

# Key moments for EU Advocacy on Migration and Asylum

April – December 2021



To be effective, any advocacy strategy must be timely: the right actions must target the right people and be rolled out at the right moment.



This document aims to inform civil society organisations of upcoming key moments in 2021 to carry out advocacy on migration and asylum at EU level.



It is designed as a static document for 2021. However, users are expected to regularly check the various links provided throughout the document in order to stay on top of new opportunities, key dates and up-to-date information.

## 1. Dates marking key events



These dates can serve as an opportunity to launch online campaigning (social media, petitions, etc.) targeting European citizens or EU officials and institutions or to send formal letters to the latter to remind them of their legal obligations or commitments they've made.

In 2021, the following dates could be utilised as “advocacy hooks” :

<b>15 April 2021</b>	First relocation flight of unaccompanied minors from Greece.
<b>May 2021</b>	One year since Croatia was first called upon to investigate allegations of serious abuses by the police, spray-painting the heads of displaced people with crosses who attempted to cross the border from Bosnia and Herzegovina.
<b>28 July 2021</b>	70 years of the Geneva Convention.
<b>9 September 2021</b>	One year since the Moria Fires on Lesvos island.
<b>9 September 2021</b>	One year since the publication of the UNHCR's position paper stating that Libya cannot be recognised as a 'safe third country,' upon failing to meet criteria “for being designated as a place of safety for the purpose of disembarkation following rescue at sea”.
<b>23 September 2021</b>	One year since the publication of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.
<b>October 2021</b>	One year since the publication of the evidence-based report on Frontex involvement in pushbacks in the Aegean by the Lighthouse reports, Bellingcat, Der Spiegel, ARD and TV Asahi.
<b>13 November 2021</b>	Two years since the adoption of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Regulation.
<b>13 November 2021</b>	One year since the signature of the grant agreement between the European Commission and the Greek authorities for financing the construction of new centres on Samos, Kos and Leros.
<b>30 November 2021</b>	One year since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and the Greek authorities to jointly pilot the establishment of a new Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centre in Lesvos.

These dates are not exhaustive but rather meant to serve as an inspiration and starting point. Depending on the thematic and geographic focus of your advocacy, you might want to identify other relevant “moments” along similar lines.

## 2. EU institutions calendar



The various EU institutions have different roles, responsibilities and internal working processes and structures. They are involved in both political and legislative processes. All these aspects can make it complicated to identify the right target and the right moment for effective advocacy. Notwithstanding a good understanding of distribution of power amongst EU stakeholders on migration and asylum, the below offers a broad overview of potential advocacy opportunities.

### European Council

The European Council defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. It consists of the heads of state/government of the member states, together with its President, currently Charles Michel, and the President of the Commission, currently Ursula Von der Leyen.

It meets at least twice every six months. The calendar foreseen for 2021 is as follows:

<b>8 May 2021</b>	In Porto	Informal meeting of heads of state or government
<b>24 – 25 June 2021</b>		European Council meeting
<b>21 – 22 October 2021</b>		European Council meeting
<b>16 – 17 December 2021</b>		European Council meeting

Key Agenda items are made known informally through media outlets a few weeks ahead of each meeting, and officially made known one week before the meeting date.

Migration-related issues (both internal and external dimensions) are very often at the agenda. In 2021, it is expected that the New Pact on Migration and Asylum as well as cooperation with third countries will be on the agenda.



Visit this [page](#) to check the forthcoming European Council meeting agendas.

### Council of the EU

The Council of the EU is the institution representing the member states' governments. Also known informally as the EU Council, it is where national ministers from each EU country meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies.

#### The Presidency

The presidency of the Council rotates among the EU member states every six months. During this six-month period, the presidency chairs meetings at every level in the Council and rolls out its priorities.



If you aim to influence the development of these priorities, you should target member states at least a year in advance of their presidency term.



Later, when holding the Presidency, the member state remains a relevant stakeholder to target for advocacy due to their central role within the EU Council.

<b>Until 30 June 2021</b>	Portugal Presidency
<b>1 July – 31 December 2021</b>	Slovenia Presidency
<b>1 January – 30 June 2022</b>	France Presidency
<b>1 July – 31 December 2022</b>	Czech Presidency
<b>1 January – 30 June 2023</b>	Sweden Presidency

## The Council

The Council is a single legal entity, but it meets in ten different 'configurations', depending on the subject being discussed. Council meetings are attended by representatives from each member state at a ministerial level. Participants can therefore be ministers or state secretaries. They take decisions (in most cases through a qualified majority) on relevant legislative acts.

One of these ten configurations is the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council in which migration and asylum related topics are included. JHA Council meetings are organised every three months.

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**7 – 8 June 2021**

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**September 2021** (exact dates to be confirmed)

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**December 2021** (exact dates to be confirmed)

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Key agenda topics are made available approximately one week before the meeting.



Visit this [page](#) to check meeting information and forthcoming dates of the 2021 JHA Council meetings.

## Preparatory bodies

Several preparatory bodies also exist, and meet regularly (most of them on a weekly basis) to prepare the work of the Council configurations at the technical level. They also look at the legal basis of the proposals made. On asylum and migration related topics, the following preparatory bodies could be relevant advocacy targets:

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### Coreper II

Meets every week and prepares the work of four Council configurations including the JHA Council.



Visit this [page](#) to see the calendar of meetings including the reference documents and topics for discussion (available approximately one to two weeks in advance).

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### The Standing Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA)



Visit this [page](#) to see the calendar of meetings including the reference documents and topics for discussion (available approximately one to two weeks in advance).

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### The Asylum working party and the Working Party on Frontiers

Notably working on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum proposed legislation pieces.



Visit this [page](#) to see the forthcoming meeting dates and reference documents.



As these bodies work at a technical level, ahead of the JHA Council meetings, it is important to start advocacy work towards them well in advance of the Council discussing the advocacy pieces and to tailor your advocacy messages in a very specific and technical manner.

## EU Commission – DG Home

DG Home is the Commission department responsible for EU policy on migration and home affairs. It is currently headed by Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson. The role of DG Home is to put forward policies on migration and asylum related topics and to ensure that member states are fulfilling their obligations and implementing the European legislation accordingly.



Visit Ylva Johansson's Weekly [Calendar](#) items as well as her Twitter [account](#) to follow her work.



Visit this [page](#) to take stock of ongoing infringement procedures on various policy areas including asylum, border management and Schengen, immigration and integration and returns.



Visit this [page](#) to stay informed and contribute to the Commission’s public consultations on migration and asylum: although these consultation processes are not in themselves enough to actively advocate for your cause, they can be a first step to publicly share your messages and contribute, alongside other organisations, and put pressure on EU institutions.

## European Parliament

The European Parliament is both a target and a potential ally depending on the MEPs you choose to approach. Migration and asylum related policies and legislative pieces are primarily discussed and amended within the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committee.

**The LIBE Committee’s meeting dates are currently known until July 2021 :**

12-13 April 2021

16 June 2021

19 April 2021

22 June 2021

26 – 27 May 2021

1 July 2021

3 June 2021

14 – 15 July 2021



Visit this [page](#) to check the meeting dates after July 2021.



The agenda is made known only a few days/weeks before each meeting: visit this [page](#) to check the agenda highlights of a forthcoming meeting.

Other potentially relevant committees include Foreign Affairs ([AFET](#)), and its subcommittee on Human Rights ([DROI](#)), as well as the committee for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality ([FEMM](#)). Children’s rights are promoted across the European Parliament by a [Coordinator](#) on children’s rights who works closely with their fellow MEPs, as well as with committees, and the [Intergroup on Children’s Rights](#).



To plan your advocacy work towards the European Parliament you must keep track of the legislative processes of the pieces you are interested in. To do so, the European Parliament has set up a [platform](#) that provides an overview of the ‘state of play’ of the ongoing process for each legislative piece. However, it does not provide a timeline of the next steps. The latter can be found through direct contacts with EU NGOs on migration and asylum (visit the [EPAM](#) website to see the full list of members) or with MEPs, who are [members](#) of the Committee you are interested in engaging with.

Finally, the legislative pieces are debated and voted in [Plenary](#) by all MEPs. If you want to advocate towards your country’s MEPs to influence their vote or if you are planning to share messages with certain political groups, you may wish to stay informed of the Plenary sessions [calendar](#):

26 – 29 April 2021

4 – 7 October 2021

17 – 20 May 2021

18 – 21 October 2021

7 – 10 June 2021

22 – 25 November 2021

5 – 8 July 2021

13 – 16 December 2021

13 – 16 September 2021

The [Agenda](#) of a forthcoming plenary is made available up to a month in advance. For further information on the foreseen timeline, you may contact [MEPs’](#) offices or the respective [Secretariats](#) of political groups with whom you have contact.