

## Plenary round-up – Brussels, July 2020

The July 2020 plenary session was the fifth conducted with Members participating remotely, using the alternative voting procedure put in place in March by Parliament's Bureau, although a majority were present in Brussels. During this session a number of Council and European Commission statements were debated, with the presentation of the programme of activities of the German Presidency a highlight. Members also debated the conclusions of the European Council meeting of 19 June and preparation of the meeting of 17-18 July 2020. Members heard Council and Commission statements on Union policy on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing, on the state of play of Council negotiations on the proposed regulation on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States, and on cultural recovery in Europe. Parliament also debated a Commission statement commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. Members debated statements from the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borell, on stability and security in the Mediterranean and the negative role of Turkey, and on the situation in Belarus. Parliament voted on a number of legislative proposals and resolutions including on the European citizens' initiative, a resolution on the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, and a chemicals strategy for sustainability.

### EU post-coronavirus public health strategy

Members heard statements from the Council and Commission on the [post-coronavirus public health strategy](#), which were followed by a debate on the measures required to reorganise EU assistance for various specific sectors following the pandemic and in light of its expected economic consequences. Parliament adopted, by a large majority (526 votes to 105 and 50 abstentions), a resolution in favour of stronger health cooperation and creation of a European Health Union. In learning lessons from the coronavirus crisis, Parliament underlined the need for common minimum standards and equal access to healthcare. To prepare for possible resurgence of the pandemic, Members called for a European Health Response Mechanism. Parliament also welcomed the newly proposed EU4Health programme.

### Cohesion policy role in the coronavirus pandemic recovery

The Commission responded to an oral question on the role of [cohesion policy](#) in tackling the socio-economic fallout from Covid-19, agreeing with Parliament that a decision on the legislation regulating cohesion spending and the revised EU budget proposals is urgent.

### Road transport: Social and market rules

Parliament adopted at second reading three important files on social and market legislation aimed at ending distortion of competition in the [road transport sector](#) and providing better rest conditions for drivers. The 'Mobility Package' now becomes law, ensuring better working conditions for freight drivers, fairer competition and measures to tackle illegal practices, as well as clear rules on posting of drivers to ensure equal pay.

### Amending Budget No 5/2020: Continuing refugee and host community support

By a large majority (557 votes to 72 and 59 abstentions), Parliament approved [draft amending budget \(No 5\)](#) to the 2020 EU general budget, seeking to extend the humanitarian support currently provided for refugees and host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey as a result of the Syrian crisis. Following this amendment, €485 million will maintain funding of the EU's humanitarian support in Turkey, and €100 million will be used to fund projects assisting refugees in Jordan and Lebanon through mobilisation of the contingency margin in 2020.

### Annual report on the European Investment Bank's financial activities

Members adopted a resolution based on the Committee on Budgets' report on the [2019 annual report on the European Investment Bank's financial activities](#). The report welcomes the EIB's reinforced focus on the

EU priorities of green investment and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, but underlines that the bank can still do more in this direction. The report also expresses concern regarding continued exceptions for gas projects, the geographical coverage of EIB lending, the use and control of intermediaries to disburse external lending, as well as transparency towards other EU institutions.

### Annual report on control of the EIB's financial activities

The EIB's move towards greening the EIB's investment policy is also a focus of the Budgetary Control (CONT) Committee's [annual report](#) on control of the EIB's financial activities in 2018. Members adopted a resolution based on the report, which covers the activities of the EIB and the types of transactions and relationships it deals with in detail. The need to ensure funding for climate sensitive projects, and to ensure that ethics, integrity, transparency and accountability are key in all EIB activities was highlighted in the report.

### 2018 report on protection of the EU's financial interests – Combating fraud

Members also adopted (421 votes to 167 and 93 abstentions) a resolution the [2018 report on protection of the EU's financial interests](#) and the fight against fraudulent use of EU funding, where a 25 % fall in the number of irregularities compared to the previous year is counterbalanced by the amounts involved having nevertheless risen by 183 %, necessitating continued vigilance and action by the EU Member States.

### Boosting Roma inclusion process in Europe for the next decade

Members also heard and debated a Council and Commission statement on plans to adopt a new EU policy framework to tackle socio-economic exclusion and discrimination against [Roma](#) peoples. Parliament has already drawn attention to the need for stronger measures and will be making recommendations for the new EU framework for the equality and inclusion of Europe's largest ethnic minority.

### Annual human rights report 2019

Members held a joint debate on statements by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, on the [2019 annual report on human rights and democracy](#). The report provides an overview of EU actions to promote human rights worldwide, using development instruments, trade conditionality, external policies and diplomacy. The debate is just the first stage in a process under which Parliament will prepare its own report later in the year, providing indications for future measures, in advance of the adoption of a new EU action plan on human rights.

### Opening of trilogue negotiations

Members [confirmed](#) (without a vote) two Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE) mandates on a European Institute of Innovation and Technology and on the strategic innovation agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. They also confirmed an International Trade Committee (INTA) decision to open negotiations on Union rights for the application and enforcement of international trade rules, and an Employment & Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) decision on enhanced cooperation between public employment services.

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](#).

