

Plenary round-up – April 2022

The war in Ukraine led the agenda of the April 2022 plenary session in Strasbourg. Members held two important debates: on EU protection for children and young people fleeing the war, and on the conclusions of the European Council meeting of 24-25 March 2022, which covered the latest developments and EU sanctions against Russia and their implementation. Parliament also debated a number of Council and Commission statements on: the outcome of the EU-China summit of 1 April 2022, the ongoing hearings under Article 7(1) TEU regarding respect for EU values in Poland and Hungary, violations of the right to seek asylum and non-*refoulement* in the EU Member States, the Sixth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the urgent need to adopt the minimum tax directive, the situation of marginalised Roma communities in the EU, and mental health. In an adjustment to the structure of the plenary agenda, question time with the Commission has been reintroduced. Members questioned President Ursula von der Leyen on progress on the Commission's political priorities over the past two years. Members then questioned Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP), on the EU's security and Strategic Compass. Another debate with the HR/VP focused on the situation in Afghanistan, in particular the women's rights situation. Several debates and votes on legislative files also took place, including on the Schengen evaluation mechanism.

Revision of the market stability reserve for the EU emissions trading system

In line with the EU's climate ambitions, the European Commission's 'Fit for 55' proposals seek to revise the entire EU 2030 climate and energy framework. Members debated the first legislative proposal from the package – a proposed revision of the [market stability reserve](#) for the EU emissions trading system (ETS). The world's first and largest carbon market, the ETS aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by capping the volume of emissions permitted and encouraging trading of unused allowances. However, a surplus of emissions allowances has built up due to recent economic crises. The proposed revision of the market stability reserve aims to correct this, by maintaining the already doubled intake rate (24 %) and minimum number of allowances placed in the reserve (200 million) to December 2030. Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) agreed with the proposal, stressing that it will avoid further increases in the surplus. Members adopted the committee's report as Parliament's first-reading position, allowing interinstitutional negotiations to begin.

Data governance act

Members debated and adopted a provisional agreement reached between Parliament and the Council on the first of the Commission's proposals on an EU data strategy. The [data governance act](#) should set the rules for sharing or trading data for legitimate uses – such as medical research or combating climate change – whilst preserving data rights. The co-legislators reached a compromise on re-use of publicly held data, limiting public authorities' ability to grant rights to data and ensuring they seek consent. Parliament also succeeded in tightening the rules for 'data brokers'. Organisations wishing to share data for the common good will have to register as 'altruism organisations' and follow a Commission rulebook. Parliament also insisted on strengthening aspects of the composition and tasks of the proposed European data innovation board, which will enforce the act.

Trans-European energy infrastructure

Well before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) had insisted that the proposed revision of the rules on [trans-European energy infrastructure projects](#) should require energy projects to be more environmentally sustainable and exclude fossil fuel infrastructure. Major energy infrastructure projects benefit EU citizens by boosting the single market and securing EU supplies, and such projects of common interest are therefore sometimes eligible for EU funding. The committee argued for a wider role for the EU Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER), and for a new

stakeholder committee to ensure projects can call on good expertise. The committee's report also called for a transitional period to 2029, as well as for the regulation to cover CO₂ storage, and for a derogation for already-included natural gas projects. Members debated and adopted the agreed text reached during interinstitutional negotiations on the rules governing funding of major energy projects.

Use of vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road

Parliament debated goods vehicle hire rules, in its second reading of a proposal to loosen restrictions on transport operators. The European Commission's proposal to grant haulage companies the same right to hire vehicles without a driver in another Member State as in their own Member State originally aimed at harmonising the rules across the EU. However, Parliament and Council wished to preserve Member States' ability to protect their national vehicle tax bases from market distortion. Members approved the proposed draft agreement reached by the Council and Parliament that allows countries to restrict their own haulage companies from [hiring vehicles without drivers](#) in other EU Member States, but prevents them from restricting goods vehicle hire outright, if all the rules are observed.

Amending budget 1/2022: Adjustment of the multiannual financial framework

Following delays in launching certain programmes, Parliament's Committee on Budgets (BUDG) reiterated its concern regarding the effect of such payment delays on the Union's recovery. To prevent payment crises, the committee called on the Commission to present any proposals for payment increases immediately in future. Members approved the Council position, thereby definitively adopting [draft amending budget 1/2022](#) which seeks to strengthen the 2022 EU budget by transferring €12 billion in commitments from 2021. Further transfers will be made to the budgets of subsequent years of the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework.

Guidelines for the 2023 budget – Section III

Parliament's [guidelines for the 2023 EU budget](#) (Section III – European Commission) launch the annual budgetary debate. Underlining the need for a just transition to a greener economy, Parliament's Committee on Budgets (BUDG) highlighted the importance of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The BUDG committee's report adopted by Parliament lists a number of budgetary priorities, including a stronger health union, the green and digital transitions, fundamental rights and the rule of law. The report also underlined the need to spread payments evenly throughout the period of the current multiannual financial framework. The guidelines provide the basis for Parliament's trilogue negotiations on the 2023 budget, ahead of the European Commission's proposed draft budget.

Opening of trilogue negotiations

Members [confirmed](#), without a vote, a mandate for negotiation from the Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) and Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committees on information accompanying transfers of funds and certain crypto-assets.

Members also [approved](#), with votes, a mandate for negotiation from the Legal Affairs (JURI) Committee on the proposal for a directive on corporate sustainability reporting, and from the Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) Committees on the proposal for a directive to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

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](#).

