

## [Press briefing ahead of Eurogroup video conference of 15 February 2021](#)



The (virtual) press briefing ahead of the videoconference of Eurogroup will take place on **10 February 2021 at 15.00**.

The briefing will be “off the record” and will be given by Tuomas Saarenheimo, President of the Eurogroup Working Group.

EU accredited journalists will be able to participate and ask questions remotely. If you hadn't registered for one of the previous virtual Eurogroup press events, please use [this link](#) to do so and have the possibility to ask questions.

- **Deadline: Wednesday, 10 February 2021, 13.00**

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants after the deadline.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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## [Press release – Press briefing on plenary session at 15.30](#)



The main topics that MEPs will discuss and vote on during the 8-11 February plenary session include:

- the EU's vaccination strategy with Ursula von der Leyen
- the crackdown on the political opposition in Russia
- scrutiny of social media/fundamental rights
- curbing the effects of the pandemic
- EU consumption and recycling rules
- fighting in-work poverty/Minimum wage
- the debate with Christine Lagarde.

Interpretation will be available at the press conference in English, French and German.

Journalists wishing to actively participate and ask questions, please connect via Interactio by using the link

<https://broadcaster.interactio.eu/join/66e2-hy1p-1w4u>.

You can also follow it live from 15.30 via Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and [EbS+](#).

### **Information for the media – Use Interactio to ask questions**

Interactio is only supported on iPad (with the Safari browser) and Mac/Windows (with the Google Chrome browser).

When [connecting](#), enter your name and the media you are representing in the first name / last name fields.

For better sound quality, use headphones and a microphone. Interpretation is only possible for interventions with video.

Journalists who have never used Interactio before are asked to connect 30 minutes before the start of the press conference to perform a connection test. IT assistance can be provided if necessary.

For more details, check the [connection guidelines](#) and [recommendations for remote speakers](#).

## **EIB Group provides €443 million to Bulgarian economy in 2020**



- **Support for SMEs and mid-caps, urban development and advisory services**
- **Operations benefited 4 000 businesses and supported some 81 000 jobs**
- **Ten-year record for EIF, unlocking €1.8 billion for SMEs in Bulgaria**

The European Investment Bank Group (EIB Group), which consists of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF), provided loans, guarantees and equity commitments worth €443 million for

projects in Bulgaria in 2020. This represents a 23% increase in total financing activities compared to 2019.

In 2020, EIB lending in Bulgaria amounted to €115 million. The EIF committed some €328 million in new operations for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which is expected to unlock €1.8 billion for SMEs in Bulgaria, most of which will support those that are struggling under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**EIB Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova** said: “2020 has been a very challenging year for all of us. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented global crisis. In this context, I am proud that the EIB Group has increased its financing, in particular for SMEs. Our financial support is helping to improve people’s lives and has an important role in boosting the economic development of Bulgaria during the pandemic. I want to thank all our partners and assure you that we stand ready to support SMEs, regional cohesion, climate action and urban development to create employment and prosperity across Bulgaria.”

**Deputy-Minister of Finance of Bulgaria Marinela Petrova** said: “We highly appreciate the active role of the Bank in the fulfilment of the climate-related strategic objectives and priorities of the European Commission and the Member States, as well as its willingness to support Member States in the implementation of the transition towards climate neutrality. In order to successfully use the financial opportunities provided by the European Commission and the EIB, it is essential to identify the specific investment needs and to prepare quality projects. With its experience and expertise in financing investments in the area of infrastructure, innovation, climate and environment, the Bank can significantly support this process and contribute to the successful transition of Bulgaria to carbon neutrality.”

In a virtual press conference, Marinela Petrova, Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Finance and member of the EIB Board of Directors, and EIB Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova presented the impact of the EIB Group’s financing in Bulgaria and discussed the strategic outlook for the EU bank in the year ahead. In addition, Vice-President Pavlova gave an overview of the main EIB Group activities in 2020, including the [response](#) to the COVID-19 pandemic and the key role it plays in fighting the [climate crisis](#).

The press conference was followed by a virtual conference, organised by the EIB Economics Department, to present the annual EIB Investment Survey results for Bulgaria. The survey gathers unique insights on the corporate investment landscape in the European Union.

The [survey](#) found that in Bulgaria, COVID-19 has substantially affected firms’ investment strategies. It prompted nearly half of firms to invest less than planned (46%) and only very few to invest more than planned (7%). Bulgarian firms’ reaction to the pandemic is in line with the EU average (45%). A quarter of firms cited the increased use of digital technologies (25%) compared to half of firms in the European Union (50%). A quarter of firms expect a permanent reduction in employment (25%) as a long-term impact of COVID-19, similar to the EU average (21%). In addition, almost two-thirds

(63%) of firms in Bulgaria have no investment plans to tackle climate change impact, well above the EU average (35%).

[EIB Group in Bulgaria 2020](#)

[EIB Activity Report 2020](#)

[EIF Brochure 2020](#)

[EIB at a glance](#)

[EIB Investment Survey](#)

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## [Joint EUIPO/EPO IP Contribution Report](#)

February 08, 2021 [About the EUIPO](#)

Joint EUIPO/EPO IP Contribution Report



By effectively protecting their intellectual property, innovative companies can secure financing, grow, collaborate and create value. But how does owning intellectual property rights (IPRs) impact their performance?

This [joint report](#) by the EUIPO and the European Patent Office (EPO) delves deeper into the role of IPRs by analysing a representative sample of over 127 000 European firms from all 28 EU member states as of 1 January 2020. According to this analysis, firms that own IPRs generate 20% higher revenues per employee than their counterparts without an IP portfolio. Firms that own IPRs also pay on average 19% higher wages than firms that do not.

The report also includes an econometric analysis which makes it possible to

isolate the effect of IPR ownership from other factors such as the size of a firm or the countries and sectors in which it operates. The results confirm the positive association between IPR ownership and economic performance, with revenue per employee 55% higher for IPR owners than for non-owners.

A more detailed analysis of the overall picture reveals significant potential, especially when it comes to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Although fewer than 9% of European SMEs rely on IPRs, this subset of companies appears to generate 68% higher revenues per employee than SMEs without IPR portfolios.

All Observatory studies and reports can be found on the Observatory Webpage [here](#)

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## [Apprenticeships for green and digital transitions](#)



The European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission's European Alliance of Apprenticeships (EAfA) organised on 26 January a joint online event, the second in a series of roadmap events leading to a high-level conference on apprenticeships. The event was supported by the German Delegation of the Committee of the Regions, the European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) and the Basque Government. The live-streamed event explored emerging opportunities in relation to apprenticeships for regional and local authorities at a time when the green and digital transitions are accelerating across Europe.

Setting the scene, **Norbert Schöbel**, Team Leader at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, began by reminding the audience of the profound impact the green and digital transitions will have on work, education and the way Europeans live. By 2030, one million jobs are estimated to be created by the decarbonisation process in industries and services. As new jobs emerge and some professions become obsolete, apprenticeships have the potential to reduce the skills gap by equipping individuals with the right skills, including green and digital competences. Regions and cities can become catalysts by anticipating the skills needed and facilitating European cooperation by getting involved in EU-funded projects, monitoring and disseminating information, and contributing expertise.

□**Anne Karjalainen**, Chair of the SEDEC Commission, Member of Kerava Municipal Council and CoR Rapporteur on "A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions", highlighted that the green transition should not be a top-down exercise, but

instead a multi-level governance endeavour with the full involvement of local and regional authorities. In the coming years, low-skilled and old workers will likely face difficulties in coping with the transitions. European initiatives including the Just Transition Fund, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the new Skills Agenda must ensure that no people and no places are left behind. Well placed to tackle emerging challenges, local and regional authorities are familiar with the realities on the ground as they provide public services and supply for public needs.

**Emil Boc**, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca, CoR Rapporteur on “Achieving the European Education Area by 2025” and former Prime Minister of Romania, stressed how digitalisation represents a revolution in how Europeans live, teach, learn, work and communicate. To stand ready in the digital era, teachers and trainers must be immediately supported in transferring new skills demanded by the labour market and society. Looking ahead, digitalisation holds the potential to become an inclusive process where, for example, generations can come together to learn and strengthen their skills.

[Read the full report here](#) □

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