

Plenary round-up – Strasbourg, January 2018

The January session highlights were the European Council conclusions debate and a presentation of Bulgarian Presidency priorities, as well as the first in a series of debates with EU leaders on the future of Europe, with the Irish prime minister, Leo Varadkar. Parliament voted, inter alia, on three clean energy package proposals; a review of dual-use items export controls; its opinion on the revised Brussels IIa Regulation; and gave its consent for the conclusion of the Marrakesh Treaty.

December European Council conclusions

During the debate on the conclusions of last December's European Council, President Donald Tusk underlined the progress made in the negotiations between the European Union and the UK government on the first phase of talks, which have been addressing citizens' rights, Ireland and the financial settlement. He did not exclude the possibility that the people of the United Kingdom might change their minds on the future relationship of their country with the European Union.

Conclusion of Estonian and presentation of Bulgarian Presidencies

Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas highlighted the main achievements of the Estonian Presidency, pointing out the importance of the digital dimension of EU policies. He also underlined defence cooperation, climate policy and the social dimension as the main policy fields in which the EU noted progress during the presidency.

As for the [Bulgarian Presidency's priorities](#), Prime Minister Boyko Borissov concentrated on the future of Europe and young people. The Western Balkans, digital economy, social issues, defence and the normalisation of relations with Turkey and Russia, and stability and security, including migration issues, are also on the agenda. Regarding negotiations on the next MFF, Bulgaria, as an EU budget beneficiary, supports maintaining the common agricultural and cohesion policies.

Statements on the Colombian peace process, Iran and Kenya

Commissioners Stylianides, Hahn and Malmström made statements on behalf of VP/HR Federica Mogherini regarding EU support for the Colombian peace process, the situation in Iran and Kenya. During debate, Members underlined the importance the EU places on supporting the practical implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia. They called for the release of all demonstrators imprisoned in Iran for taking part in protests against unemployment and the low standard of living. The uncertainty over the agreement with Iran on nuclear issues should not be seen as an excuse not to defend human rights in the country.

Commission statement on the EU strategy on plastics

The European Commission presented its strategy on plastics, expecting it – a key factor for the EU transition towards a circular economy – to have a positive effect on innovation, investment prospects, growth, jobs and competitiveness. It includes a range of means – legislation, economic incentives, voluntary agreements with industry – to transform product design, production, use, and recycling and reduction of marine litter. The aim is to cut the use of disposable plastics, restrict the intentional use of microplastics, encourage demand for recycled plastics, create a genuine single market for plastics, and to work to mobilise all European players and encourage international cooperation.

Clean energy – joint debate

Parliament adopted a strong position in line with EU climate commitments on three of the eight Commission proposals in the [clean energy package](#): namely those for a revised energy efficiency directive, a recast directive on the promotion of renewable energy sources, and a new regulation on energy union governance. The existing legislation seeks to deliver 20% reductions by 2020. For the next period, to 2030, the Commission had proposed increased targets: to 30 % for improved energy efficiency, and for energy consumption to comprise



27 % renewable energy sources. For Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, these ambitions are insufficient (they proposed 40 % and 35 % respectively). The plenary voted for binding targets of 35 % for both, and Parliament's representatives will now negotiate with the Council on that basis.

New framework for fisheries technical measures

Parliament adopted its position for trilogue negotiations on the proposals for a [new framework for fisheries technical measures](#), and against the authorisation, on an experimental basis in the EU, of 'electro fishing', or electric pulse trawling, in the North Sea. The current [technical measures](#), which govern which fish are caught, where and how, are much derided for their complexity and rigidity.

South Pacific fisheries management measures

Parliament's Fisheries Committee considers that the proposal to transpose [South Pacific fisheries management measures](#) into EU law so that they are applicable to fishing vessels flying the flag of a Member State has already largely been carried out by the Commission. Members adopted their position, making specific changes to the text to cover use of certain nets that were not addressed, by an overwhelming majority, which will allow trilogue negotiations to proceed smoothly.

Implementation of EU macro-regional strategies

Where cooperation benefits all participants, the [EU macro-regional strategy framework](#) allows countries from the same geographical area to pool together resources to work on issues such as nature protection or transport, regardless of borders. By a large majority, Members adopted an own-initiative resolution calling for continued support for macro-regional strategies in the next multi-annual financial framework and for reinforced horizontal and vertical cooperation.

Review of dual-use export controls

Members adopted by an overwhelming majority the EP position for negotiations with the Council on the proposal to update EU rules on the control of exports, transfer, brokering, technical assistance and transit of [dual-use items](#) – goods and technologies that are usually used for legitimate purposes, but that can also be used as weapons, or for torture. The review also seeks to adapt the position to take account of the dangers of human rights violations due to the use by dictators of dual-use goods produced in Europe.

Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative

The EU's young people and children are the future citizens of Europe and therefore a high priority for Parliament. A large majority voted in favour of adoption of a resolution calling for a Parliament resolution on the implementation of the [Youth Employment Initiative](#). It underlines the need to reach out to the most excluded young people, ensure that they receive good quality offers of employment, and that the Commission and Member States set realistic and achievable goals for the initiative.

Brussels IIa Regulation

With the best interests of the child its priority, Parliament adopted by large majority its opinion (under the consultation procedure) on the proposal to recast the [Brussels IIa Regulation](#) governing the jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of decisions in matrimonial matters and matters of parental responsibility, and international child abduction. Parliament's Committees on Petitions and Legal Affairs consider that the current proposals can be strengthened, particularly in cross-border cases, and to expand the child's right to be heard in such proceedings.

Marrakesh Treaty

Following years of legal debate as to whether or not the EU could conclude the Marrakesh Treaty, which aims to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled, Parliament gave its consent to Council for the [conclusion of the treaty](#).

Opening of trilogue negotiations

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee announced its decision to enter into interinstitutional negotiations on three legislative files, all of which were confirmed [unopposed](#).

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](#).