

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,

You are about to start a week which is yet again a **mixture** of anxiety and progress for the pandemic, on the one side, and of forward-looking measures on the other side.

Last Thursday EU Leaders met in video-conference and among the many things discussed there was the delicate and difficult balance between keeping **frontiers** open in order not to annihilate the **Single Market**, and discourage or prohibit **non-essential travels** amidst the emergence of new **variants**. While reaffirming that the vaccination process needs to **speed up** and maintain its characteristic of a European solidarity exercise, EU Leaders also started to discuss more practical questions like the **mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results**. This is of course linked with the preservation of open borders and circulation. In the very last days, the question of the **pace of delivery of vaccines** by the pharmaceutical firms arose in all its crudeness and the Commission, with its fundamental role at the centre of the EU purchasing mechanism, expects clear and committal replies from the firms. In the meantime, while Portugal re-elected its President, the Commission launched an ambition and far-reaching process called **European Bauhaus**, which looks ahead, not behind, and is a collective exercise at the crossroad of aesthetics, industry and Green Deal targets. Speaking of looking ahead, please hold your horses on the **Conference on the Future of Europe**. It will come, but we need the EU Institutions' Joint Declaration and an official kick-start of the process before events and outreach can claim to be within its framework. Have a nice week!

The big picture

- **United against coronavirus.** European leaders gathered in videoconference on Thursday agreed to establish criteria for the mutual recognition of coronavirus tests, to keep borders open while discouraging non-essential travels, and called on vaccine producers to deliver on their commitments. Earlier last week, the Commission recommended that at least 80% of people 80+ and healthcare workers be vaccinated by the end of March, and at least 70% of the EU population by the end of the summer. A game changer in this sense could come Friday, when the European Medicines Agency gives its verdict on the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- **Portugal & Biden: new beginnings.** At the European Parliament plenary session last week, Commission president Ursula von der Leyen extended her best wishes to two new presidencies of 2021: the Portuguese presidency of the Council of the EU, and the new US administration led by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris - who were sworn in last Wednesday in Washington. "The United States is back. And Europe stands ready" said von der Leyen. The EU also welcomed the decision of President Biden to re-enter the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- **Next generation look: Bauhaus.** The New European Bauhaus entered its design phase: the initiative aiming to give the European Green Deal its own aesthetic, the New European Bauhaus is now open to proposals from artists, engineers, students as well as citizens interested in bringing art, design, science and technology together in a sustainable way. A call for proposal will follow next autumn, leading to a first series of pilot projects.



Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks during the European Parliament plenary session, on 20/01/2021. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-048895/00-01

What's in it for you?

1. **You can help clarify to citizens the state of lockdowns and restrictions in Europe.** Tools like Re-open EU offer an overview of the health situation across the EU and of the different prevention measures in force in each Member State.
2. **Help us show the concrete side of European solidarity.** The Parliament approved a Commission proposal to provide additional resources to FEAD, a fund providing food, clothing and other necessities to those who need it most, and financing activities to support their social inclusion. On average, since 2014, roughly 13 million people benefit each year from FEAD.



Vaccination campaign news



We are all well aware that **vaccination is our way out of this pandemic**. Through this Newsletter, you have been getting access to reliable and factual information on how the vaccines that EU countries have received – also thanks to the help of the European Commission – have been developed, tested and approved. Besides data and scientific evidence, you can also hear the live voices of **experts, advocates and healthcare workers testifying to the vaccines' safety and efficacy**. You can help us **spread their voices** – they are powerful testimonials!



The Commission's digital Learning Corner is a precious instrument in this time of distance learning. European Union, 2020, EC - Audiovisual Service, P-045299/00-02

Looking ahead

26/01

[President von der Leyen speaks at Davos 2021, online](#)

29/01

["Entrepreneurial societies make resilient regions" conference, online](#)

29/01

[Citizens' Dialogue in Austria with Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, online](#)

Life of our network

While many in the EU are eagerly awaiting for the **Conference on the Future of Europe** to start, (the Portuguese presidency of the Council promised to work to make sure that the CoFE can quickly begin its activities) - this is not yet the case. We would like to remind you to **be careful in your communication on this topic**. If you plan any outreach event on the CoFE you should make sure that a clear distinction is drawn between this period, ahead of the CoFE - when we can only outline what it will be and (broadly) how it will work - and the period after the CoFE will have started and events will be, under certain conditions, eligible for the reporting in the framework of the CoFE. This is not the case yet, and it should be made very clear. We just need to be patient.

Since the pandemic forced schools to move online, the Commission's digital **Learning Corner** has proved to be a most useful tool. We would like to ask you to help us raise its visibility by **including in your website a visual element** (banner, thumbnail, etc.) **linking to the Learning Corner**. Do let us know, via your Network Correspondents, if you need visual elements in your own language. For inspiration, head to the website of the Commission Representations in France and Romania.