A) **Informal Foreign Affairs Council 23 March 2020**

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) is responsible for the EU's external action, which includes foreign policy, defence and security, trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid. They are chaired by EU High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Josep Borrell Fontelles. Due to the exceptional circumstances in light of the coronavirus pandemic, the meeting, held by video conference, was of an informal nature, which means that official decisions could not be taken, although some political agreements will be conveyed through a written procedure in the following days. The meeting itself was closed-door, but it was followed by a press conference and Q&A session by the HR/VP.

- **International cooperation and solidarity** need to be stepped up. During the press conference, Borrell displayed a clear criticism of the response of many EU Member States to close national borders. He called for stronger global cooperation among people, regions and countries. Borrell shared his belief that the only way to tackle this threat to humankind is to join forces and strengthen multilateralism. He said the EU intends to continue its work with international organisations, particularly in support of countries at risk, especially in fragile contexts.

- **Scaling up of international cooperation.** Borrell called for a radical increase of international cooperation among scientists, economists and policymakers. He mentioned specifically the UN, WHO and IMF, as well as the G7, G20 and other international fora.

- **Africa:** the EU will be especially vigilant to the situation in Africa, where the impact of the pandemic could rapidly become out of control. While some African countries have recent experience handling Ebola, health systems overall are weak and social distancing will be difficult. In addition, the many making their living in the informal economy do not have a social safety net.

- **Iran** was hit badly by the coronavirus, but the EU has not been able to provide much humanitarian help. Borrell said there is more than €20 millions of humanitarian help in the pipeline that is expected to be delivered in the next weeks.

- **IMF support:** 70 countries have been asking for financial support from the IMF. Two of these are Iran and Venezuela. Borrell affirmed that the EU will support these requests.

- **EU-Turkey Statement:** the EU is currently analysing the implementation of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement.

B) **The European Commission (COVID-19 dedicated website)**

**Overview: European Commission's action on coronavirus**

President Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a comprehensive set of measures that will:

- Ensure the adequate supply of protective equipment and medical supplies across Europe;
- Cushion the blow for people’s livelihoods and the economy by applying full flexibility of EU fiscal rules;
- Set up a EUR 37 billion Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative to provide liquidity to small businesses.
- Provide a coherent set of guidelines to Member States on border measures to protect citizens’ health while allowing the free flow of essential goods
- Restrict temporarily non-essential travel to the European Union

**FACTSHEET**
Press release: COVID-19: Commission sets out European coordinated response to counter the economic impact of the Coronavirus

On 13 March, the Commission presented an immediate response to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, centred on a European coordinated response. The response will be deployed in the framework of the following instruments and objectives:

- State aid Framework Flexibility ([Press Release](#) and [Communication](#))
- European Fiscal Framework Flexibility ([Press release](#))
- Ensuring solidarity in the Single Market ([Factsheet](#))
- Mobilising the EU budget
- Alleviating the impact on employment
- Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative

Press release: Coronavirus: Commission presents practical guidance to ensure continuous flow of goods across EU via green lanes

On 23 March, the Commission issued new practical advice on how to implement its [Guidelines for border management](#), in order to keep freight moving across the EU during the current pandemic. To ensure that EU-wide supply chains continue to operate, Member States are requested to designate, all the [relevant internal border-crossing points on the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)](#) as ‘green lane’ border crossings. The green lane border crossings should be open to all freight vehicles, whatever goods they are carrying.

Press release: Coronavirus: Commission stands ready to continue supporting EU's agri-food sector

Following the outbreak of coronavirus, the European Union's agri-food sector is showing its resilience and continues to provide Europeans with high quality and safe food. Nonetheless, farmers and producers are facing difficulties and increasing pressure. Ensuring food security and an effective food supply chain across the continent remains one of the Commission's priorities.

Since the beginning of the crisis the following measures were adopted by the Commission to support the agri-food sector:

- Extension of the deadline for CAP payment applications
- Increased state aid
- Continuous flow of food products across the EU

Press release: Coronavirus: Commission issues guidelines to protect critical European assets and technology in current crisis

On 25 March, the European Commission issued guidelines to ensure a strong EU-wide approach to foreign investment screening in a time of public health crisis and related economic vulnerability. The aim is to preserve EU companies and critical assets, notably in areas such as health, medical research, biotechnology and infrastructures that are essential for our security and public order, without undermining the EU's general openness to foreign investment.

Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel, following the EU Leaders' videoconference on COVID-19 of 26 March

"We are now several weeks into the crisis. This is why it is so important to ensure that we coordinate and align as much as possible our actions, both between Member States, and between the EU institutions and national governments."

Statement: Coronavirus: Commission Statement on consulting Member States on the proposal to extend State aid Temporary Framework

On 27 March, the European Commission has sent to Member States for consultation a draft proposal to extend the State aid Temporary Framework adopted on 19 March 2020 to support the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak.
Press release: Coronavirus: Commission boosts budget for repatriation flights and rescEU stockpile
On 27 March, the European Commission has proposed to make €75 million from the EU budget available to help Member States repatriate EU nationals and to increase the budget of the RescEU medical stockpile. Commissioner Johannes Hahn, in charge of the EU budget, said: “Today’s measure is yet another illustration of how the EU budget can add value when and where needed the most. It is also an illustration of European solidarity and cooperation at its best.”

Press release: State aid: Commission amends Short-term export-credit insurance Communication in light of economic impact of coronavirus outbreak
The European Commission has decided to temporarily remove all countries from the list of “marketable risk” countries under the Short-term export-credit insurance Communication. This will make public short-term export credit insurance more widely available in light of the current crisis linked to the coronavirus outbreak.

Calendar
Next appointments regarding EU Institutions’ response

C) The European Parliament

Press release: Sassoli on corona: The moment is serious, and Parliament will not stand by and watch
Speaking at the start of a video conference with EU leaders dedicated to tackling the Covid19 outbreak, Parliament President David Sassoli said that although the focus should now be on health-related measures, it is also necessary to think about how to “relaunch the European economy, protect employment and our social model”.

Press release: European Parliament ready to play its part in mitigating Covid-19 impact
The Parliament is committed to helping EU countries deal with the coronavirus and address the socio-economic impact of the outbreak. Parliament adopted three proposals to help people and business tackle the crisis during an extraordinary plenary session on 26 March. The approved measures are:

- **The Corona Response Investment Initiative**: €37 billion from available EU funds will be channelled to people, regions and countries that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. The funds will go to healthcare systems, small and medium-sized firms, labour markets and other vulnerable parts of EU countries’ economies.
- **The extension of the EU Solidarity Fund** to cover public health emergencies. The measures will make up to €800 million available for European countries in 2020.
- **Temporarily suspending EU rules on airport slots**. This will stop air carriers from operating empty flights during the pandemic.

Press release: Coronavirus: Parliament approves €37 billion crisis response
MEPs voted in favour of making €37 billion from EU structural funds available to EU countries to tackle the coronavirus crisis during the plenary session on 26 March. The measure, proposed by the European Commission, is a key element in the EU response to the pandemic and has been fast-tracked through Parliament.

D) The Council of the EU

Joint statement of the Members of the European Council
The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge for Europe and the whole world. It requires urgent, decisive, and comprehensive action at the EU, national, regional and local levels. We will do everything that is necessary to protect our citizens and overcome the crisis, while preserving our European values and way of life.
The UNIDO Brussels Office – biweekly Intelligence report
On COVID-19 response by the European Union

Press release COVID-19 - Council adopts measures for immediate release of funds
On 30 March, the Council adopted two legislative acts to quickly release funding from the EU budget for tackling the COVID-19 crisis. One of the acts amends the rules of the structural and investment funds, while the other extends the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund.

Press release: COVID-19: EU adopts slot waiver to help airlines
The EU will suspend until 24 October 2020 the airport slot requirements which oblige airlines to use at least 80% of their take-off and landing slots in order to keep them the following year. The waiver adopted by the Council on 30 March is designed to help air carriers cope with the drastic drop in air traffic caused by the Coronavirus crisis.

E) The European Investment Bank

Press release: Coronavirus outbreak: EIB Group’s response to the pandemic
The EIB Group has proposed a plan to mobilise up to €40 billion of financing. This will go towards bridging loans, credit holidays and other measures designed to alleviate liquidity and working capital constraints for SMEs and mid-caps.

F) The European Economic and Social Committee

Statement: EU leaders take initial responsible steps to fight COVID-19, but Europe needs more courage to deliver #WhateverItTakes
In less than 15 days, the EU has taken ground-breaking decisions to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and after some initial hesitation it has proven that Member States can simply not do without a coherent, coordinated approach when faced with a global threat.

Statement: COVID-19: Let’s not forget the millions of refugees
If today, we are afraid of falling ill, losing our loved ones, our jobs, and our individual freedoms, we should not lose sight of those who are living in refugee camps, in and outside Europe.

G) Think Tanks

Euractiv

News: Von der Leyen to announce new post-virus economic ‘stimulus package’
The European Commission will propose a new stimulus package, including changes to the EU budget, in order to help the bloc recover from the economic damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Saturday (28 March).

News: EU announces COVID-19 help for Balkans, Eastern neighbours after criticism
On 30 March, the EU announced nearly €40 million to help Western Balkan countries deal with the coronavirus, after Brussels came under fire for not doing enough for its neighbours. A further €140 million euros was announced for the European Union’s “eastern partner” countries — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

POLITICO

News: Commission to change EU budget blueprint to tackle coronavirus
The European Commission will propose changes to its blueprint for the EU’s 2021-2027 budget to address the coronavirus crisis, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement on Saturday night.
CEPS (Center for European Policy Studies)

In Brief: This time is different: Generals fighting the last war also applies to policymakers in general. The memory of the financial crisis of 2008/9 is still very fresh. This is the reason why financial markets will not collapse this time. Policymakers at every level are using every lever at their disposal to avoid a repeat of the freezing of financial markets, which was so damaging ten years ago.

Friends of Europe

Publication: Three scenarios for a Covid-19 world: we can still make the right choices
Adjusting to life in a Covid-19 world is difficult. Daily disruptions impair thinking beyond today. Last week was history, yesterday another country. Tomorrow is unknown, the day-after, unknowable. Yet the outlines of three possible global governance scenarios can be discerned. They illustrate our options and confirm the need for the right decisions today in order to secure better outcomes tomorrow.

Egmont Institute

Policy Brief: Coronavirus and Power: The Impact on International Politics
This will change everything. It is an understandable feeling. When people pass through an ordeal, they want to believe that when all is over there will be some compensation. Things may indeed change, but perhaps not as radically as may seem likely today in the midst of the crisis – and not all change will be for the better. What change could the corona crisis bring to international politics?

ECDPM (European Center for Development Policy Management)

Blog: Turning the tables: African and European narratives in the time of Corona
Most of Europe is in lockdown, trying to cope with the huge implications of the battle against the novel coronavirus. Africans are following what is happening on the other side of the Mediterranean with relief that Africa is not currently the epicenter of the crisis, but also with a troubled gaze.