

COVID-19: Stepping up EU's response to alleviate the effects of the crisis

- Maximum flexibility to channel EU structural funds not yet used to fight impact of COVID-19 on citizens
- Enhanced support to EU fishers, aquaculture farmers and agri-food producers
- Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived will continue to provide assistance where it is most needed



MEPs voted remotely due to the COVID-19 crisis. © European Union 2020 - EP

MEPs adopted additional measures so that EU funding can be granted immediately and with exceptional flexibility to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Friday's extraordinary plenary session, the European Parliament endorsed the "Corona Response Investment Initiative Plus" (CRII+) package proposed by the European Commission on 2 April by means of an urgency procedure.

The approved proposals are:

Specific measures so that EU funds can be used flexibly. The adopted measures will allow member states to transfer resources between the three main cohesion funds (the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund), between the different categories of regions and between the funds' specific priority areas.

Exceptionally, it will be possible to fully finance cohesion policy programmes related to COVID-19 through 100% EU funding during the accounting year starting on 1 July 2020 and ending on 30 June 2021. The measures also simplify programme approval to speed up implementation, make financial instruments easier to use and simplify audits.

New rules will allow farmers to benefit from loans or guarantees at favourable conditions to cover their operational costs of up to €200.000. They will also free unused agriculture-related rural development funding to fight COVID-19. The proposal was adopted with 689 votes in favour, 6 against and one abstention.

Specific measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the fishery and aquaculture sector. Measures include supporting fishers that have to temporarily stop operating, financial aid for aquaculture producers when production is suspended or reduced, support to producer organisations for temporary storage, as well as a more flexible reallocation of national operational funds.

MEPs also approved, following informal agreement with the Council, a series of improvements that will allow support to be given to new fishers and fishers on foot (i.e. those fishing without a boat). These improvements will also adapt provisions for outermost regions to deal with the crisis, as well as providing budgetary flexibility to help countries that have exhausted all allocated funding. The amended proposal was adopted with 671 votes in favour, 10 against and 15 abstentions.

Specific measures to guarantee the continued functioning of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). Measures include the possibility to finance the provision of protective equipment for workers and volunteers, the temporary 100% co-financing from the EU budget and lighter reporting and audit measures during the COVID-19-crisis.

Following informal agreement with the Council, MEPs also approved changes that allow for aid to be delivered using new methods, such as through electronic or paper vouchers, to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the operations and to reach the most vulnerable and excluded.

The approved measures aim to protect the most vulnerable people from falling victim to COVID-19 and to ensure that food aid and basic material assistance still reaches them, while respecting social distancing and personal protection. The amended proposal was adopted with 686 votes in favour, 7 against and 3 abstentions.

Next steps

The Council has to formally approve Parliament's position. The adopted measures will enter into force once published in the Official Journal of the European Union in the coming days.

Further information

[Committee on Regional Development](#)
[Adopted texts \(17.04.2020\)](#)

[European Parliament COVID-19 webpage](#)

[Questions & answers: Making EU structural funds available and flexible to mitigate effect of COVID-19](#)

[EP Research: Specific flexibility measures for ESI funds in response to the coronavirus outbreak](#)

[EP Research: Support for the fishing and aquaculture sectors in the coronavirus crisis](#)

[Coronavirus: the FEAD to continue supporting people in need](#)

[Questions & answers on extraordinary remote participation procedure](#)

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material](#)

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