

Plenary highlights: new Commission head, Council presidencies, human rights



Plenary highlights

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MEPs elected Ursula von der Leyen as president of the European Commission, discussed the work of the Council presidencies in 2019 and reviewed human rights issues.

The second July plenary saw former German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen elected as the [first woman to head the European Commission](#) after 383 MEPs voted to back her candidacy in a secret ballot on Tuesday evening.

Von der Leyen will form her team of commissioners over the summer. The candidates will have to prove their suitability for the posts to parliamentary committees before MEPs vote on whether to grant approval to the whole Commission during a plenary session in October.



Ursula von der Leyen elected Commission President

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Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne outlined the priorities of the new [EU Council presidency](#) on Wednesday morning, including fighting climate change, boosting competitiveness and improving security.

The previous day MEPs discussed Romania's turn at the helm of the Council during the first six months of the year with [Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă](#).

In a debate on humanitarian assistance in the Mediterranean on Wednesday MEPs clashed on how to reconcile the moral duty of saving people in distress on the open seas with the need to control [migratory flows](#) to Europe and stop people smugglers.

The size and the composition of Parliament's delegations were [established](#) on Wednesday. [Delegations](#) maintain ties with parliamentarians from non-EU countries with the aim of supporting EU foreign policy and promoting core EU values such as liberty, democracy and respect for human rights.

On Thursday MEPs discussed a range of [human rights issues](#) across the world, including ongoing protests in Hong Kong, the tense situation at the US-Mexico border and the way Russian authorities treat environmental activists and political prisoners from Ukraine.

Parliament also adopted a [resolution](#) on Venezuela on Thursday, in which it expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in the country and called for additional sanctions against state authorities responsible for human rights violations and repression.

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