

Press conferences of the Special meeting of the European Council, 24-25 May 2021



Indicative programme

Monday 24 May

18.00 Arrivals and doorsteps of EU leaders

19.00 Exchange of view with European Parliament President David Sassoli

19.30 Working dinner

TTBC Press conference by Presidents Michel and von der Leyen in [live streaming](#)

Tuesday 25 May

08:30 Arrivals and doorsteps of EU leaders

09.30 Working session

TTBC Press conference by Presidents Michel and von der Leyen in [live streaming](#)

Arrangements for the press conferences

Please note that there will be no physical press conferences. They can be followed via [live streaming \(Monday\)](#) and [live streaming \(Tuesday\)](#)

English, French and German interpretation available.

In order to ask questions remotely, **EU accredited journalists** and journalists who had a **EUCO accreditation from June 2019** EUCO meeting or later, can register using [this form](#)

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

Deadline for registration: Monday 24 May at 20.00 and Tuesday 25 May at 10.00

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants approximately half an hour after the deadline.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the forced diversion of Ryanair flight FR4978 to Minsk on 23 May 2021



On 23 May, the Belarusian authorities, in an inadmissible step, forced a civilian plane to perform an emergency landing in Minsk. The plane, owned by an EU company, flying between two EU capitals and carrying more than 100 passengers, was forced to land by a Belarusian military aircraft.

One of the flight passengers, Mr Raman Pratasevich, an independent journalist from Belarus, was retained by the Belarusian authorities and prevented from boarding the plane at the Minsk airport to its original destination. This is yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices.

We call for the immediate release of Mr Pratasevich.

In carrying out this coercive act, the Belarusian authorities have jeopardised the safety of passengers and crew. An international investigation into this incident must be carried out to ascertain any breach of international aviation rules.

This situation will be raised at the upcoming meeting of the European Council. The EU will consider the consequences of this action, including taking measures against those responsible.

Communiqué of European Council President Charles Michel on the incident involving a forced landing of a Ryanair flight in Minsk, Belarus, on 23 May



I condemn in the strongest possible terms the forced landing of a Ryanair flight in Minsk, Belarus, on 23 May 2021 and the reported detention by Belarusian authorities of journalist Raman Pratasevich.

I call on Belarus authorities to immediately release the detained passenger and to fully guarantee his rights.

EU leaders will discuss this unprecedented incident tomorrow during the European Council.

The incident will not remain without consequences.

Presentation of letters of credentials to the President of the European Council Charles Michel



The President of the European Council Charles Michel received the letters of credentials of the following Ambassadors:

H.E. Mr Serge Thierry MICKOTO CHAVAGNE, Ambassador, Head of Mission of the Gabonese Republic

H.E. Mr Iván Emilio de Js. OGANDO LORA, Ambassador, Head of Mission of the Dominican Republic

H.E. Ms Pontšo Susan Matumelo SEKATLE, Ambassador, Head of Mission of the Kingdom of Lesotho

H.E. Mr Lim Hong Huai, Ambassador, Head of Mission of the Republic of Singapore

Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their special meeting of 24 and 25 May 2021



It is my pleasure to invite you to our special meeting of the European Council in Brussels on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 May.

Our Monday evening dinner will be dedicated to foreign policy issues.

As agreed during our videoconference in March, we will hold a strategic

debate on Russia. Russia's illegal and provocative steps have continued both within EU Member States and beyond, most recently with the so-called "unfriendly states" list. A future discussion among ourselves could usefully be framed by a report from the High Representative and the Commission, in line with the five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations.

We will also address relations with the UK following the entry into force of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 1 May 2021. This agreement, as well as the Withdrawal Agreement and its Protocols, should be fully and effectively implemented, in the interests of a mutually beneficial relationship and close partnership. This includes ensuring that the UK respects the principle of non-discrimination among Member States.

As to other foreign policy issues, we will briefly address the situation in the Middle East as well as preparations for the upcoming EU-US institutional Summit mid-June.

Our discussion on Tuesday will revolve around the pressing issues of COVID and climate.

On COVID-19, we are entering a new phase as the pace of vaccinations is increasing across the EU and we seek to prepare for a reopening ahead of the summer. The recent agreement on the Digital COVID Certificates is a welcome step. We should continue our coordinated approach to facilitate free movement throughout the EU. It is nevertheless of utmost importance that we maintain our vigilance regarding new variants and that we are prepared to take action as necessary.

We should also discuss international solidarity in fighting the pandemic. As a leading vaccine producer, exporter and contributor to COVAX, the EU is at the forefront of efforts to help meet global needs. We should now address how, and to what extent, we can further step up our sharing of vaccines with the rest of the world.

In December 2020, we agreed to increase our climate ambition for 2030. On that occasion, we also agreed to revert once again to the matter before the Commission's Fit-For-55 package proposal. This will be a good occasion for everybody to state their key priorities and concerns in this respect.

As to the practical aspects of our meeting, we will begin at 7pm on Monday 24 May with our usual exchange with the President of the European Parliament. We will resume on Tuesday morning at 9:30am. I look forward to seeing you in Brussels.

[Visit the meeting page](#)