



Remarks by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Commissioners Lenarčič, Kyriakides, Johansson, Vălean and Gentiloni at the ERCC ECHO on the EU's response to COVID-19

Brussels, 2 March 2020

Good afternoon to all of you,

First of all, I want to express my full sympathy for those who are suffering from the Coronavirus. And I want to thank the medical staff who is treating them and doing an outstanding job not only in Europe but all over the world.

As you know, the Coronavirus has brought governments and health systems throughout Europe to work at all different levels to contain this virus. And so does the Commission, with the support from our agency, the ECDC, and in very close cooperation with the WHO.

You have witnessed that from the very beginning of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the European Union has acted. We have for example activated our alert system immediately. We have an ongoing risk assessment that is being carried out in close coordination with all the Member States.

I think very important is our European Health Security Committee that is coordinating all these different national measures, so that we have a very comprehensive approach to contain the virus.

We have informed you on a regular basis over the last weeks about the support that the Commission provides to the national authorities, in very close cooperation with the agencies.

ECDC has announced today that the risk level has risen to moderate to high for people in the European Union. In other words, the virus continues to spread.

We all know that there are many, many different actions that are needed to address the Coronavirus. They are very multifaceted, they are very manifold. And since eight weeks, we are working intensively on these different work strands. The Commission has been addressing all these work strands.

We have a situation that is very complex and it requires on the one side, very swift action and on the other side, a strong coordination at all the levels and all the different sectors – not only on the European level but of course on the national level. And then, a very comprehensive and coherent approach towards the topic from all 27 Member States and the European Union.

This is why today we are launching the corona response team. This corona response team brings together all the different strands of action that have been in place since many, many weeks – you have witnessed their outstanding work –, but also brings in place in the corona response team the new work streams, the emerging work streams.

The corona response team has basically three main pillars. The first pillar is the medical field. It includes topics from prevention and procurement. There are relief measures, information and foresight. It is always in close cooperation with ECDC and our European Medicines Agency. The second big and important column is the pillar that covers mobility, from transport to travel advice and also to the Schengen-related questions. The third pillar covers the economy. It is looking in-depth at various business sectors – such as tourism or transport, trade, but of course, it is also looking at the value chains and at the broader macro-economic picture we have.

To bundle this, we also have in parallel launched today a website on the corona response team where all the information we have gathered over all the weeks – and that comes on a daily basis – is collected and bundled so that there is a direct access to the very complex, wide-reaching work the corona response team is doing. There are other topics that are presented on the website and worked on in the corona response team, as for example news, press releases, calendars, social media, statistics, which are important on a daily basis from all the different questions that occur in this scenario, [as well as] the general information, like access to studies or links to others, the role and responsibilities, again, if you have different questions that have to be addressed.

Allow me now to introduce the five Commissioners, who will be working together on all these different topics. It is Janez Lenarčič, who is in charge of crisis management. It is Stella Kyriakides, who is in charge of all the health issues. It is Ylva Johansson, who is in charge of border-related issues. It is Adina Vălean, who is in charge of mobility. And Paolo Gentiloni, who is dealing with the macroeconomic

aspects.

And I would like to invite the different Commissioners now to present their aspects for the day, because this is a situation, where on a daily basis we have actual topics and news we want to work on.

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