

Regional leaders commit to launch an 'Alliance of Regions for European Democracy' to enhance regions' political impact at EU level



Αpostolos Tzitzikostas (EL/EPP), President of the European Committee of the Regions, said: "We all know that our Union is diverse. Some Member States are more centralised, whilst others regions hold legislative powers. But every region, regardless of their power, has a crucial impact on the national and European level. Regional and local authorities implement 70% of all EU legislation and represent one-third of public spending and half of public investments. Therefore, we cannot accept forever that others will make decisions on our behalf. Our regional and local legal responsibilities and democratic mandate must be fully taken into account at European and national level. It is time to end this democratic and legal gap. The Declaration we are adopting intends to launch a political Alliance of Regions for European Democracy. Its purpose is to improve the way regions impact EU decision making, for the benefit of our Union and the citizens it serves."

Gustavo A. Matos Expósito (ES/PES), President of the Parliament of the Canary Islands and President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies added: "The regional parliaments and legislative assemblies of the EU represent the citizens of their regions, through their elected representatives, therefore they are fundamental tools to achieve the involvement of citizens in the process of redefining the EU in the CoFE."

José Manuel Bolieiro (PT/EPP), President of the Autonomous Region Azores, who hosted the event, commented: "It is our duty to promote an alliance. An alliance between all European regions, regardless of their competences within their Member States. An alliance where each of our regions finds its place and every region can count on the support of the other regions."

Vasco Ilídio Alves Cordeiro (PT/PES), 1st Vice President of the European Committee of the Regions and Member of the Regional Parliament of Azores concluded the event: "This declaration is the founding document of an Alliance of Regions for European democracy. Our mobilisation is crucial for the Conference on the Future of Europe, as local and regional authorities represent the third pillar of European democracy. We need to reinforce their political role for the implementation but also for the definition of all policies that are relevant to our communities."

The Declaration "The place of regions in the European Union architecture in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe" can be endorsed [here](#).

Quotes from other speakers at the event:

- **Mark Speich (DE/EPP)**, CoR CIVEX Chair and Secretary of State for Federal, European and International Affairs in North Rhine-Westphalia: “*Regions know better about the implementation of EU law than the national level. They are also closer to EU citizens and enterprises. Strengthening their position in the institutional structure of the EU could attribute to a better EU decision-making, and at the end to a better EU legislation.*”
- **Concepción Andreu Rodríguez (ES/PES)**; President of the Regional Government of La Rioja: “*The participation of regional administrations in European affairs should be included in the national and regional legal systems. La Rioja is reforming its Autonomy Statute and one of the proposals is the regional participation in the European legislative process.*”
- **Rachid Madrane (BE/PES)**, President of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region: “*The regions are at the forefront of European democracy. They are often the laboratory for new practices that aim to « facilitate » democracy – I am thinking in particular of innovations in participatory democracy, such as deliberative commissions. Discussions about their place in the European architecture are therefore very important and the Brussels Parliament will actively participate in them.*”
- **Ilse Aigner (DE/EPP)**, President of State Parliament of Bavaria and President of the Conference of German state parliaments: “*In the future, the regions and their political leaders must be given sufficient degree of flexibility in Europe. Because there is only citizens' support for the European idea if citizens are more involved – the regional parliaments as the people's representation have in this context a central role to play as legislators and as mediators of European policy.*”
- **Massimiliano Fedriga (IT/ECR)**, President of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region and President of the Conference of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces: “*Citizens look at their daily life and judge institutions and politics based on the quality of life, the availability of public services and the care of public goods that are provided to them, as well as on the wellness and the safety of the environment where they live. Therefore, we need concrete measures which should be built in the medium-long term to be financially sustainable.*”
- Antje Grotheer (DE/PES), CoR CIVEX Member and Vice-President of Bremen City Parliament: “*As those closest to the people in Europe, we in the regions know exactly what the inhabitants of Europe need. It is therefore important that our opinion is heard, our challenges seen and our solutions recognized in the EU.*”
- **Leendert Verbeek (NL/PES)**, King's Commissioner of Flevoland and President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe: “*The region plays a unique role as a bridge between the European and national levels and local communities and citizens. Regions have the primary responsibility for ensuring territorial cohesion, social protection of citizens and their participation in democratic governance. This special role of regions must be strengthened further through their greater involvement in national and European policy making.*” □

– **Olgierd Geblewicz (PL/EPP)**, President of West Pomerania Region and President of the Association of Polish Regions: “*The Conference on the Future of Europe is a window of opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of the regional level. It is mainly about two things – first providing input for policies which are more citizen and needs-based. Second, providing more democratic legitimacy in EU’s structures. I think we as regional leaders fit both purposes excellently. Because of the variety of competences that our regions have we can deliver ideas for policies which are both needs-based and comply with the realities of implementation.*”

– **Alin-Adrian Nica (RO/EPP)**, President of Timiș County Council: “*The Conference on the Future of Europe is a historic chance for all our European territories to build the democratic house we want to live in. It is the chance for authorities and citizens to work together and generate a rethinking and revival of European policies to fit our children’s needs!*”

– **Juraj Droba (SK/ECR)**, President of the Bratislava Region: “*I am convinced that regions should become stronger partners of the EU institutions, especially when it comes to the preparation of the new programming period and EU Recovery Plan. Conference on the Future of Europe is an excellent opportunity for cities and regions to raise their voices and to call for strengthening of their role in EU policy-making.*”

Watch the conference [here](#).

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Farming ministers reaffirm need for a new approach to protecting honey bees

Today agriculture ministers agreed on the need to set a **specific goal to protect honey bees** from pesticides.

Member states considered guidance provided by the **European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)**, outlining a new approach to assessing the impact of pesticides on honey bee populations. Specifically, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, invited ministers to consider an approach that would set the **maximum reduction in colony size at 10% across the whole of the EU**.

Ministers agreed on the need to **increase the EU’s ambitions in terms of honey bee protection** while also ensuring that the measures were feasible for member states to implement. On the whole they supported the proposed approach, with

some member states calling for the maximum size to be set lower than 10%. Many also stressed the importance of taking the **latest scientific advice** into account.



Today the Council made a significant step towards setting a specific protection goal for honey bees. Honey bees are not only a vital part of our ecosystems, they also help ensure a sustainable future for agriculture by pollinating crops. We are confident that today's exchange of views between ministers will lead to the introduction of EU-wide measures to protect honey bee populations from the effects of pesticides.

Maria do Céu Antunes, Portuguese Minister for Agriculture

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), bees pollinate 71 of the 100 crop species that provide 90% of the world's food. However, bee numbers have fallen steeply over the past two decades. The use of pesticides has been identified as a potential factor in this decline.

Background

According to EU law, pesticides can only be used in farming if a comprehensive risk assessment demonstrates that such use will not harm human or animal health or cause unacceptable levels of damage to the environment. The current risk levels are based on the Guidance Document on Terrestrial Ecotoxicology, produced by the European Commission in 2002.

In March 2019, the European Commission asked the EFSA to conduct a review of its 2013 Bee Guidance Document. In the context of this review, a majority of member states expressed their preference for an approach to risk assessment that takes into account the natural variability of honey bee colony sizes. They also emphasised that any new targets for colony size needed to be feasible to implement.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Media advisory – Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 28 and 29 June

2021



Indicative programme

Monday 28 June 2021

Place:
ECC Luxembourg

Chairs:
Maria do Céu Antunes, Minister for Agriculture
Ricardo Serrão Santos, Minister of the Sea of Portugal

All times are approximate and subject to change

from 08.00
Arrivals ([live streaming](#))

10.00
Beginning of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council
Adoption of the agenda
Approval of non-legislative list A items
Approval of legislative list A items ([public session](#))

Common agricultural policy (CAP) reform package for 2023-2027 ([public session](#))

+/- 14.00
Regulation on Fisheries Control ([public session](#))

+/- 14.15
Press conference in [live streaming](#)

+/- 14.35
Common Fisheries Policy (CFP): state of play and fishing opportunities for 2022

+/- 16.00
Any other business:
– Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
– European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) ([public session](#))
– Situation in the North East Atlantic

+/- 17.40
Biological control agents ([public session](#))

+/- 18.10
Setting a protection goal for honey bees ([public session](#))

+/- 19.10

Any other business:

- Food supplements on the EU market ([public session](#))
- Joint action on antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infections (JAMRAI) ([public session](#))
- Fur farming ([public session](#))

+/- at the end of the meeting

Press conference in [live streaming](#)

Tuesday 29 June 2021

from 09.00

Arrivals ([live streaming](#))

10.00

EU food market situation

+/- 11.30

Any other business:

- 49th conference of EU paying agency directors
 - Regional economic accounts for agriculture (REAA) and statistics on agricultural inputs and outputs ([public session](#))
 - Fourth African Union and European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference ([public session](#))
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Arrangements for the press conferences

In light of the gradual relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions both in Belgium and Luxembourg, a limited number of journalists will be allowed to attend physically the meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Council. More info [here](#).

Press conferences will remain accessible also in video conference. In order to participate and ask questions, EU accredited journalists should register using [this link](#).

Those who already registered for previous press briefings or press conferences of Agriculture and Fisheries Council do not need to do it again.

- Deadline for registration: Monday, 28 June 2021, 15.00

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants shortly after the deadline.

[Videos and photos from the event](#)

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Non-performing loans: provisional agreement on selling credit to third parties

EU ambassadors today confirmed a provisional agreement reached between the Council presidency and the Parliament on a new directive harmonising rules for credit servicers and credit purchasers of non-performing loans issued by credit institutions.

The aim of the new rules is to **support the development of the secondary market** for non-performing loans in the EU in order to allow banks to clean their balance sheets of 'bad loans', while ensuring that the sale does not affect the rights of borrowers.



Efficient lending opportunities for our businesses and households are important for economic recovery in Europe. Making sure that credit institutions clean their balance sheets of non-performing loans will ensure better access to funding for citizens and entrepreneurs.

João Leão, Portugal's Minister for Finance

A bank loan is generally considered non-performing when more than **90 days** pass without the borrower paying the agreed instalments or interests, or when it becomes unlikely that the borrower will reimburse it. Efficient management of non-performing loans is particularly important in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis to **reduce risks in banks' balance sheets and enable banks to focus on lending** to businesses and citizens, thus supporting economic recovery in the EU.

The directive standardises the rules for credit servicers and credit purchasers across the EU and **facilitates the sales of non-performing loans**, including across national borders, while ensuring that borrowers' rights are not hampered in the process. A designated authority in the home member state will authorise and supervise credit servicers, in close cooperation with the authorities of other member states.

The Council presidency and the Parliament's negotiators have reached a provisional agreement on the following main issues discussed during the negotiations:

- authorising credit servicing activities, to ensure borrowers are treated

- fairly and diligently
- forbearance measures, to take into account the rights and interests of consumers before starting enforcement proceedings

Next steps

The Parliament and the Council are expected to adopt the directive after legal-linguistic revision. After it is signed and published in the Official Journal of the EU, the text will be transposed into national law within 24 months of the date of entry into force.

Motor insurance directive: Coreper endorses provisional agreement



The Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) today gave its support to the political agreement reached between the Council and the European Parliament's negotiators during the trilogue on 22 June 2021 on the amendment to the motor insurance directive that will **strengthen the protection of injured parties** in motor vehicle accidents and **improve the rights of policyholders**.

The provisionally agreed text amends the **scope of the directive**, following ECJ rulings, including new definitions of 'vehicle' and 'use of vehicle'. It also provides member states with new possibilities for national derogations from the insurance obligation. The use of a vehicle in motorsport events and activities will be excluded from the directive, provided that there is alternative insurance.

Moreover, bodies will be created in each member state to ensure that, if the insurance undertaking of a vehicle responsible for an accident is **insolvent**, injured parties can be compensated in their member state of residence; the body in that member state will then seek reimbursement from the body in the insolvent insurer's home member state.

Likewise, the co-legislators agreed on the establishment of an EU-harmonised **claims history statement** and on new rules to avoid discrimination in the treatment of policyholders on the basis of their nationality or previous member state of residence.

The revised text also includes:

- reinforced rules regarding checks on insurance
- increased harmonised minimum protection amounts for personal injury and material damage across the EU
- targeted amendments to the framework for dispatched vehicles and

provisions on accidents involving a trailer towed by a vehicle, independent motor insurance price comparison tools, information centres and information for injured parties.

Next steps

After legal-linguistic revision, the Parliament and the Council are expected to adopt the directive in the autumn. Once it has been signed and published in the Official Journal of the EU, the text will be transposed into national law within 24 months from the date of entry into force.