

Earth Hour 2020: the Committees switch off their lights



□The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions will take part in the worldwide Earth Hour initiative over the last weekend of March. The lights in their buildings will be switched off from 10 p.m. on Friday 27 March to 6 a.m. on Monday 30 March.

For the 12th consecutive year, the Committees are responding to the call of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) by symbolically demonstrating their commitment to a global decrease in energy consumption. Their action will highlight the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and draw attention to climate change more broadly.

The [WWF](#) is one of the world's largest grassroots movements for the environment, this year celebrating its 13th anniversary (see [video](#)). The [Earth Hour](#) initiative they launched in 2007 encourages everybody to turn off their lights and unplug electronic devices on Saturday 28 March between 8.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. Today, more than 180 countries and millions of people have taken part in the initiative, which is intended to prompt debate and collective action to protect our natural environment.

Most of the European institutions' commitment already go far "beyond the hour" by implementing the environmental management systems EMAS and/or ISO 14001, which continuously reduces their environmental impact throughout the year. Moreover, they exchange best practices striving for environmental excellence through inter-institutional environmental management groups (GIME and Greening Network), in line with the EU Green Deal towards a climate neutral Europe by 2050.

For their part, the Committees have been EMAS and ISO 14 001-registered since 2011. Since 2009 they have reduced their gas and electricity consumption by 49% and 30% respectively. They obtain all their energy from renewable sources, and have installed 150m² of photovoltaic panels and 1 800m² of green roofs. Through these concrete energy saving actions, the Committees themselves implement the environmental practices they recommend in the political context.□

For more information, read the Committees' [Environmental Statement](#). You can also check the [EMAS in EU Institutions webpage](#) including EMAS stories and best practices.

Remarks by Mário Centeno following the Eurogroup videoconference of 24 March 2020

We have just finished a videoconference of the Eurogroup together, with non-euro area finance ministers. All our energy and focus is on initiatives to tackle the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Let me start by expressing again my deepest sympathy and solidarity with the citizens and families hit by this crisis. This is a devastating human tragedy and we are all affected.

We met only a week ago. And what a difference a week makes in the context of this crisis! In economic fallout but also in the boldness of our policy response.

In these last eight days, the epidemic has taken a stronger toll on our citizens, businesses and overall on our economies. At the same time, governments and institutions in the EU are taking decisive measures.

Today we took stock of all the measures already taken and also of the initiatives that are being explored among institutions. The aim is to prepare for the meeting of the Leaders on Thursday where decisions are expected.

First, there is a clear increase in our fiscal response. In one week alone, the total amount of the fiscal measures at national level has doubled and is now estimated at 2% of GDP. Liquidity support schemes for firms and workers have been scaled up from 10% to more than 13% of GDP.

Second, coordinated measures at the European level are being deployed, supplementing national efforts. There has been significant progress since our last meeting.

To provide for the required flexibility in our budget, the Commission has activated the general escape clause of our fiscal rules.

The decisions taken by the ECB last week have provided a strong element of reassurance and we have welcomed them unanimously.

We also welcomed the Commission's temporary State-aid framework, which helps our efforts to provide public support to our companies, while safeguarding the level playing field in the Single Market.

The Corona Response Investment Initiative will help to support healthcare systems, SMEs and the labour market, by making resources from the structural funds available for the challenges we face today. Accelerated legislative work is now underway to make this initiative operational.

The EIB's proposal for a €25 billion pan-European guarantee, announced by

President Hoyer, which will represent an additional €200 billion in support to SME's, midcaps and corporates which are struggling to cope with the virus fallout.

Third, we have started a debate on additional forms of support to reinforce crisis management and prepare the ground for economic recovery.

We are committed to explore all possibilities necessary to support our economies get through these difficult times. This involves all our institutions. This discussion has just only started and more work is needed to get to the finish line.

The challenge our economies are facing today is in no way similar to the previous crisis. This is a symmetric external shock. Moral hazard considerations are not warranted here. We must bear this in mind when we consider coronavirus dedicated instruments. This is particularly true for any ESM instruments which were set up during the last crisis.

We look forward to more initiatives, namely from the European Commission which is expected to bring forward its unemployment insurance proposal.

Our discussions are more advanced on the ESM workstream because we can build upon the strong framework already in place. There is broad support to consider a Pandemic crisis support safeguard based on an existing ESM precautionary instrument, such as the Enhanced Conditions Credit Line (ECCL). This would provide an additional line of defence for the euro and work as insurance to protect us against this unfolding crisis.

The features of this instrument would need to be consistent with the external, symmetric nature of the COVID-19 shock. This is also true for any attached conditionality. In the short term it will be targeted to coronavirus response and in the longer term, countries are expected to return to stability.

This instrument would be available for all countries to apply, individually. The size of the available instrument could be in the range of 2% of members' GDP, as a benchmark. While there is broad support among members around these features, more work is needed on details.

This discussion corresponds to the Leaders' mandate to explore options among institutions for an EU coordinated response. It will allow me to report back to Leaders on Thursday. We look forward to their guidance and stand ready to implement their decision shortly after.

Collectively, we will continue to do everything within our reach, going beyond, to support our citizens and our economy.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Press release – EP stands up for democracy in Hungary during COVID-19



Following developments in Hungary, where the government is trying to expand its executive authority in order to rule by decree while the country remains in a “state of danger”, [Juan Fernando López Aguilar \(S&D, ES\)](#), made the following statement, in his capacity as Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee.

“On behalf of the Civil Liberties Committee, I would like to express our concern about the Hungarian National Assembly’s intention to vote on extending the ‘state of danger’ in Hungary and the related changes to the Criminal Code. We are aware that member states have a responsibility to take protective measures in these difficult times, but these measures should always ensure that fundamental rights, rule of law and democratic principles are protected.

In this context, we would call on the Commission to assess if the proposed bill complies with the values enshrined in [Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union](#) and to remind member states of their responsibility to respect and protect these common values”.

Background

The Hungarian government tabled a bill on Monday 23 March, which would authorise the executive to rule by decree if adopted. Although the Hungarian legislature did not approve the proposal, the governing Fidesz-KDNP alliance can still push the bill through Parliament next Tuesday, leveraging its two-thirds majority

Press release – Plenary session 26 March



In an effort to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Parliament is reducing the need for physical meetings on its premises, without compromising its role of democratic scrutiny as well as its ability to approve the necessary legislative measures to combat the virus and support the public, consumers, businesses and emergency services.

Those parliamentary activities still taking place (including this week's plenary session) will be web-streamed and can be followed by the media without requiring your physical presence on EP premises.

Follow plenary on EPLive:

<https://webstreaming.europarl.europa.eu/ep/embed/embed.html?event=20200326-0900-plenary&language=or&autoplay=true&logo=true>

Follow plenary on EbS+:

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/embed/index.html?lg=OR&channel=2>

You are therefore advised not to come in person unless absolutely necessary. If you do, you are requested to respect the standard recommended guidelines on social distancing and hygiene. Please refrain from coming to EP premises if you present any symptoms of a respiratory infection, if you have knowingly been in contact with an infected person in the last 14 days or if you have been to regions with very high transmission rates. For updated guidance see:

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>
https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete.html

- Although most Members of Parliament will be participating remotely, if you need to interview Members of Parliament, please give preference to telephone or online methods unless absolutely necessary.
- The Vox Box recording studio will be open on 25 and 26 March, but under a strict regime of prior reservation and respect for social distancing.
- The press tribune in the hemicycle will be accessible (limited capacity respecting social distancing).
- The press work room will remain closed.
- More details on the plenary agenda to follow tomorrow.
- An online pre-session briefing for journalists with the EP spokesperson will be held on Thursday morning at 9.30. More details will follow.

Thank you for your understanding.

[Panama joins TMclass and DesignClass](#)

March 24, 2020 [European Trade Mark and Design Network](#)

Panama joins TMclass and DesignClass



As of 16 March 2020, the General Directorate of the Industrial Property Registry of Panama ([DIGERPI](#)) is part of the [TMclass](#) and [DesignClass](#) tools. DIGERPI uses and accepts the list of terms from the harmonised database of goods and services (HDB) in TMclass as well as the list of terms from the harmonised database of product indications (HDBPI) in DesignClass.

Following DIGERPI's decision to use HDB and HDBPI, there are now **eight non-EU IP offices** in both TMclass and DesignClass that use and accept terms from these harmonised databases.

The latest addition of DIGERPI in TMclass brings the total number of participating national and regional intellectual property offices, including ARIPO, OAPI, WIPO and EUIPO, to 77. As for DesignClass, there are now 33 IP offices in the tool.

TMclass offers users the ability to search and translate goods and services to and from each of the **44 available languages**. DesignClass allows searching and translating product indications in **27 languages**.

The adoption of HDB and HDBPI by DIGERPI are concrete results of the [IP Key Latin America](#) programme directed by the European Commission and executed by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO).

More information can be found in www.euipn.org, [TMclass](#) and [DesignClass](#).