

Poland: EIB supports Poland in the fight against COVID-19



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- **€650 million made available to the Polish Ministry of Finance to support the country's efforts in combating the pandemic**
- **The aim is to strengthen Poland's emergency response system and pandemic preparedness, with a focus on health and civil protection**
- **The EIB will be able to finance eligible projects fully rather than its standard maximum of 50%**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Polish Ministry of Finance have agreed today on a financial support programme to cope with the consequences of COVID-19. The EU bank will lend €650 million to help the Polish government cover expenses and investments related to the ongoing pandemic.

The aim is to strengthen Poland's emergency response system for the COVID-19 crisis as well as increase its mid and long-term pandemic preparedness. The EIB financing targets schemes in the health and civil protection sectors, which are under the greatest stress.

Healthcare projects can include the purchase and supply of medical and non-medical equipment, the reconfiguration of healthcare facilities and services,

drug supply and production, as well as the co-financing of COVID-19 research. Civil protection programmes might involve infrastructure and equipment, including for communication and awareness-raising campaigns, hygiene and disinfection measures, examinations, screening, quarantining and other official measures imposed to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

The EIB and the Ministry of Finance also agreed that the Bank would finance eligible expenditures in full rather than the standard maximum of 50% of project costs applied to most Bank-approved projects.

“The EIB funding agreed today with the Ministry of Finance means that Poland is better equipped to fight the pandemic and can invest more resources in upgrading its level of responsiveness in both healthcare and civil protection,” said **Prof Teresa Czerwińska, EIB Vice-President**, who oversees operations in Poland. *“Helping the country to be more resilient to pandemics is part of our mission to ensure balanced regional development and cohesion in Europe. In unity, there is strength: as coronavirus remains present in our societies, we should continue to consolidate our support packages by topping up national resources with European funding.”*

“The European Investment Bank has been supporting the government’s activities for many years,” said the Polish Finance Minister **Tadeusz Kościński**. *“This loan is a good example of the Bank’s support in an area that is currently a priority for the Polish authorities. The agreement was made possible thanks to the set of measures prepared and implemented by the Bank, which allowed to effectively support EU Member States in the fight against the unprecedented crisis”.*

This financing is made possible by repurposing the last tranche of a €1.35 billion Structural Programme Loan (SPL) granted to Poland under the EU programming period 2014-2020. SPLs are part of the financing instruments the EIB uses to supplement the structural and investment funds allocated to EU countries in the EU budget. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the Polish government and the EIB have agreed to dedicate the unused part of the current SPL to co-financing the country’s response to the pandemic.

[Article – What is artificial intelligence and how is it used?](#)



AI in everyday life

Below are some AI applications that you may not realise are AI-powered:

Online shopping and advertising

Artificial intelligence is widely used to provide personalised recommendations to people, based for example on their previous searches and purchases or other online behaviour. AI is hugely important in commerce: optimising products, planning inventory, logistics etc.

Web search

Search engines learn from the vast input of data, provided by their users to provide relevant search results.

Digital personal assistants

Smartphones use AI to provide services that are as relevant and personalised as possible. Virtual assistants answering questions, providing recommendations and helping organise daily routines have become ubiquitous.

Machine translations

Language translation software, either based on written or spoken text, relies

on artificial intelligence to provide and improve translations. This also applies to functions such as automated subtitling.

Smart homes, cities and infrastructure

Smart thermostats learn from our behaviour to save energy, while developers of smart cities hope to regulate traffic to improve connectivity and reduce traffic jams.

Cars

While self-driving vehicles are not yet standard, cars already use AI-powered safety functions. The EU has for example helped to fund [VI-DAS](#), automated sensors that detect possible dangerous situations and accidents.

Navigation is largely AI-powered.

Cybersecurity

AI systems can help recognise and fight cyberattacks and other cyber threats based on the continuous input of data, recognising patterns and backtracking the attacks.

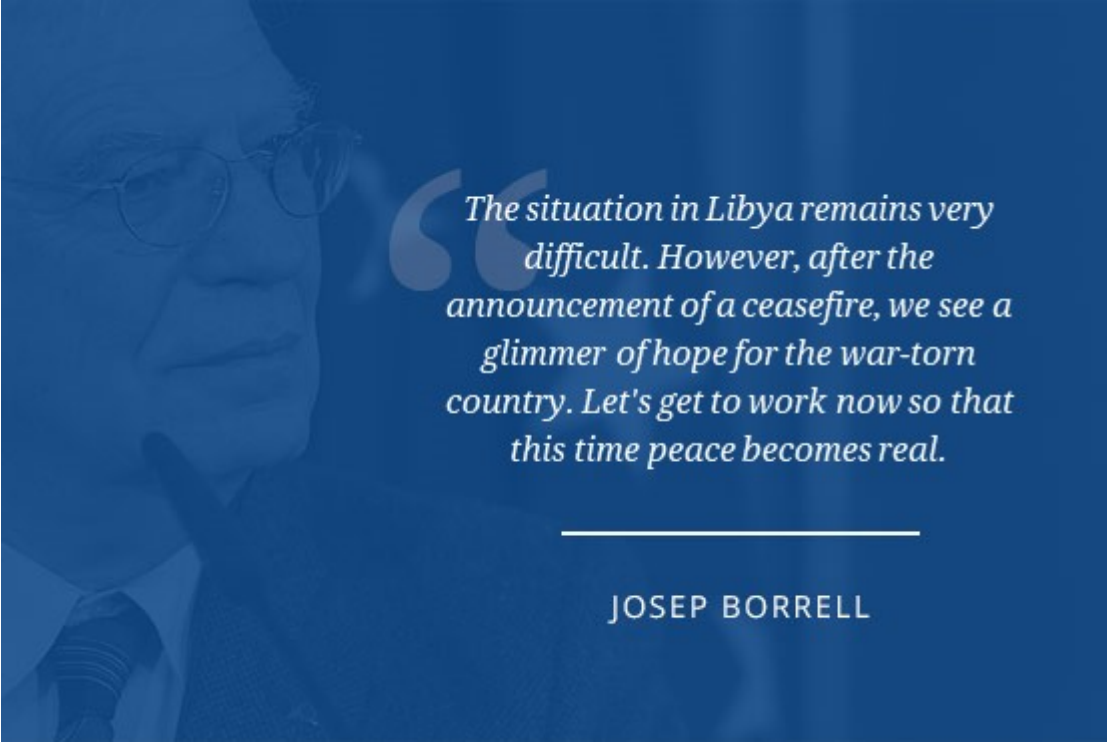
Artificial intelligence against Covid-19

In the case of [Covid-19](#), AI has been used in thermal imaging in airports and elsewhere. In medicine it can help recognise infection from computerised tomography lung scans. It has also been used to provide data to track the spread of the disease.

Fighting disinformation

Certain AI applications can detect [fake news and disinformation](#) by mining social media information, looking for words that are sensational or alarming and identifying which online sources are deemed authoritative.

[Libya: a glimmer of hope](#)



“The situation in Libya remains very difficult. However, after the announcement of a ceasefire, we see a glimmer of hope for the war-torn country. Let's get to work now so that this time peace becomes real.”

JOSEP BORRELL

Since the 2011 Arab Spring, Libya – a country of 6.7 million inhabitants, potentially very rich with immense oil reserves – has been beset by violent conflicts between different factions and militias, as well as outside players and actors.

Ten years of violent conflicts

The Libyan people have suffered enormously and the instability in the country has had negative spill over effects on regional security, affecting neighbouring countries and the whole Sahel region. The country also served as a major route for people trafficking and irregular migration to Europe. Only a few kilometres away from the European coast, this chronic instability has long been a major concern for the EU.

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In April 2019, when General Khalifa Haftar of the so-called Libyan National Army, controlling the Eastern part of the country, started a military offensive, the armed conflict saw another culmination point. Shortly after, Ghassan Salame, then UN Special Representative for Libya and head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), proposed an elaborated peace plan. The plan called for a ceasefire and an internal dialogue between the warring Libyan parties. This plan was accepted by General Haftar and the Government of National Accord (GNA) led by President Faiez Serraj and based in Tripoli.

The “Berlin process” to forge international unity for peace

To actively support the UN-led mediation process and since any solution depended on the buy-in of the international actors involved, Germany initiated the “Berlin process” to forge the necessary international unity in favour of peace in Libya. The process led to a conference in Berlin at the beginning of 2020, which adopted a 55-point declaration specifying the different elements of a possible agreement and establishing an internationally supported process to contribute to ending the conflict. It created three parallel tracks: a military track with a 5+5 group tasked to elaborate modalities for a ceasefire, a political track with a group of representatives from both the East and West and civil society to work on a political solution, as well as an economic track with experts working on the economic challenges to be addressed.

Foreign interference on the ground has multiplied in recent months: the conflict parties continue to receive arms, mercenaries and financial support, and some countries even sent troops or threatened to do so.

Unfortunately, these processes have not yet led to sustainable agreements and peace. Foreign interference on the ground has multiplied in recent months, including notably by Turkey, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, backing different sides of the conflict. In violation of the United Nations arms embargo, the conflict parties continue to receive arms, mercenaries and financial support, and some countries even sent troops or threatened to do so.

The Libyan people, faced with very difficult living conditions aggravated by the Covid-19 outbreak, are exasperated by the continuing civil war.

Fighting also led to a prolonged freeze on the Libyan oil production and exports, which is the main source of revenue for the country. The Libyan people, faced with very difficult living conditions aggravated by the Covid-19 outbreak, are exasperated by the continuing civil war.

A rare piece of good news

In August of this year, a rare piece of good news came when President Faiez Serraj and Aguila Saleh, Speaker of the House of Representatives, based in Eastern Libya, agreed to call for a ceasefire and unblock the oil production. [We immediately welcomed this initiative](#). However, it remains unclear to what extent this agreement will be implemented in practice by the two sides, and the understanding has not yet found the support of General Haftar.

This is the context in which [I visited Libya](#) to observe first-hand the

situation, to discuss the possible way forward for an effective implementation of the ceasefire, and to help to put the Berlin process back on track.

In my meetings with President Faiez Serraj, Speaker Aguila Saleh and the National Oil Corporation Chairman Mustafa Sanalla, we discussed ways for making the political efforts successful, and for lifting the blockade on oil production and exports.

The critical importance of oil production and exports

The latter is highly relevant: in 2019, Libya produced 1,2 million barrels of oil per day, but currently the production has almost fully stopped. If Libya were to return to its normal production level, this would enable it to earn at least €10 billion each year.

As EU, we want Libya to preserve its territorial integrity and Libyans to decide their own future, free from external interference

I underlined the EU's commitment to help rebuilding Libya, which is also in our very own interest. As EU, we want Libya to preserve its territorial integrity and Libyans to decide their own future, free from external interference. A stable and peaceful Libya could be a solid partner for the EU and the region to collaborate effectively on economic development, energy, trade, security, education, and migration.

EU Operation Irini has proven its utility

We also discussed EU naval Operation Irini, which monitors the arms embargo in the Mediterranean in line with a UNSC mandate. So far, Irini has conducted more than 600 hailings of vessels to control the arms embargo and related to oil smuggling. It has shown its ability to document and monitor violations on both sides and has proven its deterrence effect, preventing attempts to smuggle Libyan oil outside of the NOC's control from terminals in the Tobruk region.

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The situation in Libya remains very complex and difficult. However, we see a glimmer of hope and I was encouraged by all interlocutors' commitment to the Berlin process as the way out of the Libyan stalemate, and the shared desire to ensure that foreign fighters leave the country.

Even though we are well aware of the magnitude of the task ahead, I return from this trip more optimistic for Libya's future. Let's get to work now, in

close connection with the UN and all relevant players, so that this time the chance for peace becomes real.

Declaration of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on th



The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned by a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group, similar to the one used in the assassination attempt on Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury on 4 March 2018.

The use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable under any circumstances, constitutes a serious breach of international law and international human rights standards. The European Union calls for a joint international response and reserves the right to take appropriate actions, including through restrictive measures.

This new assassination attempt on a Russian citizen took place on the territory of the Russian Federation. The Russian government must do its utmost to investigate this crime thoroughly in full transparency and bring those responsible to justice. Impunity must not and will not be tolerated. The European Union calls upon the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to ensure an impartial international investigation.

We are grateful to the *Charité – Universitätsmedizin* hospital in Berlin for the treatment of Mr Navalny and wish him a prompt and full recovery.

The European Union will continue to closely follow the issue and consider its implications.

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