

Portuguese prime minister says European Union must stand strong against coronavirus



Lisbon, July 9 (RHC)-- Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa has said it is essential for the European Union to stand strong in its fight against the coronavirus outbreak and its effect on the bloc's economy.

"We either come of it together or we die together," Costa told online conference Global Leaders' Day organised by the International Labour Organization. "We need a strong EU."

EU leaders still have to agree on the makeup of any recovery package, and a meeting on the recovery fund and the next joint EU budget will take place in Brussels on July 17th and 18th.

In other news, the European Commission has struck deals with drugmakers Roche and Merck KGaA to secure supplies of experimental treatments for COVID-19, a Commission source told the Reuters news agency.

The deals cover Roche's arthritis medicine RoActemra and Merck's multiple sclerosis drug Rebif -- both seen as potential treatments for COVID-19 -- and will secure supplies to any of the 27 EU member states willing to buy them, the source said.

According to Reuters, the source, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the topic, did not disclose the terms of the deals. Roche, Merck and a Commission spokeswoman were not immediately available for comment.

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