

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,

We are at the last full week of November 2020 and it is becoming increasingly clear that the EU is **bracing for a breath-taking, hectic and very busy end of the year**. Unlike many of us would have hoped, we are approaching the cut-off date of 31 December with two major files still unsettled: Brexit and MFF/NGEU. On **Brexit**, issues like fisheries, level playing field and governance of the new relations are still on the table and remember... a deal must be ratified both in London and by the EP. Many think an extraordinary plenary session of the EP after Christmas will have to be convened, and this is if there is a deal. On **MFF/NGEU**, which profoundly touches us all, the well-known vetoes are still there after the leader's summit last Thursday and remember... MFF must be approved unanimously in the Council and endorsed by the EP, whereas any decision on the own resources for the EU budget (allowing for NGEU to happen) must also be ratified in each Member States, mainly by national parliaments. Enough to keep you busy in explaining objectively the unprecedented importance of this last bunch of weeks ahead of us.

Against this nervous background, the **G20** this weekend agreed to make Covid-19 vaccines available and affordable for all and some of **you EDICs kick-started** the ambitious process of building **regional networks of networks** with your fellow networks on the ground, something that will help us all for the major communication challenges ahead of us (recovery, CoFE...). Have a nice week!

The big picture

EU budget: so close, and yet... In their videoconference last Thursday, EU leaders **failed to reach unanimity** to approve the next seven-year EU budget (MFF) and Next Generation EU (NGEU). The point of contention remains the rule of law conditionality mechanism – which, according to the Commission, is an integral part of the agreement reached in July on the MFF and NGEU.

Workers on the EU mind! A new chapter of the 2021 European Semester cycle began last Wednesday. The Commission's **opinions on the draft budgetary plans of euro area countries** arrive as the second wave of the pandemic is in full swing; thus, measures to sustain employment take the centre stage. Particularly important is the **Joint Employment Report** proposal, which aims at helping Member States identify priority areas for reforms and investment. Meanwhile, **financial resources for employment support worth €14 billion** have been disbursed to 9 member states through the second instalment of SURE.

(More) vaccines ahead. The Commission concluded last week a fifth contract with a company working on a candidate vaccine: **European pharmaceutical CureVac agreed to an initial sale of 225 million doses to EU countries**, with an option for further 180 million. The Commission also recommended that EU countries set common standards regarding rapid antigen tests for the diagnosis of Covid-19.

What's in it for you?

*A lot has been discussed, announced and implemented in the EU since the beginning of the pandemic – we know it. It is now time to **pause, take a step back** and look at this useful overview of all the actions taken so far by Brussels to fight the virus and the economic downturn.* There you will find summarised:

1. The **health and emergency response** – ranging from the vaccines strategy to the proposal for a European Health Union.
2. The **economic response** to the crisis – SURE, monetary measures from the European Central Bank, new rules on state aid and budget flexibility, the Recovery Plan for Europe.
3. The **roadmap for an exit from lockdowns and restrictions** – including the coordination of the rules governing cross-border movements in the EU.

New measures are being adopted every week but, for the time being, this document offers the most comprehensive snapshot of everything that has been put in place so far.

Use it under the angle that fits your interlocutors best!



Commission president von der Leyen and European Council president Michel at the EU leaders' videoconference, on 19/11/2020

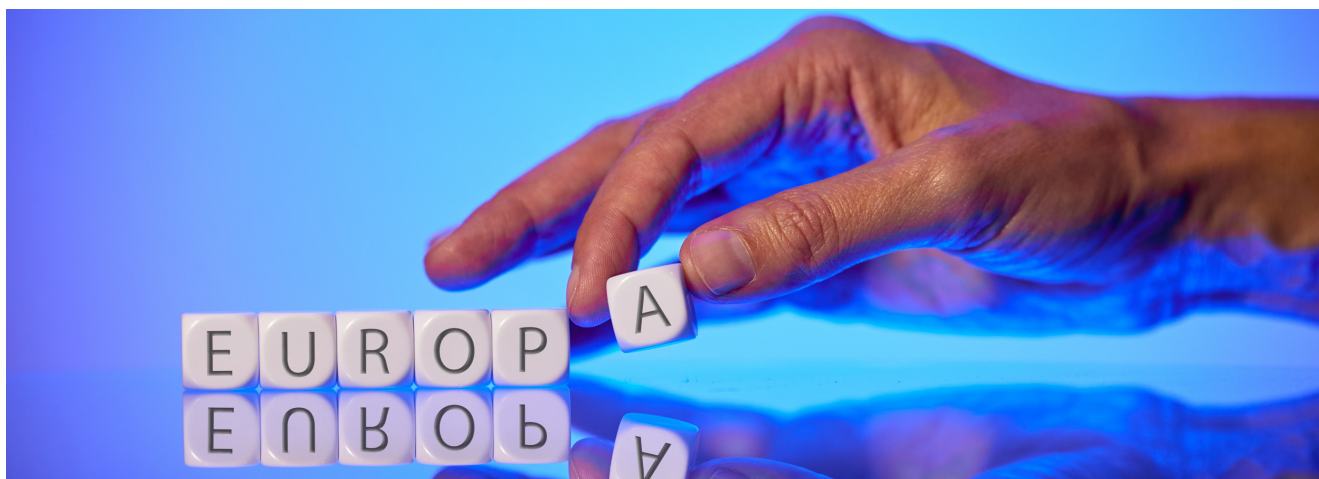
Life of our network

As you know from the previous issue of this newsletter, our new **pilot project “Europe in”** was launched ten days ago. Over 270 people from eight EU countries participated in the virtual kick-off meeting; an exciting turnout that confirmed to us that **coordination and cooperation among EU outreach networks** is deeply felt by network members.

Working towards a more coordinated external communication from the different “manifestations of the EU” at the local level will become even more crucial in the coming months: the Recovery and Resilience campaign and the Conference on the Future of Europe – just to name a few examples.

In the **next phase of the project**, networks from the pilot regions will meet in a series of **regional workshops** that will run from December 2020 to March 2021. They will discuss the best way to arrive to some form of permanent cooperation among them, possibly featuring a single entry point for citizens to all EU services: “Europa in...” each region. **EDICs will be key players.**

A big thanks to the EDICs involved – you are paving the way for a similar coordination to develop in each European region with the next ED generation!



Our pilot project “Europa in” started on 13/11/2020. Regional workshops will now follow over the course of the next months

Looking ahead

23-26/11

[European parliament plenary session, Brussels](#)

26/11

[EESC public hearing of New Pact on Migration and Asylum, online](#)

27/11

[CoR webinar on European Rural Agenda, online](#)



Q&A



Many EDICs that are working on **projects financed by DG REGIO to promote the European Cohesion policy** asked us if – and for how long – they can postpone their activities due to lockdowns and restrictions to public events.

Your **Representation will reach out to you** on this in the next weeks, to discuss with you how this important partnership with DG REGIO can be adapted to the new circumstances of our work.