

# EUROPE DIRECT WEEKLY

*Monday morning news for the Europe Direct network*

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## Weekly message from DG COMM

by Alessandro Giordani

*Head of Unit, Networks in the Member States*

Dear European EDICs,

This third week of November starts amidst several exciting things happening not only in the "big picture", but also for us, as a network! On the big picture side, while Europe starts debating about **European sovereignty** in the wake of **Joe Biden's election**, with Macron asserting loud and clear last Thursday that a revamped partnership with the US should not make the EU give up on its quest for strategic autonomy, for example in the domain of defence, on our side the **EDIC network** experienced last Friday the kick-start of a major **overhaul in its relations with the other EU outreach networks** on the ground leading to a new way for the EU to present itself to citizens in each region. Over 270 people participated in the virtual launch of this pilot project called "**Create Europe in...**", where some of you in defined pilot regions were projected as the driving force of an aggregation process that will bring together all manifestation of Europe on the ground under the name "**Europa in Piemonte**", "Europa in Castilla y León", "Europe en Rhône-Alpes", etc. Exciting like all pioneer endeavours, this will be ultimately happening in all EU regions with the next generation, so let me commend the spearhead role of our pilot EDICs!

Other than this, this week will be marked, starting today, with the real **moment of truth for the next MFF and NGEU**, including the need for a unanimous agreement of principle on the future own resources system, and, for a change, a last... last-ditch attempt to clinch a deal on **Brexit**. Have a nice week and stay safe!

## The big picture

**My health, your health, European health.** If coronavirus taught us anything, is that public health is a cooperative endeavour. This is why the Commission presented a [first series of proposals to build a European Health Union](#): a regulation to foster coordination among Member States against serious cross-border threats to health, and two regulations to strengthen the mandate of the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

**United in diversity: equality for LGBTIQ.** Last week, the Commission unveiled another historic proposal: the first ever [EU strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer \(LGBTIQ\) equality](#). Among its many proposals, the strategy aims at extending the list of EU crimes to cover homophobic hate speech and hate crime.

**Light at the end of the Covid tunnel!** Last Wednesday, the European Commission concluded a contract with BioNTech/Pfizer for the [purchase of 300 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine](#). It is the fourth contract signed by the Commission, on behalf of the Member States, with companies developing a vaccine.

**EU recovery: we (almost) have a deal.** Negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reached last Tuesday [an agreement on the €1.8 trillion economic package](#) comprising Next Generation EU (€750 billion) and the next seven-year EU budget (€1.074 billion). The agreement must now be formally adopted by the EU Parliament and, unanimously, by the Council.



*Commissioner Stella Kyriakides presents the European Health Union proposal, on 11/11/2020*

## What's in it for you?

- 1. Please spare some quality time to look at the proposal on a Health Union and see how you can explain it to citizens:** it can be game changer given that, as things stand, limited powers are granted by Member States to the EU on healthcare. It is perhaps too early to say where this initiative will lead European healthcare governance to; the project, however, is likely to feature among the hot topics of the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe – as anticipated by President von der Leyen.
- 2. Help us clarify the Commission's fundamental role in vaccines and vaccination:** the Commission finances part of the costs of vaccine development in exchange for the right to purchase certain amounts of doses – which will eventually be acquired and paid for by Member States. Once a candidate vaccine receives market authorization by the EMA, doses will be distributed among EU countries according to a population-based criterion. Given last week's good news on the vaccine front, stepping up your outreach effort once the **vaccination campaign** starts will be all the more relevant!

## Life of our network



*DG COMM is getting ready to cooperate with other DGs to promote the upcoming European Climate Pact*

You may have seen that **the Commission is launching a European Climate Pact**, whose goal is to bring together citizens, businesses, civil society and local governments to design new climate actions and turn the EU Green Deal into reality. This topic being so relevant and cross sectoral, we are sure that many of you EDICs will be interested; so, we invite you to **get in touch with your Representation**, to try to understand how you can take part in the upcoming activities and help promote this crucial initiative.

Lastly, a quick reminder: **today the European Citizens' Initiative Week begins**. As we mentioned last week, it is an event of great interest for the citizenship; so, **we invite you to highlight and promote it** through your channels.

### Looking ahead

**16-20/11**

[European Citizens' Initiative Week, online](#)

**18/11**

[Digital Transport Days, online](#)

**21/11**

[President von der Leyen at the G20 summit, online](#)

**23-26/11**

[European Parliament plenary session, Strasbourg](#)



### Q&A



*Some of you have been asking us whether **additional resources** will be allocated to support the organization of **events related to the Conference on the Future of Europe**.*

*As beneficiaries of a grant, EDICs are not entitled to receive new funds on top of the grant; however, EDICs organizing activities within the framework of COFE may be able to **request specific, technical support** from **service providers contracted by the Commission**. We will provide you with more details in the coming weeks.*