

European Chronology 2021¹

January

- 1 January Portugal takes up presidency of Council of the EU
The EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement is implemented, and the UK is no longer a member of the European Union. Still, many bilateral issues remain unsolved
- 4 January Julian Assange's extradition is blocked by a British court
UK begins inoculating British citizens against Covid-19 with AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine
- 6 January Supporters of former US president Donald Trump assault the United States Capitol
- 8 January Twitter permanently bans Trump, to prevent him from encouraging further violence through inflammatory tweets
- 18 January Lilianne Ploumen is elected leader of Dutch PvdA
- 20 January The inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States takes place in Washington DC. The hopes are high that the page has been turned and a new chapter in the world's history can now begin
- 21 January European Parliament adopts resolution on the EU Strategy for Gender Equality
- 24 January Presidential election is held in Portugal. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa is re-elected for a second term
- 27 January A near-total ban on abortion enters into effect in Poland, making it impossible to conduct a procedure even if the foetus is fatally damaged. The protesters again take to the streets, mobilising thousands of citizens – whose voices the government ignores
- 28 January Estonia becomes the only country currently to have both a female prime minister and president
Poland: thousands protest as abortion law comes into effect
FEPS publishes the Progressive Yearbook 2021

¹ Special thanks to Sophia Christodoulou for compiling this chronology.

February

- 1 February In Myanmar a coup d'état led by the Tatmadaw disempowers the newly elected National League for Democracy (NLD)
In the Netherlands MH17 trial begins of four people accused of shooting down an airliner over Ukraine and killing 298 people
- 7 February Parliamentary election is held in Liechtenstein
- 11 February Berlin film festival awards gender-neutral acting prizes for the first time, thus eliminating the categories of best actor and best actress
- 19 February The United States officially re-joins the Paris Agreement, from which the previous Trump administration withdrew in November 2020. The international commitment to fight against climate change gets real again
- 22 February Italian ambassador Luca Attanasio is killed in the Democratic Republic of Congo

March

- 4 March The EU Commission publishes a communication containing the Action Plan implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, presented by Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit
Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli proposes pay transparency directive
- 11 March Launch of China's 14th five-year plan (2021-25) containing important strategic elements for the orientation of its economy
- 14 March Regional elections are held in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. The Greens win over 32 per cent of the vote and lead in the enlarged Landtag. Their previous coalition partner – the CDU – suffers the worst result in its history
- 17 March The European Commission proposes a Digital Green Certificate to facilitate safe free movement inside the EU during the Covid-19 pandemic
Parliamentary election is held in the Netherlands. The PvdA ends up with nine seats in the Tweede Kamer, finishing sixth behind D66 and the SP among others
- 21 March Turkey withdraws from the Istanbul Convention
- 23 March A 400-metre container ship is buffeted by strong winds and runs aground in the Suez Canal, blocking all traffic and disrupting trade worldwide
Knesset elections take place in Israel (the fourth in two years). Likud wins the largest share of seats (30). Following difficult negotiations, Bennett-Lapid rotation government is formed
- 26 March New Zealand approves paid leave for miscarriage

April

- 4 April First parliamentary elections of the year are held in Bulgaria. The governing coalition led by Boyko Borissov loses seats, but the new composition makes it impossible for anyone to form a new government
- 8 April French vote in favour of hijab ban in public for girls under the age of 18
- 9 April Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, dies at the age of 99
- 14 April Biden delivers remarks on withdrawal from Afghanistan: troops will be pulled out by 11 September (20th anniversary of terror attack on New York and Washington DC organised by Osama bin Laden of Saudi Arabia)
- 22 April The Leaders' Summit on Climate takes place in the US
- 25 April Parliamentary election is held in Albania. The Socialist Party wins 74 seats out of 140. Edi Rama continues as prime minister
- 26 April The so-called 'sofagate' scandal takes place – a diplomatic protocol incident which happened during the visit of Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel to Turkey, where their hosts had not organised an appropriate seating arrangement for the presidents of the European Commission and Council
- 27 April One billion doses of the Covid-19 vaccine have been administered worldwide, according to *AFP* (AstraZeneca is the most widely used vaccine, followed by Pfizer, Moderna, Sinopharm, and Sputnik)

May

- 6 May Local elections are held in the UK, and a parliamentary election takes place in Scotland, where the SNP dominates, winning 64 out of 129 seats and entering government for the fourth consecutive time
- 7-8 May Social summit of EU heads of state and government in Porto, hosted by Portuguese government (endorsing Action Plan to boost EU social dimension)
- 10 May An escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is triggered by a decision of the Supreme Court of Israel to evict six Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The violent crisis will last until 21 May
- 13 May Violence against women is "a pandemic", says Dubravka Šimonović, UN special rapporteur on violence against women
- 23 May The government of Belarus hijacks a civilian plane to arrest an opposition journalist
- 25-27 May FEPS Call to Europe #10 – the first online progressive festival – on 'Recovering Europe: Mind the Social Gaps' is held

- 30 May Parliamentary elections take place in Cyprus. The Socialist party EDEK gains one additional seat in the parliament after ten years
- 31 May The Delta variant of Covid-19 is named

June

- 1 June EU Digital Covid Certificate: EU Gateway goes live with seven countries, allowing vaccination certificates to be checked in a secure and privacy-friendly way
- 2 June Presidential election takes place in Israel and is won by Labour Party politician Isaac Herzog (son of former Israeli president Chaim Herzog)
- 2-4 June The first UN General Assembly Special Session on Corruption takes place in New York
- 11-13 June The G7 Summit is held in Carbis Bay, Cornwall (discussing post-Covid economic recovery, protection of the climate, and gender equality)
- 18 June Presidential election is held in Iran amidst widespread controversy
- 23 June Statement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the new Hungarian bill that discriminates against people based on their sexual orientation
- 24 June PES Women Annual Conference
- 25 June Derek Chauvin is sentenced by Minnesota judge Peter Cahill to 22 years and six months in jail for George Floyd's murder
- 25-26 June PES leaders conference takes place in Berlin. Prime ministers and top-level participants from across Europe arrive to discuss the priorities for the post-Covid recovery and to support the SPD in their electoral campaign
- 29 June The Spanish government approves the draft of a bill to allow anyone over the age of 14 to change gender legally without a medical diagnosis or hormone therapy
S&D Group mourns the death of their secretary general, Michael Hoppe, who died at the age of 58 after a long and severe illness
- 30 June Progressive Alliance Asia regional network meeting

July

- 1 July Slovenia assumes presidency of the Council of the EU
- 6-15 July The UN high-level political forum on sustainable development takes place under the auspices of ECOSOC
- 7 July Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko threatens to "flood" the EU with human traffickers, drug smugglers, and armed migrants. A protracted border crisis begins

- 11 July Italy wins against England at the UEFA EURO final 2020
Snap election takes place in Bulgaria. A new party, 'There is such a people' led by popular television presenter Slavi Trifonov, narrowly wins from the coalition of GERB-Union of Democratic Forces. As in April, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) finishes in third position
- 14 July European Commission First Vice President Frans Timmermans launches the first tranche of measures of Commission's 'Fit for 55' package aimed at reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030
- 22 July New migration legislation is introduced in Sweden
- 23 July The Olympic Games begin in Tokyo

August

- 13 August The Taliban seizes two major Afghan cities, Kandahar in the south and Herat in the west, entering Kabul two days later
- 16 August The US government deploys 6,000 troops to evacuate EU and allied personnel from Kabul and secure the international airport. Thousands of Afghans attempt to flee and chaos erupts
- 24 August Paralympic Games begin in Tokyo
The Delta variant has spread to over 163 countries
- 30 August The last US military forces depart from Afghanistan and leave it under Taliban control
- 31 August 70 per cent of the EU adult population is fully vaccinated

September

- 3 September The EU and AstraZeneca agree on Covid-19 vaccine supply ending litigation
- 8 September Trial on the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris opens
- 9 September S&D puts forward 10 key priorities ahead of the debate on the State of the Union, including on gender-based violence
- 10 September Jorge Sampaio, former president of Portugal, dies aged 81
- 11 September The 20th anniversary is commemorated of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon
- 13 September General election is held in Norway and is won by a coalition formed by the Labour Party and the Centre Party. Social democrats now have prime ministers in all four countries of the North – also including Sweden, Denmark and Finland
- 15 September Ursula von der Leyen delivers State of the Union speech at the European Parliament

- Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez meets with the leader of Catalonia in an attempt to solve the political dispute over independence claims
- Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States announce their trilateral security pact (AUKUS)
- 17 September France recalls its ambassadors from Australia and the US in response to the announcement of AUKUS
- 17-19 September Parliamentary election is held in Russia. The ruling party, United Russia, gains 324 seats out of 450
- 21-27 September The 76th session of the UN General Assembly takes place in New York
- 23 September The Food Systems Summit is held during the UN General Assembly
- 22 September The EU and the US announce their agenda for beating the global pandemic: a new EU-US partnership to help vaccinate the world
- 25 September Parliamentary election takes place in Iceland. Independence Party, Progressive Party and the Left-Green Movement take the first three positions, with the Social Democratic Alliance coming fourth
- 26 September Bundestag elections are held in Germany. The SPD wins 206 seats and becomes the largest parliamentary group. The coalition negotiations begin, leading to the creation of a 'traffic light coalition'
- 27 September Afghan women nominated for Sakharov Prize by S&D and Greens/EFA
- 30 September Australia withdraws from nuclear-powered submarine deal with France

October

- 1 October Australia re-opens its border for the first time in pandemic
Progressive Alliance Board meeting is held (online)
- 3 October The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists begins to publish the Pandora Papers
- 3-4 October Local elections are held in Italy. Naples, Bologna and Milan elect centre-left mayors, signalling populist decline and strengthening positions of the PD
- 6 October The EU-Western Balkans Summit takes place in Brdo pri Kranju (Slovenia)
- 8-9 October Parliamentary election is held in Czech Republic. The two winners are SPOLU and ANO 2011 (there is one seat's difference between them) with the Pirates and Mayors coming third. The CSSD and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia find themselves below the threshold and outside the parliament for first time since the Velvet Revolution
- 9 October Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz resigns following a corruption scandal. Two days later Alexander Schallenberg is sworn in as new Austrian chancellor

- 11-14 October FEPS organises its first full hybrid event: the 3rd Annual Autumn Academy 2021
- 15 October After 75 years, Alitalia ceases operations
- 16 October Péter Márki-Zay, the mayor of Hódmezővásárhely, emerges as the unity candidate of the Hungarian democratic opposition, following two rounds of primaries (defeating MEP Klára Dobrev in the second round)
- 17-18 October In Italy, run-off municipal elections are held in Rome, Turin, and Trieste. Roberto Gualtieri becomes the mayor of Rome
- 20 October The S&D Group presents the Progressive Society Report
- 25 October Former Greek Socialist Party leader Fofi Gennimata dies aged 57 after battle with cancer
- 27 October Poland hit with a record-high daily fine of €1 million for not complying with an EU court order to suspend the country's controversial disciplinary mechanism for judges. It is the second fine, both of which Poland refuses to acknowledge
- 30-31 October G20 Summit takes place in Italy. Leaders agree on a Global Tax Deal (establishing a 15 per cent minimum level of corporate tax)

November

- 1 November The number of recorded Covid-19 victims is over 5 million
North Macedonia's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev resigns following his party's (SDMS) poor results in local elections
- 1-12 November COP26 takes place in Glasgow, ending without a particularly ambitious decision
- 5-7 November Conference on the Future of Europe Citizens' Panel takes place online
- 14 November Bulgaria holds its third national vote this year, electing the president and National Assembly. The turnout falls to 38 per cent, the lowest in three decades. A new party, 'We continue the change', wins most of the seats
- 16 November Regional and local elections are held in Denmark
- 17-19 November Global Progressive Forum takes place in Brussels (online)
- 18 November The 2021 Silver Rose Lifetime Achievement Award goes to Myrtle Witbooi, President of the International Domestic Workers Federation and Secretary General of South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union
- 22 November Europe's first reported case of the new Covid variant discovered in Belgium
- 24 November European Parliament plenary votes to greenlight negotiations with Council on directive on adequate minimum wages

Magdalena Andersson becomes first female prime minister of Sweden. She resigns on the same day due to a controversial vote over the budget, but she is elected again the following week

- 25-26 November The Europe-Asia Meeting (ASEM) takes place in Cambodia
- 26 November The World Health Organization names the new variant of SARS-CoV-2 'Omicron'
- 29 November Municipal elections take place in Cyprus
- 30 November Binary gender identification will disappear from ID cards in Belgium

December

- 2 December Austria's ex-chancellor Sebastian Kurz withdraws from politics. His successor, Alexander Schallenberg, also announces his resignation
- 3-5 December Citizens' Panel on the Data Act and Security and Justice in the Digital World package takes place in Dublin
- 6 December Call to Europe conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 9 December Angela Merkel leaves and Olaf Scholz enters office as German chancellor (fourth Social Democrat at the helm of the Federal Republic following Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schröder)
- 9-10 December The first of two Summits for Democracy, organised by the Biden administration, takes place virtually (among the EU countries, Hungary is not invited)
- 10-12 December Citizens' Panel of the Conference on the Future of Europe takes place in Florence (in hybrid virtual-physical format)
- 17-18 December PES Council meeting is held in Brussels
- 20 December The European Commission grants conditional marketing authorisation for the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Novavax
- 21 December Franziska Giffey is sworn in as new mayor of Berlin
- 26 December Desmond Tutu, anti-apartheid and human rights activist, dies aged 90
- 29 December The president of North Macedonia, Stevo Pendarovski, hands Social Democratic Union (SDSM) leader Dimitar Kovachevski a mandate to form a new government