

The European Union in 2019: key events

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Introduction

In terms of social policy, 2019 was a fruitful year. The first half of the year, with Romania holding the presidency of the Council of the EU, saw the adoption of several regulations and directives which represented significant progress for Social Europe: the directive on transparent and predictable working conditions; the directive on work-life balance; the revised directive on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work; and finally the directive on accessibility requirements for products and services. Under the Romanian presidency, moreover, the European Labour Authority (ELA) was inaugurated, based in Bratislava. These events were largely due to a political wish to achieve results before the European elections and the forming of a new European Parliament.

In the second half of 2019, Finland took over the presidency of the Council of the EU. These six months were marked by the formation of the new Parliament and new appointments to the top EU posts. The elections did not bring about any fundamental change in the political balance in the European Parliament. The constitution of the new European Commission was, however, a more laborious task. After tough negotiations between the Member States, circumventing the *Spitzenkandidat* process, Ursula von der Leyen (Germany) was appointed president of the European Commission.

The president sent out a strong message in her agenda for Europe, introducing a far-reaching plan for environmental and digital transition, while strengthening the EU's social dimension. She announced, in particular, proposals for a European minimum wage framework (see Peña-Casas and Ghailani, this volume), a 'European Child Guarantee' and a European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme.

The notable social progress made during the second half of 2019 included the agreement reached between the Parliament and the Council on the 'Mobility I' package. Finally, on 11 December 2019, Ursula von der Leyen presented a key communication: the 'European Green Deal', a long-term strategy for the EU to become climate-neutral by 2050 by means of a 'socially just' ecological transition. For this purpose, the Commission presented a trillion-euro plan over 10 years.

Finally, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) also went through a process of renewal at its fourteenth Congress held in Vienna, electing a new President, Laurent Berger, and adopting an action plan for the period 2019–2023.

January

1 January: 20th anniversary of the creation of the euro. On 1 January 1999, the euro became the official currency of 11 Member States.¹ Initially used solely for cashless transactions, coins and notes were made available to the European citizens on 1 January 2002. Twenty years later, the euro is now the official currency in 19 of the 27 Member States.²

1 January: Romania takes over the six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union. Its priorities are to reduce development gaps between Member States, to consolidate the single market, to promote digitalisation, to drive the convergence of social rights and to fight climate change. (romania2019.eu)

15 January: the British House of Commons rejects the draft Brexit withdrawal agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May. Several options are now open to the British government: to renegotiate a withdrawal agreement, to go for ‘no deal’, or to hold another referendum. (UK Parliament, Government loses ‘meaningful vote’ in the Commons, 16 January)

16 January: the EU Parliament and Council endorse the revision of the directive on protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens and mutagens at work. This text strengthens worker protection by lowering the exposure limit values for five chemical agents deemed to be dangerous for workers’ health. (OJ L 30 of 31 January 2019: 112-120)

22 January: the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) rules that granting certain employees a day of paid leave on Good Friday on the basis of their religious beliefs constitutes a form of discrimination on grounds of religion. (Case C-193/17)

February

6 February: the European Centre for Public Enterprises (CEEP), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), BusinessEurope and SMEunited sign the sixth autonomous work programme of the European social partners for 2019–2021. This addresses the following six priorities: digitalisation, improving the performance of labour market and social systems, skills, addressing psycho-social aspects and risks at work, capacity-building for a stronger social dialogue, and the circular economy. (European Social Dialogue – Work Programme 2019–2021)

7 February: the CJEU publishes a judgment set to become a milestone in European social policy. According to the Court, the regulation on coordination of social security systems must be interpreted as meaning that a person residing in a Member State is

1. Finland, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal and Ireland.

2. Greece, Slovenia, Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania adopted the euro between 2001 and 2015.

entitled to receive family benefits, in line with the legislation of that State, including for family members residing in another Member State, even if the person has no specific status, such as that of an employed person. (Case C-322/17)

20 February: the European Commission extends by six months the process of enhanced macroeconomic surveillance for Greece, in force since 21 August 2018. This surveillance is designed, above all, to assess compliance with the commitments entered into by Greece vis-à-vis the Eurogroup, concerning implementation of the reforms adopted under the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). (OJ L 60 of 20 February 2019: 17 and OJ L 202 of 31 July 2019: 110)

March

7 March: the European Central Bank (ECB) announces a new programme of loans, under favourable conditions, to banking institutions (TLTRO III) between September 2019 and March 2021. (ECB, Monetary policy decisions)

12 March: the British House of Commons rejects the proposal for a ‘no deal’ Brexit put forward by Theresa May. However, until an alternative is approved by the House of Commons and by the EU-27, the ‘default’ option is still for the United Kingdom to leave the EU without a negotiated agreement. (UK Parliament, House of Commons vote on no-deal Brexit)

14 March: the CJEU finds that, where a resident of a Member State is affiliated to the social security system of another Member State, income from the assets invested in the State of residence may not be made subject to a social levy by the latter State. (Case C-372/18)

22 March: the European Council makes a statement reiterating its commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate,³ expressing its wish to achieve climate neutrality. (European Council Conclusions, 22 March 2019)

25 March: the Parliament and the Council of the EU adopt a regulation establishing contingency measures in the field of social security coordination with regard to Brexit. The main purpose of the text is to safeguard rights linked to periods of insurance and employment for European citizens who have lived and worked in the United Kingdom. (OJ L 85I, of 27 March 2019: 35-38)

26 March: the European Commission registers the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) calling for stronger rights for platform workers. It thus confirms that the EU can legally take legislative action to improve worker protection. As a next stage, the Commission will analyse the content of the initiative and consider whether to present a legislative proposal meeting this demand. (European Commission, *#NewRightsNow – Strengthening the rights of ‘uberised’ workers*)

3. United Nations, *Paris Agreement*, 2015.

29 March: the Parliament and the presidency of the Council reach a provisional agreement on the proposal for a legal text amending the regulation on the coordination of social security systems and the implementing regulation (COM (2016) 815 final). However, the negotiations fail to produce a formal agreement.⁴ The main points of conflict between the two institutions are still a) the aggregation of periods for unemployment benefits; b) prior notification for posting a worker to the Member States concerned; and c) the Community definition of ‘pluri-activity’.

April

2 April: the EU, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the World Food Programme (WFP) present a report stating that around 113 million people experienced acute food insecurity in 2018, a slight drop compared to 2017. (Food Security Information Network, *Global report on food crises 2019*)

3 April: the European Commission launches an infringement procedure against Poland regarding the new disciplinary regime for judges. (IP 19/1957)

4 April: the European Parliament adopts a resolution to increase the budget of the European Social Fund plus (ESF+), boosting, in particular, the resources allocated to social inclusion, equal opportunities, the creation of a Child Guarantee, and assistance to young people not in education, employment or training. (European Parliament, procedure file 2018/0206 (COD))

5 April: the eurozone Ministers, welcoming the reforms adopted by Greece under the ESM programme, particularly labour market reforms and privatisations, approve a new €1-billion tranche of assistance to Athens. (Council of the EU, *Eurogroup statement on Greece*, 5 April 2019)

8 April: the high-level expert group on the impact of the digital transformation on EU labour markets, set up by the European Commission, publishes its final report. Its recommendations include a) expanding vocational training and skills-acquisition; b) preventing occupational safety and health risks; and c) strengthening social dialogue, particularly for platform workers. (European Commission, *Final Report HLG on the Impact of the Digital Transformation on EU Labour Markets*)

9 April: the Council of the EU adopts the directive on accessibility requirements for products and services. This text is intended, in particular, to facilitate accessibility to products, means of transport and services for people with a disability. The Member States must implement this directive by 28 June 2025 at the latest. (OJ L 151 of 7 June 2019: 70-115)

4. For further details, see Cornelissen R. and De Wispelaere F. (2020) Sixty years of European social security coordination: achievements, controversies and challenges, in Vanhercke B., Ghailani D. and Spasova S. (eds.), *Social policy in the European Union 2009–2019: the long and winding road*, Brussels, ETUI and OSE, 153-178.

11 April: the CJEU rules that a national law may establish fixed reference periods for the calculation of average weekly work time, as long as the objectives of protection of the health and safety of workers, set out in directive 2003/88/EC, are still respected. (Case C-254/18)

10–20 April: the International Labour Organization (ILO) holds the 108th session of the International Labour Conference, marking the centenary of the organisation. It adopts the ILO Centenary Declaration on the future of work. The resolution underlines, among other things, that the ILO must ensure a just transition to a future of work that contributes to sustainable development, must harness the potential of digitalisation to achieve widespread decent work, and must promote the acquisition of skills throughout the working life. (ILO, 108th session of the International Labour Conference)

23 April: the ETUC launches an appeal to tackle workplace deaths. According to the Confederation, almost 200,000 people die every year in the EU as a result of workplace diseases, illnesses and accidents. The real figure, the organisation claims, is higher, due to under-reporting by employers. (ETUC, *Work is to earn living, not cause death*)

May

8 May: in a ruling concerning gender equality, the CJEU finds that the Spanish system for calculating retirement pensions for part-time workers is contrary to Community law. The system results in an excessive reduction of pensions, purely based on working time. The vast majority of part-time workers are women. The CJEU therefore denounces this national legislation that places women at a particular disadvantage. (Case C-161/18)

8 May: in the view of the CJEU, the calculation of compensation payments for dismissal and redeployment of an employee who is on part-time parental leave must be carried out on the basis of the full-time salary. Conflicting national law results in indirect discrimination on grounds of sex, as the vast majority of part-time workers are women. (Case C-486/18)

8 May: the CJEU finds that the Austrian system for remunerating civil servants is contrary to Community law, as it wrongly maintains a difference of treatment on grounds of age. (Cases C-24/17 and C-396/17)

14 May: the CJEU finds that employers must set up a system enabling the measurement of the daily working time of each worker. Respect of the maximum working time, and daily and weekly rest periods, are fundamental social rights. (Case C-55/18)

23–26 May: European elections are held. The elections do not change the political balance within the European Parliament. Though polls predicted otherwise, the rise of the radical right was contained. The European People's Party (EPP) keeps its status as the largest party (24.2 % of seats), followed by the Socialists & Democrats (20.5 %),

the liberals of Renew Europe (14.3 %),⁵ the Greens (9.8 %), Identity and Democracy (9.7 %), the European Conservatives and Reformists (8.2 %) and the European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) (5.4 %). With a turnout of 50.5 %, these elections are among those with the highest participation rate in the history of the EU.

24 May: the ETUC adopts an emergency motion calling on the European Commission to put the December 2015 social partner agreement between the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and the European Public Administration Employers (EPAE) forward for adoption in the form of a directive. (ETUC, *ETUC Emergency Motion in support of Social Partner Agreement on Information and Consultation Rights for Workers in Central Government*)

24 May: Theresa May announces her resignation after the UK parliamentarians reject, twice in a row, her proposals for Brexit plans for the United Kingdom. She officially steps down on 7 June 2019. (Gov.UK, Prime Minister's statement in Downing Street, 24 May 2019)

21–24 May: the ETUC holds its 14th Congress in Vienna. It elects a new President, Laurent Berger (France). The Congress amends the ETUC constitution and adopts several key documents, including the Vienna Manifesto and the ETUC Action Programme 2019–2023. (European Trade Union Confederation – 14th Congress #ETUC19)

June

4 June: the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) publishes an analysis showing that ethnic minorities and people of non-European origin account for just 5% of the 751 MEPs. (*ENAR's Election Analysis – Ethnic minorities in the new European Parliament 2019–2025*)

5 June: the European Commission publishes its country-specific recommendations as part of the European Semester. These are issued against the backdrop of a particularly low unemployment rate in the EU. The recommendations therefore largely aim to reduce the socio-economic gaps between Member States, regions and population groups, particularly by means of targeted investment strategies. (European Commission, *2019 European Semester: Country Specific Recommendations / Commission recommendations*)

13 June: the Council of the EU adopts the interinstitutional agreement on the work-life balance directive. Paternity leave is set at ten working days, to be remunerated at the same rate as sick leave or hospitalisation pay. Parental leave is set at four months, including two non-transferable months. It is up to Member States to set the level of remuneration, in line with CJEU case law. In a particular step forward, the directive also introduces rules for 'carers' looking after a family or household member suffering from a serious illness. These carers will be eligible for five working days of unpaid leave.

5. Formerly 'Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe' (ALDE).

All EU countries must implement the directive by 2 August 2022 at the latest.⁶ (OJ L 188 of 12 July 2019: 79-93)

13 June: the CJEU finds that, in cases where a company production unit is sold or transferred, and where the transferor, the transferee or both act with the intention of continuing the economic activity, then directive 2001/23/EC, on the safeguarding of employees' rights, applies. (Case C-664/17)

14 June: the Council of the EU endorses the interinstitutional agreement on the regulation on a pan-European Personal Pension Product (PEPP). The regulation reinforces surveillance by the national and European authorities and requires businesses providing these services to offer savers a basic option, together with explanations. The ETUC strongly regrets that the regulation does not require PEPP providers to guarantee workers' retirement savings if the service providers invest these in the financial markets. (OJ L 198 of 25 July 2019, 1-63 and ETUC, press release, 5 September 2019)

20 June: the Member States set the European strategic agenda for the institutional cycle 2019–2024. The document focuses on four main priorities: 'protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong economic base, building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe, and promoting European interests and values on the global stage'. (European Council, *A new strategic agenda 2019–2024*)

20 June: the Parliament and the Council of the EU sign the regulation establishing a European Labour Authority (ELA). Based in Bratislava, this body aims to ensure 'fair labour mobility' within the EU and proper enforcement of regulation EC 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems. (OJ L 186 of 11 July 2019: 21-56)

20 June: the Council of the EU and the Parliament adopt the directive on transparent and predictable working conditions. This text requires employers to provide written information to employees on the employment relationship at the latest on the seventh day from the beginning of their employment contract. According to this directive, it is up to the national authorities to define the concept of 'worker', subject to CJEU case law. Contrary to the expectations of the ETUC and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), many workers, such as those in the civil service, public emergency forces, the armed and police forces, judges, prosecutors' investigators and other law enforcement services, are excluded from the scope of the directive. (OJ L 186 of 11 July 2019: 105-121 and EPSU, press release, 8 February 2019)

20 June: the CJEU finds that, in accordance with the European Framework Agreement on fixed-term work, teachers on fixed-term contracts should receive the same additional grade-related remuneration as statutory teachers if they have the same length of service and if the periods of service completed are the sole condition for receipt of the additional remuneration. (Case C-72/18)

6. Except for payment of the two last weeks of parental leave, for which the deadline set is 2 August 2024.

25 June: the Council of the EU adopts a free trade agreement (FTA) and an investment protection agreement between the EU and Vietnam. The FTA includes commitments concerning implementation, by Vietnam, of ILO fundamental standards. (European Council, *EU-Vietnam: Council adopts decisions to sign trade and investment decisions*)

July

1 July: Finland takes over the six-month presidency of the Council of the EU. Its programme calls for a strengthening of the EU's social dimension ('work towards achieving an "economy of wellbeing"'), and for Europe to position itself as a 'global leader in climate action'. (Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU, *Sustainable Europe – Sustainable Future*, 1 July 2019)

3 July: Italian David Sassoli, member of the European Socialists & Democrats party, is elected President of the European Parliament until 2022. After this, Manfred Weber, initially put forward as a candidate for European Commission President, will take over. The European People's Party (EPP) and Renew Europe had not nominated any candidates for the Parliament presidency, thus – implicitly – indicating that they accepted the appointments proposed by the European Council for the posts of President of the European Commission and EU High Representative for foreign affairs.⁷ (European Parliament, election of the President of the Parliament)

3 July: following changes made by the Italian government to its budgetary policy, the European Commission finally decides not to open an excessive deficit procedure against Italy. In addition to a reduction in public spending, the improvement is largely because two of the Italian government's key measures – early retirement and universal income – cost less than expected. (IP 19/3569)

4 July: the European Commission publishes its annual report on the labour market and social development in the EU. The 2019 edition is dedicated to the theme of 'sustainability'. (European Commission, *Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2019*)

16 July: the European Parliament elects Ursula von der Leyen (Germany), from the German Christian Democratic party (CDU), president of the new European Commission. In her programme 'A Union that strives for more',⁸ she states that she wishes to accelerate the environmental and digital transition and strengthen the EU's social dimension. (European Parliament, Minutes, 16 July 2019 – Strasbourg)

22 July: the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) publishes a report documenting the large number of work-related accidents in the EU. (EU-OSHA, *The value of occupational safety and health and the societal costs of work-related injuries and diseases*)

7. See *Libération*, Le Parlement ouvre la voie à la confirmation d'Ursula von der Leyen, 5 July 2019.

8. See Von der Leyen U. (2019) *A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe*, 16 July 2019.

23 July: Boris Johnson becomes British Prime Minister, having won the election to leader of the Conservative party with the slogan ‘Get Brexit done’.

31 July: the European Commission publishes a report on gender inequality. Almost half of single-parent families in the EU are at risk of poverty – a situation which largely affects women. In addition, they suffer multiple types of discrimination in access to the world of work and remuneration. *European Commission, Mechanisms supporting single parents across the European Union.*

September

5 September: the European Commission publishes a communication reporting progress made in the implementation of national Roma integration strategies. However, several major challenges remain, particularly in relation to housing and access to health care. (COM (2019) 406 final)

13 September: the European Commission proposes to extend the period of establishment of the European network of public employment services (PES) until the end of 2027. The national PES are the main actors for implementing activation policies in the Member States and play an important role in facilitating successful labour market transitions and integration. (COM (2019) 620 final)

20 September: the Network of Presidents of the Supreme Courts of the EU, the European Judges Association and the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary send a letter to Ursula von der Leyen. In it, they express their concerns over the independence of the judiciary in the EU and denounce the political pressure put on the judiciary in several Member States. (ENCJ, *Judicial Networks express concern over the Rule of Law in letter to President-elect von der Leyen*)

October

7 October: the presidents of the Parliament and the Council sign the directive on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law. The directive sets out rules and procedures to protect whistleblowers. Any company with at least 50 employees must establish internal reporting channels. The ETUC welcomes this directive, emphasising that trade unions will ensure that it is implemented effectively. (OJ L 305 of 26 November 2019: 17-56)

7 October: the Council adopts conclusions on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It emphasises the considerable progress that still needs to be made on non-discrimination and calls on Member States to strengthen their collaboration with the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights. (*Council Conclusions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights after 10 years: state of play and future work*)

16 October: the ETUC and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers report nine situations of exploitation to the European Labour Authority involving hundreds of workers in the EU. (ETUC, *Unions refer first exploitation cases to new European Labour Authority*, 15 October 2019)

17 October: the EU and the United Kingdom reach agreement on some of the Brexit provisions. In particular, this agreement avoids establishing a physical border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. (OJ C 384I of 12 November 2019: 1-177)

18 October: the European Council appoints Christine Lagarde to the post of President of the ECB. She takes over from Mario Draghi, who has made his mark on the history of the Bank, especially by reducing interest rates and launching a programme to buy up public debt as a stimulus to growth. (OJ L 267 of 21 October 2019: 1-2)

24 October: the Governing Council of the ECB announces that interest rates for the main refinancing operations, deposits and lending will not be increased. The ECB decides to pursue its asset purchase programme at a monthly pace of €20 billion. (ECB, *Monetary policy decisions*)

24 October: the European Parliament adopts a resolution calling for use to be made of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) following the bankruptcy of tour operator Thomas Cook. (European Parliament, procedure file 2019/2854 (RSP))

24 October: the General Court of the EU rejects the appeal brought by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) against the European Commission, thus marking a turning point in the history of European social dialogue. In the view of the General Court, the Commission's right of initiative authorises it to decide whether a social partner agreement should be transposed into a directive; see 24 May. (Case T-310/18)

24 October: the EPSCO Council amends the provisions of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) so that it can be used to provide assistance to workers who lose their jobs as the result of a no-deal Brexit. (Council of the EU, *Results of the Council session of 24 October 2019*)

28 October: the Boards of Directors of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) decide to waive Greece's early repayment obligation of ESM/EFSF loans, which was initially linked with a partial early repayment by Greece to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). (*ESM, ESM and EFSF approve waiver of Greece's mandatory payment obligation*)

29 October: following a request from the United Kingdom, the Council adopts an extension of the deadline for the implementation of an effective Brexit until 31 January 2020. In the meantime, the UK remains a Member State, and must meet all the obligations set out in the treaties and Community law. (OJ L 278I of 30 October 2019: 1-3)

November

5 November: the CJEU finds that the Polish law establishing different retirement ages for men and women judges and public prosecutors is contrary to EU law. The measure reducing the retirement age for certain judges and giving the Minister of Justice the right to derogate from this is also contrary to EU law. (Case C-192/18)

8 November: the Council of the EU adopts its recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed. The recommendation aims at ‘supporting all self-employed and non-standard workers who, due to their contract type or labour market status, are not sufficiently protected by social protection schemes regarding unemployment, sickness, maternity or paternity, accidents at work and occupational diseases, disability and old-age.’ (OJ C 387 of 15 November 2019)

13 November: following pressure from the ETUC, Nicolas Schmit, initially Commissioner-designate for employment, becomes Commissioner ‘for Jobs and Social Rights’. (European Commission, *Adjustments to names of portfolios of Commissioners-designate*, 13 November 2019)

14 November: the European Investment Bank (EIB) announces that it will end financing for fossil fuel projects from the end of 2021. (EIB, *EU bank launches ambitious new climate strategy and Energy Lending Policy*)

28 November: the European Parliament votes in favour of two resolutions aimed at combating climate change. One declares a climate and environment emergency, while the other calls on the EU to submit its strategy to reach climate neutrality as soon as possible to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. MEPs also speak out in favour of a target of a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in the European Green Deal; see 11 December. (European Parliament, 2019/2930(RSP) and 2019/2712(RSP))

29 November: the Council of the EU refuses an application made by the Walloon Region to deploy the EGF following the dismissal of 400 workers by the supermarket Carrefour, which is highly unusual. The Permanent Representatives’ Budget Committee had asked the European Commission to provide more evidence that this restructuring was indeed a consequence of globalisation. Despite a positive opinion from the European Parliament, the Commission’s arguments did not convince the Budget Committee, which issued a negative recommendation to the Council. (Permanent Representatives Committee, Budget Committee, 12777/19, COM (2019) 442 final)

December

1 December: the new European Commission, with Ursula von der Leyen as its president, takes up office. It announces an ambitious environmental and social programme, including, in particular, the European Green Deal, a proposal for a minimum European wage, a European Child Guarantee, and a European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme. (European Commission, *The Commissioners. College 2019–2024*, Mission letters)

2–14 December: the United Nations hold the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP) on the climate. All sensitive decisions are postponed to a later date. (UN Climate Change Conference – December 2019)

4 December: the eurozone finance ministers approve a financial grant of €767 million to Greece, which comes from profits made by the Member States' central banks after they bought up of Greek public debt in the form of bonds. (Council of the EU, *Eurogroup statement on Greece of 4 December 2019*)

11 December: the European Commission presents its communication 'The European Green Deal'.⁹ This is a long-term growth strategy setting the objective of 'climate neutrality' for Europe by 2050. The communication sets out a cross-cutting policy covering many areas: industry, energy, the agri-food sector, housing and the digital transition. (COM (2019) 640 final)

12 December: the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reach provisional agreement on the 'Mobility I' legislative package, under which a) posting rules will not apply to drivers travelling between the Member States where their undertakings are based and other Member States; b) drivers will be allowed to return to the country where the undertaking is based at least once every two months and will have a two-week rest period; c) the rest period will be remunerated and d) all lorries will be equipped with new tachographs by 2025. (European Parliament, procedure files 2017/121(COD), 2017/122(COD) and 2017/123(COD))

12 December: the Conservative party of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wins the general election in the United Kingdom. He promises to complete Brexit by 31 January 2020 at the latest.

12 December: the CJEU finds that European law precludes the establishment of a pension supplement differentiating between fathers and mothers. (Case C-450/18)

9. For further details, see Sabato S. and Fronteddu B. (2020) *A socially just transition through the European Green Deal?*, Working Paper 2020.08, Brussels, ETUI.

12 December: the European Council, except Poland, endorses the objective of achieving a ‘climate-neutral’ EU by 2050. The European Council underlines the importance of, in the long term, establishing ‘adequate instruments, incentives, support and investments to ensure a cost-effective, just, as well as socially-balanced and fair transition’. (European Council Conclusions, 12 December 2019)

17 December: the Parliament and the Council reach agreement on Regulation EU 2020/852 establishing a classification of ‘sustainable’ economic activities. The European Commission will decide detailed arrangements for this classification, in cooperation with the Member States and a platform of experts. (Council of the EU, Approval of the final compromise text, 14970/19, 17 December 2019)

19 December: the European Parliament and the Council of the EU reach informal agreement on the recast of the ‘drinking water’ directive, intended, in particular, to improve access to drinking water for all. (European Parliament, procedure file 2017/0332 (COD))

Sources

The main sources of information for this chronology are the following:

Council of the EU

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/president/news/>

ECB

<https://www.ecb.europa.eu/paym/intro/news/html/index.en.html>

European Commission

<https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/home/en>

European Parliament

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en>

References to legal texts are from the CURIA website:

https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/Jo2_7052/en/

The follow-up to all these issues is based on information in the Europe Daily Bulletin:

<https://agenceurope.eu/en/home.html>