



## European Union Emergency Support Instrument for the healthcare sector - questions and answers

Brussels, 2 April 2020

### What does the Commission propose to support the healthcare sector?

The Commission wants to directly support the healthcare systems of EU Member States in their fights against the coronavirus pandemic through measures that can best be taken at EU level. For this purpose and based on the solidarity principle, the Commission will complement in a fast, flexible and direct way the ongoing efforts at national level.

More concretely and as a first stage, the Commission has drawn up an initial needs assessment and will be working with Member States to further detail and prioritise their necessities.

**To finance this action, the Commission is mobilising €3 billion from the EU budget, of which €2.7 billion will be channelled through the Emergency Support Instrument and €300 million through the rescEU medical equipment capacity. Additional contributions will be possible from Member States and also individuals, foundations and even crowd funding.**

In this way, the Commission will be able to:

- directly purchase or procure emergency support on behalf of Member States and distributing medical supplies such as masks and respirators;
- financially support and co-ordinate pressing needs such as the transportation of medical equipment and of patients in cross-border regions;
- support the construction of mobile field hospitals.

To make use of efficiency gains and generate economies of scale, wherever possible, the Commission will directly procure on behalf of Member States and focus the help where the needs are.

In the medium- to long-term and thanks to these tools, the EU will be able to support testing capacities of its Member States and to support any relevant medical research. In this way, the Commission will be providing an EU response throughout the health crisis, until its exit.

To implement the initiative, the Commission will work with Member States national health authorities, international organisations and with the non-governmental sector.

### What action can be undertaken via the Emergency Support Instrument?

The Emergency Support Instrument will allow the EU to provide a coordinated EU response throughout the different stages of the crisis.

The concrete action will depend on the needs of the EU countries. For example, the Commission will work to:

- support the imports, transport and distribution of protective gear, focusing on worst hit regions;
- assist the transportation of patients in need to cross-border hospitals which can offer free capacity;
- boost the swift development of medication and testing methods.

Other actions will also be possible, according to the evolving needs of Member States, hospitals, doctors and patients.

### How will this action be financed?

To secure the necessary financing, the Commission is relying entirely on the EU budget for 2014-2020 and mobilising all available resources within the spending limits for 2020.

This is why today the Commission has also put forward a Draft Amending Budget - a proposal to reorganise part of the EU spending for the year in line with the latest priorities – to secure:

- **€300 million for the rescEU-medical equipment capacity.** This will help to procure and distribute further medical supplies across the EU. The funding comes on top of the €80 million already allocated [last month](#).
- **€2.7 billion directly to the European Union's Emergency Support Instrument** – whose

general purpose is to complement the other EU instruments, where they cannot act alone, by directly respond to crisis situations across the EU – and to amend it so that it can be used in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Commission will activate the remaining flexibility of the current long-term budget – reserves which go beyond the annual ceilings – to finance this operation.

### **The needs are obviously bigger than the budget you have. How are you going to bridge the gap?**

Given the medium- to long-term perspective of the proposed action, the Commission will explore further avenues to attract financing. These include donations by individuals, foundations and even crowd funding. The Commission is looking into putting in place all necessary modalities to allow speedy collection of contributions and donations. The budget could be further reinforced through these means as well as fresh budget appropriation in 2021 once a budget for 2021 is in place (based on an agreement on the MFF 2021-2027).

### **How will this money be distributed among Member States?**

The objective of the initiative will be to provide targeted support to the Member States and regions most concerned.

Given the rapid evolution of the health crisis across the Union, there cannot be a pre-determined allocation per Member State. The team running the initiative will monitor the ongoing developments and respond based on the relative severity of the crisis in the different Member States as well as already existing measures and instruments.

To map EU countries' most pressing necessities and be able to direct money where the needs are, the Commission has already started working with Member States' national health authorities. This preliminary assessment will serve to identify the first steps to make and the decisions to take. Additional consultations with Member States and specific requests from their part will also be taken into account.

### **Who will be implementing the initiative?**

The Commission will have a central role in implementing the initiative. For this purpose, the Commission is setting up a Task Force from across its departments, which will work, on a full time basis, to turn the ideas into action. The team in charge will include experts in crisis management, health policy, transport, EU public procurement and financial management.

Of course, the Commission will work closely with Member States' national authorities as well as international organisations and the non-governmental sector.

### **Which will be the next steps?**

Today, the Commission has put forward a comprehensive legislative proposal to finance and implement its action to directly support Member States' healthcare sectors. The Commission is inviting the European Parliament and the Council to endorse this initiative as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the Commission will be working to identify and prepare the first actions that need to be undertaken so that implementation can start as soon as the legislative proposals have been adopted.

### **What other actions have been supported by the EU budget?**

The EU has already taken a series of action to address the coronavirus pandemic across the EU, in the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Measures taken so far notably include unlocking €37 billion of investments from the EU cohesion funds to enable Member States buy medical supplies, pay doctors and help small and medium-sized enterprises keep paying their staff; creating the first-ever RescEU medical capacity and financing the repatriation of EU nationals stranded around the world. So far, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism has facilitated the repatriation of 10,017 EU citizens to Europe on 47 flights.

However, the scale and scope of the challenge requires an even more robust co-ordinated response, targeted directly at the health care systems, which builds on the solidarity and enhances cooperation between EU Member States.

Today's initiative will be complementary to and consistent with the action taken so far. It will seek to add to what national healthcare authorities are already doing by creating synergies and making best use of economies of scale.

### **How the rescEU medical capacity works?**

- The medical capacity will be hosted by one or several Member States. The hosting State will be

responsible for procuring the equipment. The Commission will finance 100% of the medical capacity. The [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) will manage the distribution of the equipment to ensure it goes where it is needed most.

- The initial EU budget of the capacity is €80 million, of which €70 million is subject to the approval of the budgetary authorities.

### **Who can use strategic capacity of critical medical assets under rescEU?**

- rescEU capacities are primarily available to complement national capacities of all countries that are part of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM): all EU Member States, the UK during the transition period and six Participating States (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey).
- If national capacities and including those pre-committed to the European Civil Protection Pool under the Mechanism are not sufficient to ensure an effective response to an emergency, rescEU capacities can be activated as a last resort and strategic reserve at European level.
- Other countries can in principle also request support to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. If no assistance is offered on spontaneous basis or through the European Civil Protection Mechanism, rescEU capacities such as the newly created stockpile can be deployed in third countries but only for an emergency with a major impact on Member States or EU citizens.
- However, in view of current high demand for medical capacities under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism from countries participating in the Mechanism, it is at this stage unlikely that the rescEU capacity can be used for response operations in countries not participating in the Mechanism.

### **How are you going to report on how the project is being implemented and on how the money has been spent?**

In full transparency, the Commission is going to set up a dedicated section on its website where it will report on the progress made and on the steps ahead

### **For more information**

[Press release: Commission sets out European coordinated response to counter the economic impact of the Coronavirus](#)

[Coronavirus response](#)

Factsheet: [EU response to the coronavirus - latest updates](#)

[Proposal for a Council Regulation on the activation of emergency support](#)

[Draft Amending Budget No 2](#)

[Full package of legislative proposals Emergency Support Instrument for the Healthcare Sector](#)

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Press contacts:

[Balazs UJVARI](#) (+32 2 295 45 78)

[Claire JOAWN](#) (+32 2 295 68 59)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)