

Plenary round-up – Strasbourg, December 2017

The December session highlights were the pre-European Council debate, including on the state of play of 'Brexit' negotiations, as well as the debate on foreign, security and defence policy, with a statement from Federica Mogherini on PESCO. Members also debated US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the PANA Committee of Inquiry report. Parliament adopted, inter alia, the 'Omnibus' regulation for agriculture, extension of EFSI, and a regulation on aviation emissions.

Preparation of the European Council meeting and the state of play of negotiations with the United Kingdom

This session's key joint debate was on preparation of the December European Council meeting. Members also debated progress in [negotiations with the UK](#), following the country's decision to leave the EU. After the 8 December agreement on first-phase issues reached between the Commission and the UK, focus turns to whether the European Council (without the UK) will authorise the launch of the second phase of negotiations, on a possible transitional period, and on a framework for future relations.

Sakharov Prize

Parliament awarded the Venezuelan Opposition – collectively, the Venezuelan National Assembly and political prisoners in the country – with the [2017 Sakharov Prize](#), in recognition of their struggle to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Listen to podcast ['The 2017 Sakharov Prize'](#).

Implementation of the Social Pillar

The November 2017 Gothenburg Social Summit declaration underlines the importance of the social consequences of EU policies as a main priority for all the EU institutions, but Member State governments nevertheless largely retain responsibility for social policy. The Commission and Council made statements on [implementation of the Social Pillar](#) to tackle the challenges of developing labour markets and welfare in a globalised world.

European foreign, security and defence policy and PESCO

Members held a joint debate on European foreign, security and defence policy, including presentation of Parliament's annual report, as well as the new chapter in [European defence policy](#), Permanent Structured Cooperation, ([PESCO](#)). On 11 December, 25 EU Member States formally established PESCO. They also agreed a first list of 17 joint projects, which are set to be formally adopted in early 2018.

US recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel

Members debated the [US decision to recognise Jerusalem as capital of Israel](#), mirroring the official Israeli position on the city's status, following a statement made by the High Representative, Federica Mogherini. The US is the first state to officially endorse the Israeli position on what is a disputed issue within the Middle East Peace Process, potentially weakening the US role in that process as an impartial mediator. The move, widely condemned as violating international law, and as a political provocation, nevertheless may still allow the city's status to be addressed as part of a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

'Omnibus' regulation – agriculture provisions

The 'omnibus' of amendments to various regulations in the field of agriculture and rural development aims at technical and policy fine-tuning of the common agricultural policy. Members debated and adopted [changes to current CAP regulations](#) seeking to improve farmers' lives and the markets for agricultural produce, in a



procedure splitting agricultural provisions from the rest of the proposed amendments on financial rules, so that they can already apply from 1 January 2018.

Sustainable management of the EU external fishing fleet

To ensure [sustainable management of the EU external fishing fleet](#), under the Fishing Authorisation Regulation, [new rules](#) should improve monitoring of EU fishing outside the EU. Parliament followed a Fisheries Committee recommendation on second reading, adopting the text agreed in trilogue with the Council, which aims to increase measures to counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Aviation emissions – towards a global approach

Because the aviation industry produces high quantities of carbon emissions, [global market-based measures](#) are necessary to ensure an international effort to reduce emissions. Whilst awaiting a global agreement in the International Civil Aviation Organization, flights within the European Economic Area (EEA) come under the emissions trading system, while extra-EEA flights are temporarily exempt. In the interim, a Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation has been agreed, and Parliament decided by a large majority to extend the exemption for extra-EEA flights until 2023, when the first phase of the new scheme begins.

EU-Kazakhstan Partnership Agreement

Members agreed to give consent for the conclusion of an [Enhanced EU-Kazakhstan Partnership Agreement](#). Kazakhstan is a key partner in the Central Asian region, both in terms of trade and strategically. However, its human rights record is poor, and the new agreement aims to encourage Kazakhstan to commit to human rights standards and dialogue.

PANA Committee of Inquiry report

Members debated the final report of the [Parliament's Committee of Inquiry](#) on investigating alleged contraventions and maladministration in relation to money laundering, tax avoidance and evasion and approved its recommendation. The committee was set up in the light of shadowy practices, designed to escape regulations such as tax provisions, revealed in the successive Panama, Bahamas and Paradise papers. The recommendation sets out measures to redress the balance in favour of those who pay their taxes honestly.

Listen to podcast '[PANA committee of inquiry](#)'.

Extension of EFSI

Members adopted a regulation to [extend of the duration of the European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI) based on agreement in trilogue following a joint report from the Budgets and Economic and Monetary Affairs Committees. EFSI will be extended to 31 December 2020, entailing changes in its governance and financial capacity. The new provisions also aim to increase the amount of investment available to small businesses in the EU, with a target of €500 billion.

Combating sexual abuse of children

Parliament debated failures to implement the EU Directive on [combating sexual abuse of children](#) in certain Member States. The report was adopted with a large majority. Members underline that, although progress has been made, there is still room to improve the prevention, investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

Opening of trilogue negotiations

The IMCO, ECON and LIBE committees announced their decisions to enter into interinstitutional negotiations on three legislative files, two were confirmed [unopposed](#). The IMCO committee decision to enter into trilogue negotiations on the proposal regarding services in the internal market and the notification procedure for authorisation schemes and requirements related to services was approved following a vote in plenary. The JURI committee decision to enter into negotiations on the proposal on exercise of copyright and related rights applicable to certain online transmissions of broadcasting organisations and retransmissions of television and radio programmes was approved by a vote as requested during the November II plenary session.

This 'at a glance' note is intended to review some of the highlights of the plenary part-session, and notably to follow up on key dossiers identified by EPRS. It does not aim to be exhaustive. For more detailed information on specific files, please see other EPRS products, notably our 'EU legislation in progress' briefings, and the plenary [minutes](#).