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*(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)*

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P9\_TA(2020)0054

**EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences**

**European Parliament resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences (2020/2616(RSP))**

(2021/C 316/01)

*The European Parliament,*

— having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas Article 2 and Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) enshrine solidarity as a core value of the Union; whereas Article 3 of the TEU states that the Union aims to promote its values, namely economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity, among the Member States, as well as the well-being of its people;
- B. whereas Parliament adopted a resolution on 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal (2019/2956(RSP)) <sup>(1)</sup>;
- C. whereas the global and European spread of COVID-19 has already tragically cost the lives of many thousands of people in Europe and the world, causing irreparable damage and confining over a billion people to their homes;
- D. whereas the provision of healthcare is, above all a national competence and public health is a competence shared between Member States and the Union;
- E. whereas the EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic has so far been marked by a lack of coordination between Member States in terms of public health measures, including restrictions on the movement of people within and across borders and the suspension of other rights and laws; whereas with our economy having been put on hold, the effects of the ensuing disruption on European citizens, businesses, workers and the self-employed will be dramatic;
- F. whereas during the pandemic, healthcare systems are under great pressure to ensure adequate care for all patients;
- G. whereas the measures taken by governments should always respect the fundamental rights of each and every individual; whereas these measures should be necessary, proportional and temporary;
- H. whereas solidarity among the Member States is not an option but a Treaty obligation and forms part of our European values;

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<sup>(1)</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0005.

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- I. whereas the Commission has already taken initial action, including a package of measures voted on by Parliament during its plenary session on 26 March 2020;
- J. whereas thus far, the European Council has been unable to reach consensus on the economic measures needed to tackle the crisis;
- K. whereas Parliament, as co-legislator, joint budgetary authority and the only institution directly elected by universal suffrage, must be included as an integral and essential part of all discussions on the EU's response to this crisis and the subsequent recovery;
- L. whereas this is a moment of truth for the Union that will determine its future and that can only pull through this crisis if Member States and European institutions stand together in solidarity and responsibility, and when a strong and united voice of the European Parliament is needed more than ever;

### ***A united and decisive response to a shared crisis***

1. Expresses its deepest sorrow at the loss of lives and the human tragedy that the pandemic has brought to Europeans and their families and to citizens all over the globe and extends its condolences to all those who have lost loved ones; expresses its heartfelt sympathy with all those affected by the virus and who are fighting for their lives as well as with their families and friends;
2. Stands in awe and admiration of all those that stand in the frontline fighting the pandemic and have worked tirelessly such as doctors and nurses but also is deeply grateful to all the anonymous heroes, who fulfil essential duties such as those working in the fields of food retail and delivery, education, agriculture, transport, members of emergency services, civil society, volunteers, cleaning and waste collection to maintain public life and services and to guarantee access to essential goods; highlights that 70 % of the global health and social workforce are women, often only paid the minimum wage and in precarious working conditions, and calls for the levelling up of wages and working conditions in strongly female-dominated sectors like care, health and retail sales, as well as the eradication of the gender pay and pension gap and labour market segregation; considers that it is the duty of the EU and its Member States to provide maximum support to these key workers and recognise the daily sacrifices they make; Urges the Member States to ensure safe working conditions for all workers at the front line of this epidemic, in particular front-line medical staff, by implementing appropriate and coordinated national measures, including the provision of sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE); calls on the Commission to supervise the implementation of these measures;
3. Expresses its solidarity with those Member States that have been hit the hardest by the virus and with all other countries that are facing the effects of the pandemic; expresses its most sincere solidarity with those who have lost their jobs and whose professional lives have been disrupted by the pandemic; stresses the need to pull together as a community and ensuring no country is left to fight this virus and the aftermath on its own;
4. Is concerned about the potential impacts of the crisis, including confinement, on the well-being of people around the world, notably the most vulnerable groups and people in vulnerable situations, including elderly people, people who are already suffering from poor health, populations in conflict-affected areas and settings prone to natural disasters, and migrants, and those that are exposed to domestic violence, especially women and children;
5. Is concerned by Member States' initial inability to act collectively and demand all future actions taken by Member States to be guided by the Union's founding principle of solidarity and loyal cooperation; believes that the COVID-19 crisis has shown above all the importance of joint European action; stresses that the Union and its Member States have the common resources to fight the pandemic and its consequences, but only when cooperating in a spirit of unity; recognises that Member States, having acted unilaterally at the beginning of the crisis, now understand that cooperation, confidence and solidarity are the only way to overcome this crisis;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to act together and to rise to the challenge and ensure that the Union emerges stronger from this crisis; stresses that Parliament will cooperate with the other EU institutions to save lives, protect jobs and businesses, and drive economic and social recovery and that it will stand ready to hold them accountable for their actions;

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***European solidarity and action in the health sector***

7. Welcomes the European solidarity in action shown by Member States in their treating of patients from other Member States, supplying health care equipment, including via EU-led procurement initiatives and stockpiling, and in repatriating citizens; stresses that borders must remain open within the EU for the circulation of PPE, food, medicine, medical devices, blood-derived products and organs as well as the supply chain in the Single Market; underlines the need to facilitate the mobilisation of health professionals and call for the deployment of the European Medical Corps to deliver medical assistance; further emphasises the need to facilitate the transportation of patients from saturated hospitals in one Member State to another where capacity is still available;

8. Calls for substantially strengthening the competences, budget and staff of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to enable them to coordinate medical responses in times of crisis; suggests that the COVID-19 expert panel should be made into a permanent independent expert team on virus outbreaks, which should work with the ECDC to develop standards, issue recommendations and develop protocols to be used by the Commission and the Member States in the event of a crisis;

9. Calls for the creation of a European Health Response Mechanism to better prepare and respond in a common and coordinated way to any type of health or sanitary crisis that emerges at EU level in order to protect the health of our citizens; believes that such a mechanism should function both as an information hub as well as an emergency response team that is able to deliver vital supplies, medical equipment and medical staff to regions experiencing a sudden surge in infections;

10. Calls on the Commission to strengthen all components of crisis management and disaster response, and to further strengthen instruments such as RescEU to ensure a truly common, coordinated and effective response at EU level; believes that European disaster risk management, preparedness and prevention should be enhanced in addition to common equipment, materials and medicines stocks, in order to allow for their quick mobilisation to protect the lives and livelihoods of EU citizens; believes that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism should be strengthened in order to facilitate the joint repatriation of EU citizens;

11. Welcomes the Commission's initiative of directing funds from the EU research programme towards the fight against the virus by ensuring that the treatments, vaccines and diagnostics are globally available, accessible and affordable; calls for the establishment of additional funding for a 'COVID-19 research and innovation (R&I) fund' to boost its efforts to finance speedy research on a vaccine and/or treatment; believes that Europe's researchers, innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industry should get every support they need to find a cure; calls on the Member States to significantly increase support for research, development and innovation programmes aimed at understanding the disease, speeding up diagnosis and testing, and developing a vaccine; calls on hospitals and researchers to share data with the EMA, and to enter into large-scale European clinical trials; highlights the need to support measures favouring open science in order to accelerate the sharing of data and research results within the scientific community in Europe and beyond; insists that any publically funded research must stay in the public domain;

12. Expresses concern over whether the Member States are paying sufficient attention to the mental health implications of the crisis and calls for the organisation of an EU-wide mental health campaign that advises citizens on how to safeguard mental well-being in the present circumstances and on where to seek advice when needed;

13. Calls for the measures adopted by the EU and by Member States to respect the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; stresses that particular attention should be given to equal access to healthcare, and ensuring that community-based care and support services, needed by persons with disabilities on a daily basis, are funded and well equipped and staffed; stresses also that public information concerning the COVID-19 pandemic should be accessible to the widest range of persons with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities should be included in all income protection measures;

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14. Calls on the Commission to further develop its capacity for cloud services, while complying with the ePrivacy Directive <sup>(2)</sup> and the General Data Protection Regulation <sup>(3)</sup> to facilitate the exchange at EU level of research and health data by entities working on the development of treatment and/or vaccines;

15. Highlights the crucial importance of policies that ensure the reliable and quality supply of food from agriculture, fisheries and food businesses during and beyond the immediate health crisis, and the need to support these sectors and safeguard their continued production and barrier-free transport across the Single Market;

16. Recalls the One Health principle, which reflects the fact that the health of people, animals and the environment are interconnected and that diseases may be transmitted from people to animals and vice versa; stresses the need to take a One Health approach to pandemics and health crises in both the human and veterinary sectors; stresses, therefore, that diseases have to be tackled in both people and animals, while also taking into special consideration the food chain and the environment, which can be another source of resistant microorganisms; underlines the important role of the Commission in coordinating and supporting the One Health approach to human and animal health and the environment in the EU;

17. Calls for a coordinated post-lockdown approach in the EU, in order to avoid a resurgence of the virus; urges the Member States to jointly develop criteria for lifting the quarantine and other emergency measures on the basis of the preservation of human life; calls on the Commission to launch an effective exit strategy that includes large-scale testing, and PPE for the largest possible number of citizens; encourages the Member States to develop more systematic testing on infection and exposure to the virus and to share best practices;

#### ***European solutions to overcoming the economic and social consequences***

18. Welcomes the measures that have been taken so far at EU level in terms of fiscal measures and liquidity support;

19. Calls on the European Commission to propose a massive recovery and reconstruction package for investment to support the European economy after the crisis, beyond what the European Stability Mechanism the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank are already doing, that is part of the new multiannual financial framework (MFF); believes that such a package should be in place while the economic disruption caused by this crisis lasts; the necessary investment would be financed by an increased MFF, the existing EU funds and financial instruments, and recovery bonds guaranteed by the EU budget; this package should not involve the mutualisation of existing debt and should be oriented to future investment;

20. Stresses that this recovery and reconstruction package should have at its core the European Green Deal and the digital transformation in order to kick-start the economy, improve its resilience and create jobs while at the same time assist in the ecological transition, foster sustainable economic and social development — including the strategic autonomy of our continent — and assist in implementing an industrial strategy that preserves core EU industrial sectors; highlights the need to align our responses with the EU's objective of climate neutrality;

21. Supports the Commission in its objective of designing a new EU industrial strategy in an effort to achieve a more competitive and resilient industry when contending with global shocks; supports the reintegration of supply chains inside the EU and increasing EU production of key products such as medicines, pharmaceutical ingredients, medical devices, equipment and materials;

22. Insists, therefore, on the adoption of an ambitious MFF that has an increased budget in line with the Union's objectives, the projected impact on EU economies by the crisis and citizens' expectations on European added value, has more flexibility and simplicity in the way we use the funds to respond to crises, and is equipped with the necessary flexibility; calls, furthermore, for a revision of the Commission's proposal on the reform of the own resources system in order to gain sufficient fiscal room for manoeuvre and ensure better predictability, capacity to act and reduced exposure to national hazards; stresses that new own resources would be needed for the EU budget to guarantee the recovery and reconstruction package;

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<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 201, 31.7.2002, p. 37.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

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23. Calls on the Member States for a quick agreement on this new MFF proposal, as an instrument of solidarity and cohesion; calls on the Commission to present a contingency plan in case of non-agreement, extending the duration of ongoing financing programmes beyond 31 December 2020;

24. Calls for the use of all available means and unused money in the current EU budget, including the surplus and unspent margins and the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, so as to swiftly deploy financial assistance to the regions and businesses most affected, and allow for the greatest flexibility possible in the use of funds, while continuing to respect the principle of sound financial management and ensuring that funding reaches those most in need; welcomes, to this end, the recent Commission proposal to create an Emergency Support Instrument;

25. Acknowledges the need to mobilise additional funds in a fast and non-bureaucratic way to help Member States meet the needs for fighting against COVID-19 and its consequences but stresses that potential misuse of such funds needs to be investigated with enforceable sanctions once the immediate crisis has ended; considers therefore that an enhanced MFF must include adequate resources for the European Public Prosecutor's Office so as to enable it to gain citizens' trust, fight fraud, seize assets and thereby become budget-neutral in the medium term; asks that its budget be financed through Heading 7 (European Public Administration), in a similar way to the European Data Protection Supervisor, the European External Action Service or the European Ombudsman, so as to strengthen its independence;

26. Calls on the euro area Member States to activate the EUR 410 billion of the European Stability Mechanism with a specific credit line; Recalls that this crisis is not the responsibility of any particular Member State and that the main objective there should be to fight the consequences of the outbreak; stresses that, as a short term measure the European Stability Mechanism should immediately extend precautionary credit lines to countries that seek access to it in order to address short-term financing needs to tackle the immediate consequences of the COVID-19 and with long-term maturities, competitive pricing and repayment conditions linked to the recovery of Member States' economies;

27. Urges the Member States to rapidly agree on a significant injection of capital into the EIB to enable it to rapidly contribute its substantial firepower to mitigating the economic impact of COVID-19, including the creation of a new EIB credit line to guarantee liquidity to SMEs;

28. Proposes the creation of an EU COVID-19 Solidarity Fund of at least EUR 50 billion, consisting of up to EUR 20 billion outside the MFF ceilings in grants and up to EUR 30 billion in loans, guaranteed by the EU Budget, (both frontloaded in the first 2 years of the next MFF or, failing an agreement on the MFF in due time, spread over the contingency period), supporting the financial efforts undertaken by the healthcare sectors of all Member States during the current crisis, as well as investments in the healthcare sector in the post-crisis period in order to make health-care systems more resilient and focused on those most in need;

29. Insists on a proactive role for the banking sector in this crisis, so as to allow companies and citizens who are suffering financially as a result of COVID-19 to temporary lower or halt debt or mortgage repayments, provide maximum flexibility in the treatment of non-performing loans, temporarily suspend dividend payments and reduce the often excessive interest rates on current account overdrafts; stresses that supervisors must demonstrate a high degree of flexibility to this end;

30. Stresses the immediate need to do more for SMEs, help them maintain jobs and manage their liquidity; urges European prudential and supervisory authorities, as well as the Member States, to explore all options to relieve the burden on SMEs; calls for a European horizontal strategy for SME recovery to support them by reducing red tape, costs for access to finance, and by fostering investments in strategic value chains;

31. Believes that the EU must seize the opportunity and propose a Health Autonomy Action in strategic areas such as the active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) essential for the manufacture of medicine, and thus reduce its dependence on third countries without undermining the rewards that open economies derive from international trade; stresses that this action plan should help produce, store and coordinate the production of critical medicine and pharmaceutical products and equipment, notably sanitising gel, ventilators and masks in the Union; stresses, further, that this action plan should also pool and coordinate digital manufacturing capabilities such as 3D printing, which can contribute to substituting necessary equipment;

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32. Underlines the fact that in addition to the health dimension, the crisis is dramatically affecting workers, employees, the self-employed and SMEs — the backbone of our societies; considers that the Commission together with the Member States must take all measures to keep as many jobs as possible and to ensure that the recovery is based on upward social economic convergence, social dialogue and improved social rights and working conditions with targeted measures for those in precarious forms of work;

33. Underlines that the cultural and creative sectors in Member States have been hit especially hard by the fallout from the COVID-19 due to the closure of cinemas, theatres and music venues and the sudden stop of ticket sales; highlights the fact that, as these sectors have high numbers of freelance and self-employed workers, many of whom were struggling well before the outbreak, the effects are particularly dire for creative professionals, whose income streams have been unexpectedly reduced to zero and who now have little or no support from the social system;

34. Insists that the EU institutions and the Member States ensure that public financial support provided to firms in order to combat the economic effects of COVID-19 is conditional upon the funding being used to benefit employees and the recipient firms refraining from bonuses to the management, tax evasion, paying out dividends or offering share buy-back schemes for as long as they receive such support;

35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to prioritise aid and crisis-mitigation measures for the most vulnerable citizens, women and children exposed to domestic violence, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and people from remote and isolated regions, including the Overseas Countries and Territories and outermost regions by means of a dedicated exceptional support fund focused on the healthcare system and sectors hit by the COVID-19 outbreak, and people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, who all run the greatest risk of being infected with COVID-19 but also suffer the most from its economic effects; calls for measures to protect tenants from eviction during the crisis and the creation of safe havens for those who need shelter; calls for a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, with a European Child Guarantee; urges the EU and the Member States to incorporate a gender analysis across all response efforts in order to avoid exacerbating gender inequalities, to ensure that services for victims of violence remain open, and to reinforce helpline services, emergency shelters for victims, online legal support and reporting services in order to combat and protect all women and children from domestic and gender-based violence; recalls that relevant measures need to be in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ensuring equal and non-discriminatory access to social and healthcare services, as well as adopting specific measures aiming at the protection of persons with disabilities, based on consultations and involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative family members or organisations, when adopting measures that affect them;

36. Insists that Member States should give particular attention to equal access to healthcare, especially non-discrimination in access to medical treatment and urgent care, ensuring the rights of persons living in residential institutions, who are more at risk of infection, in particular the elderly and persons with disabilities, and ensuring that community-based care and support services, needed by these persons on a daily basis, are funded and well equipped and staffed, insists also that confinement measures should take into account the needs of persons with disabilities, that public information concerning the COVID-19 pandemic should be accessible to the widest range of persons with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities should be included in all income protection measures;

37. Believes that the Member States must take measures to ensure that workers in Europe, including the self-employed, are shielded from income loss and that the most affected companies, in particular SMEs, and sectors have the necessary support and financial liquidity; welcomes in this respect the Commission's new Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) proposal and calls for its swift implementation and to launch a permanent European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme; encourages the Member States to better coordinate social and fiscal legislation in order to avoid ramifications in terms of social security and fiscal systems for cross-border workers and labour migrants as a result of emergency measures;

38. Underlines that homeless people and other people in precarious housing situations are particularly at risk in the COVID-19 crisis and can often not practice social distancing or follow other protective measures; urges the EU and Member States to implement targeted measures to protect the homeless and to provide financial assistance to those NGOs and local authorities providing frontline assistance, to suspend evictions and to support tenants and mortgage payers;

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39. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote social dialogue and collective bargaining in the response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as to ensure that the social partners are fully involved in the design and the implementation of the measures taken; calls on the Member States to take the necessary actions to safeguard jobs, working conditions and wages, including measures for short-time work, income compensation arrangements and similar measures;

40. Considers it is of utmost importance to keep the internal EU borders open for goods; recalls that the Single Market is the source of our collective prosperity and well-being and that it is a key element of the immediate and continuous response to the COVID-19 outbreak; strongly supports the Commission's call on the Member States to allow frontier workers to continue crossing borders, in particular in sectors for which continued free movement in the EU is deemed essential; calls, in that respect, for the establishment of 'green lane' border crossings for land (road and rail), maritime, inland waterways and air transport;

41. Supports measures in favour of the EU agri-food sector and the viability of farms during the crisis, namely through liquidity support via the timely (pre-)payment of direct and second pillar payments, flexibility in the management of aid schemes and in the submission of claims, market monitoring and crisis management (private storage, promotion measures and exceptional measures to allow the Commission to propose additional market measures and time-limited derogations from competition law);

42. Considers that the transport and tourism sectors have been severely affected and calls for action to ensure the health, safety and working conditions of transport workers and that transport companies can survive the crisis; suggests that a prevention and management mechanism be developed for the tourism sector at EU level to protect our workers, help our companies and ensure passenger safety;

43. Calls for the EU and the Member States to provide support to the cultural and creative sectors as they play an important role for our economy and our social life and are severely affected by the current crisis; highlights that the current crisis has shown that our education systems are not as resilient as they should be and therefore considers it to be essential that educational infrastructure, online and offline, be significantly upgraded, and that educators and pupils be provided with the necessary skills and equipment for home schooling situations; welcomes in that regard the Commission's initiative to revise and update the Digital Education Action Plan; considers this to be insufficient, however, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to come up with a coordinated investment plan in order to improve our education systems;

44. Calls on the Commission to see to it that its Interpretative Guidelines on EU passenger rights regulations in the context of the developing situation with COVID-19, published on 18 March 2020, are properly implemented;

45. Calls on the Commission to coordinate Member-State action to crack down on internet-fraudsters and cybercriminals exploiting people's fears by selling overpriced or counterfeited medical material;

### ***Protecting democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights***

46. Underlines that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and compliance with the rule of law must continue to apply, and that in the context of emergency measures, the authorities must ensure that everyone enjoys the same rights and protection; emphasises that all measures taken at national and/or EU level must be in line with the rule of law, strictly proportionate to the exigencies of the situation, clearly related to the ongoing health crisis, limited in time and subjected to regular scrutiny; deems it totally incompatible with European values both the decision from the Hungarian Government to prolong the state of emergency indefinitely, to authorise the Government to rule by decree without time limit, and to weaken the emergency oversight of the Parliament, and the steps taken by the Polish Government — namely changing the electoral code against the judgment of Constitutional Tribunal and provisions laid by law — to hold Presidential elections in the middle of a pandemic, which may endanger the lives of Polish citizens and undermine the concept of free, equal, direct and secret elections as enshrined in the Polish Constitution;

47. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to urgently assess whether the emergency measures are in conformity with the Treaties and to make full use of all available EU tools and sanctions to address this serious and persistent breach, including budgetary ones, underlining once again the imminent need for an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights; urges the Council to put back on its agenda the discussions and procedures related to the ongoing Article 7 procedures;

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48. Calls on the Member States to effectively guarantee safe and timely access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the necessary healthcare services for all women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially access to contraception, including emergency contraception, and to abortion care; strongly rejects any attempts to backtrack on SRHR and LGBTI rights, and in this context condemns the attempts to further criminalise abortion care, stigmatise HIV positive people, and undermine young people's access to sexuality education in Poland, as well as the attack on transgender and intersex people's rights in Hungary;

49. Urges the Member States to adopt only necessary, coordinated and proportionate measures when restricting travel or introducing and prolonging internal border controls, after careful evaluation of their effectiveness to address the public health issue and based on existing legal provisions, namely the Schengen Borders Code and the Freedom of Movement Directive and in full observance of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; stresses that border controls and restrictions on movement must remain proportionate and exceptional and that all freedom of movement should be re-established as soon as it is deemed feasible; insists that the cross border travel of front-line workers in sectors key to the fight against COVID-19, in particular health care and elderly care professionals, but also those working in the agri-food sector such as seasonal farm workers, must not be limited; emphasises the need to get back to a fully functioning Schengen Area of free movement with no internal border controls as part of a crisis exit strategy;

50. Calls for full respect of the Geneva Convention and European asylum law; points out that provisions have to be made for the reception of new asylum seekers in appropriate sanitary conditions and medical support, and therefore expresses its deep concern at the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers arriving at the Greek islands, and in hotspots and detention centres, who do not have access to adequate health care and who are particularly at risk; considers that necessary solutions, including the preventive evacuation and relocation of the population at high risk, must be found to ensure the appropriate material conditions and social distancing to avoid contamination; stresses the important contribution of many migrants and descendants of migrants who are working to ensure the proper functioning of many essential sectors across the EU, and in particular in health and care sectors;

51. Takes note of the Commission's plan to call on telecoms providers to hand over anonymised and aggregated data in order to limit the spread of COVID-19, of national tracking programmes already in force, and of the introduction of apps allowing authorities to monitor movements, contacts and health data;

52. Takes note of the emergence of contact-tracing applications on mobile devices in order to warn people if they were close to an infected person, and the Commission's recommendation to develop a common EU approach for the use of such applications; points out that any use of applications developed by national and EU authorities may not be obligatory and that the generated data are not to be stored in centralised databases, which are prone to potential risk of abuse and loss of trust and may endanger uptake throughout the Union; demands that all storage of data be decentralised, full transparency be given on (non-EU) commercial interests of developers of these applications, and that clear projections be demonstrated as regards how the use of contact tracing apps by a part of the population, in combination with specific other measures, will lead to a significantly lower number of infected people; demands that the Commission and Member States are fully transparent on the functioning of contact-tracing apps, so that people can verify both the underlying protocol for security and privacy, and check the code itself to see whether the application functions as the authorities are claiming; recommends that sunset clauses are set and the principles of data protection by design and data minimisation are fully observed;

53. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to publish the details of these schemes and allow for public scrutiny and full oversight by data protection authorities (DPA); notes that mobile location data can only be processed in compliance with the ePrivacy Directive and the GDPR; stresses that national and EU authorities must fully comply with data protection and privacy legislation, and national DPA oversight and guidance;

54. Stresses that disinformation about COVID-19 at this time is a major public health problem; urges the EU to establish a European information source, in all the official languages, to ensure that all citizens have access to accurate and verified information; believes the ECDC should be in charge of coordinating and aligning Member States' data to improve quality

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and comparability; calls on social media companies to proactively take the necessary measures to stop disinformation and hate speech regarding COVID-19;

55. Stresses the particularly acute and worsening financial situation in the media, especially news media across the EU, due to the abrupt reduction or complete loss of advertising revenues, which may lead to the failure of news organisations across the Member States; highlights the especially dire state of local and regional news media as well as those operating in small markets; points out that free, independent and sufficiently funded media are instrumental for a functioning democracy and for ensuring that citizens are well informed throughout this crisis;

#### ***External action, international solidarity and cooperation***

56. Calls for a swift update of the EU Global Strategy in the light of the global impact of the crisis; draws particular attention to the so-called 'corona-diplomacy'; reiterates that the EU must be ready to strategically communicate and fight external disinformation and adapt continuously to the changing geopolitical landscape, without ever compromising its core values; calls on the Commission and Council to act strategically in the world and within Europe to put into motion the ambition of a geopolitical Union;

57. Advocates that emergency measures adopted by third countries in response to the COVID-19 crisis not violate human rights or international law, that they be limited to strictly necessary, proportionate measures, and that they be subject to regular scrutiny and time bound; condemns censorship, arrests and intimidation of journalists, opposition figures, healthcare workers and other individuals for criticising governments, including their crisis management; calls for the EU to support a global campaign to release political prisoners and detained human rights defenders and low-risk offenders;

58. Stresses that the EU must become more resilient against crises in general, to stay free of undue political and economic influence, such as from China and Russia, and must be ready to strategically communicate, fight external disinformation, fake news and cyberattacks, and adapt continuously to the changing geopolitical landscape; urges, therefore, the Commission to counter aggressive Russian and Chinese propaganda efforts that are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of undermining the EU and sowing mistrust in the local population towards the EU; believes it is crucial to effectively communicate about the EU's financial, technical and medical support;

59. Insists that the use of export authorisations must not, under any circumstances, turn into de facto export bans; emphasises the importance of maintaining access to scarce medical products for developing countries; stresses that the export of PPE must get to those who need it most and not those who can afford to pay the highest price; considers that to this end, a global catalogue of essential emergency healthcare products must be agreed within the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), in order to stop price speculation and facilitate their trade; strongly encourages all countries to join the WTO Pharmaceutical Tariff Elimination Agreement (Zero for Zero) and for its scope to be extended to all pharmaceutical and medicinal products to ensure worldwide cross-border trade; calls on WTO members to make this topic a priority on the agenda of the next WTO Ministerial Meeting; expresses its deep concern at the warning jointly issued by the WTO, WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization that global restrictive trade measures could lead to food shortages around the world; calls for measures to minimise disruption to food supply chains, thus preventing the exacerbation of food insecurity and price volatility; calls on all Member States to use all available tools to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to assess potential investment and acquisitions of critical infrastructure and strategic industrial capacities in the EU, and to take mitigating or blocking measures as needed; calls on the Commission to quickly advance the WTO e-commerce negotiations to guarantee rules for rapidly increasing online trade, especially for goods;

60. Underlines that the pandemic knows no borders or ideologies and that it requires the cooperation and solidarity of the entire international community and a strengthening of the UN system, and the WHO in particular: considers it essential for the EU to ask China to shed full light on this pandemic, the timing of its emergence and its real human toll; emphasises the importance of cooperation and support for the Western Balkan countries, for our closest neighbours in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods and partners and for developing countries, in particular Africa and Latin America; expresses its strong solidarity with the UK, our neighbouring country, which is currently very severely hit by the pandemic and offers all measures of cooperation to fight the pandemic and its consequences;

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61. Calls for increased EU support to the Western Balkans (e.g. through their inclusion in the EU Solidarity Fund and exemption from the temporary export authorisation scheme for protective equipment), and for a strengthening of the visibility of this support in order to demonstrate the EU's solidarity with these countries and peoples; calls for a special focus on minorities with low access to healthcare services such as the Romani people;
62. Welcomes the initiatives taken by the UN Secretary General for a multilateral approach of the COVID-19 crisis and its global consequences and calls for an internationally coordinated approach; Calls on the Commission, the Council and Member States to politically and financially support UN initiatives to coordinate efforts at international level, primarily through the 'COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan' and 'COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund';
63. Acknowledges the importance of a globally coordinated response to the drastic economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, such as those stressed by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and urges the Commission, the Council and Member States to develop a comprehensive approach and to take initiatives to help the developing countries to face the sanitary and economic consequences of the pandemic;
64. Welcomes the EU package for the global response to COVID-19 and the EUR 20 billion allocated to the fight against the pandemic in partner third countries;
65. Underlines that the IMF Board's decision to provide immediate debt service relief to 25 of the poorest and most vulnerable member countries is a first clear positive example of concrete and rapid solidarity, and calls for further similar measures by international donors;

***A post-crisis Union that is stronger, and delivers more effective action to its citizens***

66. Recalls that this crisis is no one's doing and that it should not be everyone's undoing; expresses its firm intention to do whatever it takes for the Union and its citizens to come out of the crisis and calls on all EU Institutions and Member States to make an immediate use of all relevant Treaty provisions and to act accordingly in the spirit of solidarity;
67. Suggests this strategy could include proposing greater powers for the Union to act in the case of cross-border health threats, with new and strengthened instruments to ensure that in future the Union can act without delay to coordinate the response at European level, and direct the necessary resources to where they are most needed, be they material (e.g. face masks, respirators and medicines) or financial and enable the collection of quality, standardised data;
68. Is convinced that corporate human rights and environmental due diligence are necessary conditions in order to prevent and mitigate future crises and ensure sustainable value chains;
69. Believes that the pandemic has shown the limits of the Union's capacity to act decisively and exposed the lack of the Commission's executive and budgetary powers; believes that the Union must undergo a profound reform in response; considers it necessary amid of the urgency to complete the Economic and Monetary Union, to activate the general passerelle clause to ease the decision-making process in all matters which could help to cope with the challenges of the current health crisis;
70. Urges the Member States to put aside their differences and to act in the general interest and in the spirit of solidarity; calls on them to make an immediate use of the dedicated Treaty provisions to act accordingly;
71. Calls on the Commission to take its Treaty-based responsibility to heart and take bold initiatives;
72. Stresses that the Union must be prepared to start an in-depth reflection on how to become more effective and democratic and that the current crisis only heightens the urgency thereof; believes that the planned Conference on the Future of Europe is the appropriate forum to do this; is therefore of the opinion that the Conference needs to be convened as soon as possible and that it has to come forward with clear proposals, including by engaging directly with citizens, to bring about a profound reform of the Union, making it more effective, united, democratic, sovereign and resilient;

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73. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the Commission, the President of the European Council and the Presidency in office of the Council.
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