

Webinar addresses migrant border assistance

FRA spoke during a panel alongside the UN Refugee Agency and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the impact of EU border management on the needs of migrants.

FRA described the fundamental rights safeguards included in the Schengen Borders Code and the preventive measures EU Member States can take when cooperating with non-EU countries (see [FRA guidance on non-refoulement](#)).

How to effectively protect children at borders

FRA drew from its research and work on the ground.

The webinar focused on protecting children at borders and Save the Children's recent report [Struggling to Survive: Unaccompanied and separated children travelling the Balkans Route](#).

Saskia Bricmont MEP, co-chair of the European Parliament's Child Rights Intergroup, presented the conclusions of the workshop.

Update from the Executive Director of the EUIPO

June 12, 2020 [About the EUIPO](#)

Update from the Executive Director of the EUIPO

The Executive Director of the EUIPO, Christian Archambeau, has released a new video update on the current situation at the Office, at the start of the return to work plan.

Mr. Archambeau confirmed that a group of approximately 70 volunteers had entered the office in the first phase of the return plan, conforming to all safety precautions, while the rest of the staff continues to telework.

He also confirmed that, after the end of the extension period, the last of the 21 000 delayed EU trade marks were published earlier this week, with the 4 800 international registrations affected due to be published by the end of the month.

Mr. Archambeau gave details of the virtual Management Board and Budget Committee meeting as well as new SME initiatives, including the recent call for interest in pro-bono services.

View the video:

[Article – Good neighbours: EU relations with countries on its eastern borders](#)



The EU values good relations with other countries, especially those along its borders. Through a variety of initiatives from free trade agreements to partnerships, it seeks to stimulate trade and cooperation and encourage democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

This also applies to the countries along its eastern borders. In fact [countries in the Western Balkans could be next to join the EU](#). Candidate countries include Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia. Bosnia and

Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates.

The EU has also set up the [Eastern Partnership](#), a framework for collaboration between the EU and eastern neighbours Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

In addition to helping these countries with the Covid-19 outbreak, the EU is also reflecting on how to deepen relations.

Support with Covid-19 pandemic

In addition to €3.07 billion, announced in April, from existing resources, on 15 May, [Parliament approved €3 billion in favourable loans](#) to help EU neighbours and partner countries deal with the fallout from Covid-19: Albania (€180 million), Bosnia and Herzegovina (€250 million), Georgia (€150 million), Jordan (€200 million), Kosovo (€100 million), Moldova (€100 million), Montenegro (€60 million), North Macedonia (€160 million), Tunisia (€600 million) and Ukraine (€1.2 billion).

Other concrete EU measures include a new health security initiative with the European Centre for Disease Control. The €9 million initiative covers all 23 neighbourhood and enlargement countries and focuses on capacity-building for epidemiologists and front-line health staff in partner countries.

[Read more about how the EU is supporting other regions, including Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries](#)

[Discover 10 things the EU is doing to fight the coronavirus and its impact](#)

[Check out the time line of EU action](#)

Future relations

The EU is currently reflecting on the best way to advance relations with its eastern neighbours and Parliament is keen to contribute to the discussion.

On 17 June the Parliament will vote on a [resolution regarding the Western Balkan countries](#) in which MEPs call on the EU to do more to make the enlargement process for these countries succeed.

The Parliament has always been in favour of Western Balkan countries having the opportunity to join the EU once they are ready. In a [resolution adopted last October](#), Parliament expressed disappointment that Albania and North Macedonia were not able to start accession talks, stressing that the enlargement process has played a decisive role in stabilising the Western Balkans.

After months of delay, in March, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.

On 17 June, Parliament will also vote on a [resolution regarding the Eastern Partnership](#), which deals with how MEPs want the partnership to develop ahead of a crucial summit on 18 June.

In May 2019, the European Commission launched a consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership to help identify new policy objectives. This led to a [communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020](#) adopted by EU leaders in May 2020. The next step is the Eastern Partnership summit on 18 June 2020.

Remarks by Mário Centeno following the Eurogroup videoconference of 11 June 2020



Our meeting today marked a new phase in our crisis response. The safety nets for workers, firms and sovereign in the emergency phase were agreed and are ready to use. As we turn the page towards the recovery, we took stock of the economic situation and the required policy measures to support this recovery.

Visibility is low, forecasts change every month and risks are still significant. In any case, we are in a deep recession. Policy action to support the recovery at EU level is needed now.

The Commission has put forward a proposal for an unprecedented recovery package, integrated in the multi-annual financial framework. The negotiation of this file will be conducted by leaders at the European Council. The Eurogroup has been mandated to work on the recovery. Given the economic relevance of this fund, finance ministers are well placed to discuss investment needs. We will focus on the quality of expenditure and work on the complementarity of national and EU level recovery plans. We stand ready to follow up on leaders decisions.

The key element of this package is the recovery and resilience facility to support member states' reforms and investments. As you recall, it inherits the spirit of the euro area budget instrument, but in a temporary form and for the EU as a whole.

Today the finance ministers looked at how they can best coordinate their efforts when putting together their recovery plans. Coordination, in particular within the euro zone, is key to ensure that we avoid divergence and the build-up of our imbalances. Protecting the single currency is as critical as protecting the single market. In fact, they are interlinked.

Let me be specific: we discussed a possible euro area dimension to the

recovery facility. The European Semester is at the heart of the proposed Recovery and Resilience Facility, and has always had a strong euro area dimension reflected in the Euro Area Recommendation. Taking this recommendation into account would be an appropriate way to give a legitimate euro area angle to the recovery funds. The Eurogroup follows this issue closely.

Today we also picked up on some old Eurogroup topics. Namely Greece. We discussed the sixth enhanced surveillance report by the Commission. Clearly, these are difficult times, also for the Greek economy. But the policy response from the Greek authorities has been decisive and appropriate, thereby mitigating some of the adverse effects of the crisis.

Even in this extraordinary situation, Greece has been able to continue the reform progress – though of course there are inevitable delays. Overall, the Commission concludes that Greece has taken necessary action to deliver on its reform commitments. On this basis, we have reached a political understanding on the approval of the next tranche of debt measures.

You are familiar with the process that follows. Our deputies will formally approve the policy-contingent debt relief measures, after national procedures. These debt measures concern the reduction to zero of the step-up interest margin on certain EFSF loans and also the transfer to Greece of profits made by the central banks on Greek governments bonds, the so-called SMP and ANFA. This all adds up to a grant of 748 million euros.

We also looked at the post-programme surveillance for Cyprus and Spain. Also, for these countries, we fully realise that these are very challenging times. We commended both cases for their policy response. I am confident that the measures put in place by the authorities to address the pandemic, as well as the economic and financial reforms implemented during the last few years, will help to withstand the current shock.

We had a very fruitful discussion on Banking Union – the first one after the virus outbreak. The context was the hearing of the SSM chair and the update on the SRB's activities, for which we counted with Andrea Enria and Elke Koenig's contribution. They informed us about the state of play of the banking sector and on the measures taken by their respective institutions to enable banks to play their part in supporting the economy during the COVID-19 crisis, and shield them from its unduly impact.

Banks entered this crisis better capitalized and in a better liquidity position than in previous ones. Banks went from being a shock amplifier in the sovereign debt crisis, to become a shock absorber in this crisis. That is due to the good work done in the last decade. Nonetheless, some of the pre-existing vulnerabilities, notably the low profitability of the banking sector, have been aggravated by the current crisis. They need to be addressed.

We need a solid and resilient banking sector to support our recovery. That is why we all agreed today that the work on the strengthening of the Banking Union must continue. Our efforts on this file were halted by the immediate

response to the COVID-19 crisis. We have asked our deputies to restart the preparatory work as soon as possible so we can have a first discussion in the autumn. This work should move forward in a holistic manner, including the ESM and the backstop, EDIS, crisis management, sovereign exposures and financial stability, cross-border integration, liquidity in resolution and the early introduction of the backstop.

Let me close this initial statement with a non-policy issue, but important nonetheless. I have informed ministers about the procedure for the election of the next President of the Eurogroup. The official call for candidates will be launched shortly by the Council. Ministers have until 25 June to send a motivation letter backing their respective candidacies. The election will then take place at the Eurogroup in early July. Let me recall that the Eurogroup President is elected for a term of two and a half years. Candidates have to be ministers responsible for finance. The President is elected by a simple majority of euro area ministers.

In this context, I have informed my fellow ministers today that I will not be seeking a second mandate. I will remain President of the Eurogroup until the end of my mandate, which is 12 July. All good things come to an end. But you will still see me here in our July meeting.

It will be a *grand finale* with a full agenda and the election of the next president.

[Visit the meeting page](#)