

The European Investment Bank and Raiffeisenverband Salzburg support regional companies with a further €100 million



Raiffeisenverband Salzburg (RVS) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) are intensifying their cooperation. Due to high demand for loans, RVS has signed a further €30 million financing agreement with the EU bank. This is the first tranche of an overall sum of €50 million for which RVS has secured the EIB's agreement. To provide clear impetus for investment in the region, the new loan volume will also be doubled by Raiffeisen Salzburg to €100 million in the coming years.

The two banks have been working closely since 2017. Over this period, RVS has been cooperating with the EU bank directly to support companies in the region by granting loans on favourable terms. Projects that meet EIB criteria enjoy low interest rates. Since 2017, the EIB has granted promotional loans totalling €100 million to selected projects as part of this cooperation, with RVS doubling this amount to €200 million.

The scope of the EIB's refinancing is broad: in previous years, the low-interest EU loans went towards supporting new expansion and modernisation projects conducted by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the state of Salzburg and neighbouring regions, with a focus on environmentally friendly investment. These initiatives included renovation projects at tourism companies, which have reduced their CO₂ emissions significantly thanks to new heating and ventilation technologies, thermal insulation and/or the use of energy management systems. The funds were also used for switching to energy-efficient production machinery and processes as well as constructing low-energy buildings for commercial use.

These newly signed agreements place even greater emphasis on climate action, with a particular focus on innovation. These favourable refinancing packages are primarily intended for companies operating in innovative fields and investments in pioneering products and processes.

Salzburg-based businesses and their future are particularly important to RVS General Manager Dr Heinz Konrad: "Small and medium-sized enterprises in particular form the backbone of the local economy. They create jobs and provide young people with training, thereby safeguarding the success of future generations. Even amid today's economic challenges, we intend to keep looking to the future and ensure that increasingly important issues such as sustainability and business continuity do not fall by the wayside. Thanks to this refinancing, we can support our clients' projects by granting medium- and long-term loans with favourable terms, while keeping red tape to a minimum."

EIB Vice-President Thomas Östros added: “In the current difficult economic climate, marked by the COVID pandemic, we must ensure that access to fresh capital is not blocked. Against this backdrop, I am particularly pleased that we are stepping up our cooperation with Raiffeisenverband Salzburg, especially since the new funds have an even greater focus on financing climate action. Tackling the crisis and climate change are absolute priorities for the EIB, the EU bank.”

Background information:

Raiffeisenverband Salzburg

Raiffeisenverband Salzburg (RVS) is on the one hand a regional universal bank and on the other hand the regional headquarters of the Raiffeisen banking group Salzburg and is, together with the 41 independent Raiffeisen banks and a total of 119 bank branches, the largest banking group in the state of Salzburg. Since May 1st, 2020 Mr. Heinz Konrad is CEO of the Raiffeisenverband Salzburg.

[Article – Plenary highlights: Covid-19 recovery, vaccines, circular economy](#)



Covid recovery

On Tuesday, [MEPs approved the Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), designed to

help EU countries [recover from the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

The impact of Covid-19 on young people and sport

MEPs called on the Commission and EU countries to do more to prevent the [pandemic affecting young people and the sports sector](#) in a report adopted on Wednesday.

Vaccinations

In a debate on Wednesday, MEPs said the EU should take measures to boost the [production of vaccines](#).

Relief measures for aviation sector

To support the transport sector during the coronavirus crisis, MEPs agreed to extend [rules for the use of airport slots](#) to prevent empty flights and prolonged the validity of some licences used in the transport sector on Wednesday.

Circular Economy Action Plan

The Parliament called for tighter recycling rules and [binding 2030 targets for materials use and consumption](#) in a resolution adopted on 9 February 2021. The report represents Parliament feels should be included in the European Commission's proposed Circular Economy Action Plan to [achieve a circular economy by 2050](#).

Reducing inequalities

On Tuesday, MEPs called for a minimum wage, equal labour conditions for platform workers and a better work-life balance in order to [fight inequality and in-work poverty](#).

Human trafficking

In a report adopted on Tuesday, MEPs called on the EU to [step up the fight against human trafficking](#) and strengthen protection for victims.

Social media and democracy debate

On Wednesday, MEPs called on the EU to [regulate social media](#) to protect freedom of expression while limiting harmful content.

Russia

On Tuesday, MEPs hit out at the Council for failing to adequately react to [Russia's aggressive policies](#) and criticised EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell for his recent visit to Moscow.

Myanmar

On Thursday MEPs called for [democracy in Myanmar to be restored](#) and demanded the unconditional release of all those illegally arrested following Sunday's military coup.

Abortion ban in Poland

In a debate on Tuesday morning, MEPs condemned the rollback on abortion rights in Poland following the entry into force of the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling.

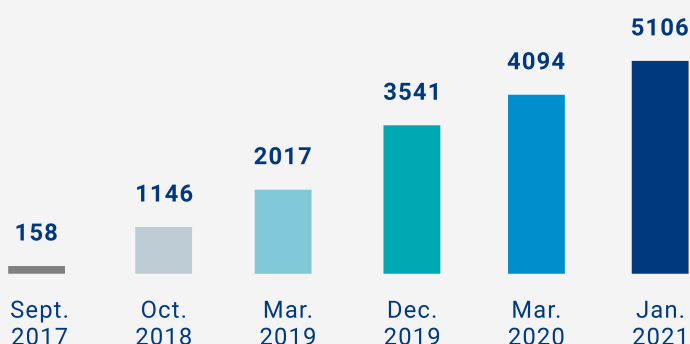
**[SIRIUS Annual Advisory Board Meeting:
Celebrating a Full Partnership Between
Europol and Eurojust](#)**

SIRIUS PLATFORM ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020



All EU countries are members of the platform with 17 third party countries

EVOLUTION OF PLATFORM MEMBERSHIP



KEY RESOURCES AVAILABLE

40 guidelines on specific online service providers

36 tools created by the SIRIUS community

E-learning series to learn more about e-evidence



Interactive game to train members of the platform



With more than 1,200 new registered members last year, the release of the [EU Digital Evidence Situation Report 2020](#) and a growing hub of information and resources for EU authorities, the [SIRIUS project](#) hosted yesterday its annual Advisory Board meeting to present its 2020 main achievements. This event was the perfect opportunity for both agencies to highlight ambitious new activities for the upcoming year.

This event brought together representatives of the European Commission, CEPOL, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United States Department of Justice, the European Cybercrime Training and Education Group (ECTEG), the European Judicial Network (EJN), the European Judicial Cybercrime Network (EJCN) and the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)

2020 MILESTONES

Building on a strong record of past successes, in 2020 SIRIUS reached 5,000 members via its platform on the [Europol Platform for Experts](#). This space, dedicated to law enforcement and judicial authorities, now reaches all EU Member States and 17 additional third countries, and serves as a recognised centre of excellence at EU level in the field of electronic evidence.

The event was also a chance to showcase the second edition of the [EU Digital Evidence Situation Report](#), which focused on the status of EU authorities in retrieving electronic data held by foreign-based online service providers (OSPs), and highlighted the prevalence of electronic evidence in investigations today. Members of the SIRIUS community now have access to

guidelines on over 40 different OSPs, and benefit from 36 tools created by their colleagues.

Finally, participants were given an overview of the latest training activities and [interactive games](#) developed for the SIRIUS community and designed to facilitate investigations for law enforcement and judicial authorities of EU Member States.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, the project team will further leverage its established visibility and position to support an even larger number of law enforcement and judicial authorities in developing the knowledge related to the retrieval of electronic data. The creation of new and additional resources tailored for an even larger community of experts will help SIRIUS reach new heights in 2021.

ABOUT THE SIRIUS PROJECT

The SIRIUS project, co-implemented by Europol and Eurojust, is a central reference point in the EU for knowledge sharing on cross-border access to electronic evidence. It offers a variety of services, such as guidelines, trainings and tools, to help with accessing data held by online service providers. These services are available to law enforcement and judicial authorities via a platform and an application. To this day, SIRIUS serves a community of competent authorities from 44 countries, representing all EU Member States and a growing number of third countries.

The SIRIUS project has received funding from the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy (FPI) under grant agreement No PI/2017/391-896

[Press release – EU is right place to tackle pandemic, but reform is needed, latest survey finds](#)



At the end of 2020, more respondents saw things on the right path at EU level in comparison with their own country. Furthermore, nearly three out of four respondents (72%) believe the EU Recovery Plan would allow their country's economy to recover more rapidly from the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

A new survey commissioned by the European Parliament and conducted between November and December 2020 by Kantar finds an increase of ten percentage points in the number of citizens who expressed a positive view of the EU (50%) compared to autumn 2019. 66% of respondents in this survey are optimistic about the future of the European Union.

Yet the individual outlook remains pessimistic in the face of the continuing pandemic: 53% of respondents believe that the economic situation in their country will be worse in one year's time than it is now. Only one in five respondents (21%) believe that the national economic situation would improve over the coming year. More than half of respondents (52%) expect their individual living conditions in one year's time to be the same as today. One quarter of respondents (24%) believe they will even be worse off in one year's time, while 21% think that they would be better off.

Likely driven by these perceived consequences, citizens formulate a new top political priority for the European Parliament: 48% of respondents want the fight against poverty and social inequalities at the top of the agenda. This is the first priority in all EU Member States apart from Finland, Czechia, Denmark and Sweden, where the fight against terrorism and crime comes first. On EU average, measures to combat terrorism and crime (35%), to ensure a quality education for all (33%) as well as to protect our environment (32%) follow suit.

A similar shift also appears in citizens' ranking of the core values the European Parliament should defend. While defence of human rights worldwide (51%) and equality between men and women (42%) remain on top, solidarity between Member States ends in third place with 41% of respondents wanting Parliament to defend this value above all others, compared to 33% one year

ago.

The pandemic and other global challenges such as the climate emergency sustain citizens' call for fundamental EU reform. 63% of respondents want the European Parliament to play a more important role in the future, an increase of 5 points compared to autumn 2019. And while the positive image of the EU was increasing at the end of last year, so did the call for change: Only 27% support the EU just the way it has been accomplished so far, while 44% 'rather support the EU' but want to see reform being brought about. Another 22% see the EU 'rather sceptical but could change their mind again in light of radical reform'.

European Parliament President, David Sassoli said: *"The message of this survey is clear: European citizens support the European Union and they find that the EU is the right place to seek solutions to the crisis. But reform of the EU is clearly something citizens want to see and that is why we need to launch the Conference on the Future of Europe as soon as possible."*

[Joint press release following the 7th Association Council meeting between the EU and Ukraine](#)



On 11 February 2021, the European Union and Ukraine held the 7th meeting of the Association Council, in Brussels. The meeting was co-chaired by Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Denys Shmyhal, Prime Minister of Ukraine.

The Association Council reaffirmed its continued commitment to strengthening the political association and economic integration of Ukraine with the European Union on the basis of the Association Agreement and its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and to the common values enshrined in it.

The Association Council underlined the unity, solidarity and mutual commitment demonstrated in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU reiterated its readiness to help Ukraine gain early access to vaccines and support its vaccination campaign through a regional project with the World Health Organisation launched today. The Association Council looked forward to the resumption of non-essential travel for our citizens, once the epidemiological conditions allow.

The EU welcomed the reform efforts by Ukraine. The participants agreed on the need for Ukraine to step up efforts on strengthening the rule of law and to ensure the independent and effective operation of the anti-corruption

institutions in order to secure broad public trust and support in the fight against corruption. They have reconfirmed that a comprehensive judicial reform remains vital. Following the decisions by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, the EU commended the commitment of Ukraine to fully restore the electronic asset declaration system and emphasized the importance of adopting deterrent sanctions. The EU also highlighted the need for credible integrity checks for judges.

The EU reiterated its unwavering support and commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The Association Council reiterated its strong condemnation of the violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian armed forces and reconfirmed its support for a peaceful and sustainable political solution. The need for full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides was underlined and Russia's responsibility in this regard was stressed. The EU recalled that the scope and duration of economic sanctions against Russia remains linked to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The importance of maintaining the ceasefire regime, and compliance with additional measures to strengthen the ceasefire in effect since July 27, 2020 was underlined. The Association Council called for the release all conflict-related detainees in line with the Minsk Agreements. The Association Council also reiterated its full support to the efforts in the Normandy format, the Trilateral Contact Group and the OSCE and called for the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission's full, secure and unimpeded access throughout Ukraine.

The EU reaffirmed its policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol by Russia, including through restrictive measures. The Association Council condemned the deterioration of the human rights situation in the Crimean peninsula and the further militarisation of the peninsula and the Black and Azov Seas. The sides called for the immediate release of all illegally detained and imprisoned Ukrainian citizens in the Crimean Peninsula and in Russia, including Crimean Tatar activists. The Association Council also called on Russia to ensure unhindered and free passage to and from the Sea of Azov, in accordance with international law. The sides welcomed the diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. In this context, Ukraine further presented the concept of an "International Crimean Platform" and invited the EU to take part in the inauguration high-level meeting of this initiative on August 23, 2021, in Kyiv.

The Association Council reconfirmed the launch of the cyber dialogue in 2021. The sides also noted the importance of enhancing cooperation in the area of Common Security and Defence Policy and alignment with Common Foreign and Security Policy, welcoming in this regard Ukraine's participation in EUFOR Althea.

The Association Council agreed to continue enhancing Ukraine's economic integration and regulatory approximation with the EU in sectors such as digital economy, trade facilitation, customs cooperation and justice and home affairs, within the framework of the Association Agreement.

The Association Council reiterated the intention of the EU and Ukraine to take forward a comprehensive review of the achievement of the Agreement's objectives, as foreseen in Article 481. As a first step, each side is undertaking an internal assessment with a view to presenting the outcome at the Ukraine-EU Summit in 2021.

The Association Council reiterated the commitment of the EU and Ukraine to start consultations on the further review of trade liberalisation for goods under the DCFTA, in line with the Article 29 of the Association Agreement and to continuously update the relevant Annexes to the Agreement. The Association Council underlined the need to enhance joint work on further trade facilitation.

The Association Council agreed on the need for effective and timely implementation of the DCFTA in order to fully reap the benefits of the Association Agreement and underlined the need to fully respect commitments under the DCFTA.

The Association Council welcomed the launch of the pre-assessment mission on Ukraine's preparedness on an Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products and looked forward to its recommendations as soon as possible.

The Association Council acknowledged Ukraine's efforts in maintaining macro-economic and financial stability. Both sides acknowledged the disbursement to Ukraine of 1.1 billion Euro in 2020 under two EU macro-financial assistance programmes. The EU encouraged Ukraine to implement its policy commitments under the current Covid-19 macro-financial assistance programme, and to continue close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund. The Association Council reaffirmed the importance of the irreversibility of reforms in the banking sector, in particular the nationalisation of PrivatBank stressing the importance of bringing to justice those responsible for the large-scale fraud at PrivatBank, and the recovery of assets.

The Association Council agreed on the importance of continued implementation of reforms in the energy sector. The Association Council welcomed the launch of the Energy Efficiency Fund and underlined the need for adequate contributions from the Ukraine's State budget to the Fund. Both sides agreed on the importance of continued cooperation on integration of Ukraine's energy markets and energy systems with the EU energy market, based on effective implementation of the updated Annex XXVII of the Association Agreement as well as coordination of further steps.

The Association Council recalled the importance of strengthening efforts to address challenges in the fields of climate action and environment as stipulated in the Association Agreement and in line with Paris Agreement.

The Association Council welcomed Ukraine's ambition to approximate its policies and legislation with the European Green Deal. Both sides welcomed the dedicated kick-off meeting between Executive Vice President Timmermans and Prime Minister Shmyhal. Areas of shared interest that were discussed included: energy efficiency, hydrogen, coal regions in transition, industry

alliances and climate governance architecture.

The Association Council welcomed cooperation within the High Level EU-Ukraine Dialogue on Horizontal Issues and Specific Industrial Sectors. The EU and Ukraine wish to intensify cooperation in the field of critical raw materials and batteries, with the view to launch a strategic partnership. The EU welcomed Ukraine's participation in the European Raw Materials Alliance and the European Battery Alliance.

The Association Council welcomed Ukraine's aspirations to further approximate its national legislation with the EU acquis in the area of the digital economy, welcomed the progress on the implementation of the telecommunications provisions of the Association Agreement and underlined the need for continued efforts in this area, notably ensuring the independence of telecommunications regulator. Both sides welcomed a joint working plan for co-operation between EU and Ukraine on electronic trust services.

The EU recalled the importance of freedom of expression and the independence and pluralism of the media, including the important role played by the independent public service broadcasting. The sides recognized that Ukraine's efforts to defend itself from information manipulation are legitimate, in particular given the scale of disinformation campaigns affecting Ukraine including from abroad. Any measures taken should not come at the expense of freedom of media and should be proportional to the aim.

Both sides recalled the common values of democracy, rule of law, respect for international law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as gender equality. The Association Council agreed on the need to ensure the respect for rights already exercised of persons belonging to national minorities as enshrined in UN and Council of Europe conventions and related protocols, non-discrimination of persons belonging to national minorities and respect for diversity, on the basis of a substantive dialogue with representatives of persons belonging to national minorities.

The EU side underlined the need to implement fully the recommendations of the Venice Commission regarding the education law. The Ukrainian party underlined that with the adoption of the Law "On General Secondary Education" in January 2020, followed by the extension of the transitional period until 2023 on implementation of article 7 of the law on education it had implemented key recommendations of the Venice Commission regarding this law. The EU encouraged Ukraine to implement the recommendations of the Venice Commission regarding the State language law and adopt a national minorities' law.

The Association Council agreed on the need to swiftly and thoroughly investigate attacks against civil society activists and journalists and to ensure that the instigators and perpetrators are brought to justice. Furthermore, the EU referred to recent developments against representatives of persons belonging to national minorities including a Member of the European Parliament. Ukraine stated that it remains committed to the protection of human rights including those related to national minorities and commits to exchange any information and to take any action that might contribute to dispel the concerns.

The Association Council welcomed progress on the decentralisation reform and recognised the need to complete a legal framework. The EU underlined the need to continue public administration reform and to adopt measures to fully implement the land turnover reform. The Association Council welcomed the launch of the College of Europe Natolin project for Ukrainian civil servants.

The Association Council recalled the importance of concluding the Common Aviation Area Agreement at the earliest possible date in 2021.

The Association Council welcomed the adoption by Ukraine of the law on inland waterways and the intention of Ukraine to include its inland waterways (Dnipro and Southern Bug) in the regional Trans-European Transport Network.

The Association Council welcomed Ukraine's interest in cooperation with the EU on the basis of the upcoming EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

The Association Council welcomed Ukraine's intention to deepen Research and Innovation cooperation with the EU, including through participation in Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ and other programmes, as well as continued integration in the European Research Area.

The Association Council agreed to continue cooperation within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The Association Council commended Ukraine's active participation and contribution to the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the Eastern Partnership in view of the Eastern Partnership Summit in 2021.

[Visit the meeting page](#)