



Welcome to the NAT Bulletin!

In this fifth edition, we continue to inform you about recent developments in the NAT Commission policies affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Since the outbreak of the Corona-Crisis, the main question for decision makers and society as a whole has been "*what to do from now on?*" Although the number of victims seems to be falling and authorities and people are eager to restart life as it was, the question remains. Unfortunately, this question is not answered by science and sound arguments, and even worse, we are often witnessing misinformation and propaganda. To counter this trend we will present some good examples coming directly from EU regions, as well as measures undertaken by the European Commission.

You can share your stories with us under covid19@cor.europa.eu – they will appear on the CoR COVID-19 portal, and later here, in this newsletter. Please, continue to use our e-mail address nat@cor.europa.eu for direct contact with the NAT Commission secretariat, and most importantly, stay safe!

Ulrika Landergren (SE/RE), NAT Commission Chair

Joining Forces to Develop Life-Saving Vaccine

Last Monday (04/05), the European Commission hosted an unprecedented event: a global pledging teleconference. During this international event, governments and business leaders will announce their pledges for the development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against the coronavirus.

Several Heads of States and Governments, leaders of International Organisations and influential foundations are expected to commit significant resources to address the immediate funding gaps in order to come up with innovative and equitable solutions.

The objective of the event is to raise €7.5 bln and to ensure that not only do these life-saving tools get developed in the first place, but also that they are universally available and affordable. No person, country or region should be left behind.

Link: https://global-response.europa.eu/programme_en

RescEu Stockpile Fully Operational

On 27 April 2020, the first delivery of 90,000 FFP2 protective masks coming from the strategic rescEU distribution centre in Romania arrived in Italy to help equip Italian medical workers to fight the Coronavirus pandemic. Romania is the first Member State to host the EU's new rescEU stockpile, a reserve of medical equipment. This delivery comes in addition to teams of doctors and nurses, and stocks of equipment that have been sent bilaterally and via the EU civil protection mechanism. More help, such as ventilators, will be on its way to other Member States in the coming days. The EU covers 100% of the operational costs.

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

EU Solidarity Fund –

Commission Receives the First Preliminary Application for Support for Health Emergency

Italy, currently one of the hardest-hit Member States, has been the first to submit a preliminary application for financial support from the EU Solidarity Fund to address the coronavirus outbreak and its effects (further details will be submitted in the coming weeks).

The European Commission will collect all coronavirus-related applications until 24 June 2020 and deal with them in a single package in order to ensure that all cases are being treated equally and available resources are being distributed in a fair and equitable manner among all Member States that are hardest-hit by this health emergency.

Since 1 April 2020, EU Member States can apply for support from the EU Solidarity Fund also for health emergencies. The scope of the Solidarity Fund was extended to include major public health emergencies as part of the tools the European Commission has put in place to alleviate the burden on Member States' budgets, with €800 million at its disposal for 2020.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_753

EU Solidarity Fund for COVID-19: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/solidarity-fund/covid-19

Food Distribution Channels

As mentioned in one of our previous newsletters, the food distribution chains across the EU have been impacted during the COVID-19 crisis. This can be especially problematic in big cities. Therefore, some regions and municipalities are trying to increase their food self-sufficiency through development of platforms that allow direct orders from consumers to producers.

Group purchasing structures for fruit and vegetables as well as community-supported agriculture groups are seeing a spike in demand and are operating at full capacity. Farmers are trying to reach out directly to consumers during the crisis, some to replace the loss in revenue caused by the closure of restaurants. The crisis is also affecting consumer behaviour and food on our menus. International traffic being disrupted and some exotic ingredient running out of stock, citizens have to rely more on local and seasonal products and they tend to favour local dishes. Will this affect the way we shop and eat? Time will show ...

More on initiatives in France: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/eus-farm-to-fork-strategy-establishes-itself-in-france-due-to-covid-19-crisis/>

Nutrition

During the COVID-19 outbreak, it is even more important to eat a well-balanced diet to build up a strong immune systems and lower your risk of chronic illnesses and infectious diseases. We are encouraged to

eat a variety of fresh and unprocessed food as well as drink enough water to get our daily dose of vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre, protein and antioxidants.

You can find more nutrition advice for adults during the COVID-19 outbreak from the WHO here:
<http://www.emro.who.int/nutrition/nutrition-infocus/nutrition-advice-for-adults-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.html>

State aid: Commission approves €200,000 direct grant scheme to support agricultural and aquaculture sectors in Brussels-Capital region following coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €200,000 Belgian regional scheme to support agricultural and aquaculture sectors in the Brussels-Capital region in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on 3 April 2020.

Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: “This €200,000 scheme will support companies active in agricultural and aquaculture sectors in the Brussels-Capital region, which are currently experiencing difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak. It will help these companies cover their immediate liquidity needs to support them in continuing their crucial activities during these challenging times. Our work with Member States continues and ensures that national support measures can be put in place in a coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules.” The public support will take the form of direct grants, and will not exceed €100,000 per company for companies active in the primary agriculture sector and €120,000 per company for those active in the aquaculture sector.

Press release: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/da/IP_20_732

Examples from the regions via the CoR COVID-19 Exchange Platform

A large number of contributions from European regions is reaching via our Covid-19 exchange platform, informing us about additional measures of local and regional governments, supplementing the efforts of the Member States:

Andalucía (Spain) set to invest 1000 Million in healthcare and economy, presents new ventilator prototype

A series of positive news are arriving from Spanish regions to our COVID-19 exchange platform. IN Andalucía, the Health Department together with Info UMA have been able to design a new ventilator prototype to improve the medical assistance. The government of Andalucía has decided to inject €1,000M into the economic system of the region: €900M will be allocated to help SMEs, while the rest will be devoted to facing the health crisis. The Regional Ministry of Economy has launched a platform

which connects companies, R&D actors, and other innovative entities in order to offer quick and efficient solutions to confront COVID-19. A €40M pack of measures has been passed to help over 150,000 self-employed people in Andalucía, including also various tax breaks.

Saving local bookstores

Catalonia, Spain: The cooperative SOM*, active in the cultural and communication sector, has set up #LlibreriesObertes, an initiative enabling citizens to purchase books and other media from (smaller) local bookstores that had to close due to the lockdown and risk their existence. Purchased goods can be picked up once the shops open again.

Spanish region Castilla y León launches educational TV programme for home-schooling

Castilla y León, Spain: The regional government launched a new initiative for kids during coronavirus times. Given the fact that they are not going to school, a T.V. programme called "Aprendiendo en casa: la hora educativa" (*Learning at home: the educational hour*). The intention is to help children to continue their learning process despite the crisis. For 45 minutes every day the regional channel will emit different educational subjects. This initiative has been promoted for kids from six to twelve years old. The educative content has been designed with leading educational publishers. In addition to that, the local government has launched a large number of public services and economic measures to help directly the population, such as tax and payment breaks, COVID-19 research grants and direct aid to companies and individuals.

Support to victims of domestic and intra-family violence

Brussels, Belgium: In the beginning of April, on the initiative of the Collège of COCOF (the French Community Commission in Belgium), a Brussels hotel welcomed its first new occupants: women victims of intra-family violence. This scheme complements those already in place in Brussels in shelters and refuges for women victims of violence. It should enable women to find a safe and comforting place, far from the violence they are subjected to in their homes, and to be accompanied psycho-socially by professionals. In response to these problems of violence, a task force on "Domestic and intra-family violence" has been set up by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia, the Brussels-Capital Region and Cocof, as well as an inter-ministerial conference on women's rights.

Volunteers supporting COVID-19 measures

Gabrovo, Bulgaria: The Municipality of Gabrovo is recruiting volunteers to carry out various activities that counteract the spread of COVID-19. These include shopping and delivery of food, medicines and other essential products for the elderly as well as supporting information campaigns on how to prevent the spread of the pandemic. In addition, the textile company MAC based in Gabrovo started producing protective clothing for health professionals.

More stories on the Covid-19 exchange platform: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/covid19-stories.aspx>

LOCAL 2030

LOCALIZING THE SDGS

UN invites local leaders to send videos on their work on SDGs and Covid-19

Local2030, the initiative of the UN Secretary General on Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals, has recently launched the **Local2030 Spotlight Series**.

The Series aims to facilitate experience sharing among stakeholders involved in the local response to the COVID-19 crisis through short videos. Cities and regions around the world are invited to share 2-minute videos highlighting their perspectives on the main challenges and innovative solutions developed at the local level to fight the outbreak. Interested partners can share the video using the Local2030 Dropbox or via twitter using **#Local2030 #SpotlightSeries**. Videos will be featured in the Local2030 media channels and feeding into the global debate on COVID-19.

Every week a burning topic will be addressed. For this week (until 12 May) the debate will be centered around **Urban Basic Services delivery**, followed by series to discuss **Livelihoods and Local Economies** (13 – 19 May) and **Safety and Vulnerability in local communities** (20 – 26 May).

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Story web links:

Local 2030 initiative: <https://www.local2030.org/>

Local 2030 spotlight series: <https://www.local2030.org/story/view/335>

Initiative Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/request/EoPKrOeL0UhyTB3SDvPT>