

## The UNIDO Brussels Office – biweekly Intelligence report on COVID-19 response by the European Union

### A) The European Commission (COVID-19 dedicated website)

#### EU Coronavirus response - latest updates

##### Speech by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary on the new MFF, own resources and the Recovery Plan

“We have to push for investment and reform, and we have to strengthen our economies by focusing on our common priorities: like **the European Green Deal, digitalization and Resilience.**”

##### Joint Statement: The global response: Working together to help the world get better

Joint op-ed, for the occasion of the Coronavirus Global Response pledging moment, co-authored by Giuseppe **Conte**, President of the Government of the Italian Republic, Emmanuel **Macron**, President of the French Republic, Angela **Merkel**, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Charles **Michel**, President of the European Council, Erna **Solberg**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, Justin **Trudeau**, Prime Minister of Canada and Ursula **von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission.

##### Press release: Coronavirus Global Response: €7.4 billion raised for universal access to vaccines

On 4 May, the Commission registered €7.4 billion in pledges from donors worldwide during the Coronavirus Global Response pledging event. This includes a pledge of €1.4 billion by the Commission. The aim is to gather significant funding to ensure the **collaborative development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines** against coronavirus.

##### Press release: Coronavirus Global Response: EU sets up a Humanitarian Air Bridge

The European Commission has set up an EU Humanitarian Air Bridge to transport humanitarian workers and emergency supplies for the coronavirus response to some of most critical areas around the world.

How does it work?

- In a joint effort between the Commission and Member States, the Commission funds air transport of Member States' flights to and from the proposed destinations, where possible combined with ongoing repatriation flights, also including **humanitarian workers** on rotation.
- Humanitarian staff from national administrations, NGOs or **UN Agencies** can benefit from the facility.
- **The Commission finances 100% of the transport costs**, whereas the EU partners remain responsible for the procurement of the humanitarian material.

More on [Crisis management and Solidarity](#).

##### Press release: Coronavirus: Commission boosts urgently needed research and innovation with additional €122 million

The Commission has mobilised another €122 million from its research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020, for urgently needed research into the coronavirus. The new call for expressions of interest contributes to the Commission's €1.4 billion pledge to the Coronavirus Global Response initiative.

##### Press release: Coronavirus global response: EU allocates additional €50 million in humanitarian aid

On 20 May, the European Commission announced an additional €50 million in humanitarian aid to help respond to the dramatic increase in humanitarian needs caused by the Coronavirus pandemic globally. The new funding follows increased appeals by humanitarian organisations, including the UN Global Appeal.

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### [Press release: Coronavirus: Commission announces exceptional measures to support the agri-food sector](#)

On 4 May, the Commission [published](#) the latest package of exceptional measures to further support the agricultural and food sectors most affected by the coronavirus crisis.

These exceptional measures include:

- [Private storage aid](#) for dairy and meat products.
- [Flexibility for market support programmes](#) regarding wine, fruits and vegetables, olives, olive oil and apiculture.
- **Temporary derogation from EU competition rules** for milk, flowers and potatoes sector.

On top of these measures, the Commission proposed to allow Member States to use rural development funds to compensate farmers and small agri-food businesses with amounts of up to €5,000 and €50,000 respectively.

- [Q & A](#)

### [Press release: Reinforcing Europe's resilience: halting biodiversity loss and building a healthy and sustainable food system](#)

On 20 May, the European Commission adopted a new [Biodiversity Strategy](#) and a [Farm to Fork Strategy](#). In line with the European Green Deal, these two propose EU action and commitments to halt biodiversity loss.

- The **new Biodiversity Strategy** will tackle the key drivers of biodiversity loss, such as unsustainable use of land and sea, overexploitation of natural resources and pollution. ([FACTSHEET Biodiversity Strategy](#))
- The **Farm to Fork Strategy** will aim to enable the transition to a sustainable EU food system. ([FACTSHEET Farm to Fork](#))
- [Q & A Biodiversity Strategy](#)
- [Q & A Farm to Fork Strategy](#)

### [Press release: Coronavirus: Commission invites Member States to extend restriction on non-essential travel to the EU until 15 June](#)

On 8 May, the Commission invited Schengen Member States and Schengen Associated States to extend the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU for another 30 days, until 15 June.

### [Calendar](#)

Next appointments regarding EU Institutions' response

## **B) [The European Parliament](#)**

### [Press release: Parliament this week \(25/05-29/05\): EU long-term budget, tourism, Covid-19](#)

On Wednesday 27 May, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, will present a revised long-term EU budget (2021-2027) and recovery plan during a plenary session. **MEPs** will discuss the proposals but have already called for a **€2 trillion recovery package** to help the EU bounce back from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### [Press release: Plenary highlights: recovery fund, contingency EU budget, tracing apps](#)

During the Parliament plenary session, MEPs addressed a variety of topics, among which **Recovery fund, Contingency plan for EU budget, Vaccines and treatments** and more.

### [Press release: COVID-19: the EU plan for the economic recovery](#)

MEPs want a €2 trillion package to support people and businesses as the EU battles a deep economic recession due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### [Press release: COVID-19: MEPs to discuss way forward with Commissioners Breton and Gentiloni](#)

The COVID-19 exit strategy, including gradually lifting lockdown measures and agreeing on the recovery fund, will be the focus of the debate with Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton, on Monday, from 14.00.

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### **Press release: Partner countries get €3bn in loans to prop up economies affected by pandemic**

The loans, which will be given on highly favourable terms and disbursed over a year, will help the following ten countries whose economies have been pushed into recession by the pandemic: the Republic of Albania (€180 million), Bosnia and Herzegovina (€250 million), Georgia (€150 million), the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (€200 million), Kosovo (€100 million), the Republic of Moldova (€100 million), Montenegro (€60 million), the Republic of North Macedonia (€160 million), the Republic of Tunisia (€600 million) and Ukraine (€1.2 billion).

### **Policy brief: EU budgetary and financial response to the coronavirus crisis**

EU institutions have organised a package of measures (some already decided, others proposed or requested), to counter the crisis, drawing both on the EU budget and a wider economic package. Parliament is calling on the European Commission to propose a €2 trillion recovery package, distributed mostly through grants (over which Parliament will maintain scrutiny) rather than loans, and warns against the presentation of misleading figures.

## **C) The Council of the EU**

### **Meeting: EU-Western Balkans Zagreb summit, 6 May 2020**

The EU-Western Balkans summit took place on 6 May 2020 via video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU leaders stressed the importance of good neighbourly relations, regional stability, and mutual cooperation.

The EU leaders adopted the [Zagreb declaration](#), with which the Western Balkans partners have aligned themselves.

### **Press release: Western Balkans and Turkey: Joint conclusions of the economic and financial dialogue of 19 May 2020**

Representatives of the EU Member States, the Western Balkans and Turkey, the European Commission and the European Central Bank, as well as representatives of the central banks met for their annual economic policy dialogue. The dialogue aims at preparing the Western Balkans and Turkey for the future participation in the European Semester.

### **Press release: COVID-19: Council adopts €3 billion assistance package to support neighbouring partners**

On 20 May, the Council adopted a decision to provide up to 3 billion euros of macro-financial assistance to ten enlargement and neighbourhood partners to help them cope with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Press release: COVID-19: Council reaches political agreement on temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE)**

On 15 May, EU ambassadors reached a political agreement on SURE, a temporary scheme which can provide up to €100 billion of loans under favourable terms to member states.

### **Press release: COVID-19: Council agrees its positions on transport relief measures**

The EU is working on a set of urgent measures to help companies and authorities in the aviation, rail, road and shipping sectors to weather the impact of the coronavirus crisis. On 8 May, member states' ambassadors approved a mandate for the presidency to negotiate with the European Parliament four legislative proposals designed to provide flexibility, ease the administrative burden and reduce financial costs for transport businesses.

## **D) The European Investment Bank**

### **Press release: EIB backs EUR 3.4 billion COVID-19 health and business resilience, energy, transport and education investment**

On 15 May, the European Investment Bank approved EUR 3.4 billion of new financing to support companies most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and priority public health projects, alongside energy, transport, water and education projects across Europe and around the world.

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### [Press release: EIB Group to contribute €1.7 billion to the EU's Covid-19 response package for the Western Balkans](#)

The European Investment Bank (EIB) Group will provide €1.7 billion to support the social and economic recovery of the Western Balkans from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is part of the €3.3 billion financial support package for the region announced on 29 April by the European Commission and follows the Team Europe efforts to support the Western Balkans.

### [Press release: WHO and EIB strengthen efforts to combat COVID-19 and build resilient health systems to face future pandemics](#)

The World Health Organization and the European Investment Bank will boost cooperation to strengthen public health, supply of essential equipment, training and hygiene investment in countries most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## E) [The European Economic and Social Committee](#)

### [Press release: EESC asks for 2020 Employment Guidelines to be adapted in the face of Covid-19 pandemic](#)

The EESC suggests that, although the employment guidelines should be stable over a longer period and valid for all EU countries in their national contexts, for this year the possibility should be exceptionally considered of introducing an additional extraordinary or emergency guideline that would help Member States adjust their employment policies to the current unprecedented circumstances.

### [Press release: A transitional regulation is urgently needed to provide certainty in the Agri world, says the EESC](#)

The EESC congratulates the Commission on its proposal for a transitional regulation to support European farmers, and the positive outcome of the vote in the European Parliament Comagri Committee, which will ensure a smooth transition from the current (2014-2020) to the next (2021-2027) CAP period.

The Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reform should be adopted by October 2020, but the negotiations for the next programming period are far behind schedule, situation even more aggravated by the coronavirus crisis.

## F) [Think Tanks](#)

### [Euractiv](#)

#### [News: Member states brace for 'great stimulus' battle](#)

The European Commission's proposal on the next seven-year budget and the accompanying recovery fund will this Wednesday (27 May) launch one of the most difficult negotiations in the EU history, as member states disagree over the size, the goals and conditions, and primarily whether to give grants or loans.

#### [Opinion: Green Deal – and electrification – should be the backbone of EU recovery plan](#)

The Green Deal is Europe's growth strategy. Making it the backbone of the recovery plan is not only necessary in a climate perspective, but also from an economic point of view – in order to create growth and work opportunities that are sustainable in the long run, argue Nordic energy CEOs and top executives.

### [POLITICO](#)

#### [News: Brussels eyes a bigger EU shareholder role in the coronavirus recovery](#)

Brussels is looking to carve out a greater role for the EU in the coronavirus recovery by drawing up a fund to take equity stakes in systemic companies.

In an interview with POLITICO, European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said that the EU executive is still weighing up what form this share-buying fund would take.

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### CEPS (Center for European Policy Studies)

#### Policy Contribution: The great lockdown: was it worth it?

What the IMF calls the ‘great lockdown’ has thrown Europe and the global economy into a deep recession. When putting their countries into lockdown, governments essentially pushed the panic button, mostly in the face of rising fatalities. Was this the right choice? The answer to this question is usually framed in terms of the lives saved versus jobs lost.

[\(Download\)](#)

### Friends of Europe

#### Insight: European Union enlargement in times of coronavirus

In March of 2020, the European Union took a welcome step towards enlargement by deciding to open accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia. The European Council, as well as Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi, confirmed that both countries had fulfilled EU recommendations and achieved tangible results. Albania notably made considerable efforts to satisfy the five key priorities needed to open negotiations.

#### Insight: The EU and the Covid-19 crisis: emerging stronger or weaker on the international stage?

Whatever the plans to show the rest of the world a new “geo-political” face of the EU and to develop a European multilateralist “third way” vis-a-vis the two increasingly antagonistic power blocs of the United States and China, the EU has had to put its foreign policy ambitions on hold. Like everyone else it has turned inwards as EU member states have closed their borders and sought derogations from EU rules such as in enforcing budgetary discipline or giving state subsidies to industry.

### Egmont Institute

#### Policy Brief: The end of ‘business as usual’? COVID-19 and the European Green Deal

It has become evident over the past months that the short-term effects of the pandemic may actually be beneficial for the climate, through the immediate reduction of emissions and pollution caused by the lockdowns in many countries.

While optimists point out the unprecedented opportunity to hit ‘reset’ and make the COVID19 recovery strategy a green and fair one, those on the pessimistic side point out the difficulty in finding the material resources and political will to do so in the wake of a health crisis.

### ETTG (European Think Tanks Group)

#### Blog: Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A necessary horizon for the post-crisis recovery, but how to do it?

This crisis is a strong reminder of the integrated and interconnected nature of the common and global challenges we face and exacerbates the issue of vulnerabilities: ecological and health risks are linked; and our economic and social systems are vulnerable to these risks.

#### Blog: How to build back greener in the COVID-19 recovery

Governments responding to the Covid-19 pandemic are right now focused on survival, delivering healthcare and emergency support for shut-down businesses and people thrown out of work by lockdowns. These responses will have an impact on the natural environment. So far around \$840 billion has gone to sectors with a high environmental impact in 11 G20 countries and the crisis has been seized upon as reason to relax environmental protection regulations. Worryingly though, long-term environmental sustainability has not been a key consideration.

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### [Blog: Responsibility for the poorest countries – How the international financial institutions are responding to the pandemic](#)

The world's poorest countries will be unable to cope with the corona crisis on their own. The international community and, in particular, the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, should take a leading role in providing financial assistance, to these nations in the short and medium term.

### [Blog: The 'youth burden' needs a new narrative and how we respond to Covid-19 in conflict zones can change it](#)

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, Covid-19 is increasing vulnerabilities and tensions caused by unequal access to already strained (and often inexistent) social and medical services. This is particularly true for young people – one in every four of whom live in such areas. Despite repeated appeals for a global ceasefire, violence is intensifying in some places whilst some peace processes are also on hold or endangered. Our response to Covid-19 must empower young people through greater inclusion in these processes, at both a local and international level.

### [ECDPM \(European Center for Development Policy Management\)](#)

#### [Paper: The impact of COVID-19 on remittances for development in Africa](#)

Remittance flows, which are an integral part of development finance, proved relatively resilient during the 2008 financial crisis and the 2014 Ebola epidemic. However, they are currently under threat by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdown measures implemented in host countries have caused many migrants to lose their jobs, consequently reducing remittance flows to developing countries. In 2020, the World Bank estimates a historical decline in global remittances of US\$110 billion, with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) expected to experience a decline of about 23.1%.

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