

Things we learnt in plenary: new Commission, Sakharov Prize and the EU's 2015 budget



<https://vimeo.com/109791030>

The October plenary saw the new European Commission led by Jean-Claude Juncker receive the Parliament's approval to start its five-year term...

On Wednesday, MEPs approved the new European Commission with 423 votes in favour, 209 against and 67 abstentions. The day before outgoing Commission President José Manuel Barroso had discussed the results of his second five-year term in plenary.

Gynaecologist Denis Mukwege, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was announced as the 2014 laureate of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, following Tuesday's decision by the political group leaders and EP President Martin Schulz. Dr Mukwege, who has been treating rape victims in his home country, will be invited to receive the award on 26 November in Strasbourg.

MEPs voted for a better EU budget for next year, providing more funding for small and medium-sized enterprises, research, education and foreign aid. They also argued that the EU needs more money to halt the rising number of unpaid bills that could harm companies throughout the EU. Parliament will now seek a compromise in the final round of budget talks with EU governments.

Members condemned the violence of Islamic State militants and said Turkey should do more to help the Kurds counter the IS threat in the besieged Syrian city of Kobane. In a separate debate, MEPs discussed how to deal with IS fighters of European origin, with some calling for a swift approval of the EU Passenger Name Record (PNR) proposal to better detect potential terrorists entering or leaving the EU.

In a resolution about the European semester of economic policy coordination, MEPs urged member states to deliver on their own pledges for economic reforms and to implement recommendations made by the European Commission.

About 2,800 workers, let go by companies in Spain, Belgium and France, should be helped to find new jobs, MEPs said, approving a request that now has to be considered by member states in the Council. The grants, totalling €15.2 million, will come from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

On Wednesday, MEPs discussed Mos Maiorum, an EU-wide police operation aimed at disrupting people-smuggling networks. MEPs stressed that the authorities should tackle traffickers, but this should not turn into a witch-hunt against migrants.

The Parliament supported plans that would grant Ukraine's exports to the EU duty-free access until the end of 2015. This extends the application of unilateral trade measures introduced by the EU earlier this year in support of the economy in Ukraine.

MEPs expressed concerns about the Hungarian government's policies on pluralism, freedom of speech and civil society in a debate on Tuesday. EU values must be respected in all EU countries, they said.

The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group continues. Last week the Eurosceptic group collapsed after the departure of its only member from Latvia, Iveta Grigule, but this week it met again the requirement of having members from at least seven EU countries by bringing in Polish MEP Robert Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz.

Further information

[Photo gallery of the plenary session](#)

[Photo gallery of the election of the new Commission](#)

[Storify wrap-up of the Commission debate and vote](#)