

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the EU-Japan Leaders' meeting



First of all, I would like to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for this very productive meeting and for this very positive video conference.

Our meeting sends two important messages: first the Eu-Japan partnership is very strong and vibrant. And second, we are working very hard together in order to face this COVID-19 crisis.

We share with Japan the same values: multilateralism, rule of law, democracy and the conviction that global challenges require global answers.

The first topic we addressed today is COVID-19. We have taken the decision to continue to work together in order to develop vaccines, and we consider that COVID-19 vaccines have to become common goods and affordable for everybody everywhere. We have also had the occasion to welcome the generous contribution of Japan in the framework of this European initiative, this pledging conference, in order to mobilise a huge amount to support research.

We also had the occasion to consider that we will need to work together in order to reform some international organisations. WHO is an important multilateral organisation, and we consider that it is important to make an evaluation and to see how it is possible to learn some lessons in the future.

Un autre point important qui a été abordé dans cette vidéo conférence est la mobilisation très forte du Japon et de l'Union européenne sur la scène internationale en faveur d'une stratégie solide, ambitieuse et rapide pour la relance économique sur le plan international et sur le plan mondial. Nous avons l'intention d'y travailler ensemble, notamment dans le cadre du G7 qui devra se tenir dans quelques semaines. Nous avons l'intention aussi de veiller à ce que le libre échange, basé sur la réciprocité, basé sur les principes de level playing field, basé aussi, selon l'Union européenne, sur l'importance de considérer l'enjeu climatique, doit être une force motrice pour réussir une stratégie de relance économique sur le plan international tout en développant, nous l'avons déjà exprimé à plusieurs reprises, cette ambition de renforcer l'autonomie stratégique de l'Union européenne. Et autant la capacité de l'Union européenne de diversifier son accès aux chaînes de valeur et de faire en sorte qu'il y ait cette capacité pour l'Union d'agir de manière davantage autonome. Il est important de souligner aussi que le lien entre le Japon et l'Union européenne est un lien qui est très significatif sur le plan économique, puisqu'il représente un tiers de l'économie mondiale. Nous avons eu l'occasion d'affirmer sur le plan bilatéral, la volonté de renforcer des coopérations de manière très opérationnelle dans différents domaines. Il en va du changement climatique en passant par la recherche, mais également l'ambition de considérer le Green Deal et l'Agenda Digital comme étant des leviers pour renforcer nos coopérations à l'avenir.

Another important topic that you have addressed this morning is the geopolitical topic. We are convinced that this COVID-19 crisis will have huge economic effects, but not only economic effects. We are also convinced that this crisis will have some geopolitical effects, and it is why it is essential for Japan and the European Union to work together to face some challenges, especially to be very committed to peace, security and stability. And we have seen, especially in recent weeks, the very negative effects of some disinformation strategies and some disinformation campaigns. We need to work more together in favour of more transparent information. We need more cooperation and this is a key topic, in our opinion, because the strength of democratic societies is based on reliable information and transparent information. That's why it is essential to protect and to promote our strong European values, our strong democratic values to be more committed in the future with all our partners to contain the negative effects of disinformation campaigns.

Nous avons eu aussi l'occasion d'aborder un point qui nous tient à coeur et qui me tient à coeur personnellement sur le plan de l'ambition que nous avons pour l'avenir: la relation avec les pays plus vulnérables, les pays en développement, notamment les pays africains. Et dans ce cadre-là, j'ai eu l'occasion de souligner le fait que nous saluons les premiers pas qui ont été accomplis pour ouvrir le débat sur la question des dettes vis-à-vis de pays en développement, notamment des pays africains. Je souhaite que dans le cadre du G7 qui se tiendra dans quelques semaines, ce point de la question des dettes liées aux pays en développement et aux pays africains puisse être un point abordé dans une stratégie de relance parce qu'il y a là un sujet extrêmement essentiel, si l'on veut pouvoir progresser sur le terrain du développement. Cela signifiera qu'on devra aborder cette question dans le cadre multilatéral avec l'ensemble des partenaires qui sont concernés par ce sujet-là. Nous avons eu l'occasion de développer ce point pour tenter de coopérer davantage aussi ensemble sur ce sujet.

La préparation du sommet du G7 va nous mobiliser dans les quelques semaines qui viennent. Bien sûr, avec les pays membres de l'Union européenne qui sont également membres du G7, nous allons tenter de coordonner nos positions, de coordonner nos efforts.

Cette réunion du G7 dans quelques semaines est une réunion très essentielle parce qu'elle doit être l'occasion, selon nous, d'envoyer un signal très clair et très fort sur une ambition commune, sur l'unité de ce groupe du G7 pour réussir une stratégie économique de relance. Une stratégie très forte aussi, pour lutter contre la désinformation qui vise à miner les fondements des sociétés démocratiques, doit nous permettre aussi de progresser afin d'avoir une approche commune sur le terrain des vaccins liés au COVID-19. Faire en sorte que ce vaccin soit considéré comme un bien commun, un bien commun qu'il puisse donc être accessible partout dans le monde à un prix abordable, raison pour laquelle nous sommes très engagés sur le sujet afin que cette réunion puisse donner lieu à des résultats, qu'il y ait des avancées qui soient significatives sur le sujet.

Voilà les quelques éléments que je voulais partager à l'issue de cette réunion par vidéo conférence avec le premier ministre du Japon.

[Estonia: European support for new psychiatric ward of North Estonia Medical Centre](#)



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- EIB makes available EUR 25 million for the extension and modernisation of the North Estonia Medical Center near Tallinn.
- Apart from new construction, project will see extension of existing facilities to better serve patients needing different types of care.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a EUR 25 million, 20-year tenor, loan agreement with the *Põhja-Eesti Regionaalhaigla* or North Estonian Medical Centre (NEMC). The financing will support the new construction of a psychiatric clinic, as well as a new building to consolidate the pathology, oncology and haematology departments of the hospital, responding to an urgent need for better inpatient and outpatient facilities. Next to the EIB loan the project is financed by the Nordic Investment Bank, European Structural Funds, and is expected to benefit from an upcoming loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).

The new facilities will allow to further optimise the healthcare processes through modern technologies and digitisation. Especially the psychiatric

facilities will benefit, as the new building will allow the psychiatric clinic to move out of its current 140-year old premises in the Seewald estate on Paldiski road. The main objective is to improve comfort, quality and safety of housing and recreational areas for patients, as well as to provide a more modern and safer workplace for healthcare personnel.

The EIB's Vice President **Thomas Östros** commented: *"In the current climate, investments in medical facilities – even if not directly related to Covid-19 – are all the more relevant. The North Estonia Medical Centre will be able to provide high standards of care in new, more accommodating facilities, while importantly also improving the working environment for healthcare staff. The EIB is squarely behind this project, which is set to take care of a large portion of the Estonian population for years to come."*

Agris Peedu, Chairman of Management Board of the North Estonia Medical Centre, commented: *"The new buildings will form a vital part of Mustamäe medical campus, enabling us to do what we are best at – provide medical care to our patients. During these challenging times, it is especially uplifting to say that the construction of the new facilities will start this year. We are looking optimistically towards the future, knowing the hard work our medical staff and engineers have put into these projects will bear fruit."*

The new psychiatric facility, which will provide space for 248 hospital beds, is the main component of the project. Constructing a new building will allow for improved care for patients in more accommodating facilities, while also improving the energy efficiency of the building itself. Further parts of the financing will be used to construct the new "building-Y", which will house the pathology centre, the oncology and haematology clinic. The up-to-date hospital premises will improve patient care and enable the optimisation of health care processes, treatment costs and the improvement of diagnostic paths.

This is the second EIB-investment to NEMC, after having [financed the initial construction](#) in 2011, when a new high-tech diagnostic and treatment centre were built, and existing facilities were refurbished.

[ECDC marks 15 year anniversary](#)



About ECDC

The idea of creating a European public health agency emerged in 2003. In the aftermath of the SARS outbreak, it became clear that response measures, scientific advice and disease surveillance needed to be coordinated, not just at the national levels, but also at a central EU level.

ECDC's main role as an agency of the European Union is to strengthen Europe's defences against communicable diseases. Over the last 15 years, ECDC has been working together with all EU/EEA countries in response to public health threats and emerging diseases.

Highlights of ECDC's work

Vaccine coverage

Immunisation is a highly successful intervention to prevent communicable diseases with an evident need to sustain or achieve high vaccination coverage. However, decreasing coverage in some countries for important childhood vaccinations such as against measles, is threatening elimination plans as evidenced by outbreaks and very high numbers of cases in the years 2017 to 2019, in Europe.

ECDC has been working on vaccination issues from day one. In April 2020, ECDC launched the European Vaccination Portal, providing accurate, objective, up-to-date evidence on vaccines and vaccination in general. The Portal also provides an overview of the mechanisms in place in the EU that ensure that available vaccines conform to the highest standards of safety and effectiveness. The portal is a result of a cooperation between the European

Commission, The European Medicines Agency, and ECDC.

Read more on the [Vaccination Portal](#)

Antibiotic resistance

Antimicrobials are the other important tools to curb the morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases. However, antibiotic resistance remains a major European and global public health problem. Tackling this complex issue requires a multi-faceted approach. Since 2008, ECDC has been partnering with numerous academic and scientific organisations, as well as the European Commission and the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe to coordinate the European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD), a European health initiative that promotes the prudent use of antibiotics. More than 43 countries in the European Region have so far conducted campaigns under the EAAD umbrella.

ECDC also promotes the One Health approach, a collaborative, multidisciplinary effort to attain optimal health for people, animals and the environment.

Read more on [antibiotic resistance](#) and [EAAD](#)

Whole genome sequencing

Whole genome sequencing is a major development that has rapidly transformed the way epidemiologists perform investigations and analyses. In particular, cross-border outbreak identification is facilitated by comparison of sequences, preferably through public accessible databases. ECDC has delivered strategies and frameworks for the integration of whole genome sequencing into European disease surveillance. Whole genome sequencing is now widely used for routine surveillance in the EU, and this has strengthened EU cross-border outbreak investigation and public health surveillance.

Hepatitis monitoring

Since its establishment, ECDC has been promoting the elimination of viral hepatitis.

In May 2020, the first monitoring report on the progress towards the elimination of hepatitis B and C across EU/EEA countries was published. The report represents a significant step towards establishing priority areas for action and also points out gaps in the national responses to hepatitis B and C. The collated EU data provide an important baseline to help map progress towards the WHO elimination targets and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Read more on [monitoring progress towards the elimination of hepatitis B and C in the EU/EEA](#)

International collaboration

International collaboration is key to increased health security through exchange of experience and information as well as support to countries to enhance their capacities and capabilities to detect, assess, respond, and prevent health threats caused by infectious diseases.

The Commission is ECDC's closest partner. The Centre supports the Commission in the development of EU policies related to infectious diseases and follows up on their implementation (e.g. Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health). Lately, ECDC has been in close contact with the Commission to ensure a coordinated response to the spread of COVID-19 and provide objective information about the pandemic to the Member States and the European public.

ECDC has an excellent and sustained working relationship with European Parliament, in particular the European Parliament Committee for Public Health (ENVI).

ECDC also cooperates with the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries in order to establish technical cooperation and strengthen capacities in all areas of public health. ECDC wants to familiarise the ENP partner countries with EU standards, practices and legislation in the field of disease prevention and control.

ECDC was recently entrusted with additional resources to continue this work.

Read more on [ECDC's partnerships](#)

ECDC's establishment was sparked by the SARS outbreak, and nearly two decades later, ECDC's future will certainly be influenced by the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Health is not everything, but without health, everything is nothing."

– Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher, 1788–1860

[Slovenia: EIB lends EUR 31 million to Slovenian Elektro Maribor to increase reliability of electricity](#)

distribution in North East Slovenia

- Elektro Maribor to further increase stability of electrical distribution and develop electrical infrastructure for more than 219.000 users in North Eastern Slovenia;
- Loan supports Elektro Maribor improve quality of service, reliability of its network, and minimize blackouts and blackout-related damages to property and environment;
- The loan allows for introduction of advanced metering system to optimise future investments and reduce technical and commercial losses;

The European Investment Bank signed a EUR 31 million loan with Elektro Maribor, electricity distributor from Slovenia's second largest city of Maribor; the loan will go towards maintenance or improvements in the reliability and in quality standards of electricity supply. The EIB loan supports Elektro Maribor's EUR 81,2 million investment in reconstruction and development of its electricity distribution network in order to minimise power blackouts and blackout-related damage to property and environment.

To date, the EIB invested EUR 170.5 million in electric power distribution projects in Slovenia, bringing the total amount of its investments in Slovenia to EUR 6.87 billion.

Elektro Maribor will be able to reinforce and refurbish high, medium and low voltage networks, as well as expand the national electric grid with connection of new users and the integration of renewable energy generation. Investment will allow introduction of advanced metering systems, improving the collection of data and optimisation of investments, together with reduction of technical and commercial losses.

Liliana Pavlova, Vice President of the EIB, said: "This EIB investment delivers a more reliable electric distribution network in Slovenia and therefore improves the quality of life for thousands of Slovenians as well as conditions for doing business in the country. Reliable power supply is also crucial for the country's resilience in major crisis such as the covid-19 pandemic. The European Investment Bank is happy to support this investment by Elektro Maribor and continue with supporting Slovenia develop further".

Boris Sovič, CEO of Elektro Maribor, said: "Elektro Maribor and the European Investment Bank have been cooperating very successfully since 2015. With its own resources and with the help of EIB funds, Elektro Maribor has increased the level of network robustness, smartness and strength as well as the number of grid-integrated renewable energy sources. The funds obtained with the new loan are in line with the needs and expectations of our users, households, business and public sector, intended for co-financing investments in stronger, more robust and advanced low- and medium-voltage networks. As distribution network represents the basic infrastructure of sustainable development, its strengthening is of a great importance for a successful transition to a low-carbon society."

About Elektro Maribor:

Elektro Maribor is an integral part of the electricity system of the Republic of Slovenia, and one of five electricity distribution companies in the Republic of Slovenia. Main activity of the company is distribution of electricity to business and household customers in North East Slovenia. The company is organized as a public limited company, with Republic of Slovenia as the largest shareholder.

[EUIPO's Academy Tuesday webinars: June 2020](#)

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