

Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2020/2118(INI)
Procedure completed	
The role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic	
Subject 4.20.01 Medicine, diseases 6.30 Development cooperation 6.50 Emergency, food, humanitarian aid, aid to refugees, Emergency Aid Reserve	
Legislative priorities The EU's response to the Covid-19 pandemic	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Development	 BENTELE Hildegard  NEUSER Norbert Shadow rapporteur  ANDREWS Barry  HERZBERGER-FOFANA Pierrette  BILDE Dominique  KEMPA Beata  AUBRY Manon	30/04/2020 30/04/2020
European Commission	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Culture and Education	The committee decided not to give an opinion. Commissioner URPIILAINEN Jutta	
	Commission DG		
	International Cooperation and Development		

Key events			
17/09/2020	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/04/2021	Vote in committee		
03/05/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0151/2021	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2020/2118(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	DEVE/9/03583

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE661.884	02/12/2020	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE663.361	20/01/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0151/2021	03/05/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0308/2021	23/06/2021	EP	Summary

The role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

The Committee on Development adopted an own-initiative report prepared by Hildegard BENTELE (EPP, DE) and Norbert NEUSER (S&D, DE) on the role of the EUs development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is a global pandemic affecting every country in the world but the economic and social impact of the pandemic has been felt most strongly in developing countries. The pandemic has greatly exacerbated the existing debt problems of developing countries, undermining their efforts to mobilise sufficient resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Team Europe approach

While welcoming the EU's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Members called for significant new resources to be mobilised in a flexible way to help developing countries around the world address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Making safe vaccines, treatments, equipment, therapeutics and diagnostics available globally in a fast, equitable and affordable manner must be one of the first steps. Members welcomed COVAX, a global scheme to ensure equitable and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines, and the strong support of Team Europe, which is the largest donor and has so far allocated more than EUR 850 million to the initiative. They stressed that safe vaccines should be made easily accessible and affordable for all, insisting that health workers and the most vulnerable people should be given priority.

The report called on the Team Europe to strengthen effective mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development. The EU and Member States should allocate additional funds to countries that will suffer the greatest impact of the pandemic.

Food security

Stressing that the pandemic threatens food security in rural, urban and peri-urban settings, Members stressed the development of resilient food systems and the need for a global transformation to accelerate the development of equitable, safe and healthy food systems, using the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 as an opportunity to better rebuild after the COVID-19 crisis.

Poverty and social protection

An estimated 47 million more people will fall into extreme poverty by 2021, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating the problems caused by the conflicts and hitting women and girls the hardest. Members stressed the importance of universal social protection and social dialogue. They called on the Commission to work with partner countries to develop strategies for economic recovery and job creation and to improve social security systems.

Refugees and displaced persons

The report stressed the importance of helping refugees and displaced persons to cope with the disproportionate socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, by further strengthening livelihoods and supporting income-generating activities, as well as their access to safety. It called on the EU and Member States to create the conditions for children and young people in refugee camps to have access to education, including distance learning opportunities, in particular basic learning activities.

Strengthening the health sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the persistent problem of global drug shortages, which has serious consequences in developing countries. The report emphasised that development assistance should focus on ensuring universal health care system coverage from a comprehensive and rights-based perspective. It called for a review of proposed or existing strategies and partnerships to strengthen and support public health systems in partner countries, including pandemic preparedness and the organisation and management of health systems.

Members stressed the need to address delays in national immunisation programmes as soon as possible and to ensure that the provision of other basic health services is resumed. They urged the EU and Member States to: (i) work towards equal and affordable access to universally available vaccines based on the principle of international solidarity and (ii) commit to making anti-pandemic vaccines and treatments a global public good, accessible to all.

Human rights, governance and democracy

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, many governments have used the emergency to justify placing restrictions on democratic processes and the civil space, including limiting humanitarian access, and to oppress minorities. The report highlighted the particularly severe consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns and the collateral damage that has been suffered by women, girls and children, in particular the rise in gender-based violence.

The Commission and Member States are invited to support parliaments in continuing to play an active role in scrutinising government measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and in assessing the human rights implications of public health measures. Efforts to better prevent and combat domestic violence should be intensified.

Debt service and sound budgets

Members called on the Commission and Member States to promote the full implementation of the G20 initiative to suspend debt servicing for the poorest countries. They urged the Commission to support international efforts in this regard, saying that the interest saved by the suspension should instead be invested in the health sector, which is often severely underfunded in developing countries.

The report also stressed the importance of addressing debt sustainability in partner countries as a priority. The Commission is called upon to take further steps to tackle the problems of illicit financial flows, tax evasion and tax fraud to improve the tax bases of developing countries.

Education

Members called for education to remain a spending priority in the EU's development policy and for the social and cultural function of schools to be given due consideration. They recommended that UNICEF's actions be supported and that Member States share their practices of maintaining education even in times of crisis. They called on the EU and its Member States to exploit the potential of distance learning.

The role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

The European Parliament adopted by 443 votes to 40, with 209 abstentions, a resolution on the role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 is a global pandemic affecting every country in the world but the economic and social impact of the pandemic has been felt most strongly in developing countries. The pandemic has greatly exacerbated the existing debt problems of developing countries, undermining their efforts to mobilise sufficient resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The economic consequences of the measures taken to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries will exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, including by further weakening health infrastructure, worsening food insecurity, widening education gaps and increasing poverty and social exclusion.

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The report called on the Team Europe to strengthen effective mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development. The EU and Member States should allocate additional funds to countries that will suffer the greatest impact of the pandemic.

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Refugees and displaced persons

Parliament stressed the importance of helping refugees and displaced persons to cope with the disproportionate socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, by further strengthening livelihoods and supporting income-generating activities, as well as their access to safety.

Strengthening the health sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the persistent problem of global drug shortages, which has serious consequences in developing countries.

Members stressed the need to address delays in national immunisation programmes as soon as possible and to ensure that the provision of other basic health services is resumed. They urged the EU and Member States to: (i) work towards equal and affordable access to universally available vaccines based on the principle of international solidarity and (ii) commit to making anti-pandemic vaccines and treatments a global public good, accessible to all.

Human rights, governance and democracy

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, many governments have used the emergency to justify placing restrictions on democratic processes and the civil space, including limiting humanitarian access, and to oppress minorities. The resolution highlighted the particularly severe consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns and the collateral damage that has been suffered by women, girls and children, in particular the rise in gender-based violence. The EU is called on to better mainstream childrens rights in the fight against climate change and in its actions to promote resilience and disaster preparedness directly in social sectors such as education, health, social and child protection.

The Commission and Member States are invited to support parliaments in continuing to play an active role in scrutinising government measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and in assessing the human rights implications of public health measures.

Debt service and sound budgets

Members called on the Commission and Member States to promote the full implementation of the G20 initiative to suspend debt servicing for the poorest countries. They urged the Commission to support international efforts in this regard, saying that the interest saved by the suspension should instead be invested in the health sector, which is often severely underfunded in developing countries.

The resolution also stressed the importance of addressing debt sustainability in partner countries as a priority. The Commission is called upon to take further steps to tackle the problems of illicit financial flows, tax evasion and tax fraud to improve the tax bases of developing countries.

Resilience

Parliament stressed the importance of exchanging best practices with and assisting partner countries (including capacity building of their local and regional administrations) and of exchanging best practices with and assisting local civil society organisations in identifying vulnerabilities and building up prevention and crisis response mechanisms as well as protecting critical infrastructure in order better to deal with future systemic shocks of all kinds.

It underlined the importance of adopting a One Health approach from central government down to community level, in order to prevent or combat zoonoses.

Parliament called on the recovery strategy to pursue the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Resilience against future public health crises must also be built upon research into diseases that cause deadly outbreaks in developing countries on a regular basis. In this regard, the EU and its Member States are called on to fund more research with a view to developing vaccines that prevent future outbreaks of diseases such as malaria or zika.