**SUM-UP BY THE PRESIDENCY**

*following the VTC of Health Ministers on 15 April 2020*

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented health crisis in the history of the European Union but also a serious threat to the EU economy and society. The Presidency thereby welcomes the concrete measures that the European Commission has taken in cooperation with Member States to respond to the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19.

As regards public health, our focus should remain on minimising, as far as possible, human suffering, in terms of the number of people falling ill and people dying.

Member States agree that adequate capacities of Health systems are crucial for deciding on de-escalation of measures currently in place and that exit strategies measures should be coordinated and sustainable in the long run and, respecting the principle of solidarity.

Ensuring wide and robust population testing, protection of vulnerable groups, comprehensive communication to the general public, and creating a framework that enables protection of persons having an increased risk of infection, including through electronic solutions, are of utmost importance to ensure that exit strategies are sustainable.

Joint work on exploring therapeutics and research on vaccines together with securing the supply of necessary medical products is vital.

In that context and recalling commitments undertaken in the Council conclusions on COVID-19 adopted in February 2020 ***information-sharing and cooperation between Member States in the field of health, in particular on surveillance, risk assessment, risk management and countermeasures to COVID-19 remains essential.***

Acknowledging that return to normality will require significant efforts, ***in line with the advice of ECDC and recognizing that de-escalation of measures is dependent on the epidemiological situation and capacity of the national health system in each Member State, it is necessary to ensure coordination in order to prevent spill-over and negative effects from one Member State to another when de-escalation of measures is introduced.***

The Presidency remains determined to work together with Member States and European Institutions to facilitate a common approach to exit strategies with the aim to diminish the health and socio-economic impact of the pandemic. ***The Commission’s assistance to Member States in coordinating the de-escalation of measures, in line with the*** ***Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures, is welcome.***