

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,

This third week of February was rich of happenings and forward-looking debates in the EU, both on the pandemic and on economic recovery.

Raising the head, for once, above the beleaguered question of vaccine production and delays, debate started on the construction of a **genuine Single Market for pharmaceuticals** for patients, which is one of the unaccomplished dimensions of an otherwise far-reaching EU internal market. In parallel, and in the face of the dangerous **variants** of the virus, the EU is setting up a European bio-defence **preparedness plan** (the so-called "HERA-incubator", see this Newsletter). Moreover, on the holistic side, EU trade unions are demanding for certain **intellectual property rights to be waived for vaccines**, in order to put deeds on the words than *no one is safe until everyone is safe*, in the whole world.

On the recovery, Valdis Dombrovskis announced last Tuesday that, already by Friday 19 February, Member States can actually submit their **Recovery and Resilience Plans**, and stressed once more how such plans are meant to address the criticalities identified in the Country Specific Recommendations along the European Semester. At this crucial juncture, he also reminded everyone that **investments and reforms** cannot be decoupled from one another. On the revenue side, Dombrovskis confirmed that 6 Member States have already ratified the **own resources decisions**, and the others should do that swiftly in order for the extraordinary EU borrowing of NGEU to start.

So you see, you have much to follow and communicate on. Have a nice week!

The big picture

- **Rewriting the EU trade playbook:** The Commission has set out a robust, [new trade strategy](#) meant to further strengthen the EU's toolbox in defending its interests. The strategy builds on the EU's openness to contribute to the economic recovery through support for the green and digital transformations.
- **Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis makes a strong case for Europe's Recovery and Resilience Facility:** As announced in the previous issue, with the adoption of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the major part of Next Generation EU had become a reality. During his address at the informal ECFIN press conference that took place on 16 February, Dombrovskis gave credit to this reality by delivering an inspirational address on the role of the Commission in finalising the Next Generation EU and the efforts made and due to be made by the Member States to prepare their national Recovery and Resilience plans. [More here](#).
- **Coronavirus: preparing Europe for the increased threat of variants:** The Commission is proposing [immediate action](#) to prepare Europe for the increased threat of coronavirus variants. The new European bio-defence preparedness plan against COVID-19 variants called "HERA Incubator" will work with researchers, biotech companies, manufacturers and public authorities in the EU and globally to detect new variants, provide incentives to develop new and adapted vaccines, speed up the approval process for these vaccines, and ensure scaling up of manufacturing capacities.

What's in it for you?

- **Follow the debate on "A Pact for People and Planet" with the Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans on 26/02:** The [debate](#) will focus on how everyone can participate in building a greener Europe and what the EU is doing. Frans Timmermans will be debating live with representatives of various youth associations, citizens and Climate Pact Ambassadors from Spain. You can follow via webstreaming and via the social media accounts of the Directorate-General for Climate Action ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) and the Representation in Spain ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)).
- **Use the [address](#) made by Dombrovskis** to understand and communicate on the state of play of Next Generation Europe.



European Union, ID:P-049939/00-08 EC Audiovisual Service, Valdis Dombrovskis, Date: 18/02/2021

Life of our network

Conference on the future of Europe (CoFE) in sight: Last week we called upon EDICs designated as hubs to start mapping stakeholders to be involved in the future debates with a deadline 4 March. Our call aims to set the ball rolling in view of the Joint Declaration between the EU institutions. Awareness raising and mobilisation of citizens and stakeholders are likely to kick off shortly after the signature of the Joint Declaration. Those of you who have not been designated as hub EDICs should continue to stay tuned and be prepared to take their part in the mobilisation exercise when the time comes. More will follow.



Vaccination campaign news



- The Commission **approved a second contract with the pharmaceutical company Moderna**, which provides for an additional purchase of 300 million doses (150 million in 2021 and an option to purchase an additional 150 million in 2022) on behalf of all EU Member States. The new contract also provides for the possibility to donate the vaccine to lower and middle-income countries or to re-direct it to other European countries. More information is available in the press releases on the **EU support for COVAX**, on the **EU to support COVID-19 vaccination strategies and capacity in Africa** and on the dedicated website on the **EU Global Response to coronavirus**.
- Don't forget to check out the latest on the **ECDC vaccines tracker** where you will find fresh updates on the MS vaccine uptakes, a global overview of Covid-related developments and country comparisons.
- Stay tuned to the **Commission new page on vaccination**.

Looking ahead

23/02: President von der Leyen participates in the launch of **Global Citizen** new campaign for global recovery.

24/02: College: New **EU strategy on adaptation to climate change**.