmes to best help those who most need it in this time of crisis.

Additional resources:
- President von der Leyen video on guidelines for setting up ‘green lanes’ to speed up transport of goods: [https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/topnews/M-004608]
The European Commission registered €9.8 billion in pledges from donors worldwide during the Coronavirus Global Response pledging event which began today with the aim raising funding for the development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus.

**€1 billion mobilised under H2020 for Coronavirus Global Response**

To help reach the objectives of the Coronavirus Global Response, €1 billion will be mobilised under the EU’s flagship programme for research and innovation, Horizon 2020.

- €450 million for developing scientific solutions for testing, treating and preventing against the coronavirus and developing health systems
- €400 million European Commission guarantee of the European Investment Bank lending to finance pre-commercial stage investments in COVID-19 (including scale-up of related production facilities)
- €150 million for disruptive innovations on COVID-19 under the European Innovation Council’s Accelerator

The European Commission has concluded exploratory talks with the pharmaceutical company Sanofi to purchase a potential COVID-19 vaccine. Once a vaccine has proven
to be safe and effective, the Commission would purchase of 300 million doses for all EU Member States

In addition, three powerful European supercomputing centres – located in Bologna, Barcelona and Jülich – are currently being used to research and develop vaccines, treatments and diagnoses for the coronavirus.
The Commission’s global coronavirus response, with the aim of universal access to affordable coronavirus vaccination, treatment and testing, will now move to the next phase. What began on 4 May with the pledging event culminated in a final Global Pledging Summit on Saturday 27 June. Together with the international advocacy organisation Global Citizen, the Commission will step up the mobilisation of funding to enable the world to overcome this pandemic and avoid another.

Total pledges under the Coronavirus Global Response pledging marathon, launched by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on 4 May, to €15.9 billion.

The aim is to gather significant funding to ensure the collaborative development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus.

It rejuvenates multilateralism and international cooperation, with Europe at the front line, at a time when the world needs to come together.

The pledging event was co-convened by the European Union, Canada, France, Germany, Italy (also incoming G20 presidency), Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
(also holding the G20 presidency), Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. The initiative is a response to the call from the World Health Organization (WHO) and a group of health actors for a global collaboration for the accelerated development, production and equitable global access to new coronavirus essential health technologies. The Coronavirus Global Response Initiative is comprised of three partnerships for testing, treating and preventing underpinned by health systems strengthening
The EU strategy rests on two pillars:

**Securing the production of vaccines in the EU and sufficient supplies for its Member States** through Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers via the **Emergency Support Instrument**.

Adapting the EU's regulatory framework to the current urgency and making use of existing regulatory flexibility to accelerate the development, authorisation and availability of vaccines while maintaining the standards for vaccine quality, safety and efficacy.

**Advance Purchase Agreements**

In order to support companies in the swift development and production of a vaccine, the Commission will enter into agreements with individual vaccine producers on behalf of the Member States. In return for the right to buy a specified number of vaccine doses in a given timeframe, the Commission will finance part of the upfront costs faced by vaccines producers. This will take the form of Advance Purchase Agreements.

**Financing criteria**
When taking the financing decision on what vaccines to support, the following non-exhaustive criteria will be taken into account, including: soundness of scientific approach and technology used, speed of delivery at scale, cost, risk sharing, liability, coverage of different technologies, early engagement with EU regulators, global solidarity, and capacity to supply through development of production capacity within the EU.

**A flexible and robust regulatory process**
Regulatory processes will be flexible but remain robust. Together with the Member States and the European Medicines Agency, the Commission will make the greatest use of existing flexibilities in the EU’s regulatory framework to accelerate the authorisation and availability of successful vaccines against COVID-19. This includes an accelerated procedure for authorisation, flexibility in relation to labelling and packaging, and a proposal to provide temporary derogations from certain provisions of the GMO legislation to speed up clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines and medicines containing genetically modified organisms.

**First agreement on vaccines between the European Commission and AstraZeneca**
On 14 August, the European Commission reached a first agreement with the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to purchase a potential coronavirus vaccine, as well as to donate or re-direct vaccines to other European or other lower and middle-income countries. On 27 August, the first contract that the Commission negotiated on behalf of the EU Member States with a pharmaceutical company entered into force following the formal signature between AstraZeneca and the Commission. AstraZeneca’s vaccine candidate has already entered large-scale Phase II / III clinical trials after achieving promising Phase I / II results in safety and immunogenicity. Once the vaccine is proven safe and effective against the coronavirus, the Commission has agreed to purchase 300 million vaccine doses on behalf of Member States, with an option for an additional purchase of 100 million doses. The agreement is financed with the Emergency Support Instrument, and the Commission continues discussing similar agreements with other vaccine manufacturers.
The Commission has put forward a European roadmap towards lifting coronavirus containment measures. It takes into account the expertise of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control the Commission’s Advisory Panel on the coronavirus, experience of Member States and guidance from the World Health Organization.

Accompanying measures to phase-out confinement: gather data; create a framework for contact tracing and warning (guidelines on mobile apps), testing capacity expanded and harmonized; increase capacity of health system; develop introduction of vaccines

Timing is essential based on three criteria: Epidemiological criteria; sufficient health capacity; appropriate monitoring system

Common principles based on science; coordinated between Member States; respect and solidarity between Member States

The Commission adopted a recommendation to support coronavirus containment measures through mobile data and apps. The recommendation sets out key principles for the use of mobile applications used for social distancing measures,
warning, preventing and contact tracing. Any use of apps and data should respect data security and EU fundamental rights such as privacy and data protection.

To allow people to take holidays and catch up with their friends and families, to let tourism businesses reopen after months of being locked down, and to help Member States help gradually lift travel restrictions while respecting the necessary health precautions, the European Commission presented a set of guidelines and recommendations. The package includes an overall strategy, a common approach to restore free movement, a framework to support transportation, a recommendation on travel vouchers, and criteria for restoring tourism.

**Restoring transport services across the EU while protecting the health of transport workers and passengers:**
The guidelines present general principles for the safe and gradual restoration of passenger transport by air, rail, road and waterways. The guidelines put forth a series of recommendations, such as the need to limit contact between passengers and transport workers, and passengers themselves, reducing, where feasible, the density of passengers.

The guidelines also include indications on the use of personal protective equipment such as face masks and on adequate protocols in case passengers present coronavirus symptoms. The guidelines also make recommendations for each mode of transport and call for coordination among Member States in light of re-establishment of
gradual connections between them.

**Safely resuming tourism services:**
The Commission sets out a common framework providing criteria to safely and gradually restore tourism activities and developing health protocols for hotels and other forms of accommodation, to protect the health of both guests and employees. These criteria include epidemiological evidence; sufficient health system capacity being in place for local people and tourists; robust surveillance and monitoring and testing capacity and contact tracing. These guidelines will allow people to safely stay at hotels, camping sites, Bed&Breakfasts or other holiday accommodation establishments, eat and drink at restaurants, bars and cafés and go to beaches and other leisure outdoor areas.

**Ensuring cross-border interoperability of tracing apps:**
Member States, with the support of the Commission, agreed on guidelines to ensure cross-border interoperability between tracing apps so that citizens can be warned of a potential infection with coronavirus also when they travel in the EU. This will guide developers working with national health authorities. Such tracing apps must be voluntary, transparent, temporary, cybersecure, using anonymised data, should rely on Bluetooth technology and be inter-operable across borders as well as across operating systems. Interoperability is crucial: EU citizens must be able to receive alerts of a possible infection in a secure and protected way, wherever they are in the EU, and whatever app they are using.

**Making vouchers a more attractive option for consumers**
Under EU rules, travellers have the right to choose between vouchers or cash reimbursement for cancelled transport tickets (plane, train, bus/coach, and ferries) or package travel. While reaffirming this right, the Commission's recommendation aims to ensure that vouchers become a viable and more attractive alternative to reimbursement for cancelled trips in the context of the current pandemic, which has also put heavy financial strains on travel operators. The voluntary vouchers should be protected against insolvency of the issuer, with a minimum validity period of 12 months, and be refundable after at most one year, if not redeemed. They should also provide passengers sufficient flexibility, should allow the passengers to travel on the same route under the same service conditions or the travellers to book a package travel contract with the same type of services or of equivalent quality. They should also be transferable to another traveller.

**Ensuring liquidity for tourism businesses, in particular SMEs, through:**
- Flexibility under State aid rules
- EU funding
Connecting citizens to local tourism offer, promoting local attractions and tourism and Europe as a safe tourist destination:
The Commission will work with Member States to promote a patronage voucher system under which customers can support their favourite hotels or restaurants. The Commission will also promote pan-European communication campaigns featuring Europe as a number one tourist destination.

The European Commission launched ‘Re-open EU’, a web platform that contains essential information for a safe relaunch of free movement and tourism across Europe, so that you confidently can enjoy your upcoming holidays. The platform provides real-time information on borders, travel restrictions, public health and safety measures such as physical distancing or the use of facemasks, as well as other practical information for travellers. Re-open EU is available in the 24 official EU languages.
Thank you