



10 things we learnt in the May Strasbourg plenary

This week in Strasbourg MEPs approved proposals for a financial transaction tax and more protection for blue-fin tuna and voted for equal pay between men and women. Also on the agenda were justice in Ukraine, EU-China trade relations, youth opportunities, growth and SMEs. Ahead of the informal EU summit, MEPs debated growth and fiscal consolidation on Tuesday. Yulia Tymoshenko's daughter, Yevgenia, visited the EP on the same day.

In a debate on Tuesday, MEPs from across the political spectrum called for better access to structural funds and less red tape to **help small and medium-sized enterprises create jobs**, especially for young people. In a resolution adopted on Thursday, MEPs urged the European Commission to use unspent EU funds to **combat youth unemployment**.

MEPs stressed that fundamental rights must be respected when applying the **EU's Internal Security Strategy**. They also called for proper long term funding for the implementation of the strategy in a resolution adopted on Tuesday.

Tensions between **Sudan and South Sudan** over the splitting of oil revenues and border-demarcation, among others, were discussed with the Danish presidency on Wednesday. Negotiations between the two countries are ongoing and MEPs insist that the EU has to support the process.

The first step to tackling unfair competition from China and rebalancing trade is to get a clearer picture of China's penetration of the EU economy by setting up a body to monitor **China's investment in EU** firms, the EP said on Wednesday.

EU countries are increasingly failing to implement and enforce European rules, according to the latest Commission **internal market scoreboard**. In a resolution on Tuesday, MEPs said this could hurt the economic recovery and called for fast-track infringement procedures and an internal market prosecutor.

The free movement of people is fundamental to the EU and Parliament is ready to defend it. On Thursday MEPs adopted a resolution criticising **Swiss quotas on residence permits** granted to nationals of eight countries that joined the EU in 2004.

The EP condemned all types of **discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people** within and outside the EU and called for the inclusion of homophobic crime in the upcoming revision of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia.

Yevgenia Tymoshenko, the daughter of former Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko who has been jailed for seven years on charges of abuse of power, was in Strasbourg on Tuesday for a debate on Ukraine and to meet EP president Martin Schulz. Many MEPs consider Ms Tymoshenko's imprisonment to be politically motivated.

The **human rights situation in Azerbaijan** was discussed in plenary on Thursday, ahead of the Eurovision song contest final to be held in Baku on Saturday. In a resolution MEPs called on Azerbaijan to respect democracy, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They also condemned the harassment of journalists.

Outside plenary

Article

MEPs secured a deal with member states on **project bonds** on Tuesday: €230m from the EU budget will be allocated in 2012–2013 to back bonds issued by private companies and they are designed to attract new funds for EU infrastructure (including roads, railways, broadband).