

## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

### #COVIDJOURNAL SURVEY – DRAW-UP OF RESPONSES

During the month of May 2020, Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna has shared the “covidjournal” questionnaire, investigating which perceptions people around Europe have on the recent measures taken by the National Governments and the EU in response to COVID-19.

Thank you very much to those who have participated! Now, we would like to share data and percentage of the survey with you, as well as our infographics, some news, and links as good “food for thoughts”.

The following information is updated as of 3 June 2020, as the respondents took the survey between the beginning and the end of May. Our aim is to provide you with the set of measures that have been taken at both national and EU level in chronological order, and to communicate them in a clear and concise manner for the benefit of our public.

Your observations (30!) are an extremely precious starting point to analyse the respondents’ perceptions about their own Government’s and the EU’s actions in the fight against the Coronavirus emergency.

First of all, the majority of the participants **called for more transparency and clarity** about the facts and news that are reported to the people, especially those regarding new legislative and policy acts. It is striking that some also admit that they would like to know more about EU Institutions and Member States competences over different domains; this potentially indicates a general unawareness about how the EU decision-making process takes place, and what the role of the different actors is.

Another concern expressed by the respondents was the **lack of cohesion and coordination**, matched with an intergovernmental approach to the crisis management. According to some, this attitude has increased **inequalities** among Member States, and will continue to do so unless a change in the Union’s approach takes place. For instance, it is suggested enhancing knowledge-sharing and mutual support among Countries, as well as more radical transformations such as the institution of a unique Constitution, a unique tax system – even a European army!

On the economic level, some interviewees supported the creation of Coronabonds, while others warned about the importance of **helping States and companies move towards digitalisation**, which will inevitably take place in a few years. Economic solidarity among people and businesses was also mentioned.

Lastly, a few respondents also suggested creating both **economic and healthcare solidarity** among Member States.

Besides personal opinions, what is clear is that, in times of confusion and uncertainty, information plays a key role and each of us should be able to benefit from good information service and news.

At this stage, we can now move on to look in detail each of the topics investigated in the survey.

Let’s start by following the order of the questions!

The first round of questions was targeted to understand how the emergency has been tackled from a national perspective. The first three questions investigated the national health systems, the economic situation and the tensions at social level. The last two questions of this section were more directed towards the European level, paving the way to section three, specifically designed to analyse the European Union context in depth. The idea of this review is to provide the data on the questionnaire, while highlighting the main measures undertaken by EU Member States. Italy will be taken as main example, as well as other MSs, which will be compared to the Italian case\*. The comparison has not to be understood in negative terms; rather its aim is to highlight how different approaches may be valid and in support of other Member States (MSs). From a broad perspective, **solidarity among European Countries** has been intense, as shown by the [European Solidarity Tracker](#). Without further hesitation... Enjoy the reading!

## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

*\*Please note that some resources may be in different European languages.*

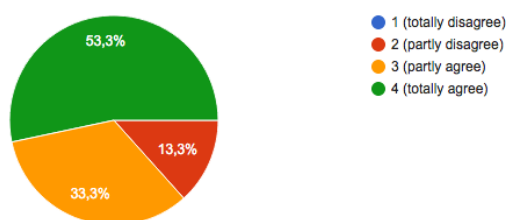
The first question considered whether “*The healthcare crisis due to COVID-19 has created pressures on the regional organisation (e.g. Länder, Autonomous Regions, Provinces or Municipalities) of the national healthcare system*”. The majority of the respondents agree with the statement, specifically more than half totally agree, and the 33,3% partly agree.

What is worth mentioning is that the European Union cannot intervene on national measures on the health system; rather, the Union can only have a coordinative role. Therefore, when tackling this issue, one should keep in mind not only the above-mentioned function that the EU can play, but also that among MSs the NHS differ from one-another. Hence, there are five main systems when it comes to health, be they: *a) decentralised systems*, meaning that the management and funding of the system is given to regions, such as the case of Italy or Spain; or *b) centralised systems*, in which the central government has most of responsibilities, despite the fact that implementation is at territorial level through agencies acting on behalf of the central administration.

More into practice, it is undeniable that some national health systems have been facing great pressure, especially those with the highest number of cases. For example, **Italy**, one of the most affected States, announced the introduction of lockdown measures, in order to stop the spread of the virus. In terms of funds and investments, specific premises to cure COVID-19 patients, such as “**Covid Hospital**” or “**Covid Intensive Care**”, were constructed; while the new Decree has allocated **€ 3.25 billion** in support of the **health system**. In order to have another perspective on what has been done around Europe, we can take **Germany** into account. Similarly to Italy, Berlin has defined some stringent measures too: **big events**, such as festivals or sports events, **are not allowed until August 31<sup>st</sup>**, while museums or cultural sites re-open under certain condition. Moreover, at the beginning of May, the Federal Government defined some measures, targeted to: *a) ensure that the health system would have functioned effectively, so that to protect people; b) overcome the pandemic thanks to cooperation at international level; c) and help private companies and the workforce*. In addition, **€ 122 billion** have been allocated to in order to provide sufficient **funds** to overcome the crisis. Overall, even though in different ways, both Italy and Germany have taken some measures, in terms of funds allocation and of social rules, in order to face this health crisis. At European level, further support to MSs has also come from the Joint Procurement Agreement (JPA). The Commission has launched four calls for medical supplies and equipment, while € 9.4 billion have been allocated to the programme EU4Health in response to the current crisis.

created pressures on the regional organization (e.g. Länder, Autonomous Regions, Provinces or Municipalities) of the national healthcare system

30 risposte



The second question was more targeted to society and the consequences that this health crisis is having on us. As affirmed by the International Labour Organisation, the corona crisis will intensify the already existing **fragile conditions** of some Countries. Thus, States experiencing conflicts or natural disaster are now called

## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

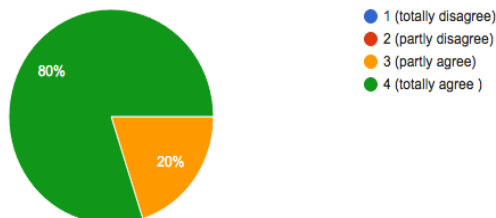
to face and respond to this pandemic, while being not so well equipped to do so. Social tensions can result from different situations: the **lack of protection and safety at work**; the absence of jobs opportunity itself; or the impossibility to access the health system.

It is clear that this aspect of the crisis is quite relevant and widely spread. Social tensions are affecting, by and large, all Member States, which are therefore acting in order to ease those pressures. In **Italy**, for example, the Minister of Interior and that of Equal Opportunity worked together so that to publish "**directives**" for **anti-violence centres**; while the number of days due to paid off (*ex law 104*) has increased to 12. In addition, economic support (400/800 €) is given through the so-called "**emergency income**" measure. Furthermore, when it comes to non-Italian speakers, different local communities and authorities have provided translation and services in different languages so that to allow every person in Italy to understand how to behave and keep safe in these times of health emergency. Similarly, also in **Poland**, Polish doctors have been urging for making foreigners aware of **free coronavirus treatment**, while two campaigns #pomocdlaseniora (help for elderly) and ##WdzięczniMedykom (grateful to doctors) have been initiated in order to help old people and buy medical supplies for those working in hospitals. From a European perspective, around **13 million European citizens** can benefit from the Fund for the European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD), whose regulation has been recently amended in order to make it easier for Member States to access the fund and provide support to those in need.

As reported below, differently to the previous question, in this case, the majority of respondents supported the statement. In fact, none disagrees or partly disagrees.

caused tensions at the social level (fear of being affected, fear concerning supplies, fear of losing one's job, ...)

30 risposte



The third question focussed on economy. Surely, it is quite evident that this crisis is having an impact on the economic systems of the European Member States, as also emerged through the graph below. More than half of the participants supported what stated: "*The healthcare crisis due to COVID-19 has generated problems to the economic system, (with repercussions on SMEs; freelancers, retailers, workers...)*". From a general perspective, the GDP in the EU has decreased by 3,3 % compared to the 3,8% of the euro area. Even though caused by different events, apparently, the trend is sharply shrinking towards the level recorded in 2009. Yet, the European Union is now acting in order to support the MSs' economies and boost the restart. Thus, the EU has mobilised around € 3.4 trillion. This economic umbrella includes Commission's **SURE mechanism**, as well as liquidity measures to help SMEs, and EIB Group investments. Furthermore, the **European Semester Spring Package**, with specific recommendations to European Member States, defines the main guidance in terms of economic policy within the context of coronavirus pandemic. The package identifies two main targets: short term objectives, as far as easing the socio-economic consequences of the virus is concerned; and short to medium term, referring to inclusive and sustainable development, including green transition and digital transformation.

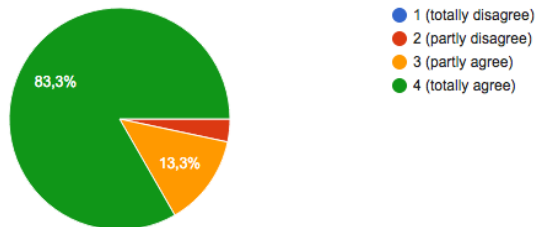
More into details, concrete help and support has been given to both Spain and Italy on what has been called "**umbrella scheme**". In fact, these two Mediterranean Countries have benefitted from support for R&D, as well as wage subsidies; and help for self-employed workers and SMEs, respectively.

## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

More details on the economic sphere will be provided below, within the third section.

generated problems to the national economic system (with repercussions on SME, freelancers, retailers, workers...)

30 risposte



The last two questions did not focus only on national levels; rather, they investigated the engagement of Member States with one another. The fourth question specifically targeted trade and Single European Market (SEM), while the fifth took solidarity among MSs into account. But let's follow the order.

Generally speaking, SEM is the bulk of the economic restart, and the European Commission is willing to strengthen and improve it, focussing on SMEs, key players of the market.

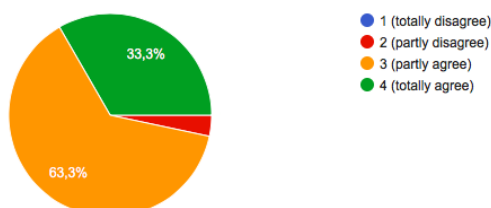
Free movements of goods and, more broadly, of people, has to be understood within a bigger context. Thus, during a press conference, the Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen has illustrated the "**European roadmap**" showing the path towards common lifting of containment measures. In this framework, in order to spur the economic restart, besides Single European Market, investments; responsibility at international level; resilience and governance have to be taken into account.

Concerning SEM in detail, "**green lanes**" have been implemented in order to keep freight movements. Particularly, as far as border crossings are concerned, checks or health screenings should not take more than 15 minutes. Furthermore, guidelines to facilitate border crossing of essential workers have been delivered. In addition, **securing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and medical supply** has always been a priority at European level; therefore, great work has been done in order to manufacture new protective equipment for the **EU market**. The scheme consists of supporting measures, in terms of capacity increase, of already existing EU manufacturing facilities; boosting for the conversion of production lines, especially in the textile sector, to produce PPE; while looking for cooperation with companies that are not active in the EU market.

Similarly to the previous answers, also in this case, the participants showed a quite compact trend: more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  recognise that the health crisis has created distortion within the European Market. Only 3,3% partly disagreed, while none totally disagreed.

created distortions or interruptions in the European Internal Market (difficulty in goods mobility, distortion of competition...)

30 risposte

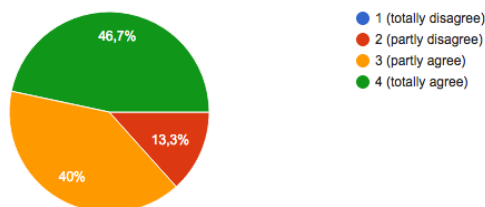


## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

Finally, the last question of this part investigated the degree of resilience of national healthcare systems. Specifically, the statement affirmed *“the healthcare crisis due to COVID-19 has made clear that some Member States handled the crisis better than others, thanks to well-functioning economic and healthcare systems which prove their solidity in times of emergency”*. As mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, among Member States there are different structures. Besides the type of systems, centralised or decentralised, dissimilarities can also be found as far as services and expenditures are concerned: for example, MSs with obligatory health insurance (such as Germany, France and The Netherlands); or MSs with national health systems – be they Sweden or Italy. This means that different actors play a more or less prominent role within the management of the health system: from the Government, to insurance companies, and citizens. Besides that, it is true that this crisis has disclosed some already-existing disparities among MSs. Therefore, in time of healthcare crisis, to spur solidarity and alleviate the gaps, the European Commission has launched the two packages of measures: **“Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative” CRII and CRII+**. The latter mobilises the cohesion policy to react rapidly and flexibly to the needs in those highly affected sectors, such as SMEs and labour market, as well as the health care systems. Moreover, to increase the level of solidarity among Member States, the European Union has launched the **#EuropeansAgainstCovid19 campaign**, aimed at saving lives and jobs, **mobilising € 3000 billion**. Finally, additional **9.4 billion €** have been allocated for **EU4Health programme**.

made clear that some Member States handled the crisis better than others, thanks to well-functioning economic and healthcare systems which prove their solidity in times of emergency

30 risposte



In the Third part of the survey we investigated your opinions on the European Union’s response to the COVID-19 emergency. Mixed feelings are reported, expressed through both harsh critics towards these measures’ lack of timeliness and solidarity, and praises to EU’s coordination and implementation ability. Question 6 dealt with solidarity: more than half of the interviewees (56.7%) disagreed on the statement *‘the EU has managed to stimulate solidarity among Member States, and called for concrete actions of mutual help with regard to the different healthcare systems’*.

In this respect, it is worth recalling that, **after a moment of hesitation** – which the European Commission President Mrs. Von der Leyen herself admitted – the EU Institutions have nonetheless **fully exploited their powers to mobilise inter-European solidarity**. Indeed, according to the principle of State sovereignty, although they cannot force national Governments to act, still they can stimulate them to do so. And several Member States did respond to the call! From the provision of personal protective equipment to the hospitalisation of patients from other overwhelmed healthcare structures, each of the Member States either showed or benefitted from EU solidarity.

## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

This was made possible thanks to the [European Emergency Response Coordination Centre, open 24/7](#) and core of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, which has been fundamental for some EU Countries during the Corona-crisis.

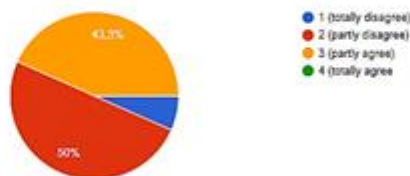
Specifically, [Austria, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg have made their intensive care units available to Dutch, French and Italian patients in critical conditions](#). When it comes to competencies- and facilities-sharing, there is the example of Germany and Luxembourg, who sent air ambulances, pilots, and specialised staff to help Italy, the Netherlands and France cope with the crisis. Other examples include the strengthening of FRONTEX to assist Greece in managing the flows of migrants who keep reaching its territory to find asylum despite the pandemic. Lastly, Baltic Countries have benefitted from EU solidarity, by means of a European Commission co-funded flight which supplied them with medical equipment.

These are just a few of the several actions that have been undertaken by Member States in an effort of mutual support, and coordinated by the European Commission. They are evidence of the very existence of **European solidarity in action**, which can turn out to be decisive in times of emergency such as those we are now living in.

Last but not least, it should not be forgotten that precious help has also come from outside the Union, notably from Albania, China, and Cuba.

managed to stimulate solidarity among Member States and ask for concrete actions of mutual help with regard to the different health systems

30 risposte

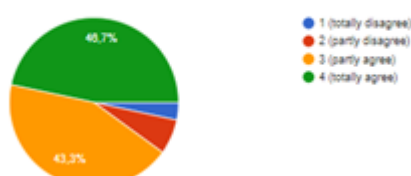


In question 7 we have instead discussed about *lack of timely support by the EU to the first severely hit Countries*. A striking majority of respondents (90%) agreed with the statement. Indeed, on the one hand it is arguable that EU Institutions failed to act in a timely manner. On the other hand, though, it must be recalled that **Member States bear responsibility for health-related measures**, while **EU Institutions can only support, coordinate and/or complement national measures**. And this is what the EU has done after a moment of hesitation: to define **guidelines and criteria to harmonise** various national strategies, to activate EU Instruments such as the European Civil Protection Mechanism and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). Additionally, the exceptional – and hence temporary – [Schengen Agreement suspension](#) has been disposed for non-essential movements until 15 June 2020, and simultaneously came the definition of [guidelines to ensure free movement of goods](#) within EU territory via the **so-called green lanes**.

As it will be explained below, EU Institutions did not stop here but resolutely proceeded to offer aid and relief to Member States.

not acted in a timely manner in support of the first severely hit States

30 risposte



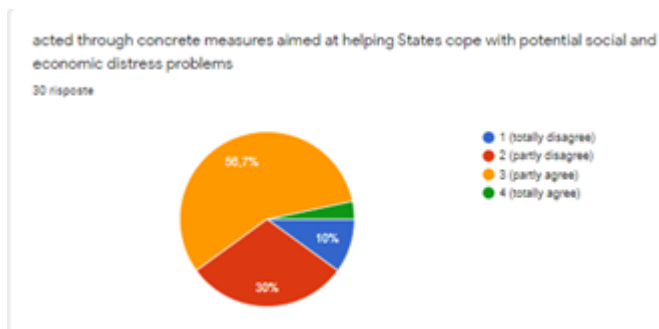
## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

As a matter of fact, question 8 explores whether *the EU has acted through concrete measures aimed at helping States cope with potential social and economic distress problems*. 60% of the respondents believe so, while 40% of them consider that this is not the case.

In this respect, the EU has relentlessly worked to mitigate the pandemic's social and economic repercussions, in particular through the [economic package](#) consisting of a **revised European Stability Mechanism** – which eliminates all conditionalities for medical expenses; **SURE** – to complement national short-term work schemes; and **funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB)**.

More recent measures include the activation of the [fiscal framework's general escape clause to respond to Coronavirus pandemic](#); the [definition of Country-specific recommendations](#) to help each and every State recover from the economic crisis linked to Coronavirus – with both short-term and medium-term strategies. Last but not least, the proposal for [strategic investment facility](#), embodied in the brand new [Next Generation EU Instrument](#), aimed at generating private investment for up to € 1.5 billion to turn key-sectors for the green and digitalised economy resilient to future shocks. Also the European Central Bank's intervention will be crucial: the [purchase of Government bonds within the PEPP](#) (Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme) for a sum of € 750 billion + € 600 billion more, which will remain valid until June 2021 and will help ensure stability in the Eurozone.

From a social perspective, there is the approval of the European Commission's proposal **to redirect all available structural funds to respond to the Corona-crisis**. Similarly, the EU also managed to guarantee essential food supplies via the [strengthening of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#), and to protect agriculture and fisheries via targeted support. Additionally, it has also set up [online tools](#) to allow teachers and students to continue educational activities. Furthermore, the [current Cohesion Policy programmes will receive an additional € 55 billion](#) until 2022 within the new REACT-UE initiative, in an **endeavour to assign funds in proportion to the severity of the pandemic's socio-economic consequences**. The Just Transition Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development will complement this Programme.



Going back to **economic measures**, question 9 specifically explored those **conceived for businesses and citizens**. As strange as it may sound, half of the respondents agreed that *the EU has put in place of all the available resources to help people and businesses*, while the other half disagreed. So, where does the truth lie?

In this regard, the decisions adopted by EU Institutions are numerous and sensational, as they are historically unprecedented in terms of financing that has been mobilised. Besides the already-mentioned SURE, it is worth mentioning the [decision to redirect € 1 bln from the EU budget as a guarantee to the European Investment Fund to incentivise banks to provide liquidity to SMEs and small mid-caps](#). This will help 100 thousand of these European companies with about € 8 bln of financing. The Commission also [decided to expand the scope of the State aid Temporary Framework to further support the economy](#) in the context of the Coronavirus outbreak.

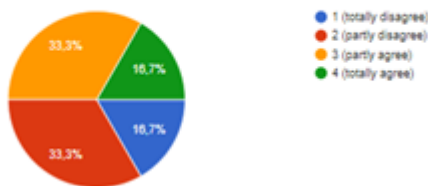
## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

The ECB and the EIB have also played a crucial role in this sense: for instance, the former has intervened with the above-mentioned Purchase Programmes. At the same time, the latter has [approved a € 25 bln European guarantee](#) which aims to deliver up to € 200 bln for the European economy.

Lastly, a sensational proposal within the Next Generation EU Instrument: to relaunch EU's economy by incentivising private investments. This should occur, *inter alia*, through [a new Solvency Support Instrument](#) (intended to mobilise resources for the benefit of ailing European firms); and through the [strengthening of InvestEU](#), core EU investment programme for the implementation of private projects.

put in place all of the available resources to help people and businesses

30 risposte



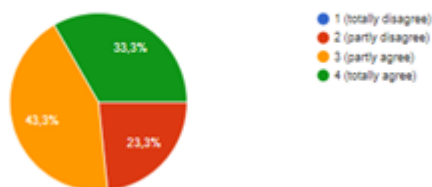
On a more general level, question 10 asked participants whether they agreed with the statement '*the EU acted in an apparently confused and uncoordinated manner*'. 76.6% of them agreed. As we have previously illustrated, EU Institutions can intervene about 'common safety concerns in public health matters for aspects defined in' the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) only to coordinate sovereign national measures in this domain – according to art. 4.2.k, TFUE. Therefore, EU action has taken the form of a series of [guidelines to guarantee continuity of repatriation and asylum procedures](#) as much as possible while also fully ensuring the protection of people's health and fundamental rights, as well as [to protect EU passenger rights in the context of the crisis](#) – just to cite a few.

[Guidelines for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services](#) also proved to be vital, just like [those on the optimal and rational supply of medicines to avoid shortages during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

**All of these measures** have been defined by a task force of European specialised epidemiologists and virologists, and are hence **science-based**. Be that as it may, it is evident that these measures' effectiveness can only be assessed once the emergency will have come to an end.

acted in an apparently confused and uncoordinated manner

30 risposte



With the last question (number eleven) '*the EU has both coordinated and supported scientific research for the vaccine, and economically integrated Member States' actions*', 63.3% believed so, while just 36.7% was of the opposite opinion.

Indeed, the European Commission has intensely worked to accelerate research on the vaccine, and on possible treatments and prevention strategies. For instance, it has created a [EU COVID-19 Data Portal](#) to enable European scientists to share their data and results, and contributed [with a pledge of € 1.4 bln to the Coronavirus Global response Initiative](#) – a sum coming from the EU's flagship **Horizon 2020 programme** and

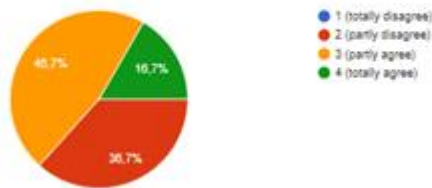


## Europe Direct Emilia-Romagna

aimed at contributing towards a universal and affordable global access to the vaccine. Moreover, the Commission has defined a EU-wide [roadmap towards common lifting of containment measures](#), and proposed [EU4HEALTH](#), a revolutionary programme that endeavours to change the current paradigm in order to better cope with sanitary crises in the future, improve EU citizens' health and make healthcare systems more resilient to future shocks. These have already begun to bear fruit: one of the 18 selected projects that will be financed by the EU [has showed positive results as far as the development of a molecular diagnostic test for Coronavirus for near patient testing](#) is concerned.

When it comes to coordination of national economic measures, we can refer to multiple examples: besides SURE, the ECB's and the EIB's intervention, the European Commission has lately presented the [Tourism and Transport Package](#), a series of guidelines and recommendations intended to help EU Countries gradually lift travel restrictions, allow businesses to reopen, and ensure that people in Europe can benefit from a safe and relaxing summer while respecting necessary health precautions. Additionally, it has set forth a package to encourage banks to make full use of the flexibility embedded in the EU's prudential and accounting frameworks, so that they can fully support citizens and companies during this pandemic by providing funding – [the so-called Banking Package](#).

both coordinated and supported scientific research for the vaccine, and economically integrated Member States' actions  
30 risposte



These are just few of the examples of how the European Union has managed, and is managing the pandemic crisis, mostly through national measures coordination actions. For more details, please visit [our website!](#)

### To sum up

In light of this analysis, it is appropriate and timely to draw some considerations, with the specification that they are based upon 30 responses – and hence must not be considered in absolute terms.

First, these responses reveal dissatisfaction and mistrust with respect to both national and EU reactions to the pandemic. Second, solidarity among Member States – and the European Union's ability to stimulate it – is perceived as insufficiently effective.

In order **to counter scepticism and strive to revive our fellow citizens' confidence in the European Union**, we have showcased various measures adopted by the EU for the benefit of Member States, their industries and citizens, by also specifying the scope and limits within which it can act.

Of course, Europe Direct Centre's mission of spreading information and communicating to citizens does not stop here! Our followers can **keep visiting our website, our social media channels and [take a look at our infographics!](#)**

For a wider overview of all the EU's actions and policy proposals, please visit other official Institutional sources – such as the [European Commission's section to fight disinformation](#), the [national authority and public health agency of EU Member States'](#) websites, the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's](#) website, and the [World Health Organisation](#) website.