

Plenary round-up – Brussels, June 2020

The June 2020 plenary session was the fourth conducted with Members participating remotely, although this time a majority were present in Brussels, and using the alternative voting procedure put in place in March by Parliament's Bureau. The session focused on a number of urgent legislative proposals as well as votes on draft amending budgets and the guidelines for the 2021 EU budget. Parliament adopted recommendations on the negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom, and discussed the European Council meeting held subsequently on 19 June. Members heard Council and European Commission statements on anti-racism protests, on the Conference on the Future of Europe, and on Covid-19 related issues: protecting strategic sectors; tackling disinformation; and protection of cross-border and seasonal workers. Members also discussed the situation in the Schengen area following the Covid-19 outbreak, as well as tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond, and land-grabbing and deforestation in the Amazonas. Members debated statements from the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borell, on the foreign policy consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, on China's national security law for Hong Kong, and on the EU response to the possible Israeli annexation of the West Bank. Finally, Parliament adopted decisions creating a subcommittee on tax matters, a special committee on beating cancer, a special committee on foreign interference and a special committee on artificial intelligence.

New European Union-United Kingdom partnership

Members adopted, by a large majority, [recommendations on the negotiations for a new partnership with the United Kingdom](#), based on a joint report from the Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committees. The fourth round of EU-UK negotiations ended on 5 June 2020, with limited progress and critical divergence between the parties on level playing field commitments, fisheries, cooperation on criminal matters and the overarching institutional framework to govern future relations. During the second EU-UK Joint Committee meeting on 12 June, the UK confirmed it will not request an extension to the transition period ending on 31 December 2020. Parliament fully supports the EU negotiating [position](#), prioritising the protection of the single market.

Guidelines for the 2021 budget

Members adopted amendments to a Budget Committee report on [guidelines for the 2021 Budget – Section III](#), the first under the yet to be agreed new MFF. Parliament's guidelines on Section III are intended to assist the Commission by indicating political priorities for the deployment of next year's EU budget and, most urgently, the recovery from the coronavirus crisis, whilst Parliament also seeks to reinforce focus on the European Green Deal and digital transformation.

Amendments to the 2020 budget

Members adopted two further draft amending budgets for the current year. [Draft amending budget No 3/2020](#) concerns the more than €3.2 billion surplus for 2019 (mostly higher than expected revenues, and underspent expenditure), which is carried over to 2020. While this surplus will reduce Member States' gross national income contributions in 2020, Parliament is keen to see Member States devote the equivalent amount to support regions and businesses affected by the coronavirus crisis. To tackle the likely effects of the coronavirus crisis on the labour market, Members also approved a Commission proposal to mobilise €345 000 to provide technical assistance to strengthen the [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund](#). The fund provides vital support for workers who lose their jobs due to structural changes in global markets. Members also approved [draft amending budget No 4/2020](#), to make €279 million available in the 2020 budget to assist regions in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Austria affected by natural disasters caused by extreme weather events in 2019.

Conference on the Future of Europe

Planned to provide a comprehensive reflection on the direction and organisation of the EU, Members heard and debated Council and Commission statements on the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#). The Covid-19 epidemic has delayed discussion on the composition and structure of the Conference – and will inevitably have an effect on the proposed 'Agora' format. Members approved a resolution calling for the Conference to be launched as soon as possible during the second half of 2020.

Foreign policy consequences of the Covid-19 crisis and tackling coronavirus disinformation

Members debated a statement by the VPC/HR on the [foreign policy consequences of the Covid-19 crisis](#), where Parliament has already called for more strategic action in the face of deteriorating international relations. Parliament seeks strengthened resolve to support vulnerable regions in facing the threat to public health globally and in [tackling disinformation regarding Covid-19](#) and the virus's impact on freedom of expression. Members adopted a proposal to set up a special committee on [foreign interference in EU democratic processes](#).

VPC/HR statement on the People's Republic of China national security law for Hong Kong

Parliament debated a statement from the VPC/HR on the [national security law for Hong Kong](#) and its consequences for EU defence of Hong Kong's autonomy. The law, authorised by the Chinese National People's Congress and bypassing the Hong Kong Parliament, is expected to enter into force prior to Hong Kong's September 2020 legislative elections in a premature phasing-out of the 'One country, two systems' model that was planned to subsist for 50 years from the 1997 handover.

Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond

Following Council and Commission statements on [tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond](#), Members adopted, by a large majority, a resolution urging more action and greater financial support for the sector to help with recovery from the coronavirus crisis and to encourage investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and modernisation of the tourism industry.

Fisheries Partnership Agreements – Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé

Parliament approved three reports on fisheries agreements. These include the conclusion of the Protocol on the implementation of the 2019-2024 [Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the Republic of Cape Verde](#), the 2019-2024 Protocol on the implementation of the [EU-Guinea-Bissau Fisheries Partnership Agreement](#) and the Protocol on the implementation of the [EU-São Tomé and Príncipe Partnership Agreement](#). All three agreements concern access rights for the EU fleet to fish in the respective regions and promote sustainable fisheries and the blue economy in those waters.

Opening of trilogue negotiations

The proposal on temporary measures concerning the time limits for the collection, verification and examination stages under the European citizens' initiative, in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, treated under the urgent procedure, was referred back to the Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO) to pursue interinstitutional negotiations.

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](#).

