

Press briefing ahead of the video conference of the members of the European Council on 21 January 2021



The press briefing ahead of the video conference of the members of the European Council of 21 January 2021 will take place via video conference TOMORROW **Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 10.00**. English and French interpretation available.

This briefing is “off the record”.

In order to follow the briefing and to be able to ask questions remotely, EU accredited journalists and journalists who had a EUCO accreditation from June 2019 European Council meeting or later, can register using [this link](#).

Journalists who already registered for high-level press conferences (European Councils, international summits) in 2020 **don't need to register again**.

Deadline: TOMORROW **Wednesday, 20 January 2021, 08.30**

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants approximately half an hour before the briefing.

Press release – MEPs call for additional EU sanctions against Russia over Navalny's imprisonment



In a debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Tuesday afternoon, MEPs called on the Russian authorities to immediately release Russian opposition politician and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny, stressing that his arrest and the way it happened clearly contravene international law and the Russian constitution.

MEPs also demand that EU sanctions currently being applied to Russian officials responsible for poisoning Mr Navalny should be enlarged to cover those involved in his imprisonment. For all such purposes, the EU must not hesitate to use its new EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, members stressed.

Some MEPs also argued that much more must be done to hold the Kremlin effectively accountable for its human rights abuses and for politicising the Russian justice system. Several called on the EU, and some national and regional governments in particular, to finally move ahead with cancelling the remaining work on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, as a means to impose proper economic sanctions against the Russian government.

Others stated that the Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be afraid of following in the footsteps of Belarusian dictator Aliaksandr Lukashenka, and is therefore doing his utmost to arrest critics of the regime.

You can watch the debate again [here](#). A resolution on Mr Navalny's arrest will be put to the vote on Thursday.

Click on the links to view individual statements again

[Josep BORRELL FONTELLES](#) , Vice President, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

[David MCALLISTER](#) (EPP, DE)

[Isabel SANTOS](#) Isabel (S&D, PT)

[Urmas PAET](#) (Renew Europe, ET)

[Marco ZANNI](#) (ID, IT)

[Sergey LAGODINSKY](#) (Greens/EFA, DE)

[Witold Jan WASZCZYKOWSKI](#) (ECR, PL)

[Idoia VILLANUEVA RUIZ](#) (The Left, ES)

[Fabio Massimo CASTALDO](#) (NI, IT)

Press release – Press conference on priorities of the Portuguese Presidency at 13.00 on Wednesday



When: Wednesday 20 January 13.00 CET

Where: EP Press room and via Interactio

After the debate in plenary, EP President David Sassoli, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Portugal's Prime Minister António Costa will comment on the programme of the Portuguese Presidency, which focuses on the economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving an inclusive climate and digital transition, and giving a new impetus to EU relations with Africa and Latin America. They are also expected to talk about COVID-19 vaccination, EU's relations with the new US administration, and shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Interpretation will be available at the press conference in English, French and Italian and Portuguese.

Journalists wishing to actively participate and ask questions, please connect via Interactio by using the [link](#).

You can also follow it live from 13.00 CET via Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and [EbS+](#).

Information for the media – Use Interactio to ask questions

Interactio is only supported on iPad (with the Safari browser) and Mac/Windows (with the Google Chrome browser).

When [connecting](#), enter your name and the media you are representing in the first name / last name fields.

For better sound quality, use headphones and a microphone. Interpretation is only possible for interventions with video.

Journalists who have never used Interactio before are asked to connect 30 minutes before the start of the press conference to perform a connection test. IT assistance can be provided if necessary.

For more details, check the [connection guidelines](#) and [recommendations for remote speakers](#).

[Press release – COVID-19 vaccines: EU must respond with unity and solidarity](#)



In the plenary debate on Tuesday, MEPs exchanged views with Ana Paula Zacarias, Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, and Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

A large majority of MEPs showed their support for the united EU approach, which ensured vaccines are being developed quickly and secured access to vaccines for all European citizens. At the same time, they deplored “health nationalism”, including alleged parallel contracts signed by member states or attempts to outcompete each other. In order to uphold the European success story, the EU must respond with unity and solidarity, with all levels of government working together, say MEPs.

Members called for the terms of contracts between the EU and pharmaceutical companies involving public money to be completely transparent. Recent efforts by the Commission, to allow MEPs to consult one incomplete contract, were deemed insufficient. MEPs reiterated that only complete transparency could help combat disinformation and build trust in the vaccination campaigns across Europe.

Speakers also acknowledged the global dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires global solutions. The EU has a responsibility to use its position of strength to support its most vulnerable neighbours and partners. The pandemic can be overcome only once all people have equal access to vaccines, not only in rich countries, MEPs added.

The debate also touched upon other issues, such as the need for comparable national data and mutual recognition of vaccinations, the need to avoid

delays and increase the speed of vaccination, as well as the unconstructive nature of blaming the EU or the pharmaceutical industry for any failures.

Watch the video recording of the debate [here](#). Click on the names below for individual statements.

[Ana Paula Zacarias](#), Portuguese Presidency

[Stella Kyriakides](#), EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

[Esther de Lange](#), EPP, NL

[Iratxe García Pérez](#), S&D, ES

[Dacian Cioloș](#), Renew Europe, RO

[Joëlle Mélin](#), ID, FR

[Philippe Lamberts](#), Greens/EFA, BE

[Joanna Kopcińska](#), ECR, PL

[Marc Botenga](#), The Left, BE

Context

The Commission is expected to publish today an additional communication on the EU's COVID-19 strategy. EU leaders will debate the pandemic state of play during the European Council meeting on 21 January.

Background

On 22 September 2020, Parliament held a [public hearing](#) on “How to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines for EU citizens: clinical trials, production and distribution challenges”. During the December 2020 Plenary session, Parliament expressed [support for the speedy authorisation of safe vaccines](#) and on 12 January 2021, MEPs [blamed a lack of transparency](#) for fuelling uncertainty and disinformation regarding COVID-19 vaccination in Europe.

[EBI uruchomił 100 mln euro kredytu dla Pekao Leasing na finansowanie małych i średnich firm](#)



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The European Investment Bank (EIB) has advanced a new €100 million loan to Pekao Leasing for the financing of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Further to the EIB mandate and the loan agreement, a considerable part of the funds will be used for financing energy efficiency measures and developing sustainable energy initiatives as well as preparing a competitive leasing offer for enterprises owned or managed by women.

The loan to Pekao Leasing, the leasing arm of Bank Pekao Group, is a continuation of the cooperation started in 2005. The loan is secured by a bank guarantee from Bank Pekao.

The beneficiaries can use the loan to finance durable asset investments and tangible assets, for instance R&D expenses. The overall investment cost should not exceed €25 million and EIB support can extend to €12.5 million.

“Pekao Group substantially supports the development of the Polish economy. The new agreement with the EIB will allow us to significantly support enterprises owned or managed by women. Moreover, part of the new EIB loan will be used to finance sustainable energy and energy efficiency investments. The loan will allow us to offer a competitive range of products and services for SMEs,” says Ms Magdalena Zmitrowicz, Bank Pekao vice-president responsible for SMEs.

The EIB was founded in 1958 and is the financial arm of the European Union. It is world's largest multilateral bank and plays a leading role in financing climate action initiatives. The EIB's other key areas of activity are the

promotion of SME development, the creation of new jobs and the fostering of women entrepreneurship.

"Financing small and medium-sized enterprises is one of the core activities of the EIB. We do it through partner banks and institutions, such as Pekao Group, with whom we have been cooperating for 15 years. In this transaction, we are particularly glad that our funds will support companies investing in energy-saving solutions and companies managed or owned by women. SMEs can be a key player of the green transformation with women owners and managers playing a greater role in the economy. The EIB is proud to support these dynamics," says Prof. Teresa Czerwińska, vice-president of the EIB.

Bank Pekao S.A., founded in 1929, is one of the largest financial institutions in Central and Eastern Europe and one of the top three universal banks in Poland with around PLN 230 billion in assets. Through the country's second largest branch network, Bank Pekao serves over 5.7 million customers. As the leading corporate bank in Poland, Bank Pekao serves every second large corporation in Poland. Its status of universal bank is underpinned by market-leading private banking, asset management and brokerage operations. Its diversified business profile is supported by a first-rate balance sheet and risk profile, as reflected in its low cost of risk, strong capital ratios and resilience to macroeconomic conditions (ranked among the top three banks in the European Banking Authority's EU-wide exercise). Since 1998, Bank Pekao has been listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and has been a member of several local (including the WIG20 and WIG Banks) and international indices (including the MSCI Emerging Markets, Stoxx Europe 600 and FTSE Developed). Pekao is among the top dividend-paying companies listed in Warsaw, with a total shareholder payout of PLN 20 billion in the last 10 years.