

CoR SEDEC Bulletin No. 4: Updates on the COVID-19 crisis



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The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected our world and our way of living, with the loss of thousands of lives and unprecedented consequences for every aspect of our daily existence. The Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) at the European Committee of the Regions is preparing regular bulletins on the policy fields within its remit, reflecting recent research, articles and discussions on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in Europe and on the different actions and response measures being planned and implemented at EU, national, regional and local level.

You can read [here](#) the fourth edition of the SEDEC Bulletin.

Messages and contributions to: sedec@cor.europa.eu. □

Press release – Returning to free movement across borders is of utmost importance



Civil Liberties Committee MEPs express their concern about the current situation of [internal border controls in the Schengen area](#) and their impact

on people and businesses, in [a resolution](#) adopted on Thursday by 53 votes in favour, 6 against and 6 abstentions.

They stress that a swift and coordinated return to a fully functional Schengen area is of utmost importance to safeguard freedom of movement, one of the main achievements of European integration, and to ensure the EU's economic recovery after the pandemic.

While demanding that member states reduce restrictions on the freedom of movement to the same extent that COVID-19 containment measures are being relaxed, MEPs suggest that a regional approach may be more proportionate than national border controls. Restrictions on freedom of movement could be lifted where the public health situation in neighbouring regions has comparably improved.

MEPs also urgently call for a debate on setting up a Recovery Plan for Schengen and the ways and means to return to a fully functioning Schengen area as quickly as possible, to prevent temporary internal border controls from becoming semi-permanent. The plan should also include contingency plans in case of a potential second wave.

Civil Liberties Committee Chair and rapporteur [Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D, ES) said: "For the vast majority of EU citizens, the Schengen area constitutes one of the greatest achievements in the history of the EU, and it has never before experienced the outbreak of such a serious pandemic on its territory. I strongly deplore any unilateral or disproportionate measures by individual Member States to impose border restrictions upon other Member States without communication or a clear and limited timeframe. All actions meant to restore a fully operational Schengen area must be coordinated at EU level and fully respect the principle of non-discrimination".

Future of Schengen: new governance and enlargements

In the medium-term, MEPs stress that a reflection on how to enhance mutual trust between member states and ensure a truly European governance of the Schengen area is needed. In light of new challenges, they call on the Commission to propose a reform of Schengen governance.

MEPs also ask in their resolution for the Council and member states to increase their efforts in Schengen integration and take the necessary steps to admit Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia into Schengen. Except for these three countries, Cyprus and Ireland, all EU countries are part of the Schengen area. Of non-EU states, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein have joined Schengen.

Next steps

The resolution follows [a debate in the Civil Liberties Committee](#) on the situation in the Schengen area. The plenary is expected to vote on the resolution in its plenary session taking place 17-19 June.

[Space policy for a sustainable economy : Council adopts conclusions](#)



Space policy can play an important role in achieving a sustainable EU economy. The Council today adopted a set of conclusions acknowledging the important contribution of space activities to the development of skills, technologies and services needed to build a society that is capable of addressing global challenges in a changing world. These include climate change, ecosystem degradation, health crises, food security and migration.

The Council underlines that Earth science and European space data, services and technologies may contribute to the European Green Deal, enabling Europe to become a global leader in the transition to a sustainable world, solving societal challenges and preserving the functioning of natural ecosystems, for the benefit of future generations.

It invites the Commission to develop an in-depth analysis of the European New Space current landscape and future perspectives and its contribution to the EU economy, and underlines the importance of supporting member states with emerging space capabilities, as well as their industry and academia, in their active involvement to unlock the full potential of the EU space economy and strengthen its economic resilience.

In terms of skills development, the Council highlights the importance for member states, in cooperation with the private sector, universities and research organisations, as well as intergovernmental organisations, to increase efforts to develop skills and stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in order to foster an attractive work environment in the space sector.

Finally, member states and the Commission are invited to facilitate a more integrated approach on skills development across the value chains of the space sector, for example by fostering vocational training, online and continuous learning and by promoting joint degrees and training offers in higher education.

[ESMA updates reporting instructions](#)

for MMF reporting

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU's securities markets regulator, has published [updated](#) reporting instructions to be used for reporting under the Money Market Fund Regulation (MMFR).

ESMA has implemented amendments on the XML schema and reporting instructions in a new version, v1.1. which is published today. As indicated in the announcement published on [31 March](#) this update follows feedback received by market participants after the publication of the first version of the XML schema (v.1.0) and an assessment of the technical committee.

Next steps

Reporting entities should use the version v1.1 to submit reports required under Article 37 of MMF regulation by September 2020. The reference period for the first reporting is Q1 2020, meaning that MMF Managers shall report in September 2020 quarterly reports for both the Q1 and Q2 reporting periods.

EIB and UNOPS sign new agreement to help governments better respond to emergencies and natural disasters

In line with the European Consensus on Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the agreement will facilitate global cooperation in response to exceptional circumstances such as the current COVID-19 crisis.

- UNOPS and the European Investment Bank (EIB) will work together to target challenges to sustainable development, including climate change.
- The partnership will work to strengthen healthcare systems and promote regional integration to generate economic growth.
- The EIB and UNOPS have signed a framework agreement on Thursday, 4 June 2020.
- This represents the first operational agreement of this kind signed between the EIB and a UN agency.
- The agreement follows a memorandum of understanding signed by EIB and UNOPS in 2016 which focused on impact investments in sustainable infrastructure.

Through UNOPS expertise and life-saving role in timely and efficient procurement, and the quality infrastructure mandate it carries across sectors, the EIB and Team Europe can count on UNOPS full support to

strengthen health systems and address the acute economic and social consequences of COVID-19 and beyond.

UNOPS and EIB share the same key values: efficiency, transparency, accountability, and the strong dedication to empower local communities.

Through this framework agreement, the EIB can entrust UNOPS through its General Assembly mandate on the procurement of goods, works and services to provide support to governments to better respond to and be prepared for emergencies and crisis situations.

This is the first operational agreement of this kind between the EIB and a UN agency and was signed by President of the EIB, Werner Hoyer, and Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNOPS, Grete Faremo, during an online ceremony under the strict COVID-19 social distancing rules currently in place across Europe.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNOPS, Grete Faremo said:

“This is an important milestone in the partnership between UNOPS and the European Investment Bank. UNOPS and EIB share the same key values: efficiency, transparency, accountability, and a strong dedication to empowering local governments and communities. This agreement allows us to support governments globally to better respond to emergencies, and I look forward to working together in the years to come.”

Speaking at the signing ceremony, President of the EIB, Werner Hoyer said:

“The value of multilateral partnership cannot be overstated. That’s why at the European Investment Bank Group we are pleased to continue deepening our collaboration with the United Nations family in our 160 countries of operation. The agreement that we are signing today with UNOPS will mean that by pooling our respective experience and expertise we can achieve more impact in responding to crises, not only in the context of COVID-19 and as part of the “Team Europe” effort, but also facing future natural disasters and conflicts, where an urgent and coordinated response is crucial to save lives and livelihoods.”

About UNOPS

UNOPS mission is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development. We help the United Nations, governments and other partners to manage projects, and deliver sustainable infrastructure and procurement in an efficient way.