



**European Committee
of the Regions**

NAT Commission Bulletin **COVID-19 Lockdown** **updates on Health Policy**

5) facilitate a **reality check on the ground of the EU's measures to fight the pandemic**; gather evidence from Members to improve EU policies based on the experiences of the local and regional level (policy health check).

Link to PRESS RELEASE: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/COVID-19-EU-Committee-of-regions-to-launch-an-exchange-platform.aspx>

COVID-19 Exchange Platform:

Taking into consideration the need of cooperation and mutual assistance, CoR has launched a supporting online platform for local and regional authorities in this crisis situation.

Beside the list of Member States' contact points, the platform also offers a possibility to exchange best practices and agree on concrete steps in fighting COVID-19. Moreover, due to this instrument, local and regional leaders can inform not only about their successes but also the challenges they are facing and the help they might need during these hostile times.

Link COVID-19 Exchange Platform: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/COVID19-exchangeplatform.aspx>



EU support for hard-hit fisheries sector

Fishing and aquaculture have been among the sectors hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. The demand for seafood is experiencing a dramatic downturn, as retailers, restaurants, canteens and other large-scale buyers are reducing or temporarily closing down their activities. The European Commission has therefore decided to revise EU state aid rules, which allow Member States to provide temporary relief to economic operators hit by the crisis. **The new rules include a large increase of the maximum amount of *de minimis* aid per undertaking, from currently € 30,000 to € 120,000.** The impact of these measures on coastal areas goes well beyond the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Also companies in the wider blue economy – from biotech to tourism – will benefit. Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, said: “Our fishermen and women and our aquaculture farmers are among the first to suffer the economic consequences of COVID-19, as the



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demand for seafood has experienced a dramatic slump. But let me say it loud and clear: the European Union stands with you through this crisis. Together, we will ensure that the EU maintains a strong seafood industry and thriving coastal communities, now and in the future.”

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/news/covid-19-response-eu-enables-immediate-support-to-hard-hit-fisheries-sector_en

EU helps to secure medical and protective equipment

Personal protective equipment – **masks, gloves, goggles, face-shields, and overalls** – as well as medical **ventilators** and **testing kits** are vital for hospitals, healthcare professionals, patients, field workers and civil protection authorities. To buy such equipment rapidly and at reasonable cost, the Commission launched four different calls for tender: (1) gloves and surgical gowns, (2) masks, goggles, face-shields; (3) medical ventilators and respiratory equipment and (4) laboratory equipment, including testing kits. All interested Member States were able to take part and contracts should be signed in the coming weeks. The equipment should then be available in the Member States without delay.

Boosting EU production capacities

Manufacturers in Europe must massively increase their overall production of personal protective equipment. To make their efforts possible, the Commission and the European Standardisation Organisations agreed that **all the relevant European harmonised standards will exceptionally be made freely and fully available** for all interested companies. This action will help to manufacture these items without compromising on our health and safety standards and without undue delays.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_502

Export authorisations

Reacting to the restriction on exports of personal protective equipment, the Commission issued guidance on how to implement these measures. As a result, almost all Member States have lifted by now national export restrictions and the **protective equipment can be delivered seamlessly across the Union** to where it is most needed.

Link to EC decision: https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/march/tradoc_158668.pdf

One for all, all for one



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This week, Germany has been taking seriously ill COVID-19 patients from France and Italy for treatment in its hospitals in North-Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg. France and Germany combined sent to Italy more masks and protective gear than China; Austria is sending another 1.6 million masks as we type. (Source infographic: European Commission)



26 March 2020
#coronavirus

 
France and Germany combined have donated to Italy more masks than China

 
Germany announced that it would send 1 million face masks to Italy still this week

  
Last Friday, France sent 1 million masks to Italy and 200,000 protective suits

 
Austria is flying 1.6 Million masks to Italy



 
Germany is taking patients from France and Northern Italy

... and much more will follow

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Transfer of doctors

Meanwhile, the Commission together with Ministries of Health is working on a proposal for the EU wide support in terms of **transfer of health professionals** from countries with less immediate intensive care burden to countries where needs were more acute. This could complement the already undertaken cross-border coordination of patients (see above) and also provide training for health care professions of other countries, in case of further strain in other national contexts at a later stage. National governments should now inform about their needs and agree to go forward with such a proposal.

Link: Minutes of the Health Security Committee (Member States and Commission's officials):
https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/preparedness_response/docs/ev_202003252_sr_en.pdf

Wider scope for the Solidarity Fund

As part of the European coordinated response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission has proposed to broaden the scope of the EU Solidarity Fund to include major public health crises in view of mobilising it if needed for the hardest hit Member States. Currently, the EU Solidarity Fund is an essential support instrument for responding to major natural disasters.

In 2020, the hardest hit member states should get access to financial support of up to €800 million in 2020 – decided on a case-by-case basis.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_459

rescEU medical stockpile – EU solidarity in action

The European Commission has decided to create a strategic **rescEU stockpile of medical equipment** such as ventilators and protective masks but also vaccines and laboratory supplies to help EU countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (rescEU is part of the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) which strengthens cooperation between Participating States in the field of civil protection, with a view to improving prevention, preparedness and response to disasters).

Commissioner for Crisis Management, Mr. Janez Lenarčič said: *"The EU is taking action to get more equipment to Member States. We are setting up a rescEU stockpile to rapidly get the supplies needed to fight the coronavirus. It will be used to support Member States facing shortages of equipment needed to treat infected patients, protect health care workers and help slow the spread of the virus. Our plan is to move ahead without delay."*

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_476