

Plenary highlights: refugee crisis, roaming, GMOs, Sakharov Prize

The refugee crisis and its potential to disrupts politics in Europe was debated during October's third plenary session, with MEPs warning that some could use the issue to undermine the EU. MEPs also adopted plans to abolish roaming charges and better regulate net neutrality as well as proposals to tighten rules on GMOs and simplify the approval of novel foods, such as for example insects. In addition Raif Badawi was announced as the laureate of this year's Sakharov Prize.

The migration crisis is used by opponents of the EU to destroy it, many MEPs warned during a [debate](#) on the issue on Tuesday morning. They also hit out at member states dragging their feet over measures to help refugees, which they had already agreed to.

[Roaming charges](#) when using mobile phones in another EU country are to be banned from June 2017, MEPs decided on Tuesday. They also voted to protect net neutrality: specific services can only be given preference if there is no degradation of other traffic and all web traffic should be treated equally unless specific conditions, such as network congestion, require temporary and transparently applied restrictions.

On Thursday, the [Sakharov Prize](#) for Freedom of Thought was awarded to Raif Badawi, the Saudi blogger who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for insulting Islamic values.

The decision to allow or ban human food and animal feed containing [GMOs](#) should only be taken at the EU level in order to avoid excessive border controls within the Union, Parliament said Wednesday, rejecting a Commission proposal to allow individual member states to decide on authorisation. Check out our [infographic](#) on it.

Nanomaterials, insects and other ingredients that have so far been absent from most European cooking, are all covered by the [novel food](#) proposals adopted on Wednesday to make it easier for them to get approved. Check out our [infographic](#) on it.

Additional funding for the refugee crisis was added to the [EU's 2016 budget](#) by the Parliament on Wednesday, alongside additional resources for youth training and paying money the EU owes its suppliers. Check out our [infographic](#) on the budget.

The emissions of six key [pollutants](#) will be capped under legislation approved on Wednesday, which will help save thousands of lives and prevent €40 billion worth of air pollution costs by 2030.

On Tuesday MEPs expressed their disappointment at the "missed opportunity" to tackle unfair tax competition in an agreement between EU governments, restricting the exchange of information on [tax rulings](#). However, Parliament did endorse a deal to ensure that the EU and [Switzerland](#) automatically exchange information on the bank accounts of each other's residents from 2018.

[Travellers](#) booking a flight, hotel or rental car as a package online will be given the same degree of legal protection as travel agency customers already enjoy, under plans adopted on Tuesday. This includes being better able to cancel reservations and making it easier to identify who is responsible when problems surface.

Fraud involving emissions testing should be thorough investigated in the wake of the [Volkswagen scandal](#), said MEPs on Tuesday. They also said that the possibility of a pan-European surveillance authority should be looked into.

MEPs debated on Tuesday how the elections for the European Parliament could be improved. We asked our followers on social media for their ideas. Check out our [article](#) and take part in the ongoing debate online with the hashtag EP2019.

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