



European Committee
of the Regions

NAT Commission Bulletin

COVID-19 Lockdown

Updates on Health Policy



Welcome to the sixth edition of the NAT Bulletin!

While people are eager to continue their daily life as before and lockdown measures and restrictions are gradually being lifted, governments still struggle to find adequate solutions to all of the problems caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. Moreover, the full extent of the damage is not yet known. One thing however is for certain: the health crisis has left a lasting mark on many levels of our life and our society, and it will take an incredible amount of time and efforts for things to return to normal.

From your contributions to the COVID-19 platform of the Committee of the Regions we can all see that active local and regional governments can indeed make a difference.

Please continue to send us your stories at covid19@cor.europa.eu, and do not hesitate to contact the NAT Commission secretariat at nat@cor.europa.eu. And most importantly, stay safe!

Ulrika Landergren (SE/RE), NAT Commission Chair

Tourism and Transport Package

Good news for the tourism and transport sectors: on 13 May the European Commission presented a package of guidelines and recommendations to help Member States gradually lift travel restrictions and allow tourism businesses to reopen, after months of lockdown, while respecting necessary health precautions. The Commission's Tourism and Transport package includes:

- An overall strategy towards recovery in 2020 and beyond;
- A common approach to restoring free movement and lifting restrictions at EU internal borders in a gradual and coordinated way;
- A framework to support the gradual re-establishment of transport whilst ensuring the safety of passengers and personnel;
- A recommendation which aims to make travel vouchers an attractive alternative to cash reimbursement for consumers;
- Criteria for restoring tourism activities safely and gradually and for developing health protocols for hospitality establishments such as hotels.

You can find more information and a direct link to all documents under:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_854



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Coronavirus: €117 million granted for treatments and diagnostics through the Innovative Medicines Initiative

The Commission announced on 13 May that 8 large-scale research projects, aimed at developing treatments and diagnostics for the Coronavirus, were selected in a fast-track call for proposals, launched in March by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a public-private partnership. In order to fund a larger number of high-quality proposals, the Commission increased its commitment to €72 million (up from the originally planned €45 million) from Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme. €45 million will be provided by the pharmaceutical industry, IMI associated partners and other organisations involved with the projects, bringing the total investment to €117 million.

More information and links under: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_837

Masks delivered to Member States and beyond

Following the deliveries of FFP2 protective masks to Spain, Italy and Croatia, additional batches have now been delivered also to North Macedonia and Montenegro via rescEU – the first ever common European reserve of medical equipment to help countries affected by the coronavirus outbreak. In these first deliveries, already 330,000 masks have now been delivered to Italy, Spain and Croatia. More deliveries will follow.

In addition, the first batch of 1,5 million medical masks has been delivered to 17 Member States and the UK to protect healthcare workers against coronavirus. Additional weekly instalments of 1,5 million masks will be delivered over the coming six weeks as part of the new purchase of 10 million masks via the Emergency Support Instrument, funded by the European Commission.

Romania and Germany are the first Member States to host the rescEU reserve and are therefore responsible for procuring the equipment, while the Commission finances 100% of the assets such as personal protective equipment.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/coronavirus-resceu-masks-delivered-spain-italy-and-croatia_en

More about European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/coronavirus-further-resceu-masks-delivered-north-macedonia-and-montenegro_en

More about money allocation at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_819

Further assistance to refugees and migrants in Greece

Greece receives additional support through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to help it protect refugees and migrants against the coronavirus after it activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism requesting accommodation, hygiene and medical materials.



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In response to the request, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France and the Netherlands have offered customised containers for shelter and medical care for refugees and migrants. The EU will coordinate and co-finance the delivery of this assistance to Greece.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/coronavirus-eu-channels-further-assistance-greece-protect-refugees-and-migrants_en

French MEP proposes 'EU Emergency pharmacy'

According to an article published in POLITICO, a French MEP Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé (EPP) has drafted a resolution to fight the EU's medicine shortages. Shortages of certain medicines had increased 20 times between 2000 and 2018 with the situation being exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. In the resolution Colin-Oesterlé proposes several solutions from rescEU becoming the EU emergency pharmacy, stockpiling vital drugs and vaccines that EU countries can use in case of emergency, to bringing supply chains of vital medicines back into the EU. According to Colin-Oesterlé, the vote in the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety committee is set for the end of June.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: <https://pro.politico.eu/news/french-mep-proposes-eu-emergency-pharmacy-to-fight-drug-shortages-coronavirus>

Lessons learned: We need a permanent EU medical emergency unit

Romanian MEP Victor Negrescu (S&D Group) writes in Euractiv that while the EU lacks the legal basis and the resources to coordinate the fight against the epidemic, as national health policies remain a member state prerogative, the true reality of the EU is best described by the acts of solidarity and kindness, like the Romanian doctors and nurses taking care of Italian patients or the Italian and French citizens treated in German hospitals. Negrescu writes about the need to adapt to the new circumstances and create permanent mechanisms for fast intervention, one possibility for that being his proposal to the European institutions to establish an EU-wide medical emergency unit – EU Blue Medical Corps, which can be rapidly deployed in crisis or emergency situations. The necessary equipment could be supplied via the RescEU stockpile mechanism. Moreover, Negrescu finds that the existing coordination mechanism – the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre – is insufficient for the current needs and should become a permanent, flexible, well-funded instrument.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/opinion/lessons-learned-we-need-a-permanent-eu-medical-emergency-unit/>

Nutrition during the lockdown

Shoppers under lockdown are spending more on fresh fruits and vegetables and less on ready-made meals, turning to healthier diets, according to a new survey. During the pandemic, they are also trying new recipes and using more left-overs, thus reducing food waste. This could be linked to fears of food



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shortages, as EU consumers were seeing empty shelves in supermarkets, due to supply disruptions during the pandemic. Around mid-March, EU countries closed non-essential stores, whilst groceries, supermarkets and pharmacies could remain open. This had a clear effect on the retail trade volumes of various distribution channels. In March 2020, retail trade of food products (incl. beverages and tobacco) increased substantially compared with the average March growth rates of the last decade. Among EU Member States, highest increases were observed in Luxembourg (+20%), Ireland (+14%) and Belgium (+13%).

Link to PRESS RELEASE: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200507-2?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=/eurostat/en/news/whats-new>

More about the shoppers at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-food/locked-down-shoppers-turn-to-vegetables-shun-ready-meals-idUSKBN22P17V>

Some light at the end of the tunnel

On 14 May, Slovenia became the first Member State to officially call an end to its coronavirus epidemic. Slovenia recorded less than seven new coronavirus cases each day for the past two weeks. To prevent a possible spreading of infection, Slovenian citizens will still have to follow some basic rules, such as wearing masks in indoor public spaces and practicing social distancing. Next week, some pupils will return to school whereas bars and restaurants will be allowed to reopen.

Link to PRESS RELEASE: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/slovenia-calls-an-official-end-to-its-coronavirus-epidemic/>

More about actions that Slovenia undertook at: <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/pred-vrati-recesija-morda-tudi-depresija-308829.html>

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:

Economic measures in the Region of Madrid

The Region of Madrid has launched off a renting service for those affected by the coronavirus. The government of the region of Madrid has set up an initiative to help renters face the current economic situation due to coronavirus. Hence, a study will be carried out during the following days to detect which renters are in a vulnerable economic situation. After this selection process, the government will act as intermediary between the two parts in order to achieve a deal which favours everyone. The government of the region of Madrid has passed a financial support plan for SMEs and self-employed, to help them cope with the economic impact of the crisis. The plan has €220M at its disposal, 68.2M of which will be used as economic aid, while the rest will serve as financing through endorsements.

Mosina asks businesses what they need to respond to the crisis

The city of Mosina is well aware that Covid-19 hit many parts of the population and is proving a challenge for everyone. It has thus implemented many actions to help business and the population. To help entrepreneurs, the municipality surveyed private business and offered tax relief, including tax reductions or postponement of fees. For senior citizens, since 30 March, the municipality provides a service with the help of volunteers, in cooperation with the Caritas of the Archdiocese of Poznań and the Centre for Senior Initiatives, to help seniors with food and medicine shopping, so they don't need to leave their homes. Citizens can sign up with a telephone call.

Lower Silesia (Poland) and the Free State of Saxony (Germany) example of cross-border cooperation during the COVID-19 epidemic

On 22 April, 100 000 face masks for protection against coronavirus arrived in Lower Silesia. These masks were donated to Lower Silesia by its partner region, the Free State of Saxony in Germany; 50 000 of them are protective FFP2 masks while the rest 50 000 are surgical masks. As the Polish national government has recently made it compulsory to wear protective facial equipment outside one's home, this assistance from Saxony was greatly appreciated by the Marshal of Lower Silesia, Mr. Cezary Przybylski.

A few days earlier, 1 000 protective suits and 2 000 masks had also arrived from Saxony. This cooperation between Saxony and Lower Silesia also extends to testing for COVID-19, with labs in Dresden testing sometimes as many as 200 samples from Lower Silesia every day. Over 3 000 medical samples from Polish citizens had been tested for COVID-19 in Germany as of 24 April.

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

COVID-19 in Selected Partner Countries

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/civex-covid-19.aspx> - this page, created by the CoR CIVEX Commission, presents measures against COVID-19 and more related information from selected partner countries, based on data provided by the CoR partners. The European Committee of the Regions is in frequent exchange with partners in candidate countries and potential candidates for EU enlargement, Eastern Partnership countries, Mediterranean partner countries and beyond.



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