

Albania joins FRA as observer

This follows the decision to allow Albania to become an official observer to FRA's work. This will enable it to benefit from the agency's fundamental rights expertise and assistance as of 1 December 2020.

Albania is already part of FRA's human rights gateway – the [EU Fundamental Rights Information System](#).

Albania has also appointed a [National Liaison Officer](#), a government official to act as the main contact point between FRA and Albania.

Candidate countries and countries with which the EU has concluded a Stabilisation and Association Agreement can become FRA observers following a decision of the relevant Association Council.

North Macedonia and Serbia are also FRA observers and a number of FRA activities extend to those countries already.

Press release – EU Budget 2021 deal: supporting the recovery



On Friday, the negotiators from the European Parliament and the Council reached a common understanding on the 2021 EU Budget.

The preliminary figures are €164.3 billion in commitment appropriations and €166.1 billion in payment appropriations. Detailed figures will be available later.

For a more competitive Europe, creating jobs and investing in the EU's future

MEPs succeeded in reinforcing, on top of the Commission's original budget proposal, programmes they considered key to boosting growth and jobs, reflecting widely agreed European Union priorities, namely Digital Europe (+25.7 million) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for transport infrastructure (+€60.3 million).

Strengthen respect for Europe's values and boosting climate action

As a supplementary effort to fight climate change, the reinforcements obtained by the EP for the LIFE programme (+€42 million) aim at contributing from the outset to reaching the target of 30% of climate-relevant spending in the EU budget for the 2021-2027 period.

The Rights and Values programme will receive an additional €6.6 million, and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), an independent Union body aiming to fight crimes against the Union budget will benefit from an extra €7.3 million.

MFF top-ups: supporting the young, EU research and healthcare

Other reinforcements for 2021 reflect the [top-ups to selected key EU programmes](#) Parliament obtained in the [deal with Council on the next long-term EU budget \(MFF\) 2021-2027](#).

This is the case for Erasmus+ (+€175.1 million), Horizon Europe (research programme, +€20 million) and the EU4Health programme, the EU's response to COVID-19, by a further €74.3 million. EU4Health will support medical and healthcare staff, patients and health systems. Similarly, the commitment appropriations for humanitarian aid have been increased by €25 million and for supporting the EU's southern neighbourhood by 10.2 million.

Quotes

"I'm pleased we could reach a swift agreement in the interest of European citizens in these challenging times. With the top-ups for some of the future-looking programmes agreed in the multi-annual framework just weeks ago, we obtained budget increases for other programmes with proven European added value. These extra investments in, for example, the trans-European transport networks and digital Europe all answer to real needs and are in line with the expectations of EU citizens", said the Chair of the Budgets committee [Johan van Overtveldt](#) (ECR, BE).

"Parliament and Council today reached an agreement on the 2021 EU budget. 164 billion euros to protect citizens, reduce the immediate impact of the crisis and prepare for a more prosperous, balanced and sustainable future. In the last two days of the negotiations, Parliament secured an additional 183 million euros for its priorities: health, climate and employment. Considering the very rigid framework, this is a good result. Faced with governments that were unwilling to give up one cent, Parliament did its utmost and obtained additional increases. But, in all conscience, we all know that this budget is not up to the task. It was the maximum that could be obtained given the

multiannual budget that was negotiated with heads of state who decide unanimously.

But the good news is that there is a solution that can mobilise more than 50 billion euros per year for health, climate and employment, and that will not be blocked by the unanimity rule: taxing speculation by relaunching the existing reinforced cooperation on this subject. I call on the leaders of these pioneering countries, starting with Ms Merkel and Mr Macron, to get to work on this tax without delay”, said the lead rapporteur (Commission section) [Pierre Larroustou](#) (S&D, FR).

“Thanks to the united position of the EP, we have reached a very good political agreement on the 2021 budget of the European Union institutions, despite a difficult context of crisis. My concern throughout these negotiations was to ensure that all the institutions of the Union, i.e. the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee, the European Data Protection Supervisor,..., have sufficient resources and staff to enable them to fulfill their missions as well as possible and to function optimally. This was made possible following our commitment to save money in connection with the changes in our activities during the COVID-19 pandemic”, said the rapporteur for the other sections, [Oliver Chastel](#) (RENEW,BE).

Next steps

In the absence of an agreement in Council on the EU’s long-term budget (MFF, Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027), the two arms of the EU’s budgetary authority, Parliament and Council, have not formalised their deal. Once the MFF is adopted, Commission will propose the substance of the agreement as second draft budget.

Once Council has formally adopted the compromise in the form of this second draft budget, it will be submitted for approval to the Committee on Budgets, then voted on in plenary in the European Parliament and signed into law by its President.

[Hungary: EIB supports healthcare sector during COVID-19 pandemic with €162.5 million](#)



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- The EU bank will invest €162.5 million to support the Hungarian healthcare sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The loan beneficiary is AEEK, the national hospital management agency.
- The operation covers the procurement of medical supplies, personal protective equipment, mobile units and an emergency container hospital.

Today, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the lending arm of the European Union, and the Hungarian Ministry of Finance signed a €162.5 million loan to support the country's healthcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The loan will support the National Healthcare Service Centre (Állami Egészségügyi Ellátó Központ – AEEK), Hungary's national hospital management agency. It will cover the costs of acquisition of COVID-19-related medical supplies, personal protective equipment and mobile units, and the construction of an emergency container hospital, which will expand the number of bed units for treating COVID-19 patients in Hungary.

EIB Vice-President Tereza Czerwińska, who is responsible for operations in Hungary, said: "The EIB is continuing to bolster the capability of Europe's healthcare systems to protect our citizens from the coronavirus. We stand ready to support Hungary and every Member State in providing the best possible treatment and care for EU citizens. We reinforce our investments in healthcare equipment and infrastructure by engaging in projects aimed at conceiving a long-term solution to the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we have committed €600million to support European companies working on COVID-19 vaccines, treatment and diagnostics.

Mihály Varga, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Hungary, said:
"I highly appreciate the support of EIB to the Hungarian Government with the aim to develop the capacity of the Hungarian health care system and health infrastructure to tackle the virus.

The operation will help Hungary mitigate the effects of COVID-19 faster, reinforce the national healthcare system and increase the country's ability to respond to major emergencies like the pandemic and continue with sustainable economic and social development.

Support for the COVID-19 health emergency in Hungary and the wider region demonstrates the EIB's readiness to step up its support for Hungary and stem the potentially severe impact of the ongoing epidemic outbreak in the region, which complements similar measures introduced by the European Commission.

EIB in Hungary:

EIB lending commitments in Hungary since the start of the Bank's activity in the country are currently close to €21.6 billion. Between 2008 and -2018 alone the EIB signed for support worth EUR 13.2 billion. EIB operations cover important sectors of the Hungarian economy, including transport, the environment, energy infrastructure, manufacturing and services.

Another key component of the Bank's activity in Hungary is the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by increasing SME access to long-term financing through local financial institutions. Since 2001, the EU bank supported 5,172 Hungarian SMEs sustaining 263,767 jobs in the process.

#DigitalServicesAct, **#DigitalMarketsAct: Time for our** **democracy to catch up with technology**



The European Commission's forthcoming initiatives to regulate digital services and markets will ensure that providers take responsibility for the services they offer and that digital giants do not impose their own rules on Europe's markets, said Commission executive vice-president Margrethe Vestager at the EESC plenary.

The European Commission's Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, expected to be released shortly, will help European democracy catch up with the last twenty years of digital development, defining how digital services should be provided and digital markets work, said **Ms Vestager** yesterday to the European Economic and Social Committee's plenary during a debate on **A Europe fit for the digital age.**

EESC president **Christa Schweng** stressed that the digital transition has become more important than ever as one of the two building blocks of Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, together with the green transition.

The EESC president quoted a recent study which estimated that by 2030 the cumulative additional GDP contribution of new digital technologies could amount to EUR 2.2 trillion in the EU – the equivalent of Spain's and the Netherlands's combined GDP for 2019.

Ms **Schweng** said: "We need a European, human-centred approach to digitalisation. Without the trust of the citizens and businesses we will not be able to seize the opportunities offered by digitalisation. To that end, it's important to build a genuine European Dataspace where our data is protected and privacy and self-determination are ensured. We also need to build EU technological sovereignty while maintaining global digital trade."

Ms **Vestager** outlined the key elements of the Commission's digital strategy, its focus on **leveraging private investment**, its reliance on **flagship initiatives** (on digital skills, digital public services and cybersecurity) and the building and deploying of digital capacities.

Now "the Digital Services Act will make sure that digital service providers take responsibility and are accountable for the services they provide and that trust can be rebuilt," said Ms **Vestager**. "Illegal online content and products which do not live up to the rules that we have for physical products are the problem. Both should be fixed, and should be fixed on a European scale."

"The Digital Markets Act", she went on to remark, "will say to giant companies: you are more than welcome to do business in Europe, you are more than welcome to be successful, but there is a list of do's and don'ts when you reach that gatekeeper position in order for fair competition to be there and serve consumers in the best possible manner. The fundamental point here is that the market should serve us as consumers and that we want technology that we can truly trust."

Stefano Mallia, president of the EESC Employers' Group, said: "European employers strongly support the key goal of restoring Europe's digital sovereignty. It is our firm view that investing in digitalisation is the best way for the EU and its Member States to come out of the current economic hardship, support the recovery and create new jobs."

He voiced the business community's backing for the Commission's goal of over EUR 20 billion annual investment in AI over the next decade, and quoted a newly published McKinsey study showing that, although just a quarter of businesses globally are reporting bottom-line impact from the use of AI, that impact seems to be coming mainly from the generation of new revenue rather than cost reduction – a finding worth exploring in talks between the Commission, the business community and trade unions.

Oliver Röpke, president of the EESC Workers' Group, said: "As workers' representatives, we are convinced that digitalisation is an opportunity

beyond the current pandemic to have better jobs and working conditions. However, clear and fair rules are needed to prevent digital platforms from circumventing legislation and creating a smartphone version of 19th century capitalism. To ensure that we can fully profit from the enormous potential of digitalisation, we must fully involve the social partners through a clear framework with workers' information, consultation and participation rights enshrined at all levels."

He also said that finding fair and effective ways of taxing the digital economy was a fundamental blueprint to ensure proper redistribution of wealth as new technologies developed and robotisation spread.

Seamus Boland, president of the EESC Diversity Europe Group, stressed that the pandemic had both revealed and precipitated the digitalisation of our lives and at the same time brought to the fore the plight of people who did not know how to use the technology.

Tuesday webinars: December 2020

December 04, 2020 [General](#)

Tuesday webinars: December 2020



The Academy is pleased to announce the Tuesday Webinar live broadcasts scheduled for December 2020.

DATE	TITLE	LEVEL	TIME
01/12/2020	Leading digital transformation	Basic	10:00 – 11:00

08/12/2020	Decisions of the Trimester of the GC and the CJEU	Advanced	10:00 – 11:00
08/12/2020	Digits and numbers: When do they COUNT as trade marks?	Intermediate	11:30 – 12:30
15/12/2020	The new services offered by alternative dispute resolution	Basic	10:00 – 10:30
15/12/2020	Decisions of the Trimester of the EUIPO Boards of Appeal	Advanced	11:00 – 12:00

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