
Coronavirus: a timeline of EU action in 2020

The EU is taking many measures to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and its impact. Check out our timeline for a clear picture by theme.

Find out what the EU is doing for healthcare, research, economy, employment, society, travel and transport while helping its partners worldwide to fight Covid-19.

You can also check out our [2021 coronavirus timeline](#) and [2022 coronavirus timeline](#).

HEALTHCARE

Supporting public health sectors and ensuring the availability of medical equipment



20 million rapid antigen tests for member states

18 December 2020

The European Commission proposes common rules for the use, validation and mutual recognition of rapid antigen tests. Additionally, more than 20 million tests are made available to member states.

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EU4Health programme

14 December 2020

Council and Parliament negotiators agree on the EU4Health programme, which aims to tackle cross-border health threats and create resilient European health systems. Thanks to Parliament, the funding was increased to €5.1 billion for 2021-2027. The European Commission had proposed the new programme on 28 May.

[Read more](#)

[Interview with Parliament's public health committee chair Pascal Canfin](#)



A European Health Union

11 November 2020

The European Commission presents a first set of measures to create a European Health Union that ensures stronger preparedness and response during the current and future health crises. The proposal includes an EU Emergency Response Mechanism to be set-up to declare an emergency independently and more quickly and stronger mandates for the European Medicines Agency and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

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Making it easier to import medical equipment

28 October 2020

In order to get medical equipment from non-EU countries more easily, customs duties and VAT on imports are temporarily waived. The exemption, already applicable from 30 January 2020, is extended until April 2021. Additionally, new rules will grant VAT relief to sales of vaccines and testing kits to hospitals and general practitioners.

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Tackling medicine shortages

17 September 2020

In a resolution adopted on 17 September, Parliament calls for the EU to become more self-sufficient in health issues by securing supplies, restoring local drug manufacturing and ensuring better EU coordination of national health strategies.

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Support for treatment through convalescent plasma

31 July 2020

More than 200 blood collection services around the EU can apply for funding for the purchase of plasmapheresis equipment to support the treatment of new Covid-19 patients.

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EU access to Remdesivir

28 July 2020

Thanks to a contract signed with the Gilead pharmaceutical company, batches of Veklury - the brandname for Remdesivir, which is the first medicine authorised at EU level for the treatment of Covid-19 - are available to member states and the UK.

[Read more](#)



Strengthening preparedness for future outbreaks

15 July 2020

The European Commission presents immediate short-term measures to increase the EU's preparedness for future Covid-19 outbreaks, such as increasing testing coverage, ensuring supply of medicines and medical equipment and reducing the burden of the seasonal flu.

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New requirements for medical devices postponed

17 April 2020

To prevent shortages or delays in getting key medical devices onto the market, Parliament agrees to postpone the application of the new Medical Devices Regulation.

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Providing emergency support for health sectors

17 April 2020

The EU mobilises more than €3 billion from its budget to distribute medical supplies, coordinate transportation of equipment and patients and support the construction of mobile hospitals. In the longer term, the funds will support testing capacities and research.

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Creating a common EU reserve of medical equipment

20 March 2020

The EU is creating a strategic stockpile of ventilators, reusable masks, laboratory supplies and therapeutics (“rescEU”) to help member states facing shortages.

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Ramping up production capacity

20 March 2020

European harmonised standards for medical supplies (such as facemasks, protective clothing, respiratory protective devices) are made freely available to facilitate increased production.

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Setting up a European expert team

17 March 2020

A panel of seven epidemiologists and virologists from different member states formulates science-based EU response guidelines and coordinates risk management measures.

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Securing the availability of personal protective equipment

15 March 2020

Exports of personal protective equipment (such as masks, face shields, protective garments) to countries outside the EU must be authorised.

[Read more](#)



Buying medical equipment together

28 February 2020

EU countries join forces under the joint procurement agreement to purchase protective equipment (such as gloves, masks, overalls), ventilators and testing kits.

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RESEARCH

Supporting research and innovation for effective treatments and vaccines



Second vaccine authorised

6 January 2021

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Vaccination starts across the EU

27 December 2020

Vaccination against Covid-19 starts across the EU. First, people in priority groups are vaccinated, according to EU countries' national vaccination strategies.

[Updates on vaccines in the EU](#)



First vaccine authorised

21 December 2020

After a positive scientific recommendation by the European Medicines Agency, the European Commission grants the first conditional market authorisation for a Covid-19-vaccine to BioNTech/Pfizer. The authorisation is endorsed by the member states.

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Contracts for vaccine against Covid-19

25 November 2020

The EU has signed contracts with AstraZeneca, Sanofi-GSK, Janssen Pharmaceutica NV, BioNTech-Pfizer, CureVac and Moderna, so that member states can purchase their vaccines. Donation to lower and middle income countries or re-direction to other European countries is also possible.

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EU one of the leading donors to Covax

12 November 2020

The Covax facility is part of a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to Covid-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. The EU will contribute €500 million to secure vaccines for low and middle-income countries.

[Read more](#)



Effective vaccination strategies

15 October 2020

The European Commission presents key elements for the member states' Covid-19 vaccination strategies, including priority groups to be vaccinated first.

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€128 million for research diagnostic and vaccines

11 August 2020

The EU supports 23 research projects with €128 million under the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020.

It comes on top of €48.25 million allocated to 18 research projects involving 151 teams under the Horizon 2020 programme to develop vaccines, new treatments, rapid diagnostic tests and improve the preparedness and response to outbreaks and €117 million for eight projects on diagnostics and treatments through the Innovative Medicines Initiative.

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Fast-track development of vaccines

10 July 2020

Parliament approves a temporary derogation from certain clinical trials rules to allow Covid-19 vaccines and treatments to be developed more quickly.

[Read more](#)



€75 million to vaccine developer CureVac

6 July 2020

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and CureVac, a vaccine developer in Germany, enter into a €75 million loan agreement to support the company's ongoing development and production of vaccines, including CureVac's vaccine candidate against SARS-CoV-2.

[Read more](#)



A worldwide pledging effort to fund development of diagnostics and vaccines

27 June 2020

The "Global goal: unite for our future" summit mobilises an additional €6.15 billion under the Coronavirus Global Response initiative, bringing the total pledged to almost **€16 billion**. The initiative had been launched by the EU together with its global partners on 4 May, calling on countries and organisations around the world to help raise funding for the development and deployment of diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines against the coronavirus.

[Global response page](#)



An EU vaccines strategy

17 June 2020

The European Commission presents an EU strategy to accelerate the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against Covid-19.

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€100 million for vaccine development

11 June 2020

The European Investment Bank supports the immunotherapy company BioNTech SE with €100 million in debt financing for the development of its Covid-19 vaccine programme.

[Read more](#)



€314 million for innovative companies

8 June 2020

€166 million is allocated to 36 companies via the European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator pilot programme to work on pioneer projects to combat the virus and support recovery. Additionally, €148 million are granted to another 36 companies set to contribute to the recovery plan for Europe. 139 companies were given the new Covid-19 EU Seal of Excellence to help them attract funding from other sources.

[Read more](#)



Additional €122 million for research and innovation

19 May 2020

The EU launches a new call for projects to: repurpose manufacturing for the rapid production of vital medical supplies and equipment needed for testing and treatment; develop medical technologies to improve detection and patient care; research into the behavioural and socio-economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic to help improve treatment and prevention strategies. €122 million in funding will come from the EU research and innovation programme Horizon 2020.

[Read more](#)



A data sharing platform for researchers

20 April 2020

To support researchers in Europe and around the world in the fight against the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission together with several partners launches a European Covid-19 Data Platform to ensure the rapid collection and sharing of available research data.

[Read more](#)

ECONOMY

Supporting the financial sector and businesses




Agreement on Recovery and Resilience Facility

18 December 2020

Council and Parliament negotiators agree on the rules for the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which is the key instrument of the Covid-19 recovery plan. It will make €672.5 billion in loans and grants available to support EU countries' reforms and investments.

[Read more](#)



EU's budget for 2021-2027 approved

16 December 2020

Parliament approves the EU's next long-term budget during its plenary session. Together with the Covid-19 recovery package, it will allow the EU to provide €1.8 trillion in investments for a more resilient, green and digital Europe. In the negotiations with the Council, MEPs secured a substantially larger budget for the new EU4Health programme.

[Read more](#)



Compromise on EU long-term budget

10 November 2020

Parliament's negotiating team reaches a provisional agreement on the EU's budget for 2021-2027. Parliament obtains €16 billion on top of the package agreed on the EU summit in July. €15 billion will reinforce flagship programmes to protect people from the Covid-19 pandemic and provide opportunities to the next generation. €1 billion will increase flexibility to address future needs and crises.

[Read more](#)



€6.2 billion to tackle crisis and speed up vaccine deployment

17 September 2020

Parliament approves to increase the EU's 2020 budget by €6.2 billion: support for poorer regions will be topped up by €5.1 billion to ensure that requests for reimbursements from member states for measures to tackle the crisis can be covered and €1.1 billion are used to develop and deploy a Covid19-vaccine.

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Parliament clears way for recovery plan

16 September 2020

With a fast-tracked plenary vote already in September, Parliament speeds up the procedure that would allow the EU to borrow €750 billion on the markets to implement the coronavirus recovery plan. MEPs uphold their call to introduce new own resources in the EU budget that should at least cover the costs related to the plan.

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Parliament criticises budget cuts

23 July 2020

After heads of state and government agreed a deal on the EU budget for 2021-2027 and the recovery plan in mid-July, MEPs adopt a resolution laying out their position ahead of negotiations with the Council. Parliament welcomes the agreement on the overall size of the recovery plan, but criticises the cuts to the long-term budget, calls for binding commitment to new sources of EU revenue and says it intends to withhold its consent if the deal is not improved. MEPs also insist that Parliament should be fully involved in decisions on the recovery plan.

[Read more](#)



Easing rules to encourage banks to lend to companies and households

19 June 2020

Parliament adopts more flexible capital requirement rules to temporarily ensure favourable conditions for banks to support credit flows to companies and households and absorb losses, mitigating the economic consequences of the Covid-19 lock-down.

[Read more](#)



ECB pandemic emergency purchase programme (€1.35 trillion)

4 June 2020

The European Central Bank increases the pandemic emergency purchase programme by €600 billion to €1.35 trillion. The temporary asset purchase programme of private and public sector securities was initially launched in March with €750 billion, in addition to €120 billion already mobilised for the pandemic emergency.

[Read more](#)




€750 billion to stimulate economic and social recovery

27 May 2020

MEPs broadly welcome the European Commission's proposals for a €750 billion recovery instrument called Next Generation EU within a revamped long-term EU budget to tackle the Covid-19-crisis as presented by Ursula von der Leyen in plenary. In resolutions adopted on 15 May and 17 April, MEPs called for a robust and massive economic recovery package, focusing on people's needs.

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Maximum flexibility to channel EU structural funds

23 April 2020

New measures will allow EU countries to transfer resources between the three main cohesion funds (the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund), between the different categories of regions and between the funds' specific priority areas.

[Read more](#)




EIB support for the economy (€65 billion)

16 April 2020

The European Investment Bank creates a €25 billion guarantee fund mobilising up to €200 billion to help the European economy on top of €40 billion already mobilised.

[Read more](#)



European roadmap to phase out containment measures

15 April 2020

The European Commission and the European Council present guidance and recommendations for member states when lifting confinement measures.

[Read more](#)

[Joint European Roadmap towards lifting Covid-19 containment measures](#)



Immediate help for at least 100,000 small and medium-sized enterprises

6 April 2020

Keeping in mind the strong impact of the crisis on small and medium-sized enterprises, the EU unlocks around €8 billion in finance for European firms.

[Read more](#)



EU structural funds for essential investments and resources (€37 billion)

27 March 2020

€37 billion from EU structural funds are made available for the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative to support healthcare systems, small and medium-sized enterprises and labour markets.

[Read more](#)



More fiscal flexibility

23 March 2020

To allow member states to undertake exceptional spending to deal with the crisis, the EU makes its budgetary rules more flexible.

[Read more](#)



Revised state aid rules

19 March 2020

EU countries can flexibly apply state aid rules to ensure that sufficient liquidity remains available to businesses of all types and to preserve the continuity of economic activity.

[Read more](#)

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIETY

Supporting household incomes and jobs during the crisis



Keeping people in jobs and businesses alive (€100 billion)

27 October 2020

As part of its coronavirus response, the EU adopted the Sure instrument in May, providing funding to EU countries of up to €100 billion for loans on favourable terms, to allow companies to keep their employees and reduce working hours while ensuring income support. It was activated on 22 September. The first instalments were disbursed on 27 October.

[Read more](#)



Helping the agri-food sector

19 June 2020

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the EU has taken exceptional financial support and market crisis measures and introduced more flexible EU farm policy rules to help farmers, fishermen and small agri-food businesses cope with the impact of pandemic.

[Read more](#)



Protecting cross-border and seasonal workers

19 June 2020

Parliament calls for urgent action to safeguard health, safety and fair working conditions for cross-border and seasonal workers in the context of the coronavirus crisis.

[Read more](#)



Risk group classification of SARS-CoV-2

11 June 2020

Parliament and the Commission agree to classify the virus that causes Covid-19, SARS-CoV-2, within risk group three of the EU Biological Agents Directive to ensure extra guarantees for workers' health and safety.

[Read more](#)




EU guidance for a safe return to the workplace

24 April 2020

The EU issues guidelines to ensure workers can return to their workplaces in a safe and healthy environment. The guidance covers anything from risk assessment and the care of sick workers to information for specific sectors and occupations.

[Read more](#)



Taking care of the most deprived

23 April 2020

To lower the risk of infection, delivery of food aid and basic material assistance via the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived will be possible through electronic or paper vouchers, while protective equipment for workers and volunteers provided.

[Read more](#)



Ensuring privacy and data protection for Covid-19 tracing apps

17 April 2020

The European Commission issues guidance and an EU toolbox on developing new apps that support the fight against Covid-19. Parliament stresses that any digital measures against the pandemic must be in full compliance with data protection and privacy legislation.

[Read more](#)



Financial assistance through the Solidarity Fund (€800 million)

26 March 2020

The EU Solidarity Fund's scope is extended to cover public health emergencies, making €800 million available in 2020 for member states hit hardest by the pandemic.

[Read more](#)



Avoiding network congestion

19 March 2020

The EU asks Netflix, Facebook and YouTube to reduce streaming quality to avoid overloading the web.

[Read more](#)

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Restricting travel and ensuring the delivery of critical services



Staying safe from Covid-19 during winter

2 December 2020

The European Commission presents a strategy to keep the number of Covid-19 cases down over the winter period. It includes recommendations for EU countries to persist with requirements on physical distancing and masks, to reinforce testing and contact tracing, to provide advice on safe travel and to further develop vaccination strategies.

[Read more](#)



EU gateway for tracing and warning apps goes live

19 October 2020

The European Commission has set up an EU-wide system ("gateway") to ensure the interoperability of member states' contact tracing and warning apps across borders. The first apps linked to this service are Corona-Warn-App (Germany), Covid tracker (Ireland) and Immuni (Italy). Other apps will be connected during October and November.

[Read more](#)



Coordination of measures restricting free movement

17 September 2020

The European Commission presents a proposal to ensure that any measures taken by member states restricting free movement are coordinated and clearly communicated at EU level. In a resolution adopted on 17 September, Parliament supports the proposal and calls for harmonised health assessments and methodologies.

[Read more](#)



Lifting travel restrictions gradually

15 June 2020

EU countries are gradually lifting the travel restrictions introduced to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Parliament demands that the passport-free Schengen zone returns to full functioning as soon as possible.

[Read more](#)



Re-open EU website: helping free movement and tourism resume

14 June 2020

To ensure the protection of public health, the EU launches the web-platform 'Re-open EU' to provide travellers with the necessary information to plan their European travels and holidays, while staying healthy and safe. The information is updated regularly and available in 24 languages.

[Read more](#)




Recommendations for safe travel

13 May 2020

The European Commission proposes guidelines and recommendations for tourism and transport, to help EU countries coordinate the safe lifting of travel restrictions and protect travellers.

[Read more](#)



Putting an end to empty flights

26 March 2020

EU rules on airport slots that obliged airlines to use their planned take-off and landing slots to keep them next season are temporarily suspended. The rules were updated on 10 February 2021.

[Press release on relief measures for the transport sector](#)



Ensuring the continuous flow of goods and services

18 March 2020

The EU installs "green lane" border crossings to secure the supply of essential goods and vital medical and protective equipment within the single market.

[Read more](#)

Restricting travel to halt the spread

17 March 2020

The EU temporarily closes its borders for non-essential travel, to contain the spread of Covid-19.

[Read more](#)

Repatriating EU citizens

Since January 2020

Tens of thousands of EU citizens are brought home from non-European countries around the world thanks to the Civil Protection Mechanism.

[Read more](#)

EU global response

Supporting partner countries' efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic



€20 million for health systems in South-East Asia

1 December 2020

The EU launches a new €20 million programme to strengthen the monitoring and testing capacities of partner countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and to support their health systems.

[Read more](#)



€86.5 million for Ghana

20 November 2020

The EU mobilises €86.5 million in emergency support for Ghana to tackle the consequences of the pandemic.

[Read more](#)



€92 million for Sahel

9 November 2020

The EU provides €92 million to Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad to help the countries provide quality health care and reduce the economic and social impact of the pandemic.

[Read more](#)



€25 million for the Gambia

19 October 2020

The EU mobilises €25 million for the Gambia as part of the Team Europe package to contribute to the recovery from the pandemic and support the transition towards democracy.

[Read more](#)



EU Humanitarian Air Bridge

11 September 2020

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge to transport humanitarian workers and emergency supplies provides help to critical areas affected by the Covid-19 pandemic around the world. Since its launch on 8 May, 67 flights have brought medical equipment and humanitarian workers to critical areas in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

[Read more](#)



Global deliveries of medical supplies and protective equipment continue

28 July 2020

Through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the EU continues to deliver medical supplies and personal protective equipment throughout the world. Deliveries have been made to 24 countries, including seven member states, on top of bilateral help.

[Read more](#)



€64 million for Southern Africa region

20 July 2020

The EU provides €64.7 million worth of humanitarian aid to Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe to help support people in need dealing with the coronavirus and extreme weather conditions such as persistent drought and other crises.

[Read more](#)



New assistance package for North Africa

2 July 2020

The EU adopts a new aid package to support migrants and local communities and tackle Covid-19 in North Africa. The package includes €80 million in new funds and €30 million reallocated from the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

[Read more](#)



Support for Central African Republic

18 June 2020

The EU grants €54 million to the Central African Republic to assist the government in the fight against the coronavirus.

[Read more](#)



€60 million package to help countries in the Horn of Africa

17 June 2020

The EU mobilises a €60 million package to help tackle the health and socio-economic impact of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. In May, the EU approved €105.5 million worth of aid to humanitarian projects in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia to help provide health care, food aid and the basic needs of refugees.

[Read more](#)



Additional €55 million for Syrian refugees and local communities in Jordan and Lebanon

10 June 2020

A support package of €55 million is mobilised by the EU to help Syrian refugees and vulnerable people in Jordan and Lebanon during the coronavirus crisis. The aid focuses on health and water, sanitation and hygiene services. This comes on top of an almost €240 million support package approved in March.

[Read more](#)



Additional €50 million in humanitarian aid

20 May 2020

An extra €50 million is mobilised to provide access to health services, protective equipment, water and sanitation to vulnerable people in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, the Central African Republic, the Great Lakes region in Africa, Eastern Africa, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and Venezuela, as well as the Rohingya. The funding is channelled through NGOs, international organisations, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

[Read more](#)



€3 billion in loans for neighbouring and partner countries

15 May 2020

The EU approves €3 billion in loans to help neighbouring and partner countries mitigate the social and economic effects of the pandemic while preserving financial stability.

[Read more](#)




€3.3 billion EU support for the Western Balkans

29 April 2020

The EU is mobilising a package of more than €3.3 billion to assist its Western Balkan partners, providing support for the health sector, social and economic recovery, humanitarian assistance to refugees and macro- as well as micro-financial assistance.

[Read more](#)



More than €36 billion to support partner countries

8 April 2020

The EU launches a Team Europe package to help the most vulnerable countries fight the pandemic and mitigate its social and economic consequences, in particular in Africa, the EU's neighbourhood, but also countries in Asia and the Pacific, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean.

[Read more](#)



Up to €28 million to support research in sub-Saharan Africa

8 April 2020

The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) is launching three calls for expressions of interest to support research capacities in sub-Saharan Africa, with a budget up to €28 million funded by Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme.

[Read more](#)



€700 million in financial assistance to help Greece manage migration

3 March 2020

The EU makes €350 million available to support Greece, where most refugees and migrants heading for Europe arrive. Additional financial assistance of €350 million can be requested as part of an amending budget. Also, Greece is provided with assistance in terms of medical equipment, medical teams, shelters, tents and blankets through the Civil Protection Mechanism.

[Read more](#)

Disinformation on the pandemic is spreading everywhere, making it more difficult to fight the virus. The [EU provides and actively promotes reliable information](#) and cooperates with online platforms to remove fake news and online scams. On 10 June, the Commission proposed [concrete measures](#) that can be quickly set in motion to fight disinformation.

You can also check out our summary of [10 things the EU does to tackle the Covid-19 crisis](#).