

EU support for the Western Balkans to tackle the coronavirus

The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented global crisis, a severe public health emergency for citizens, societies and economies. The virus knows no borders. It is a global pandemic that requires a global and coordinated effort to stop it. The EU is already taking firm measures at home to address the consequences of the coronavirus and we are also helping our partners to contain the spread. Underlining our solidarity with the Western Balkans, the EU has launched a **Team Europe package** of some **€750 million** to support Western Balkan partners in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic and deal with its consequences.

- In the Western Balkans, the EU has already mobilised considerable funds for immediate support to the health sector amounting to €38 million,
- €4 million for Albania for immediate lifesaving medical equipment, including 5 fully equipped ambulances, respirators, digital mobile x-rays and state of the art equipment for intensive care,
- €7 million for Bosnia and Herzegovina, to equip hospitals with 7,500 testing kits and personal protecting equipment,
- €5 million for Kosovo for laboratory and protection equipment, including 30 respirators, 5 fully equipped ambulances and 400 hospital beds,
- €3 million for Montenegro for medical equipment, including 100 respirators, ten mobile X-ray devices and personal protective equipment,
- €4 million for North Macedonia for medical equipment and supplies, including 20 respirators, 5000 testing sets and substantial quantities of personal protective equipment;
- €15 million for Serbia to pay for five cargo flights carrying 280 tonnes of emergency medical supplies procured by Serbia (€2 million), for supplies for vulnerable groups in society through UNOPS (€4.9 million) and to modernise a laboratory with the purchase high-tech machines (€7.5 million). The laboratory originally designed to test milk and other food products can now perform up to 1,000 coronavirus tests a day.
- The EU is also associating Western Balkan partners to EU initiatives such as the Joint Procurement Agreement for protective medical equipment and the European rapid alert system for communicable diseases.

- The new EU Initiative for Health Security with the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) – worth €9 million that covers all 23 Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries - has been accelerated. It will enhance their capacities to survey and control communicable diseases, improve their health emergency preparedness capabilities, and support the development of their public health microbiology laboratory systems.
- Countries negotiating their accession can also apply for the EU Solidarity Fund that is being expanded to be able to also tackle major public health emergencies. See: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/solidarity-fund/covid-19

To mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic in the Western Balkans, over €374 million has been reallocated and redirected IPA funds to help the most affected companies.

- €46.5 million for Albania,
- €73.5 million for Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- €63 million for Kosovo*,
- €50 million for Montenegro,
- €63 million for North Macedonia,
- €78.5 million for Serbia.
- The intent is to redirect existing investment programmes so they can provide liquidity and working capital to businesses, especially for SMEs and we are in discussions with International Financial Institutions and national development finance institutions to see how we can deliver support to the real economy fast.
- In this context, additional €290 million will help with the socio-economic recovery of the whole region. The €290 million are redirected regional funds meant to bring liquidity in the Western Balkans in close cooperation with International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

In total, the EU will support with some **€750 million** our Western Balkan partners to address the coronavirus.

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.