

Transparency register: Council adopts new rules making registration of interest representatives mandatory

The Council has adopted new rules, in agreement with the European Parliament and the Commission, to ensure transparent and ethical interest representation.

The new joint framework expands the scope of the existing register and introduces the registration of interest representatives in the transparency register as a prerequisite for certain activities covered by the Interinstitutional agreement, such as those aimed at influencing policy, legislation or decision-making in relations with any of the three institutions.



Transparency and accountability are essential for maintaining the trust of Union citizens in the legitimacy of the political and legislative decision making in the Union. Joining the transparency register is a new clear commitment by the Council in favour of these values.

Ana Paula Zacarias, Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal

Each of the signatory institutions has pledged to apply the joint framework set out in the Interinstitutional agreement, taking into account their specific role, and will be able to adopt complementary transparency measures. In this context, the Council has adopted a decision on the regulation of contacts between the General Secretariat of the Council and interest representatives, as part of the negotiated package. This decision includes new rules, making conditional upon prior registration of the interest representatives in the register their meetings with senior staff of the Secretariat of the Council, as well as their participation in thematic briefings and public events organised by the General Secretariat and their access to the Council premises.

Next steps

On 20 May, the three institutions will sign the Interinstitutional agreement and the joint political statement accompanying it. The texts will then be published in the EU Official Journal and are expected to entry into force in early July.

Background

The Commission presented its proposal for a new Interinstitutional agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register for interest representatives covering the Parliament, the Council and the Commission in 2016. Since 2011, the Parliament and the Commission have jointly operated a public register for interest representatives. The Council has been an observer since 2014.

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[Travel restrictions: Council adds Israel to the list of countries for which member states should gradually lift restrictions on non-essential travel](#)



Following a review under the recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU, the Council updated the list of countries for which travel restrictions should be lifted to add Israel. As stipulated in the Council recommendation, this list will continue to be reviewed every two weeks and, as the case may be, updated.

Based on the criteria and conditions set out in the recommendation, as from 6 May 2021 member states should **gradually lift the travel restrictions at the external borders for residents of the following third countries:**

- Australia
- Israel
- New Zealand
- Rwanda
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Thailand
- China, subject to confirmation of reciprocity

Travel restrictions should also be gradually lifted for the special administrative regions of China: Hong Kong and Macao, subject to confirmation of reciprocity.

Residents of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican should be considered as EU residents for the purpose of this recommendation.

The **criteria** to determine the third countries for which the current travel restriction should be lifted were updated on 2 February 2021. They cover the epidemiological situation and overall response to COVID-19, as well as the reliability of the available information and data sources. Reciprocity should also be taken into account on a case by case basis.

Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) also take part in this recommendation.

Background

On 30 June 2020 the Council adopted a recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU. This recommendation included an initial list of countries for which member states should start lifting the travel restrictions at the external borders. The list is reviewed every two weeks and, as the case may be, updated.

On 2 February 2021, the Council adopted an amending recommendation which updated the criteria to determine the countries for which restrictions should be lifted. These are the criteria currently applied to the review of the list. The amending recommendation also set out measures for travellers including PCR testing and quarantine and provided for the rapid reintroduction of restrictions where the situation worsens quickly or a high incidence of variants of concern is identified.

On 3 May 2021, the Commission presented a proposal to further ease the current restrictions on non-essential travel, in view of the developments in the epidemiological situation and the progress of vaccination campaigns. This proposal increases the threshold of cumulative COVID-19 cases for countries included in the list and allows for non essential travel of vaccinated persons. At the same time, it introduces an 'emergency break' mechanism to limit the entry of variants of concern into the EU. This proposal is currently under discussion within the Council.

The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument. The authorities of the member states remain responsible for implementing the content of the recommendation. They may, in full transparency, lift only progressively travel restrictions towards countries listed.

A member state should not decide to lift the travel restrictions for non-listed third countries before this has been decided in a coordinated manner.

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[PESCO: Canada, Norway and the United](#)

States will be invited to participate in the project Military Mobility

Following the requests of Canada, Norway and the United States of America to participate in the **PESCO project Military Mobility**, the Council today adopted positive decisions authorising the coordinator of this project – the Netherlands – to invite the three countries. Canada, Norway and the United States of America will be the first third states to be invited to participate in a PESCO project.



Today, the Council approved the participation of the US, Canada and Norway in the Military Mobility PESCO project. Their expertise will contribute to the project and, with it, to improving military mobility within and beyond the EU. This is an area of shared priority and common interest in our transatlantic relations. It will make EU defence more efficient and contribute to strengthen our security.

Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

The decisions by the Council confirm that the participation of Canada, Norway and the United States of America in the PESCO project Military Mobility meets the general conditions as established in Decision (CFSP) 2020/1639 of November 2020. Some of these conditions are political in nature; others are focused on the substantive contribution by the third state to the PESCO project, or prescribe certain legal requirements.

The PESCO project Military Mobility is a strategic platform enabling the **swift and seamless movement of military personnel and assets** throughout the EU, whether by rail, road, air or sea. This is important to EU security and defence, its preparedness and resilience, as well as to EU CSDP missions and operations.

On 5 November 2020, the Council adopted decision (CFSP) 2020/1639 establishing the general conditions under which third states could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects.

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Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their informal meeting in Porto on 7-8 May 2021



It is my pleasure to invite you to our informal meeting in Porto, where Prime Minister Costa is kindly hosting us. Following the High Level Conference organised by the Portuguese Presidency on 7 May, which will focus on social matters, we will have our working dinner, where we will address the COVID-19 situation and prepare the EU-India leaders' meeting of the following day. We will also touch upon other issues of international concern.

Our morning discussion on 8 May will concentrate on how we can best ensure an inclusive recovery, with education and skills at the heart of our political action. We will focus on ways to create jobs and improve job quality, and fight poverty and social exclusion. We will also address how to support all those affected by the COVID-19 crisis and who have, for example, seen their education, training or participation in the labour market disrupted. The Porto Declaration, which we expect to adopt at this meeting, sets out our vision for Europe's ambitious digital, green and fair transition.

We will then welcome Indian Prime Minister Modi, who will join us via video conference for the EU-India Leaders' meeting that same day. Our focus will be on strengthening EU-India cooperation. The President of the Commission will update us on the latest trade developments with India. Our meeting takes place against the dramatic backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic recently hitting India and for which the EU and Member States are providing support. Beyond this immediate priority, we will discuss how to reinforce our Strategic Partnership with India. I believe the current global situation may allow us to open a new important chapter in our relationship and we should make the best of this opportunity.

As to the practical proceedings, our informal dinner on 7 May will start at 7:45 pm. We will resume the following day at 9:30 am, and will then proceed to the EU-India Leaders' meeting over a working lunch from 12:30 pm. All times indicated are in local Porto (WEST) time. I look forward to seeing you in Porto.

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European climate law: Council and Parliament reach provisional agreement



A climate neutral EU – what does it mean?

[Press release updated on 5 May 2021 to include a link to the text following approval by Coreper]

The Council's and the European Parliament's negotiators reached a provisional political agreement setting into law the objective of a climate-neutral EU by 2050, and a collective, net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target (emissions after deduction of removals) of at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990.

We are very happy with the provisional deal reached today. The European climate law is “the law of laws” that sets the frame for the EU's climate-related legislation for the 30 years to come. The EU is strongly committed to becoming climate neutral by 2050 and today we can be proud to have set in stone an ambitious climate goal that can get everyone's support. With this agreement we send a strong signal to the world – right ahead of the Leader's Climate Summit on 22 April – and pave the way for the Commission to propose its “fit-for-55” climate package in June.

João Pedro Matos Fernandes, Minister of Environment and Climate Action

Regarding the 2030 target, negotiators agreed on the need to give priority to emissions reductions over removals. In order to ensure that sufficient efforts to reduce and prevent emissions are deployed until 2030, they introduced a limit of 225 Mt of CO₂ equivalent to the contribution of removals to the net target. They also agreed the Union shall aim to achieve a higher volume of carbon net sink by 2030.

Other elements of the provisional agreement include the establishment of a European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change, composed of 15 senior scientific experts of different nationalities with no more than 2 members holding the nationality of the same member state for a mandate of four years. This independent board will be tasked, among other things, with providing scientific advice and reporting on EU measures, climate targets and indicative greenhouse gas budgets and their coherence with the European climate law and the EU's international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

The negotiators agreed that the Commission would propose an intermediate climate target for 2040, if appropriate, at the latest within six months after the first global stocktake carried out under the Paris Agreement. It

will at the same time publish a projected indicative Union's greenhouse gas budget for the period 2030-2050, together with its underlying methodology. The budget is defined as the indicative total volume of net greenhouse gas emissions (expressed as CO₂ equivalent and providing separate information on emissions and removals) that are expected to be emitted in that period without putting at risk the Union's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Negotiators also agreed that the Commission would engage with sectors of the economy that choose to prepare indicative voluntary roadmaps towards achieving the Union's climate neutrality objective by 2050. The Commission would monitor the development of such roadmaps, facilitate the dialogue at EU-level, and share best practices among relevant stakeholders.

The provisional agreement also sets an aspirational goal for the EU to strive to achieve negative emissions after 2050.

The provisional political agreement is subject to approval by the Council and Parliament, before going through the formal steps of the adoption procedure. The provisional agreement was reached by the Council's Portuguese Presidency and the European Parliament's representatives, based on mandates from their respective institutions.

The text of the agreement will follow.

Background

The European Council, in its conclusions of 12 December 2019, agreed on the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050, in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, while also recognising that it is necessary to put in place an enabling framework that benefits all member states and encompasses adequate instruments, incentives, support and investments to ensure a cost-efficient, just, as well as socially balanced and fair transition, taking into account different national circumstances in terms of starting points.

On 4 March 2020, the European Commission adopted its proposal for a European climate law, as an important part of the European Green Deal. On 17 September 2020, the Commission adopted a proposal amending its initial proposal to include a revised EU emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030. The Commission also published a communication on the 2030 climate target plan, accompanied by a comprehensive impact assessment.

On 10-11 December the European Council in its conclusions, endorsed a binding EU target of a net domestic reduction of at least 55% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990.

The Council adopted a general approach on 17 December 2020, after which the Council and the Parliament launched a series of trilogue meetings with the aim of securing an agreement on the final text.