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Answer given by Ms Kyriakides
on behalf of the European Commission
(2.7.2020)

The Commission is working with Member States on all fronts to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak. The priority is to protect people from the spread of the virus, support health systems while mitigating effects on the economy¹.

Decisions are based on scientific evidence. An advisory panel was created on COVID-19, working with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Medicine Agency to guide the Commission. The Commission issued guidance on testing strategies².

The Commission is in contact with pharmaceutical and medical devices industry to ensure that medicines, equipment and testing kits are available to Member States. The Commission has launched joint procurement tenders for medical and protective equipment and may launch others, if requested. The first ever rescEU stockpile³ of medical countermeasures and protective equipment is being established as a safety net.

On proposal by the Commission, the Council adopted on 14 April 2020 the Regulation on the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI)⁴. The ESI will allow the Commission to deploy targeted actions in Member States and address the pandemic in a coordinated manner mitigating consequences and complement assistance of other EU instruments and national efforts with EUR 2.7 billion.

A clearing house was established to facilitate matching the needs of Members States for medical equipment, including tests, with the supply.

Furthermore, on 27 May 2020, the Commission presented a major recovery plan⁵ to help repair the economic and social damage, protect and create jobs and kick-start European recovery. Part of this EU budget for recovery is the proposal for an ambitious health programme, EU4Health⁶, which will strengthen the Union's preparedness and crisis management capability.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_459

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/covid19_-_eu_recommendations_on_testing_strategies_v2.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_476

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/com175final_-_en_-_proposal_council_regulation_activating_esi.pdf

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/eu-long-term-budget/2021-2027_en

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com_2020_405_en_act_v11.pdf