

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ASSIST COMPANIES AND WORKERS IMPACTED BY COVID-19

Since January 2020, an epidemic of Coronavirus COVID-19, qualified as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, has spread from China and now concerns 130 countries, among which France.

In March 2020, the government launched **an action plan to support and assist businesses** impacted by the coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19).

This action plan amounts to 45 bn EUR and is divided into a set of **concrete and immediate government measures** for companies that would encounter proven difficulties linked to this health crisis in the deployment of their activity in France. The Ministry of Economy and Finance has furthermore created an **economic continuity task force** to manage the impact on the French economy, through a daily decision-making process. A draft law allowing the implementation of these measures has been presented during the Cabinet Council meeting of March 18th, 2020.

These support measures will be applied on a case-by-case basis according to the situation of each French company and de facto of each French subsidiary of an international company. They may be revised according to the evolution of the epidemic in the coming weeks.

They are of several types:

- **Tax measures;**
- **Credit guarantee**
- **Economic and social measures;**
- **Establishment of dedicated contacts and specific sources of information.**

NB: An important effort to provide detailed and updated information on the evolution of the epidemic is conducted by the Government ([FAQ de gouvernement.fr](https://www.gouvernement.fr)).

A call center providing all relevant information is also available: 0 800 130 000

TAX MEASURES

For companies that encounter cash flow problems, the following measures are applicable:

- Allow **upcoming social charges and/or tax payments** to the URSSAF and/or French tax administration **to be carried over, by automatic right and without prior authorization.**

The request for extended payment terms (or for refund of March payments made before March 15th), will be applicable:

- For **social charges**, via the URSSAF website for employers and self-employed workers (extension possible up to 3 months, without penalty);
- For **taxes**, on the online platform www.impots.gouv.fr, or via the following [link](#).

- Allow **direct tax rebates** for businesses in the most precarious situations. These rebates will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

- Accelerate the **refund by the administration of VAT and tax credits** to companies.

CREDIT GUARANTEE

In the event of proven difficulty, the French Government (via Bpifrance) will be able to guarantee up to 90% of the cash loans which companies (SMEs and mid-caps) could need. Globally, the French President has announced a State guarantee for bank loans granted to companies, up to an **aggregated amount of 300 bn EUR**.

Starting from March 25, every (non-financial) company registered in France can request through their bank the granting of a State guaranteed loan (“prêt garanti par l’Etat or PGE”). This State guaranteed loan is a short term liquidity loan, which could cover up to 3 months of turnover and up to 2 years of the net wage bill for start-ups.

Two procedures are in place :

- Companies whose turnover is lower than 1.5 bn €, are invited to contact their own bank. After analysis of the case by the bank and its pre-agreement, the company should submit its request through a dedicated platform, managed by Bpifrance (follow the following link for submission : [link](#))
- For companies whose turnover exceeds 1.5 bn €, and staff higher than 5000 employees, the first stage is similar (contacting their own bank). Then the case will be assessed by the General Directorate of the Treasury with the support of Bpifrance. The file should be sent by e-mail to garantie.etat.grandesentreprises@bpifrance.fr

-In addition, a toll-free number (0 969 370 240) is in service since March 10 in order to refer companies to Bpifrance agencies for issues related to their treasury.

- Companies will be able to request the support of the government and Banque de France (credit mediation) when **requesting a rescheduling or moratorium of credits with their banks**, for the next 6 months.

Credit Mediator contact form : https://mediateur-credit.banque-france.fr/contactez-nous_mediation_credit

- The Minister of Economy and Finance also announced the **creation of a solidarity fund** of at least 1 bn EUR for "micro-entrepreneurs, the smallest businesses, for independents, with revenues of less than 1 million EUR and which have lost between March 2019 and March 2020 at least 70% of their sales".

- For Small and Medium size companies facing difficulties, bills (water, gaz, rent, electricity) may be temporarily suspended (consultations are conducted by the State with large landlords and utility providers in order to encourage them to exercise benevolence in this respect).

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MEASURES

The following measures have been adopted in order to ensure the economic survival of companies and the maintenance of employment:

- **A simplified and reinforced use of the partial activity system** which is available to companies experiencing cyclical economic difficulties. This system, also called partial unemployment, enables companies to receive financial aid to offset the loss of income caused by the reduction in the working time of the concerned employees.

Request form : <https://activitepartielle.emploi.gouv.fr/aparts/>

Companies have 30 days from the interruption of activity to apply for the partial activity system; indemnification will

be retro-active.

- In the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, the government has also decided to **strengthen the compensatory compensation paid to employees** undergoing partial employment: the Minister of Labor announced on March 13 that partial unemployment, normally compensated up to the minimum wage, will be fully supported (100%) by the government, up to 4.5 times the SMIC minimum wage, in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

- **Support from the Business Mediator** (<https://www.economie.gouv.fr/mediateur-des-entreprises>) for businesses that face a conflict in their business relationships with customers and/or suppliers.

Business Mediator contact form : <https://www.economie.gouv.fr/mediateur-des-entreprises/contactez-mediateur-des-entreprises>

- **Acknowledgement of the COVID-19 epidemic as a case of “force majeure”** for the public procurement of the French government and local authorities, resulting in a waiver of late penalties.

- For certain industries (construction, chemistry), an acceleration of authorization procedures for new supply sources, in order to support these industries, while at the same time respecting social, environmental and European norms.

USEFUL CONTACTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

We invite you to consult the Government's website very regularly in order to obtain up-to-date information: <https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus>.

Dedicated contact points have been set up to support companies facing economic difficulties linked to the COVID-19 epidemic:

- for any question, companies can contact the General Directorate of Companies (Ministry of Economy and Finance) via the following address: covid.dge@finances.gouv.fr

- for help with administrative procedures, companies are invited to get in touch with the SPOC (**single point of contact**) of the DIRECCTE in the region where their company is located (contacts: <https://www.economie.gouv.fr/coronavirus-soutien-entreprises#>).

- in order to **inform companies and employees in real time**, the Ministry of Labor has published the following document, which is updated frequently: https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/coronavirus_entreprises_et_salaries_qr_17032020.pdf

All Business France teams, in France and abroad, are also mobilized to answer questions from international companies, subsidiaries in France and international talents:

Your local contact: Florent Belleteste, Head of BusinessFrance Zürich : florent.belleteste@businessfrance.fr

Your contacts in France:

Information and contact for investors: www.choosefrance.fr/en

Information and contact for international talents: www.welcometofrance.com