

# Council approves conclusions on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024



The Council has approved conclusions on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. The Action Plan sets out the EU's **level of ambition and priorities** in this field in its relations with all third countries.

With this Action Plan, the Council reaffirms the EU's **strong commitment to further advancing universal values for all**.

The conclusions acknowledge that while there have been leaps forward, there has also been a **pushback** against the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The ongoing **COVID-19 pandemic** and its **socio-economic consequences** have had an increasingly negative impact on all human rights, democracy and rule of law, deepening pre-existing inequalities and increasing pressure on persons in vulnerable situations.

**No one should be left behind, no human right ignored.** To this end the EU and its member states will use the full range of their instruments, in all areas of external action, to focus on and further strengthen EU's global leadership in the field of human rights and democracy and in the implementation of the EU Action Plan.

## Background

In 2012, the EU adopted the Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy which set out the principles, objectives and priorities designed to improve the effectiveness and consistency of EU policy in these areas. To implement the EU Strategic Framework of 2012, the EU has adopted two EU Action Plans (2012-2014 and 2015-2019).

The new Action Plan for 2020-2024 builds on the previous action plans and continues to focus on long-standing priorities such as **supporting human rights defenders** and the **fight against the death penalty**.

By identifying five overarching priorities: (1) protecting and empowering individuals; (2) building resilient, inclusive and democratic societies; (3) promoting a global system for human rights and democracy; (4) new technologies: harnessing opportunities and addressing challenges; and (5) delivering by working together, the Action Plan also reflects the changing context with attention to new technologies and to the link between global environmental challenges and human rights.

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## Press release – Migration and asylum: time to find balance between solidarity and responsibility



At the opening of the High-level Inter-parliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe organised by the European Parliament, EP President David Sassoli stressed that “behind migration figures there are people , each one with their own story”, adding that “they need to be at the heart of any efficient European policy on migration and asylum”.

President Sassoli referred to the recent tragedy off the coast of Libya in which a six-month-old baby from Guinea lost his life after a shipwreck. He also emphasised that Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Maltese borders are, in fact, European borders: i.e. a shared responsibility for the whole Union.

EC President Ursula von der Leyen also acknowledged that “far too many people are risking their lives to come to Europe” and highlighted the great contribution that migrants often make to their hosting communities – citing the German-Turkish couple behind the Pzifer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as an example. The new Pact on Asylum and Migration aims to balance the need to welcome refugees, fight smugglers, and ensure integration and appropriate treatment for everyone, including those who cannot remain in Europe, she explained.

Wolfgang Schäuble, Chair of the German Bundestag, admitted that there are no easy nor optimal solutions to this conundrum. “We must fulfil our humanitarian obligations, and saving lives at sea is a legal obligation”, he said, but sometimes we also have to cooperate with dubious regimes. He warned that cynical smugglers use EU ideals to their benefit, so “we need to show we are capable of returning people in order to not create false incentives”.

The Speakers of the Portuguese and Slovenian parliaments, Eduardo Ferro

Rodrigues and Igor Zorčič, also took part in the opening of the conference, since these two countries form together with Germany the trio of EU presidencies of the Council.

Ferro Rodrigues noted that migration is a global phenomenon to which the EU must respond based on its founding values. "There is a lot of work to be done in the years ahead" on the basis of a new European Pact, he added. Zorčič agreed that the current asylum system has shown too many weaknesses in recent years and hoped the EU will be able to create an efficient common framework, taking into account each member state's situation.

You can watch the [recording of the opening session](#), and [follow live, or recorded](#), the rest of the sessions.

Find here the [full programme](#) of the event. Debates will focus on the relationship between solidarity and responsibility in migration and asylum management, the external dimension, shaping partnerships with third countries, and legal migration and integration.

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## **Press release – EU economies need public investment-led stimulus, ECB President tells MEPs**



Thursday's meeting was the fourth and last time that MEPs will meet with President Christine Lagarde in 2020.

Opening the discussion, Ms Lagarde struck a downbeat tone on the EU's economic prospects due to the continued effects of the pandemic. She also

insisted, however, that the ECB's standard tools and those specifically put in place to cope with the exceptional situation, together with other actions at EU level, had been very successful in preventing a much worse situation. Ms Lagarde also insisted that member states needed to run a public investment led stimulus of the economy.

Although MEPs were broadly in agreement that the exceptional times called for exceptional action, some worried that the ECB was coming close to overstepping its mandate, while others argued that it was urgent for the ECB to consider using additional tools. This difference in approach also concerned the question of whether the ECB should specifically target climate change, notably by purchasing more green bonds.

MEPs also worried whether the easing of the conditions linked to the ECB's targeted longer-term refinancing operations (TLTRO) programme had become another way to finance banks rather than meeting its original purpose – that of facilitating lending to the real economy.

In light of the prolonged downturn, some MEPs questioned the role of the stability and growth pact in its current format, whereas others asked Ms Lagarde whether debt should be cancelled in some form. Finally, the recent blocking of the EU's long-term budget by Hungary and Poland was also brought up by MEPs, who hinted that the ECB's governing council could have reason to look into potential negative repercussions on the Eurozone economy.

You can soon watch the meeting again [here](#).

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## [Still insufficient progress in making transport fuels more climate friendly, latest EEA data show](#)

The European Union is behind its objective to reduce the greenhouse gas emission intensity of fuels sold for road transport to 6 % below 2010 levels, as set out in the EU's 2020 climate and energy targets.

According to the EEA's [fuel quality data indicator](#), the emission intensity decreased by 3.7 % between 2010 and 2018, mostly due to the increased use of biofuels. The emission intensity of fuels sold in the EU actually increased between 2017 and 2018, when considering the effects of indirect land use change due to the increased use of oil crops as feedstocks.

Transport is responsible for more than 25 % of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions and is a major contributor to climate change. Cutting emissions from transport is pivotal to realising the ambition of having net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as set out in the [European Green Deal](#). To

support a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport, the [EU's Fuel Quality Directive](#) sets the target that fuel suppliers should reduce the emission intensity of fuels sold in the EU by 6 % by 2020, compared with 2010. In 2017, the average emission intensity of fuels in the EU was 3.4 % lower than in 2010, thus failing to meet the indicative target of a 4 % reduction by 2017. By 2018, the average emission intensity was 3.7 % lower than in 2010.

## **More progress needed**

Finland and Sweden are the only Member States whose emission intensities decreased by more than 6 % according to the data. This is because their road transport fuel mixes have relatively high proportions of biofuels (8 % in Finland and 23 % in Sweden) and, on average, the biofuels used have relatively low emission intensities.

The two Member States that reduced their emission intensities the least between 2010 and 2018 were Croatia (0.1 %) and Estonia (0.9 %).

## **Background**

The EEA's fuel quality data reporting complements the annual report on the Fuel Quality Directive published by the European Commission, which was also released today. EU Member States report annually on the volumes, energy content and life cycle greenhouse gas emissions of fuels used in road transport and non-road mobile machinery, in line with their obligations under the Fuel Quality Directive.

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# **European cooperation: online improvements in Romania**

November 19, 2020 [EU Intellectual Property Network](#)

European cooperation: online improvements in Romania



On 28 October, the Romanian State Office for Inventions and Trademarks (OSIM), with the support of the EUIPO's European cooperation projects, enhanced its back and front office applications.

New reporting and improved smart PDF online forms introduced in the back office have further enhanced the capabilities available to OSIM users. The front office application will also now include six new e-services for designs.

The new reporting capability consists of 70 different reports available within the back office. OSIM users benefit from an improved user-friendly interface and more powerful and faster search results.

The existing smart PDF forms have been improved in order to manage trade mark applications submitted on paper as well as digitally more efficiently. Users can now submit their applications electronically using email. OSIM users will then be able to introduce the application information more efficiently in the back office system. Overall, the application process will run faster and more smoothly from application to completion.

The front office application has been also enhanced with six additional e-services for designs; this includes renewals, the transfer of rights, modification of owner/representative, oppositions, rights in rem and licences. From now on, users will be able to file design applications using these services, expanding the same capability already provided for trade marks. The new services mean that users will gain in usability and have a better user experience overall. This new implementation is also paving the way for a planned and future integration of all e-services with the back office application.

This implementation will bring enhanced benefits to users by reducing working times and removing potential data errors during manual data handling, improving the user experience overall. OSIM and the EUIPO, within the framework of the European cooperation projects, will continue to work together to introduce further enhancements to both the front and back office

applications during 2020 and beyond.

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