2020 European Chronology*

January

2 January	Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani is killed in US drone strike
5 January	Croatia holds second round of presidential elections. Zoran Milanović from the Croatian Social Democratic party SDP is elected president
7 January	Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) is re-elected Prime Minister in Spain
8 January	The Duke and Duchess of Sussex emancipate from the British royal family
9 January	WHO announces mysterious coronavirus-related pneumonia in Wuhan, China
11 January	China records its first coronavirus death
23 January	Wuhan, China, is placed under an unprecedented lockdown
24 January	First European case of Covid-19 is reported in France
31 January	WHO declares the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic a Public Health Emergency of International Concern
31 January	The United Kingdom officially withdraws from the European Union

February

5 February	The US Senate acquitted President Donald Trump and the impeachment trial (over charges that he asked Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter) comes to an end
6 February	Ireland holds parliamentary elections. Sinn Féin makes unprecedented gains but Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party form coalition government
11 February	The World Health Organisation names the coronavirus disease Covid-19
21 February	Clusters of Covid-19 cases are detected in Lombardy and Veneto (Italy)
29 February	Slovakia holds parliamentary elections. Leader of anti-corruption movement Igor Matovič becomes Prime Minister.

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* Special thanks to Fernando Rejón Sánchez for compiling this chronology.

PROGRESSIVE YEARBOOK 2021

March

8 March	Thousands march in Spain on Women's Day despite coronavirus fears
9 March	Italy issues first nation-wide quarantine in Europe
9 March	The Dow Jones industrial average suffers its worst single-day point drop ever. The coronavirus pandemic triggers a global recession as numerous countries go into lockdown
10-13 March	Cheltenham Festival (horse racing event) with 440,000 participants fuels the deadly spread of coronavirus in the UK
11 March	WHO declares Covid-19 a pandemic
15 March	France holds the first round of municipal elections. The second round, initially planned for 22 March, is postponed to 28 June due to the pandemic
17 March	EU leaders agree on closing the EU's external and Schengen borders
18 March	Central Bank announces the €750 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme
23 March	EU finance Ministers agree on the suspension of the Growth and Stability Pact in order to ease Member States' fiscal rules
26 March	The European Parliament goes fully digital and uses remote participation for the first time in its 62-year history
30 March	The Hungarian Parliament passes the Act on the Protection Against the Coronavirus ("enabling act") which aims to extend the "state of danger", allowing the government to rule by decree for an indefinite period
30 March	2020 Summer Olympics, planned to take place in Tokyo from 24 July to 9 August 2020, are postponed to 2021, due to the pandemic

April

2 April	The European Commission proposes the creation of the SURE instrument (to support Short-Time Work arrangements with loans up to €100 billion)
4 April	Sir Keir Starmer (shadow Brexit secretary) is elected UK Labour Party leader with 56 per cent of votes on first round
23 April	The number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the EU and the United Kingdom surpasses one million
24 April	The European Commission launches the Coronavirus Global Response initiative aimed at supporting partner countries' efforts in handling Covid-19

May

11 May	Several countries, such as Spain, Iran, Italy, Denmark, Israel, Germany, New Zealand and Thailand, begin to ease their lockdown restrictions
18 May	France and Germany propose €500 billion EU recovery fund
21 May	UN Secretary General António Guterres launches UN initiative dubbed *Verified* to fight Covid-19 misinformation
25 May	The police killing of George Floyd (in Minneapolis) sparks a wave of demonstrations and riots across the world to demand an end to police brutality and racial injustice, giving rise to the "Black Lives Matter" movement
27 May	The European Commission presents the NextGenerationEU recovery package

June

4 June	100th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon (partitioning of Hungary following World War One)
10-11 June	FEPS Call to Europe IX – version 2.0 on Climate Justice and Gender Equality is held online
16 June	UK government extends meal voucher programme for the summer period following the campaign by Manchester United striker Marcus Rashford
28 June	France holds second round of local elections. Socialists and Greens win control over key cities such as Paris, Lyon and Marseille
28 June	Poland holds first round of presidential elections (incumbent President Andrzej Duda is in pole position)
29 June	The number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 worldwide surpasses 10 million
30 June	The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China unanimously passed a new national security law for Hong Kong, setting off a fresh wave of mass protests

July

1 July	Russia holds a referendum on a constitutional amendment that enables President Vladimir Putin to seek two further six-year terms beyond 2024
10 July	Turkey's highest administrative court issues a ruling paving the way to revert Hagia Sophia into a mosque

PROGRESSIVE YEARBOOK 2021

13 July	President Duda, supported by the Law and Justice Party of Poland, wins the second round of presidential election and remains Polish head of state
5 July	Croatia holds parliamentary elections. The ruling Christian-democratic party obtains a surprise victory (Davor Bernardic steps down as Social Democratic leader)
21 July	EU leaders agree on the NextGenerationEU recovery plan and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 in a four-day summit

August

3 August	Former king Juan Carlos leaves Spain amid a corruption investigation
4 August	Two explosions of unsafely stored ammonium nitrate kill over 220 people in Beirut, Lebanon
9 August	Belarus holds fraudulent presidential elections. President Aleksander Lukashenko reportedly wins a landslide with over 90 per cent of the vote. The rigging of the election sparks unprecedented civil unrest in the country
10 August	German SPD choses Finance Minister Olaf Scholz as candidate for Chancellor (ahead of Bundestag elections to be held in 2021)
13 August	Israel and the UAE agree to normalise relations, marking the third Israel-Arab peace deal
24 August	EU Commission proposes to provide €81.4 billion in financial support for 15 member states under SURE

September

16 September	Ursula von der Leyen delivers State of the Union speech at the European Parliament (announcing European "Bauhaus")
18 September	FEPS UNited for a New Multilateralism conference is held online
21 September	Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations
21 September	In delayed regional elections, Italy's left defeats far-right bid to take stronghold Tuscany
27 September	Deadly clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijani forces erupt over the disputed region of Nagorno Karabakh
28-30 September	The second edition of the FEPS Annual Autumn Academy (AAA) takes place online
29 September	Worldwide death toll from Covid-19 exceeds one million

October

3 October	Pope Francis travels to Assisi to sign an encyclical laying out his vision of a post-Covid world built on solidarity, fraternity, and care for the environment
10 October	Armenia and Azerbaijan agree on a ceasefire to halt hostilities in the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
11 October	Lithuania holds parliamentary elections. Homeland Union (Christian Democrats) expand their majority and Ingrida Šimonytė is elected Prime Minister
11 October	In Vienna municipal elections the Social Democratic Party of Austria remains comfortably in first place with small gains
21 October	The European Commission issues EU SURE social bonds for the first time
30 October	In Poland the biggest protests in decades with over 100,000 participants are held against abortion ban
31 October	Slovakia begins a programme to screen its entire population for coronavirus with antigen tests in a global first, involving 45,000 medical workers, army and police

November

3 November	Tumultuous presidential elections take place in the United States. Joe Biden is elected as the 46th President of the United States (and Kamala Harris becomes Vice President-elect). Incumbent President Donald Trump refuses to concede
11 November	The European Commission presents first set of measures to create a European Health Union
15 November	Moldova holds 2nd round of presidential elections. Maia Sandu becomes the first women elected President in the history of the country
9 November	Pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and BioNTech announce the completion of phase III trial of a Covid-19 vaccine, showing more than 90 per cent effectiveness

December

6 December	Romania holds parliamentary elections. Social Democratic Party wins the election with 28.9 per cent of the vote (but without majority needed to form government)
8 December	First patient in the world receives the Covid-19 vaccine in the UK

9 December	European Council reaches agreement with Hungary and Poland over MFF rule of law mechanism
16 December	European Parliament awards Sakharov Prize to Belarus opposition
17 December	EU MFF for 2021-2027 is adopted
24 December	EU and UK reach post-Brexit trade deal