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Newsletter 1-2 February 2017 Plenary session Brussels

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Debate: next steps in shaping the Energy Union

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MEPs set to call for automatic cross-border recognition of adoptions

To protect adopted children’s best interests, MEPs want the EU Commission to require all EU countries to recognise each other’s adoption certificates automatically. Their draft resolution proposes a European Certificate of Adoption to speed up automatic recognition process. The debate and vote will take place on Thursday.

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Visa-free EU access for Georgians: final vote in Parliament

A draft law giving Georgian citizens the right to travel to the EU without a visa will be put to a plenary vote on Thursday at noon. Biometric passport holders will be able to enter the Schengen area for 90 days within any 180-day period for a holiday, business or any other purpose, except working.

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Debate to be added: migration flows in the central Mediterranean

MEPs are expected to add an item to the agenda to debate the current growing migratory pressure in the central Mediterranean on Wednesday afternoon at around 17.00.

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The EU Erasmus+ programme should give all young people a chance to learn abroad, not just university students, say MEPs in a draft resolution to be voted on Thursday. Erasmus+ budgeting needs to be made more flexible to offer equal opportunities to all and accommodate an increase in project submissions for youth organisations, they add. MEPs are also concerned that few apprentices take part.

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Vote on clarifying licensing rules for EU vessels fishing outside EU waters

Rules for authorising EU vessels to fish outside EU waters will be clarified by a new regulation to be debated on Wednesday and put to a vote on Thursday. This regulation would also extend the current licensing system to include private agreements between EU companies and third countries.

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MEPs will quiz the Commission on progress made towards eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM) in the EU, and protecting young girls against this violent practice, in a debate on Wednesday evening.

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<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2017-02-01>

Further information

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US travel ban on the agenda for debate

Political group leaders will debate the “travel restrictions following US President executive orders”. The item will be added to the plenary agenda at the opening of the session.

Political group leaders will take the floor to express their views on the consequences of the executive order, signed last Friday by US President Donald Trump, to ban nationals from seven countries from entering the US, with immediate effect.

Changes to the draft agenda, if approved by the majority of MEPs, will be announced at the opening at 15.00 by EP President Antonio Tajani.

Procedure: Statement by the VPC/HR, one round of political group leaders

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

#EPlenary

Further information

[Statement by Claude MORAES \(S&D, UK\), Chair of the Civil Liberties committee on the new US immigration policy \(30.01.2017\)](#)

Debate: next steps in shaping the Energy Union

The second State of the Energy Union report will be debated with Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič on Wednesday at 15.00.

With eight additional proposals (“Clean energy package”) tabled in November 2016, about 80% of the legislation needed to complete the Energy Union is now in the legislative process to ensure that Europe has secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy.

Parliament and the Council have reached a provisional deal on energy intergovernmental agreements, and are now debating new rules on energy efficiency labelling. They are also due to start talks soon on security of gas supply proposals.

Clean energy package

The legislative proposals cover energy efficiency, renewable energy, the design of the electricity market, security of electricity supply and governance rules for the Energy Union. Parliament’s Industry Committee is about to start examining the proposals.

Procedure: Commission statement

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

#EnergyUnion @MarosSefcovic

Further information

[Work in progress in the committee on energy](#)

[EP Research Service: Legislation in progress](#)

[Clean Energy Package – European Commission press release \(November 2016\)](#)

[Video recording of the exchange of views with ITRE committee \(25/01/2017\)](#)

[First report on the State of the Energy Union - press release of the European Commission \(November 2015\)](#)

MEPs set to call for automatic cross-border recognition of adoptions

To protect adopted children’s best interests, MEPs want the EU Commission to require all EU countries to recognise each other’s adoption certificates automatically. Their draft resolution proposes a European Certificate of Adoption to speed up automatic recognition process. The debate and vote will take place on Thursday.

The draft resolution invites the Commission to put forward rules on automatic EU-wide recognition of “domestic” adoptions, i.e. cases where the adopters and the adopted child are resident in one country.

Families with adopted children from their own country still face legal and administrative hurdles when moving from one EU member state to another. For example, parents might be unable to arrange for the education or medical treatment of their adopted child unless additional legal steps are taken to demonstrate that they have custody.

If the resolution is approved, the Commission will not be obliged to follow the Parliament’s recommendations, but must state its reasons if it refuses.

You can find more information about this topic in the [background note](#)

Procedure: Legislative initiative procedure (INL)

[2015/2086\(INL\)](#)

Debate/vote: Thursday, 2 February

#crossborder #adoption

Further information

[Draft report on cross border aspects of adoptions](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Tadeusz Zwiefka, \(EPP, PL\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Background note: “Q&A: New rules on automatic cross-border recognition of adoptions?”](#)

[EP Research Added Value Assessment: Cross-border recognition of adoptions](#)

[Audio-visual material for media](#)

Visa-free EU access for Georgians: final vote in Parliament

A draft law giving Georgian citizens the right to travel to the EU without a visa will be put to a plenary vote on Thursday at noon. Biometric passport holders will be able to enter the Schengen area for 90 days within any 180-day period for a holiday, business or any other purpose, except working.

Parliament and Council negotiators struck a deal on the legislation last December. The visa waiver will enter into force on the same date as the visa suspension mechanism, which allows EU member states to temporarily reintroduce visa requirements for reasons of public security.

Procedure: Co-decision (Ordinary Legislative Procedure), first reading agreement

[2016/0075\(COD\)](#)

Debate/vote: Thursday, 2 February

#Georgia #visas

Further information

[Draft report on the proposal to exempt Georgian citizens of visa requirements](#)

[Georgia to get visa-free access to the EU, MEPs and Council negotiators agree \(Press release, 13.12.2016\)](#)

[Reimposing visas: MEPs back emergency brake measures \(Press release, 15.12.2016\)](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Mariya Gabriel \(EPP, BG\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Audiovisual material for professionals](#)

MEPs to vote on import surge safeguards for EU banana growers

Rules to protect EU banana growers against any surge in imports from Ecuador after its accession to the EU-Colombia/Peru trade deal will be debated on Wednesday and put to a vote on Thursday.

Ecuador, one of the world's biggest banana producers, joined the EU's trade agreement with Colombia and Peru in January 2017. Ecuador will have preferential access to the EU market, but the interests of EU growers will be protected by a temporary stabilisation mechanism.

A political agreement on this mechanism, which enables preferences to be suspended once an annual threshold is reached, was struck by ministers and MEPs in December. Parliament's negotiators also inserted an early warning system, which will be triggered when import volumes reach 80% of the threshold.

Background

Bananas are eaten in greater quantities than any other fruit in the world. The EU is the biggest market, buying one third of global exports. EU imports come mainly from Latin America, while roughly 11% of world demand is met by European producers in Spain (Canary Islands), France (Guadeloupe and Martinique), Portugal (Madeira and Azores) Cyprus and Greece. In these territories, the banana industry plays a key economic role and serves as a model of sustainability.

Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure (ex-codecision procedure)

[2015/0112\(COD\)](#)

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

Vote: Thursday, 2 February

#EUtrade #Peru #Colombia #Ecuador

Further information

[Press release: MEPs back trade deal with Ecuador \(14.12.2016.\)](#)

[The economic impact of the accession of Ecuador to the EU-Colombia/Peru trade agreement \(European Commission, June 2016\)](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Marielle de Sarnez \(ALDE, FR\)](#)

[Committee on International Trade](#)

Debate to be added: migration flows in the central Mediterranean

MEPs are expected to add an item to the agenda to debate the current growing migratory pressure in the central Mediterranean on Wednesday afternoon at around 17.00.

While the number of persons crossing the Aegean Sea to reach the EU has fallen significantly, the number of those risking the central Mediterranean sea crossing, mainly from Libya to Italy, has continued to grow.

The idea of replicating the EU-Turkey deal to cope with migration flows from Libya, suggested earlier this month by Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat for the Council Presidency, was rejected by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

Ms Mogherini instead announced €200m in EU funding to be allocated to the EU Trust Fund for Africa, to help prevent migration from Libya. This funding includes €3.2m to expand the current EU training programme for the Libyan Coastguard as part of Operation Sophia. Some of the money will be used to develop a programme of “voluntary returns”, helping some of the displaced migrants stranded in Libya return to their countries of origin.

Statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

#Libya #migration

Further information

[EP Research Service - At A glance: “Libya after Gaddafi: A challenging transition” \(June 2016\)](#)

[EU-Libya relations](#)

[Audiovisual material for media](#)

Crisis in South Sudan up for a debate

MEPs will debate the spread of violence, including mass atrocities, and the resulting urgent humanitarian needs of South Sudan on Wednesday afternoon.

In December 2013, a power struggle between President Salva Kiir and his sacked deputy Riek Machar erupted into a civil war in two-year old South Sudan.

Despite a [peace agreement](#), signed under considerable international pressure in August 2015, several tens of thousands people have died, and food insecurity and acute malnutrition have reached unprecedented levels. More than three million people have been driven from their homes, creating one of the world's worst displacement situations, according to the United Nations.

Procedure: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Statement

[2017/2509\(RSP\)](#)

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

#SouthSudan

LINKS

Further information

[Procedure file](#)

[EP Research Service "Peace agreement in South Sudan: Ambitious but hard to deliver" \(February 2016\)](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015 on the situation of two Christian pastors in Sudan](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2015 on South Sudan, including recent child abductions](#)

[The EU and South Sudan](#)

[The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – Horn of Africa \(December 2016\)](#)

[Audiovisual material for professionals](#)

Rule of law crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Gabon

MEPs are set to call for independent investigations into election-related violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Gabon late on Wednesday afternoon, and a resolution to be voted on Thursday.

Condemning all the violence perpetrated and the allegations of serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in both countries, MEPs are likely to call for a recount of the Gabonese election results to be referred not only to the Gabonese Constitutional Court but also to the African Union and the UN. They are also set to urge all political players in the DRC to engage in peaceful and constructive dialogue and to prevent any deepening of the current political crisis.

Procedure: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Statement (with resolution)

[2017/2510\(RSP\)](#)

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

Vote: Thursday, 2 February

#Congo #RDC #Gabon #ruleoflaw

Further information

[Draft resolution on Rule of law crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Gabon Procedure file](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 1 December 2016 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

[EP Research Service - Briefing: "Democracy in Africa - Power alternation and presidential term limits"](#)

[EP Research Service - At A Glance: "Tense situation in Democratic Republic of Congo" \(June 2016\)](#)

[EP Research Service - At A Glance: "Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo \(DRC\): Turmoil in the run-up to elections" \(June 2016\)](#)

[Audiovisual material for media](#)

MEPs to call for Erasmus+ funding for youth organisations and apprenticeships

The EU Erasmus+ programme should give all young people a chance to learn abroad, not just university students, say MEPs in a draft resolution to be voted on Thursday. Erasmus+ budgeting needs to be made more flexible to offer equal opportunities to all and accommodate an increase in project submissions for youth organisations, they add. MEPs are also concerned that few apprentices take part.

Parliament asks the EU Commission to give national agencies more flexibility to move funds within programme's key actions and thus enable quality projects in under-budgeted sectors to go ahead. MEPs also stress the need to reduce bureaucracy, simplify application forms and increase up-front funding rates to make it easier for small organisations to run projects.

Student loan mechanism isn't working

MEPs also urge the Commission to prepare a critical assessment of the functioning of the Students Loan Guarantee Facility, which is designed to help master's degree students take up low-rate bank loans backed by the Commission as a part-guarantor against possible student defaults. Only 130 students and four banks have used this tool since its inception in 2015.

Background

Erasmus+ is the EU's umbrella programme for education, training, youth and sport for 2014-2020. It replaces previous EU programmes in these fields: Erasmus for higher education, Comenius for schools, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training, Grundtvig for adult education, the Jean Monnet programme, the Youth in Action programme and four international higher education programmes, Erasmus Mundus, ALFA III, Tempus and Edulink.

The first (Erasmus) mobility exchanges in education field began in 1987. The higher education programme has been the most successful one of the last 30 years.

Erasmus+ is organised around three key actions:

- **learning mobility for individuals** (supports mobility projects in education, training and youth for students, staff and youth workers),
- **cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices** (promotes strategic partnerships between organisations in the education, training or youth fields; partnerships between organisations in the education or training and work fields; skills alliances; projects to develop youth organisations, volunteering, social and regional integration; and international cooperation), and
- **policy development** (supports initiatives for policy innovation, stakeholder dialogues and policy and programmes promotion, cooperation in the field of recognition of skills, transfer of credits; research, teaching and debates at international level regarding education, training and policy making)

Sport is a new sector for Erasmus+. The programme supports projects addressing integrity in sport, fighting discrimination and intolerance, match fixing, dual careers for athletes, health-enhancing physical activities, voluntary activities and the European Week of Sport.

Procedure: non-legislative resolution

2015/2327(INI)

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

Vote: Thursday, 2 February

#ErasmusPlus @EUErasmusPlus

Further information

[Draft resolution the implementation of 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Milan ZVER \(EPP, SV\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Erasmus+ webpage](#)

[Study on Erasmus+: Decentralised Implementation - First Experiences](#)

[EPRS Briefing - How the EU budget is spent - Erasmus+](#)

[Erasmus+ 30th anniversary - Video from the event organised at the European Parliament](#)

Vote on clarifying licensing rules for EU vessels fishing outside EU waters

Rules for authorising EU vessels to fish outside EU waters will be clarified by a new regulation to be debated on Wednesday and put to a vote on Thursday. This regulation would also extend the current licensing system to include private agreements between EU companies and third countries.

The proposed regulation would replace the current '[Fishing Authorisations Regulation](#) 1006/2008. It would apply to all EU vessels fishing outside EU waters and to third-country vessels fishing in EU waters. It includes provisions on common eligibility criteria for licensing and the creation of a public register of authorised vessels.

Procedure: ordinary legislative procedure (vote on the negotiating mandate)

[2015/0289\(COD\)](#)

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

Vote: Thursday, 2 February

#EUfisheries

Further information

[Draft resolution on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Linnéa ENGSTRÖM \(Greens/EFA, SV\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP briefing on new rules for managing the EU external fishing fleet](#)

[EP's resolution on the external dimension of the Common Fisheries \(22 November 2012\)](#)

[EP's resolution on the external dimension of the CFP, including fisheries agreements. \(12 April 2016\)](#)

[European Commission factsheet on EU fleets fishing internationally](#)

[EU Commission website on illegal fishing](#)

Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

MEPs will quiz the Commission on progress made towards eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM) in the EU, and protecting young girls against this violent practice, in a debate on Wednesday evening.

Parliament called on the Commission to come forward with joint action plans to end FGM in the EU in a February 2014 [resolution](#). It says that any EU resident who has committed the crime of FGM should be prosecuted, even if the offence was committed outside the borders of the member state concerned, and that this “extraterritoriality” principle should be included in the criminal law provisions of all member states.

Background

The [Commission estimates](#) that hundreds of thousands of women living in Europe have been subjected to genital mutilation and that thousands of girls are at risk. The largest groups of women and girls originating in countries where the practice of FGM is widespread now live in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the UK.

Globally, at least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone some form of FGM, [according to UN](#) estimates. If current trends continue, 15 million additional girls between ages 15 and 19 be subjected to it by 2030. FGM is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15.

February 6 is the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

#EndFGM

Procedure: Commission statement

Debate: Wednesday, 1 February

#EndFGM

Further information

[EP resolution 'Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation' \(31.01.2014\)](#)

[Commission website on FMG](#)

[Video: extracts from debate on female genital mutilation:](#)

[EP Research study: Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation](#)

Other topics on the agenda

Other topics for debate and vote include the following:

Sport policy: good governance, accessibility and integrity, *Hannu Takkula (ALDE, FI) (INI)*,
debate Wednesday, vote Thursday

Further information

[Hannu Takkula \(ALDE, FI\)](#)