

Article – Green Deal: key to a climate-neutral and sustainable EU



EU Climate Law

In March 2020, the Commission proposed the European Climate Law, a **legal framework** to achieve the [2050 climate neutrality goal](#). In January, Parliament had called for [more ambitious emission reduction targets](#) than those initially proposed by the Commission. The EU executive is expected to come up with a revised interim target for 2030 later in 2020.

Empowering European industry and SMEs

In March 2020, the Commission presented a new [Industrial Strategy](#) for Europe to ensure that European businesses can transition towards climate neutrality and a digital future.

As 99% of European firms are small and medium-sized enterprises (**SMEs**), accounting for 50% of the 's gross domestic product and responsible for two out of three jobs, the Commission also proposed a [new SME Strategy](#), encouraging **innovation**; cutting **red tape** and allowing better **access to finance**.

Boosting the circular economy

In addition the Commission presented the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#) in

March, which includes measures along the entire life cycle of products promoting circular economy processes, fostering sustainable consumption and guaranteeing less waste. It will focus on:

- electronics and ICT
- batteries and vehicles
- packaging and plastics
- textiles
- construction and buildings
- food chain

[Press release – COVID-19: Both WHO and Europe must learn from the current pandemic, say MEPs](#)



Today the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety held a debate with the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on the fight against COVID-19 and the global response to it, including WHO actions to prevent the spread of the disease and to develop treatments and vaccines.

Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the pandemic has highlighted the importance of global solidarity and that health should not be seen as a cost but an investment. He added that all countries in the world must strengthen primary health care and crisis preparedness and stressed the need for EU leadership globally.

While the Director-General said the situation in the EU has improved

significantly, he underlined that COVID-19 is very much still circulating globally, with more than four million new cases in the last month.

The importance of vaccines

Many MEPs said that the global community must cooperate including in developing, manufacturing and distributing vaccines against COVID-19 and asked when a safe vaccine could be available.

Dr. Adhanom Gebreyesus very much welcomed the Global Coronavirus Response pledging campaign launched by the EU, which has so far raised €9.8 billion, but said more is needed. He said scientists predict we may have a vaccine within one year or even a few months earlier. However, making the vaccine available and distributing it to all will be a challenge and requires political will. One option would be to give the vaccine only to those that are most vulnerable to the virus.

Global cooperation and the WHO

Several MEPs underlined the importance of the WHO but also said it has made mistakes in its response to the pandemic. The Director-General admitted everyone makes mistakes and informed MEPs that an independent panel will evaluate the WHO response to the pandemic to learn from any mistakes made. It will start its work soon.

Dr Hans Kluge, Regional Director of WHO Europe, added that the three most important lessons learned in Europe from the pandemic are:

1. A stockpile of medical equipment, such as ventilators and masks, is needed;
2. Common indicators for monitoring a pandemic are necessary;
3. Solidarity is key, as no one is safe from a pandemic until everyone is safe.

Watch the full recording of the debate [here](#).

Background

WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on 12 March 2020. Based on the data received by WHO from national authorities, there have been 9 236 128 confirmed cases at global level and 477 634 deaths to date. You can see an updated dashboard [here](#).

[Press release: meeting of President](#)

Charles Michel with Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti



The President of the European Council held a meeting with Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti of Kosovo* on 25 June 2020.

President Michel stressed the EU's strong renewed focus on the Western Balkans, which was evidenced also by the 6 May Zagreb Summit; the summit reconfirmed the EU's unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region.

As the credibility of this commitment also depends on the implementation of necessary reforms, the two leaders also discussed Kosovo's reform path, with a special focus on the full implementation of the rule of law.

The discussion on the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina was at the heart of the meeting.

Charles Michel: *"I welcome that the Prime Minister's first foreign visit was to Brussels. During our meeting I stressed the urgent need for progress in the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The recent appointment of ambassador Miroslav Lajčák as the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue illustrates the EU's focus on this dialogue, whose resumption is now planned for July 2020 in Brussels."*

The leaders also discussed the fall out of the Covid-19 pandemic; President Michel highlighted the Coronavirus assistance package to Kosovo, which includes EUR 100 million macro-financial assistance to Kosovo in the form of loans and 68 million in assistance for health needs and social and economic response.

With regard to an indictment that has reportedly been filed against President Hashim Thaci, the EU does not comment on proceedings of the Specialist Prosecutor office and the Specialist Chambers.

Charles Michel: *"It is important that the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office are able to continue to do their work independently, without any outside interference."*

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

[ODIHR expert consultation on human rights and border management](#)

FRA presented how the fundamental rights framework applicable to the storage and collection of biometric data applies in practice. This is in the context of the EU large-scale databases for migration and security.

FRA drew from its report '[Under watchful eyes – biometrics, EU IT-systems and fundamental rights](#).' FRA also spoke about the fundamental rights risks that might arise when profiling practices are powered by artificial intelligence technology. It referred to [FRA's paper on facial recognition technology](#) and its [guide on preventing unlawful profiling](#).

As an example of the use of algorithmic profiling, FRA highlighted the importance of implementing safeguards in the European Travel Information Authorisation System (ETIAS) Regulation, drawing on its [legal opinion on ETIAS](#). ODIHR is running digital expert meetings to collect input on the use of new technology and its impact on rights in the border and security context as it develops a policy paper.

[Council of Europe discusses COVID-19 impact on child rights](#)

It was an opportunity to take stock, from a child rights perspective, of [lessons learnt to date](#) from the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Member States.

Committee members and observers shared their perspectives on the disruptive impact of the coronavirus on children's lives, their wellbeing and their rights. FRA referred to its own bulletins on the [fundamental rights implications of COVID-19 and relevant country studies](#).

Participants also discussed how to ensure that child protection systems remain operational and effective in such situations.