

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

5 June 2020

### List of European decisions

Date	Number of cases and deaths <sup>1</sup>	European response
2 June	1 407 430 cases 166 613 deaths	<p><a href="#">EU ministers responsible for sport</a> held an exchange of views about the next steps in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sport sector in the short, medium and long-term.</p> <p>The European Commission put forward a <a href="#">proposal</a> to significantly reinforce with €2 billion the rescEU mechanism over 2021-2027 to create reserves of strategic equipment to cover health and natural emergencies.</p>
3 June	1 410 698 cases 167 270 deaths	<p>The European Commission <a href="#">proposed modifications to its budget for 2020</a> to make €11.5 billion for crisis repair and recovery available already in 2020.</p> <p>Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy announced the formation of an “Inclusive Vaccine Alliance”, aimed at ensuring that a possible future coronavirus vaccine is available to and affordable for Europeans.</p>
4 June	1 417 220 cases 167 940 deaths	<p><a href="#">EU ministers responsible for transport</a> discussed the sustainability and digital aspects of the recovery within the transport sector.</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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>

		The <a href="#">European Central Bank</a> decided to add €600 billion to the firepower of its Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP) and other measures.
<b>5 June</b>		<p><a href="#">EU home affairs ministers</a> discuss the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of internal border controls and the free movement of persons.</p> <p><a href="#">EU ministers responsible for telecommunications</a> identify the priorities for the digital sector in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak.</p>

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

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### European Commission

#### *MFF and Recovery Plan*

Following up its proposal of a recovery plan and new Multiannual Financial Framework of last week, on Wednesday 3 June, the European Commission proposed modifications to its budget for 2020 to make funds available for the regions most in need and businesses already in 2020. Additional EUR 11.5 billion should become available for REACT-EU, the Solvency Support Instrument and the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) as early as possible this year.

The European Commission updated information on its Multiannual Financial Framework and Recovery Plan proposals:

- Questions and Answers on the EU budget: the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy,  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_20\\_985](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_985)
- Questions and Answers: the EU budget for external action in the next Multiannual Financial Framework,  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_20\\_988](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_988)
- Questions and Answers: rescEU and Humanitarian Aid under the new MFF,  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_20\\_984](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_984)

The next European Council is due to take place on 19 June. In the meanwhile, European Council President Charles Michel is speaking to leaders to try to find a compromise on the Multiannual Financial Framework and the Recovery Plan, but the fact that leaders will not meet in person casts a shadow over the prospects of the European Council meeting.

## *Social rights*

The European Commission launched the second-stage consultation on a possible initiative concerning fair minimum wages on Wednesday 3 June. This initiative was scheduled already before the coronavirus pandemic but obviously becomes even more topical in the current context of social crisis.

- **“COVID-19 heroes deserve decent minimum wages”**, Press release of the S&D Group, 3 June 2020,  
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/covid-19-heroes-deserve-decent-minimum-wages>
- **“Wages initiative needed even more after coronavirus”**, Press release, European Trade Union Confederation, 3 June 2020,  
<https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/wages-initiative-needed-even-more-after-coronavirus>

After a first consultation of social partners on the possibility of an EU action concerning minimum wages launched in February 2020, the second-stage consultation document sets out the fundamental policy objectives that an EU action in this field will have, namely:

- Set minimum wage levels to ensure that no worker earns a living below the 60% of the median national wage;
- Ensure all workers are covered by minimum wages, whether or not they are set through collective bargaining or statutory measures;
- Establish clear and stable criteria for minimum wage updates at the national level.

The actual proposal should be published by the European Commission in the autumn. You can directly contribute by following this link before 4 September 2020:

- [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_979](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_979)

## *Brexit*

On Tuesday 2 June, the fourth round of negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom started. Ahead of the meeting, the S&D Group called for significant progress. At this stage, it is still unclear to what extent Brexit will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **“S&Ds: If the UK is serious about a deal, significant progress is needed next week”**, Press release of the S&D Group, 31 May 2020,  
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-if-uk-serious-about-deal-significant-progress-needed-next-week>
- **“Michel Barnier: ‘No agreement’ unless UK sticks to Brexit promises”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 31 May 2020,  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/michel-barnier-no-agreement-unless-uk-sticks-to-brexit-promises/>

On 29 May, the UK and Poland signed a treaty to guarantee the right of British and Polish citizens to stand and vote in local elections in each other's countries following the UK's exit from the EU. This is the fourth treaty of this kind signed, following the ones with Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg last year.

## European Parliament

### *Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs*

On Thursday 4 June, Members of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) adopted a motion for a resolution by S&D Group rapporteur Juan Fernando López Aguilar (Spain) on the situation in the Schengen area following the COVID-19 outbreak. The resolution focuses on the importance of remaining vigilant about the temporary suspension of Schengen by Member States, recalling that it is an important achievement for the European Union. It also stresses that more targeted restrictions applicable at regional level, including cross-border regions, would have been more appropriate and less intrusive. Last but not least, the rapporteur considers necessary a reflection on how to enhance mutual trust between Member States and ensure a truly European governance of the Schengen area.

- **“Without Schengen, there is no recovery”**, Press release of the S&D Group, 4 June 2020,  
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/without-schengen-there-no-recovery>
- **“Crisis made EU countries act like panicked shoppers, says commissioner”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 2 June 2020,  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/countries-acted-like-panicked-shoppers-at-start-of-coronavirus-crisis-says-eu-commissioner-ylva-johansson/>

## The European progressive family

On Tuesday 2 June, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen joined the S&D Group for a debate on the Recovery Plan. Von der Leyen praised the action of the European Commission during the crisis (derogation states aids, derogation Stability and Growth Pact, CRII, SURE...) in order to inject very quickly liquidities in the internal market. Beyond this urgent response, she insisted that the *Next Generation EU* package is incorporated into the MFF, which will allow the European Parliament to exert its control.

- **“S&Ds tell Ursula von der Leyen to remain firm when negotiating the Recovery Plan with the Council”**, Press release of the S&D Group, 2 June 2020,  
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-tell-ursula-von-der-leyen-remain-firm-when-negotiating-recovery-plan-council>

Moreover, between 1 and 2 June, the appeal calling for a climate and jobs pact, led by Member of the European Parliament Pierre Larrourou and signed by many of our

members and over 700 other leaders, was published in several languages across the European Union:

- More information and signatures: <https://climateandjobs.eu/>
- **“European Call: 3 solutions for climate and jobs”**, *Euractiv*, 2 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/opinion/european-call-3-solutions-for-climate-and-jobs/>

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:

- **“Housing: an essential piece of the ‘Next Generation EU’ puzzle. Time is now for a global rethink of housing policy. The EU must lead on this”**, Housing Europe, 2 June 2020, <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-1431/housing-an-essential-piece-of-the-next-generation-eu-puzzle>
- **“Agriculture has fundamental role to play in fighting climate change, says French socialist MEP”**, Interview with Eric Andrieu, *Euractiv*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/interview/agriculture-has-fundamental-role-to-play-in-fighting-climate-change-says-french-socialist-mep/>

## PES Group projects

We renew our call to you to join the PES Group project on solidarity initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic:

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

So far, we have received a total of 43 contributions from 12 countries from PES Group members and also other local and regional progressive leaders.



If you wish to contribute, you can consult the online form available at this [link](#).

Recently, we also joined the UN Habitat Local 2030 Spotlight Series. You can find here the contributions of some PES Group members (Manuela Bora, Juan Espadas, Christian Illedits, Christophe Rouillon and Pascal Smet), together with instructions on how to share your sustainability story:

→ <https://pes.cor.europa.eu/pes-group-joins-un-habitat-initiative-local2030-spotlight-series>

Last but not least, on 16 June at 18:30, the PES Group is hosting a debate on the future European budget from the point of view of cities and regions, moderated by PES Group President Christophe Rouillon, and with the participation of PES Group Member, Chair of the COTER Commission, and Vice-President of Nouvelle-Aquitaine Isabelle Boudineau, Mayor of Charleroi and Leader of the Belgian Socialist Party Paul Magnette, and Member of the European Parliament Margarida Marques (S&D). The event will be in French and it will see the participation of young local and regional leaders from our network.

→ Register now:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZludOuqqDwpGdYXI-Nr-ABxxK96lhn0Ycn9>

## The fight against fake news

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The European Union is preparing new sanctions on a group of Russian hackers to address foreign hacking that has been really intense during the COVID-19 crisis. The sanctions, expected later this year, would be the first application of the EU's so-called cyber sanctions regime, since it was adopted in May 2019, and is a result of Germany's effort to bring a European response to the cyber-attack on the Bundestag in 2015. But how would it work?

- **“Europe nears tipping point on Russian hacking”**, *POLITICO Europe*, 3 June 2020,  
<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-reached-its-tipping-point-on-russian-hacking-germany-bundestag-cyberattack/>
- **“CYBER CONFLICT UNCODED. The EU and conflict prevention in cyberspace”**, European Union Institute for Security Studies, April 2020,  
[https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%207\\_Cyber.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%207_Cyber.pdf)

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](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](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

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### New COP26-COP25 initiative

To mark Environment Day, the UK COP26 and the Chile COP25 presidencies are launching a new campaign “Race to Zero” for many stakeholders, including 458 cities and 24 regions, to promote the adoption of net zero emission targets and create support for a “zero carbon recovery which creates well-paying jobs, unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth and prevents future threats”.

- Details will be revealed at a UNFCCC webinar today at 1 PM CEST: <https://unfccc.int/event/climate-leadership-after-covid-framing-the-new-growth-agenda-for-economies-cities-businesses-and>

### European Green Capital and Green Leaf Awards

Applications are now open for the European Green Capital in 2023 and European Green Leaf in 2022. The European Green Capital Award is open to cities across Europe which have more than 100,000 inhabitants. The European Green Leaf Award is open to cities across Europe which have a population of 20,000 and up to 100,000 inhabitants.

- More information: <https://www.egcaeglportal.eu/>

### European City Facility: First call open for municipalities

The European City Facility (EUCF) will assist municipalities with fast and simplified financial support for developing investment concepts delivering local sustainable energy

projects. More than €12m of funding will be available through a series of regional calls to support over 200 municipalities over the next three years. Municipalities can apply now until 2 October 2020!

→ [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/06/06-02-2020-european-city-facility-first-call-open-for-municipalities](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/06/06-02-2020-european-city-facility-first-call-open-for-municipalities)

### **Covenant of Mayors**

Have your say on the future of the Covenant of Mayors by 15 September. In this challenging, changing context, the Covenant of Mayors has to show it can evolve to best support and empower local and regional authorities that are leading the way while planning their recovery.

→ <https://www.eumayors.eu/news-and-events/news/1786-what-is-the-future-of-the-covenant-of-mayors-initiative-have-your-say.html>

Back in December 2019, the European Committee of the Regions adopted an opinion by former PES Group member Benedetta Brighenti on this issue, highlighting important aspects for the renewal of the Covenant.

→ <https://cor.europa.eu/EN/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opId=CDR-1804-2019>

### **European Committee of the Regions**

Together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Committee launched a survey to know more about the challenges that subnational government entities are facing in the COVID-19 crisis, to better understand and assess the impact of the crisis on regional and local communities across the EU and the OECD, especially in matters of governance, finance and recovery strategy.

→ Fill in the 10-minute- survey:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/2020CovidImpactLRAs>

The meeting of the Commission for the Environment, Climate change and Energy (ENVE) on Monday 8 June will be the first meeting since March with votes on the agenda. Out of the 5 opinions to be adopted, there are two highlights: the draft opinion by PES Group member and Minister for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development of Lower Saxony, Birgit Honé, on clean hydrogen, as well as the draft opinion by the EPP member and Mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski on the Climate Pact. Trzaskowski is also running in the Polish presidential elections of 28 June and has good chances to challenge the incumbent conservative President Duda (ECR) in the second round.

### **Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)**

Register now for the Call to Europe IX – version 2.0! This year’s FEPS flagship initiative will start with a two-day online conference through Zoom and FB Live, focusing on climate justice and gender equality. Our First Vice-President Yoomi Renström and PES Group Member Manuela Bora will join as speakers.

→ <https://www.feps-europe.eu/events/upcoming-events/634-call-to-europe-online-conference.html>

## 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/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](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

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Please find below a series of useful articles, published by various think tanks and organisations:

- **“A Just Transition Fund – How the EU budget can help with the transition”**, Bruegel, 26 May 2020,  
<https://www.bruegel.org/2020/05/a-just-transition-fund-how-the-eu-budget-can-best-assist-in-the-necessary-transition-from-fossil-fuels-to-sustainable-energy/>
- **“The MFF recovery plan breaks with a fundamental taboo”**, Centre for European Policy Studies, 28 May 2020,  
<https://www.ceps.eu/the-mff-recovery-plan-breaks-with-a-fundamental-taboo/>
- **“An uncompromising budget”**, Bruegel, 29 May 2020,  
<https://www.bruegel.org/2020/05/new-eu-budget-proposal-the-uncompromised-compromise/>

- **“Demography On The European Agenda: Strategies For Tackling Demographic Decline”**, European Parliament Research Service, 2 June 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651939/EPRS\\_BRI\(2020\)651939\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/651939/EPRS_BRI(2020)651939_EN.pdf)
- **“Commission vows to break with troika-type conditions in recovery phase”**, *Euractiv*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economic-governance/news/commission-vows-to-break-up-with-troika-type-conditions-in-recovery-phase/>