[Joint press release by the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission following their video conference with President Erdoğan](#)

Ahead of the March European Council President Michel and President of the European Commission von der Leyen had a videoconference today Friday 19 March 2021 with President Erdoğan of the Republic of Turkey.

They discussed the follow up to the December European Council, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, including the forthcoming Cyprus settlement talks, and the state of play of EU – Turkey relations.

The EU side underlined the importance of sustained de-escalation and further strengthening confidence building to allow for a more positive EU-Turkey agenda.

The Presidents also exchanged views on the situation of Syrian refugees hosted in Turkey, as well as the wider regional situation including Libya and Syria.

They also discussed a possible visit to Turkey following the March European Council.

[Press release – Conference on the Future of Europe: EP appoints executive board representatives](#)

The executive board will oversee the work of the Conference, and prepare the Conference Plenary meetings, including following up on citizens' input. The European Parliament's President and the leaders of the political groups endorsed the following nominations:

Guy VERHOFSTADT (Renew Europe, BE)	Co-chair
Manfred WEBER (EPP, DE)	Member
Iratxe GARCÍA PÉREZ (S&D, ES)	Member
Gerolf ANNEMANS (ID, BE)	Observer
Daniel FREUND (Greens/EFA, DE)	Observer
Zdzisław KRASNODĘBSKI (ECR, PL)	Observer
Helmut SCHOLZ (The Left, DE)	Observer

Parliament's leaders want the Conference on the Future of Europe to start its work as soon as possible in order to "contribute significantly to building a Citizen's Union".

Article – MEPs want a safer and more sustainable tourism after Covid

Tourism and Covid-19

Tourism is one of the sectors affected the most by the Covid-19 pandemic. It employs about 27 million people and represents around 10% of the EU's gross domestic products. Six million jobs are currently at risk. Europe, the world's top tourist destination, welcomed 66% fewer international tourists in the first half of 2020 and 97% fewer in the second half.

Read more: [Covid-19: EU support for the tourism industry](#)

Need for a new tourism strategy in Europe

MEPs are set to call for a new European strategy to make tourism cleaner, safer and more sustainable as well as get it back on its feet, after the pandemic, including a common vaccination certificate.

"With summer just around the corner, we want to avoid past errors and put in place coordinated and uniform EU measures, such as a protocol of tests before departure, a certificate of vaccination, a sanitary seal, to facilitate travel, with no costs for citizens." said report author [Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar](#) (EPP, Portugal) .

Financial assistance

Continued short-term financial support is essential to the survival of the sector, the report says, urging EU countries to include travel and tourism in their Covid recovery plans. It also calls for public and private investment in the digitalisation and overall modernisation of the sector and says

countries should consider temporarily reducing VAT rates on travel and tourism services,

Common vaccination certificate

In order to re-establish freedom of movement, the report calls a common vaccination certificate, which could become an alternative to PCR tests and quarantine requirements once vaccines are available for everyone and there is sufficient scientific evidence that vaccinated people do not transmit the virus. Quarantine should remain the instrument of last resort, according to the report.

On 17 March the European Commission proposed a [digital green certificate](#) in line with the suggestion in the report.

Making tourism more sustainable

The report says the pandemic has shifted consumer preferences to greener options that bring them closer to nature. It calls for a roadmap to develop more sustainable forms of tourism to reduce the environmental footprint of the sector.

Other proposals in the report include:

- An EU hygiene certification seal, certifying minimum Covid-19 virus prevention and control standards to help restore consumer trust in tourism and travel
- A new EU gency for tourism.

[Respect human rights to rebuild our societies in all their diversity, say human rights heads on International Anti-Racism Day](#)

Maria Marouda, Chair of the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Yanduan Li, Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), underline the pandemic's great toll on racial justice and call for equitable, concerted and determined action across society to reverse this trend.

The Covid-19 pandemic not only cast a spotlight on the structural inequalities and discrimination in our societies, but has made them even worse, in Europe and beyond, as we see from this week's spate of shootings in the United States. We see new forms of inequality and discrimination, particularly in access to healthcare and vaccinations. There have been attacks against ethnic and religious minority groups, terrifying entire communities. Online hate speech spread widely and scapegoated specific groups such as migrants. The economic fallout of the pandemic has led to a rise in inequality, stigmatisation and hatred. To turn the tide on the vicious circle of racism, discrimination and poverty, greater efforts and closer cooperation are vital.

"Like the coronavirus, racism also mutated and new variants have developped during the pandemic. All political and other actors need a deep dive into current challenges in order to build a racism-free Europe and a racism-free

world; they must address novel risks urgently," said ECRI's Chair Maria Marouda. "Many believe that the current global health crisis provided them with a carte blanche for manifesting hostile attitudes towards specific groups and individuals on several grounds, which profoundly mirror the intersectional dimension of discrimination. This leads to greater social polarisation. We have to fight the battle by reaching out to victims of racism and racial discrimination and protecting those who are assisting them and by establishing solid legal and policy frameworks to make non-discrimination and inclusion a reality", she continued.

More than a year after its appearance, COVID-19 remains a serious global health and human rights challenge. It has touched all countries and, unfortunately, exacerbated the inequalities already faced by many minority and vulnerable groups, such as people of African descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Indeed, its consequences have impacted the most vulnerable we should pay more attention to," said Yanduan Li, Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). "States should pursue their efforts to address the disparate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on minority and vulnerable groups with regard to access to education, health care services including to vaccines, employment, housing".

"Even before the pandemic, persistent racism and intolerance blighted the lives of many people across Europe. Covid-19 further exposed the divisions in our societies. Not one person is defined by a single trait; gender, age, economic and social standing all combine to multiply the impact of discrimination and exclusion," said Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). "We must work together with impacted people in building societies that strive to respect everyone's human rights in all their diversity. With targeted measures we can tackle racism in all its complexity."

"The pandemic has had a particularly devastating impact on racial and ethnic minority communities, who have often met with prejudice and exclusion where they needed equal treatment and care," said ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci. "States have a responsibility to protect vulnerable minorities by adopting policies that favour inclusion and counter discrimination at all levels, starting with public institutions and the education system. By both preventing and countering acts of racial discrimination and hate crimes societies become more inclusive and resilient in times of crisis."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, FRA has regularly published bulletins on the fundamental rights implications of Covid-19 and the groups most at risk in the European Union. Its wide range of surveys regularly underscore widespread racial discrimination and intolerance that many people continue to face. ODIHR has also published guidance on human rights challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the OSCE region. CERD has adopted a statement laying down States obligations under the ICERD Convention in the context of COVID-19. At the same time, in its country monitoring reports and statements as well as in its recently published annual report, ECRI has helped countries to detect and address pandemic-related problems being experienced by groups of concern to ECRI.

The United Nations designated 21 March the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1966, in memory of the 69 people killed six years earlier in Sharpeville, South Africa, during a peaceful demonstration to protest the apartheid system.

[Respect human rights to rebuild our societies in all their diversity, say human rights heads on International Anti-Racism Day](#)

Maria Marouda, Chair of the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Yanduan Li, Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), underline the pandemic's great toll on racial justice and call for equitable, concerted and determined action across society to

reverse this trend.

The Covid-19 pandemic not only cast a spotlight on the structural inequalities and discrimination in our societies, but has made them even worse, in Europe and beyond, as we see from this week's spate of shootings in the United States. We see new forms of inequality and discrimination, particularly in access to healthcare and vaccinations. There have been attacks against ethnic and religious minority groups, terrifying entire communities. Online hate speech spread widely and scapegoated specific groups such as migrants. The economic fallout of the pandemic has led to a rise in inequality, stigmatisation and hatred. To turn the tide on the vicious circle of racism, discrimination and poverty, greater efforts and closer cooperation are vital.

"Like the coronavirus, racism also mutated and new variants have developped during the pandemic. All political and other actors need a deep dive into current challenges in order to build a racism-free Europe and a racism-free world; they must address novel risks urgently," said ECRI's Chair Maria Marouda. "Many believe that the current global health crisis provided them with a carte blanche for manifesting hostile attitudes towards specific groups and individuals on several grounds, which profoundly mirror the intersectional dimension of discrimination. This leads to greater social polarisation. We have to fight the battle by reaching out to victims of racism and racial discrimination and protecting those who are assisting them and by establishing solid legal and policy frameworks to make non-discrimination and inclusion a reality", she continued.

More than a year after its appearance, COVID-19 remains a serious global health and human rights challenge. It has touched all countries and, unfortunately, exacerbated the inequalities already faced by many minority and vulnerable groups, such as people of African descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Indeed, its consequences have impacted the most vulnerable we should pay more attention to," said Yanduan Li, Chairperson of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). "States should pursue their efforts to address the disparate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on minority and vulnerable groups with regard to access to education, health care services including to vaccines, employment, housing".

"Even before the pandemic, persistent racism and intolerance blighted the lives of many people across Europe. Covid-19 further exposed the divisions in our societies. Not one person is defined by a single trait; gender, age, economic and social standing all combine to multiply the impact of discrimination and exclusion," said Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). "We must work together with impacted people in building societies that strive to respect everyone's human rights in all their diversity. With targeted measures we can tackle racism in all its complexity."

"The pandemic has had a particularly devastating impact on racial and ethnic minority communities, who have often met with prejudice and exclusion where they needed equal treatment and care," said ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci.

"States have a responsibility to protect vulnerable minorities by adopting policies that favour inclusion and counter discrimination at all levels, starting with public institutions and the education system. By both preventing and countering acts of racial discrimination and hate crimes societies become more inclusive and resilient in times of crisis."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, FRA has regularly published [bulletins](#) on the fundamental rights implications of Covid-19 and the groups most at risk in the European Union. Its wide range of [surveys](#) regularly underscore widespread racial discrimination and intolerance that many people continue to face. ODIHR has also published [guidance](#) on human rights challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the OSCE region. CERD has adopted a [statement](#) laying down States obligations under the ICERD Convention in the context of COVID-19. At the same time, in its [country monitoring](#) reports and [statements](#) as well as in its recently published [annual report](#), ECRI has helped countries to detect and address pandemic-related problems being experienced by groups of concern to ECRI.

The United Nations designated 21 March the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1966, in memory of the 69 people killed six years earlier in Sharpeville, South Africa, during a peaceful demonstration to protest the apartheid system.