

# Coronavirus in Italy. New Government decree to strengthen the country's economy.

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Italy is now entering the second week of lockdown to contain the coronavirus epidemic testing the country's strength. Even if there are reasons to be concerned, the decisive response of the Government is staving off the contagion in the majority of the country. As of March 16, measures are no longer limited to the lockdown, thanks to the new decree adopted.

The Government intends to pump 25 billion euros in the economy to mitigate the impact of the outbreak. The decree provides 3.5 billion euros to the health service and its heroic workers and another 10 billion to support family and workers, lessening the burden of mortgage repayments, increasing funds to help temporarily laid-off workers and extending parental leaves.

"This is a weighty economic package. We never thought we could face this flood with mops and buckets," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told reporters in a scarcely attended press conference. Italy, and countries affected by the virus, should not only devise a strategy to curb the contagion but also tackle this political and social challenge. "We can speak about an Italian model not only due to our strategy to curb contagion, but we can also start to talk about it regarding our political and economic strategy to tackle this great political and social emergency." Italy's efforts are not going to stop here as the government is already working on an additional stimulus package to be approved next month. Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri said many times that "nobody must lose their job because of coronavirus."

The Italian Government is not idle. Previous decrees show its commitment to do everything in its power to assure that the country will come out these trying times mostly unscathed. While there is not a scientific consensus on how long the epidemic will last, estimates are indicating that the peak is quite close and in a couple of weeks, the situation should be more manageable.

Italians' response to the lockdown has been amazing and, even when faced with many restrictions, they are not losing their joie de vivre. Donations to hospitals engaged in the fight are surging, and instances of non-compliance with the lockdown measures are virtually non-existent. In many cities, people are organizing impromptu concerts on their balconies every day to fill the silence and show their defiance in the face of circumstances.

"We can all be truly proud to be Italians, and together we will get through this," Conte said, thanking everyone still at work to provide essential services.

Source: Reuters