



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communication

Spokesperson's Service

Gradual re-opening of the press room – note for journalists

[New version with effect from 20 September 2021]

The Spokesperson's Service has re-opened the Berlaymont press room to a limited number of journalists **as of 1 July**. The SPP will continue implementing a hybrid system that allows questions to be asked both remotely (via the application), and in person (with a physical presence in the press room for the press events).

Limiting the number of available seats

The normal press room capacity of 300 seats is limited to 99 available places for journalists. The first four rows are reserved for a limited number of photographers and camera operators based on the press pool system, and for authorised Commission staff.

Special 'no-sitting' signs are installed in the press room, clearly indicating which seats are blocked off and which are available for journalists.

Posters with current hygiene guidelines (in English, French and German) are placed in front of the press room, including *inter alia* the following: mask wearing, badge scanning via the mobile-badge reader, physical distancing, the recommendation to use one's own headset, and the limited number of available places in the room.

Entering the press room from the back doors is strictly limited to authorised EC staff. The posters indicate this limitation on the doors.

Admitting journalists to daily press events

Journalists arriving at the Berlaymont entrance, like staff, are subject to the fever detection system. This control should not delay access to the press area, and unless a fever is detected (37.7 C or above), all accredited journalists are allowed to enter the press zone. Nevertheless, journalists are advised to come to the Commission premises at least 15 minutes before the start of the press event. Accredited journalists are allowed to enter the press room via the 'fast check lane' between 11.00 and 12.30, as before.

Accredited journalists who have the new (white format) inter-institutional press badge are asked to scan their badge at the sliding doors of the Berlaymont entrance, and once more in front of the press room entrance via the mobile-badge reader operated by the security guards. The minority of accredited journalists who still have the previous (yellow format) press badges, which cannot be read by the mobile-badge reader, need to have a photo taken of their badge in front of the press room allowing security guards to record their presence manually. The presence lists are stored up to 1 month by DG HR/Security, and are only

used in the event of a confirmed coronavirus infection in one of the persons present in the room during a press event. If such a case occurs, the EC Medical Service informs all the participants who attended the event.

The mobile-badge reader counts the number of people entering and leaving the press room, so that on reaching the limit of 99 journalists, the SPP is able to inform any additional journalists that the maximum number has been reached and that they cannot enter. In that event, those journalists not admitted to the press room can follow the press event online in the Berlaymont press zone.

Admitting journalists to the press working room

Accredited journalists are allowed to access the Berlaymont press zone, including the working room, from Mondays to Fridays from 08:00 to 20:00 local time. However, access to the working room is limited to a maximum of 32 places for journalists.

Prior registration for VIP events

For press events with the participation of the President or Commissioners, when we anticipate a greater number of journalists, the SPP applies a system of **prior registration for the entire day**. In such cases, journalists are required to pre-register for all press events of the day, even if they do not want to attend all of them.

Nevertheless all accredited journalists can always participate in the press events of their choice remotely (via Interactio). No prior registration is required for remote participation.

All journalists who have subscribed to SPP press notifications receive the link to register in advance of press events. Journalists are admitted on a ‘first come, first served’ basis. Pre-registration for the VIP event is mandatory for all journalists (accredited and non-accredited). The SPP reserves the right to limit the presence of journalists representing one media outlet to a “reasonable amount”, in order to ensure a balance of participation among journalists in the light of the limited number of seats available.

Press events held at the VIP Corner

Due to sanitary restrictions, the press events taking place at the VIP Corner will remain fully virtual, except for a limited number of camera crews and photographers, as well as journalists who are part of the delegation of external visitors.

Admitting journalists to the Berlaymont TV & radio studios

The TV and radio studios at the Berlaymont are partially open to journalists, following the same general safety rules put in place for accessing the Berlaymont press room and other public areas in the building. The studios operate at approximately 30% capacity, in line with the Belgian health guidance, which limits the number of staff that can be present in the workplace.

Journalists are granted access on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the general health regulations, the availability of studios and the scheduling of their face-to-face interviews with the President, Vice-Presidents or Commissioners.

Access to the studios is limited to one journalist at a time and only for the duration of the interview. No make-up is provided for the journalist due to the sanitary rules.

Admitting journalists to the Berlaymont canteen

The canteen is **open from 12 p.m. until 2.15 p.m.** During this time, journalists are able to purchase a limited choice of hot and cold dishes to consume **on the spot** or **take away** (the same rules apply to EC staff members). To avoid food waste, the offer is gradually increased and adjusted to the number of clients. Payments are possible only by debit or credit card (cash payments are not possible). For the time being, the press bar remains closed, however journalists are welcome to use the Berlaymont main cafeteria.

Journalists not accredited to the European Commission

Journalists not accredited to the Commission are allowed into the press room on a limited basis, providing that they can present one of the following COVID-19 certificates:

- a valid vaccination certificate indicating that at least 14 days have passed since full vaccination;
- a valid test certificate that indicates a negative result obtained not more than 72 hours before entering the Commission site, in case of a NAAT (i.e. PCR); or not more than 48 hours before entering the Commission site, in case of a RAT (i.e. antigenic).
- a valid recovery certificate indicating that less than 180 days have passed since the date of the first positive test result.

Hygiene measures

The cleaning service provides thorough and daily disinfection of the press room and its installations.

Journalists are advised to use their own headphones and to follow all the sanitary and social distancing requirements at all times. Wearing the mask is mandatory at all times. Only the persons on the podium are exempt from this obligation.

Ad hoc press gatherings, either before or after midday briefings, (so-called ‘huddles’) are allowed provided that journalists and EC staff members keep the 1.5 metre physical distance and wear a mask. The duration of such gatherings should be reduced as much as possible.