



COVID-19 Country policy responses

1 March 2023

Countries are taking unprecedented measures to combat the spread of the disease, while ameliorating its pernicious effect on the economy and labour market.

Find out the policies implemented by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and the ILO in **188 countries and territories**.

Content can be found in one of the ILO official languages (English, French and Spanish) depending on the country.

How policies are reported

Country policy responses are presented within the **four pillars of action** defined by the ILO to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on businesses, jobs and the most vulnerable members of society.

Pillar 1: Stimulating the economy and jobs

- Active fiscal policy
- Accommodative monetary policy
- Lending and financial support to specific sectors including the health sector

Pillar 2: Supporting enterprises, employment and incomes

- Extend social protection for all
- Implement employment retention measures
- Provide financial/tax and other relief for enterprises

Pillar 3: Protecting workers in the workplace

- Strengthen OSH measures
- Adapt work arrangements (e.g. teleworking)
- Prevent discrimination and exclusion

- Provide health access for all
- Expand access to paid leave

Pillar 4: Using social dialogue between government, workers and employers to find solutions

- Strengthen the capacity and resilience of employers' and workers' organizations
- Strengthen the capacity of governments
- Strengthen social dialogue, collective bargaining and labour relations institutions and processes

**European
Union**

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Stimulating the economy and employment

Stimulating the economy

The COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge for Europe, the world and the livelihoods of people. On 10 March 2020, the European Council agreed [on four priorities](#) to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic: 1) limiting the spread of the virus, 2) ensuring the provision of medical equipment (focus on masks and respirators), 3) promoting research (including a vaccine) and 4) **tackling socio-economic consequences**. In its [conclusions](#), the European Council authorised the European Commission (EC) to propose all necessary initiatives to support the above priorities. On 17 April 2020 the European Parliament further approved a [Resolution on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences](#).

As of October 2021, the European Council has agreed to a recovery package for Europe of €2.018 trillion which combines the €1210.9 billion long-term EU budget for 2021-27 and €806.9 billion NextGenerationEU funds. The total EU economic response has amounted to €3.7 trillion, of which €524 billion taken in national measures (subject to the general escape clause), €100bn in SURE to fund short-time work schemes, €70 billion in direct EU budget support, €2,553 billion in national liquidity measures, €240 billion European Stability Mechanism, and €200 million in EIB funding.

Fiscal policy

During the last 18 months, the EU has taken several measures **to ease its fiscal rules and to support public expenditures of its member states (MS)**. The EC has [temporarily amended its rules on state aid](#) to allow MS to support businesses, banks, and their economies. As of June 2021, €3.05 trillion in national aid has been approved under the amended state aid rules. The EU institutions, agreed to activate the [General Escape Clause of the Stability and Growth Pact](#) which

allows MS to deviate from the budgetary objectives and to increase public expenditure. On 3 March 2021, the European Commission adopted a Communication providing EU Member States with a broad guidance on the conduct of their fiscal policies in the medium time to support economic recovery. For 2022, the Commission proposed the application of the general escape clause. As of October 2021, under the flexibility of EU budgetary rules, some €524bn in national measures by Member States have been taken under the general escape clause.

Under its **two Corona Response Investment Initiatives** ([CRII](#) and [CRII+](#)) the EC proposed measures to make more **flexible** and **simplify** the use of EU funds to tackle the pandemic (together €54 billion in public investments), including the European Social Fund. The Council and the European Parliament supported these proposals, which entered into force in record time, and MS are already making use of them by **reorienting already allocated cohesion and structural funds** to tackle Covid-19 and benefit from simplified procedures.

The most affected MS can make use of [the European Solidarity Fund](#) (€800 million). As of October 2021, some €37 billion has been disbursed under the CRII.

EU finance ministers (euro area) [agreed](#) that the European Stability Mechanism will establish a Pandemic Crisis Support, based on its Enhanced Conditions Credit Line (ECCL), which allows euro area member states **to request assistance for up to 2% of their GDP** (as measured at the end of 2019). All funds need to be used to support domestic financing of direct and indirect healthcare, cure, and prevention related costs due to the COVID 19 crisis. This credit line is expected to make available about [€240 billion](#).

The European Council welcomed a Joint Roadmap for recovery, which emphasises the need for a functioning single market, the need for an unprecedented investment effort, acting globally and ensuring a fiscal system of governance.

On 27 May 2020, **the EC launched three key actions for a European recovery from the socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic**. These consist in first, [increasing the ceilings of the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial Framework](#) to allow for the immediate implementation of measures to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; second, **a proposal for a reinforced multi-annual financial framework for 2021-2027** and third an emergency [European Recovery Instrument](#) (dubbed "Next Generation EU")

Under the European Recovery Instrument, the EC aims to temporarily **borrow €800 billion from the capital markets** to support the economic recovery in the EU, in line with the green and digital transition. To do this, the EC plans to temporarily [increase its own resources to 2% of the EU's Gross National Income](#). Repayments for the funds borrowed would start in 2028 and be completed by 2054.

The funds raised will be **channelled through and reinforce already proposed/existing EU programmes** and instruments. The EC proposes to invest the funds (€500 billion in grants and €300 billion in loans to EU MS) under the "Next Generation EU" instrument **across three pillars in line with the proposals to reinforce the current and next EU multi-annual financial frameworks**.

Under the first pillar, **MS will receive support to investments and reforms for their economic recovery**. For this [purpose, a new Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) was created. Through the facility €672.5 billion will be disbursed through loans and grants to EU MS. For this purpose, MS

have to draw up recovery and resilience plans linked to their National Reform Programmes, which are submitted under the European Semester process. Under the [REACT-EU initiative](#) the EC proposes to top up member states structural funds with additional financial support of €55 billion for them to support workers, SME's, health systems and the green and digital transition across sectors. On 28 June 2021, the Commission disbursed €800 million in payments to 41 national and regional programmes in 16 Member States to foster a greener, more digital and resilient recovery under the REACT-EU initiative.

Under **the second pillar, the EC aims to incentivise private investment** through a [Solvency Support Instrument](#). The instrument takes the form of **a third window under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)**. In line with the EFSI, the EU guarantee will be made available to the EIB to attract private investment for the objectives of mobilising private resources **to support economically viable companies temporarily needing support due to the impact of Covid-19**. The support is aimed at companies in those regions, sectors and countries most affected. Through the EU guarantee it is hoped to unlock more than €300 billion in private investment solvency support. In addition, **the EC proposed to double the amount available under its reinforced investment programme InvestEU** and to create a strategic investment window which, amongst others, will support projects and companies relevant for achieving or maintaining strategic autonomy in value chains of key importance for the EU.

Under the third pillar, **EC commitments to better support its global partners** by both strengthening the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#) and [the Humanitarian Aid Instrument](#). As part of pillar three, EC proposed to create a new standalone [EU4Health programme](#) with a budget of €9.4 billion to improve long-term health lessons from the crisis and invest in prevention and crisis preparedness.

Legislative work by the Council and the European Parliament (where it is required to give its consent and for those in which it is a co-legislator) are under way.

On 21 July 2020, the European Council adopted [conclusions on the recovery plan and multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027](#). Negotiations with the European Parliament are ongoing.

On 17 September 2020, the European Commission presented next steps for €672.5 billion [Recovery and Resilience Facility in 2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy](#). The new growth agenda helps to build a green, digital and sustainable recovery. The Facility is the **key instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU and its ambition is to help the EU become stronger and more resilient**. The four dimensions of environmental sustainability, productivity, fairness and macroeconomic stability are guiding principles of this strategy underpinning EU Member States' recovery and resilience plans and their national reforms and investments. On 15 June 2021, in its first transaction, the Commission raised €20 billion via a ten-year bond due on 4 July 2031. Including other transactions up to October 2021, the Commission has so far raised €45 billion under NextGenerationEU. These funds will be used for support to Member States under the NextGenerationEU, under the Recovery and Resilience Facility and various EU budget programmes.

The European Commission presented on 18 November 2020 its [autumn economic policy package](#), with notably a **Proposal for a Joint Employment Report 2021**. This package draws

upon the [Autumn 2020 Economic Forecast](#) – prepared in a context of high uncertainty – which projected that the economic shock caused by the coronavirus pandemic would leave output in the euro area and the EU below its pre-pandemic level in 2022.

On 2 June 2021, the European Commission published its European Semester Spring Package, which focused on providing fiscal guidance to Member States as they continue the process of gradually reopening their economies. On March 3 2021, the Commission's [Communication on fiscal policy](#) clarified that the decision to deactivate the general escape clause should be taken based on an overall assessment of the state of the economy based on quantitative criteria, with the level of economic activity in the EU compared to pre-crisis levels as the key quantitative criterion. Based on the Commission's [Spring 2021 Economic Forecast](#), the general escape clause will continue to be applied in 2022 and is expected to be deactivated as of 2023 to allow fiscal policies to remain supportive in 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to avoid a premature withdrawal of support and make full use of EU RRF funding.

Monetary policy

The European Central Bank (ECB) has [responded](#) by taking measures to ensure sufficient liquidity for governments, businesses and households and increased lending capacity of banks. A key component of the ECB strategy is the temporary pandemic emergency purchase programme (PEPP). Under its scope, the ECB pledged to purchase private and public securities at a volume of up to €1350 bn throughout 2020-21 (and longer, if needed). Other ECB actions include providing longer term refinancing operations, collateral easing measures and providing banks with liquidity over longer time horizons and preserving financial stability through international cooperation.

Support to specific sectors

See under “Other measures”, in particular for [fishing, agriculture, transport and tourism](#).

Supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes

Social protection & employment retention

The [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) can rapidly intervene via the existing investment priority on access to services, short-term work schemes and specific schemes for the self-employed. A number of operations can be activated quickly, including the ones benefitting SMEs and self-employed. Both the ESF national programmes and the regional ones can direct non-utilised support to address the crisis with a co-financing rate up to 100%.

In April 2020, the European Commission created a new financial instrument for temporary [“Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency \(SURE\)”](#), in the form of a Council Regulation. The objective of SURE is to enable the EU **to provide financial assistance to EU member states (MS) facing severe economic disturbances caused by COVID-19 to protect jobs and incomes**. EU member states which experience a “sudden and severe increase in actual and possibly also planned public expenditure caused by the COVID-19 outbreak” can make a request for financial assistance. **Financial assistance provided via the SURE instrument is to support the creation or extension of short time work schemes and other similar measures**

including for self-employed, in full respect of national competences.

The SURE instrument will enable the European Union to provide member states **with loans up to an overall total of €100bn** (as opposed to issuing grants as e.g. the European Solidarity Fund does). This lending scheme will be underpinned by a **system of voluntary national guarantees** from EU Member States. Under the scheme as proposed, the European Commission would borrow from financial markets or with financial institutions in order to provide the loans for the EU MS. The system of national guarantees would ensure that the contingency liability is compatible with the EU budget. SURE is **a voluntary instrument and member states must make a request for assistance to the European Commission**. After assessing the situation with the member states, the European Commission will make a proposal to the Council. The latter will have to agree by qualified majority following which the European Commission and the member states would conclude an implementation agreement.

The instrument will be operational until 31 December 2022.

In August 2020, the Commission proposed plan to provide €81.4 billion of the €100bn in SURE funds. In October 2020, the Commission disbursed €17 billion under SURE to Italy, Spain and Poland. In November 2020, the Commission disbursed €14 billion to nine Member States. In March 2021, the Commission disbursed €13 billion to six EU Member States. In May 2021, the Commission disbursed €14.1 billion to 12 EU Member States in the seventh instalment of financial support under the SURE instrument. As of October 2021, some €94 billion has been disbursed to 19 EU Member States.

Among others, national labour market measures supported by SURE are estimated to have reduced unemployment by 1.5 million people in 2020.

As a concrete action under Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Commission presented on 4 March 2021 a [Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment following the COVID-19 crisis \(EASE\)](#). With this Recommendation, the European Commission provided concrete guidance to EU Member States on policy measures, backed by EU funding possibilities, to gradually transition between emergency measures taken to preserve jobs in the current crisis and new measures needed for a job-rich recovery. The Recommendation promotes job creation and job-to-job transitions from declining sectors towards expanding sectors, notably the digital and green ones. These new measures should contain three elements:

- hiring incentives and entrepreneurial support;
- upskilling and reskilling opportunities;
- enhanced support by employment services.

EU funds, including from the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Social Fund Plus, are available to help EU Member States finance their EASE measures.

Assistance to business

The European Commission in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) [agreed to unlock](#) € 8bn of financing by providing €1 bn from the EU budget as a guarantee to the

European Investment Fund (EIF). This supports the liquidity needs of about **100 000 European SMEs and small mid-caps** worth €8 bn.

In addition, the EIB Group decided to create a [pan-European guarantee fund](#) of €25 bn, which is expected to provide €200 bn of financing to companies with a focus on SMEs. The Commission is mobilising another €8 billion to help at least 100,000 companies, together with the EIB.

Youth Employment

On 1 July 2020 the European Commission adopted a [Youth Employment Support package](#). The package includes a new proposal for a Council Recommendation: [Bridge to Jobs - reinforcing the Youth Guarantee](#). Among other elements, it widens the scope of the Youth Guarantee (created in 2013), covering youth aged 15-29 and has the ambition to reach out to more vulnerable young people across the EU. The principle remains that if you sign up to the Youth Guarantee, you will receive an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or training within four months.

[The Youth Employment Support package proposes also strengthening:](#)

- **Vocational education and training:** The Commission's [proposal](#) for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training aims to make systems more modern, attractive, flexible and fit for the digital and green economy.
- **Apprenticeships:** new impetus through a renewed [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#)

In addition, the Youth Employment Package proposes [additional measures](#) to support youth employment, such as employment and start-up incentives in the short term, and support for young entrepreneur networks in the medium term.

On 30 October 2020, the Council adopted the Commission's proposal for a [Council Recommendation](#) on a Bridge to Jobs from 1 July 2020, reinforcing the existing Youth Guarantee.

The European Commission proposed on 28 October 2020 an [EU Directive on minimum wages](#) to ensure that the workers in the EU are protected by adequate minimum wages allowing for a decent living wherever they work. The current crisis has particularly hit sectors with a higher share of low-wage workers.

In September 2021, the European Commission President announced plans to create a special programme dubbed [ALMA](#) (acronym for "Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve") which should offer young people not in education, nor in employment or training (NEETs) a temporary professional experience in another Member State.

Protecting workers in the workplace

OSH

The European Agency for Safety and Health, EU-OSHA, created a [resource page](#) on Covid-19 and OSH in the workplace that includes various guidance instruments and tools to ensure respect for safety and health during the Covid-19 pandemic, including ["back to the workplace- Adapting workplaces and protecting workers"](#).

The European Commission [published](#) guidelines for EU Member States to facilitate cross border recognition of health personnel qualifications as well as guidelines on protection of health, repatriation and travel arrangements for [seafarers](#) and other persons on board ships. It further adopted specific measures for the [transport and tourism](#) sectors.

The EU supports national health care systems and procuring of essential equipment through a new [Emergency Support Instrument](#) (about €2.7bn) and the [rescEU-medical equipment capacity](#) (€300 million).

On 15 April, the European Commission, in cooperation with the President of the European Council, has issued a [Roadmap towards common lifting of containment measures](#).

On 3 June, the [European Commission has updated the biological agents directive](#) to better protect the health and safety of workers in the EU. The [Biological Agents Directive now includes SARS-CoV-2](#) among the list of biological agents it covers. This update considers new risks in the workplace and offers additional protection to all workers, particularly those working in direct contact with the virus in hospitals, industrial processes and laboratories.

As part of the decision making process and considering the latest available data on the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, experts from all Member States unanimously recommended a classification in group 3. This decision was supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Social partners were also involved in this process through the tripartite Advisory Committee on Health and Safety at Work.

The new Directive, which enters into force 20 days from its publication, shall be transposed by Member States five months after its entry into force, i.e. by 24 November 2020. The [factsheet](#) explains what this means for workers.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, on 28 June 2021, the European Commission renewed its commitment to update occupational safety and health rules by adopting the [EU strategic framework on health and safety at work 2021-27](#). The new strategy focuses on three crosscutting objectives, namely managing **change** brought by green, digital and demographic transitions as well as changes to the traditional work environment, improving **prevention** of accidents and illnesses, and increasing **preparedness** for any potential future crises.

New work Arrangements

On 16 July 2020, the European Commission published Guidelines on [cross-border movement of critical workers](#), including workers in utilities, in health, care and food sectors, frontier workers and seasonal workers, as well as specific measures for the transport and tourism sectors. These Guidelines provided practical guidance to national authorities, labour inspectorates and social partners on how to guarantee the rights, health and safety of workers as well as increased awareness among workers of their rights.

A survey has been carried out by EUROFOUND on [Living, working and COVID-19](#).

Prevention of discrimination and exclusion

Measures in the CRII+ (see box 1) introduced [amendments](#) to the [Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#) to allow for food and basic material assistance to be provided to the most

deprived persons directly or indirectly (e.g., such as through vouchers or cards, also in electronic form) and introduced the possibility of 100% co-financing.

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights analyses and reports on [the fundamental rights implications of COVID-19](#), including the impact for vulnerable or at-risk people, such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities, Roma or refugees.

The EU has adopted on 14 June 2021 a [European Child Guarantee](#). The objective is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need – persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion – to a set of key services: early childhood education and care; education; healthcare; nutrition and housing.

EU Digital Certificate

Since 1 July 2021, the EU Digital COVID Certificate Regulation entered into application. The Certificate aim is to facilitate safe free movement within the EU during the pandemic.

EU Vaccination and Testing

The EU, through the Commission, has built a diversified portfolio of four authorised vaccines for EU citizens, with contracts agreed with seven vaccine developers and 4.4 billion doses secured. As new variants emerge, the Commission has mobilised funds for urgent research and has continued to conclude advance purchase agreements for booster shots and the adoption of vaccines against new variants. In addition, the Commission has given €35.5 million to the International Federation of the Red Cross to scale up its COVID-19 testing capacity.

On 18 November 2020, the EU adopted a recommendation on the use of rapid antigen tests for the diagnosis of COVID-19 for use in workplaces among other places. This followed an earlier recommendation for a common approach and more efficient testing strategy across the EU. The Commission has allocated €100 million from the Emergency Support Instruments to purchase and deliver such tests in Member States. In addition, the Commission has launched a joint procurement to help countries acquire these tests in a cost-effective manner.

In July 2021, the EU reached a milestone of vaccinating 70% of its adult population with at least one dose. The EU does not have any competency on vaccination administration policies of EU Member States. On 24 March 2021, the Commission introduced a measure to facilitate and speed up the approval of adapted vaccines against COVID-19 variants.

Relying on social dialogue for solutions

EU social partners in **various sectors** have issued joint statements and recommendations to address the impact of Covid-19 in their sector (e.g., [temporary agency work](#), [woodwork and furniture](#), [food business](#), [postal sector](#), [civil aviation](#), [live performance sector](#) and others see [EU social dialogue's text database](#)).

On 16 March 2020, the **European cross-sectoral social partners** (BusinessEurope, CEEP, ETUC, SMEunited) jointly urged the European institutions and Member States to approve all the measures proposed by the European Commission so far, without delay. In their joint [Statement](#),

they highlighted the urgency of the following measures:

- Temporary suspension of the Stability and Growth Pact
- Avoiding distortions of the single market, including export bans and restrictions on the export of medical equipment and medicines, and stopping the closing of borders for goods
- Encouraging Member States to invest in staff, equipment and resources for national health services, social protection systems and other services of general interest
- Mobilising unused structural funds and other EU funds to support Member States in providing financial and income support for unemployed or suspended workers, including non-standard workers and self-employed workers.

EU Social partners have also been consulted on the [Joint Roadmap for recovery –towards a more resilient, sustainable and fair Europe.](#)

On 22 June 2020, the **EU social partners concluded the [European Framework Agreement on Digitalisation](#)** as a result of the European social dialogue autonomous process. This framework agreement is the shared commitment of the European cross-sectoral social partners - BusinessEurope, SMEUnited, CEEP and the ETUC (and the liaison committee EUROCADRES/ CEC) - to optimise the benefits and deal with the challenges of digitalisation in the world of work.

The agreement supports the successful integration of digital technologies at the workplace, investment in digital skills, skills updating and the continuous employability of the workforce. The agreement enables employers and unions to introduce digital transformation strategies in partnership in a human oriented approach at national, sectoral, company and workplace levels, including on the modalities of connecting and disconnecting and respect of working time rules and appropriate measures to ensure compliance.

The **Tripartite Social Summit** continues to provide a high-level forum for the discussions between the European social partners, the European Council and the Commission. On 23 June 2020, the Tripartite Social Summit discussed the “[Contribution of the Social Partners to relaunching Growth and Employment in the Aftermath of COVID-19](#)”. On 14 October 2020, the Tripartite Social Summit discussed “[How to implement together an inclusive economic and social recovery in Europe](#)”. On 24 March 2021, the Tripartite Social Summit discussed the question “[How to achieve a fair and sustainable recovery?](#)”. The discussions focused on following main topics: handling the health, economic and social crisis while maintaining emergency measures; the contribution of social partners at EU and member state level for an economic and social recovery; the road to [Porto Social Summit](#) (to be held on 7-8 May 2021).

Ahead of the video conference of the members of the European Council on 19 November 2020, the European social partners urged EU Member States to endorse the agreement found on the European recovery fund and Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. The adoption has been completed by the Parliament and the Council in January 2021.

The European Commission published on 2 February 2021 the [report of special advisor](#) Ms Andrea Nahles on **strengthening EU social dialogue**. The Commission intends to build on the progress made under the New Start for Social Dialogue launched in 2015 and on the related 2016 quadripartite joint statement. The upcoming Action Plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights is an excellent opportunity for further boosting social dialogue. The proposals

made by Ms Andrea Nahles in her report will be considered for the Action Plan.

Two recent [consultations of social partners](#) were launched:

- Launch in December 2020 of 1st phase consultation of EU social partners on the protection of workers from **risks related to exposure to chemical agents at work and to asbestos**.
- Launch on 24 February 2021 of 1st phase consultation of social partners on a possible action addressing the **challenges related to working conditions in platform work**.

On 4 March 2021, the European Commission set out its ambition for a strong Social Europe that focuses on jobs and skills for the future and paves the way for a fair, inclusive and resilient socio-economic recovery. The [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) outlines concrete actions to further implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a joint effort by the Member States and the EU, with an active involvement of social partners and civil society. The consultation which ran from January to November 2020 drew 1041 contributions from social partners, industry and citizens. The Action Plan sets three headline targets for the EU to be achieved by 2030:

1. At least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment.
2. At least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year.
3. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million.

The social partners will have a key role in the implementation of the Action Plan as well as in recovery process. The European Commission will therefore present an initiative to support social dialogue at EU and national level in 2022. The initiative will include the following four actions: the launch of a new award for innovative social dialogue practices; an information and visiting programme for young future social partner leaders; the review of sectoral social dialogue at EU level; a new supporting frame for social partner agreements at EU level.

Eurofound has published on 9 March 2021 a [study on the “Involvement of social partners in policymaking during the COVID-19 outbreak”](#). The results of the analysis highlight how social dialogue can be an effective tool in shaping policy initiatives and finding solutions to emergency situations affecting businesses, workers, the economy and society. The participation of social partners in the design and implementation of national recovery and resilience plans in 2021 will be key in the recovery process and for strengthening social dialogue going forward. The European Commission has presented on 4 March 2021 a **proposal on pay transparency** to ensure that women and men in the EU get equal pay for equal work. This proposal will also involve an important role for the social partners. Relevant to this field is the [joint statement of social partners on childcare provision in the EU](#) .

On **capacity building support**, the [political agreement on ESF+](#) (29 January 2021) includes a legal requirement for member states having a social dialogue related Country Specific Recommendation to spend at least 0,25 % of available funding to support capacity building of social partners.

The Commission has granted **EUR 10 millions of extra support** to be distributed through open

call for proposals, for the national social partners being impacted by crisis effects.

The [2020 edition of the Employment and Social Development in Europe report](#) “Leaving no one behind and striving for more: fairness and solidarity in the European social market economy” reviews how social partners across Europe have made key contributions to the public responses against the impacts of COVID-19.

On 7 May 2020, the **European Economic and Social Committee**, EESC, has welcomed in [a press release](#) the Commission's proposal on revised employment guidelines for Member States, but asked for the guidelines to be adapted to take account of the looming employment and social crisis caused by the Covid-19 outbreak and to help cushion its adverse effects on Europe's labour markets. The EESC has put forward its proposals [in an opinion](#) on the Commission's proposal for a Council decision on guidelines for employment policies of the Member States, adopted at its first plenary session since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Other measures

Global Response to support partner countries' efforts to tackle the COVID-19

The EU has put forward [a global response](#) to support partner countries' efforts to tackle the COVID-19. The response puts forward a Team Europe approach and focuses on:

- Addressing the immediate **health crisis and resulting humanitarian needs** (€502 million)
- Strengthening **partner countries' health, water and sanitation systems and their research and preparedness capacities to deal with the pandemic** (€2.8 billion)
- Mitigating **the socioeconomic impact** (€12.28 billion)

The 'Team Europe' combines resources from the EU, its Member States and financial institutions, in particular the EIB and the EBRD, to support partner countries and address short-term needs, and long-term structural impacts on societies and the economy.

The EU launched a pledging effort for universal access to treatment, diagnosis and vaccines – the [Coronavirus Global Response](#) – on 4 May 2020. In June 2020, the Commission in conjunction with Global Citizen organised a 'Global Goal: Unite for our Future' Summit to develop and ensure equitable access to coronavirus vaccines, tests and treatment. Under the Coronavirus Global Response, a total of €15.9 billion has been pledged to this end.

Under the third priority focused on research announced on 10 March 2020, the EU has allocated funding of €120 million from Horizon Europe (2021-27) to 11 projects to support research into the coronavirus and its variants. In February 2021, the Commission launched the HERA Incubator, a new European bio-defence preparedness plan.

Education and training in the EU and EU Neighbourhood

Acknowledging that the measures taken to tackle the spread of COVID-19 might cause a disruption to the provision of education, training and mobility opportunities for learners, teachers and educators across the EU, the Commission offers a wide range of [online platforms](#)

[and learning materials online](#). The European Training Foundation issued guidance on [Coping with COVID-19 in education and training in EU Neighbourhood](#). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEFEDOP) invited experts to [report](#) on how the coronavirus health emergency currently affects the delivery of career and lifelong guidance in their country or region.

Screening of foreign direct investment (FDI)

The European Commission issued on 25 March [guidelines to help Member States screen FDI](#)s and acquisitions of control/influence, intending to protect critical EU assets and technology.

Support to specific sectors

Measures under the [CRII+](#) initiative gives flexibility to Member States in their use of European funds and include support to fishing and agriculture. Specific support measures are geared towards the [transport and tourism sectors](#). In June 2020, the EU adopted a regulation as an exceptional measure to allow Member States to pay up to €7000 for farmers and €50000 to small and medium enterprises active in processing, marketing or development of agricultural products, except fishery products.

The EU supports national health care systems and procuring of essential equipment through a new [Emergency Support Instrument](#) (about €6bn, of which €3 billion allocated by the Commission and another €3 billion matched by EU Member States) and the [rescEU-medical equipment capacity](#) (€300 million).

EU Social partners in various sectors have issued joined statements and recommendations to address the impact of Covid-19 in their sector : [Temporary agency work](#), [Woodwork and furniture](#), [Food business](#), Textile-Clothing-Leather-Footwear Industry, Telecommunications, Road transport, Professional football, Private security, Maritime Transport, Local and Regional Government, Live Performance, Industrial Cleaning, Construction, Commerce, Civil Aviation, Chemical Industry, Central Government Administrations, Audiovisual, Agriculture, Hospitality, Railway. See EU [social dialogue's text database](#).

Global Vaccination Policy

In August 2020, the EU confirmed its interest to participate in the COVAX Facility for the equitable access to affordable COVID-19 vaccines everywhere. As part of a Team Europe effort, the Commission announced a contribution of €400 million which was later increased to €500 million. In February 2021, the EU announced an additional €500 million for the COVAX Facility, doubling its contribution to the global vaccine initiative. Together with EU Member States, Team Europe has pledged €3 billion to COVAX. Through the EU vaccine sharing mechanism, 2.6 doses of vaccines have been donated, with the possibility to share with other countries. The EU has pledged to donate some 100 million doses of vaccines by the end of 2021.

In May 2021, the EU announced at the G20 Global Health Summit, a €1 billion Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa. The initiative will help create an enabling environment for local vaccine production and tackle barriers on both supply and demand sides. The €1 billion initiative will be further enhanced by contributions from Member States.

On 22 September 2021, the EU and US announced a new EU-US partnership to help vaccinate the world. The aim is to reach a 70% global vaccination rate by September 2022. The EU-US Global Vaccination Partnership will help expand supply, improve coordination in delivery and remove bottlenecks in supply chains, especially in developing countries.

EU COVID-19 Therapeutics Strategy

On 29 June 2021, the European Commission announced the EU COVID-19 Therapeutics Strategy for the treatment of patients with coronavirus. On 22 September 2021, the Commission signed a joint procurement framework contract with the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly for the supply of a monoclonal antibody treatment, the first promising therapy from a portfolio of five.