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I. SUMMARY

EUROPEAN UNION

Number of cases: 1,071,536 (including the UK)

Number of deaths: 118,479

- The Health Security Committee had a [meeting](#) on the outbreak of COVID-19 on 22 April. One of the main issues discussed was research and innovation regarding vaccines. On 24 April the European Union [launched](#) the pledging effort named the Coronavirus Global Response to gather funds for developing solutions to COVID-19, as well as a [Q&A](#) on this initiative. The pledging will be launched on 4 May 2020.
- European authorities continue their efforts to support Member States on mitigating the impacts of COVID-19. On 24 April the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) published [guidance](#) for a safe return to the workplace in the context of the pandemic. Also, on 27 April the Commission has [received](#) the first application for support from the EU Solidarity Fund (ESF) for emergency, from Italy.
- A major concern has been the availability of medical devices. To ensure this can be maintained, the regulation which postpones the entry into force by one year of the Regulation of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) officially entered into force on 24 April.

- The European External Action Service (EEAS) published a [Special Report](#) providing an assessment of disinformation around COVID-19 from 2 to 22 April.
- The European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA) [announced](#) on 27 April the development of an app to facilitate the movement of goods and freight within the EU.
- HealthforAnimals and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) have compiled [recommendations](#) for caring for pets during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For more information, please get in touch with **Charline Quillérou, Associate Director EU** at c.quillerou@rpp-group.com

FRANCE



Number of cases: 124,575

Number of deaths: 22,856 (*including retirement homes*)

- The end of confinement measures will take place on 11 May as per the decision by the French President.
- The Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, will present the official exit strategy to the National Assembly on 28 April. This strategy will be followed by a vote from the National Assembly. Issues related to masks, schools, companies will also be presented and discussed.
- The French Parliament definitively adopted the EUR 110 billion budget presented by the government to finance the combat against the pandemic on 23 April. It entered in force on 27 April and will include exceptional bonuses announced for health workers, to finance the partial unemployment plan and to support families and students in need.
- The French Scientific Council's President, Jean-Francois Delfraissy announced on 27 April that the end of confinement measures is now essential, considering the economic, social, and sanitary negative impacts of the quarantine.
- The president of the general practitioners' union declared on 27 April that around 9,000 individuals died because of Covid-19, at home, without having been taken into account in the official counting.

For more information, please get in touch with **Salomé Chelli-Enriquez, Director RPP France** at s.chelli-enriquez@rpp-group.com

GERMANY



Number of cases: 157,770

Number of deaths: 5,976

- Beginning from 27 April, with the exemption of Berlin, all German federal states introduce the mandatory wearing of mouth and nose masks in public traffic as well as supermarkets. In Berlin, the regulation only applies to public traffic. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the compulsory use of nose and mouth masks is moreover extended to weekly markets, bus stops, railway stations, taxis, medical practices, post office, bank, petrol stations.
- Beginning from 27 April, schools will gradually open for pupils who graduate this year. Additional hygienic and precautionary measures were implemented.
- After debates concerning the data protection standards of the so-called “Corona Application”, Federal Minister of Health, Jens Spahn, and Head of the Chancellery, Helge Braun explained in a statement that the German Federal Government aims to find a solution in which data is stored de-centrally. The respective Corona-App shall identify COVID-19 infection-chains. Thus, the app warns users if their smartphone was in near distance to another user that was tested positive for COVID-19.

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ITALY



Number of cases: 197,675

Number of deaths: 26,644

- The manufacturing sector, the construction sector and wholesale trade will be the first sectors to reopen. All companies will have to comply with workplace safety protocols.
- People will be able to move around their own regions to visit their relatives in small numbers, in addition to work, health and emergency-related reasons.
- All retail shops, museums, exhibitions and libraries will be allowed to reopen as of 18 May.

- Hairdressers, beauty salons, bars and restaurants will be able to reopen as normal from 1 June. Schools however will remain closed until September.
- The Regions will be required to inform the government on a daily basis about the epidemiological curve so that the Health Ministry may intervene to reintroduce more restrictive measures if necessary.
- The government is working on a new decree called "Unlock Country" that will introduce new economic measures to support the companies.
- The Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA) approved three new clinical trials to treat the COVID-19 on 1) enoxaparin sodium, 2) colchicine and 3) baricitinib.
- The Government approved the Document on Economy and Finance which sets the public health expenditure (119,556 million) for the current year at 7.2% of the GDP, an increase of 3.6% compared to 2019.

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SPAIN



Number of cases: 236,199

Number of deaths: 23,521

- The strict lockdown has been in place since 15 March is starting to ease. COVID-19 cases are decreasing and so is the death toll. Children under 14 years old are as of 26 April allowed to go outdoors under set conditions, and the rest of the population is expected to join them as of 2 May. The Centre for Scientific Research (CSIC) warns should de-escalation not be carried out properly, there could be a new outbreak within two weeks.
- The task force responsible for advising the government on phasing out containment measures has produced a report on healthcare recommendations. The transition towards a new normal within the coronavirus crisis is shaped around 4 basic pillars: health care, epidemiologic surveillance, identification and early detection of contagion sources, and collective protection measures.

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UNITED KINGDOM



Number of cases: 152,840

Number of deaths: 20,732

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson returns to work today (27 April) after more than three weeks in hospital and recovery after contracting COVID-19. Johnson's key task upon returning will be a decision on when to ease lockdown measures, and what form easing may take as the COVID-19 economic crisis mounts.
- Widespread testing remains a key priority for the Government to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and yesterday (26 April) launched mobile testing units, operated by the Army, to increase access to COVID-19 testing. The units will focus on areas of greatest demand for testing, such as care homes and prisons, and sites that are difficult to access.
- The expanded testing effort allowed the Government to extend COVID-19 testing to all essential workers in England who present symptoms, as well as members of their household. The Government remains committed to testing 100,000 samples per day by the end of April; testing is now at around 30,000 per day.
- The Government has launched a long-term study to track COVID-19 in the general population to better understand rates of infection and the development of antibodies. 20,000 households will take part in the 12-month study; blood samples from 1,000 households will show what proportion of the population has developed antibodies, while antigen-testing swabs will be taken from all participating households.
- A treatment pathway for COVID-19 involving the use of convalescent plasma – the antibody-rich plasma of a virus survivor – has proceeded to clinical trial. The randomised controlled trial (RCT) will test the safety and efficacy of convalescent plasma transfusion therapy for COVID-19 patients, and if successful a national donation programme will support the delivery of up to 10,000 units of plasma a week, which will treat 5,000 patients each week.

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II. EUROPEAN UNION

- On 24 April the European Union [launched](#) the pledging effort named the Coronavirus Global Response. This is a pledging effort for gathering funds for developing solutions to test, treat, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This pledging will be launched on 4 May 2020 as a worldwide pledging marathon. The European Commission also published a [Q&A](#) on the Coronavirus Global Response.
- On 24 April the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) published [guidance](#) for a safe return to the workplace in the context of the pandemic. This includes information on risk assessment and appropriate measures, involving workers, taking care of workers who have been ill, planning for the future, staying well informed, and information for specific sectors and occupations.
- On 27 April the Commission has [received](#) the first application for support from the EU Solidarity Fund (ESF) for emergency from Italy. The European Commission will collect applications until 24 June 2020 and assess all coronavirus-related requests as one single package, in order to ensure equitable conclusions. A proposal for financial aid will then be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council.
- The Regulation which postpones the entry into force by one year of the Regulation of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) entered into force on 24 April. With this, the application of the MDR is officially postponed to 26 May 2021.
- The Health Security Committee had a [meeting](#) on the outbreak of COVID-19 on 22 April. Topics discussed include exit strategies, vaccine development and coordination of sero-epidemiological studies, air transport measures, and risk communication.
- The European External Action Service (EEAS) published a [Special Report](#) providing an assessment of disinformation around COVID-19 from 2 to 22 April. This has identified many misinformation campaigns, including official sources from several governments such as Russia and China.
- The European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA) [announced](#) on 27 April the development of an app to facilitate the movement of goods and freight within the EU. This app will be named "Galileo Green Lane" and is being developed in collaboration with the European Commission.
- HealthforAnimals and the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) have compiled [recommendations](#) for caring for pets during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes sections on daily care, planning for care, visiting the veterinarian and the importance of staying informed.

III. FRANCE

- The number of hospitalised patients in critical state due to Covid-19 has been steadily decreasing for 17 days. On 26 April, the number of critical patients hospitalised went below 5,000 (4,682 patients). Initially, before the pandemic, there were 5,000 hospital beds available for critical patients nation-wide. During the highest peak of the crisis, this number increased to 10,000 occupied beds for patients in critical state.
- French President Emmanuel Macron announced that confinement measures are extended until 11 May. The precise exit strategy will be presented by Prime Minister Édouard Philippe on 28 April to the National Assembly which will vote on it on the same day. Many issues such as the obligation of wearing masks in public areas, the supply of masks to citizens, the reopening of schools, the tracking application system will all be addressed by the Prime Minister.
- On 23 April, the Parliament Joint Committee voted for the special budget presented by the government to finance the special measures during the coronavirus crisis which entered into force on 27 April. This new budget of EUR 110 billion has been adopted based on the forecast of -8% GDP growth for 2020. It will be used to finance the various exceptional bonuses announced by the government:
 - The funding of partial unemployment plan is estimated to EUR 25,8 billion.
 - A solidarity fund is created for companies in difficulties.
 - A EUR 8 billion budget will be allocated to health expenses to face the pandemic.
 - An exceptional bonus allocated to health workers will be financed. Frontline health workers will receive EUR 1500 bonus, the others EUR 500. Extra hours made by health workers will be tax exempted.
 - An exceptional bonus will be allocated to families and students in need.
- The Scientific Council's President, Jean-François Delfraissy announced on 27 April that the end of confinement is now essential. Considering the social, sanitary and economic impact of confinement measures, it seems important to elaborate an exit strategy according to him. The main argument behind this is that the massive failure to provide care to citizens during the pandemic, especially to those who suffer from chronic diseases, will have a worse sanitary impact than the Covid-19 itself.
- The President of the General Practitioners' Union Jacques Battistoni (MG France) announced the results of an inquiry made by the union, according to which 9,000 people died because of coronavirus at home, without having been tested and taken into account in the official death count.

IV. ITALY

- On Sunday 26 April, the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced in a [press conference](#) the [details](#) of the next phase for gradually lifting containment measures. He underlined that although confinement measures may be lifted, it will be imperative to continue practicing social distancing and using protective masks for months to come. The wearing of masks on public transport becomes mandatory and the price of face masks would be capped at €0,50 to avoid speculations. The Prime Minister also announced that those who have a temperature above 37.5 degrees and respiratory symptoms must stay at home and inform their doctor.
- It will be possible to start the preliminary operations for the reopening from 27 April, such as the sanitization of environments and the safety of workers. New safety protocols have also been signed for companies in the transport sector and for safety on construction sites.
- The rest of the measures will start to be relaxed from May 4. From that date, the manufacturing sector and the construction sector and wholesale trade whose activity is functional to the first two sectors will reopen. All companies will have to comply with workplace safety protocols (see [here](#) the one signed on 24 April).
- People will be able to move around their own regions to visit their relatives in small numbers – private parties and family gatherings will still be forbidden. Therefore, travels outside the region will only be permitted for work, health, emergency and to return home. Sports and training will be allowed again but only in the vicinity of their home and in wider areas. Bars and restaurants will also reopen but only for takeaways. Funerals will also be allowed, but for no more than 15 persons. Other religious ceremonies remain suspended for the time being.
- Another phase will start from 18 May onwards. All retail shops, museums, exhibitions and libraries will be allowed to reopen. Sports teams will also be able to train again.
- Hairdressers, beauty salons, bars and restaurants be able to reopen as normal from 1 June. Schools however will remain closed until September.
- The Prime Minister explained that in order to quickly manage in case of new outbreaks, the Regions will inform the government on a daily basis about the epidemiological curve, and the Minister of Health Roberto Speranza will indicate the "sentinel thresholds" to be respected in order to intervene in certain situations and reintroduce more restrictive measures. It was made clear that the decision on the "sentinel thresholds" is the only one that will take into account different situations from region to region. Therefore, although in many regions in Southern Italy there have been very few infections for days, restrictions will continue to apply in the same way throughout the country.

- Mr Conte also announced that the government is working on a new decree called "Unlock Country" that will introduce new economic measures to support the companies.
- The Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA) has authorised [three new clinical trials](#) for the treatment of COVID-19:
 - An Italian multicentre study, coordinated by the University of Bologna, which will evaluate the safety and efficacy of the anticoagulant **enoxaparin sodium**, administered at different dosages, in the treatment of people with a moderate or severe clinical condition.
 - A multicentre randomised controlled trial, coordinated by the University of Parma, to study the safety and efficacy of the anti-inflammatory drug **colchicine**, in the treatment of patients with COVID-19 infection and pneumonia, in stable conditions.
 - A multicentre trial, coordinated by the Azienda Ospedaliera Universitaria Pisana, to assess the efficacy, safety and tolerability of **baricitinib** in addition to the usual treatment in patients with COVID-19 pneumonia. Baricitinib is an inhibitor of Janus-kinases 1 and 2 (JAK-1 and -2) authorised in Italy for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.
- On 24 April, the Government approved the Document on Economy and Finance ([Stability Programme](#) and [Analysis and trends in public finance](#)) . This document sets the public health expenditure (119,556 million) for the current year at 7.2% of the GDP, an increase of 3.6% compared to 2019. For 2021, on the other hand, growth is expected to slow down, which is estimated at 1.3% compared to 2020, forecasted at 6.9% of the GDP. The analysis takes into account the higher expenditure to tackle the COVID-19 emergency.

V. GERMANY

- Beginning from 27 April, with the exemption of Berlin, all German federal states introduce the mandatory wearing of mouth and nose masks in public traffic as well as supermarkets. In Berlin, the regulation only applies to public traffic. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the compulsory use of nose and mouth masks is moreover extended to weekly markets, bus stops, railway stations, taxis, medical practices, post office, bank, petrol stations.
- Beginning from 27 April, schools gradually open for pupils that graduate this year. Hereby, additional hygienic, precautionary measures were implemented.
- After debates concerning the data protection standards of the so-called "Corona Application", Federal Minister of Health, Jens Spahn, and Head of the Chancellery, Helge Braun explained in a statement that the German Federal Government aims to find a solution in which data is stored in a decentralised manner. The respective Corona-App shall identify COVID-19 infection-chains. Thus, the app warns users if their smartphone was in near distance to another user that was tested positive

for COVID-19. According to Mr. Spahn and Mr. Braun, the German Federal Government is currently in discussions with Google and Apple on how to introduce the app.

- In a position paper, one of the opposition parties, the Greens call for the introduction of consumer voucher to support local retail. Accordingly, each citizen should receive a voucher of EUR 250 that can be spent in food retail, for groceries or in the gastronomy. According to the position paper, the vouchers shall be distributed as soon as the epidemiological situation permits. The overall aim is the strengthening of local businesses that are mainly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. SPAIN

- The task force advising the government on the Covid-19 crisis has put together a [strategy](#) towards a transition period once the de-escalation phase begins. The document recommends strengthening the four following pillars: 1) healthcare, 2) epidemiologic surveillance, 3) identification and early detection of contagion sources, and 4) collective protection measures.
 - Healthcare: healthcare should be ensured in hospitals and in primary care centres, both for non-covid-19 and covid-19 patients, also in the scenario of other outbreaks;
 - Epidemiologic surveillance: indicators and surveillance protocols should allow an effective monitoring of cases;
 - Identification and early detection: the strategy should continue focusing on containment by diagnosis of all symptomatic cases with antibody tests or other tests, early isolation of cases under suitable conditions, identification and quarantine of individuals with whom the diagnosed case have had recent contact, and identification of possible sources of transmission within specific groups (elderly, health professionals etc.);
 - Collective protection measures: both the central and the regional governments should guarantee social distancing, hand hygiene and the use of face masks.
 - Only when these four strategic capacities are reinforced will the government be able to start lifting mobility and work-related restrictions.
- The strict lockdown measures in Spain that have been in force since 15 March are now starting to ease. Children under 14 years old are allowed to go outside under certain conditions since 26 April introduced in a legal [order](#), and the rest of the population is expected to join them as of 2 May, announced by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. The latter will be discussed on 28 April during the Council of Ministers and therefore details have not been provided yet. However, the Centre for Scientific Research (CSIC) has warned the government that should de-escalation not be carried out properly, there could be a new outbreak in the upcoming weeks.

VII. UNITED KINGDOM

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson returns to work in Downing Street today (27 April) after spending more than three weeks in hospital and recovery after contracting COVID-19. Johnson has been briefed daily on COVID-19 developments and has held several video conferences with First Secretary Dominic Raab on COVID-19 policy and strategy. Johnson will first chair the daily morning meeting of senior ministers to discuss COVID-19; Johnson's key task upon returning will be a decision on when to ease lockdown measures, and what form easing may take as the COVID-19 economic crisis mounts. Ministers have already sought to shift the Government's message from 'Stay at Home', which has proved popular and effective in helping to lower the infection rate, to a push to adapt to a 'new normal' as a comprehensive end to lockdown measures remains out of sight.
- Widespread testing remains a key priority for the Government to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and yesterday (26 April) launched mobile testing units, operated by the Army, to increase access to COVID-19 testing. The units will focus on both areas of greatest demand for testing and sites that are difficult to access; the units will test vulnerable individuals and frontline workers at key sites and hives of infection such as care homes, prisons and benefits centres. The units will supplement the core testing efforts of drive-through test sites and large diagnostic laboratories ('mega-labs'). Vehicles will be fitted with fully functioning testing sites, and facilities can be set up in under 20 minutes, enabling rapid testing across a wide area. Swabs collected in the sites will be sent to the mega-labs for processing and results will be available in 48 hours. There are eight existing units, and 96 are expected to be deployed through May.
- The expanded and more flexible testing effort has allowed the Government to extend COVID-19 testing to all essential workers in England who present symptoms, as well as members of their household. A new online booking system allows both employers to register and refer self-isolating staff and employees to directly book a test for themselves or members of their household. The Government remains committed to testing 100,000 samples per day by the end of April; testing is now at around 30,000 per day.
- The Government has launched a long-term study to track COVID-19 in the general population to better understand rates of infection and the development of antibodies. 20,000 households – up to 300,000 people – will take part in the 12 month epidemiological study; blood samples will be taken from adults from around 1,000 households to show what proportion of the population has developed antibodies to COVID-19, and antigen-testing swabs will be taken from all participating households.

- A treatment pathway for COVID-19 involving the use of convalescent plasma – the antibody-rich plasma of a virus survivor – has proceeded to clinical trial. There is some evidence that convalescent plasma transfusion benefits COVID-19 patients; the robust randomised controlled trial (RCT) will assess its safety and efficacy, and at what point in their illness convalescent plasma should be administered. A second trial is likely to follow if the clinical trial shows early signs of widespread effectiveness and does not compromise patients' health. If effective, the national programme will deliver up to 10,000 units of plasma a week to the NHS for the treatment of COVID-19; this would treat 5,000 patients each week. NHS Blood and Transplant is urging people to come forward and donate plasma through apheresis – a 45-minute process to separate plasma from the blood – to meet the 10,000-unit target.