

# [Press release – European Parliament opens its doors online to mark Europe Day](#)



Due to the current circumstances, the annual open-door event of the European institutions, that each year brings tens of thousands of citizens to the premises of the European Parliament, has been turned into a digital open day. A series of online events and exhibitions are organised around the theme of solidarity and EU action to confront the pandemic and its economic consequences.

Amongst the highlights of the day will be the meeting on Saturday morning between [President Sassoli](#) (S&D, IT) and organisations working for solidarity in Europe. Under the title “The courage to act: Schuman’s lesson 70 years on”, the President will give the floor to a range of organisations working on the front line to deal with the consequences of the crisis.

Later in the morning, the Parliament’s two Vice-Presidents for communication, [Othmar Karas](#) (EPP, AT) and [Katarina Barley](#) (S&D, DE), will participate in a Live debate, open to questions from the public, and there will be video statements by most of the chairs of the political groups. Several committee chairs will also answer questions on the EU’s response to the pandemic.

The event will be interpreted simultaneously in eight languages.

[Statement](#) by European Parliament’s President and leaders of political groups on the Schuman Declaration anniversary (9 May)

You can also enjoy an [online exhibition](#), featuring items from the Parliament’s archives.

Follow Parliament’s all-day [Facebook event](#) and check the European

Parliament's website.

Visuals: [Schuman Declaration 9 May 1950](#)

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## **Independent monitoring at the EU external borders and rights violations**

FRA spoke about the methods and requirements of independent border monitoring, also pointing out the differences from complaint mechanisms. [The discussion](#) also looked at the accountability of border management authorities, including the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).

Speakers included representatives of the Office of the EU Ombudsman, the European Commission, ENNHRI, NGOs as well as FRA. Discussions focused on the role of Frontex and human rights monitoring bodies.

The webinar was attended by some 300 participants. The [full livestream](#) is also available.

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## **Demographic challenges: Europe should combine a plethora of labour market and social measures to stop its depopulation and growing inequalities**



With its share in the global population at an all-time low and another baby boom unlikely, Europe will need to take a holistic approach if it is to reverse its demographic decline, stimulating employment and embracing strong economic and social policies that can restore the confidence of its citizens in the future, the **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** said on 7 May.

In the opinion [\*Demographic challenges in the EU in light of economic and development inequalities\*](#), the EESC said that such an approach should prioritise active labour market policies that combat unemployment and help create quality jobs, especially for young people, whose unemployment rate remains about twice the average in every Member State.

Another key to ensuring positive demographic trends is stable and proactive family policies and human-centred labour market policies that promote work-life balance, such as parental leave and flexible work.

High-quality, affordable care and assistance for children, people with disabilities and the elderly is of paramount importance and investing in efficient public services is indispensable for the establishment of decent living and working standards and for an environment in which people want to work, live and raise a family.

Although it can make up for labour and skills shortages, immigration is not the ultimate solution for tackling the consequences of demographic ageing in Europe, the EESC said in the opinion.

The opinion, drafted at the request of the Croatian Presidency of the EU, was adopted at the EESC's first plenary session since the outbreak of COVID-19, held remotely for the first time in the EESC's history and with members casting their votes in writing.

The EESC warned about the important implications of the COVID-19 crisis for the future EU policies addressing demographic challenges and growing inequalities between Member States. It called upon the EU to urgently prepare relevant policies with ambitious funding to protect citizens from the effects of the pandemic and from the negative social impacts of the economic crisis that is bound to follow. This should be done in consultation with the social partners and organised civil society.

*Member States with active family policies, which are diverse and reflective of their cultures, have higher birth rates than those which have none or weak ones", said the rapporteur for the opinion, **Stéphane Buffetaut**. Such policies are part of a broader framework that guarantees their effectiveness: jobs, economic and social dynamics, a family-friendly culture, an adapted housing policy, an efficient education system, and environmental policies.*

*The aim, he stressed, is to guarantee that having children, who ensure the future of Europe, does not have a penalising effect on the standard of living or career prospects.*

According to the co-rapporteur of the opinion, **Adam Rogalewski**, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is a very important factor in improving the EU's demographic situation, thanks to the strong social measures it proposes.

*Most of the European population's income comes from work, and without job creation, dynamic labour market perspectives, security in the labour market and quality employment it is difficult to establish a family and to provide them with decent living conditions, **Mr Rogalewski** said, this is why the most feasible and effective remedy to negative consequences of population ageing is neither focusing on higher fertility rates nor more migration, but rather increasing labour force participation.*

The opinion sets out figures that testify to Europe's demographic decline and its demographic weight hitting rock bottom, with its share in the world's population dropping from 21.7% in 1950 to less than 10% in 2017.

In the last 25 years, parts of Europe have seen depopulation every year, with the number of deaths surpassing that of births and with the fertility rate in the Member States often significantly and lastingly below the threshold for generational replacement. This depopulation affects a little more than half of EU countries: Germany, Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia.

Furthermore, in spite of migration, Europe is seeing a rise in the proportion of people aged 65 and more in the total population.

The problem could become especially acute in central, eastern and southern

Europe, which is seeing a labour force drain at all skill levels as well as a brain drain, as its workers leave for economically stronger countries. These workers are mostly young, their countries having invested in their education and training only to see other countries that can offer better working and social conditions benefit from that, further deepening the gap between western Europe and its southern and eastern parts.

In the EESC's view, although the free movement of EU citizens is a fundamental freedom of the EU, such high levels of intra-EU migration can pose particular challenges for the Member States of origin, as it speeds up the ageing of its population and the loss of their workforce and skills. It equally brings challenges for the receiving countries.

*Care should [...] be taken not to foster the systematic migration of the highly qualified and highly skilled, further exacerbating the skills gap with developing countries which would harm their economic and social development,* the EESC said in the opinion.

Eliminating economic and social disparities between west and south and east and west is the best way to slow down this labour leakage, the EESC maintains. In its view, the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund must be specially geared towards helping EU countries with weaker economic performances to develop projects to improve their social and economic development if these countries are to remain or become attractive to their own population.

In the opinion, the EESC also proposed recognising and supporting the work of unpaid caregivers, usually family members, who do not work as they have to care for sick, disabled and other dependent family members. Member States should give these people an appropriate status and financial support as well as social security entitlements.

However, changes cannot be expected overnight. *Demography is the domain of the long term and requires coordinated European action. The EU should develop common guidelines based on intergenerational solidarity and gender equality, taking into account national cultures and social policy differences,* the EESC concluded.

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## [\*\*ESENER 2019 reveals biggest concerns for European workplaces – musculoskeletal disorders and psychosocial risks\*\*](#)

Commenting on the Survey, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas

**Schmit said:** *“Protecting and promoting occupational safety and health for workers, companies, and society at large has become even more vital over recent months. There is no doubt that concerns put forward in this study have been exacerbated by the Covid19 crisis. We need to redouble our efforts to address issues related to workers’ mental health and to deal with the challenges posed by digitalisation, given the recent sharp increase in teleworking. The upcoming OSH strategy framework will provide the opportunity to address these issues.”*

**EU-OSHA’s Executive Director, Dr Christa Sedlatschek, highlights that** *‘during the current coronavirus crisis, all businesses, regardless of size, are facing serious economic threats. But safety and health at work remains essential in these critical times and the more attention companies pay to this, the better they can recover from the effects of the pandemic. ESENER is a valuable resource, which policy-makers and workplaces can use to ensure effective evidence-based prevention’.*

The findings reveal that musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and psychosocial risks are the issues most frequently reported by European workplaces. Repetitive hand or arm movements (reported by 65 % of workplaces in the EU27\_2020), prolonged sitting (61 %) – a new item in the survey – and having to deal with difficult customers, patients, pupils, etc. (59 %) are the three most frequently reported risks.

The survey also looks at how companies tackle these risks, and identifies some worrying trends. For instance, despite the high proportion of workplaces reporting MSD risks, there has been a slight decrease since 2014 in the number of workplaces adopting measures to prevent them. Moreover, only 29 % of companies say they would intervene to stop employees working excessively long hours to manage psychosocial risks.

Some companies report having no risk factors at all. This is particularly true for small businesses – the smaller the enterprise, the more likely it is to report having no risk factors, particularly psychosocial risk factors, which highlights a concerning lack of awareness of this type of risk. A reluctance to talk openly about issues appears to be the main obstacle to tackling these risks.

ESENER 2019 clearly shows further OSH issues for concern. More than a third of EU workplaces report having no form of employee representation, and more than a third report a lack of time or staff as a barrier to OSH management. Between 2014 and 2019, the proportion of workplaces reporting a visit by the labour inspectorate in the previous 3 years fell in almost all countries.

The emerging issue of digitalisation and its impact on workers’ safety and health is included for the first time in ESENER 2019. This reveals, for instance, that only 24% of workplaces using a digital technology reported having discussed the potential impact of such technologies on the safety and health of their workers. Focusing on the possible impacts that have been discussed, the need for continuous training to keep skills up to date comes first (77 % of workplaces in the EU27\_2020), followed by prolonged sitting (65 %) and more flexibility for employees in terms of place of work and

working time (63 %).

EU-OSHA's projects on digitalisation aim to make sure that policy-makers and workplaces have the information they need to take advantage of the benefits of technological developments while protecting employees. Digitalisation will also be the focus of EU-OSHA's 2023 Healthy Workplaces Campaign, as the Agency joins forces with its partners to raise awareness of the opportunities and risks associated with digitalisation.

**Links:**

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## [Christine Lagarde: Opening remarks for EUI event](#)



SPEECH

### **Opening remarks by Christine Lagarde, President of the ECB, at the Online Edition of The State of the Union conference organised by the European University Institute**

8 May 2020

Today marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, while tomorrow marks the 70th anniversary of Europe's response to that cataclysm: the Schuman declaration that set us on the path towards

deeper European union.

The declaration famously maintained that “*Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.*”

Schuman’s idea was that Europe needed to become so deeply integrated – and so interdependent – that solidarity would become self-interest. And, thereafter, it would become natural to build stronger common institutions that reflected the depth of those ties.

By and large, this is the path that integration has followed. When Europeans saw that the common market was not delivering in the 1980s, we launched the Single Market. When we realised the Single Market was vulnerable to competitive devaluations, we launched the euro.

And when the euro members recognised that the single currency was vulnerable to self-fulfilling crises, new institutions were established and new instruments were developed – such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the ECB’s Outright Monetary Transactions programme (OMT), and the banking union that still needs to be completed.

Whenever our “concrete achievements” were threatened, we did not backtrack: we made them stronger – because they had created the de facto solidarity that Schuman promised. European integration paved the way for prosperity, stability and peace.

The coronavirus pandemic today is both *confirming* and *testing* this thesis. We are seeing once more how interdependent we have become. If not all countries are cured from this crisis, the others will suffer – and not just in terms of health, but economically too.

Trade within the euro area accounts for 45% of GDP. The success of the Single Market means that supply chain integration is three times tighter within the euro area than with the rest of the world. As a result, analysis by the ECB finds that a common shock is amplified by about 30% – meaning all countries have to act together to mitigate large crises effectively.

So the question we face today is this: can we respond to the economic shock we are facing – which is unprecedented in peacetime – in a way that reflects our fundamental common interest, as those generations of Europeans did in the past?

We have seen some encouraging signs of European cooperation. State aid rules were quickly relaxed and fiscal rules suspended, empowering a strong fiscal response to underpin wages and incomes. About 16% of employees in the four largest countries are now enrolling in short-time work schemes and government-supported temporary layoffs.

In parallel, the actions of the ECB, European banking supervision and national governments have dovetailed to put the banking sector in a stronger position to plug the liquidity gap facing firms, preventing an even sharper loss of capacity and jobs. Bank lending increased by almost €120 billion in



March, the largest monthly flow on record.

However, when it is safe to do so, Europe will have to move to the next phase of its crisis response. The focus will need to shift from providing backstop support to enabling the recovery. This will present a new set of challenges.

The ECB will play its part in line with its mandate. We will do everything necessary within our mandate to support the recovery and we remain undeterred in delivering on our price stability objective.

On the fiscal side, the measures adopted in the euro area so far have been quite diverse, ranging from around 2% of GDP to more than 40%. In about half of euro area countries, government guarantees make up the largest share of the fiscal support.

But the costs of the crisis continue to rise and, as we move forward, the form of fiscal support will likely change: discretionary spending may increase, automatic stabilisers will kick in further and – in more severe scenarios – the loan guarantees supporting firms could be called.

The ECB estimates that – in our medium scenario of a drop in GDP of around 8% – the additional government financing needs in the euro area this year resulting from the recession and the required fiscal measures may exceed 10% of euro area GDP. This would put the additional debt issuance due to the pandemic in the range of €1 trillion to €1.5 trillion in 2020 alone.

We need, as a union, to be prepared for this future. Since no one is to blame for this crisis, we must ensure that there are no undue constraints on our policy responses. Not all countries have to react in the same way. But each needs to be able to respond as necessary. Otherwise, we risk widening asymmetries and exiting this crisis with greater economic divergence.

This underscores why a common European fiscal response is so desirable.

First, it will help bridge the gap for Member States and counter that risk of divergence. Given the fiscal needs already on the horizon, it needs to be swift, sizeable and symmetrical.

Second, it will help guide us towards the Europe we want to build after the crisis. We have been given a chance to take a leap forward: to reimagine our social contract, reconsider Europe's strategic autonomy, and recognise the risks of not taking the environment seriously. These are all areas where acting together is in our common interest.

Let me give just one example: we have now experienced the consequences of a systemic ecological crisis, and we are also likely to face a period of weak private investment as firms repair their balance sheets. Public investment will have to fill the gap. It makes sense to use this opening to accelerate the transition to a green economy and hit our climate targets.

The recovery presents a further opportunity, too: to engage citizens in the process of defining our common interest and the areas where Europe should be stronger.

In sum: this is our generation's "Schuman moment". We have been passed the baton of European integration. We are seeing our de facto solidarity all around us. And we are being asked to act, as those before us did, by strengthening Europe in response.

I am confident that we will recognise our historical responsibility and rise to the challenge.