

EU Coronavirus Response Measures Tracker

NOTE: Main overview of Commission activities can be found [here](#).

Economic

- **State aid** - the [Commission will enable Member States to use the full flexibility](#) foreseen under State aid rules to tackle COVID-19. On March 13, the Commission adopted a Communication setting out the many possibilities that already exist. The Commission also announced a new Temporary Framework, to complement existing possibilities. The new Temporary Framework will enable Member States to
 - (i) set up schemes direct grants (or tax advantages) up to €500,000 to a company
 - (ii) give subsidised State guarantees on bank loans
 - (iii) enable public and private loans with subsidised interest rates.
 - (iv), the new Temporary Framework will recognise the important role of the banking sector to deal with the economic effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, namely to channel aid to final customers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. The Temporary Framework makes clear that such aid is direct aid to the banks' customers, not to the banks themselves. And it gives guidance on how to minimise any undue residual aid to the banks in line with EU rules.
- **European Fiscal Framework Flexibility** - The Commission [has proposed](#) to give Member States the full flexibility provided for in the EU fiscal framework so that they can implement the measures needed to contain the coronavirus outbreak and mitigate its negative socio-economic effects.
 - The Commission considers that the COVID-19 pandemic qualifies as an “unusual event outside the control of government”. This allows accommodating exceptional spending to contain the COVID-19 outbreak such as health care expenditure and targeted relief measures for firms and workers. Second, the Commission will recommend adjusting the fiscal efforts required from Member States in case of negative growth or large drops in activity. Finally, the Commission stands ready to propose to the Council to activate the general escape clause to accommodate a more general fiscal policy support. This clause would – in cooperation with the Council – suspend the fiscal adjustment recommended by the Council in case of a severe economic downturn in the euro area or the EU as a whole.
- **Mobilising the EU budget** - To bring immediate relief to hard-hit SMEs, the EU budget will deploy its existing instruments to support these companies with liquidity, complementing measures taken at national level. In the coming weeks, €1 billion will be redirected from the EU budget as a guarantee to the European Investment Fund to incentivise banks to provide liquidity to SMEs and midcaps. This will help at least 100,000 European SMEs and small mid-caps with about EUR 8 billion of financing. We will also provide credit holidays to the existing debtors that are negatively affected. The [EP Committee on Budgets urges the Commission to go beyond redirecting existing and funds and mobilize fresh appropriations, which are available in the 2020 budget through margins and flexibility instruments](#).
- The Commission [proposes to redirect €37 billion from European Cohesion Policy](#) to mitigate the effects of the crisis caused by COVID-19. To this end, it proposes to relinquish this year the obligation to request Member States to repay unused pre-financing from the structural funds. This amounts to approximately €8 billion of the EU budget, which Member States will now have at their

disposal. The EC has asked the European Parliament and the Member States to approve this proposal quickly so that it can be effective in the next two weeks. EU leaders [approved](#) the proposal on March 18.

- The EU Executive also [proposes](#) to **expand the scope of the Europe Solidarity Fund** or by including a scenario of public health crisis that can be activated for Member States facing the most negative effects of the crisis. Up to €800 million is available in 2020.
- The Official Journal of the European Union has [reported](#) on the **effects that Covid-19 may have on anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations**. The pandemic may indeed negatively affect on-spot verifications and deadlines within which interested parties have to respond to the Commission's information requests. Due to the context, the Commission will, if necessary, implement different measures to cross-investigate possible infringements and may apply a limited tolerance when it comes to the deadlines that interested parties have to respect to provide relevant information.
- On 18 March the **European Central Bank** [announced](#) a **€750bn pandemic purchase programme** of private and public sector securities to counter the serious risks to the monetary policy transmission mechanism and the outlook for the euro area posed by the outbreak and escalating diffusion of the coronavirus, COVID-19. This new Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) will have an overall envelope of €750 billion. Purchases will be conducted until the end of 2020 and will include all the asset categories eligible under the existing asset purchase programme.

Operational

- The European Commission has drafted an **implementing act that would allow EU governments to block the export of certain types of goods (masks and other personal protective equipment, etc) to third countries but not to each other**. (OJEU guideline [here](#)) The measure followed the recent introduction of border checks and bans on the export of medical gear adopted by some Member States. The act, finally meant to support the single market, will still have to be approved by the Union's members. Cf. [press release](#).
- The European Commission has **imposed a 30-day ban on "non-essential travel" into the Schengen zone** from outside countries in order to slow down the spread of the virus (EC communication: [here](#)).
- **The Commission has asked national capitals to act with restraint in imposing new border controls** after several EU members, including Germany, unilaterally ordered an array of restrictions. Control measures should not cause serious disruption of supply chains, essential services of general interest and of national economies and the EU economy as a whole. Member States should designate priority lanes for freight transport (e.g. via 'green lanes').
- The Commission is also [working to coordinate](#) the **repatriation of EU citizens stranded abroad**, efforts are being led by the EU External Action Service following the [request](#) from the European Council.

Health

- President Von der Leyen [announced on March 10](#) that the Commission would also assemble a **team of epidemiologists and virologists** to provide expert advice. The team was officially [created on 17 March](#), under the format of an [advisory panel on COVID-19](#). Advice will include:

- Formulation of response measures to be addressed to all Member States in line with the different stages of the epidemic in the EU as a whole and taking into account particular Member State contexts;
 - Identification and mitigation of significant gaps, inconsistencies or inadequacies in measures taken or to be taken to contain and manage the spread of COVID-19, including in clinical management and treatment, and overcome its impact;
 - Prioritisation of healthcare, civil protection and other resources as well as support measures to be organised or coordinated at EU level;
 - Subsequently, recommendation of policy measures for addressing and mitigating long-term consequences of COVID-19.
- The European Commission on March 19 [published](#) recommendations for best practices for [community measures](#), as well as [testing strategies](#) to tackle the spread of COVID-19. A coordinated approach remains the Commission's priority, and it has asked that all member states apply these guidelines while taking national specificities into account.
 - Following a [request](#) from the Commission, standard organisations CEN-CENELEC made freely available a number of European standards for certain medical devices and personal protective equipment. This concerns 11 standards on 20 March and potentially more later.
 - The Commission **launched a tender on March 2 to jointly procure personal protective equipment**, using an existing Joint Procurement of medical countermeasures [scheme](#). Twenty countries have signed up to take part, although some health ministers have criticized the process for taking too long.
 - On March 19, the Commission [launched](#) a **joint EU stockpile of medical equipment** with the aim of facilitating the joint procurement and financing of vital supplies to combat COVID19. Medical equipment part of the stockpile will include items such as: intensive care medical equipment such as ventilators, personal protective equipment such as reusable masks, vaccines and therapeutics, and laboratory supplies. The stockpile will be hosted by one or several Member States, the hosting State will be responsible for procuring the equipment, and the Commission will finance 90% of the stockpile.
 - On 16 March, the Commission [offered up to €80 million](#) of **financial support to CureVac, a innovative vaccine developer from Tübingen, Germany, to scale up development and production of a vaccine against the Coronavirus in Europe**. The support would come in form of an EU guarantee of a currently assessed EIB loan of an identical amount, in the framework of the InnovFin Infectious Disease Finance Facility under Horizon 2020.
 - On 10 March the European Commission [mobilised €140 million](#) of public and private funding for research on vaccines, diagnosis and treatment on COVID-19.
 - On 30 January 2020, the European Commission launched a special call for expressions of interest to support research on COVID-19 for a budget of €10 million mobilised, subsequently increased to €47.5 million [early March](#), given the scale of the outbreak and the potential of the research projects submitted. On 6 March, the Commission published an [overview](#) of all its research actions related to the outbreak.

Tech

- **Processing of personal data in the context of COVID-19:** [EDPB Statement](#). In addition, each Member State Data Protection Authorities (DPA) are slowly publishing GDPR guidance on the processing of health data under emergency, pandemic situations. In addition, some of the DPAs are informing what employers can and cannot do with their employee data (for example, asking employees to take mandatory health checks, or provide medical data).

- Irish DPA ([here](#)).
 - Italian DPA ([here](#)).
 - French DPA ([here](#)).
 - Danish DPA ([here](#)).
 - Spanish DPA ([here](#) and [here](#)).
 - Belgian DPA ([here](#)).
 - Netherlands DPA ([here](#)).
 - Poland DPA ([here](#)).
 - Slovakia DPA ([here](#)).
 - Slovenia DPA ([here](#)).
- **Easing demand on internet infrastructure** - Commissioner Breton [spoke](#) 18 March to Netflix to switch to SD from HD streaming to ease demands on internet infrastructure. Thierry Breton, [called on](#) the responsibility of streaming services, operators and users in order to prevent congestion and to ensure the open Internet in light of the increased demand for Internet capacity arising from the social distancing measures put in place across Europe to fight the Coronavirus pandemic. It is suggested that Telecom operators ought to *"take preventive and mitigating measures"* whereas users should *"apply settings that reduce data consumption, including the use of Wi-Fi or lower resolution for content"*.
 - Google also [announced](#) on 19 March that video quality on YouTube will be standard definition by default in the EU and the UK, for the next 30 days.
 - Amazon (Prime Video), Facebook and Disney+ also [announced](#) video bitrate reductions.
 - In this regard, the Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications (RTR) has also [recently given](#) the green light for restrictions to be placed on the data consumed on high-capacity websites, including video streaming services.
 - **Telecom data:** The Commission is [discussing](#) with telecom operators sharing anonymised mobile metadata for modelling and predicting the propagation of the virus.
 - **WiFi4EU Project:** The Commission has [postponed](#) the final call for its high-quality internet project for the public sector.
 - **COVID-19 disinformation online** - "We are aware of an increasing number of false information about the COVID-19 outbreak appearing in public discourse, including on social media," European Commission Vice President Věra Jourová she also acknowledged that "we need to understand better the risks related to communication on end-to-end encryption services."
 - **Cybersecurity issues for remote working** - ENISA has published [Top Tips for Cybersecurity when Working Remotely](#).
 - **Research funding** - For research calls under Horizon 2020, upcoming application deadlines [are extended](#) (for calls with deadlines between 17 March and 15 April - this extension does not apply to IMI and EIC pilot calls).
 - **Online fraud** - On March 19, the European Commission [announced](#) the launch of joint actions with the network of [national consumer protection](#) authorities at EU level (CPC), following an action started by the Italian consumer protection authority, with a view to addressing the rise in rogue traders selling false products online, which allegedly can prevent or cure the COVID-19 virus. With the support of Commission, the EU consumer authorities are preparing guidance, to be made public " *in the next days* ", to help coordinate action between all national authorities, traders and platforms, and advise the national authorities on how to eradicate false claims quickly.

Other policy related elements

- **France** has announced that all non Coronavirus-related legislative work will be halted. Hate speech law and copyright reform will have to wait. (tweet [here](#))
- **BREXIT** - The second round of trade talks due to take place this week (week commencing March 16) were cancelled due to COVID-19. Now increasing likelihood of an extension to the transition period. Chief negotiator Michel Barnier also announced [he is infected](#).

Internal EU institutions activities

Commission:

- The Commission launched a response team with [all relevant Commissioners](#).
- An [advisory panel](#) has been created to advise the Commission during the outbreak.
- Commission President von der Leyen has also ordered the **institution's staff "with non-critical functions" to work remotely**.
- The 18 March College of Commissioners meeting took place remotely. The number of [work items](#) for the next meetings has been reduced.

Parliament:

- All normal activities have been suspended. The European Parliament will hold an extraordinary plenary session on 26 March, to [discuss](#) the measures adopted by the Commission to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. It will replace the planned mini-plenary of 1-2 April. Votes will be taken through a written procedure (via email).
- A tentative [new calendar](#) of activities has been approved on 10 March.
- As from 23 March, Parliament committees and groups may hold remote meetings.
- **MEPs call for remote electronic vote:** Bulgarian MEP Eva Maydell (EPP) [sent a letter](#) to the EP President on March 18 suggesting Parliament adopt a system for remote electronic voting to adopt urgent decisions.

Council:

- The European Council summit scheduled for 26-27 March is [postponed to a later date](#) but video conference calls will be organised each week to monitor the outbreak and the EU and national responses.
- Written procedures (remote voting) have been made more flexible from 23 March (for a month), to ensure [institutional continuity](#).