

EUROPE DIRECT WEEKLY

Monday morning news for the Europe Direct network

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Weekly message from DG COMM

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Dear European EDICs,
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL! You are now entering the **last mile** of this awesome EDIC generation, with the 4-months extension that will take us from here to the 30th of April. Needless to say, this is going to be a crucial and delicate time span! During Christmas holidays, many new things have happened: we finally have a **Brexit deal**, and you will find in this Newsletter all means to inform affected citizens about its consequences, but the EU also concluded in principle the negotiations on a landmark **agreement on investment with China**, with many opportunities opening up for EU businesses. Also new during these holidays, is the **second safe and effective vaccine (Moderna)** shedding even more light and hope towards the end of the Covid tunnel. Please see the dedicated box in the Newsletter, there is a crucial call for your action in there! Also, the EU did not cease to represent a major actor for solidarity in Europe, as shown in the context of the **earthquake that hit Croatia** on 29th December.

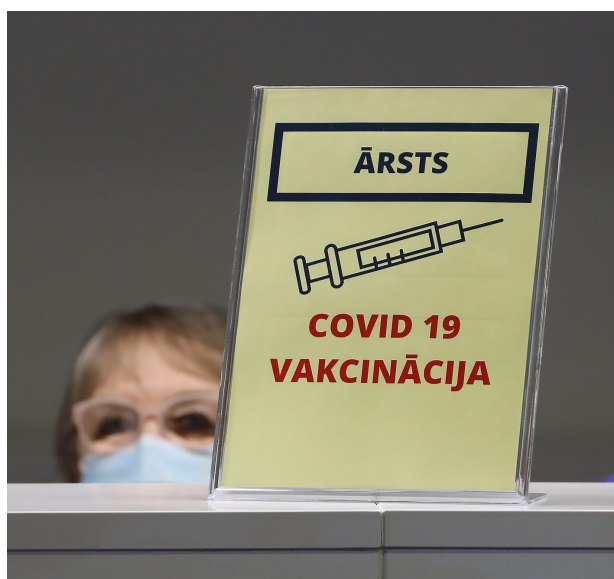
This is not all, and new challenges appear ahead of us: what we have all witnessed in the US with the **storming of the Capitol** and the banning of President Trump from social media, calls for an urgent **regulation** of this particular **power of social media giants for the sake of our democracy**. Once again the EU is set to be a spearhead of this. Commissioner Breton made it clear that the EU Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act will be the instrument to give clear responsibilities to online platforms and ensure that "*what is illegal offline should also be illegal online*".

Have a wonderful start of the year!

The big picture

- **Second safe and effective vaccine against Covid-19.** The European Medicines Agency (EMA) recommended [COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna for authorisation in the EU](#). This was followed by the granting of a conditional marketing authorisation by the Commission on 6 January this year. Next, the Commission has played a key role in the purchase of additional 200m doses of the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine, with the option to acquire another 100m doses.
- **Britain and EU reach landmark deal on Brexit.** Britain and the European Union struck a hard-fought agreement, setting the terms for a post-Brexit future as close neighbours living apart. The agreement, known as the [EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) sets out preferential arrangements in several areas, and it is underpinned by provisions ensuring a level playing field.
- **The EU and China concluded in principle the negotiations for a [Comprehensive Agreement on Investment \(CAI\)](#).** With the agreement, the EU seeks to create new investment opportunities for European companies by opening China's market and eliminating discriminatory laws and practices that prevent them from competing in the Chinese market on an equal basis with Chinese companies. The protection of fundamental rights will also be ensured.
- **2021 is the [European Year of Rail](#), shining a light on one of the most sustainable, innovative and safest transport modes we have.** You may recall that the goals under the European Green Deal extend to many different sectors, including transport, with reduction in emissions from transportation methods being one of the key target areas. The European Year of Rail in this sense is very much conducive to the Green Deal goals.

What's in it for you?



First day of coronavirus vaccination at the Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital, Latvia. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-048349/00-01

1. **Do not forget to share the stories on the Recovery campaign** and make use of the hashtag [#UnitedAgainstCoronavirus](#). The visuals are available on the [dedicated wiki](#). A set of 22 stories are published [on the website](#) with the next batch coming soon.

2. **Stay informed of the latest developments on the [post-Brexit deal](#), including the [Q&A](#).** Do not forget to direct people to the EDCC for any questions you find hard to answer

3. **Help us spread the word about the benefits of rail transport as part of the European Year of Rail** by making extensive use of the communication material [available on the website](#). Consider emphasizing the benefits under the Green Deal!



Vaccination campaign news



The European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved the BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna vaccines after a thorough evaluation demonstrating the same high standards of quality, safety and efficacy required for any other vaccine approved in the EU. This fast-changing reality requires all of us to **stay up to speed with the latest in the field. We call upon you to direct people to the EU official sources of information and explain the important role played by the EU in combating the pandemic.** Here is a quick list of the latest updates:

1. The Commission [main webpage on vaccines](#) and the Questions and Answers [Factsheet](#) on COVID-19 vaccination in the EU in all the EU languages;
2. The [latest video](#) on the vaccine approval process;
3. You may also check out the *Newsguard* with its [Coronavirus Misinformation Tracking Center](#) for the US, the UK, France, Italy, and Germany, as well as a [hotline](#) for reporting suspicious websites.

Life of our network

In the summer of 2020 we issued specific guidelines for those of you who signed an **extension of the Specific Grant Agreement**.

As part of the guidelines, we called upon you to promote the Recovery Plan.

The unfolding pandemic with its impact on people's health and lifestyle and the response of the European Union in the framework of the Recovery Plan provide a great opportunity for you to showcase what has been achieved so far.

Looking ahead

12-13/01

[13th European Space Conference](#)
Brussels, online

18-21/01

[European Parliament plenary session](#)
Brussels



A night view of the Christmas tree of the Grand-Place of Brussels. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-047821/00-03