

## Plenary round-up – February II 2023

The highlight of the February II 2023 plenary session was a debate with the Council and the European Commission marking one year since Russia's invasion and the start of its war of aggression against Ukraine. Members also debated the European Union response to the humanitarian situation following the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Members discussed EU funding allocated to non-governmental organisations incriminated in recent corruption revelations, following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the integrity of European institutions and to establish an independent EU ethics body.

The European Commission and Council also made statements on a Green Deal industrial plan and access to strategic critical raw materials. Parliament discussed the outcome of the recent special European Council meeting, and among other topics concerning non-EU countries, the further repressions against the people of Belarus, in particular the cases of Andrzej Poczobut and Ales Bialiatski.

Finally, in a formal sitting, Members heard an address by Egils Levits, President of the Republic of Latvia.

### REPowerEU chapters in recovery and resilience plans

Members debated and adopted the provisional agreement reached with the Council on REPowerEU chapters in recovery and resilience plans. The amendments to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) should enable EU countries to use their RRF plans to fund additional energy investment and reform measures necessitated by the twin climate and energy crises. Parliament's negotiators have ensured that the [RRF amendments](#) prioritise tackling energy poverty and small businesses, and that spending under the plans will be fully transparent.

### CO<sub>2</sub> emission standards for cars and vans

Transport is the only sector in which greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have continued to rise. In line with measures to tackle climate change, Members held a debate and approved the interinstitutional agreement reached with the Council on reducing road transport emissions under the 'Fit for 55' initiative. To set stricter [CO<sub>2</sub> emission standards](#) for new cars and vans, Parliament's negotiators have succeeded in introducing more ambitious zero low emission vehicle (ZLEV) incentives; limits to the maximum contribution of sustainable production (or 'eco-innovation') to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction efforts; and have ensured measures are based on real-world energy consumption and emissions data.

### Union secure connectivity programme 2023-2027

Members debated and approved an interinstitutional agreement on a proposal to ensure a resilient, interconnected and secure satellite system for the EU. Known as IRIS<sup>2</sup>, this [secure connectivity programme](#) will run until 2027, setting up dedicated EU infrastructure to end EU dependency on other countries' systems, which will be designed and deployed under private partnership to improve cyber-resilience and cybersecurity, high-speed broadband and seamless connectivity. The agreement on the proposal reflects Parliament's priority for improved telecommunications security and a more sustainable space policy.

### Electoral rights of mobile Union citizens

Parliament considered and adopted reports on two proposals to eliminate barriers to exercising the electoral rights of European citizens resident in Member States of which they are not nationals, such as a lack of information or difficult registration procedures. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCD) report on [electoral rights in European Parliament elections](#) underlines the need for improved access to voting booths, and encourages civil society involvement in ensuring citizens can obtain information, including in their own language. Members also debated and adopted a Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) report on proposals reinforcing mobile citizens' [electoral rights in municipal elections](#). The LIBE report calls for an end to derogations and restrictions, and urges Member States to



facilitate voting for citizens with disabilities. Both files fall under the consultation procedure (where the Council is not bound by Parliament's opinion), and the Council has to adopt the proposals unanimously.

### European Central Bank annual report

Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank (ECB), attended the plenary for a debate on an Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) Committee own-initiative report on the 2021 [ECB annual report](#). The report raises concerns about the high levels of inflation – at 2.6 % on average in 2021, but subsequently reaching 9.2 % in 2022. The ECON committee welcomes ECB measures to raise interest rates and the Bank's recognition of the need to progress fiscal integration in the EU. However, it also warns that measures must be gradual, targeted and justified. The ECON committee particularly welcomes the ECB's plans to incorporate climate risk in monetary policy.

### EU accession to the Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) sets standards on prevention, protection, prosecution and services for those at risk of gender-based violence. Parliament has repeatedly called for EU accession to the Istanbul Convention as well as its ratification by those individual EU countries that have yet to do so. However, certain 'deliberate misinterpretations' persist. Members debated and adopted a joint report from Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and the LIBE committee on [EU accession to the Istanbul Convention](#). The report calls for constructive dialogue, aimed at dispelling remaining Member State concerns, and stresses that while not exempting individual countries from the need to ratify, EU accession can take place before all have done so.

### Question time – Strengthened EU Western Balkan enlargement policy

Members posed questions to Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi regarding the EU's [strengthened Western Balkan enlargement policy](#). Under Article 49 TEU, the Parliament must consent to any accession to the EU. Its budgetary powers give it direct influence over the amounts allocated to enlargement tools, and Parliament recommends full use of the new EU enlargement methodology to accelerate integration for countries that demonstrate commitment to EU-related reform.

### Opening of trilogue negotiations

Members [confirmed](#), without a vote, six mandates to enter into interinstitutional negotiations from the ECON committee, on reports on: i) requirements for credit risk, credit valuation adjustment risk, operational risk, market risk and the output floor; ii) on supervisory powers, sanctions, third-country branches, and environmental, social and governance risks; iii) on delegation arrangements, liquidity risk management, supervisory reporting, provision of depositary and custody services and loan origination by alternative investment funds; iv) on establishing a European single access point providing centralised access to publicly available information of relevance to financial services, capital markets and sustainability; and v) on amending certain directives and vi) regulations as regards the establishment and functioning of the European single access point.

Members also confirmed, without a vote, one Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) decision to enter into negotiations on the report on establishing a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's semiconductors ('chips act'), one decision from the LIBE committee on the report regarding digitalisation of the visa procedure, and one decision from the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) on the report on the 2023 European Year of Skills.

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](#).