

## **COVID-19 EU update**

### **European Commission:**

- Please find von der Leyen's speech at the European Parliament Plenary on the conclusions of the Special European Council meeting [here](#). President von der Leyen said that there are regrettable and painful decisions on many program budgets such as Horizon and the Health Program which were increased but not as much as planned.
- On 22 July, the Commission published a [roadmap for a Communication on achieving an European Education Area](#). For the Commission, education, training and skills will play a key role in the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The Communication will put forward specific actions and targets to achieve the European Education Area by 2025.

### **European Council:**

- [Special European Council, 17-21 July 2020](#). EU leaders agreed on a recovery package (€750 billion), the "Next Generation EU", and the 2021-2027 budget (€1 074.3 billion), the "Multiannual Financial Framework" (MFF). These instruments will help the EU to rebuild after the pandemic and will support investment in the green and digital transitions. The size of the MFF will allow the EU to fulfill its long-term objectives and preserve the full capacity of the recovery plan. Some resources within the recovery fund were reshuffled by the European Council. €7.7 billion allocated to top-up a new EU4Health Programme were cut out. This new health program was reduced from €9.4 to €1.7 billion. RescEU, a separate program used to stockpile medical equipment as well as other emergency assets, will receive €3 billion in total.

### **European Parliament:**

- In a resolution on the conclusions of the extraordinary European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020, adopted by 465 votes against 150, with 67 abstentions, MEPs stressed that the EU long-term budget deal must be improved for Parliament to accept it. In the text, which serves as a mandate for the upcoming negotiations on the future EU financing and recovery, Parliament welcomes EU leaders' acceptance of the recovery fund as proposed by Parliament in May, calling it a "historic move for the EU". MEPs deplore however the "massive cuts to the grant components" i.e. research and health, and call for full democratic involvement of Parliament in the recovery instrument which "does not give a formal role to elected Members of the European Parliament". More info [here](#).

### **Council:**

- On 20 July 2020, the Council adopted its [2020 recommendations](#) and opinions on the member states' economic, employment and fiscal policies, as well as the recommendation for the euro-area. This year's country-specific recommendations take into account the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the activation of the general escape clause under the Stability and Growth Pact on 20 March 2020. They are lighter, more focused and less prescriptive than in previous years.
- [Outcomes Health Ministers meeting 16 July](#): At the press conference of the Health Ministers of the Trio Presidency (DE, PT, SL), DE Health Minister Spahn outlined first steps towards reforming the ECDC. In addition to more staff and more financial resources, the ECDC is to be given a task force that can be deployed both inside and outside the EU and which has clear competences. This would require legal changes, he said, and the Commission would draw up proposals to this end. In addition, investments should be made in a better digital exchange of information from/to the ECDC. Furthermore, the ECDC should be given the competence to publish clear recommendations in case of a crisis. The second topic of the Council meeting was the independence of the EU from the world markets in pharmaceuticals, medical devices and personal protective equipment. The aim was to shift the production of important drugs back to the EU. The German Council Presidency,

Spahn said, was concerned with achieving "less dependence, more autonomy and its own strength". Questions such as how to do this had to be answered: What are the active substances that are to be produced in the EU? Which instruments are the right ones, are they investment grants, price or sales guarantees or are there other ways? The third topic discussed was research funding: The aim is to promote a common understanding of how health data should be handled. The COVID 19 crisis had shown that a meaningful combination of health data could create added value. In creating a health data area, the aim is to achieve the same basic understanding in all 27 Member States of how health data are used under the General Data Protection Regulation.

#### **ECDC:**

- ECDC along with the European Union's Agency's for Railways (ERA) has developed a COVID-19 [railway protocol](#), outlining the operational guidelines for the resumption of railway operations in Europe. It summarises preventive measures considered effective at the date of publication, and complements measures taken by the European Commission to support Member States in re-launching mobility and tourism across Europe. Based on the protocol, ECDC has also developed an [infographic](#).
- ECDC [provides](#) scientific evidence and guidance for healthcare settings and the public on using gloves as a preventive measure during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report states that the use of medical gloves is recommended as part of standard precautions to reduce the risk of contamination of healthcare workers' hands adding that taking into consideration the currently available types of gloves for use in healthcare settings, extended use, decontamination and reuse of single-use medical gloves is discouraged. See also an infographic [here](#).

#### **EMA:**

- EMA is applying exceptional transparency measures for treatments and vaccines against COVID-19 that are approved or are under evaluation, to address the high interest in information on COVID-19 medicines and to support global research. All disclosed information can be accessed [here](#).
- EMA [sets up infrastructure](#) for real-world monitoring of treatments and vaccines. The latest contract with Utrecht University and the University Medical Center Utrecht concerns the collection of data on the impact of COVID-19 in pregnancy. Other ongoing projects focus on building a framework for the conduct of multicentre cohort studies on the use of medicines in COVID-19 patients and on preparatory research into data sources and methods that can be used to monitor the safety, effectiveness and coverage of COVID-19 vaccines in clinical practice, once authorised.
- International regulators [aligned positions](#) on phase 3 COVID-19 vaccine trials. Medicines regulatory authorities from around the world have published a [report](#) highlighting the outcomes of the second workshop on COVID-19 vaccine development. The report describes the regulatory positions agreed by the meeting participants on two key topics: data needed from laboratory, animal and human studies to allow initiation of phase 3 clinical trials for a COVID-19 vaccine, and considerations for study design for phase 3 clinical trials.

#### **COVID-19 and Data Protection:**

- On 15 July 2020, the European Data Protection Board published guidance addressing European institutions on [Reactions of EU institutions as employers to the COVID-19 crisis](#).