

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 entering this third week of the new year with mixed feelings of preoccupation (surge of Covid cases: second or third wave?) and hopes for the future. But let me refer to the latter ones, because they have much to do with the EU these days. While the European Medicine Agency could review the **AstraZeneca vaccine** file as early as next week, and debate starts as to whether a bloc-wide **vaccination certificate** as a way to get people traveling again is at all advisable or not (no decisions yet), there are important evolutions also beyond the pandemic front. Few days ago, the **German CDU party** chose its new Chairman (in the person of Armin Laschet), who now could stand a chance to be the next *Bundeskanzler* and hence a pivotal figure for the future evolution of the European Union. Among the candidates, he was depicted as the one in greatest continuity with Angela Merkel. Then on Wednesday this week, Mr **Joe Biden** will come into power amidst a highly protected ceremony, and promised an immediate array of presidential decrees that will mark the difference with the recent past. Follow this, because some of these decrees will pave the way for new and relaunched relations with the EU (trade, climate change, global health etc).

Last but not least, let me refer to a little sign that can nevertheless be of symbolic relevance. It comes from **Frontex**. For the first time, the European Union has its own **uniformed service** – the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps. A uniform, for people working for a EU body, may seem something like a *coming of age* for our Union. It is in any event a noteworthy novelty. Have a very nice week!

The big picture

- **More EU-purchased vaccines on the way.** The Covid-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University could be [reviewed by the European Medicines Agency](#) as early as 29th January. If approved, 400 million doses of the new vaccine optioned by the EU will be distributed across Member States. Last week, the Commission also concluded [exploratory talks with Valneva](#) for the purchase of 30 million doses of the vaccine the company is developing.
- **A new transatlantic chapter.** In two days, the United States of America will have a new president. After the attack on Capitol Hill on 6th January – which President von der Leyen condemned as [“appalling” and “outrageous”](#) – the EU is ready to work with the incoming Biden administration: defeating the coronavirus, protecting planet and prosperity, cooperating on trade and technology and promoting peace and democracy feature prominently in the [new EU transatlantic agenda](#) published in December.
- **Recovery forecasts.** Speaking at an event organized by the news agency Reuters, European Central Bank’s President Christine Lagarde confirmed that the [ECB forecasts for an economic rebound](#) in 2021 still stand if lockdowns are lifted by the end of March. Should restrictions remain in place longer than that, this might pose “a concern” to economic activity.

What's in it for you?

1. **Tell citizens to rest assured: EU vaccines will keep coming.** In the past weeks rumours circulated about parallel purchases of vaccines by single EU countries. To clear any doubt about how things stand in the EU mechanism, just [listen to what Sandra Gallina, Director-General for Health and Food Safety, told the European Parliament:](#) vaccines purchased by the EU come first.

2. **Like last week, we remind you to spread around the [recovery stories](#) that we published online,** using the hashtag [#UnitedAgainstCoronavirus](#). They are being translated in all EU languages, so that citizens across the continent can see what has been achieved so far. The bottom-line message is still the same: European support is already very, very concrete.

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen greets David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, during his visit to the European Commission last Thursday. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-048673/00-01





Vaccination campaign news



Questions and doubts have arisen across the EU about the relatively short time span that was required for the Covid-19 vaccines to be developed, tested and approved. Since the pace of distribution of the precious vials has sped up, with more vaccines reaching European citizens and from more producers, these questions have spread and multiplied. These are legitimate concerns that must be seriously addressed, as only people's trust in the vaccination can ensure its success.

This is why the Commission's main webpage on vaccination features a section entirely dedicated to **explaining how vaccines are developed, authorised and put on the market**, as well as to **how were Covid-19 vaccines developed so quickly**. With the help of this material (available in all EU languages), you can help us make sure that citizens have access to reliable and accurate information about this crucial instrument in our fight against the pandemic.

Life of our network

A new MFF means new requirements for clarity and effectiveness. Beneficiaries of EU funds have an obligation to advertise the fact that money came from the EU. However, rules on how to do so have been disparate and at times confusing. With the new 2021-27 long-term budget, all the new EU programmes launched as of 2021 will be subject to a coherent and binding set of **communication and visibility requirements** – which are expected to contribute to a more effective EU communication in a spirit of joint responsibility.

Besides the general obligation to **communicate effectively and accurately**, beneficiaries, as a rule, will have to **display of the EU emblem prominently, together with a simple funding statement**. They will also have to “show the wood, not only the tree” by **linking back to the EU's political priorities**. They will need to grant the EU the right to use their communication material and, depending on the programme, have to involve the EU in their communication and engage in additional outreach activities. In case of non-respect, financial reductions could be applied.

Looking ahead

18-21/01

[European Parliament plenary session](#)
Brussels

18/01

[Eurogroup, online](#)

21/01

[Meeting of the members of the European Council, online](#)



New communication and visibility requirements for recipients of EU funds are being introduced. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-025697/00-07