



## Coronavirus: The European Union stands by its Eastern partners

Brussels, 30 March 2020

As part of the global response to the coronavirus outbreak, the European Commission stands by Eastern partner countries and has reallocated €140 million for the most immediate needs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. In addition, the Commission will also redirect the use of existing instruments worth up to €700 million to help mitigate the socio-economic impact of the coronavirus crisis.

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér **Várhelyi** said: *"These are very difficult times not only for the EU, but for our partner countries as well. We are doing all we can to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on human lives and livelihoods. We are responding both to the immediate needs of the health systems, as well as longer term needs to the most vulnerable groups in society and small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the backbone of the economies in the six countries."*

### Responding to immediate needs

At the request of the partner countries, the Commission will respond to **immediate needs** by supporting the supply of medical devices and personal equipment, such as ventilators, laboratory kits, masks, goggles, gowns, and safety suits. The European Commission is working with the World Health Organisation (WHO), and is deploying €30 million to ensure these necessary supplies are jointly purchased and effectively distributed to the health systems of the six countries in the coming weeks. In addition, the funds will support national health administrations to train medical and laboratory staff and carry out awareness raising measures to the wider population.

The Commission has also made available more than €11.3 million in small grants to civil society organisations. These funds are already responding to immediate needs, through the ongoing regional "Rapid Response Mechanism", such as supporting local schools with distance learning. By the summer, and as part of this package, the Commission will launch the "**Eastern Partnership Solidarity Programme**" which will target the most affected parts of the populations through civil society support and notably sub-grants to smaller, local organisations.

### Mitigating the socio-economic impact of the outbreak

The Commission is working closely with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and relevant financing institutions from EU Member States as [TEAM EUROPE](#) providing a coordinated European response for the real economy, including SMEs, in particular through:

- Launching of a new support programme of €100 million to help SMEs, including self-employed and others to easily access credit and boost their businesses after the crisis;
- Facilitating, simplifying, accelerating, and reinforcing €200 million worth of existing credit lines and grants to SMEs in local currency including through its EU4Business Initiative;
- In addition, in the current crisis the EU has mobilised its major de-risking instrument the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), worth a total of €1.55 billion, with €500 million being made available for the EU's neighbourhood. This will rapidly provide liquidity in the EU's neighbourhood, including through working capital, trade finance, or moratoria on debt service. This support is in addition to the ongoing macro financial assistance support to partners, including Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The Commission also stands ready to provide assistance through TAIEX, its peer to peer instrument, by using EU Member States expertise, experience and examples of good practices on assessing emergency preparedness response scheme and health systems.

The outbreak of coronavirus has accelerated the spread of myths and disinformation around it, coming from various sources both within and outside of the European Union. Learn more in [the report on Disinformation on the coronavirus](#).

### For more information

More information on the European Commission's coordination of a common European response to the coronavirus outbreak click [here](#).

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