

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 last full week of March amidst what looks like the feared third wave of the pandemic, but also strong EU actions to fight it. Yesterday evening

Commissioner Breton stated that by July 14 we have the opportunity to reach immunity against the coronavirus in the EU if we keep up the pace of vaccination. Of course, there are many criticalities looming ahead which the EU is determined to diffuse: see for example the assertive talks to be held this morning between EU leaders and the UK Prime Ministers over **reciprocity** in the exports of AstraZeneca, and the possibility for the EU to **stop export** in case such reciprocity is not ensured. On the brighter, looking-ahead side, please read carefully the Commission proposal adopted last week on **Digital Green Certificates** for vaccinated, tested or immune citizens: we need to explain precisely and carefully what it is and what it is not. In this same spirit, don't overlook the Commission communication adopted last week on "**A common path to safe and sustained re-opening**", because it goes in the same direction of giving hope via a concrete and solid action plan. On the **CoFE** side, we have already activated most of our **hub-EDICs** on identifying suitable events eligible under the Conference but also asking which kind of "**non-usual suspects**" you intend to bring into this exercise within your catchment area. More guidance will follow for all EDICs of course. Last but not least, watch out for the **European Council later this week**, and have a nice week!

The big picture

- **With the “Digital Green certificate” towards normality:** The Commission has proposed to create ‘Digital Green Certificates’ to make safe, free movement easier within the EU. The certificates will offer proof that an individual has been vaccinated against COVID-19, received a negative test result, or recovered from the disease. They will be available in digital or paper format, free of charge, and will include a QR code to ensure the security and authenticity of the certificate. More [here](#).
- **A common path towards reopening:** Ahead of the meeting of the European Council on 25 March, the Commission is calling on Member States to prepare for a coordinated approach to a gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions when the epidemiological situation will allow. In a [Communication](#), it charts the way ahead for a balanced policy and common EU approach, pointing to what we need to do to advance the time when we can recover our European way of life, and do so in a safe and sustainable way with control over the virus.
- **Once again, we can be SURE!** On 16 March, the Commission disbursed €9 billion to seven EU Member States in the fifth instalment of financial support to Member States under the SURE instrument. This is the second disbursement in 2021. As part of the operations, Czechia has received €1 billion, Spain €2.87 billion, Croatia €510 million, Italy €3.87 billion, Lithuania €302 million, Malta €123 million and Slovakia €330 million. These loans will assist Member States in addressing sudden increases in public expenditure to preserve employment. Follow the [story](#).

What's in it for you?

- **Spread the word about the “Digital green certificate” proposal** and make sure it is well understood that this is a proposal for regulation to be (hopefully) swiftly approved by Parliament and Council. The Commission is sending a good message in support of recovery and free movement within the Union.
- **Help promote** the Commission [public consultation](#) on new actions to be taken at EU level to address **migrant smuggling**. The Commission is calling for contributions from individuals and organisations and in particular from people who have experienced or have been affected by smuggling.
- **Check out** the latest [DG JUST videos](#) meant to inform citizens about their **consumer rights** and help them develop the skills to improve their financial well-being.



Questions & Answers

Question: Is it true that the Commission is giving vaccine priority treatment to its officials?

Answer: It should be emphasized that the Commission will fully align the vaccination campaign for its officials with the calendar of the respective national strategies and will rely on the vaccine doses provided by the national authorities for the various phases. The Commission has been liaising with national authorities to ensure that staff based in all other locations in the European Union as well as family members and pensioners, in general, will be vaccinated by the national health authorities in line with national protocols.



Vaccination campaign news



- The Commission and BioNTech-Pfizer have come to an agreement on the accelerated delivery of 10 million doses for Quarter 2. Here is the story.
- Follow here the statement by Stella Kyriakiades, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety following the European Medicines Agency's safety committee's review of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Looking ahead

- **25-26/03:** Council, including meeting of the executive board of the Conference on the future of Europe
- **24/03: College:** Action plan for the development of organic production, EU strategy on the rights of the child & Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the European child guarantee. 2-6 PM. European Commission & EIB high level event EU Climate leadership in the spotlight with the President von der Leyen, EIB President Hoyer, ECB President Lagarde, EVPs Timmermans & Dombrovskis, IMF Managing Director Georgieva, UN Deputy SecGen Mohammed, UN Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions Bloomberg, Csr McGuinness and others. 2 PM. Zoom public talk on the Rule of Law with Csr Reynders, co-organised by EDIC, EC Representation in Valetta and University of Malta