

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

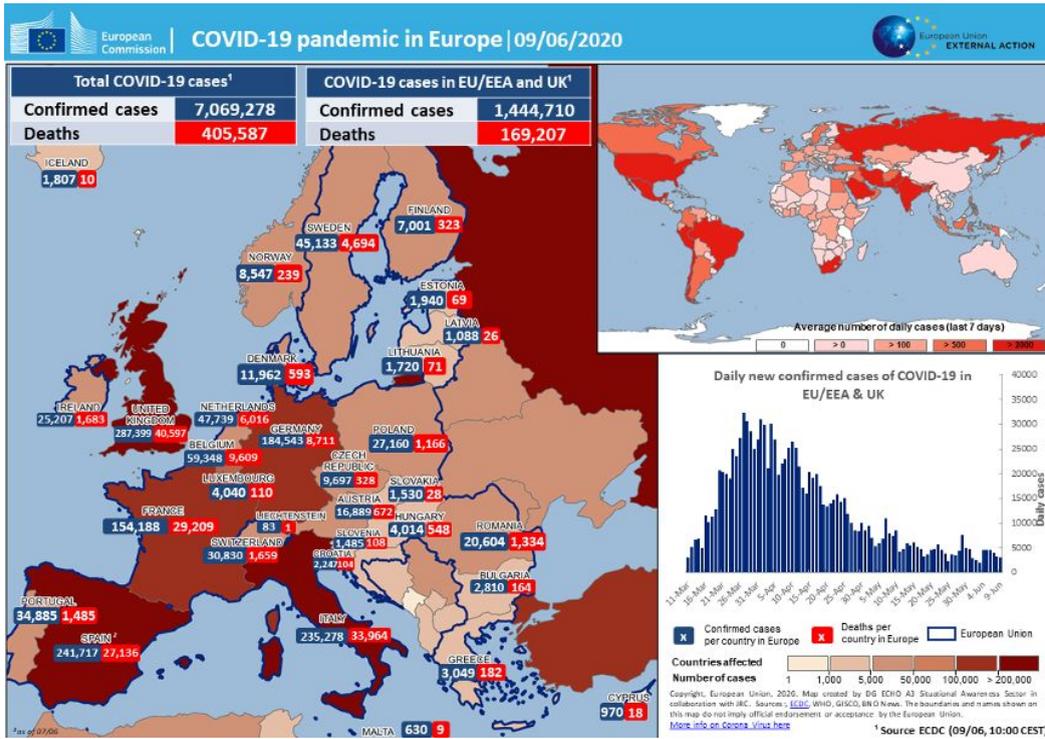
19 June 2020

List of European decisions

Date	Number of cases and deaths ¹	European response
15 June	1 477 655 cases 171 500 deaths	<p>The European Commission launched a website to safely resume travelling and tourism in the EU: Re-Open EU, available in 24 languages.</p> <p>The European Commission backed an international initiative to facilitate trade in healthcare products.</p> <p>EU ministers responsible for cohesion policy held a policy debate on the role of this policy in the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
16 June	1 486 366 cases 171 663 deaths	<p>Member States, with the support of the European Commission, agreed on an interoperability solution for mobile tracing and warning apps.</p> <p>EU ministers responsible for European affairs exchanged views on the European Commission's multiannual financial framework (MFF) and recovery plan proposals.</p>
17 June	1 449 988 cases 172 175 deaths	<p>The European Commission presented a European strategy to accelerate the development, manufacturing and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19.</p>

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>The European Union announced a €60 million package to help a regional response to the pandemic in the Horn of Africa.</p> <p>The European Parliament plenary session started, addressing the issue of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the protection of European strategic sectors from foreign takeovers in a post-COVID world and the question of tourism and transport.</p>
18 June	1 492 177 cases 172 621 deaths	<p>Eastern Partnership leaders met to discuss the future of the Partnership, but also the importance of solidarity at the times of the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p>The European Parliament plenary session continued, tackling, among others, the issues of COVID-19 disinformation, Schengen, and the protection of cross-border and seasonal workers.</p> <p>The European Commission launched additional funding via the Emergency Support Instrument to transport essential goods, medical teams and patients affected by the coronavirus.</p> <p>Using European supercomputing, EU-funded research project announces promising results for potential treatment.</p>
19 June		<p>EU leaders met to discuss the issue of a recovery fund to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and a new EU long-term budget.</p> <p>The European Parliament plenary session is ending with important votes, such as on the use of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the COVID-19 crisis.</p>

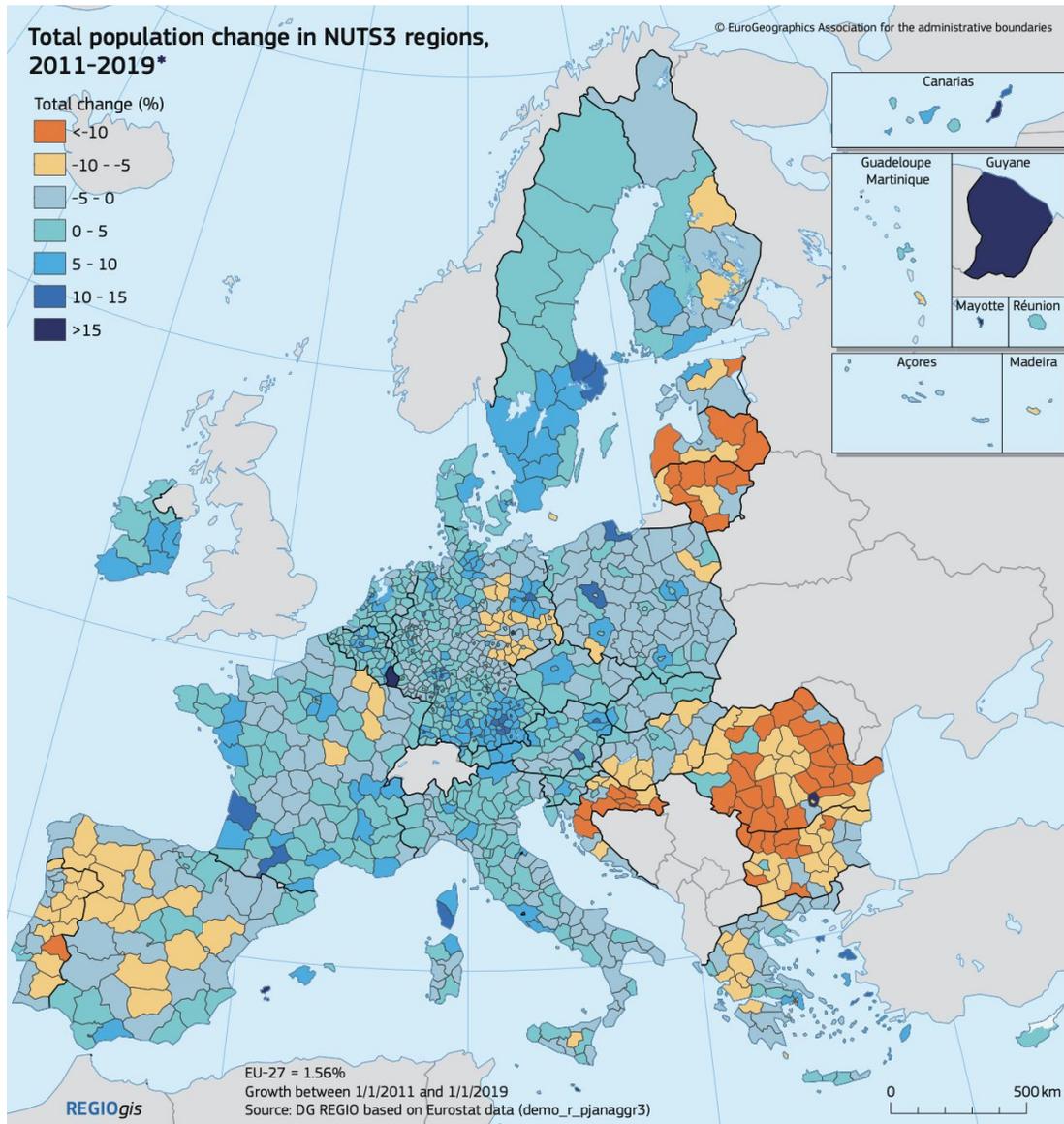


The EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the position of the PES Group

European Commission

On 17 June, the European Commission adopted its first-ever Report on the Impact of Demographic Change, presenting the drivers of this long-term change and highlighting the links between demographic structures and the impact and recovery potential from the COVID-19 crisis. The report has a particular focus on the local and regional dimension of this phenomenon.

Link to the report: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/demography_report_2020.pdf



European Parliament

A very dense week for the European Parliament. After two days of committee meetings, the plenary session took place on 17-18-19 June, addressing many important issues with the adoption of several resolutions: on anti-racism protests following the death of George Floyd, the future EU financing and economic recovery in the context of the COVID-19 ahead of the European Council, the challenges to kick off the Conference on the Future of Europe as soon as possible after the summer, Schengen border controls, the spread of disinformation campaigns, the protection of European industries weakened by the COVID-19 crisis from foreign takeovers, or green finance with the endorsement of six new environmental objectives to allow economic activity to be labelled as environmentally sustainable.

- Resolution Conference on the Future of Europe:
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2020-06-17/2/conference-on-the-future-of-europe-meps-to-push-for-launch-by-autumn>
- Resolution on Schengen:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2020-06-17/5/schengen-border-controls-meps-to-demand-swift-re-establishment-of-free-movement>

- **“As EU taxonomy sets global gold standard for sustainable investments - S&D make money work for the planet and the people”**, Press release, S&D Group, 19 June,
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/eu-taxonomy-sets-global-gold-standard-sustainable-investments-sd-make-money-work-planet>
- **“Unprecedented unity in Plenary today as S&Ds lead the way to an ambitious, social and climate friendly budget”**, Press release, S&D Group, 18 June,
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/unprecedented-unity-plenary-to-day-sds-lead-way-ambitious-social-and-climate-friendly>

European Council

On 15 June, a high-level meeting between the EU (represented by European Council President Charles Michel, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Parliament President David Sassoli) and the UK (represented by Prime Minister Boris Johnson) took place via video conference. The EU noted the UK's decision not to request any extension to the transition period, which will therefore end on 31 December 2020, in line with the provisions of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement.

- **“Johnson and von der Leyen kick the Brexit can into autumn”**, 15 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/johnson-and-vdl-kick-the-brexit-can-into-autumn/>

But the main news of this week is certainly the meeting of the 27 European leaders today. Leaders gathered to discuss their positions on the European Commission's plans for the recovery plan and the future Multiannual Financial Framework. As expected, there was no concrete outcome, but the European Council President Charles Michel confirmed in the press conference that serious divisions remain. The next meeting is now foreseen for mid-July and Michel has been tasked with presenting a negotiating box.

- **“Merkel and Lagarde Tell EU It Needs to Deliver”**, *Bloomberg*, 19 June 2020,
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-19/eu-leaders-launch-talks-on-massive-rescue-project-summit-update>
- **“EU recovery plan — By the numbers”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 17 June 2020,
<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-recovery-plan-by-the-numbers/>
- **“Joint letter from EP Group leaders to EU leaders ahead of European Council meeting”**, Press release, S&D Group, 18 June 2020,
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/joint-letter-ep-group-leaders-eu-leaders-ahead-european-council-meeting>

Council of the European Union

On 15 June, EU ministers for cohesion policy, with the participation of European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira, met to discuss the crucial role of

cohesion policy in the recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. They considered the possibility of increasing the flexibility of transfers between the structural and investment funds, of enhancing preparedness for emergencies and of further promoting job creation in small and medium-sized enterprises. They also agreed to work towards reinforcing cohesion policy tools in order to help the sustainable recovery of economies. This is in line with what is requested by the PES Group and its members.

- Press release: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/gac/2020/06/15/>
- Press release of the PES Group:
<https://pes.cor.europa.eu/no-time-waste-progressive-regions-and-cities-welcome-european-commission%E2%80%99s-proposals>

The European Committee of the Regions

On Monday 15 June, the European Committee of the Regions held its first meeting of its Working Group on the European Green Deal. Composed of 13 local and regional elected representatives, its objective is to guarantee that EU cities and regions are directly involved in the definition, implementation and assessment of the numerous initiatives under the European Green Deal, the EU's sustainable growth strategy to reach climate-neutrality by 2050. Its main goal will be to coordinate internally the work of the various commissions.

- Read more from our members:
<https://pes.cor.europa.eu/european-green-deal-going-local>

On 18 June, the meeting of the Commission for Natural Resources (NAT) took place. Two opinions by PES Group rapporteurs were debated and will be adopted on Monday:

- Opinion on Cross-border health care, Karsten Uno Petersen (Denmark)
- Opinion on Towards sustainable use of natural resources within the Mediterranean insular context, Francina Armengol (Spain)

A third opinion on the Health Emergency Mechanism was discussed (Birgitta Sacrédeus, EPP member from Sweden). The PES coordinator, Joan Calabuig (Regional Secretary for the European Union and External Relations of the Government of Valencia, Spain) has proposed some amendments to reinforce the solidarity dimension of health systems in Europe.

PES Group member Nathalie Sarabezolles (President of the Finistère Departmental Council) has been appointed rapporteur on the new European programme for health EU4Health.

- More information:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/eu-health-policy/2020_0604STO80507/health-threats-boosting-eu-readiness-and-crisis-management

The first hybrid meeting of the Committee of the Regions will be the one of the

Commission for Economic Policy (ECON) to take place on 23 June. The agenda foresees an exchange of views with Kerstin Jorna, Director general of the Commission's Directorate General GROW (Internal market), and the adoption of four opinions relating to the EU's SME policy, to the EU's digital agenda, to industrial policy and barriers to the single market.

The European progressive family

Leaders of PES member parties and organisations met on 18 June, ahead of the European Council meeting of 19 June, to discuss the progressive stance on the new recovery instrument and the EU's long-term budget. PES Group President Christophe Rouillon, who is one of the PES Leaders, warned against the risks of a weak EU budget once the temporary reinforcements come to an end. He also called for a reform of the European Semester. "The Semester cannot be a 'playground' for more and more conditionalities, leading to its full centralisation", he argued.

- <https://www.pes.eu/en/news-events/news/detail/PES-calls-on-EU-Council-to-support-fair-and-sustainable-recovery-plan/>

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:

- **"Statement on COVID-19 outbreak and recovery strategy"**, European Trade Union Confederation, 16 June 2020, <https://www.etuc.org/system/files/document/file2020-06/ETUC%20Statement%20on%20COVID-19%20outbreak-FINAL%20AFTER%20EXCO.pdf>
- **"S&D policy paper on the recovery of tourism"**, 17 June 2020, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/publications/back-track-sd-policy-paper-recovery-tourism>
- **"S&D Position paper on Reform of the System of Own Resources of the EU for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework"**, 17 June 2020, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/sites/default/files/2020-06/sd-position-paper-own-resources-en-200617.pdf>
- **"Cities should play a key role in green recovery"**, Letter by the four mayors of the Visegrad Group capitals, including progressive Mayor of Budapest Gergely Karácsony, 17 June 2020, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kC1xi-SkXu1i6Y6TCBZI8ig7Sbk3ojBo/view>
- **"Commissioner Schmit: The future of Europe is not low wages, insecure jobs"**, *Euractiv*, 17 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/commissioner-schmit-the-future-of-europe-is-not-low-wages-insecure-jobs/>
- **"German finance minister defends borrowing for economic stimulus package"**, *Euractiv*, 17 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/german-finance-minister-defends-borrowing-for-economic-stimulus-package/>
- **"Global Workers' Rights Index"**, International Trade Union Confederation, 18 June 2020, <https://survey.ituc-csi.org/ITUC-Global-Rights-Index.html>

- “PES Women: It is time to create a formal Council configuration for Gender Equality”, 19 June 2020,
<https://www.pes.eu/en/news-events/news/detail/PES-Women-It-is-time-to-create-a-formal-Council-configuration-for-Gender-Equality/>

PES Group projects

We are still receiving contributions for our project on solidarity initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic:

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



Last but not least, on 23 June at 18:30, the PES Group is hosting a debate “Is there a future for European cities after Covid?”, together with the Brussels-based PES activists, Partito Democratico Brussels, PSOE Brussels, sp.a Elsene, and others, in which our member Pascal Smet, Secretary of State for Urbanism of Brussels Region, will take part.

- More information:
<https://pes.cor.europa.eu/there-future-european-cities-after-covid>

The fight against fake news

We tried to shed light on this important issue from the perspective of cities and regions too. Find out more on our website:

- <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/disinformation-and-eu-tackling-virus-fake-news-ground>

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

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)

CEMR launched an open letter opposing “anti-LGBTI” zones and other discriminatory measures taken by Polish municipalities. In the letter, opened for signatures, they call on local and regional governments throughout Europe to express their support.

- More information: <https://ccre.org/en/actualites/view/4026>
- Sign the letter:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd5BQEQOKDHvBi_W-slOpyfzwlIC9BDtgx8gKBZLAqh9vC0Jg/viewform

UN DESA Webinar

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) organises a webinar on “Sustainable Transport and COVID-19: Response and Recovery” on 24 June and 1 July.

→ <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=2zWeD09UYE-9zF6kFubc cF34InLSUQpNqoiuJOArPuVUN0NJNEUwNkhKWUZFRjVQNUdRRUIJUjVUTi4u>

European Committee of the Regions

Coming up are three interesting events organised by the Committee:

- **22 June | Europe in my living room:** an online session featuring six young local politicians, including PES local councillor from Mannheim Isabelle Cademartori, sharing thoughts and giving insights on the COVID-19 situation in their hometown. Sign up:
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/Europe-in-my-living-room.aspx>
- **22 June | Webinar:** “Smart specialisation for economic recovery at the local and regional level”
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/SEDEC-ERRIN-smart-specialisation.aspx>
- **29 June | EuropCom:** The European Public Communication Conference goes virtual this year. Read more:
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/europcom-2020.aspx>

Eurofound and International Labour Organisation

On 25 June, these two organisations are hosting a webinar on “How COVID-19 affects Europeans and the EU labour market”.

→ Register here:
<https://app.livestorm.co/eurofound/how-covid-19-affects-europeans-and-the-eu-labour-market>

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)

On 25 June, FES is hosting a debate on the upcoming German EU Council Presidency with Michael Roth, German Minister of State for Europe, Mariana Vieira da Silva, Portuguese Minister of State for the Presidency, and others.

→ <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUkc--rqDMoGdDi9gSuNDjKNcWoF9MrTTc>

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:

- **“Coronavirus and Europe’s New Political Fissures”**, Richard Youngs, Carnegie Europe, 10 June 2020,
<https://carnegieeurope.eu/2020/06/10/coronavirus-and-europe-s-new-political-fissures-pub-82023>
- **“Eurogroup: Centeno’s successor should be a Commissioner”**, Andrew Duff, European Policy Centre, 10 June 2020,
<http://epc.eu/en/Publications/Eurogroup-Centenos-successor-should-be-a-Commissioner~3444dc>
- **“Cities in the World: A New Perspective on Urbanisation”**, OECD, 16 June 2020,
<https://www.oecd.org/publications/cities-in-the-world-d0efcbda-en.htm>
- **“Crisis communication: Italy, the coronavirus, and European solidarity”**, Teresa Coratella, European Council on Foreign Relations, 16 June 2020,
https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_crisis_communication_italy_the_coronavirus_and_european_solidarity
- **“The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government”**, OECD updated report, 16 June 2020,
<http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/>
- **“Coronavirus And Elections In Selected Member States”**, European Parliament Research Service, 17 June 2020,
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651969/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)651969_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651969/EPRS_BRI(2020)651969_EN.pdf)
- **“COVID 19: URGENT CALL TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATURE”**, WWF, 17 June 2020,

<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4783129/WWF%20COVID19%20URGENT%20CALL%20TO%20PROTECT%20PEOPLE%20AND%20NATURE.pdf>

- **“Europe’s climate goal: Revolution”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 17 June 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-climate-goal-revolution-net-zero-emissions/>
- **“No place for anti-LGBTQ discrimination in Europe”**, by Amélie de Montchalin, French secretary of state for European affairs, Michael Roth, German minister of state for Europe, and Aleš Chmelař, Czech Republic’s deputy minister for Europe, *POLITICO Europe*, 18 June 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/no-place-for-anti-lgbtq-discrimination-in-europe-amelie-de-montchalin/>
- **“Single market and the pandemic: Impacts, EU action and recovery”**, European Parliament Research Service, 18 June 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651974/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)651974_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651974/EPRS_BRI(2020)651974_EN.pdf)
- **“COVID-19 and Ensuring Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls”**, United Nations, June 2020, <https://cities4health.org/assets/library-assets/brief-covid-19-and-ensuring-safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-for-women-and-girls-en.pdf>