

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

Today 17 March, Members of the European Council held a videoconference on COVID-19 in order to follow up on previous conclusions of 10 March 2020 together with the ECB President, the President of the Eurogroup and the High Representative.

We reaffirmed the need to work together and to do everything necessary to tackle the crisis and its consequences.

The priority is the health of our citizens.

On the four priorities identified:

1. Limiting the spread of the virus

We endorsed the guidelines proposed by the Commission on border management. We need to ensure passage of medicines, food and goods and our citizens must be able to travel to their home countries. Adequate solutions for cross-border workers will be found.

To limit the spread of the virus globally, we agreed to reinforce our external borders by applying a coordinated temporary restriction of non-essential travel to the EU for a period of 30 days, based on the approach proposed by the Commission.

2. Providing medical equipment

We welcomed the decision taken by the Commission to adopt a prior authorisation for export of medical equipment.

We supported the Commission effort to (1) engage with the industry; (2) to run joint public procurements that have been recently launched and those which will be shortly finalized to provide sufficient protective equipment; (3) and purchase of protective equipment through the Civil protection framework.

3. Promoting research

We encouraged the efforts made to support research such as the Advisory Group on COVID-19.

We stressed the need to share information and to develop a vaccine and make it available to all those in need. We will support European companies in that respect.

4. Tackling socio-economic consequences.

We endorsed the Eurogroup 16 March statement and invited the Eurogroup to continuously and closely monitor economic and financial developments and to adapt without delay a coordinated policy response to the rapidly evolving situation.

We supported the various initiatives taken by the Commission in the areas of the Single Market, such as the adaptation of the State Aid rules and the use of the flexibilities provided for in the Stability and Growth Pact and the recourse to the EU budget.

The Union and its Member States will do whatever it takes to address the current challenges, to restore confidence and to support a rapid recovery, for the sake of our citizens.

5. Citizens stranded in Third countries.

We committed to coordinate among our embassies and the EU delegations in third countries. The High Representative and the European External action service will support in this regard.

We will jointly arrange repatriation of EU citizens, where necessary and possible, and make use of the Union's Civil protection mechanism. Additional EU funding for such joint operations will be mobilised.

Member States and institutions will follow-up at all levels immediately. The members of the European Council will come back to this issue in a videoconference next week. The ordinary European Council scheduled for 26-27 March will be postponed to a later date.

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