

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

26 June 2020

List of European decisions

Date	Number of cases and deaths ¹	European response
22 June	1 512 033 cases 174 792 deaths	<p>The European Union and China held their 22nd bilateral Summit, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery, but also the issue of disinformation.</p> <p>From 22 to 30 June, the European Union will be hosting the fourth “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” conference, co-chaired with the United Nations, which will also address the response and recovery in the face of the coronavirus crisis.</p>
23 June	1 518 251 cases 174 968 deaths	<p>The Tripartite Social Summit took place addressing the topic of “Contribution of the Social Partners to relaunching Growth and Employment in the Aftermath of COVID-19”.</p> <p>EU ministers responsible for environment and climate debated the contribution of environmental and climate policies to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>EU ministers responsible for education exchanged views on the lessons learnt from the crisis and</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>

		discussed possible innovations in education and training.
24 June	1 524 445 cases 175 458 deaths	The European Commission proposed an EU budget of €166.7 billion for 2021 , focused on the recovery. The European Union sent a second EU Humanitarian Air Bridge to Sudan , helping humanitarian workers and essential supplies reach people in need and supporting the coronavirus response.
25 June	1 529 484 cases 175 720 deaths	
26 June		
27 June		The “Global Goal: Unite For Our Future” campaign launched by the European Commission and the international advocacy organisation Global Citizen will culminate in a global pledging summit and concert.

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

European Commission

On 22 June, the European Commission presented the 2020 report on the progress to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Commissioner for Economy, Paolo Gentiloni, said this year is particularly important “because we are beginning to integrate the SDGs in the EU economic policy coordination framework the European Semester. This crisis has shown us more than ever the importance of interdependence and the need to link our economic, social and environmental efforts. This is exactly what the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals aims to achieve.”

→ Download the full Eurostat report:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/11010788/KS-01-20-192-EN-N.pdf/ae63aff0-a6f3-1d47-da83-c6886b9daaab>

On 24 June, the European Commission proposed an EU budget of €166.7 billion for 2021, to be complemented by €211 billion in grants and approximately €133 billion in loans under the temporary recovery instrument “Next Generation EU”, of which:

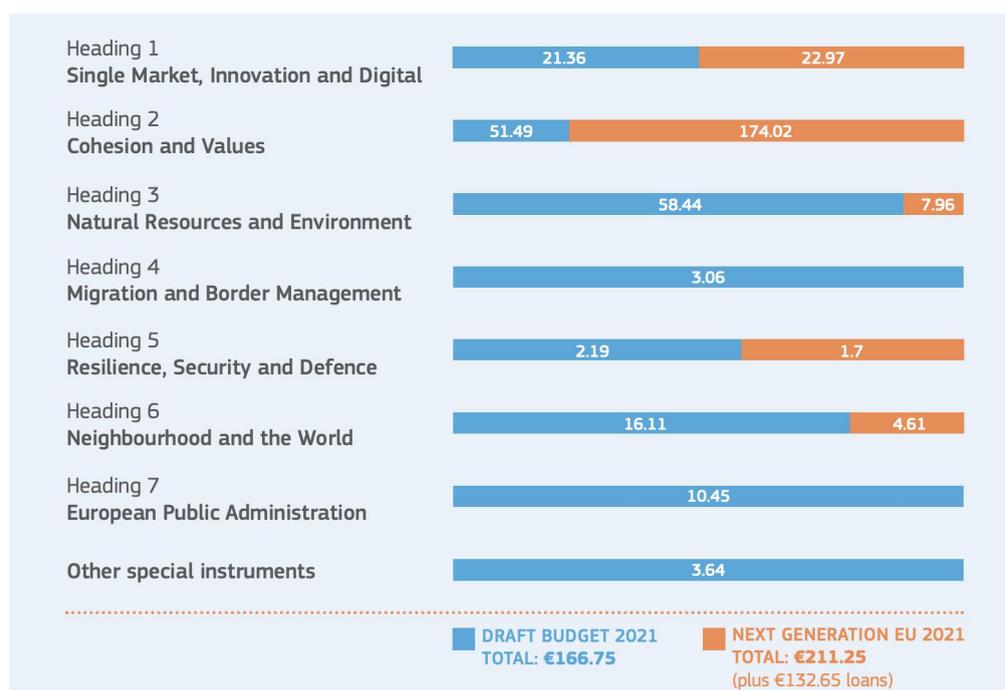
- €55.2 billion for the Common Agricultural Policy;
- €47.15 billion for Cohesion Policy;
- €42.45 billion for the new REACT-EU programme from the Recovery Instrument.

→ **Q&A by the European Commission:**

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_1185

→ **“Commission pledges almost half of the recovery fund for 2021”, Euractiv, 24 June 2020,**

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/news/commission-pledges-almost-half-of-the-recovery-fund-for-2021/>



→ **Full infographic:**

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/factsheet_draft_budget_v13.pdf

European leaders will meet in person in Brussels on 17-18 July to, hopefully, find a final agreement on the negotiations on the recovery plan and next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa shared a letter with the group of Friends of Cohesion, defending the European Commission proposal and urging leaders to support the continuation of cohesion policy spending in the agreement and to find an agreement in July to allow the implementation by January 2021. He added that “it would be a mistake to jeopardize the swift adoption of this proposal by raising new contention issues or wasting time trying to improve every detail at the expense of the whole.”

If European leaders had to be once more convinced about the need to take bold decisions and fast, on 24 June the International Monetary Fund lowered its already bleak outlook for the world economy, projecting a significantly deeper recession and slower recovery than

what it had anticipated just in April.

- “**IMF Projects Deeper Global Recession on Growing Virus Threat**”,
Bloomberg, 24 June,
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-24/imf-forecasts-deeper-global-recession-from-growing-virus-threat>

Council of the European Union

Environment

EU ministers responsible for the environment met to exchange on how to link post-COVID-19 economic recovery to the European Green Deal and the relevant climate neutrality objective, and to discuss the need for adequate resources for the green transition in the recovery plan and future Multiannual Financial Framework.

- <https://eu2020.hr/Home/OneNews?id=361>

First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans addressed the ministers, highlighting the following: “The National Energy and Climate plans (NECPs) will have a crucial role for the identification of priorities for the Recovery and Resilience Facility, with its link to the European Semester and National Recovery and Resilience plans. The NECPs offer a good roadmap of policies and projects that are ready to be rolled out quickly. We hope that they are a good basis for the design of your National Recovery Plans with a twin green and digital transition at their heart. We want a green transition, a digital transition and we want to increase Europe’s resilience.”

During the meeting, SPD Environment Minister Svenja Schulze presented the work programme of the German EU Council Presidency, running from 1 July till 31 December, and focusing on three key areas: climate action, biodiversity and sustainable digitalisation. She said that “it is now time for a socially fair and ecologically sound recovery for our economy, in addition to fighting the pandemic.”

Conference on the Future of Europe

On 24 June, the Council, meeting at ambassadors level, agreed the position on the arrangements for the conference, supporting the view that the conference should be launched as soon as the sanitary conditions linked to the pandemic allow for it. The Council position leaves the treaty change question open.

- Position: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/44679/st09102-en20.pdf>
- Press release: <https://eu2020.hr/Home/OneNews?id=368>

European Committee of the Regions

Commissions

Two commission meetings took place this week. On 23 June, the Commission for

Economic policies (ECON) took place. Christophe Rouillon, President of the PES Group and Mayor of Coullaines (France), was appointed rapporteur for the implementation of the new Recovery and Resilience Facility, amounting to €310 billion in grants and an additional €250 billion in loans, for a total of €560 billion. On 25 June, the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX) held two interesting debates: one on the Conference on the Future of Europe with S&D MEP Gabi Bischoff and one on migration. Bischoff agreed with Karl-Heinz Lambertz on the need for a strong involvement of the local and regional levels and showed openness for a permanent dialogue structure. Despite delays, she remained positive for the Conference, underlining that the current conjuncture is forcing us to refocus the European project taking bold steps, including through the recovery programme.

Plenary

Members are preparing for the next plenary session, which will take place on 30 June-2 July in a hybrid form for the first time. On the agenda, there are three important opinions led by PES Group rapporteurs: Roby Biber on forests, Birgit Honé on hydrogen, and Vojko Obersnel on the Just Transition Fund. In addition, several debates are foreseen, including a debate on the future MFF with Commissioner in charge of Budget and Administration, Johannes Hahn.

- Draft agenda of the plenary:
<https://mempportal.cor.europa.eu/Meeting/CommitteeAgenda>
- Interview with Roby Biber:
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Reconciling-forestry-and-agriculture-we-need-a-new-certification-scheme-to-protect-forests.aspx>
- Interview with Birgit Honé:
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/We-need-an-ambitious-EU-hydrogen-strategy-for-a-climate-neutral-Europe.aspx>

Members received the information regarding the PES Group meeting, which will take place on 30 June at 10:30 AM-12:00 PM (Brussels time). Information on how to connect to the web platform Interactio will be shared shortly.

- Draft agenda of the Group meeting:
<https://pes.cor.europa.eu/sites/default/files/draft-agenda-pes-group-30062020-en.pdf>

The European progressive family

On 25 June, the PES Presidency held its meeting to discuss the response to the COVID-19 crisis and the situation of racism, xenophobia and intolerance in Europe. PES Group Vice-President and President of Tuscany Region (Italy), Enrico Rossi, intervened in the debate sharing the position of the Group, stating that “As progressive regions and cities, we demand a strong role for territories in the management of the recovery plan!”.

→ Press release:

<https://www.pes.eu/en/news-events/news/detail/PES-declaration-strongly-urges-the-European-Council-to-agree-on-an-ambitious-Recovery-Plan-for-COVID-19/>

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:

- **“Homelessness cannot be just another ‘Fact of Life’ in the EU”**, Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Ana Mendes Godinho, Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security in Portugal, and Yves Leterme, Goodwill Ambassador for the Fight against Homelessness in Europe, *Euractiv*, 21 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/homelessness-cannot-be-just-another-fact-of-life-in-the-eu/>
- **“S&Ds: Passenger rights must come before industry interests in collective redress”**, Press release, 22 June,
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-passenger-rights-must-come-before-industry-interests-collective-redress>
- **“S&D position paper European Education Area: our reality for 2025”**,
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/sites/default/files/2020-06/european-education-area-our-reality-for-2025-en-200624.pdf>

PES Group projects

On 1 July, Germany will take over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. The PES Group asked members and former members what they expect.

- <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/german-eu-presidency-expectations-progressive-cities-and-regions>
- Programme of the presidency:
<https://www.eu2020.de/eu2020-en/aktuelles/article/trio-programme-germany-portugal-slovenia/2353560>

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>



The fight against fake news

During the EU-China Summit that took place on 22 June, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen addressed the issue of disinformation with the Chinese government, pointing out clearly that this cannot be tolerated.

- **“Von der Leyen: Chinese cyberattacks on EU hospitals ‘can’t be tolerated”**,
Euractiv, 23 June 2020,
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/von-der-leyen-chinese-cyberattacks-on-eu-hospitals-cant-be-tolerated/>

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
- **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/20200327STO76004/1-0-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

PES Women

On 30 June at 16:00, PES Women will host a debate on “Winners and Losers: Addressing economic and social inequalities in the context of COVID-19 crisis – a regional gender perspective”.

→ Registration:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfilGTyisF0_YK3F38Ktslx_bW32EZDuKE6brVRqbAbuJQ3g/viewform

Meet our speaker

Zita Gurmai, PES Women President, Hungary
 Rovana Plumb, S&D Group MEP, Romania
 Dasa Silovic, CEE Gender Network Chair, Croatia
 Goran Radosavljević, economist Belgrade University
 Besima Boric, SDP Presidency Bosnia&Herzegovina

Join on 30 June 2020, 16:00 – 17:30 (CET) via Zoom

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Climate Chance

Ahead of the European Council, Climate Chance, an international organisation that aims to bring together all the non-state actors recognized by the UN including Local authorities supporting the central role of local climate action, addresses the European Union with a set of proposals to be developed and integrated within the "Green New Deal" strategy.

→ <https://www.climate-chance.org/en/to-shape-climate-policies-tomorrow-let-draw-from-successes-recent-years/>

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:

- **“A sustainable recovery plan for the energy sector”**, International Energy Agency, June 2020,
<https://www.iea.org/reports/sustainable-recovery/a-sustainable-recovery-plan-for-the-energy-sector>
- **“An opportunity to improve the MFF permanently”**, European Policy Centre, 18 June 2020,
<https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/An-opportunity-to-improve-the-MFF-permanently~34cd94>
- **“A new policy toolkit is needed as countries exit COVID-19 lockdowns”**, Bruegel, 22 June 2020,
<https://www.bruegel.org/2020/06/a-new-policy-toolkit-is-needed-as-countries-exit-covid-19-lockdowns/>
- **“The city of 2050: Less smog, more bikes and hyper-local living”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 22 June 2020,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/the-city-of-2050-less-smog-more-bikes-and-hyper-local-living/>

- **“Cross-Border Regional Healthcare Cooperation To Combat The Coronavirus Pandemic”**, European Parliament Research Service, 23 June 2020, <https://epthinktank.eu/2020/06/23/cross-border-regional-healthcare-cooperation-to-combat-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- **“How the Coronavirus Tests European Democracy”**, Carnegie Europe, 23 June 2020, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2020/06/23/how-coronavirus-tests-european-democracy-pub-82109>
- **“Living In The EU: Work Before The Coronavirus Crisis”**, European Parliament Research Service, 23 June 2020, <https://epthinktank.eu/2020/06/24/living-in-the-eu-work-before-the-coronavirus-crisis/>
- **“Sustainable Infrastructure for New Growth in a Post-Covid Era”**, ISPI, 24 June 2020, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/sustainable-infrastructure-new-growth-post-covid-era-26537>