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EDITOR'S LETTER HEALTH AND DIPLOMACY



Even before the official start of the pandemic, its diplomatic aspect was simply bold. For a rather short time, the Chinese tried to hide the nature of the “infection” that had appeared in their country, from the rest of the world. But having understood the essence of the issue, they, with unexpected openness, made a warning to all of us about the threat looming over the world.

And the political game began immediately. Trump, who was already anti-China, began to deliberately refer to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus”. In response, Beijing started fighting its proliferation in such a decisive way, that it achieved incredibly positive results. Especially compared to the disastrous situation in the United States and Western Europe.

Chinese diplomacy did not miss the opportunity to introduce the success of China to everyone – it was the only country in the world where the economy still continues growing. For example, the economy of France shrank by almost 10%.

The second stage of the diplomatic war is developing right now. This is a vaccine war. Russia was the first to announce the availability of its vaccine. Western countries reacted sceptically to the announcement, but soon they also announced that they already have had it.

Now the availability of vaccines (there are at least ten of them or even more) has unleashed a real diplomatic battle for segments of the world market. Because the strategic idea is to vaccinate the entire population of the planet. But there are already more than seven billion of us! Although, judging by the current rates of vaccination even in the most developed countries, one involuntarily challenges the possibility of doing this in the coming decades.

Next time we will somehow consider the therapeutic component of utopia.

Victor Loupan

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HIGHLIGHTS

POWER TECHNOLOGY

Contrary to tradition Donald Trump was not present at the inauguration of Joe Biden, did not shake his hand, did not handover his responsibilities to a new president

VICTOR LOUPAN,
Head of the Editorial Board

The election of Joe Biden to the presidency of the United States was supposed to be the final round in the struggle of the American establishment against former US President Donald Trump.

The personality, character, behaviour, and rhetoric of the latter were so unbearable for the ruling class of the United States that, immediately after Trump's election in 2016, he made it his goal to prevent him from sitting in the White House until the end of his presidential term. Discussions of his impeachment began even before the inauguration, and parliamentary fuss with this did not stop over the entire four-year term. Significant efforts of state authorities were deployed for the fight against the enemy, which was proclaimed none other than the legally elected President of the United States.

In the fight against Trump, those who today stand behind Joe Biden and his administration have actually fought, perhaps without realising it, against the presidency as the institution of supreme executive power.

The White House is not just a building. The Oval Office is more than just an office occupied by a person elected for the next four years. Behind all this lies the almost mystical beginning of democracy in the "City on the Hill". The US President is not just a

choice of an abstract "people", he is not a nominee of the "dictatorship of the majority" – each state votes for him individually, and small states enjoy certain privileges. In short, the system is complex, archaic, and not entirely democratic. Because the candidate, who has won the election race, may take the office of the President having received arithmetically fewer votes than his losing rival. This is unthinkable by European standards. But in the United States, the president has more than once been chosen not by the majority, but by the minority.

Joe Biden, the newly elected president, entered the White House somehow joylessly. A gray-haired old man in a black mask sat down at the presidential desk, which was too massive for his physique and body



constitution, and began to sign decrees. So many of them at once, that he broke the records of all his predecessors. By the end of January 31 de-

cree had already been signed! The issue here is not only quantity, but also motivation. With his overactivity, Joe Biden openly continues to fight against Donald Trump. That is, the winner still continues to fight against the predecessor who has already left his power. It was as if Trump transformed from a visible enemy into an invisible and even more dangerous, motionless and silent giant, whose shadow obscures the horizon of the ruling president.

The fact that Trump has not recognised and, apparently, would never recognise Biden as a winner, is not just terrible from the point of view of "peaceful democracy", where it is customary to smile affably despite deep hatred for each other, but also personally unbearable for Biden, because he knows that the majority of voters who voted for Trump, and there are 75 million of them, share the point of view of "their president". Perhaps, this has never happened before in the history of the United States.

There were many controversial issues. But in the end, the vanquished recognised the victor's triumph, thereby legitimising the transfer of power. For example, so did Al Gore, agreeing to finally recognise George W. Bush as the winner. But Donald Trump didn't go for it. Contrary to tradition

he was not present at the inauguration of Joe Biden, did not shake his hand, did not handover his responsibilities to a new president. In fact, he deprived his successor of that solemnity, without which power cannot exist in its entirety.

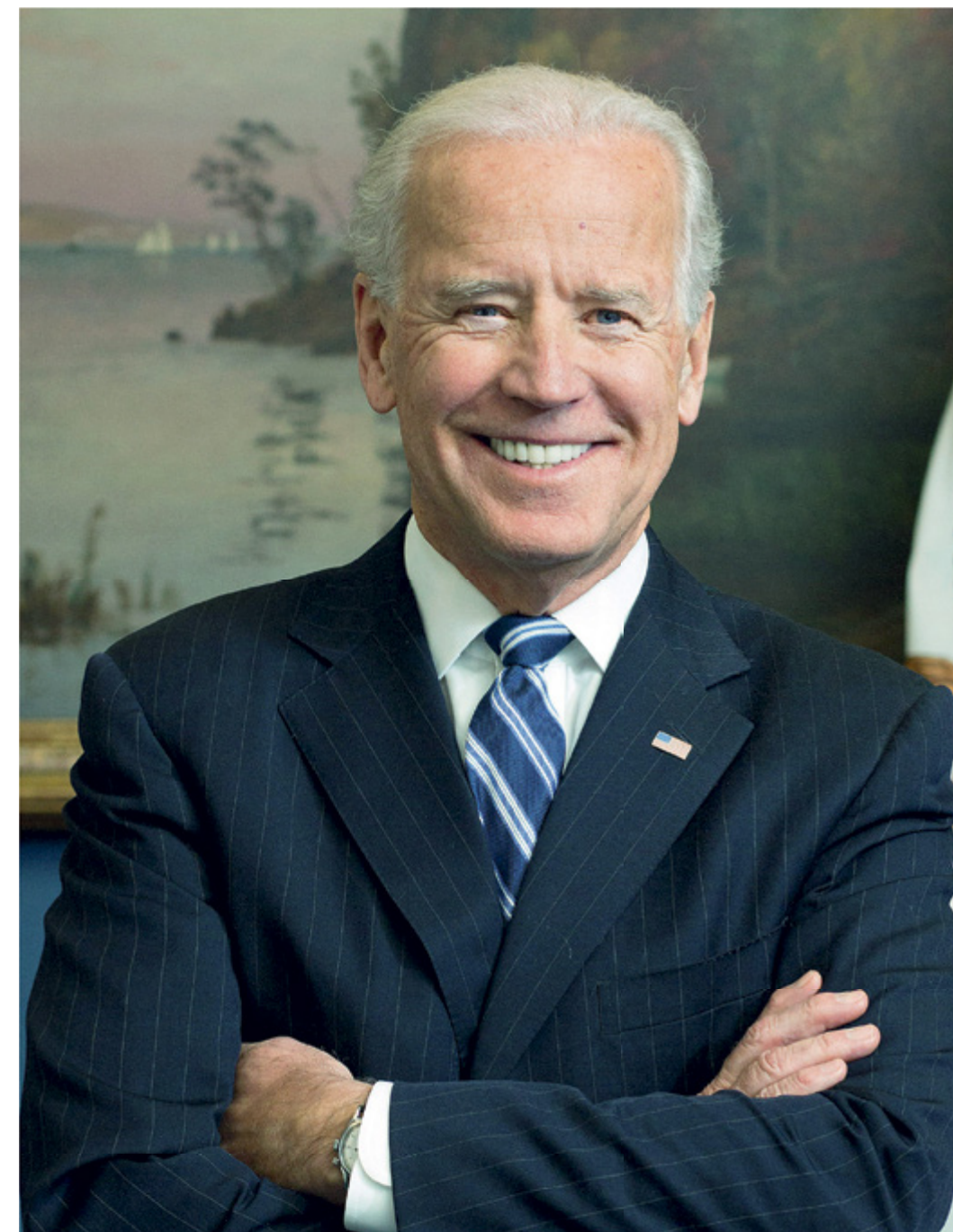
The sad essence of Joe Biden's inauguration was captured by none other than the twice-offended Democratic leftist Bernie Sanders. Wearing a mask, slouching over, he sat alone in an apparently uncomfortable chair. The Americans were especially surprised by his knitted mittens, which were very unsuitable for the moment. They were of the kind that grandmothers knit for their grandchildren. Multi-million copies of the photo swamped the Internet with add-ons and improvements, manifestation of custard-pie digital artworks, with jokes and giggles.

Some influential observers and analysts in America and Europe have long speculated about the world order in the context of a weakening US dominance. Such discussions arose even during Bush Jr.'s term, and they got worse under the eight-year rule of Obama and, of course, intensified after the election of Trump, which was not expected by the establishment. But no one could even imagine then, that the establishment itself would begin to aggressively

excoriate the presidential power. Moreover, not only the "people's representatives" having seats in the Congress took part in this process, but also the special services. The FBI, CIA and other structures designed to protect, defend, and preserve power, sometimes openly participated in the persecutions of the elected President Donald Trump.

It is known that the founder and long-term permanent "owner" of the

FBI, John Hoover, hated John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert. He had such incriminating evidence on them and on their whole family that with all their desire and hatred for him, they could not fire him. Long before that, the same ardent anti-communist Hoover hated the left-leaning Roosevelt and also collected dirt on him and his wife Eleanor, supposedly a lesbian and the mistress of a Soviet intelligence agent.





So, the byzantine politics has always existed near the top echelons of power. But Hoover's struggles with various Democratic presidents have always remained behind the scenes. And the American press, despite its independence that was much more obvious then than now, did not allow itself to "spit" on the president. Yes, it could criticise him! Or cauterise, yes! But what happened under Trump, no one could have imagined until today. Indeed, during all four years of his rule, the overwhelming majority of the American media condemned the US president almost every day for being "Putin's agent", for "Putin having compromising evidence on him", for the affirmation that "he would not have been elected without proactive support of the enemy's special services", and so on. Moreover, not only the yellow press with its low-performance skills took part in this orgy, but also the most respected and influential publications, such as New

York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, PBS radio, CNN TV channel. With this, the entire campaign was conducted with absolutely no evidence and with an extremely low level of professional responsibility. Never before has the American media sank so low.

Of course, Trump was not a God dandelion. He was both vulgar and ill-mannered, he sunk to the point where he was forced to sue his mistresses from the porn industry, videos with his obscene statements about women were played on radio and television. In short, the supreme power of the United States was enveloped in a thick and fetid fog that has not dissipated to this day, and will not dissipate for a long time.

Because while the American media was slinging mud at Trump, they completely refused not only to investigate, but also to cover the corruption scandal with Joe Biden's son, Hunter. The latter, a former

officer, was expelled from the US Armed Forces for abuse of cocaine and weakness for alcohol. Left without work, Hunter Biden started doing business in Ukraine. At that time his father, Joe, was the vice-president of the United States and the curator of Ukraine. With no qualification in oil or gas, Hunter suddenly started making millions. And not only in Ukraine, but also in China. The point here is not whether he is right or wrong, but that the American media generally refused to talk about the scandalous case, believing that its disclosure could harm the presidential nominee Joe Biden and prevent his election.

This purely corruption scheme with suppression of the facts confirms the trend towards disinformation and propaganda long noticed among the American media. That is, precisely those vices for which they condemned the press serving totalitarian regimes in the past.

On the Internet, where unlimited liberalism and unrestricted freedom of speech reigned in the past, the situation became even worse. Censorship and closings of many millions of accounts have become a commonplace. Faceless political and ideological arbitrariness of Internet platforms has turned into Orwellian norms of behaviour, such as "ban is freedom" or "the truth is a lie". They started closing websites for being a platform for expressing "unacceptable opinions". And the topics may be very different there: from "dishonest presidential elections" to "doubts about the pandemic", from "criticism of the Black Lives Matter and antifa movements" to "criticism of leftism at the universities".

Well-known American libertarian blogger Michael Malice calls this new power technology a "virtual gathering" of high-tech oligarchs and the paragovernmental media that depend on them, the ultra-left driving force of the Democratic Party, the political correctness movement that has taken control of the major universities, the antifa movement, the Black Lives Matter movement and, of course, the so-called "Deep State". It is this "gathering" that rises above the White House today.

But, like Notre Dame Cathedral in the Middle Ages, the majestic American gathering is surrounded by slum areas, which huddle a lot of people expelled from normal life. Those who are expelled because they think the wrong way, they vote the

wrong way. In short, "they are sitting wrong, they are whistling wrong". The weakness of the new American power technology is that there are lots of people expelled from the "gathering". They include not only white hardworking people who voted for Trump. There is also a rapidly impoverishing middle class. And due to the catastrophic situation caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, the number of these people will only increase.

Biden has not yet had time to demonstrate his weakness or show his inability to resist developing processes. The point is not even himself, but the fact that anyone in his shoes would be equally powerless. Joe Biden is a consummate politician, but he is an Old School politician. His team looks like Obama won a third term. And since Trump was a reaction to Obama, then Biden's arrival looks like revenge. But, according to the an-

cient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "you cannot step into the same river twice", because "all entities move and nothing remains still".

Revanchism is a terrible disease. While Trump held office, the notorious "Deep State" and enraged Democrats were infected with it. Now Trump and tens of millions of his followers are infected with it. It is especially significant that the Republican Party seems to be completely or almost completely on their side.

This situation is especially dangerous, because there is a wide ravine between the two opposing sides. Contact between them is lost. They look differently even at the most simple things. This is why more and more American observers are analysing the current events as the eve of a civil war. The war which has already begun in the minds and hearts of people.



SPUTNIK V

RDIF and the Gamaleya Center announce international scientific advisory board on Sputnik V vaccine

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF, Russia's sovereign wealth fund) and The National Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology named after N.F. Gamaleya (Gamaleya Center) announce the creation of an International Scientific Advisory Board on the Sputnik V vaccine – the world's first registered vaccine against coronavirus.

Leading scientists in virology, microbiology, genetics and biotechnology from Argentina, Croatia, France, Germany, India, Russia, Sweden, UK and USA, representing top research and medical centers, have joined the Board.

Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, said: "RDIF and the Gamaleya Center initiated the creation of the International Scientific Advisory Board on the Sputnik V vaccine and the formation of an international platform where vaccine developers could exchange information, opinions and expertise with their leading foreign colleagues. This scientific exchange has become especially in demand due to the pandemic of the new coronavirus infection, a global problem that has stimulated the pooling of the entire global scientific and research potential. We are grateful to all the experts who accepted our offer and joined the Board. An international partnership, including on the coronavirus vaccine, is the key to the ul-

timatime victory and proves once again that the noble goal of saving lives has no boundaries."

Sputnik V is the world's first registered vaccine based on a well-studied human adenoviral vector-based platform. It currently ranks among top-10 candidate vaccines approaching the end of clinical trials and the start of mass production on the World Health Organization's (WHO) list.

The ongoing Sputnik V post-registration clinical trial in Russia involves 40,000 volunteers. Clinical trials of Sputnik V have been announced in the UAE, India, Venezuela and Belarus.

The Sputnik V vaccine's efficacy is confirmed at 91.4% based on data analysis of the final control point of clinical trials. The Sputnik V vaccine efficacy against severe cases of coronavirus is 100%.



RDIF jointly with partners and manufacturers is ramping up the production of Sputnik V. The cost of one dose of the vaccine for international

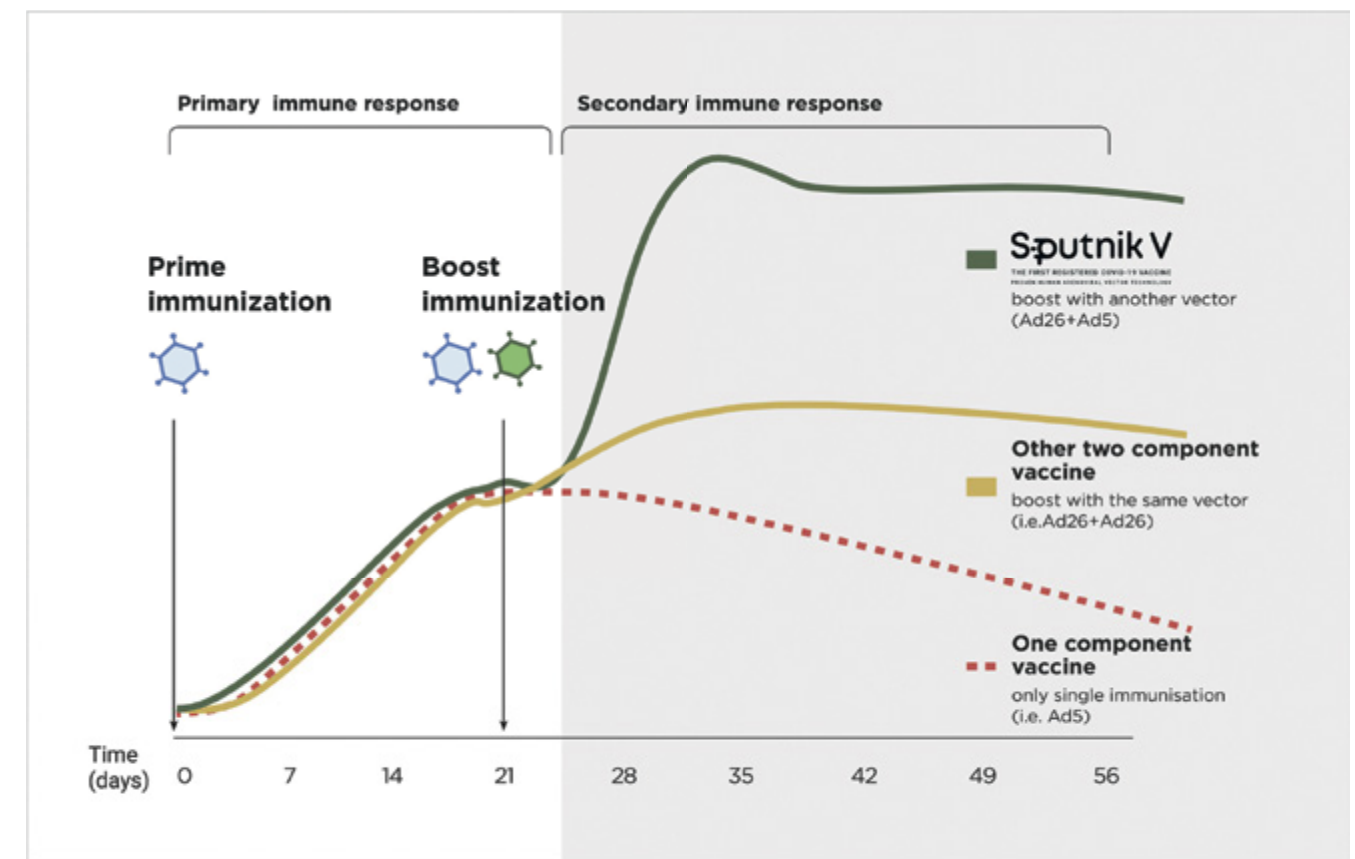
markets will be less than \$10 (Sputnik V is a two dose vaccine). The lyophilized (dry) form of the vaccine can be stored at a temperature of +2 to +8 degrees Celsius.

Requests for more than 1.2 billion doses of the Sputnik V vaccine came from more than 50 countries. The vaccine supplies for the global market will be produced by RDIF's international partners in India, Brazil, China, South Korea and other countries.

How adenoviral vector-based vaccines work

"Vectors" are vehicles, which can induce a genetic material from another virus into a cell. The gene from adenovirus, which causes the infection, is removed while a gene with the code of a protein from another virus spike is inserted. This inserted element is safe for the body but still helps the immune system to react and produce antibodies, which protect us from the infection.

The technological platform of adenovirus-based vectors makes it easier and faster to create new vaccines through modifying the initial carrier vector with genetic material from new emerging viruses that helps to create new vaccines in relatively short time. Such vaccines provoke a strong response from a human immune system.



Human adenoviruses are considered as some of the easiest to engineer in this way and therefore they have become very popular as vectors.

Safety and efficacy

After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic Russian researchers extracted a fragment of genetic material from novel coronavirus SARS-COV-2, which codes information about the structure of the spike S-protein, which forms the virus' "crown" and is responsible for connection with human cells. They inserted it into a familiar adenovirus vector for delivery into a human cell creating the world's first COVID-19 vaccine.

In order to ensure lasting immunity Russian scientists came up with a breakthrough idea to use two different types of adenovirus vectors (rAd26 and rAd5) for the first and second vaccination, boosting the effect of the vaccine.

The use of human adenoviruses as vectors is safe because these viruses, which cause the common cold, are not novel and have been around for thousands of years.

Clinical trials

Before the start of clinical trials the vaccine had gone through all stages of pre-clinical trials with experiments on different types of animals, including 2 types of primates.

Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials of the vaccine have been completed on August 1, 2020. All the volunteers are feeling well, no unforeseen or unwanted side effects were observed. The vaccine induced strong antibody and cellular immune response. Not a single participant of the current clinical trials got infected with COVID-19 after being administered with the vaccine. The high efficacy of the vaccine was confirmed by high precision tests for antibodies in the blood serum of volunteers (including an analysis for

antibodies that neutralize the coronavirus), as well as the ability of the immune cells of the volunteers to activate in response to the spike S protein of the coronavirus, which indicates the formation of both antibody and cellular immune vaccine response.

Post-registration clinical trials involving more than 40,000 people in Russia and Belarus were launched on August 25, 2020. A number of countries, such as UAE, India, Venezuela, Egypt and Brazil will join the clinical trials of Sputnik V locally. The vaccine has received a registration certificate from the Russian Ministry of Health on August 11 and under emergency rules adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic can be used to vaccinate the population in Russia. The plan is to ramp up the vaccine production in Russia and globally.

The unique substance of the Sputnik V and method of using it has a patent protection in Russia, obtained by Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

UK GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES MAJOR BOOST TO CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY

The UK Government has announced that dormant assets across the insurance and pensions, investment, wealth management, and securities sectors are set to be unlocked, with the potential for more than £800 million to be made available to support the UK as it recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

Funding raised through the expansion of the scheme will enable continued support of good causes, social investments and environmental initiatives.

This major expansion of the Dormant Assets Scheme marks the completion of a four year review and public consultation process. The responses showed widespread support for expanding the scheme from bank and building society accounts to include assets in these new sectors.

Led by the financial industry and backed by the UK Government, the expanded scheme will have consumer protection at its heart, with the priority continuing to be locating and reuniting people with their financial assets.

Where that is not possible, more businesses will now be allowed to participate voluntarily in transferring dormant assets into the scheme. People will still be able to reclaim their assets in full at any time.

Since 2011, 30 banks and building societies participating in the current scheme have enabled the release of over £745 million from dormant accounts that have been inactive for at least 15 years. These funds have been used to support a range of social and environmental initiatives across the



Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

UK, including helping young people on the path to employment, tackling financial exclusion, growing the social investment market, and supporting renewable energy solutions.

£150 million was unlocked in May 2020 to support the UK's charity and voluntary sectors, as they continue to play a vital role during the coronavirus pandemic. The funding

is supporting urgent work to tackle youth unemployment, expand access to emergency loans for civil society organisations and help improve the availability of fair, affordable credit to people in vulnerable circumstances.

"Funds raised through the existing Dormant Assets Scheme have already made a huge difference to vulnerable people and communities across the

UK, especially during the pandemic," said Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. "Expanding the scheme will mean hundreds of millions more for good causes, helping us to build back stronger in the years to come."

Baroness Barran, Minister for Civil Society, said: "Expanding the Dormant Assets Scheme provides us with two positive opportunities to highlight the importance of people tracing their lost financial assets. Firstly it will highlight the potential importance for people to trace their lost financial assets. Secondly, where that is not possible, it will release over £800 million for social investment that will make a real difference to people – both young and old – experiencing challenging circumstances across the UK as we work hard to recover from this pandemic."

"Banks and building societies across the UK are working tirelessly to reunite people with forgotten assets. But on occasions where this isn't possible, it's right that these funds are used to tackle some of the UK's most



Baroness Barran, Minister for Civil Society



John Glen MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury

pressing social and environmental challenges," said John Glen MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury. "The expansion of the scheme will mean more people are reconnected with their assets, whilst also making more money available for good causes."

To date, funding released through the Dormant Assets Scheme has been used in a number of ways, including:

Over £425 million has been used to establish Big Society Capital, an independent financial institution, launched in 2012, with the aim of growing the social investment mar-

ket in the UK. To date, over 1,200 social enterprises and charities have received investment from Big Society Capital and the social impact investment market has grown from £830 million in 2011 to £5.1 billion.

£96 million has been provided to Fair4All Finance to increase the financial resilience and wellbeing of people in vulnerable circumstances through improving availability of fair and accessible financial products and services. Fair4All Finance has provided over £15 million in financial support to the community finance sector so far, including £12 million of equity investments in community finance providers and £3.6 million in Covid-19 grants.

£90 million has been provided to Youth Futures Foundation to break down the barriers to work for young people across England, with a focus on responding to the findings of the



Photo: Ming Jun Tan

Racial Disparity Audit. It includes investing £6 million into targeted support for young people who are not in education, employment or training, and deploying £8.7 million in coronavirus grants to frontline charities, social enterprises and infrastructure bodies tackling youth unemployment.

£40 million has been provided to Access – The Foundation for Social Investment. In response to Covid-19 Access has made up to £10 million available for emergency support through social lenders, while also developing a wider £18 million programme of flexible long-term recovery finance for the social sector.

£10.4 million of funding has been provided to the ‘Engage to Change’ project in Wales since 2016, to break down barriers and stigma around disability by supporting 16–25 year olds with learning difficulties and/or autism into employment. Working with over 800 employers in Wales, in the past five years the project has enabled 959 young people to develop new skills, 381 young people to secure a paid work placement, and 272 young people to move into secure employment after their work placement.

In June 2020, more than £800,000 of dormant assets funding was provided via the Young Start programme to 12 youth-led groups in Scotland, including Leonard Cheshire and Can Do Dumfries, to help young people develop their personal skills, gain accredited qualifications that will boost their chances of future employment, and reach their full potential – often through digital platforms to keep them engaged during the pandemic.

Northern Ireland has recently used dormant assets funding to establish a £20.5 million Dormant Accounts Fund for the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector, which will open for applications on 12 January.

The UK Government intends to legislate for the scheme expansion and will continue to work with industry, regulators, and Reclaim Fund Ltd to ensure its success.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: COVID-19 VACCINATION IN THE EU

European Commission provides question and answers to all the key questions related to Covid-19 vaccination across the European Union states.

With which companies has the European Commission concluded COVID-19 vaccine agreements?

The Commission is negotiating intensely to build a diversified portfolio of vaccines for EU citizens at fair prices. Contracts have been concluded with AstraZeneca (400 million doses), Sanofi-GSK (300 million doses), Johnson and Johnson (400 million doses), BioNTech-Pfizer 600 million doses, CureVac (405 million doses) and Moderna (160 million doses). The Commission has concluded exploratory talks with the pharmaceutical company Novavax with a view to purchasing up to 200 million doses.

This means that the Commission has secured a portfolio of more than 2 billion doses. For the Commission it was important from the beginning to build a diversified portfolio of vaccines based on different technologies, to increase the chances that one or more of the vaccine candidates are approved by EMA. Should all vaccines candidates turn out to be safe and effective, Member States have the possibility to donate part of their doses to lower and middle income countries.

Which vaccine is now authorised?

The Commission has given the conditional marketing authorisation for the vaccines developed by BioN-

Tech and Pfizer on 21 December, and Moderna on 6 January following EMA positive assessment of its safety and efficacy.

No other vaccine producer has formally applied for a marketing authorisation to EMA. In order to accelerate the process, EMA has started rolling reviews on the vaccines produced by Johnson and Johnson and AstraZeneca.

Will the EU have enough capacity to manufacture the COVID vaccines?

There is already substantial vaccine production capacity in the EU – and the Commission is working intensively to increase it. In addition, and in order to ensure that vaccine developers have the necessary capacity to scale up the production of COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they have been approved by the EMA, the Commission supports the necessary investment in the development of such production capacities.

How will logistics work? How will vaccines be distributed?

Logistics and transportation is a key aspect on which all Member States have to work, as emphasised in the Communication on preparedness for COVID-19 vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment of 15 October.

Delivery to national distribution hub (s) will be ensured by the manufacturers.

Further distribution to vaccination centres will be ensured by Member States, who will also be

responsible for the vaccination of their population.

Who should be vaccinated first?

All Member States will have access to COVID-19 vaccines at the same time on the basis of the size of their population. The overall number of vaccine doses will however be limited during the initial stages of deployment and before production can be ramped up. The Commission has therefore provided examples of unranked priority groups to be considered by countries once COVID-19 vaccines become available.

Most countries have defined priority groups and are further refining who should get priority in these priority groups e.g. older person over 80 years of age. The ECDC published an overview of where EU/EEA countries and the UK are with the development of their vaccination plans/strategies. ECDC is also working on a modelling exercise on prioritisation to support Member States. This report should be published before Christmas.

Will citizens know which vaccine they will be getting?

Yes.

When vaccines receive conditional marketing authorisation, the package leaflet with details on the specific vaccine will be translated into all languages and published in electronic form by the Commission.

All health care professionals and all patients would therefore have access to a leaflet in electronic form in their own languages.

The vaccine companies are responsible for putting in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that each patient receives the package leaflet in print form in his/her language upon request without burdening healthcare professionals administering the vaccine.

What labelling and packaging information will citizens and health care professionals get with the COVID-19 vaccines?

In order to allow for a rapid deployment of COVID-19 vaccines at large scale, the Commission has developed, with Member States and the European Medicines Agency, labelling and packaging flexibilities for a temporary period. Flexibility in the labelling and packaging requirements is expected to reduce transport costs and storage space, improving the distribution of the doses between Member States and limit possible impact on the production of other routine vaccines. Despite these flexibilities, anyone vaccinated, and health care professionals will have access to all the information on the vaccine used.

An example of such flexibilities is the fact that the outer and immediate packaging may only be printed in English. Also, the package leaflet does not have to be included inside the package of the medicinal product, but will be provided separately by the vaccine company, who will be responsible for the distribution of the printed package leaflet locally in the national language (s).

Some Member States do not require the package leaflet to be printed in their national language (s). The leaflet may be printed in English only, but the information contained in the leaflet should still be available in the national language (s), for instance via a QR code printed in the package leaflet and also available in the EMA website in all languages.

How will the Commission support Member States in the roll-out of vaccines?

The Commission stands ready to support Member States to ensure the

smooth deployment of COVID-19 vaccines. A number of EU instruments in the programming period 2021–2027 can offer financial support in this regard.

For instance, investments to support health reforms and resilient, effective and accessible health systems are eligible under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), and can be included in the national Recovery and Resilience Plans. Furthermore, the Cohesion Policy funds (European Regional Development Fund – ERDF and European Social Fund Plus – ESF+) as well as the REACT-EU programme

can provide financing to Member States and their regions to strengthen their health systems, both in terms of managing and recovering from the current health crisis and as well as ensuring their resilience in the longer term.

Collectively, these programmes can support a range of investment needs, for example, in health infrastructure, training of health professionals, health promotion, disease prevention, integrated care models, digital transformation of healthcare, and equipment, including critical medical products and supplies to strengthen the resilience of health systems.

In this context, investments to prepare health systems for the roll out COVID-19 vaccines are eligible under these programme, especially given the direct link to the resilience of health systems, the availability of critical medical products and disease prevention. However, it will be up to each Member State to decide on the priorities and content of their Recovery and Resilience Plan and also their Programmes for the Cohesion Policy funds.



Photo: Hakan Nural

How will vaccination certificates work?

A common approach to pharmacovigilance, and to trusted, reliable and verifiable vaccination certificates across the EU could reinforce the success of vaccination programmes in Member States and the trust of citizens.

Registering data on vaccination is important both at individual and population levels. For an individual, it is a means to know and demonstrate their vaccination status. Proof of vaccination should be available from the moment vaccination starts. Vaccination certificates could for example be useful in the context of travel, showing that a person has been vaccinated and therefore may not need testing and quarantine upon arrival in another country.

The Commission and Member States, together with WHO, are working on vaccination certificates. This work includes a minimum dataset, including a unique identifier, for each individual vaccination which will ease the issuance of certificates and vaccination monitoring on a Europe-wide basis from the moment

that the COVID-19 vaccines are authorised.

The development of the common specifications framework will take account of and contribute to the work of WHO. EU funds, such as RRF, ERDF, InvestEU can support the setting up of the Immunisation Information Systems (IIS), Electronic Health Records and secondary use of health data on immunisation.

How much does the vaccine cost? What is the price of the vaccine?

The Commission negotiated advantageous deals with vaccine manufacturers to secure access to almost 2 billion doses so far.

At this stage the specific pricing per dose is covered by confidentiality obligations. However, a significant part of the overall costs are funded by a contribution from the overall EU funding for vaccines.

Will the vaccine be free in all EU Member States?

While this is a Member State responsibility, the large majority of the Member States intend to offer vaccination free of charge.

Are the contracts with the companies publicly available?

The focus for the Commission is the protection of public health and securing the best possible agreements with companies so that vaccines are affordable, safe and efficacious.

Contracts are protected for confidentiality reasons, which is warranted by the highly competitive nature of this global market. This is in order to protect sensitive negotiations as well as business related information, such as financial information and development and production plans.



Photo: Markus Winkler

Disclosing sensitive business information would also undermine the tendering process and have potentially far-reaching consequences for the ability of the Commission to carry out its tasks as set out in the legal instruments that form the basis of the negotiations. All companies require that such sensitive business information remains confidential between the signatories of the contract. The Commission therefore has to respect the contracts it concludes with the companies.

When will the vaccine allow the control of the pandemic?

For some known communicable diseases, it is understood that herd immunity allowing to control a pandemic and eventually eradicate a disease requires around 70% of the population to have protection either from vaccination or previous infection.

Depending on the pace of vaccination and natural infections, the pandemic might be controlled by the end 2021 in Europe.

Can we still spread the disease once vaccinated?

We do not yet know. Additional evaluations will be needed to assess the effect of the vaccine in preventing asymptomatic infection, including data from clinical trials and from the vaccine's use post-authorization.

Therefore, and for the time being, even vaccinated people will need to wear masks, avoid indoor crowds, and respect social distance, so on. Other factors, including how many people get vaccinated and how the virus is spreading in communities may also prompt revision of this guidance.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get the vaccine?

There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long after infection someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again; this is called natural immunity. Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this.

TECHNOLOGY

WORLD RADIO DAY: FEBRUARY 13

Radio is a powerful medium for celebrating humanity in all its diversity and constitutes a platform for democratic discourse. At the global level, radio remains the most widely consumed medium. This unique ability to reach out the widest audience means radio can shape a society's experience of diversity, stand as an arena for all voices to speak out, be represented and heard. Radio stations should serve diverse communities, offering a wide variety of programs, viewpoints and content, and reflect the diversity of audiences in their organizations and operations.

Radio is a low-cost medium specifically suited to reaching remote communities and vulnerable people, offering a platform to intervene in the public debate, irrespective of people's educational level. It also plays a crucial role in emergency communication and disaster relief.

Radio is uniquely positioned to bring communities together and foster positive dialogue for change. By listening to its audiences and responding to their needs, radio services provide the diversity of views and voices needed to address the challenges we all face.

UNESCO's Executive Board recommended to the General Conference the proclamation of World Radio Day, on the basis of a wide consultation process, carried out by UNESCO in 2011, further to a proposal from Spain. The leader of the project, the Academia Española de la Radio, received support for the

proposal from diverse stakeholders, including major international broadcasters and broadcasting unions and associations.

The date of 13 February, the day United Nations Radio was established in 1946, was proposed by the Director-General of UNESCO.

UNESCO's General Conference, at its 36th session, proclaimed 13 February as World Radio Day. On 14 January 2013, the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO's proclamation of World Radio Day. During its 67th Session, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 13 February as World Radio Day.

The objectives of the Day are to raise greater awareness among the public and the media of the importance of radio; to encourage decision makers to establish and provide access to in-

formation through radio; as well as to enhance networking and international cooperation among broadcasters.

"Radio brings people together. In an era of rapid media evolution, radio retains a special place in every community as an accessible source of vital news and information," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "But radio is also a source of innovation that pioneered interaction with audiences and user-generated content decades before they became mainstream.

"Radio offers a wonderful display of diversity in its formats, in its languages, and among radio professionals themselves," he added. "This sends an important message to the world. As we strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and tackle the climate crisis, radio has a key role to play as a source of information and inspiration alike."



Photo: OCV Photo

WORLD OF CHANGE

CLOSING THE CLIMATE ACTION GAP WITH GREEN RECOVERY

A green pandemic recovery could cut up to 25 per cent off predicted 2030 greenhouse gas emissions and bring the world closer to meeting the 2 °C goal of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, a new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report finds.

UNEP's annual Emissions Gap Report 2020 finds that, despite a dip in 2020 carbon dioxide emissions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is still heading for a temperature rise in excess of 3 °C this century.

However, if governments invest in climate action as part of pandemic recovery and solidify emerging net-zero commitments with strengthened pledges at the next climate meeting – taking place in Glasgow in November 2021 – they can bring emissions to levels broadly consistent with the 2 °C goal.

By combining a green pandemic recovery with swift moves to include new net-zero commitments in updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, and following up with rapid, stronger action, governments could still attain the more-ambitious 1.5 °C goal.

“The year 2020 is on course to be one of the warmest on record, while wildfires, storms and droughts con-

tinue to wreak havoc,” said Inger Andersen, UNEP's Executive Director. “However, UNEP's Emissions Gap report shows that a green pandemic recovery can take a huge slice out of greenhouse gas emissions and help slow climate change. I urge governments to back a green recovery in the next stage of COVID-19 fiscal interventions and raise significantly their climate ambitions in 2021.”

Each year, the Emissions Gap Report assesses the gap between anticipated emissions and levels consistent with the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming this century to well below 2 °C and pursuing 1.5 °C. The report finds that in 2019

erage, with a more rapid increase of 2.6 per cent in 2019 due to a large increase in forest fires.

As a result of reduced travel, lower industrial activity and lower electricity generation this year due to the pandemic, carbon dioxide emissions are predicted to fall up to 7 per cent in 2020. However, this dip only translates to a 0.01 °C reduction of global warming by 2050. Meanwhile, NDCs remain inadequate.

Green recovery critical

A green pandemic recovery, however, can cut up to 25 per cent off the emissions we would expect to see in 2030 based on policies in place before COVID-19. A green recovery would put emissions in 2030 at 44 GtCO₂e, instead of the predicted 59 GtCO₂e – far outstripping emission reductions foreseen in unconditional NDCs, which leave the world on track for a 3.2 °C temperature rise.

Such a green recovery would put emissions within the range that gives a 66 per cent chance of holding temperatures to below 2 °C, but would still be insufficient to achieve the 1.5 °C goal.

Measures to prioritize in green fiscal recovery include direct support for zero-emissions technologies and



Inger Andersen, UNEP's Executive Director

total greenhouse gas emissions, including land-use change, reached a new high of 59.1 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent (GtCO₂e). Global greenhouse gas emissions have grown 1.4 per cent per year since 2010 on av-



Photo: Karsten Wurth

infrastructure, reducing fossil fuel subsidies, no new coal plants, and promoting nature-based solutions – including large-scale landscape restoration and reforestation.

So far, the report finds, action on a green fiscal recovery has been limited. Around one-quarter of G20 members have dedicated shares of their spending, up to 3 per cent of GDP, to low-carbon measures.

There nonetheless remains a significant opportunity for countries to implement green policies and programmes. Governments must take this opportunity in the next stage of COVID-19 fiscal interventions, the report finds.

The report also finds that the growing number of countries committing to net-zero emissions goals by mid-century is a “significant and encouraging development”. At the time of report completion, 126 countries covering 51 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions had adopted, announced or were considering net-zero goals.

To remain feasible and credible, however, these commitments must be urgently translated into strong near-term policies and action and reflected in NDCs. The levels of ambition in the Paris Agreement still must be roughly tripled for the 2 °C pathway and increased at least fivefold for the 1.5 °C pathway.

Reforming consumption behaviour critical

Each year the report also looks at the potential of specific sectors. In 2020, it considers consumer behaviour and the shipping and aviation sectors.

The shipping and aviation sectors, which account for 5 per cent of global emissions, also require attention. Improvements in technology and operations can increase fuel efficiency, but projected increases in demand mean this will not result in decarbonisation and absolute reductions of CO₂. Both sectors need

to combine energy efficiency with a rapid transition away from fossil fuel, the report finds.

The report finds that stronger climate action must include changes in consumption behaviour by the private sector and individuals. Around two-thirds of global emissions are linked to private households, when using consumption-based accounting.

The wealthy bear greatest responsibility: the emissions of the richest one per cent of the global population account for more than twice the combined share of the poorest 50 per cent. This group will need to reduce its footprint by a factor of 30 to stay in line with the Paris Agreement targets.

Possible actions to support and enable lower carbon consumption include replacing domestic short haul flights with rail, incentives and infrastructure to enable cycling and car-sharing, improving the energy efficiency of housing and policies to reduce food waste.

PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

AUGUSTINE SOKOLOVSKI,
Doctor of Theology, Priest

The liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Church has many dimensions. It simultaneously contains different time sequences, liturgical cycles and links of festive events that similarly enter into certain – often paradoxical – interactions with each other. So commemoration becomes a profound matter.

The first and most important feast day from the very beginning of Christianity is Easter. Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This peculiarity of celebration means that all the festivals and memories associated with Easter (Lent, Pentecost and the sequence of liturgical readings on Sundays) fall on a different date every year. Parallel to the Easter cycle in the liturgical calendar is the Christmas cycle. This period runs from the Annunciation, i.e. the day of the conception of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, and includes Christmas, Circumcision and the Presentation of the Lord.

Initially, in the early Church, Epiphany was almost the only Christian holiday besides Easter – a kind of antithesis to the latter. If Easter was a celebration in honour of the risen Christ, then Epiphany was a celebration in honour of Christ's incarnation, the remembrance of his earthly life. Over time, different events from the life of the Lord Jesus were separately celebrated. Finally, together with the events of the Easter cycle and the feast days in honour of the Virgin Mary, they formed a sequence of the Great Twelve Feasts of the Orthodox Church. The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is one of them. It

is celebrated in the Russian Church on the 15th of February.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord has different names: Bringing Jesus to the Temple; the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Candlemas, the Liturgy of Light; and even the Meeting of the Lord in Russian and Greek Orthodoxy. Each of these names is associated with different meanings of the feast, which are gradually revealed in the story as described in the Gospel. The Feast of the Presentation bears a biblical origin. The Church's dogma on the Incarnation states that God in Christ Jesus truly became a man and lived a real human life. As the Messiah sent by God to save humanity, the Lord Jesus was a truly religious person. The religiosity of Israel during the time of Jesus Christ was built around certain constants, the most important of which was the Law and the Temple. Jesus Christ came to fulfil the Law and had to fulfil it. Following the Law of Moses, the birth of the first male child was accompanied by a triad of obligatory ceremonies described in the biblical book of Leviticus: Circumcision, Purification of a Woman and Dedication of the Firstborn.

Accordingly, the narrative of the event of the Presentation of Lord begins with the words about the circumcision of the child Jesus. For us 21st-century people, it is significant that the child was given the human name Jesus on the eighth day after birth (Genesis 12:3). This seemingly familiar event takes on incredible significance in light of the dogma of the Incarnation.

It is crucial to remember that the word "God" itself, no matter what lan-

guage you pronounce it in, is not the name of God but a conventional concept denoting the One who is above every name and merely cannot be named. In the biblical book of Exodus, God calls himself "JHWH" (Exodus 3:14). However, this is only an inaccurate translation. In Hebrew, the term means this: "He is the one who is what he (continually) becomes. Becomes what he should become. He is and will be." Or more simply, "I will be."

But if for God the absence of a name is a sign of his majesty, then the giving of the name "Jesus" to the newborn divine child on the eighth day signifies the depth of God's self-humility, which in theological language is called kenosis or exhaustion. After all, the born God-man remained nameless until the eighth day. He remained nameless to free man from all destructive anonymity and lack of a name, to fill our names with life.

According to the same book of Leviticus that prescribes circumcision, a woman who gives birth to a male child is considered unclean for 40 days. After that, she must sacrifice a lamb. If the woman cannot afford a lamb, she shall bring two doves or two pigeons (Lev. 12:6–8). Based on Luke's Gospel testimony of "two turtle doves or pigeon chicks" we can conclude that Mary and Joseph were poor (Luke 2:22–24). When the days of their purification according to the Law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present him before the Lord, as prescribed in the Law of the Lord, so that every firstborn male baby must be dedicated to the Lord. The combination of these two rituals – the purification of the mother and the bringing of



Icon, the Presentation of Jesus, early 15th century, Andrei Rublev workshop, the State Russian Museum, Saint-Petersburg

the first-born child – was, in turn, the reason why, according to the liturgical rule, the Feast is simultaneously dedicated to the Lord and the Theotokos.

The history of the biblical people before the coming of the Messiah into the world is a history of expectation. In the case of the Presentation, this expecta-

tion takes on concrete, astonishing and meaningful characteristics. "Then there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was a righteous and devout man who longed for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. The Holy Spirit foretold him that he would not see death

The Presentation as a meeting of the Messiah and righteous Israel. The Presentation as a meeting of God and man. The Presentation as the meeting of the two testaments. The Presentation as the joy of the people of God. The Presentation as the fulfillment of our hope.

until he saw Christ the Lord. And he came by inspiration to the temple" (Luke 2:25–27). In these brief words of the Gospel text, everything is said about Simeon. Simeon was one of those biblically righteous people who, over the millennia of the history of God's chosen people, beginning with Abraham, followed the divine call and awaited deliverance without knowing exactly how, when and under what historical circumstances it would come from God. The Holy Spirit rested on Simeon and the promise that he would see Christ the Lord was an unmeasurable blessing. And it was not only Simeon who waited for Christ in the temple. Anna the prophetess, a remarkable combination of female biblical holiness and prophetic gift, was also waiting for Christ the Messiah. It is interesting what exactly the Gospel says about her, as about reaching a very advanced age. The presentation was this meeting of two righteous people, Simeon and Anna, historical figures who simultaneously embodied righteous men and women throughout Israel's history, with the Lord.

WINTER BREAK IN AUSTRIA: SKIING HEAVEN



Photo: Tourismusverband St Johann in Salzburg

Winter holidays are sublime in SalzburgerLand. In total, this Austrian state is home to 1,140km of blue runs, 1,305km of red and 305km of black – all accessible with the Salzburger Super Ski Card. Off the slopes, cozy mountain huts, horse-drawn sleigh rides, toboggan runs, snowshoe hikes and ice climbing await eager holidaymakers.

There are updates aplenty across the province this year, with a new “Panorama Link” ten-seater gondola connecting Flachau / Wagrain and Flachauwinkl / Kleinarl, creating one of the largest winter sports regions in Europe. St. Gilgen on Lake Wolfgang introduces the Zwölferhorn eight-seater gondola, adding a restaurant to the lift’s mountain station. For those eager to try out the latest accommodation: Hotel Blü is new in Bad Hofgastein, boasting a rooftop spa and yoga studio. The Stadthotel Oberndorf expands with 20 new modern rooms in the former town hall, just 10 minutes from the famous Silent Night Chapel. The award winning Mesnerhaus restaurant adds guest rooms to its offering, while the five-star Hotel Moar Gut in the Grossarl Valley reopens after renovations in October.

408km of SalzburgerLand’s pistes are available via Zell am See-Kaprun with the Ski ALPIN CARD, which grants access to the Schmittenhöhe, the Kitzsteinhorn Glacier and Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn. In this beautiful region of lakes and mountains, guests can test the latest ski models and join special workshops during November’s ‘Snow-How-Days’. Furthermore, from 11th – 13th and 18th – 20th December, holidaymakers can take part in the “Digital Winter Opening Schmittenhöhe”. SalzburgerLand is also

home to the high altitude Obertauern, with its long November to May season and one of Europe’s steepest mogul slopes, the Gamsleiten II. For guests looking for some guidance before heading out onto such challenging slopes, there’s a new ski instructor format for 2020/21. “Bobby” is the new private ski instructor for families, whose instruction becomes exclusively available to all members of a family unit for a full three days once booked. Located just under 90 minutes from Salzburg airport, the cozy, serene and scenic region of St. Johann in Salzburg is also ideal for trips with children. The region’s infrastructure has been designed with happy memories of family holidays in mind, and kids big and small will love its 210km of slopes, ten winter hiking routes, snow park and toboggan run. From 28th March – 4th April 2021, the region will host its first ever winter “JoKiWo” children’s week, with an action-packed programme for younger visitors.

The western province of Tirol is one of Austria’s most famous and well-loved provinces for winter holidays from the UK, boasting 80 ski areas and more than 3,000km of skiable terrain. After hours of fun on slopes, sledges, ice-skates and snow-kites, visitors can be assured that hearty local dishes and warming drinks await in picture-perfect mountain huts and chic restaurants. In Tirol, a “gemütlich” welcome is always guaranteed. The region’s superlative winter offering is further enhanced this year with additions to its lift infrastructure and range of slope-side activities. In the family-friendly Fiss, for example, a new eight-person chairlift with heated seats and a child security mechanism is introduced, while the Steinplatte/Waidring ski resort sees the Kappellenbahn transformed from a six-person chairlift to an eight-seater to reduce waiting times. Winter walkers and cross-country skiers will be happy to hear about new routes in the Wipptal Valley, Kartitsch, Lienz

and the Gschnitztal Valley, while a new toboggan run in Fiss is guaranteed to awaken childlike glee in visitors of all ages. Furthermore, the 2020/21 season sees a variety of new well-appointed, comfortable and stylish accommodation options for winter holidays, including the secluded Feriensuite Seppel apartment in Schirm, the 21 ten-person wooden chalets in Steinach's Chaletdorf Bergeralm (each with its own Finnish sauna and wood-burning heater), and the family-friendly holiday

homes at the Farm Resort Geislerhof, each of which has three bedrooms and a private spa.

Innsbruck is Tirol's iconic capital, with a superlative 'SKI plus CITY' pass that grants access to its 13 nearby ski areas as well as 22 cultural sites of interest and wellness experiences. The city welcomes a new attraction this year in the shape of LUMAGICA: a light installation in the Hofgarten Imperial Gardens. Up in the mountains, a fast six-seater chair lift is introduced in Kühtai, in addition to a newly installed ticket office to increase access points and minimise queues. Another Tirolean destination with a new lift for the 2020/21 season is the Tiroler Zugspitz Arena – a region made up of seven small, charming towns and home to 142km of slopes, 7.9km of toboggan runs and 131km of cross-country tracks. This year, its winter sports offering is further strengthened with the addition of the Thanellerbahn – a fully automatic, six-seater chairlift with weather protection and a liftable conveyor belt, starting at the Thanellerkar valley station. Further to the east in the province of Tirol lies SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser-Brixental. This collec-



Photo: TVB Innsbruck Klaus Polzer

tion of nine villages forms one seriously sizeable ski region, offering visitors 288km of pistes. Here we find two new ski lifts for 2020/21: the ten-person Hexenwasser gondola and the Salvistabahn, which adds a 650m extension in its run up to the middle station. SkiWelt also adds to its already impressive eco-friendly credentials this year with the construction of the Brantlalm Lake for hydropower generation. The Schindlergratbahn is this year's new addition in St. Anton am Arlberg, the region situated in the heart of Tirol with 305km of slopes and 200km of freeriding terrain. This modern gondola lift drops off experienced skiers at the former top station, before continuing for a further 420m towards gentler downhill runs. There's an addition to this region's culinary scene too: two new dining lounges, a winter garden and terrace await 2020/21 winter guests in the Verwall Valley's Wagner Hut.

Zillertal is an immense ski region, with 542km of slopes spanning across four areas, all accessible with the Zillertaler Superskipass. Alongside its first-rate winter sports scene, visitors can expect some outstanding food

and drink. For hearty Tirolean cuisine after some serious skiing, head to the newly renovated Platzlalm. Another new addition for 2020/21 is the expansive exhibition area at the Zillertal Beer BrauKunstHaus, which



Photo: Christoph Johann, Zillertal Tourismus GmbH

holds regular tours and tastings of Tirol's oldest private brewery. Foodie travelers will also enjoy the region of Ischgl, home to nine toque-awarded restaurants at which to enjoy high cuisine and Tirolean delicacies. In line with the region's extensive COVID-19 protective measures, après-ski will not be available this year. However, with a myriad of activities on offer from winter hiking, snowshoeing and night tobogganing to fat biking, paragliding and ziplining, there's no shortage of alternative experiences with which to enjoy one's time in the region. Unique events are also lined up for the 2020/21 season, such as January's "Shapes in White" snow sculpture competition. Another eccentric event can be found in St. Jo-



Photo: Alpbachtal Tourismus, Gabriele Griessenboeck

hann in Tirol, which will host its first ever Dirndl and Lederhosen Winter Games on 20th March 2021, with a programme of ski races, beer mug lifting, snowball target shooting and zipflbob racing. Alongside such festivities, this charming and family-friendly region is home to 43km of slopes and a myriad of slope-side activities, from its 100 winter hiking and snowshoeing routes to the exciting 531m long Flying Fox Winter Course zipline.

The neighbouring Kitzbühel is a legendary winter location, with a history of skiing reaching back over 125 years. Its long October to May ski season and pistes starting in the town mean that guests have plenty of opportunity to explore its 234km of slopes, snow parks and extensive freeride areas. This year, the Kitzbühel Alpine Trail (KAT) – popular with hikers is

summer – receives its own two-part winter version with the introduction of the seven-day KAT Ski Tour and the 60km KAT Walk Winter. Another region with a long winter season is Ötztal, which boasts 363km of slopes across six ski areas and two glaciers – all of which can be accessed with the Ötztal Super Skipass. A dynamic pricing system is new for 2020/21, which lets visitors benefit from lower prices when booking early online, and extra off-slope experiences included free of charge when booking for at least six days. Whether it's a trip to Sölden with snow sports pros or a family holiday in cozy Gries, this new system guarantees great value. For more family-friendly winter sports, visit the picturesque Ski Juwel Alpbachtal Wildschönau, with 109km of slopes and over 100km of cross-country skiing and winter hiking routes. Those new to winter sports can complete their first turns on the wide, gentle runs, while more advanced skiers enjoy 67km of red and black pistes. A holiday here isn't complete without sampling the local cuisine: indulge in a family size Kaiserschmarrn at the Markbachjochalm hut and join craft beer tastings at the Kristallbrauerei.

A BALANCED DIET: YOUR KEY TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

According to the Eatwell Guide developed by the National Health Service (NHS) of the UK, eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health, and can help you feel your best.

This means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions, and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

To have a healthy, balanced diet, NHS advises to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day and base meals on higher fibre starchy foods like potatoes, bread, rice or pasta. It is also important to have some dairy or dairy alternatives (such as soya drinks), as well as eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein. When it comes to choosing oils and spreads, choose unsaturated varieties, and eat them in small amounts. Not least important is to drink plenty of fluids (at least 6 to 8 glasses a day). If you're having foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and sugar, have these less often and in small amounts.

Try to choose a variety of different foods from the 5 main food groups to get a wide range of nutrients.

Most people in the UK eat and drink too many calories, too much saturated fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit, vegetables, oily fish or fibre.

Fruit and vegetables: are you getting your 5 A Day?

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins and minerals and fibre, and should make up just over a third of the food you eat each day.

It's recommended that you eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. They can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.



Photo: Nadine Primeau

There's evidence that people who eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

Eating 5 portions is not as hard as it sounds.

A portion is:

- 80g of fresh, canned or frozen fruit and vegetables
- 30g of dried fruit – which should be kept to mealtimes
- 150ml glass of fruit juice or smoothie – but do not have more than 1 portion a day as these drinks are sugary and can damage teeth

Just 1 apple, banana, pear or similar-sized fruit is 1 portion each. A slice of pineapple or melon is also 1 portion, and 3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables is another portion.

Adding a tablespoon of dried fruit, such as raisins, to your morning cereal is an easy way to get 1 portion.

You could also swap your mid-morning biscuit for a banana, and add a side salad to your lunch.

In the evening, have a portion of vegetables with dinner and fresh fruit with plain, lower fat yoghurt for dessert to reach your 5 A Day.

Starchy foods in your diet

Starchy foods should make up just over a third of everything you eat. This means your meals should be based on these foods.

Choose wholegrain or wholemeal varieties of starchy foods, such as brown rice, wholewheat pasta, and brown, wholemeal or higher fibre

white bread. They contain more fibre, and usually more vitamins and minerals, than white varieties.

Potatoes with the skins on are a great source of fibre and vitamins. For example, when having boiled potatoes or a jacket potato, eat the skin too.

Milk and dairy foods (and alternatives)

Milk and dairy foods, such as cheese and yoghurt, are good sources of protein. They also contain calcium, which helps keep your bones healthy.

Go for lower fat and lower sugar products where possible.

Choose semi-skimmed, 1% fat or skimmed milk, as well as lower fat hard cheeses or cottage cheese, and lower fat, lower sugar yoghurt.

Dairy alternatives, such as soya drinks, are also included in this food group. When buying alternatives, choose unsweetened, calcium-fortified versions.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

These foods are all good sources of protein, which is essential for the body to grow and repair itself.

They're also good sources of a range of vitamins and minerals. Meat is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals, including iron, zinc and B vitamins. It's also one of the main sources of vitamin B12.

Choose lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry whenever possible to cut down on fat. Always cook meat thoroughly. Try to eat less red and processed meat like bacon, ham and sausages.

Eggs and fish are also good sources of protein and contain many vitamins and minerals. Oily fish is particularly rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

Aim to eat at least 2 portions of fish a week, including 1 portion of oily fish. You can choose from fresh,



Photo: Jennifer Pallian

frozen or canned, but remember that canned and smoked fish can often be high in salt.

Pulses, including beans, peas and lentils, are naturally very low in fat and high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.

Nuts are high in fibre, and unsalted nuts make a good snack. But they do still contain high levels of fat, so eat them in moderation.

Oils and spreads

Some fat in the diet is essential, but on average people in the UK eat too much saturated fat. It's important to get most of your fat from unsaturated oils and spreads. Swapping to unsatu-

rated fats can help lower cholesterol. Remember that all types of fat are high in energy and should be eaten in small amounts.

Eat less saturated fat, sugar and salt

Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk of developing heart disease.

Regularly consuming foods and drinks high in sugar increases your risk of obesity and tooth decay. Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure, which increases your risk of getting heart disease or having a stroke.



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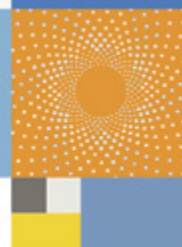


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UNIVERSITIES ACROSS UK TACKLE GRADE INFLATION

Universities UK and GuildHE, on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA), have published a progress review of universities' efforts to protect the value of their qualifications. This report demonstrates significant progress over the past 18 months following the publication of a statement of intent, which saw universities across the UK agree new commitments to address grade inflation.

Universities had previously seen a steady rise in the proportion of 1st and 2:1 degrees awarded. However, in 2018–19 there was a levelling off in the proportion of 1st and 2:1 degrees awarded, with no increase witnessed.

The report outlines how the sector is protecting the transparency, reliability, and fairness of degree classifications to ensure that students can take pride in their achievements and the public and employers have confidence in their qualifications.

The review highlights progress made across UK higher education. In July 2020, new UK-wide principles for effective degree algorithms, the method through which a student's final grade is awarded, were published. 96% of providers surveyed intend to use this new guidance to tighten up practices.

National descriptions for degree classifications, detailing for the first time what all four classifications (1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd) look like, have been published by the UKSCQA. Since October 2020, 76% of institutions across the UK have used or are intending to use UK-wide degree classification descriptors at their institution.

87% of providers have or intend to make changes to their external examiner process, most often to develop additional guidance and ask examiners



Photo: Tetiana Shyshkina

to reflect on degree classification trends. Since 2016, Advance HE's degree standards programme has trained 2,664 participants in external examining across the UK.

By December 2020, 61 providers within England and Wales had published degree outcomes statements, detailing their final degree classifications for graduates, and setting out how data has been scrutinised. All providers are expected to have published by the end of January 2021.

Future work will include building an understanding of how changes to teaching, learning and assessment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic relate to degree classification. It will also include engaging with league table compilers to assess the appropriate use and presentation of a 'good degrees' metric within student information.

Professor Andrew Wathey, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle and

Chair of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, said: "The sector has taken substantive action through statements of intent to protect the value of degree classifications. Individual institutions, their executive teams and governing bodies have engaged strongly, taking forward the sector's own guidance on maintaining degree standards and implementing best practice. Combined, these activities demonstrate a sector commitment to protect the value of qualifications so that students can have pride in their awards and have confidence that they are a true reflection of achievement."

Professor Debra Humphris, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Brighton and Chair of UUK's Student Policy Network, said: "It is very encouraging to see the progress that has been made across the sector. Universities clearly remain committed to taking action to address the issue of grade inflation."