

Plenary round-up – Strasbourg, June 2018

The June plenary session highlights were the continuation of the debate on the future of Europe with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, and the preparation of the European Council meeting of 28 and 29 June 2018. The European Commission and Council participated in discussions on, inter alia, the independence of the judiciary in Poland, humanitarian emergencies in the Mediterranean and solidarity in the EU, and the economic and monetary union package. VP/HR Federica Mogherini's statements on the Iran nuclear deal, the annual report on human rights and democracy in the world (2017), and on the Georgian occupied territories ten years after the Russian invasion, were also discussed. Debates followed on the first anniversary of the signature of the Istanbul Convention and on the closure of the ivory market to combat poaching. Parliament approved the proposal to amend the regulation on OTC derivatives, an agreement on common rules in the field of civil aviation, on monitoring and reporting of CO₂ emissions and on fuel consumption of heavy-duty vehicles. It approved the final text of a proposed directive on proportionality tests for new national professional regulations. It also approved the new composition of Parliament after 'Brexit', and further macro-financial assistance to Ukraine.

Iran nuclear deal, human rights and democracy, and Georgian occupied territories

Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, made a statement on the [Iran nuclear agreement](#); Mogherini also discussed the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World (2017), and the [EU's policy on the matter](#), followed by debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Russia, Bahrain and on the situation of Rohingya refugees. Another topic for discussion was the situation in the Georgian occupied territories, ten years after the Russian invasion.

OTC derivatives

A proposal to amend and simplify the European Market Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR), which deals with the [regulation of 'over-the-counter' \(OTC\) derivatives in the EU](#), was debated and amendments approved by Members, clearing the way for the ECON committee to open trilogue negotiations. The 2017 Commission proposal covers issues such as the clearing obligation, reporting requirements, risk-mitigation techniques and trade repositories in the OTC derivatives market. Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs proposes further amendments that would boost transparency, compliance with reporting requirements, and access to clearing, including the principle that clearing services be provided under fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) commercial terms.

Common rules for civil aviation and European Union Aviation Safety Agency

Europe remains the safest air space in the world and the EU intends to ensure it stays that way. MEPs approved the trilogue agreement on [common rules in the field of civil aviation](#) and on reform of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) statutes. Parliament's focus in its position on the proposals has been on adapting the rules to heavier air traffic and emerging technologies in aviation. One of the key points also includes the obligation of registering certain recreational drones.

CO₂ emissions from and fuel consumption of new heavy-duty vehicles

Free movement of goods in the EU is also essential to the success of the internal market. However, the large-scale use of heavy-duty vehicles in transport has consequences for our environment, as they emit around a quarter of all road transport CO₂. Parliament's amendments extend EU targets to reduce these emissions, to include new administrative fines on manufacturers who fail to comply, and introduce new on-road verification tests. Parliament validated the provisional trilogue agreement on the proposal on [monitoring and reporting of CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption of heavy-duty vehicles](#) that seeks to stimulate market uptake of cleaner, fuel-efficient, heavy-duty vehicles, by an overwhelming majority.

Further macro-financial assistance to Ukraine

Members approved the granting of [new macro-financial assistance](#) to Ukraine for a maximum of up to €1 billion, which will help cover Ukraine's needs in external financing for 2018-2019. Despite the priority accorded to Ukraine under the Eastern Partnership, the EU has already cancelled assistance payments due in the previous programme, because of the country's failure to meet the conditions regarding governance and economic reforms. Parliament and Council positions to date indicate that any further assistance will be conditional on progress in the fight against corruption, with a proposed Memorandum of Understanding to be signed covering institutional and administrative capacities, including an anti-corruption court.

Proportionality test before adoption of new professional regulations

Parliament adopted a compromise text agreed in trilogue on the proposed directive introducing [a proportionality test for new national regulations for professions](#), which affect employment in areas such as medicine and architecture. Public concern has been expressed regarding the inconsistent application of proportionality principles and a lack of transparency in the access to such professions, which is decided by Member States individually. Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection obtained a compromise between addressing unnecessary national requirements and allowing a specific status for healthcare services, and Council's desire to limit obligations regarding the transparency of the national regulatory process.

Composition of the European Parliament

The number of Members of the European Parliament is limited to 751 under the Lisbon Treaty. The United Kingdom withdrawal means the seats left vacant by British Members must be redistributed, a situation complicated by the withdrawal date falling just before the next European elections. The [composition of the European Parliament](#) will therefore change after 'Brexit', providing an opportunity for Parliament to correct the current flawed application of the degressive proportionality principle (minimum of 6 seats per Member State, maximum 96; with each Member elected in more populous states representing more electors than those elected in less populous states, and vice versa), without reopening the Treaties. Parliament voted on whether to consent to a European Council decision on a partial redistribution of seats for the next term, involving no loss of seats for any Member State, reserving 46 seats for future enlargements, and reducing the overall number of Members to 705. Parliament approved the proposal by a very large majority (566 votes for, 94 against, 31 abstentions). The reform is due to be formally ratified at the end of June by the European Council.

Structural and financial barriers to access to culture

EU citizens have a huge range of cultural heritage sites, museums, exhibitions, films, and live performances to choose from, and digital access to cultural services makes it even easier to find cultural stimulation. In addition, the EU offers support to Member States in promoting cultural life. Nevertheless, participation in cultural activities remains low. Against this background, Parliament voted this week on a CULT committee report on the [barriers to accessing culture in the EU](#), which include public funding levels, access, and the role of education.

Opening of trilogue negotiations

Three parliamentary committees' decisions to enter into interinstitutional (trilogue) negotiations were [confirmed](#): on interoperability of electronic road toll systems and facilitating cross-border exchange of information on the failure to pay road fees in the Union; on charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructure (TRAN committee); on free flow of non-personal data in the European Union (IMCO committee); and on screening of foreign direct investments into the European Union (INTA committee).

Three further TRAN committee decisions to open negotiations were rejected: on the posting of road transport drivers; on driving times, rest periods, and positioning by means of tachographs; and on the occupation of road transport operator and access to the international road haulage market. These reports will therefore be placed on the agenda of the July part-session.

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](#).

