

Remarks by President Charles Michel after the Eastern Partnership leaders' video conference



Good afternoon. Because of the COVID-19, it was impossible to have a physical meeting with the Eastern Partnership countries, but we had a video conference and we discussed different topics today. The first one is COVID-19, and the consequences of the crisis. The second one is the strategic partnership, and the third one is the future of our partnership.

About COVID-19: we have demonstrated our solidarity. Very quickly, the European Union reacted by providing support and means for our partners in the region. One billion euros has been mobilised in order to support those countries in the region. We have also provided medical equipment like gloves, masks and respirators.

About the strategic partnership: this strong European support clearly shows the importance we give to the Eastern Partnership. Leaders expressed the political will to continue building an area of shared democracy, prosperity and stability, anchored in our shared values, through a rules-based international order and international law. The Eastern Partnership is a foreign policy priority for the European Union, and it will continue to be one, along with our European priorities of democracy, human rights, rule of law, gender equality, structural reforms and fighting disinformation.

Over the last decade, our cooperation has flourished. Trade between the EU and its six partners has doubled. Together, the Eastern Partnership countries are now the EU's 10th largest trading partner. The EU is the number one trading partner for four Eastern Partnership countries and the second trading partner for the other two.

Our association agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Republic of Moldova provide for accelerating the political association and economic integration with the EU. Millions of these countries' citizens have benefitted from short-term visa-free travel to the EU. The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia is being provisionally applied. Negotiations on a new comprehensive agreement with Azerbaijan are at an advanced stage. And we just concluded visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Belarus, which will enter into force on 1st July.

The third topic is the preparation of the physical summit that we will organise in Brussels in March 2021. We have identified five priorities, five important topics that we will tackle together in order to be well prepared and in order to adopt next year a joint declaration.

Je termine ce message en indiquant que cette réunion a été l'occasion de mettre en lumière l'importance stratégique de ce partenariat. Je considère

que nous allons, sur le moyen et sur le long terme, continuer à travailler activement de manière régulière afin de préparer politiquement le sommet qui aura lieu de manière physique à Bruxelles au mois de mars 2021 et qui sera l'occasion de consolider, de conforter ce partenariat qui est essentiel pour des raisons géopolitiques.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

Media advisory – Video conference of the members of the European Council, 19 June 2020



Indicative programme

10.00 – Video conference of the members of the European Council, 19 June 2020,

At the end of the meeting: press conference by President Michel, President von der Leyen and Prime Minister of Croatia Andrej Plenković, in [live streaming](#)

Arrangements for the press conference

Please note that there will be no physical press conference. It can be followed via [live streaming](#). English, French and Croatian interpretation available.

In order to ask questions remotely, **EU accredited journalists** and journalists who had a **EUCO accreditation from June 2019** EUCO meeting or later, can register using [this link](#).

Journalists who already registered for the press conferences on 28/4 and/or on 6/5 or the press briefing on 18/06 **don't need to register again**.

For this press conference other journalists can be allowed for remote questions with a one-day accreditation: their acceptance is subject to approval by Council press centre. Please refer to [“one-day accreditation” rules](#) for the documents to provide and [terms and conditions](#) for the acceptance criteria. Please send your request to [\[email protected\]](#) with the necessary documents in attachment and register using [this link](#).

Deadline for registration: Friday, 19 June 2020, 11.00

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants

approximately half an hour after the deadline.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[Press release – President Sassoli press conference on EU summit, Recovery Fund and Budget](#)



EP President David Sassoli will hold a press conference at 11.00 on Friday following his address to EU heads of state of government (at 10.00). The summit will discuss the revised Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Recovery Plan proposals presented by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during an extraordinary EP plenary session on 27 May.

Journalists are welcome to attend the press conference in person, respecting the precautionary measures in force (see below), or participate remotely.

Parliament will be using an interactive virtual press environment (with interpretation) based on Skype TX, in conjunction with the traditional [EbS](#) and [web-streaming services](#).

If you are unable to attend and wish to ask a question:

- You will need a SKYPE account.
- Connect to VOXBOXEP and write your name and media organisation in the chat box

Please use headphones and a microphone for better sound quality.

The system will be managed by Parliament's media services and you will be placed in a queue (virtual waiting room) before being invited to ask your question(s).

If you have any trouble connecting, you can contact: +32 22834220 or use Skype chat box.

After asking a question / listening to the reply (and any follow-up), you should then disconnect from Skype so that the next journalist in line can be connected to the press briefing room.

You only need to connect through Skype if you wish to ask a question.

- You can follow the briefing LIVE on [EP MMC](#) or [EbS](#).

REMINDER: working conditions in Parliament for journalists in light of Coronavirus

It is mandatory as of 13 May to wear a community mask that covers the mouth and nose at all times while in Parliament's buildings. This is to continue to ensure Parliament's operational capacity, while at the same time avoiding health risks for Members, staff and other persons working in and visiting the European Parliament. In addition, as of Monday 15 June, temperature controls will be carried out on all persons entering Parliament's premises.

However, journalists may remove their mask for the duration of a recording (stand-ups, interviews, studio recordings) or asking a question in the press room. if the social distancing measures are respected. The press room on the ground floor (Paul-Henri Spaak building) is also now open again for those who need to work from Parliament, though social distancing rules remain in force.

Please refrain from coming to EP premises if you present any symptoms of a respiratory infection, if you have knowingly been in contact with an infected person in the last 14 days or if you have been to regions with very high transmission rates.

[Sweden: EU reaffirms support for ESS research infrastructure](#)



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- **European Investment Bank to extend tenor of original EUR 100 million credit facility signed in 2016.**
- **ESS obtains an additional tranche of financing worth EUR 50 million, supported under InnovFin, funded by the EU's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020**

The European Investment Bank has signed an increase of EUR 50 million (SEK 520 million) in the existing credit facility with the European Spallation Source (ESS) in Lund, Sweden. The loan was extended under the "InnovFin – EU Finance for Innovators" programme, with the financial backing of the European Union under Horizon 2020, the EU's programme for research and innovation. On the same occasion, the parties also agreed to extend the tenor of the [existing EUR 100 million credit facility](#), aligning it with the planned end of the construction phase of the project.

The ESS project originally marked the first time a project with an ERIC* statute was directly financed by the EU Bank. Apart from providing financing, the EIB's InnovFin Advisory Service also provided technical advice to pave the way for the successful conclusion of the loan agreement.

"It's quite an extraordinary project, which makes it all the more exciting for the EIB to support this." said [Thomas Östros](#), EIB Vice-President. "Europe needs to continue investing in facilities like this one, which boost our knowledge and open scientific possibilities that we may not even have thought of yet. We have supported this project since its inception and are happy to continue our commitment to this landmark achievement of European scientific effort."

Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *“Big science facilities such as ESS push boundaries of human knowledge and improve people’s lives with advances in many fields, from health to building materials. That is why we have supported ESS since the beginning through grants and loans funded by Horizon 2020, the EU’s research and innovation programme. This second loan under the InnovFin instrument brings ESS one step closer to reality.”*

ESS can be compared to a large “microscope”, as neutron scattering techniques offer the possibility to study material structures and motions at an atomic or molecular level. ESS will enable scientists to see and understand basic atomic structures and forces at length and time scales unachievable at other spallation sources. It thus opens new opportunities for researchers in multiple disciplines such as life science, environment, energy, transport and engineering, as well as physics, chemistry and even archaeology.

Background Information:

InnovFin – EU Finance for Innovators – Under Horizon 2020, the EU research and innovation programme for 2014-2020, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF) launched a new generation of financial instruments and advisory services in 2014 to help innovative firms access finance more easily. Until 2020, “InnovFin – EU Finance for Innovators” is offering a range of tailored products which provides financing in support of research and innovation by small, medium-sized and large companies and the promoters of research infrastructure.

InnovFin Large Projects aims to improve access to risk finance for research and innovation (R&I) projects emanating from larger firms; universities and public research organisations; R&I infrastructure (including innovation-enabling infrastructure); public-private partnerships; and special-purpose vehicles or projects (including those promoting first-of-a-kind, commercial-scale industrial demonstration projects). Loans and guarantees from EUR 25m to EUR 300m will be provided directly by the EIB.

The **European Spallation Source** (ESS) is a multi-disciplinary research centre based on the world’s most powerful neutron source. ESS will give scientists new possibilities in a broad range of research, from life science to engineering materials, from heritage conservation to magnetism. ESS is a pan-European project, with Sweden and Denmark serving as host countries. The main research facility is currently under construction in Lund, Sweden, and the Data Management and Software Centre (DMSC) is located in Copenhagen, Denmark. ESS is expected to complete its construction in 2025. It is anticipated that 2.000-3.000 guest researchers from universities, institutes and industry will participate in the ESS user program each year, making use of the facility’s broad range of neutron instruments to answer their scientific questions.

Press release – Conference on Future of Europe should start “as soon as possible in autumn 2020”



In a resolution adopted with 528 votes for, 124 against and 45 abstentions, Parliament declares that “10 years after [...] the [Lisbon Treaty](#), 70 years after the [Schuman Declaration](#) and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the time is ripe for a reappraisal of the Union.” MEPs add that “the number of significant crises that the Union has undergone demonstrates that institutional and political reforms are needed in multiple governance areas”.

Parliament also reaffirms its [January 2020 resolution](#) highlighting that citizens’ voices should be at the core of broad discussions on how to tackle internal and external challenges that were not foreseen at the time of the Lisbon Treaty.

Acknowledging that the Conference has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MEPs call on the other two EU institutions “to engage in negotiations to find common agreement [...] before the summer break”. Albeit welcoming the Commission’s “readiness to go forward in a speedy fashion”, Parliament “regrets that the Council has not yet adopted a position”.

MEPs discussed the Conference with State Secretary Nikolina Brnjac on behalf of the Croatian Presidency of the Council, and EC Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica, on Wednesday during the plenary session. You can catch up with the recorded debate by clicking [here](#), starting at 19.05, or watch excerpts [here](#).

Background

The Conference on the Future of Europe is set to be organised by Parliament, Council and Commission and was expected to start in May 2020 and run for two

years. Parliament wants citizens of all backgrounds, civil society representatives and stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level to be involved in setting the EU's priorities in line with citizens' concerns in a bottom-up, transparent, inclusive, participatory and well-balanced approach.

Further, MEPs insist on a process of open-ended citizen participation that will establish the scope of the Conference itself, and call for meaningful follow-up to the Conference's conclusions, including an express commitment by the three major EU institutions to substantive EU reforms in line with citizens' concerns, potentially including a review of the EU Treaties.