

Weekly schedule of President Charles Michel



Monday 18 January 2021

11.00 Meeting with Judge Mohamed Abdelsalam, Secretary General of the Higher Committee on Human Fraternity
15.30 Meeting with President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu
16.45 Video conference with FIFA President Gianni Infantino

Tuesday 19 January 2021

18.30 Meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and EU High Representative Josep Borrell

Wednesday 20 January 2020

12.30 Meeting with COREPER II Ambassadors

Thursday 21 January 2021

09.30 Meeting with President of Georgia Salome Zourabichvili
18.00 Video conference of the members of the European Council

Friday 22 January 2021

14.00 Meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu
16.45 Closing remarks at the virtual EIB Annual Economics Conference

Media advisory – Informal video conference of European affairs ministers of 18 January 2021



Indicative programme

Chair: Ana Paula Zacarias, Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs

10.00 – beginning of the informal video conference of European affairs ministers

Priorities of the Portuguese presidency

Conference on the Future of Europe

COVID-19: EU coordination – preparation for the informal video conference of the members of the European Council on 21 January 2021

Any other business

At the end of the meeting – press conference in [live streaming](#).

Arrangements for the press

Please note that the press conference after the meeting will take place remotely. In order to participate and ask questions, EU accredited journalists should register using [this link](#).

Those who already registered for the previous video conferences and press briefings of European affairs ministers do not need to do it again.

- **Deadline for the registration: Monday 18 January, 12.00**

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

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the alignment of certain countries concerning restrictive measures against Belarus](#)



On 17 December 2020, the Council adopted Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/2130[1] implementing Council Decision 2012/642/CFSP.

The Council Decision adds 29 persons and 7 entities to the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures set out in the Annex to Decision 2012/642/CFSP.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania[2] and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this Council Decision.

They will ensure that their national policies conform to this Council Decision.

The European Union takes note of this commitment and welcomes it.

[1] Published on 17.12.2020 in the Official Journal of the European Union no. LI 426, p. 14.

[2] The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

[Syrian foreign affairs minister added to EU sanctions list](#)



The Council today decided to add Faisal Mekdad to the list of persons subject to EU restrictive measures on Syria, in light of his recent appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

This decision brings to **289** the total number of persons targeted by a **travel ban** and an **asset freeze**. **70 entities** are also subject to an **asset freeze**.

The sanctions currently in place against the Syrian regime were introduced in 2011, in response to the **violent repression** of the Syrian civilian population. Companies and prominent business people who benefit from their ties with the regime and from the war economy are also subject to sanctions. Additional restrictive measures adopted by the EU include a **ban on the import of oil**, restrictions on certain investments, the freezing of assets held by the Syrian central bank in the EU, and **export restrictions on equipment and technology** that could be used for internal repression or for the monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications.

The Council keeps developments in the Syrian conflict under constant review. Any decision to prolong the sanctions is for the Council to take on an annual basis.

The EU remains committed to finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

The relevant legal acts, including the names of the person concerned, have been published in the Official Journal.

[Article – Coming up in plenary:](#)

vaccines, EU-US relations and Portuguese presidency



Vaccine contracts

MEPs will hold a debate on Tuesday morning on the need for more clarity and transparency concerning vaccine contracts and the EU's decision-making process regarding Covid-19 vaccines.

EU-US relations

With [Joe Biden taking over as president of the United States](#) on 20 January, MEPs are hopeful for a new chapter in EU-US relations. On Wednesday morning, Parliament will debate areas where the two partners can strengthen their collaboration in the future.

Portuguese presidency

Portugal took over the six-month rotating [presidency of the Council of the EU](#) on 1 January. Portuguese prime minister António Costa will address MEPs on his country's priorities on Wednesday morning.

Right to disconnect

The current pandemic has meant that one in three Europeans are now working from home. In a vote on Thursday, Parliament is likely to call on the Commission to make “the right to disconnect” a legal entitlement in the EU. MEPs say workers, when off work, should not feel obliged to answer work-related calls, emails and messages.

Impact of Covid-19

On Wednesday afternoon, MEPs will quiz Council and Commission representatives on the measures the EU is taking to deal with the social and employment effects of the Covid-19 crisis.

Artificial intelligence

MEPs are also set to debate and vote on how to govern the use of [artificial intelligence](#) (AI) specifically within the military and public domains. They are expected to insist on respect for human rights when using AI technologies in mass surveillance.

Gender equality

On Thursday, the Parliament will debate the [EU's strategy for gender equality](#) as well as how Covid-19 has impacted women's rights and how to include women in the digital economy.