

Beat: News

MEPs call for stronger EU response

Overcome COVID-19

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USPA NEWS - MEPs call for stronger EU response to overcome COVID-19

In a debate with Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel, MEPs called for more coordinated European action to protect citizens and support the economy.

MEPs acknowledged that the EU could have acted even earlier and more swiftly, but stressed that solidarity within the EU has been restored. Europeans have shown generosity, that they are there for each other and that they can act very effectively. However, the EU needs to do more to rebuild Europe if it is to become more resilient and effective and it needs to do so urgently.

Many speakers pointed out that closing borders cannot be a long-term solution and called for a common exit strategy and recovery plan within a new, ambitious, long-term budget to mitigate the social, economic and financial effects of the lockdown.

The debate will be wound up by a resolution to be put to the vote on Friday.

The Parliament is committed to helping EU countries deal with the coronavirus and address the socio-economic impact of the outbreak.

Parliament support

Parliament adopted three proposals to help people and business tackle the crisis during an extraordinary plenary session on 26 March. The approved measures are:

The Corona Response Investment Initiative: €37 billion from available EU funds will be channelled to people, regions and countries that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. The funds will go to healthcare systems, small and medium-sized firms, labour markets and other vulnerable parts of EU countries' economies.

The extension of the EU Solidarity Fund to cover public health emergencies. The measures will make up to €800 million available for European countries in 2020.

Temporarily suspending EU rules on airport slots. This will stop air carriers from operating empty flights during the pandemic.

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.

The proposals are part of the EU-coordinated response to counter the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, set out by the European Commission on 13 March.

The measures announced by the Commission to address Covid-19 were welcomed by Parliament President David Sassoli.

President Sassoli said the Parliament was committed to getting these measures approved as soon as possible.

“Covid-19 obliges everyone to be responsible and to be cautious. It is a delicate moment for all of us. Parliament will continue to work to exercise its duties. No virus can block democracy.”^[2]

EU strategy to manage the outbreak

The Commission proposes measures to:

Ensure the necessary supplies to health systems by preserving the integrity of the Single Market and of production and distribution chains

Support people so that income and jobs are not affected disproportionately and to avoid permanent effects of the crisis

Support firms and ensure that the liquidity of the financial sector can continue to support the economy

Allow EU countries to act decisively in a coordinated way, including by relaxing rules on state aid and support measures

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