

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

LOOKING AHEAD

Q&A



Weekly message from DG COMM



by Alessandro Giordani

Head of Unit, Networks in the Member States

Dear European EDICs,

Here comes our last newsletter of this beleaguered year, which I would have liked to devote entirely to a grateful stocktaking of your formidable activities and resilience along these months. Yet, we are still besieged by pressing and fast-evolving circumstances: following the **new strain of virus** spreading across an ever-more physically isolated UK, the German Presidency of the Council has called this morning for an urgent meeting of the Integrated Political Crisis Response mechanism. To add, **Brexit negotiations still struggle** and the deadline set by the European Parliament to guarantee a vote on the deal has expired. On the bright side, **today is the day** on which the European Medicine Agency is expected to give its **opinion on Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine**, and the Commission pledged to meet within hours of that opinion to unleash the biggest ever, EU-led vaccination campaign (remember all this was possible thanks to the Commission securing stocks for all Europeans on behalf of the Member States).

Now the sincere **gratitude of the Commission headquarters** to all of you EDICs for this unthinkable 2020: you proved to be not only a fundamental presence on the ground, but also a **resilient network** able to adapt its modes of outreach and endure unforeseeable communication urgencies. This is something that will remain a landmark fact for anyone assessing the difference that Europe Direct makes for EU citizens. We still have four challenging months to spend together and I look forward to that. **HAPPY CHRISTMAS, ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAYS, AND STAY SAFE!**

The big picture

The best Christmas present! Today, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is expected to give its [opinion on the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine](#). Should it be positive, the Commission could authorise its distribution and use by the end of the week, with the vaccination campaign likely to start across the EU between 27 and 29 December. (More on the vaccination campaign in the next page).

Recovery gets closer. In the same plenary session where the [rule of law mechanism](#) was voted into law, the European Parliament also approved the next [7-year EU budget](#) (MFF) and the €47.5 billion [REACT-EU package](#), an instrument under the umbrella of Next Generation EU that will help mitigate the effects of the crisis across EU regions.

Digital Revolution. Last Tuesday, the Commission adopted two landmark proposals with the potential to revolutionise our digital life: the [Digital Services Act](#) and the [Digital Markets Act](#). They set out, among other obligations, provisions for greater transparency and stronger protection of citizens' fundamental and consumer rights.

Erasmus? Plus! The Commission presented its [annual report on Erasmus+](#) for 2019. In the last pre-pandemic year, Erasmus+ funded the mobility of almost 700,000 people. The budget for this beloved programme is increasing every year, and will continue to do so in the future: the 2021-27 EU budget earmarked more than [€26 billion for Erasmus+](#), a remarkable increase compared to the previous 7-year budget.

What's in it for you?



1. **Please start explaining the measures that see the light of day following the agreement on MFF and NGEU.** With last week's decisions, you can start communicating in a very concrete way on the [long-term EU budget 2021/27](#).

2. **There is a public service information on Brexit you can help us circulate.** As you know, we are approaching the end of the transition period on 1 January 2021; the **Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC)** remains at the disposal of citizens, businesses and stakeholders to answer **Brexit-related questions in all 24 official languages**. Questions related to the UK will be treated as a matter of priority. The Contact Centre is available via [free phone](#) from all Member States and by [webform](#).

The European Medicines Agency (EMA), located in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-047906/00-21



Vaccination campaign news



As you read in the Big Picture section, this week could see the authorisation of the first **coronavirus vaccine** in the European Union. This decision marks the beginning of a new, crucial communication effort for the Commission and its networks, aiming to offer EU citizens **reliable, detailed and factual information** about the new vaccines.

As our local network, you **EDICs will be fundamental players in the rollout of this vaccine communication campaign**.

To help you in this effort, with the last issue before the end of the year we introduce **this new section**, where you will find useful communication materials on vaccines in the EU. Each week, we will highlight specific contents for you to share with citizens. As a starter, we would like to draw your attention on the [main webpage on vaccines](#), with loads of detailed material available in all EU languages. Start exploring it; in the coming weeks we will turn to its various sections separately.

Life of our network

The ongoing pandemic did not prevent the third meeting of the **Testing Panel for EDICs** from taking place, for the first time in a completely virtual format and spread over two sessions on 18 and 20 November.

The turnout of the EDIC network representatives was exceptional, with participants from 22 countries connected and ready to exchange about the current and future publications of DG COMM. The online meeting gave the organisers, the general public and outreach teams of COMM.A.2 an overview of what works best in these times of online communication and lockdowns. A feedback session on vaccine-related materials rounded off the second day of discussions, providing invaluable feedback as this communication strategy gets underway. Further testing panel sessions are foreseen in spring 2021.

EDIC network representatives from 22 countries joined the Testing Panel event. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-044728/00-01

Looking ahead

23/12

Last working day for the Commission before the holidays

24/12/2020-01/01/2021

Merry Christmas and Season's Greetings!

11/01/2021

Next issue of the Europe Direct Weekly newsletter

