

# 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,

At the start of this third week of February, the EU is steaming full-speed ahead under many respects. Last Friday a ceremony marked a real **turning point** in the history of European integration: the **Recovery and Resilience Facility** was finally adopted, and hence the major part of NGEU is now a reality. For the first time ever, resources bigger than the Marshall plan are being collected via common debt and will not go to Member States according to weight and population, but to needs and suffering for the pandemic. The Union is coming of age. Looking ahead, discussions are also starting on how to revive, but reform, the **Stability and Growth Pact** that is frozen since the start of the pandemic. Here, **revive but reform** are key words to understand the challenges that the Commission and the EuroGroup are facing on this crucial topic. Against this background, on Thursday Commissioner Gentiloni unveiled the **Winter Economic Forecasts**, projecting light at the end of the tunnel with a growth rate of 3.8% in the euro area for 2021 and 2022. How much of this will be due to the impact of Next Generation EU?

Last but not least, this week the former President of the European Central Bank **Mario Draghi** takes the reins of the Italian Government and many wonder whether his expertise and reputation will yield as many benefits to the **European Council** as the ones expected for his country. Will European integration get a boost from such a highly reputed former European figure?

Have a nice week!

## The big picture

- **Almost there: Parliament and Council rubber-stamp the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF):** The Council and the Parliament [put their pens to paper on Friday in the presence of the Commission President](#). The RRF is the key instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU, the EU's plan for emerging stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. Member States will now be able to officially submit their national recovery and resilience plans, which will be assessed by the Commission and adopted by the Council. Check out the [Q&A](#).
- **EU proposes new agenda for the Mediterranean:** To relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and its Southern Neighbourhood partners, the Commission and the High Representative have adopted a joint communication proposing an ambitious and innovative [new agenda for the Mediterranean](#). More information is available in the [press release](#) and in the dedicated [factsheet](#).
- **EU Cohesion policy:** Commission announces the kick-off of the 2021 REGIOSTARS Awards [competition](#). The Commission opened the 14th edition of the flagship REGIOSTARS awards competition that rewards each year the best projects financed under Cohesion policy. Beneficiaries of all Cohesion policy-funded projects are encouraged to submit their application. The competition will be open until 9 May 2021.
- **The Commission launches a consultation on combating gender-based violence:** The [consultation](#) with a deadline 10 May aims to gather the views of the public.

## What's in it for you?

- **We need your help for the [consultation on combating gender-based violence](#):** Mobilise your audiences and make people aware that they can have their say.
- **Raise awareness about the public [consultation on environmental crime](#):** We count on you. This calls for wide promotion with your audiences sensitive to environmental and sustainability issues.
- **Are you in a region close to the Mediterranean shores? Reach out to as many people as you can on the [new agenda for the Mediterranean](#).**
- **On 9 February we marked [Safer Internet Day](#). Read on to find out more** about practical ways in which you can get involved in the campaign. **Think about ways** to involve your young audiences, their teachers or educators, policy makers. **Consider promoting the [Better Internet for Kids](#) platform.**



European Union, 2021 EC - Audiovisual Service, Participation of Ursula von der Leyen at Lex Signing ceremony on Recovery and Resilience Facility at the EP  
Date: 12/02/2021

## Life of our network

**The power of solidarity:** EDIC Slovenski Brod in Croatia co-organised a virtual race to help raise funds for the areas severely hit by the recent earthquake. For every kilometre made by each participant, the partner (county administration) donated 1 Kuna (Croatian currency) to the areas affected by the earthquake. It was a symbolic gesture people could make simply by registering and by running, walking or riding a bike, in the period between 11 and 14 February. This is what we call solidarity at its finest!

**Reporting on cohesion policy events:** We trust that the concerned EDICs have duly reported on the planned and implemented events in the DG REGIO interactive map in addition to the EDIC reporting tool. **Timely reporting is of essential importance in this exercise!**



### ***Vaccination campaign news***



- President von der Leyen made a speech at the European Parliament defending the EU's joint vaccine procurement strategy.
- The European Parliament called for global solidarity on vaccine distribution at this month's plenary.

## Looking ahead

**17/02:** College: Joint Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism; Trade policy review, including WTO reform initiative; Action plan on synergies between civil, defence and space industries; Communication on a bio-defence preparedness programme

**25 – 26/02:** Informal videoconference of the members of the European Council