



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Conference on the Future of Europe

19 APRIL / 2021

On Monday 19 April top EU officials launched a multilingual digital platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe, a year-long democracy exercise meant to involve Europeans in shaping the future direction of the bloc.

The platform will provide a digital space for citizens to interact and exchange ideas on how they see the future of Europe, and will directly feed in the Conference’s panel discussions.

Following a bottom-up approach, the platform will be the central hub of the Conference, bringing together all citizens’ contribution. To allow for a truly pan-European discussion, it will be available in all 24 EU official languages through immediate translation.

In keeping with the inter-institutional nature of the Conference, the platform was launched in a joint press conference with the three co-chairs of the Conference’s Executive Board: Commission Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, MEP Guy Verhofstadt, and Portuguese Secretary of State Ana Paula Zacarias.

As a citizen-led exercise, the platform will be open to all European citizens who are interested in joining an event, exchanging ideas or organising an event to discuss what should be the EU positions on the nine key topics.

The official launch of the Conference took place on Europe Day (9 May).

Useful links:

- Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe – [link](#)
- Conference on the Future of Europe - [Platform](#)



COUNCIL OF THE EU

Porto Social Summit

7-8 MAY / 2021



The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU held the Porto Summit on Social Affairs and an informal European Council on 7-8 May. The Summit ended with the adoption of the [Porto Declaration](#).

The Porto Social Commitment is “the most comprehensive and ambitious tripartite commitment ever reached in the European Union”, said Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa at the closing session of the Social Summit, part of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In the [document](#), the signatories agree that “it is time to deliver in order to collectively ensure and support an ambitious agenda for economic and social recovery and modernisation”, one that is “strong, sustainable and inclusive, so that all citizens can benefit from the twin green and digital transitions and live with dignity”.

To meet the goals of the [Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights](#), the commitment proposes joining forces in order to implement inclusion, sustainability and job creation policies.

Porto Declaration

8 May 2021



1. We underline the importance of European unity and solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. These values have defined the response of European citizens to this crisis and also lie at the heart of our common project and distinctive social model. **More than ever, Europe must be the continent of social cohesion and prosperity.** We reaffirm our **pledge to work towards a social Europe.**
2. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, swift, critical and comprehensive action at EU and national level has protected millions of lives, jobs and businesses.
3. The same spirit of unity and solidarity inspired our historic agreement in July 2020 on the Multiannual Financial Framework and the specific Recovery effort under Next Generation EU. As we accelerate the green and digital transitions, this massive European investment and the associated reforms will set the Union and its Member States firmly on the path of reform towards a fair, sustainable and resilient recovery. **A collective, inclusive, timely, and cohesive recovery will strengthen Europe's competitiveness, resilience, social dimension and role on the global stage.**
4. We welcome the high-level conference organised by the Portuguese Presidency in the context of the Porto Social Summit and take note of its outcome. The **European Pillar of Social Rights is a fundamental element of the recovery.** Its implementation will strengthen the Union's drive towards a digital, green and fair transition and contribute to achieving upward social and economic convergence and addressing the demographic challenges. The social dimension, social dialogue and the active involvement of social partners have always been at the core of a highly competitive social market economy. Our commitment to unity and solidarity also means ensuring equal opportunities for all and that no one is left behind.
5. As established by the **EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024**, we are determined to continue deepening the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights** at EU and national level, with due regard for respective competences and the **principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.** The **Action Plan presented by the Commission on 4 March 2021** provides useful guidance for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including in the areas of employment, skills, health, and social protection.
6. We welcome the new **EU headline targets on jobs, skills and poverty reduction and the revised Social Scoreboard proposed in the Action Plan** that will help to monitor progress towards the implementation of the Social Pillar principles, taking into account different national circumstances, and as part of the policy coordination framework in the context of the European Semester.
7. As Europe gradually recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, the **priority will be to move from protecting to creating jobs and to improve job quality**, where small and medium-sized enterprises (including social enterprises) play a key role. The implementation of the principles in the European Pillar of Social Rights will be essential to ensure the creation of more and better jobs for all within the framework of an inclusive recovery. In this respect, relevant legislative and non-legislative work should be taken forward at EU and Member States level.
8. We will put **education and skills at the centre of our political action.** The green and digital transitions will bring enormous opportunities for European citizens but also many challenges, which will require more investment in education, vocational training, lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling, so as to stimulate employment transitions towards sectors where there is a growing demand for labour. At the same time, changes linked to digitalisation, artificial intelligence, teleworking and the platform economy will require particular attention with a view to reinforcing workers' rights, social security systems and occupational health and safety.
9. We are committed to **reducing inequalities, defending fair wages, fighting social exclusion and tackling poverty, taking on the objective of fighting child poverty and addressing the risks of exclusion** for particularly vulnerable social groups such as the long-term unemployed, the elderly, persons with disabilities and the homeless.
10. We will step up efforts to **fight discrimination** and work actively to close gender gaps in employment, pay and pensions, and to promote equality and fairness for

every individual in our society, in line with fundamental principles of the European Union and principle 2 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

11. We will prioritise action to **support young people**, who have been very negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis, which has profoundly disrupted their participation in the labour market as well as their education and training plans. Young people represent an indispensable source of dynamism, talent and creativity for Europe. We must make sure that they become the driving force of the inclusive green and digital recovery to help build the Europe of the future, including by using the full

potential of Erasmus + to foster mobility across Europe for all students and apprentices.

12. We stress the importance of closely following, including at the highest level, the progress achieved towards the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU headline targets for 2030.
13. We welcome, as another success of European social dialogue, that the European Social Partners have made a joint proposal for an alternative set of indicators to measure economic, social and environmental progress, supplementing GDP as welfare measure for inclusive and sustainable growth.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan

On 4 March 2021, the Commission set out its ambition for a strong Social Europe that focuses on jobs and skills for the future and paves the way for a fair, inclusive and resilient socio-economic recovery. The [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) outlines concrete actions to further **implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a joint effort by the Member States and the EU, with an active involvement of social partners and civil society**. It also proposes employment, skills and social protection headline targets for the EU to be achieved by 2030.

This is an opportunity for Europe to update its social rulebook, while successfully navigating the transformations brought about by new societal, technological and economic developments and by the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. The Commission has already started to put the Pillar's principles into action, proposing initiatives such as Youth Employment Support and Adequate Minimum Wages in 2020. Today the Commission is also presenting a [Commission Recommendation on Effective Active Support to Employment following the COVID-19 crisis \(EASE\)](#), to support a job-rich recovery.

Executive Vice-President for An Economy that Works for People, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: "Our economic recovery must be inclusive, fair and job-rich. That is why the Commission is proposing an ambitious agenda for implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and inviting Member States to actively support employment in the recovery phase following the COVID-19 crisis. With this, we want to signal the importance of a gradual transition from emergency to recovery policies for our labour markets, which the EU will support through its available funding sources - including the ESF+ and the Recovery and Resilience Facility." ([Full speech](#))

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas **Schmit**, said: "The European Pillar of Social Rights has been our reference point for building a strong social Europe. Now we breathe new life into it, turning its principles into actions. Creating jobs is one of our main priorities, and making sure people have the right skills for those jobs. This is the objective of EASE. We also have a collective duty to combat poverty in the EU and create an inclusive society. We all have a role to play. I look forward to a renewed commitment to social rights at the Social Summit in May."



EU targets for a common ambition by 2030

The Action Plan sets **three headline targets** for the EU to be achieved by 2030:

1. **At least 78%** of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment.
2. **At least 60%** of all adults should participate in training every year.
3. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be **reduced by at least 15 million**.



The new 2030 headline targets are consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and set the common ambition for a strong Social Europe. Together with a **revised Social Scoreboard**, they will allow the Commission to monitor Member States' progress under the European Semester. The Commission invites the European Council to endorse these three targets and calls on Member States to define their own national targets to contribute to this effort.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Commission adopts new rules for CAP fruit and vegetable support scheme



The Commission adopted **new rules** ([Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2021/652 of 10 February 2021](#) amending [Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2017/891](#)) to **simplify the common agricultural policy (CAP)'s fruit and vegetable support scheme**, and in particular, **rules related to activities and programmes of producer organisations in the fruit and vegetable sector**. This simplification paves the way to the new CAP, which will **apply from 2023**.

Member States will now be able to extend their national strategies for the fruit and vegetable sector to ensure a smooth transition between the current and new rules once the new CAP enters into force.

In addition, the new rules include, among others:

- Extension of the outsourcing possibilities for producer organisations in the fruit and vegetable sector;
- Extension of the use of standard flat rates or lump sums to all costs supported under operational programmes for the fruit and vegetable sector, except for crisis measures;
- **Simplification of the rules regarding market withdrawal of fruit and vegetables for free distribution;**
- **Introduction of a maximum amount of support for market withdrawals for processing;**
- Simplification of the rules related to crisis prevention and management measures (e.g. harvest insurance, coaching), to encourage a greater uptake by producer organisations in the fruit and vegetable sector.



Related links:

- [EU fruits and vegetables scheme](#)
- [EU fruit and vegetables market observatory](#)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2021/652 of 10 February 2021](#)
- [Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2017/891](#)

COUNCIL OF THE EU

Council Conclusions on the EU's priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit

20 MAY / 2021

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has convened for 2021 a '[Food Systems Summit](#)', as part of the UN Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the 2030 target date. The Summit is scheduled to take place alongside the 76th UN General Assembly (14-30 September 2021) and will be preceded by a three-day Pre-Summit hosted by Italy on 26-28 July 2021 at the Rome headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The purpose of the Food Systems Summit is to launch, in the broader context of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, bold actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, so as to ensure the lasting capacity to feed the growing world population in a sustainable manner. The Summit has acquired particular importance in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, which is exacerbating existing inequalities in access to sufficient nutritious and healthy food worldwide.

In the second half of 2020, under the German Presidency, the Coordination Working Party (FAO) started **discussions aimed at preparing Council conclusions on the EU's priorities for the Food Systems Summit**.

The Working Party recognised, in particular, the key importance of the Summit for promoting the EU's vision of a sustainable, climate-neutral and resource efficient future as set out in the European Green Deal and its associated strategies and action plans, in particular the Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU's Biodiversity Strategy.

- On 5 May 2021, the Coordination Working Party (FAO) reached an agreement on the final text of the draft Council conclusions.
- At its meeting on 19 May 2021, the Permanent Representatives Committee confirmed the agreement reached by the Coordination Working Party (FAO) and endorsed the draft Council conclusions.
- The Council conclusions on the EU's priorities for the UN Food Systems Summit have been adopted on 27 May 2021.

Council Conclusions on the EU's priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit

Structure:

- GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS
- KEY PRIORITIES TO BE ADVANCED BY THE FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

Strengthening sustainability and resilience

Promoting healthy diets through sustainable food systems

Strengthening food safety and public health

Contributing to the sustainability and resilience of food systems through trade

New finance solutions and business models

Improving scientific knowledge and ensuring a strong science-policy interface

- FOLLOW-UP TO THE SUMMIT

Actions and initiatives at EU level

Read the full document [here](#).

Horizon Europe

COUNCIL OF THE EU

Presentation of Horizon Europe: funding opportunities for 2021-2027

26 MAY / 2021

On 26 May 2021, APRE (*Agenzia per la Promozione della Ricerca Europea* - Italy) organised the Italian National launch day of the research and innovation framework programme. The event was opened by Commissioner Gabriel (Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth) who highlighted the [Horizon Europe](#) improvements made over the Horizon 2020.

Horizon Europe is the European Union's Framework Program for Research and Innovation for the period **2021-2027**. It is the successor to Horizon 2020. The Program has a duration of 7 years - corresponding to the EU's long-term budget - and a **total budget of 95.5 billion** (+30% respect 2020), a figure that includes EUR 5.4 billion allocated to the NextGeneration EU recovery plan.

It is the **largest transnational research and innovation program in the world**.

It funds research and innovation activities - or R&I support activities - and does so primarily through open and competitive calls for proposals. The programme is implemented directly by the European Commission (direct management). Research and innovation activities funded by Horizon Europe must focus exclusively on civil applications.

The missions

Horizon Europe envisions the launch of research and innovation missions, aimed at increasing the effectiveness of funding by pursuing clearly identified grand goals and solving some of the biggest challenges of our time. Each mission will include a portfolio of actions - research projects, policy measures, or even legislative initiatives -

directed at achieving, within a predetermined timeframe, a bold, measurable, and socially relevant goal that could not be achieved through single actions.

The European Commission has identified five mission areas:

- Cancer
- Climate change adaptation, including societal transformation
- Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters
- Climate neutral and smart cities
- Healthy food and soils

3 Pillars for Research and Innovation

The main novelties of Horizon Europe: The European Innovation Council (EIC).

The Commission has established in Horizon Europe the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#), already launched in pilot phase in the last period of Horizon 2020, as a "one-stop shop" to attract and support all types of innovators and innovative companies.

Indeed, the EIC is open to all types of innovators, from individuals to universities, research organizations and companies (SMEs, including start-ups and, in exceptional cases, small mid-caps), from individual beneficiaries to multidisciplinary consortia. At least 70% of the EIC budget is dedicated to SMEs.

The EIC focuses primarily on breakthrough innovation, targeting in particular market-creating innovation, while also supporting all other types of innovation, including incremental innovation



Focus: 2nd Pillar Cluster 6 - Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture & Environment

Human activities exert increasing pressure on soils, seas and oceans, water, air, biodiversity and other natural resources. This pressure in combination with ongoing climate change affects ecosystems and their ability to provide effective services for humanity. In this context, the **goal of Cluster 6 of Horizon Europe is to advance and balance Europe's environmental, social, and economic goals by setting human economic activities on a path of sustainability.** The paradigm underpinning the Cluster is the **need for transformative change in the economy and society aimed at reducing environmental degradation, halting and reversing biodiversity decline, and better managing natural resources, serving the EU's climate targets and ensuring safe food and water.**

Budget: EUR 9 billion

Who can participate

Universities, public and private research centres, associations, public administrations, sector operators, industries and encourages the participation of Small and Medium Enterprises with high technological value.

Highlights

A peculiar element of the **Work Plan of Cluster 6** is the call for a "**multi-actors approach**", able to orient R&I activities to the demands and needs of society. According to this approach, stakeholders must be directly involved in the R&I process, from the planning of the action to its implementation, in a perspective of co-creation.

Within Cluster 6, international cooperation is important and takes the form of global actions (e.g., Intergovernmental science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services - IPBES; Global Earth Observation System of Systems - GEOSS) as well as multilateral initiatives (e.g., International Bioeconomy Forum, All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance, Mediterranean and Black Seas) and bilateral initiatives (with China and Africa).

Also contributing to the objectives of the cluster are 2 missions, "Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters" and "Soil health and food", and 8 partnerships.

Enhanced international cooperation

Horizon Europe envisages the possibility of extending the association to third countries with a good capacity in science, technology and innovation, provided that they are characterized by an open market economy, with fair and equitable treatment of intellectual property rights, respect for human rights, and are supported by democratic institutions.

Informal preparatory talks for the definition of agreements for the association of third countries to the Program are currently (February 2021) underway.

The new generation of partnerships

Horizon Europe will continue to support European Partnerships between the Commission, on the one hand, and Member States, the private sector, foundations and other stakeholders, on the other hand. The goal is to address global challenges and industrial modernization through concerted research and innovation efforts.

By bringing together private and public partners, European Partnerships help avoid duplication of investment and should help reduce fragmentation of research and innovation efforts in the European Union.

The program establishes the conditions and principles for the creation of three new types of Partnerships:

- Co-Programmed partnerships
- Co-financed partnerships
- Institutionalized partnerships

Open Science

Horizon Europe encourages the principles of Open Science as an approach to the scientific process based on cooperative work and the dissemination of knowledge. The Open Science approach is embodied in the following elements:

- Open access to scientific publications resulting from research funded by the Framework Program;
- Open access to research data, including those underlying scientific publications, according to the principle of "as open as possible, as close as necessary."

Responsible management of research data must also be ensured in line with the principles of "findability", "accessibility", "interoperability", and "reusability" (FAIR), while also taking into consideration the long-term preservation of data.



G7

G7 Climate and Environment: Ministers' Communiqué

21 MAY / 2021

On 21 May 2021, the G7 adopted a [joint Climate and Environment Ministers Communiqué](#) with commitments to put climate, biodiversity, and the environment at the heart of their COVID-19 recovery strategies and investments.

Through this Communiqué, the G7 recognise the need to increase global ambition and enhance international cooperation to tackle the global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. The G7 call on all countries to join them in taking urgent, ambitious and concrete action. The Communiqué addresses issues related to sustainable development, the transition to a net zero economy, clean energy, clean mobility, resource efficiency, ocean action, food systems and food loss and waste prevention and reduction, as well as the delivery of decent green jobs and the role of finance to support the green recovery.

Regarding food loss and waste, the G7 acknowledge the importance of taking action against it in order to improve food security, mitigate climate change and land degradation and protect biodiversity.

The G7 reaffirm **commitment to achieve SDG 12.3 and commit to utilise a "Target, Measure, Act" approach** and establish national targets to reach that goal. They welcome the upcoming **UN Food Systems Summit 2021**, while also outlining:

- The importance of food loss and waste measurement activities
- The need for actions that promote sustainable and circular food systems
- The role of innovation, as well as the attention that public education and behaviour change programmes merit

What's the G7?



The Group of Seven (G7) is an intergovernmental organization consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and USA. The heads of governments of the Member States, as well as the representatives of the European Union (President of the European Council and President of the European Commission), meet at the annual G7 Summit.

2021 G7 Summit takes place in Carbis Bay, Cornwall on 11-13 June.

To read more:

- G7 Climate and Environment Ministers' Meeting Communiqué – link [here](#)
- G7 Climate and Environment: Minister's Communiqué, London, 21 May 2021" – link [here](#)



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This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.