

Conclusions by the President of the European Council following the video conference on COVID-19

Heads of State and Government welcomed the initiative to hold this video conference on COVID-19.

Member states expressed sympathy with Italy and other member states that are severely hit.

During the video conference on 10 March 2020 we emphasised the need to work together and to do everything necessary and to act swiftly. They stressed the need for a joint European approach and a close coordination with the European Commission. Health ministers and Interior ministers should consult daily to ensure proper coordination and aim for common European guidance.

During the meeting, information and practices were exchanged and 4 priorities identified.

1) **Limiting the spread of the virus.** Member states agreed that our citizens' health is the first priority, and that measures should be based on science and medical advice. Measures need to be proportional so that they do not have excessive consequences for our societies as a whole. The leaders further agreed that on this point they will share all relevant information through existing coordination mechanisms.^[1]

2) **Provision of medical equipment.** Agreement to task the Commission with analysing the needs and to come up with initiatives to prevent shortages. The Commission informed that it will continue its engagement with the industry and pursue joint public procurements. Moreover, the Commission intends to purchase personal protective equipment through the Civil Protection Framework - RescEU. It must be ensured that the Internal market functions properly and any unjustified obstacles are avoided. Particular attention must be given to masks and respirators.

3) **Promotion research,** including for a vaccine. The Member states stressed the importance of reinforcing efforts on research. The Commission has already mobilised EUR 140 million of funds and selected 17 projects to do this.

4) **Tackling socio-economic consequences.** The Union and its member states, we stand ready to make use of all instruments that are necessary. In particular we will address any impact on liquidity, on support for SME's and specific affected sectors, and their employees. Flexible application of EU rules in particular as regard State aid and Stability and Growth Pact will be needed.

The Commission will closely monitor economic developments in the Union and take all necessary initiatives. Member states and institutions will follow up closely and immediately.

Member states and institutions will follow-up at all levels immediately. The European Council will come back to the matter during **the 26 - 27 March** summit to take any further decisions needed.

[1] IPCR (Integrated Political Crisis Response) launched by the Croatian Presidency. The ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) will support MS and provide guidelines.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press