



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas on developments in the European Union

1 January 2021 – 30 June 2021

Under Section 2 (5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act
2002

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
BREXIT	2
Entry into force of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement	2
Implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement.....	3
Brexit response	4
CLIMATE CHANGE	6
MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND THE NEXT GENERATION EU.....	8
CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE.....	9
COMMUNICATING EUROPE INITIATIVE 2021	11
POLITICAL.....	16
EU-UN Cooperation.....	16
Human Rights.....	17
Conflict Resolution.....	17
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation	18
Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)	19
Cybersecurity	20
Hybrid threats and disinformation	20
ENLARGEMENT AND WESTERN BALKANS.....	22
EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD	23
Eastern Partnership	23
Central Asia	24
Council of Europe.....	25
Russia	25
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION.....	27
NDICI-Global Europe	27
Team Europe.....	27
Post-Cotonou	27
Financial Architecture for Development.....	28
AFRICA.....	29
EU-Africa	29
Sahel.....	29
Horn of Africa.....	30

Cabo Delgado	30
MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA.....	32
Egypt	32
Libya	32
Iran/ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).....	32
Iraq	32
Wider Gulf	33
Lebanon	33
Middle East Peace Process.....	33
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.....	34
Venezuela.....	34
EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Relations.....	34
ASIA – PACIFIC.....	35
EU-India Summit	35
Indo-Pacific.....	35
Myanmar	36
APPENDIX: WEB LINKS	37

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises key policy developments in the EU during the six-month period January to June 2021, when Portugal held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This was the fourth time Portugal held the rotating Council Presidency (the previous occasion took place in 2007).

Under the motto '*Time to Deliver: a fair, green, digital recovery*', the Presidency plans were strongly influenced by the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Its context included the aftermath of the discussions over the **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-27 (including the Recovery Plan for Europe)**, the end of the transition period following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union and a new political leadership in the United States of America.

Among others, the main priorities set out by the Portuguese Presidency were as follows:

- Economic recovery following the crisis caused by the pandemic;
- *Strategic autonomy* of the European Union;
- Green and digital transitions;
- Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR);
- EU's role in the world (including trade agreements and bilateral EU-India summit).

The Portuguese Presidency also signalled the intention to launch the **Conference on the Future of Europe**.

This report is submitted in accordance with the requirements of Section 2(5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002.

BREXIT

Over the period January – June 2021, the Department continued to coordinate the whole-of-Government response to Brexit, together with the Department of the Taoiseach.

Entry into force of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) negotiated by the EU and the UK in 2020 was signed on 30 December 2020 and began to apply on 1 January 2021. Subsequently, following the completion of the relevant procedures by the EU and by the UK Government, the agreement was formally concluded and entered into force on 1 May 2021.

The TCA, which is a comprehensive agreement incorporating trade and sectoral elements, provides for tariff and quota free trade between the UK and the EU, protects the Single Market that is so important for our future prosperity and ensures fair competition for Irish businesses. It also creates a new stable relationship with the UK for the Irish sectors including transport and energy and ensures continued cooperation on criminal justice matters, including between police services on these islands. However, the TCA does not replicate the status quo. The UK's decision to leave the EU means that the EU-UK relationship cannot be as close as it was then the UK was an EU Member State.

The TCA provisions on fisheries represented a difficult compromise and the Government continues to work to ensure that the fisheries sector, and the coastal communities that depend on it, are supported through the period ahead.

The Partnership Council established to oversee the implementation of the TCA held its first meeting on 9 June, and the 21 technical specialised committees and working groups are now beginning their work with a series of meetings planned to the end of the year. Irish officials will attend these meetings as part of the EU delegation.

Implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement

The sixth, seventh, and eighth meetings of the Joint Committee established to oversee the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement took place on 24 February, 15 March, and 9 June respectively and the first annual report of the Joint Committee was published on 25 June. The 6th and 7th meetings of the Specialised Committee on the Implementation of the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland also took place on 23 February and 26 March.

The Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland is an integral part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and its operational provisions came into effect on 1 January 2021, taking account of certain grace periods agreed by the EU and the UK in December 2020 in areas such as supermarket supply chains and medicines.

Throughout the period, the European Commission has continued to engage constructively with the UK to address the challenges that have been identified in the implementation of the Protocol. The Government and EU partners, including Commission Vice President Sefcovic, also continue to engage closely with stakeholders in Northern Ireland. Within the framework of the Protocol, the EU has demonstrated an openness to finding creative and flexible solutions on issues such as SPS controls, medicines supply, VAT, and on Tariff Rate Quotas, among other issues.

As part of the package of measures announced on 30 June, the Commission indicated its intention to amend EU legislation to address the issues relating to the supply of medicines to Northern Ireland. It also announced the removal of the requirement for drivers from the UK, including Northern Ireland, to carry a motor insurance Green Card as proof of insurance in the EU; and measures relating to the movement of guide dogs and livestock between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the EU also acceded to a UK request to extend the grace period for the supply of chilled meats from Great Britain to Northern Ireland to 30 September.

On 15 March, the Commission launched infringement proceedings against the UK for breaching the substantive provisions of the Protocol, as well as its good faith obligation in the Withdrawal Agreement, following the UK decision to extend unilaterally the grace periods around supermarket supply routes and pet travel.

Brexit response

The whole-of-Government response to Brexit has continued through the first half of 2021, supporting business and citizens in dealing with the permanent changes arising from the end of the Brexit transition period, and the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. This work was coordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of The Taoiseach

In the immediate period following the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020, daily coordination meetings, under the auspices of the Assistant Secretary Group on Brexit Readiness, took place to oversee the implementation of the Government's Brexit Readiness Action Plan, and to identify and respond to any issues arising. Government Departments and State Agencies worked closely with businesses experiencing issues, particularly relating to the movement of goods between Great Britain and Ireland. Dedicated information resources, call centres and advice lines were put in place for business and citizens. A range of Government supports remained on offer during the period, including training and grants, to assist businesses in dealing with Brexit-related change. Further information on these supports is available at [Gov.ie/Brexit](https://gov.ie/Brexit).

The Government's Brexit readiness response continued to be underpinned by a substantial cross-Government Brexit communications campaign. This initially focussed on responding to the end of the Brexit transition period, when the UK left the EU single market and customs union, and latterly on the planned introduction of further UK import controls (initially scheduled for 1 April but postponed until 1 October). Substantial preparations are ongoing across Government to prepare for the introductions of new UK controls including direct trader engagement, a national public information campaign and a series of webinars supported by the relevant government departments and state agencies.

In June the Council of the EU and the European Parliament reached agreement in principle on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve Regulation, which is expected will be formally adopted in early autumn. Ireland can expect to receive more than €1 billion of the €5 billion (in 2018 prices) that is to be allocated to Member States. This is the

biggest single allocation for any EU member state and just over 20% of the total fund. Funding from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve will further support our sectors and regions most impacted by the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In January, the Council adopted Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy - *Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal*. The Council Conclusions recognised that climate change is an existential threat to humanity and that global climate action still falls short of what is required to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Council acknowledged that while Europe is showing leadership and setting an example by stepping up its domestic commitments, there is an urgent need for collective and decisive global action. It called on all parties to increase their ambition on climate action ahead of the 26th Conference of the Parties in November 2021. It also confirmed the EU's continuous commitment to further scale up the mobilisation of international climate finance. The EU is the largest contributor of public climate finance, having doubled its contribution from the 2013 figure to EUR 23.2 billion in 2019.

In February, the Commission adopted a new *EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change*, setting out the pathway to prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change. In addition to addressing adaptation within the EU, the document also outlines a framework for EU engagement at the international level. In this regard, the EU will promote sub-national, national and regional approaches to adaptation, with a specific focus on adaptation in Africa and Small Island Developing States.

In May, Council Ministers exchanged views with US Special Presidential Envoy on Climate John Kerry on how to increase global climate ambition, especially amongst the world's biggest economies. It was agreed that the EU and US would work systematically together to scale up efforts to prompt partners to deliver the best possible commitments under the Paris Agreement. This is to be done both bilaterally and in multilateral fora such as the G7 and G20.

An EU-US Summit took place in Brussels in June and continued the steady progress on climate collaboration since the Biden administration took office. Major outcomes of the Summit included: 1) the formation of an EU/US Trade and Technology Council to look at, among other issues, green technologies; 2) the revitalisation of the EU/US

Energy Council to work on decarbonisation of economies; and 3) the formation of a high-level EU/US climate action group to formalise collaboration, including on third country diplomacy.

MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND THE NEXT GENERATION EU

Following its adoption in December 2020, implementation of the package totalling €1.82 trillion for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the “Next Generation EU” (NGEU) Recovery Instrument commenced in 2021. The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which accounts for the vast majority of the €750 billion NGEU package (€672.5 billion, made up of €360 billion loans and €312.5 billion in grants to Member States), was adopted on 12 February. The RRF is a large-scale financial support to public investments and reforms which aims to assist Member States address the impact of COVID-19 and assist EU Member States in addressing future shocks and becoming more resilient and better prepared for the future. The Own Resources Decision, which gives legal effect to the changes to the financing of the EU Budget as part of the 2021-2027 MFF and the NGEU and allows borrowing by the Commission on the markets so that NGEU funds can be dispersed to MS, was ratified by all Member States. This allowed the Commission to have its first two NGEU transactions on the markets which raised €35 billion via bonds. By the end of June, the European Commission had positively assessed the National Recovery and Resilience Plans of 12 Member States. Plans are required to be submitted to access funding under the RRF and to set out the reform and investment objectives for the years 2021-26 for which MS are seeking funding. Ireland submitted its draft National Recovery and Resilience Plan to the Commission on 28 May. In parallel to these developments, work continued on concluding MFF/NGEU related sectoral files, with the vast majority of files being adopted, and sectoral funding programmes continued to be adopted.

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The Conference on the Future of Europe (COFOE) is a series of conferences aimed at promoting greater citizen involvement in the European Union and engendering reflection on Europe's future direction. The inaugural EU event of the Conference took place on Europe Day (9 May) in Strasbourg. Minister of State Byrne attended that launch event virtually.

Ireland's national launch event took place virtually on 14 May and included contributions by An Taoiseach, Minister Coveney, Minister of State Byrne and EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness. The EU Ombudsman, Emily O Reilly also took part in a panel discussion with Minister of State Byrne. This was a Government of Ireland event organised in partnership with European Movement Ireland. Youth participants also featured in the launch event, reflecting the Conference's emphasis on engaging young people. The event has currently been viewed online over 1,200 times.

The inaugural plenary for the Conference was held on 19 June in Strasbourg and was attended virtually by Ministers of State Byrne and Josepha Madigan. Its agenda was broadly constitutive focusing on the Conference's overall purposes and future calendar of events. Further plenaries will take place in the latter half of 2021 and conclude in spring 2022.

Ireland's national programme of events is also now underway. The Department of Foreign Affairs is working closely with European Movement Ireland (EMI) on the Conference, continuing on collaboration from the earlier Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Europe which took place in 2018. EMI has already hosted a series of regional events online throughout June and July in Leinster, Munster and Connacht-Ulster. Minister of State Byrne has addressed each of these seminars. The Department of Foreign Affairs is also planning to collaborate with the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) on the Conference. A programme of events for later in the year to be informed by Conference's nine core themes is currently in planning.

The national programme also includes Government-led events where Minister of State Byrne engages with smaller groups of citizens in virtual discussions. The first set of these events took place during July and included sessions with representatives of the LGBTQI community, Comhairle na nÓg (a joint event with Minister Roderic O’Gorman), participants of Gaisce - The President’s Award and the New Irish communities. A second round of these smaller consultations will resume in the autumn.

COMMUNICATING EUROPE INITIATIVE 2021

The Communicating Europe Initiative (CEI) was established in 1995 to raise awareness about the European Union and to improve the quality and accessibility of public information on European issues. The 2021 call for applications opened on 4 March 2021 and this year DFA received over 50 applications, more than double the number received in 2020 or 2019. Following evaluation in April, 27 project proposals were approved and funding of €88,000 was allocated (listed below). The partners represented a wide range of community-based groups, youth organisations, educational bodies and local media companies from across the country.

Projects funded this year include several local radio series on the EU's impact on Irish communities being produced by **Dublin City FM**, **Radio Kerry** and **KCLR**, a research event on lessons from EU peacebuilding organised by the **Irish Association for Contemporary European Studies**, a Future of Europe podcast series hosted by **The European Network**, an interactive online EU Policy map produced by the **DCU Brexit Institute**, as well as a number of 2nd and 3rd level EU education and community projects in counties across the country.

Name of Organisation	Name of Project	Region	Amount granted
Aine Ryall, Centre for Law and the Environment UCC	Communicating EU Environmental Law, Policy & Practice 2021	Cork/Nationwide	€3,000
Audrey Galvin, UL	Communicating Europe through people and places	Limerick/Nationwide	€2,500
Ballinderreen Community Centre, Galway	The Role of Ireland in Europe	Galway	€1,000
Cork Chamber of Commerce	What's the story? Cork's Place in Europe – Next Generation EU	Cork/Nationwide	€5,000
Cork Education and Training Board	European Union: Partnership in Education and Training	Cork/regional	€1,500
Corran College, Sligo	It's EUR life!	Sligo	€3,500
DCU Brexit Institute	Interactive Map of the EU	EU Citizens	€3,000

Name of Organisation	Name of Project	Region	Amount granted
Design and Crafts Council Ireland	“Beautiful, Sustainable, Together – podcast series on the New European Bauhaus”	Nationwide	€3,000
Dublin City FM	EU: How & When?	Dublin/Nationwide	€6,000
European Youth Parliament, Ireland	EYP Ireland Debate Conferences	Nationwide	€7,000
Gaelcholáiste na Mara, Wicklow	Mise Agus An Eoraip	Wicklow	€3,500
Irish Association for Contemporary European Studies, UCC	Relationships on these islands: the European Union peacebuilding experience	Cork/Nationwide	€3,000
Inniscarra Twinning Association, Cork	New Visions: New Art and Music from Inniscarra for Europe	Cork	€2,000
Ionad Naomh Fionnán, Donegal	“How does the EU Impact Us” Essay Competition.	Donegal	€2,000
IRD Duhallow, Cork	Celebrating European Citizenship	Cork	€2,000
Irish Regions European Office (Committee of the Regions)	A Duologue for Strength and Resilience - bringing local communities to the EU and the EU to local communities.	Nationwide	€5,000
Irish Council for Civil Liberties	Defending the Rule of Law: The role of the EU	Nationwide	€3,000
Junior Achievement Ireland	Europe4U	Nationwide	€7,000
Kilkenny/Carlow Local Radio	What Has Europe Ever Done for the Green Scene?	Carlow/Kilkenny	€8,000
Kids’ Own Publishing Partnership	“RIGHT BY US: Youth Responses to the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child”	Sligo/Nationwide	€3,000
Our Lady’s Secondary School, Monaghan	‘The power and impact of Ireland’s international political diplomatic presence within the EU’ - A second level students’ research day focusing on Ireland’s leadership role in the EU	Monaghan	€3,000

Name of Organisation	Name of Project	Region	Amount granted
Portlaoise Family Resource Centre	Connecting You and the EU	Portlaoise	€3,000
Radio Kerry	The EU and ME – Future Europeans	Kerry	€8,000
The European Network	Future of Europe	Nationwide	€2,500
The Mayo News	Mayo and the EU	Mayo	€2,000
Twilight Community Group	Migration to Integration: The European Initiatives	Kilkenny/Nationwide	€2,500
Waterford Sustainable Living Initiative	European Unity: Lessons from Folklore	Waterford	€3,000

EU Capacity Building Programme – Access Europe

The Department is funding an EU Capacity Building Programme (‘Access Europe’), which was launched in November 2020 by The Wheel, the organisation selected as the National Contact Point for the programme, following a public tender. The Wheel is Ireland’s national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises.

The purpose of the three-year programme is to assist Irish civil society organisations (CSOs), including NGOs, community groups, and local authorities, to better access EU funds. This will be done by publicising EU funding opportunities through social media and website channels, and by providing a direct support service through targeted training and information events. This will particularly benefit smaller organisations.

Since January the Access Europe programme has continued to deliver online training for CSOs. Trainings this year have included: Partnering for building EU Projects – Online Workshop; a Horizon Europe launch event for Ireland; Introduction to EU funding for Sports Bodies – Online Workshop; a Grant Writing Tips Tricks webinar; a 3-part interactive training on the LEADER rural development funding programme; and many others. The Wheel has also continued to promote and support Irish organisations in applying for EU funding opportunities, such as Creative Europe and the Citizenship, Equality, Rights & Values programmes. Further

information can be found on the programme's dedicated website:

www.accesseurope.ie.

European Movement Ireland

European Movement Ireland is a voluntary, not-for-profit, independent, membership-based organisation working to develop the connection between Ireland and Europe. During 2020, EMI was in receipt of funding in respect of the following programmes.

European Movement Ireland (EMI) – Conference on the future of Europe 2021-2023

The Department of Foreign Affairs is funding EMI to deliver a three-year programme to generate public engagement in Ireland on the Conference on the Future of Europe. Years one and two will focus on delivering around 15 Citizens Dialogue type events around the country on the subject of the Conference. Each event will have a minimum of 30 participants from civil society groups and the general public. EMI will engage an academic to provide short briefs on topics to participants in advance to aid discussions, EMI will work with the same academic to report on each event and to provide a full report of the process at the end to the Department. EMI will publicise the events including through local and social media. In May this year EMI and DFA co-organised the launch of Ireland's national programme of the Conference on Future of Europe. In June, the first two regional COFOE Ireland events were held for the Leinster and Munster regions.

Further information on EMI's Conference on the Future of Europe programme can be found on EMI's website: <https://www.europeanmovement.ie/conference/>

Annual Grant in Aid

A grant in aid has been paid to EMI for many years to support its core activities. This is provided to assist towards its overall running costs and also towards its range of ongoing EU focused activities.

Blue Star programme

EMI manage this programme on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs, following the award of a public tender in 2017. The Blue Star Programme requires

teachers and primary school pupils to carry out projects and tasks related to the History, Geography, Culture and Institutions of the EU. 248 schools participated in the 2020/2021 programme, which is focusing on the Conference on the Future of Europe. In May this year Blue Star celebrated its ten year anniversary with An Taoiseach and Minister of State for European Affairs participating in an online event hosted by EMI to mark the occasion.

Further information on the Blue Star Programme can be found on EMI's website:

<https://www.europeanmovement.ie/blue-star-programme/>

Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA)

The Institute of International and European Affairs is an international affairs think tank. They are an independent, not-for-profit organisation with charitable status. Their aim is to provide a forum for all those interested in EU and International affairs to engage in debate and discussion, and to evaluate and share policy options.

The Department assists the IIEA through:

- An annual membership subscription, as paid by a number of Government Departments.
- Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) has engaged with the IIEA including through its *Development matters* series.
- The Department is funding a three-year integrated programme (Global Europe 2020 – 2023) which commenced in September 2020. The programme consists of research, events, and public engagement and is a direct follow up to the successful Future of the EU27 programme which ran from the second half of 2017 to the end of June 2020.

Further information on Global Europe can be found on IIEA's website:

<https://www.iiea.com/global-europe/>

POLITICAL

EU-UN Cooperation

On 17 February, the European Commission and High Representative Borrell published a Joint Communication on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism, which builds on Council Conclusions adopted in June 2019. The Joint Communication addresses EU priorities in the multilateral system, EU partnerships with other actors and regional organisations, and EU public diplomacy, and provides for related actions, including regular High Level EU-UN Summits.

In the period January to June 2021, there were numerous visits and meetings between UN and EU officials. Notably, UN Secretary-General Guterres visited Brussels from 23-25 June, meeting with the European Council on 24 June on a range of issues, including EU-UN cooperation, global access to COVID-19 vaccines, climate and multilateralism. The UN Secretary General also met with the European Commission and addressed the European Parliament during the visit. On 22 March, the Foreign Affairs Council exchanged views with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and launched the Strategic Dialogue between the EU and the High Commissioner. In the context of the EU-UN Strategic Partnership on peace operations and crisis management, the EU and UN jointly held a workshop on 18 June on driving forward the UN-EU partnership by renewing and updating joint priorities for the period 2022-2024.

On 11 June, High Representative Borrell addressed a Security Council meeting on EU-UN cooperation, on a broad range of issues of importance to the partnership, including emerging technologies, COVID-19 recovery, climate change, peace and security, and a number of country situations. EU Member States on the UN Security Council, currently Estonia, France and Ireland, continued the practice of delivering media stakeouts (statements) after certain discussions of the UN Security Council. During the period January - June 2021, Ireland participated in EU media stakeouts on a range of country and regional situations on the Council agenda, including on the Middle East Peace Process, Belarus, Ukraine, Syria, and EU-UN cooperation. The EU Delegation in New York also participated in a number of Security Council Open Debates by submitting written statements on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Human Rights

In February 2021, the Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on EU priorities in human rights fora in 2021, reaffirming the EU's commitment to respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Conclusions also reiterated the EU's support for the UN human rights system as a cornerstone of the EU's external action. According to the Conclusions, the EU will make use of all available tools provided by the UN human rights framework, including the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council.

At the 46th session of the HRC, held online in March 2021, the EU tabled its annual resolution on the thematic issue of freedom of religion or belief, which was successfully adopted by consensus. The EU also tabled a further four geographic resolutions, on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on Belarus, on Myanmar, and on cooperation with Georgia, all of which were adopted by consensus. Over 40 statements were made on behalf of the EU. Regrettably, due to lack of unity, it was not possible for the EU to deliver an Item 4 statement, representing the first time since June 2017 that the EU failed to speak collectively about country situations of concern. A statement was instead delivered on behalf of 26 EU member states.

Further to the creation of a new EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime in December 2020, the EU adopted a comprehensive package of listings for the first time in March and April 2021, targeting individuals, entities and bodies – including state and non-state actors – responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide. Sanctions were imposed on eleven individuals and four entities from six countries: Russia, South Sudan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Libya, China and Eritrea. The restrictive measures included a travel ban and asset freeze and, in addition, persons and entities in the EU are forbidden from making funds available to those listed, either directly or indirectly.

Conflict Resolution

Following on from the adoption by the Council of a new Concept on EU Peace Mediation in December 2020, the EU Community of Practice on peace mediation

held an online event in April 2021. This event, which Ireland participated in, hosted a rich exchange with civil society and EU actors aimed at building a community of peace mediation practitioners who engage with and for the EU around the globe and brought together active mediation practitioners and partners to share experiences, learn lessons and drive forward key issues in peace-making. In line with the 2020 EU Peace Mediation Concept, the focus was on the thematic priorities of digital mediation and environmental peace-making, and considered mediation perspectives in strategically important regions.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

In the period January to June 2021, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be felt across the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control portfolio, with the further postponement of meetings and conferences during this period. Nonetheless, the EU was actively engaged in debates, agreeing and delivering statements at the Conference on Disarmament; the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; and the Hague Code of Conduct.

EU High Representative Borrell issued a statement welcoming the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (New START) Treaty between the US and Russia in February 2021. The EU was also actively engaged in providing responses for inclusion in the report of the UN Secretary General on a number of UN General Assembly resolutions, including on responsible behaviour in outer space, the relationship between disarmament and development, and preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

The EU held high-level political dialogue with China on non-proliferation and disarmament issues. Outreach was also undertaken by the EU to Saudi Arabia and Cabo Verde with regard to nuclear safeguards issues, to the US on the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, and also to Eritrea on its mine clearance obligations.

Council Decisions were adopted in the period under review establishing a common approach on end-user certificates in the export of small arms and light weapons;

supporting the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty; and supporting the Cyber Security and Resilience and Information Assurance Programme of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). A number of project extensions were granted due to continuing challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. On nuclear issues, extensions were granted for projects in support of the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the universalisation and implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT). In addition, in relation to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, extensions were also granted to projects promoting the European network of independent non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks, and on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destructions and their means of delivery.

Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

Ireland is an active participant in both civilian and military CSDP missions and operations. At the end of June 2021, 22 seconded civilian experts were serving in eight of the EU's eleven civilian missions: in Europe / the Caucasus (Georgia, Kosovo and Ukraine), the Middle East (Iraq) and Africa (the Central African Republic, Libya, Niger and Somalia). At the same time, 28 members of the Defence Forces were serving in three UN-mandated EU military missions and operations; the EU Training Mission in Mali, Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Operation Iriini's Operational headquarters in Rome.

On 22 March, the EU established the European Peace Facility (EPF), a new off-budget instrument that will ensure continuity of existing EU military crisis management missions, allow the EU to maintain funding support for UN-mandated African Union-led military operations, and broaden and extend support to other partners. The EPF will have a financial ceiling of approximately €5 billion over seven years. In certain circumstances - and subject to strong safeguards - funding from the EPF may be utilised for military equipment, including equipment designed to deliver lethal force. The instrument incorporates a constructive abstention mechanism, which allows Ireland to ensure that none of our contributions will fund such equipment.

Work on the Strategic Compass, which is intended to provide enhanced politico-strategic direction for EU security and defence policy, took place across the first half of 2021. Under the aegis of the Compass, Member States have considered EU Security and Defence priorities across four broad areas - 'Crisis Management', 'Resilience', 'Capability Development' and 'Partnerships'. Defence Ministers discussed the Compass at the 6 May informal Foreign Affairs Council (Defence).

Cybersecurity

In March, the Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions welcoming the Joint Communication on the EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade, highlighting that cybersecurity is essential for building a resilient, green and digital Europe. The Conclusions also recalled the EU's support for the establishment of a Programme of Action (PoA) for advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace.

In line with the Strategy and Conclusions, the EU and its Member States continued their coordinated efforts in multilateral fora to promote a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace, including within the context of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, which adopted a final report, by consensus, in April. Partnerships with third countries were expanded and deepened, including the first EU-Ukraine Cybersecurity Dialogue and the identification of cybersecurity as an area of deepened cooperation in the EU-US Summit Statement.

In April, within the framework of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, the EU, along with several partners, expressed solidarity with the United States on the impact of the SolarWinds cyber operation. In May, the EU also prolonged the framework for restrictive measures against cyberattacks threatening the EU or its member states for another year, until 18 May 2022, including the sanctions imposed in 2020 on eight individuals and four entities.

Hybrid threats and disinformation

In June, in line with the approach set out in the European Democracy Action Plan, the Commission published Guidance on strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation. It is now envisaged that the signatories of the Code of Practice

should convene to strengthen the Code in line with the Commission's guidance and present a first draft in autumn.

Council Conclusions on Security and Defence, adopted in May, reflected an increasing emphasis on hybrid threats. They looked forward to progress in the implementation of the initiatives of the Security Union Strategy on countering hybrid threats and also noted that the Council remains committed to exploring possible responses in the field of hybrid threats including, inter alia, to foreign interference and influence operations, which may cover preventive measures as well as the imposition of costs on hostile state and non-state actors.

ENLARGEMENT AND WESTERN BALKANS

On the Western Balkans, the period has not seen any progress in agreeing the EU accession negotiating framework with Albania and North Macedonia, following the Council Decision in March 2020 to open accession negotiations with both countries. In June 2021, the first Intergovernmental Conferences were held with Serbia and Montenegro under the Enhanced Accession Methodology, which aims to reinvigorate the EU accession process and make it more dynamic.

Following the election of a new government in Kosovo, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo resumed in June under the direction of EU Special Representative Lajčák.

On Turkey, the European Council discussed EU-Turkey relations on 25 March and on 24-25 June. The March European Council recalled the EU's strategic interest in a stable environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey. The Conclusions welcomed Turkish de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean, and stressed that it should be sustained. The Conclusions reiterated the EU's readiness to engage with Turkey in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner to enhance cooperation in a number of areas of common interest, provided Turkey sustains the current de-escalation and adopts a constructive attitude, subject to the conditionalities set out in previous European Council conclusions.

EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD

Eastern Partnership

EU Member States, Partner countries and civil society actors continued to work on the development of a new set of deliverables for the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the publication of this new set of deliverables and the holding of a physical Summit were delayed, with the Summit now scheduled for December 2021. In April, Embassy Kyiv became Ireland's first resident Mission in a Partner country, with its official opening to take place by Minister Coveney on 23 August.

Divergent aspirations between the Association Agreement Partners (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and the other Eastern Partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus) became more pronounced during the first half of 2021. The 'Association Trio' called for openness from the EU toward new cooperation dimensions for interested partners, deepening of political dialogue, as well as greater economic and sectoral integration. By contrast, Belarus 'suspended its participation' in the Eastern Partnership on 28 June in response to targeted individual and sectoral economic EU sanctions. These EU sanctions relate to the ongoing repression of the Belarusian people by the Lukashenko regime and the coercive forced landing of a Ryanair aircraft to Minsk on 23 May by the regime and subsequent detention of a journalist and his partner.

Eastern Partnership developments remained overshadowed by the human rights situation in Belarus, the ongoing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and political challenges in Armenia, Moldova and Georgia, as below:

- **Belarus:** The EU kept the human rights situation in the country high on the agenda in international settings and continued its strong support for Belarusian civil society. The EU imposed further targeted sanctions against those responsible for the ongoing repression and for the coercive forced landing of the Ryanair aircraft in May. The total now stands at 166 individuals and 15 business entities under sanction. The EU also introduced sectoral economic sanctions targeting technologies and dual-use goods that could be

used for internal repression, placing restrictions on insurance, investment and trade in certain products and goods.

- **Nagorno-Karabakh:** The EU kept a close watch on developments between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia relating to the 2020 conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The EU provided over €17 million in humanitarian aid and maintained support to the OSCE Minsk Process as the appropriate forum through which to resolve outstanding issues, including the ultimate status of Nagorno-Karabakh.
- **Georgia:** The EU mediated between the majority government of Georgia and the political opposition who had refused to take up their seats following parliamentary elections in 2020 that they claimed were rigged.
- **Moldova:** Following the election of pro-EU Moldovan President Maia Sandu in 2020, the EU closely monitored the run up to the July 2021 parliamentary election that was expected to alter the political split between pro-EU and pro-Russian parties in the Moldovan parliament in favour of the pro-EU side.
- **Ukraine:** Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kuleba met with the Foreign Affairs Council in April to discuss reform efforts, the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, and the resolution of the conflict in Crimea, as well as on enhancing sectoral cooperation. The discussion also covered the build-up of Russian forces on border of Ukraine in April. The EU reiterated its unwavering support and commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

Central Asia

Uzbekistan obtained Generalised Scheme of Preferences plus (GSP+) status in March 2021. Negotiations regarding Enhanced Partnership Cooperation Agreements (EPCA) with Central Asian states continued during the period. The 7th and 8th round of EPCA negotiations took place with Uzbekistan and hope remains that it will be completed in 2021. The EPCA with the Kyrgyz Republic is now pending signature. EPCAs will lead to closer cooperation with the EU in line with the 2019 EU-Central Asia Strategy and increased trade will be important for the region in the context of post-pandemic economic recovery.

Border clashes in April between Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic left more than 50 dead and tensions remain along the poorly demarcated border. Taliban advances throughout Afghanistan from June onwards also increased tensions and regional concerns for stability and security, particularly at its Northern frontier borders with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The EU has continued to support and advocate regional cooperation that includes Afghanistan to further the goals of enhancing regional stability through preventative diplomacy. EU representatives have also advocated regional cooperation with the UN and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Council of Europe

The German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concluded with a Ministerial meeting held in hybrid format in Hamburg on 21 May. Minister Coveney made a statement outlining the importance Ireland attaches to the full implementation of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights. He also highlighted Ireland's strong support for the Istanbul Convention, for tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, hate speech and racism. The Minister, along with many others, also conveyed concerns regarding the need for the peaceful resolution of disputes and for the protection of journalists, while calling for accountability through international humanitarian and human rights law.

Hungary assumed the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for the next six months and will handover to Italy in November 2021. Ireland is currently preparing for assuming its six-month Presidency from Italy in May 2022. The Winter, Spring and Summer sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) took place in hybrid format in the first half of 2021, with Irish members participating remotely.

Russia

The conflict in Ukraine, the illegal annexation of Crimea, the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, and the human rights situation in Crimea and Russia continued to strain relations between Russia and the EU. Additional sources of strain during this period included the arrest of Alexey Navalny on 17 January and his 2 February sentencing to imprisonment in a penal colony, the subsequent crackdown on

protesters and the free media in Russia, the Czech investigation into Russian intelligence involvement in two 2014 explosions, the April build-up of Russian forces on the Ukrainian border, the expulsion of diplomats from a number of EU countries and the designation of the Czech Republic and the USA as “unfriendly states”. High Representative Borrell visited Moscow in February in a visit which was marked by an unfriendly media press conference and meetings. EU-Russia relations were discussed at several Foreign Affairs Councils and European Council meetings in this period.

In March, the Council under the first listing of the EU Human Rights Sanctions Regime decided to impose restrictive measures on four Russian individuals responsible for serious human rights violations related to the Navalny imprisonment. In the same month a further two officials were listed for torture and repression against LGBTI persons and political opponents in Chechnya in Russia.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

NDICI-Global Europe

June 2021 saw the adoption of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE), which will streamline and simplify EU external action financing instruments for international and development cooperation, crisis response and peace-building actions in partner countries. The new policy-driven instrument, with a budget of €79.5 billion over 2021-27, is designed to strengthen the EU’s position in the world, by better aligning funding to policy priorities and ensuring better coherence across all areas of the EU’s external engagement.

Ireland engaged in the development of NDICI-Global Europe, with a particular emphasis on advancing the priorities as set out in the Government’s international development policy, *A Better World*. Almost a quarter of Ireland’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) goes through EU institutions.

Team Europe

The “Team Europe” global response to COVID-19 was first endorsed in April 2020 and gained momentum during the year. This collective approach by the EU, Member States, European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was established to provide a fast response to the pandemic, supporting health systems, and alleviate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in fragile and vulnerable countries. Team Europe mobilised more than €40 billion in the year to April 2021 – with €150 million contributed by Ireland.

Work has continued in 2021 on Team Europe Initiatives, which are flagship projects designed to have a transformative effect in partner countries. Ireland is involved in some of these Team Europe Initiatives, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Post-Cotonou

Progress has been made on the proposed Post-Cotonou Agreement between the EU on the one hand, and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states on the other.

The Agreement will serve as the new legal framework to guide political, economic and cooperation relations between the EU and 79 members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) for the next twenty years – covering a population, on all sides, of over 1.5 billion people.

The Post Cotonou Agreement initialling ceremony took place on 16 April attended (virtually) by EU and ACP leadership, including the Chief Negotiators Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships and Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Togolese Abroad, Republic of Togo. It is expected that the Agreement will be ratified by the end of 2021.

Underpinning the Post Cotonou Agreement will be the financial support from the EU that will be available through the new NDICI-GE.

Financial Architecture for Development

Reflection had been ongoing for several years on how to best enhance the European financial architecture for development. In June, the Council adopted conclusions on the way forward, stressing the urgent need to increase development impact in partner countries and to address the development challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Member States agreed to enhance and improve the current institutional set-up, involving both the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), as the preferred way forward to strengthen the European financial architecture for development. Both banks are required to work together more effectively and efficiently and to strengthen their cooperation with the European development banks and financial institutions, in a Team Europe approach. This will also increase EU visibility and development impact.

AFRICA

EU-Africa

Over the period January-June 2021, Ireland has been actively engaged in the ongoing work to prepare a new EU-Africa partnership in advance of the postponed EU-African Union Ministerial and Summit meetings. EU-Africa relations were discussed in several EU Council formations during the Portuguese Presidency, including by Foreign Ministers at their informal Gymnich meeting in May. Ireland has called for an ambitious and effective partnership, and for greater coherence across the EU-Africa frameworks for cooperation, including the rapid adoption of the Post-Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the EU and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific states. Ireland has also engaged proactively during the period in EU development programming under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the planning of Team Europe Initiatives across Africa.

Sahel

Developments in the Sahel were discussed by EU Foreign Ministers in February, May and June 2021, focusing on the outcome of the summit of the G5 Sahel in February 2021, events in Chad following the death of President Idriss Déby in April, and May's coup in Mali. Discussion also covered the EU's Revised Sahel Strategy, which was adopted in the form of Council Conclusions on 19 April 2021. Ireland engaged intensively in negotiations on the revised Strategy, which emphasises the continued prioritisation of EU engagement in the Sahel, and particularly the renewed focus on civil and political dimensions of instability and the need for a focus on stabilisation and long-term development, beyond military engagement. On 24 May 2021, following the second coup to take place in Mali in nine months, the European Council adopted Conclusions on Mali, condemning events and stating the EU's readiness to consider targeted measures against those who obstruct the Malian transition. In June the EU Special Representative for the Sahel Angel Losada (ES) stepped down and was succeeded by former Italian Minister of State, Emanuela del Re.

Horn of Africa

In response to developments in the region, the EU adopted a new strategy for the Horn of Africa in May, committing to deepened partnerships in the Horn and the broader region (Foreign Affairs Council 10 May). The following month, Dr Annette Weber was appointed the new EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa (EUSR), her Office leading diplomatic engagement with the African Union on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and other issues.

The EU has been closely engaged on the situation in Tigray, Ethiopia, since the outbreak of the conflict in November 2020. Finland's Foreign Minister, Pekka Haavisto, represented High Representative Josep Borrell on two visits to the Horn of Africa region and reported to the Foreign Affairs Council on his findings. The EU continues to consider how to best to use the tools at its disposal to respond, including sanctions, following a decision in December 2020 to suspend budget support.

Brokering a peaceful outcome to the security crisis in Somalia has also been a consistent focus of deliberations in Brussels and the EU's political engagement on the ground during the period, with budget suspensions also in place.

Cabo Delgado

The escalating conflict in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, was discussed several times at the EU level during the first half of 2021. In January, the Portuguese Foreign Minister, Augusto Santos Silva, briefed EU Foreign Ministers on his visit to Mozambique at the request of High Representative Josep Borrell. This visit followed a direct request from the Government of Mozambique for EU support in October 2020, and informed the development of a 'Political Framework for Crisis Approach in northern Mozambique' (PFCA), which set out a range of possible political/diplomatic, humanitarian, development, security and peace-building actions. In April, the High Representative updated Ministers on the security and humanitarian situation following significant insurgent attacks on the town of Palma in March. Ministers were also updated on the Peace and Security Council's recent endorsement of the PFCA, and their recommendation that Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) action would be appropriate. In June, a Crisis Management Concept was developed by the

European External Action Service and approved by the Peace and Security Council with a view to forwarding it to the Council. The Crisis Management Concept proposed a non-executive military training mission for Mozambique.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Egypt

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) discussed Egypt under Current Affairs on 25 January. The EU High Representative called on Egypt to cooperate fully with the Italian authorities concerning the death of Giulio Regeni.

Libya

Libya was discussed at the 19 April FAC under Current Affairs. Following the Second Berlin Conference on 23 June, the withdrawal of foreign fighters and preparations for elections remain urgent priorities.

Iran/ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

Ongoing developments in relation to Iran and the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), were discussed at the FAC in January, February, March, April, May, and June. In January the FAC discussed the importance of supporting full implementation of the JCPOA, including by working with the new US administration. In January Ireland was appointed as Facilitator for Resolution 2231 on the Security Council (which underpins the engagement of the Council with the JCPOA), and Minister Coveney briefed the FAC on his recent call with the Iranian Foreign Minister. At the February FAC, Ministers again discussed the need for full implementation of the JCPOA. On 22 March, Minister Coveney updated the FAC on his 7 March visit to Tehran and his meetings with President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif, where he encouraged Iran to seize the opportunity for dialogue and a return to full compliance with the agreement. In April, the FAC was updated on the start of talks in Vienna aimed at the US re-joining the agreement and Iran's return to full compliance with the JCPOA. Further updates on progress in these talks were provided at the May and June Foreign Affairs Councils, with EU Ministers strongly supportive of efforts to facilitate a US return to the agreement and full implementation by Iran of its JCPOA commitments.

Iraq

In June, the Iraqi Foreign Minister briefed the Foreign Affairs Council on elections and regional developments. EU Ministers agreed on the need to support Iraq's

domestic reform efforts. Ministers also undertook to deploy an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to support free and fair elections in October.

Wider Gulf

In January, the Council discussed developments in the wider Gulf region, including resolution of the diplomatic rift between Qatar and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and non-GCC Egypt.

Lebanon

The economic situation in Lebanon continued to deteriorate in the first six months of 2021 with no agreement on the formation of a government urgently needed to implement structural reforms. During their meetings in April, May and June, Foreign Ministers set out the EU's solidarity with Lebanon, and assessed options for providing support and incentives to help Lebanon address its economic challenges.

Middle East Peace Process

At the 10 May Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), Ministers discussed the postponement of Palestinian elections and clashes in East Jerusalem under Current Affairs. On 18 May, an extraordinary meeting of the FAC was convened to discuss the escalation of violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, and the EU's response to same, including a clear call for an immediate ceasefire.

On 24 May, European Council Conclusions issued which welcomed the 21 May ceasefire and reiterated the EU's support for the two-state solution. At the 21 June FAC, Ministers had a short exchange of views on the Middle East Peace Process. The EU High Representative briefed ministers about his recent engagement with Israel's new Foreign Minister, Yair Lapid, who took office on 13 June.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Venezuela

On 25 January 2021, EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) Conclusions were adopted following the legislative elections held in Venezuela on 6 December 2020. The Conclusions stated that the EU did not consider the elections to have been credible, inclusive or transparent and reaffirmed the EU's commitment to supporting a peaceful, negotiated and democratic solution to the crisis in the country.

In February, the FAC added 19 individuals to the Venezuela restrictive measures regime, bringing the total number of listings to 55. In March, Ministers at the FAC discussed next steps in light of the Venezuelan authorities' decision to expel the EU Head of Delegation in Caracas. Ministers agreed that the EU needed to continue to use all tools available to influence the political situation in Venezuela.

EU-Latin America and the Caribbean Relations

In a continuation of the discussion at the October 2020 FAC and the December 2020 EU-LAC Ministerial Meeting, Ministers considered EU-Latin America and the Caribbean relations at the 22 June FAC. Ministers highlighted opportunities to increase engagement with the region, including through supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the conclusion of free trade agreements and enhanced high-level political engagement.

ASIA – PACIFIC

EU-India Summit

As EU President Portugal hosted an EU-India Summit in Porto on 8 May 2021. The Taoiseach joined Leaders of 27 EU in Porto in person, for a Leaders' Meeting with Indian Prime Minister Modi who participated by video conference (due to seriousness of the Covid pandemic in India at the time). Both EC President Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission attended the Summit as well as EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell.

The main deliverable from the EU-India Leader's meeting was a Joint Statement ([eu-india-leaders-meeting-joint-statement-080521.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)) highlighting key areas of co-operation including on Covid-19 and public health, green growth, trade and investment, climate and multilateralism and regional issues.

Overall, the meeting provided an opportunity to reinforce the EU-India strategic partnership, based on shared values of democracy, freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights. (An EU-India Dialogue on Human Rights took place prior to the Summit on 12 April 2021). It was also an opportunity to assess progress since the last Summit in July 2020 at which a joint Roadmap to 2025 was agreed. Other outputs from the Summit included a new Connectivity Joint Partnership and Leaders announce a resumption of EU-India Free Trade negotiations, which had been stalled for many years.

Indo-Pacific

The European Council approved conclusions on an 'EU strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' on 16 April, setting out the EU's intention to reinforce its strategic focus, presence and actions in this important and dynamic region. The Strategy encompasses six broad themes: Political, Global Challenges, Trade and Economic, Security, Connectivity, and Research and Innovation.

The renewed EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific, a region spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific island states, will have a long-term focus and will be based on upholding democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for international law. The EU and its regional partners will also work together in order to

mitigate the economic and human effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and work towards ensuring an inclusive and sustainable socio-economic recovery. The Council tasked the High Representative and the Commission with putting forward a Joint Communication on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by September 2021.

Myanmar

Following the coup in February 2021, the EU approved Council Conclusions and three rounds of targeted sanctions against Myanmar. The sanctions regime now lists 43 individuals and 6 economic entities. Other pre-existing EU restrictive measures, including an arms embargo, remain in place. The new restrictive measures include an asset freeze, prohibition from making funds available to listed persons and entities, and a travel ban. In addition to targeting those responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law, and for serious human rights violations, the sanctions also focus on military-owned corporations and extractive industries that provide an income stream to the military, including gems and timber. The situation in Myanmar remains high on the EU agenda.

APPENDIX: WEB LINKS

Measures, proposed measures and other developments January to June 2021		
Brexit		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
Signed on 30/12/2020 and began to apply on 01/01/2021	Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) negotiated by the EU and the UK in 2020	https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/reactions-non-eu-countries/reactions-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement_en
Operational provisions came into effect on 01/01/2021	The Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, an integral part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement	https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/revised-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland-included-withdrawal-agreement_en
Proposal COM/2020/854 published 25/12/2020, Agreed June 2021	Brexit Adjustment Reserve Regulation: the Council of the EU and the European Parliament reached agreement in principle	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0854
Climate Change		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
25/01/2021	Council adopted Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy - <i>Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal</i>	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48057/st05263-en21.pdf
24/02/2021	Communication COM(21) 082 published: <i>Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change</i>	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0082&qid=1632755732759
Multiannual Financial Framework and The Next Generation EU		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
Proposal published 28/05/2020, adopted on 12/02/2021	Regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R0241
Published 02/05/2018, entered into force 01/06/2021.	Proposal for a Council Decision on the system of Own Resources of the European Union COM/2018/325	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018PC0325
Conference on the Future Of Europe		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
Europe Day 09/05/2021	Conference on the Future Of Europe: the inaugural EU event of the Conference took place	https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/about

14/05/2021	Conference on the Future Of Europe: Ireland's national launch event for the Conference on the Future Of Europe took place virtually	https://www.europeanmovement.ie/launch-of-the-conference-on-the-future-of-europe-in-ireland/
Communicating Europe Initiative 2021		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
4 March - 9 April 2021	Communicating Europe Initiative 2021: call for applications	https://www.dfa.ie/our-role-policies/ireland-in-the-eu/future-of-europe/communicating-europe-initiative/
January 2021 onwards	EU Capacity Building Programme: the 'Access Europe' programme has continued to deliver online training for Irish civil society organisations	www.accesseurope.ie
2021-2023	European Movement Ireland's Conference on the Future of Europe programme	https://www.europeanmovement.ie/conference/
2020/2021	248 schools participated in the Blue Star Programme	https://www.europeanmovement.ie/blue-star-programme/
2020 – 2023	DFA is funding a three-year integrated IIEA programme (Global Europe 2020 – 2023) which commenced in September 2020	https://www.iiea.com/global-europe/
Political		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
17/02/2021	Publication of Joint Communication on <i>strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism</i>	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0003
22/02/2021	The Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on <i>EU priorities in human rights fora in 2021</i>	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48557/st06326-en21.pdf
22 February to 24 March 2021	The 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council	https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Pages/46RegularSession.aspx
22/03/2021	The EU established the European Peace Facility (EPF)	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/03/22/eu-sets-up-the-european-peace-facility/
First half of 2021	Work on the Strategic Compass took place	https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89047/towards-strategic-compass_en

09/03/2021	The Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions welcoming the Joint Communication on the EU's <i>Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade</i>	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6722-2021-INIT/en/pdf
26/05/2021	Communication <i>Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation</i> COM(21) 262 published	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0262&qid=1632764263205
10/05/2021	Council Conclusions on <i>Security and Defence</i> adopted	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8396-2021-INIT/en/pdf
Enlargement and Western Balkans		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
25/03/2021	European Council Conclusions deal with EU-Turkey relations	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/06/25/european-council-conclusions-on-external-relations-24-june-2021/
Development Cooperation		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
Proposal published 14/06/2018, Act signed and adopted in June 2021.	Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument	https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018PC0460&qid=1632766997543
10/06/2021	Adoption of Council Conclusions <i>on enhancing the European financial architecture for development</i>	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9462-2021-REV-1/en/pdf
Africa		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
16/04/2021	Adoption of <i>The European Union's Integrated Strategy in the Sahel</i> - Council Conclusions	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7723-2021-INIT/en/pdf
24/05/2021	The European Council adopted Conclusions on Mali	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/25/european-council-conclusions-on-russia-uk-middle-east-and-mali-24-may-2021/
10/05/2021	The EU adopted a new strategy for the Horn of Africa	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/10/horn-of-africa-eu-to-deepen-strategic-relationship-with-the-region/

Middle East & North Africa		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
24/05/2021	European Council Conclusions issued which welcomed the 21 May ceasefire in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and reiterated the EU's support for the two-state solution	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/25/european-council-conclusions-24-25-may-2021/
Latin America and the Caribbean		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
25/01/2021	Council Conclusions were adopted following the legislative elections held in Venezuela on 6 December 2020	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48053/st05582-en21.pdf
Asia – Pacific		
Dates	Measure/development	Link
08/05/2021	EU-India Summit Joint Statement	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49523/eu-india-leaders-meeting-joint-statement-080521.pdf
16/04/2021	Council Conclusions were approved on an <i>EU strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific</i>	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7914-2021-INIT/en/pdf
22/02/2021	Council Conclusions approved on Myanmar	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6287-2021-INIT/en/pdf

Department of Foreign Affairs
European Union Division
22/25 Clare Street, D02 HC42

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 408 2000
@dfatirl
www.dfa.ie