

MP OPEN CALL

Your Direct Line to Europe's Policymakers

Mercator European Dialogue

11 January 2021

Our monthly MP Open Calls are a space for parliamentarians to set the agenda, discuss pressing national and European issues, and support each other by sharing best practices and concerns. In the first MP Open Call of 2021, 6 parliamentarians from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Lithuania came together to discuss the success of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Europe and the recent EU-China [Comprehensive Agreement on Investment](#) (CAI). The participants touched upon additional concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the viability of online parliamentary sessions.

Conversation highlights

- **COVID-19 vaccination rollout prompts best practice discussions across countries.** Multiple factors come into play in national vaccination efforts, from the logistical aspects to the technical competences and disinformation campaigns that have either accelerated or delayed the vaccination process:
 - “The bottleneck ... is in the procedure of distributing [the vaccine]. Each EU country has a different situation... still, the [EU] vaccine rollout is a symbol of multilateral cooperation.”
 - “Why is Israel successful? Because they paid triple the price for the vaccines compared to the EU. It will pay off because they will open all businesses again soon.”
 - “There could be more political will to fight anti-vaccination campaigns.”
- **Lithuania hosted its first parliamentary e-plenary.** The jury is still out on how this will affect parliamentary proceedings. The MED team will keep monitoring developments of digital shift in other countries as well and invites its members to further discuss experiences in this field.
- **The transatlantic implications of the EU-China deal are on everyone's mind.** Our guest expert chimed in on the diplomatic situation: “the political situation in Germany has been that they cannot wait for the [US] administration to change.” Signing the CAI before the new administration enters “might start things off on an awkward political footing.” Besides, when it comes to relations with China, human rights standards remain a crucial element of the debate in many European countries.
 - “We should separate trade policy from human rights policy. No lives are saved by not trading with China.”
 - “We are dependent on China, and it is behaving like a hegemon. We are making these deals as part of the European strategy on China, but are the agreements really worth any more than the paper they are written on?”
- **Concerns about the pandemic's long-term impact on cultural industries remain.** With no easy solution in sight, crowd-reliant industries like culture and tourism might not recover.

Resources and further information

- [Podcast, Building Transatlantic Unity on China, with Noah Barkin and Peter Chase](#), November 2020
- [Culture shock: COVID-19 and the cultural and creative sectors](#), September 2020
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on the CCS: Challenges and Future Policies](#), December 2020
- Noah Barking – [Watching China in Europe](#), January 2021
 - Opinion opposing CAI: [The European Union, CAI, and the abyss](#)
 - Opinion supporting CAI: [Furor Over Europe's Investment Agreement with China is Overblown](#)

Please note, the content of the shared materials and the opinions of our guest experts do not reflect the views of the Mercator European Dialogue or any affiliated partners, but only those of the authors themselves.

What more can we do to drive the conversation forward?

The Mercator European Dialogue is a network driven by MPs. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you as best we can to connect and work with your colleagues from across Europe in these challenging times.

If you have any suggestions on how to take the conversation to the next level or to continue digging deeper into the urgent systemic challenges posed by COVID-19, feel free to reach out to us.

Keep in contact with your colleagues! Please know that you can always find contact details of all **MED members** on the **members-only area of the website**, accessible [here](#). Members are linked to all activities they participate in and are organized by member states, making it easier for you to find your colleagues. Should you have issues logging in, you can contact hwittrich@gmfus.org.

