

Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their video conference of 21 January 2021



I would like to invite you to our next video conference on the fight against COVID-19 on Thursday 21 January at 18.00.

The infection rates across Europe and the emergence of new, more contagious variants of the virus warrant the utmost caution. The prospect of vaccinations is encouraging but we must maintain our vigilance and continue our testing and tracing approach while allowing EU cross-border movements.

In order to ensure better coordination, I would like us to exchange on best practices on the measures taken across Member States and discuss the outlook for the coming weeks.

Our most pressing issue is vaccines. The good news is that today we have access to two vaccines approved in the European Union and we have secured agreements for four others.

Accelerating vaccination across the EU is our absolute priority. I will first invite the Commission to offer a state of play on the vaccination roll-out, future production increases and the equitable access to vaccines. Member States can then share their experience on the implementation of vaccination campaigns.

The vaccination process opens the debate on certification. We will discuss the suitability of a common approach to certification, as well as, if appropriate, under which circumstances certificates could be used.

Lastly, we should touch on cooperation with third countries in relation to vaccines, which should be treated as a global public good. We will look at how we can assist partners in the neighbourhood and beyond.

I look forward to a fruitful exchange.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Arms exports control: Council establishes a EU approach on end-user certificates



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Press release – Opening – January plenary session



Describing Alexei Navalny's detention on his return to Moscow yesterday as a violation of human rights, President Sassoli underlined that all MEPs support his release.

The President also paid tribute to Lithuanian citizens who defended their independence and freedom thirty years ago on 13 January 1991, when Soviet tanks attacked the Vilnius television tower.

Outgoing MEPs

Cristian Ghinea (Renew, Romania) as of 22 December 2020

Kris Peeters (EPP, Belgium) as of 11 January 2021

Incoming MEPs

Erno Schaller-Baross (EPP, HU) as of 10 January 2021

Alin Mituta (Renew, Romania) as of 28 December 2020

Changes to the agenda

Tuesday

There will be a statement by the EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on the arrest of Alexei Navalny as the first item in the afternoon. The debate will be wound up with a resolution.

The sitting is extended to 20.00.

Wednesday

The Council and Commission statements on the inauguration of the new President of the United States and the current political situation are changed into European Council and Commission statements.

The information concerning the distribution of votes is available on the website of the European Parliament under the section "[Priority information](#)".

The changes to the agenda with timing of votes can be found [here](#).

Requests by committees to start negotiations with Council and Commission

Decisions by committees to enter into inter-institutional negotiations (Rule 71) are published [on the plenary website](#).

If no request for a vote in Parliament on the decision to enter into negotiations is made by Tuesday 12.00 midnight, the committees may start negotiations.

Information on the extraordinary remote participation procedure is available [here](#).

[Russia: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the arrest of Alexei Navalny upon his return](#)



The European Union condemns the detention of the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny upon his return to Moscow on 17 January and calls for his immediate release. Politicisation of the judiciary is unacceptable and Mr Navalny's rights must be respected. We also call upon the Russian authorities to immediately release all those journalists and citizens who have been detained in connection to their reporting of, and support of, Mr Navalny upon his return. This detention confirms a continuous negative pattern of shrinking space for the opposition, civil society and independent voices in the Russian Federation. The EU will follow closely the developments in this field and will continue to take this into account when shaping its policy towards Russia.

The European Union has condemned in the strongest possible terms the assassination attempt, through poisoning using a military chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group, on Alexei Navalny, to which it responded by

imposing restrictive measures on six individuals and one entity. Together with our partners, the European Union will continue to call upon the Russian authorities to urgently investigate the assassination attempt on Mr Navalny in full transparency and without further delay, and to fully cooperate with the *Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons* (OPCW) to ensure an impartial international investigation.

Finland: € 100 million European backing for Valmet's R&D investments



- EIB signs €100 million loan with Valmet in support of the company's research and development investments for the coming years.
- The financing will be used for R&D in the fields of pulping and fibre technologies, tissue mills, energy production, biofuels and services, to be carried out in Finland and Sweden.

The European Investment Bank has signed a €100 million loan agreement with Valmet, a Finnish developer and supplier of technologies, automation and services for the pulp, paper and energy industries. The financing will support Valmet's R&D response to important global trends, ranging from enhancing raw materials efficiency to efficiency in the use of water and energy, as well as using renewable raw materials and reducing Valmet's customers' emissions. The supported R&D will be carried out in Valmet's locations in Finland and Sweden.

With this loan, Valmet will co-finance its R&D investments for 2020-2023 on paper and board mills, pulping and fibre technologies, tissue mills, energy production equipment and equipment to produce biofuels and biomaterials. Valmet's R&D is expected to bring positive environmental impacts in terms of supporting the development of technologies for sustainable energy generation and the wider adoption of renewable raw materials, improving energy and resource efficiency in processing renewable fibre for use in high-value consumer goods by developing more efficient machines that will reduce the environmental load of downstream operations, as well as supporting the production of bio-based materials and fuels.

EIB Vice-President **Thomas Östros** stated: *"Once the ongoing health crisis is behind us, climate challenges will still be there, which is why the EIB is glad to support Valmet's efforts in this area. Now is the time to look ahead and see how we can modify traditional businesses for a low-carbon future, so it's good to see that leading companies such as Valmet are taking these challenges very seriously."*

This EIB first supported Valmet back in 2004. More recently, the EIB signed two loans with Valmet in [2015](#) and [2018](#).

Valmet Oyj is a leading global developer and supplier of services and technologies for the pulp, paper and energy industries. The technology offering includes pulp mills, tissue, board and paper production lines, as well as power plants for bio-energy production. Its Services division provides spare parts, plant improvements and turnkey packages as well as maintenance outsourcing solutions. The company has over 200 years of industrial history and was reborn following the demerger of the pulp, paper and power businesses from the Metso Group in December 2013. Valmet is amongst the global market leaders in all its core business segments.