

EUROPE DIRECT WEEKLY

Monday morning news for the Europe Direct network

CONTENTS

WEEKLY MESSAGE FROM DG COMM

THE BIG PICTURE & WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

LIFE OF OUR NETWORK

VACCINATION CAMPAIGN NEWS

LOOKING AHEAD



Weekly message from DG COMM

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Dear European EDICs, we are entering the month of February amidst even more evidence that the EU plays a central role in this crisis, be it on vaccines, vaccination or economic recovery from this terrible slump. President von der Leyen could announce yesterday that **AstraZeneca had revised down** the size of its expected **cut** in production, and she did that on the very day she met the CEOs of pharmaceutical companies to launch a long-lasting **European bio-defence preparedness**. But while the Commission is looking at a more structured approach to pandemic threats for our future, it also secured the present, with measures requiring that **vaccine exports** are subject to an **authorisation** for the sake of transparency.

But yesterday we witnessed yet again that Europe is not only EU Institutions, but also its Member States and its fundamental values: the Austrian Chancellor, citing an “**imperative of European solidarity**,” announced that his country would begin accepting intensive care **patients** from Portugal, where hospitals are overwhelmed. This is not the only example.

Finally, do not miss the latest Commission guidelines on Member States’ **recovery and resilience plans**: they tell a lot on how our future societies will look like thanks to next Generation EU. You find them linked to this Newsletter.

Have a very nice week!

The big picture

- **Third vaccine, green light!** The much-awaited verdict of the European Medicines Agency on the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine arrived last Friday, and it is positive. EMA recommends it for people from 18 years of age, to be given as two injections – the second between 4 to 12 weeks after the first. The EU has purchased 400 million doses of this vaccine, although the timeline of its delivery is under debate.
- **Travel with precautions.** Last week, the Commission also issued two new proposals to coordinate travel restrictions across the EU. They suggest that [non-essential travels be discouraged](#), and that additional precautions be taken for [those travelling to the EU from the rest of the world](#).
- **Europe after the recovery plans.** The Commission published an updated set of guidelines to help EU countries prepare their national plans for the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) - the €672.5 billion instrument at the core of Next Generation EU. The guidelines highlight six priority areas: green transition, digital transformation, sustainable and inclusive growth, social and territorial cohesion, health and resilience, and policies for the next generations.
- **Let's talk about ageing.** While it may not be your usual conversation topic, ageing is a pronounced demographic trend in Europe, whose implications, challenges and opportunities will be at the centre of a [public consultation](#) that opened last Wednesday, and will run for 12 weeks. Citizens and organizations from all Member States can contribute to the debate.

What's in it for you?

Do not hesitate to make use of the handy summary of all the EU coronavirus-related actions available online. Debates about vaccines and travel restrictions, and other weekly news, should not let us forget the almost 1.500 measures that the EU adopted so far, which you can find summarised in [this presentation](#). It updates a previous document we shared with you, adding in the latest decisions about vaccination.

Help us communicate the philosophy and priorities of EU recovery, by highlighting how the six key areas of investment for the Recovery and Resilience Facility already emerge as a unifying theme of the [success stories](#) that you find on our website. These recovery stories (33 at the moment), are available in several EU languages for you to share – always with the hashtag #UnitedAgainstCoronavirus.



European Medicines Agency, European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, ID: P-047906/00-18



Vaccination campaign news



As the vaccination campaign slowly but steadily takes off across the EU, we turn with hope and expectation to those who have already received their jab – or are about to – among the priority groups such as the elderly and the healthcare professionals. In a bid to encourage citizens, the Commission launched a social media campaign entitled “I’ll do it”, displaying healthcare workers and their motivation to get the vaccine: find their stories on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). Some questions, however, require more detailed answers. In case you encounter some of them, such as how vaccination in the EU is being organised, or whether or not we can still spread the virus once vaccinated, you can point to the exhaustive [Questions and Answers](#) webpage, which is updated on a rolling basis with the most relevant information for the public.

Life of our network

Last Wednesday, the Commission appointed **three new Heads of Representation, in Spain, Latvia and Slovenia**. Ms María De Los Angeles Benítez Salas will take up her duties as Head of the Representation in Madrid at the beginning of April, while later that month Ms Zane Petre and Ms Jerneja Jug Jerše will start in their new functions in Riga and in Ljubljana, respectively. As you know, Heads of Representation act as the official representatives of the Commission in the Member States under the political authority of President Ursula von der Leyen. We wish them, as well as the Spanish, Latvian and Slovenian EDICs, all the best for their work during these critical times for Europe, under the guidance of his new leadership!

Looking ahead

[03-05/02 Plenary meeting of the European Committee of the Regions](#), online



Vaccination equipment at Air France's international vaccination centre, European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-047912/00-28