

PES Group Digest on the EU Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

12 June 2020

List of European decisions

Date	Number of cases and deaths ¹	European response
8 June	1 440 444 cases 168 898 deaths	The European Commission awarded nearly €166 million , via the European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator Pilot, to 36 companies set to combat the coronavirus pandemic and support recovery.
9 June	1 444 710 cases 169 207 deaths	Economic and finance ministers held a debate on the European Commission's proposal for a Recovery Plan. EU ministers responsible for employment and social affairs had an exchange of views on how to make national employment and social policies more robust and labour markets more resilient to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.
10 June	1 449 988 cases 169 778 deaths	The European Commission assessed its steps and proposed a way forward for the fight against disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Union adopted a €55 million support package for Syrian refugees and local communities in Jordan and Lebanon to mitigate coronavirus pandemic.

¹ European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The figures concern the countries of the European Economic Area (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the UK.
<https://gap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html>

<p>11 June</p>	<p>1 454 718 cases 170 294 deaths</p>	<p>Eurogroup ministers met to discuss the economic situation and recovery needs of the European Union Member States and the complementarity of national and European policies.</p> <p>Eastern Partnership foreign affairs ministers met to discuss the future of this initiative and how to reinforce cooperation in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>12 June</p>		<p>EU ministers responsible for health debated the legislative proposal put forward by the European Commission for a new, reinforced EU health programme EU4Health.</p> <p>EU ministers responsible for internal market and industry will discuss the green and digital transitions as drivers of the European recovery and how to strengthen strategic EU value chains.</p>

The EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the position of the PES Group



European Parliament

Economic Affairs

On 8 June, members of the European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) had an exchange of views with Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank, to discuss the latest monetary policy decisions of the ECB Governing Council. Christine Lagarde presented to MEPs the merits of the massive repurchase, through the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP), of essentially public securities, as well as the recent extension of the scope and duration of this operation launched in mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lagarde assured MEPs that the ECB stands ready to do more to fulfil its mandate, which is not only to ensure price stability but also to support the EU's economic policies.

→ **“Lagarde warns of market turbulences if no quick adoption of recovery fund”**, *Euractiv*, 8 June 2020.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/lagarde-warns-of-market-turbulences-if-no-quick-adoption-of-recovery-fund/>

Regional Development

On 8 June, members of the Regional Development Committee (REGI) held a debate in the presence of European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira on the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and on the impact of *NextGenerationEU* on Structural and Investment Funds. While welcoming the measures presented by the Commission to revive the European economy after COVID-19, MEPs were concerned about the budget cuts foreseen in the next MFF.

Conference on the Future of Europe

On 8 June, members of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) held a debate on the Conference on the Future of Europe and the role of the European Parliament. The launch of the Conference, foreseen originally to kick start in May, is now probably postponed to September, but the European institutions need to finalise an agreement on its scope and structure.

The Council of the European Union

Agriculture

EU ministers responsible for agriculture, who held an exchange of views by videoconference on 8 June, expressed a number of concerns about the impact that the “Farm to Fork” and “Biodiversity 2030” strategies could have on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Almost all the delegations were particularly concerned about the very ambitious targets for reducing pesticide use and risks (-50%), the use of fertilisers and antibiotics (-50%), and the area returned to nature (10%).

Moreover, EU ministers welcomed the European Commission’s recent proposal for the revised 2021-2027 MFF, which provides for an increase of €26.5 billion in current prices to the agricultural budget compared to the draft presented in 2018. However, the vast majority of the delegations also felt that this increase in the agricultural envelope is still insufficient in view of the additional efforts that will be required of farmers under the *Green Deal*.

Economy

On 9 June, economy and finance ministers had a first exchange of views on the EU Recovery Fund, ahead of the European Council on June 19. Ministers addressed the basic structure of the new EU recovery instrument, namely its overall size, the nature and allocation criteria of the funds and the governance framework.

- **“EU finance ministers examine recovery plan amid deep divisions”**, *Euractiv*, 10 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/eu-finance-ministers-examine-recovery-plan-amid-deep-divisions/>

On the same day, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) announced that Spain, France and Italy will be the countries hardest hit this year by the coronavirus. According to the OECD, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the most severe recession in nearly a century.

→ <http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/global-economy-faces-a-tightrope-walk-to-recovery.htm>

The Eurogroup

On 11 June, the finance ministers of the euro area held a video conference to discuss the needs for the recovery plan and the European Commission's proposal, on the table of next week's European Council. Ministers also discussed the implications for the Euro area and a possible Eurozone dimension for the recovery facility to protect the single currency. Another key issue of the meeting was the need to coordinate recovery plans at the national level. As Eurogroup Chair and Portuguese Minister Mario Centeno said: "Coordination is key to ensure that we avoid divergence and the build-up of our imbalances"

The next Eurogroup in July will be the last meeting chaired by Centeno, following his recent announcement to resign from the government by mid-July. His decision opens the race to the position of Eurogroup Chair, for which, according to the media, Nadia Calviño (PES), Spain's Deputy Prime Minister with a focus on economic affairs, and Pierre Gramegna (RENEW), Luxembourg's Finance Minister, have expressed an interest. In Portugal, Centeno will be replaced by State Secretary for Budget João Leão.

The European Committee of the Regions

On 8 June, members of the Commission for Environment (ENVE) of the European Committee of the Regions held a debate with Virginius Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, on the reviewed 2020 Work Programme and on the Green Recovery Plan.

Opening the debate, the Chair of the ENVE Commission, PES Group member and Mayor of Seville, Juan Espadas, said: "The European Green Deal is our roadmap for the economic and social recovery, which has to be also a green recovery. The European Union institutions can count on regions and cities to play an active role, as we can suggest strategies to better support societies and those most affected. To leave this crisis behind, we need to focus our efforts on building the world of tomorrow together at all levels, and I thank in particular Commissioner Sinkevičius for his dialogue with us today and his openness to intensify our cooperation."

The meeting also included debates on five opinions, among which the one by PES Group member Birgit Honé, Minister for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development (Lower Saxony, Germany) on clean hydrogen. Moreover, members appointed Enrico Rossi, PES Group Vice-President and President of the Tuscany Region,

as rapporteur of an upcoming opinion on the “Renovation Wave”, the EU’s initiative to upgrade the energy performance of Europe’s building stock.

On 15 June, the “Green Deal Working Group” of the European Committee of the Regions will hold its first meeting in the presence of Aurore Lalucq (S&D, France), Chair of the European Parliament’s Intergroup on the Green New Deal, and Diederik Samson, Head of Cabinet to European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

The European progressive family

This week, the S&D Group, in a letter addressed to the European Commission, put forward its position on the shape of the future Pact on Migration and Asylum, which the European Commission is expected to adopt at the end of June.

→ Read the full document:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vRZdOJ7vxCcF1PmPhi55Sd2RkCvS6YyL/view>

Many of our members and PES family partners came up with further proposals to address the COVID-19 crisis. Please find here some of them:

→ **“Young people must be front and centre in the recovery”**, Press release, PES, 8 June 2020,

<https://www.pes.eu/en/news-events/news/detail/Young-people-must-be-front-and-centre-in-the-recovery-PES-EPSCO-says/>

→ a**“ETUC on Future of European Pillar of Social Rights”**, Press release, ETUC, 8 June 2020,

<https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/etuc-future-european-pillar-social-rights>

→ **“An ambitious recovery plan is needed for Europe to thrive”**, Press release, PES Financial and Economic Network, 9 June 2020,

<https://www.pes.eu/en/news-events/news/detail/An-ambitious-recovery-plan-is-needed-for-Europe-to-thrive-FEN-says/>

PES Group projects

We renew our call to you to join the PES Group project on solidarity initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic:

→ <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/covid-19-progressive-cities-and-regions-share-solidarity-projects>

So far, we have received a total of 43 contributions from 12 countries from PES Group members and also other local and regional progressive leaders.



If you wish to contribute, you can consult the online form available at this [link](#).

Recently, we also joined the UN Habitat Local 2030 Spotlight Series. You can find here the contributions of some PES Group members (Manuela Bora, Juan Espadas, Christian Illedits, Christophe Rouillon and Pascal Smet), together with instructions on how to share your sustainability story:

→ <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/pes-group-joins-un-habitat-initiative-local2030-spotlight-series>

**LE FUTUR BUDGET DE L'UNION EUROPÉENNE:
LES PRIORITÉS DES VILLES ET DES RÉGIONS PROGRESSISTES**

 <p>CHRISTOPHE ROUILLON Maire de Coullaines Président du Groupe PSE</p>	 <p>ISABELLE BOUDINEAU Vice-présidente de la région Nouvelle-Aquitaine</p>	 <p>PAUL MAGNETTE Maire de Charleroi Président du PS Belgique</p>	 <p>MARGARIDA MARQUES Députée européenne S&D Co-rapporteur CFP</p>
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Zoom | Facebook

16 juin

#ProgressiveLocalStories

Last but not least, on 16 June at 18:30, the PES Group is hosting a debate on the future European budget from the point of view of cities and regions, moderated by PES Group President Christophe Rouillon, and with the participation of PES Group Member, Chair of the COTER Commission and Vice-President of Nouvelle-Aquitaine Isabelle Boudineau, Mayor of Charleroi and Leader of the Belgian Socialist Party Paul Magnette, and S&D

Member of the European Parliament Margarida Marques (Portugal). The event will be in French and will involve young local and regional leaders from our network.

→ Register now:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/91012020000?pwd=ZludOuggDwpGdYXI-Nr-ABxxK96lhn0Ycn9>

The fight against fake news

On Wednesday 10 June, European Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová and High Representative Josep Borrell published a Joint Communication, which analyses the immediate response to fight disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and proposes concrete action to counter disinformation propaganda. To counter propaganda attempts by foreign actors, the Commission wants to strengthen its own communication efforts within and outside the EU.

- Proposal: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1006
- **“Social media platforms must play their part in the fight against disinformation”**, Press release, S&D Group, 10 June 2020, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/social-media-platforms-must-play-their-part-fight-against-disinformation>
- **“Time to tell the truth’ on Chinese disinformation, Jourova says”**, *Euractiv*, 10 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/time-to-tell-the-truth-on-chinese-disinformation-jourova-says/1476012/>
- **“European Commission accuses China of peddling disinformation”**, POLITICO Europe, 10 June 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-commission-disinformation-china-coronavirus/>

The following websites, constantly updated, can be helpful to you:

- **EUvsDISINFO**, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>
- **Scams related to COVID-19**, [+https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumers/enforcement-consumer-protection/scams-related-covid-19_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumers/enforcement-consumer-protection/scams-related-covid-19_en)
- **COVID-19 foreign influence campaigns: Europe and the global battle of narratives**, European Parliament Research Service, <https://epthinktank.eu/2020/04/07/covid-19-foreign-influence-campaigns-europe-and-the-global-battle-of-narratives/>
- **European Solidarity in Action**, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_20_563
- **European Commission Corona Virus Response**, https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en

- **European Parliament Corona Virus Response**,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/eu-response-to-coronavirus>
- **“10 things the EU is doing to fight the coronavirus”**, European Parliament,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200327STO76004/10-things-the-eu-is-doing-to-fight-the-coronavirus>
- **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control**,
<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china>
- **World Health Organisation**,
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Initiatives for cities and regions

European Committee of the Regions - Stories of cross-border regions

The European Committee of the Regions together with the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the leading associations working in the field of cross-border cooperation in Europe, are looking for stories and experiences on cross-border cooperation during the COVID-19 crisis.

→ Share your story: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/CBC-COVID19?_cldee

European Commission Access City Award

On 9 June, the European Commission launched the 11th *Access City Award* competition. The competition is intended to reward a city's efforts to promote accessibility for people with disabilities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contest will pay particular attention to the accessibility of public services in times of pandemic, explained socialist European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli. Cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants are invited to apply until 9 September 2020. The first, second and third place winners will be awarded prizes of 150,000 euros, 120,000 euros and 80,000 euros respectively.

→ Apply here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1141>

Joint OECD - Committee of the Regions Webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on EU regions and cities

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is jointly organising with the European Committee of the Regions a webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on cities and regions of the EU. To get direct feedback from local and regional representatives, they prepared a 10-minute survey (available in all languages) on the governance, finance and recovery plans implemented by local and regional governments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

→ Link to the survey:

<http://cdlink2.cor.europa.eu/m/1/98870298/p1-b20155-a66325d6508f4ea3aa97a9dc96eb2469/2/312/508b9999-9705-4fa6-895b-c4b680f09c52>

→ To register for the webinar

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/ECON-impact-covid-19-on-EU-regions-n-cities.aspx>

ARLEM award - Young local entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean

After two successful editions, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) launched the Award 2021 with a new timeline. This year, the registration for applications will be open from 15 June to 31 August. The winner and the supporting LRA will be announced at the ARLEM Plenary session in the beginning of 2021.

→ More information as of 15 June here:

https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/ARLEM_Award_2021

Useful links to monitor

Please find here a list of sources that we have already shared. All these organisations are regularly publishing updates and online events, so we recommend you to check their websites:

- **Bloomberg Foundation**
<https://cities4health.org/>
<https://www.cityleadership.harvard.edu/resources-sessions>
- **C40**
https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/cities-and-coronavirus-covid-19?language=en_US&tabset-5cf81=42fb1
https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Cities-and-Coronavirus-COVID-19?language=en_US
- **European Commission's Intelligent Cities**
<https://www.intelligentcitieschallenge.eu/covid-19-webinars>
- **OECD**
<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/>
- **United Cities and Local Governments**
<https://www.uclg.org/en/issues/live-learning-experience-beyondtheoutbreak>

Useful readings

Please find below a series of useful articles, published by various think tanks and organisations:

- **“National capitals question EU’s pandemic preparedness”**, POLITICO Europe, 6 June 2020,
<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-national-capitals-question-coronavirus-pandemic-preparedness/>
- **“The EU Recovery Plan: “Next Generation EU” Recovery Instrument in a revamped MFF 2021-2027”**, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, 8 June 2020,
<https://cpmr.org/wpdm-package/the-eu-recovery-plan-next-generation-eu-recovery-instrument-in-a-revamped-mff-2021-2027/?wpdmdl=26053&ind=1591278211055>
- **“How Europe Should Prepare for the Post-Coronavirus World”**, Carnegie Europe, 9 June 2020,
<https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/82016>
- **“Connecting Europe’s forgotten regions”**, Euractiv, 9 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/connecting-europes-forgotten-regions/>
- **“Europe needs immigration: and common rules to manage it”**, Piero Fassino, *The Progressive Post*, 6 June 2020,
<https://progressivepost.eu/debates/next-global/europe-needs-immigration-and-common-rules-to-manage-it>
- **“COVID-19, populism, and sustainable development”**, VoxEU, 9 June 2020,
<https://voxeu.org/article/covid-19-populism-and-sustainable-development>
- **“Ex-Eurogroup boss: Nobody is so stupid to propose to ‘just go back under 3% deficit’”**, Euractiv, 10 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/interview/ex-eurogroup-boss-nobody-is-so-stupid-to-propose-to-just-go-back-under-3-deficit/>
- **“Protecting Midwives and Mothers During the Pandemic”**, Project Syndicate, 9 June 2020,
<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/protecting-midwives-and-mothers-during-covid19-pandemic-by-sally-pairman-and-roopa-dhatt-2020-06>
- **“Restoring free movement in the Union”**, Robert Schuman Foundation, 9 June 2020,
<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/doc/questions-d-europe/qe-562-en.pdf>
- **“Europeans want to keep their cities car-free”**, POLITICO Europe, 11 June 2020,
<https://www.politico.eu/article/life-after-covid-europeans-want-to-keep-their-cities-car-free/>
- **“Three-quarters of Next Generation EU payments will have to wait until 2023”**, Bruegel Blog, 11 June 2020,
<https://www.bruegel.org/2020/06/three-quarters-of-next-generation-eu-payments-will-have-to-wait-until-2023/>
- **“How to spend it right: A more democratic governance for the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility”**, Jacques Delors Center, Hertie School of Governance, 11 June 2020,
https://hertieschool-f4e6.kxcdn.com/fileadmin/2_Research/1_About_our_research/2_Research_centres/6_Jacques_Delors_Centre/Publications/20200610_How_to_spend_it_right_Guttenberg_Nguyen.pdf