

COVID-19: List of the measures taken in relation to the ITRE remit

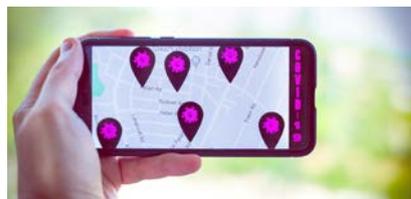
May-June 2020

Recent developments

On 27 April 2020, to tackle the COVID-19 crisis the Commission [proposed](#) an emergency **Next Generation EU (NGE)** instrument of **€750 billion** to temporarily increase the EU budget raising funds on the financial markets and a corresponding [reinforced multiannual financial framework \(MFF\) for 2021-2027 amounting to €1,100 billion](#). The proposal of the Commission had a clear major impact on the planned European industrial programmes falling under the ITRE remit and has been the subject, together with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, of recent debates in the ITRE committee. The proposed overall MFF+NGE budget for direct ITRE instruments amounts to: Horizon Europe €94.4 billion, Just Transition Fund €40 billion, Invest EU €31.6 billion, CEF €19.9 billion, European Space Programme €13.2 billion, Digital Europe €8.2 billion, European Defence Fund €8 billion, ITER €5 billion, Euratom €1.8 billion, not including the very large cohesion-oriented Recovery and Resilience Facility initiative. These figures sparked a debate on the impact of COVID-19 at the ITRE committee and will be subject to intense negotiations among the three institutions in the coming months.

On 15 May 2020, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the new multiannual financial framework, own resources and the recovery plan (2020/2631(RSP)) calling for a **€2 trillion** recovery strategy having a strong social dimension and close to citizens, financed through the issuance of long-dated recovery bonds, disbursed through loans and, mostly, through grants, direct payments for investment and equity. The European Parliament asked for recovery investments added on top of MFF-financed programmes, focused on priorities under the Green Deal and digital agenda and called for the introduction of a basket of new own resources.

With the return to some social activities, contact tracing apps have been introduced in many Member States under the coordination of the European Commission. The apps, which currently [struggle](#) to make an impact and are still subject to [privacy concerns](#), are installed on smartphones and use the low-energy Bluetooth radio technology to record epidemiologically relevant contacts among their users. If COVID-19 positive, users can consent to anonymously alert their contact history allowing each exposed contact to receive a warning message, along with specific information and guidance. The [interoperability](#) of the apps and their backend servers is judged essential for the effective tracing of cross-border infection chains and the good functioning of the internal market. (See for more information on contact tracing apps the briefing: "[National Contact Tracing Apps](#)" published by the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies).





The contribution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the economic recovery is still difficult to perceive today. In the case of COVID-19, AI has been used mainly to help the detection of novel COVID-19 outbreaks after an analysis of landmarks on computerised tomography lung scan images; to monitor, in real time, changes in body temperature through the use of wearable sensors; and to provide an open-source data platform to track the spread of the disease. (See for more information on Artificial Intelligence the in-depth analysis "[Ten technologies to fight Coronavirus](#)" published by the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS)).

On 18 June 2020, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on setting up a special committee on artificial intelligence in a digital age, and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office (2020/2684(RSO)).

On 23 June 2020, the European Commission released the [European Innovation Scoreboard 2020](#).

Research and Innovation

As of 29 June 2020, [17 global candidate vaccines](#) entered clinical evaluation in phases 1-3. The most advanced vaccine candidates having reached at least phase 2 of their clinical evaluation are: the non-replicating viral vector ChAdOx1-S, developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca (phase 3), the non-replicating viral vector Adenovirus Type 5 Vector, developed by the CanSino Biological Inc. and the Beijing Institute of Biotechnology (phase 2), and the lipid nanoparticle-encapsulated mRNA developed by Moderna and NIAID (phase 2).

On 17 June 2020, the European Commission released the [European Vaccine Strategy](#), with the following **three objectives**: (1) ensuring the quality, safety and efficacy of vaccines, (2) securing swift access to vaccines for Member States and their populations while leading the global solidarity effort, (3) ensuring equitable access to an affordable vaccine as early as possible.

The EU strategy rests on **two pillars**: securing the production of vaccines in the EU and sufficient supplies for its Member States through Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers via the Emergency Support Instrument; and adapting the EU's regulatory framework to the current urgency and making use of existing regulatory flexibility to accelerate the development, authorisation and availability of vaccines while maintaining the standards for vaccine quality, safety and efficacy.



Horizon Europe and Digital Europe

On 27 May 2020, as part of the recovery instrument [Next Generation EU](#), the European Commission proposed a **€13.5 billion** increase of the [Horizon Europe](#) budget to provide European support for health and climate-related research and innovation activities, including breakthrough innovations by start-ups and SMEs. The overall budget for Digital Europe and Horizon Europe has been respectively increased to **€8.2 billion** and **€94.4 billion**. In its presentation of the recovery package, the European Commission reassessed the European Green Deal and the Digital Strategy as the key investment strategies to relaunch the European economy with the [goal](#) of building a more resilient, sustainable, fair and prosperous Europe. The "*massive recovery package*", which MEPs asked for already in their recent [April resolution](#), must last long enough to tackle the "*expected deep and long-lasting impact of the current crisis*".

Horizon 2020 and the Coronavirus Global Response

As of 27 June 2020, the total pledges under the Coronavirus Global Response amount to **€15.9 billion**.

The European Commission [mobilised](#) over **€1 billion** from Horizon 2020 for the [Coronavirus Global Response](#) event to ensure collaborative development and universal deployment of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines: The amount is broken down in: €475.5 million for developing scientific solutions for testing, treating and preventing against COVID-19, and developing health systems; a €400 million EC guarantee of the EIB lending to finance pre-commercial stage investments in COVID-19 R&D, including scale up of production facilities; €150 million for disruptive innovations on COVID-19 under the EIC's Accelerator.

Investments and SMEs



To support the capital and investment level of European companies affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission proposed a new [Solvency Support Instrument \(SSI\)](#), with guarantees [provided](#) by the European Investment Bank (EIB), for mobilising private investments to urgently support viable European companies. The fund, operational from 2020, will have a budget of **€31 billion** aiming to unlock €300 billion in solvency support for companies, preparing them for carbon-neutral, digital and resilient future.

The European Commission upgraded [InvestEU Programme](#) to a level of **€15.3 billion** to mobilise private investment in projects across the Union and built into InvestEU a new Strategic Investment Facility, with a budget of **€15 billion** from the NGE, to generate investments of up to €150 billion of strategic sectors, notably those linked to the green and digital transition, and key value chains in the internal market.

The European Innovation Council Accelerator Pilot

On 8 June 2020, the European Commission increased the total investment of Horizon 2020 against COVID-19 to **€314 million**, of which €174 million in form of equity investments. Almost 4000 start-ups and small and medium businesses (SMEs) applied to the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\) Accelerator Pilot](#), with over 1400 proposing innovations relevant to the coronavirus outbreak: **€166 million** were awarded to **36 companies** for pioneering COVID-19 projects, such as on expanding the production of bio-decontamination wipes, developing ventilation monitoring systems that provide first aiders with real-time feedback on the quality of the ventilation given to the patient, developing an antibody platform to treat severe cases of infection, and many more. In addition, over **€148 million** will be granted to another 36 companies set to contribute to the [recovery plan for Europe](#). The start-ups and SMEs selected for support come from 16 countries, including 12 EU Member States, the UK and 3 associated countries.

For more information, see the briefing: "[COVID-19: List of the measures taken in relation to the ITRE remit - March-April 2020](#)" published by the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies.

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