Newsletter
21-24 October 2019
Strasbourg plenary session

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MEPs to debate results of October EU summit
On Tuesday morning, MEPs will take stock of the outcome of the 17-18 October meeting of EU heads of state or government.

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Parliament will adopt its position on next year’s EU budget on Wednesday, focussing on climate change, youth unemployment, Erasmus, migration and external policies.

Debate and vote on Turkish military operation in north-east Syria
MEPs will discuss the Turkish military operation in north-east Syria and its consequences on Wednesday morning. A resolution will be put to the vote on Thursday.

Parliament to discuss EU accession prospects for Albania and North Macedonia
On Wednesday afternoon, MEPs are set to reiterate their support for opening accession talks with the two Western Balkan countries.

Rescue of asylum seekers at sea: MEPs demand a system based on solidarity
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Financial support for EU workers who would lose their jobs in a no-deal Brexit
MEPs are set to approve changes to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to include support for workers affected by a no-deal Brexit, in a vote on Tuesday.

Thomas Cook: how to help tourists, companies and SMEs impacted by bankruptcy
MEPs are set to push for EU plans and funds to mitigate the economic knock-on effects on tourism, air and road transport of the Thomas Cook bankruptcy.

MEPs to debate the dangers of violent right-wing extremism
Following the recent terror attack outside a synagogue in eastern Germany, MEPs will discuss violent right-wing extremism in a plenary debate on Monday.

Get multinationals to disclose where they pay taxes, MEPs to tell member states
MEPs will discuss stalled legislation obliging multinationals to disclose what taxes they pay in each country on Tuesday, and will adopt a resolution on Thursday.

MEPs set to refuse discharge for Council’s budget
The Council’s and European Asylum Support Office’s (EASO) accounts are likely to not be approved by MEPs, in separate votes on Wednesday.

MEPs debate climate and ecological emergency
Parliament will discuss the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis with Council and Commission on Wednesday afternoon.

MEPs debate how EU money was spent in 2018
Parliament will debate with EU Court of Auditors president Klaus-Heiner Lehne and Budget commissioner Günther Oettinger on Wednesday how EU money was spent in 2018.

MEPs to denounce member states’ move to weaken bee protection from pesticides
MEPs could send the Commission back to the drawing board in a vote on Thursday, after member states watered down draft measures to protect bees.

Human rights and democracy resolutions
Parliament will hold urgent debates on the following human rights, democracy and rule of law topics on Thursday 24 October, at around 10.00, with the votes following at 12.00.
Other topics on the agenda


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Further information
Session briefing - Strasbourg, Monday, 21 October - 16.00
Draft agenda
Follow the plenary live
EbS
Press conferences and other events
EP Multimedia Centre
EP Newshub

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End-of-term assessment for the Juncker Commission

MEPs will take stock of the work done by the Juncker Commission during its mandate on Tuesday morning.

Since taking office on 1 November 2014, the Juncker Commission has dealt with a broad range of important issues, including climate change, Brexit, the Eurozone crisis, youth unemployment, migration, foreign interference in democratic processes and disinformation, attacks on fundamental rights and the rule of law, challenges posed by digitalisation, rising international tensions and numerous armed conflicts close to the EU's external borders.

MEPs will take stock of the Juncker Commission's response in relation to those challenges in a debate on Tuesday morning.

Statement by the President of the Commission, followed by debate

Debate: Tuesday 22 October

Further information

Webpage of European Commission President Jean-Claude-Juncker


EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
MEPs to debate results of October EU summit

On Tuesday morning, MEPs will take stock of the outcome of the 17-18 October meeting of EU heads of state or government.

The main items on the summit agenda are the negotiations for a long-term EU budget, strategic priorities for the next five years (including a presentation by President-elect Ursula von der Leyen), and climate change in the aftermath of the UN Climate Action Summit and ahead of the Climate Conference in Santiago de Chile in December.

A separate meeting on 17 October, in EU27 format, is dedicated to Brexit. Following the decision of the 10 April 2019 European Council Special Summit to accept the UK government’s request to prolong the Article 50 deadline, the UK is set to leave the EU by 31 October.

Council President Donald Tusk and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will take part in the debate.

Procedure: Statement by the President of the Commission, followed by debate

2019/2721(RSP)

Debate: Tuesday, 22 October

Further information
Draft Agenda of the European Council, 17-18 October 2019
Draft Agenda for the EU27 meeting on Brexit, 17 October 2019

EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
EU investment budget for 2020: a bridge to the future Europe

Parliament will adopt its position on next year’s EU budget on Wednesday, focussing on climate change, youth unemployment, Erasmus, migration and external policies.

MEPs underline, in their draft resolution, that the 2020 European Union budget should pave the way for the long-term 2021-2027 EU budget and provide a solid starting point for the launch of the new generation of EU programmes and policies.

They are set to boost the Commission’s draft budget by adding altogether more than €2 billion to protect the climate. In addition to that, they intend to increase the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the Erasmus+ programmes and approve further support in line with Parliament’s priorities in areas such as SMEs, digitalisation, migration and external policy, including development and humanitarian aid.

An interview with the General Rapporteur for the 2020 EU budget (Commission section), Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE) can be downloaded here.

Next steps

The plenary vote will kick off three weeks of “conciliation” talks with the Council, with the aim of reaching a deal between the two institutions in time for next year’s budget to be voted on by Parliament and signed by its President during the November II plenary session (25-28 November).

Background

About 93% of the EU budget funds real activities on the ground in EU countries and beyond. It goes to citizens, regions, cities, farmers, researchers, students, NGOs and businesses.

The EU budget is unique. Unlike national budgets, which are used in large part for providing public services and funding social security systems, the EU budget is primarily an investment budget and, unlike national budgets, the EU Budget cannot run a deficit.

Procedure: Budgetary

2019/2028(BUD)

Debate: Tuesday, 22 October
Vote: Wednesday, 23 October

Further information
Draft resolution
Press release on committee vote (14.10.2019) - Vote on the budgetary resolution
Press release on committee vote (1.10.2019) - Vote on the budgetary figures
General rapporteur for Section III of the EU budget, Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE)
Rapporteur for the other sections, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial (S&D, ES)
Procedure file
Infographic on the budgetary procedure
Fact Sheets on the European Union - The budgetary procedure
EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Debate and vote on Turkish military operation in north-east Syria

MEPs will discuss the Turkish military operation in north-east Syria and its consequences on Wednesday morning. A resolution will be put to the vote on Thursday.

The Turkish military started operations in north-east Syria against Kurdish-led forces more than a week ago, after US troops withdrew from the area. Kurdish militia played a significant role in helping the US defeat the Islamic terrorist group IS in Syria.

In the meantime, the Kurdish-led alliance has sought help from Syria’s government, which is backed by Russia, and the US government is preparing sanctions on Turkey as a response to Turkish military activities in north-east Syria.

The debate on Wednesday morning will be followed up by a resolution to be put to the vote on Thursday.

You can watch the plenary debate via EP Live, and EbS+.

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

Debate: Wednesday, 23 October

Vote: Thursday, 24 October

Further information
Situation in northern Syria (Plenary debate, 09. October 2019)

European Parliament resolution of 15 March 2018 on the situation in Syria

EP Multimedia centre: free photos, video and audio material
Parliament to discuss EU accession prospects for Albania and North Macedonia

On Wednesday afternoon, MEPs are set to reiterate their support for opening accession talks with the two Western Balkan countries.

On Tuesday 15 October, ministers from EU member states meeting in Luxembourg failed to reach a unanimous agreement on kicking off membership talks with both Albania and North Macedonia, despite heavy pressure from a vast majority of member states to begin negotiations.

The item will now end up on the table for EU heads of state or government on 17-18 October. The European Parliament has, in previous resolutions, expressed its strong support to start talks with both countries.

Council and Commission statements

Debate: Wednesday, 23 October

Further information


EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Rescue of asylum seekers at sea: MEPs demand a system based on solidarity

The EU and its member states must ensure search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean are managed swiftly, MEPs are set to say on Thursday.

Following a plenary debate with the Council and the Commission on Wednesday afternoon, MEPs will vote on a resolution calling for solidarity among EU countries and demanding a fair distribution of people rescued at sea whilst trying to reach European territory.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), since 1 January more than 1,000 people have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean. In March, EU member states suspended the naval operations of the joint operation Sophia, which had been in place since 2015.

Procedure: Oral questions to the Council and Commission (with resolution)

*Debate: Wednesday, 23 October*

*Vote: Thursday, 24 October*

Further information

Oral question to the Council

Oral question to the Commission

Search and rescue in the Mediterranean: MEPs to assess the situation (2.10.2019)

EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: mandate extended until 31 March 2020 (Council of the EU, 26.092019)

EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Plans to keep EU funding for UK beneficiaries until end 2020 in no-deal Brexit

UK researchers, students and farmers would continue to get EU support in the event of a no-deal Brexit, under provisions to be put to the vote on Tuesday.

Parliament is set to approve a measure to make sure that EU funds for 2019 and 2020 are fully available if the UK leaves the European Union, to minimise any negative impact of Brexit for beneficiaries of EU funding and for the European Union budget in the case of a no-deal scenario.

The draft regulation extends to 2020 the contingency plan approved by the European Parliament on 17 April 2019, previously limited to 2019. The measure includes programmes such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and agriculture and regional policies.

The proposal would make it possible to continue payments to UK beneficiaries throughout 2020, provided the UK continues to pay its contributions and accepts the necessary controls and audits.

Other Brexit-related items

MEPs will also vote on the period for granting simplified fishing authorisations for EU fishing vessels in United Kingdom waters and fishing operations of United Kingdom fishing vessels in European Union waters, now extended until 31 December 2020. An additional contingency measure, allowing member states directly impacted by Brexit to access financial support from the EU Solidarity Fund (now only meant for natural disasters), may also be put to the vote, pending prior agreement in the Regional Development Committee.

2019/0186(APP)

Debate: no debate for BUDG or PECH file

Vote: BUDG, PECH Tuesday, 22 October, REGI Thursday, 24 October (TBC)

Procedure: Consent (for the BUDG file)
Further information
Draft recommendation on the implementation and financing of the EU budget in 2020 in relation to Brexit

Press release on committee vote (14.10.2019): “Plans to keep EU budget funding in 2020 in the event of a no-deal Brexit”

Profile of rapporteur: Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE) - Implementation and financing of the EU budget in 2020 in relation to Brexit

Procedure file (Implementation and financing of the EU budget in 2020 in relation to Brexit)

Procedure file: Fishing authorisations for Union fishing vessels in United Kingdom waters and fishing operations of United Kingdom fishing vessels in Union waters (PECH)

Profile of rapporteur: Chris Davies (Renew Europe, UK) – fishing authorisations
Procedure file: Financial assistance to Member States to cover serious financial burden inflicted on them following a withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union without an agreement (REGI)

Profile of rapporteur: Younous Omarjee (GUE/NGL, FR) – financial assistance
Free photos, video and audio material
Financial support for EU workers who would lose their jobs in a no-deal Brexit

MEPs are set to approve changes to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to include support for workers affected by a no-deal Brexit, in a vote on Tuesday.

The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) finances active labour policies such as reskilling of individual workers, career advice, training, relocation allowances or business start-ups. The proposed changes specify that redundancies that may take place in EU member states resulting from the UK leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement should also fall within the scope of the EGF.

So far, EU governments could only apply for EGF financial support for workers and self-employed persons who have lost their jobs due to globalisation or an economic crisis. This change is part of the contingency measures that the EU is adopting to mitigate disruption for European citizens, businesses, and administrations in the event of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit.

Background

The member states and European Parliament must approve all EGF applications. Once approved, the EU pays 60 % and the EU countries 40 %. Since 2007, 70,000 workers have benefitted from EGF funding. A total of €170 million is available per year until 2020.

 Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading

2019/0180(COD) - EGF 2014-2020

Vote: Tuesday, 22 October
Further information
Profile of rapporteur Vilija Blinkeviciute (S&D, Lithuania)
Procedure file
EP news: European Globalisation Adjustment Fund: helping redundant workers
EP Research Briefing: Reform of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund
Report from the European Commission on the activities of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in 2017 and 2018
EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Thomas Cook: how to help tourists, companies and SMEs impacted by bankruptcy

MEPs are set to push for EU plans and funds to mitigate the economic knock-on effects on tourism, air and road transport of the Thomas Cook bankruptcy.

In a debate on Monday, MEPs will ask the Commission how it plans to prevent European economies closely linked to the tourism sector from being seriously impacted and how it will provide aid to alleviate the consequences and job losses for sectors and companies most affected, especially SMEs.

MEPs might also call for consumers’ travel rights to be harmonised across the EU and repeat their demand for air passengers to be better protected in the event of a company going bankrupt, in a resolution to be put to the vote on Thursday.

Commission statement (with resolution)

Debate: Monday, 21 October

Vote: Thursday, 24 October

Further information
Oral question to the Commission

EP Research Brief: Strengthening air passenger rights in the EU
MEPs to debate the dangers of violent right-wing extremism

Following the recent terror attack outside a synagogue in eastern Germany, MEPs will discuss violent right-wing extremism in a plenary debate on Monday.

The European Parliament will discuss the events which took place in Halle, Germany, and the dangers posed by right-wing extremism in Europe. The attack left two people dead and was motivated by antisemitism and right-wing extremism.

Commission statement (without a resolution)

Debate: Monday, 21 October

Further information
Press release: Parliament demands ban on neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups in the EU (25.10.2019)
EU Terrorism Situation & Trend Report 2018 (Te-Sat)
EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Get multinationals to disclose where they pay taxes, MEPs to tell member states

MEPs will discuss stalled legislation obliging multinationals to disclose what taxes they pay in each country on Tuesday, and will adopt a resolution on Thursday.

Parliament backed this proposed legislation, which would shed more light on multinationals’ tax practices, already in 2017. EU ministers have, however, failed to adopt a position and, as a result, no law has been adopted as yet.

After two years and numerous tax scandals, MEPs are set to deplore that finance ministers have failed to prioritise this legislation enough and are likely to call on them to adopt a negotiating position quickly.

Council statement (with resolution)

Debate: Tuesday, 22 October

Vote: Thursday, 24 October

Further information

Press release on position adopted by the European Parliament (04.07.2017)


Country by country reporting: Briefing by the European Parliamentary Research Service

Free photos, video and audio material
MEPs set to refuse discharge for Council’s budget

The Council’s and European Asylum Support Office’s (EASO) accounts are likely to not be approved by MEPs, in separate votes on Wednesday.

The European Parliament is set to refuse discharge to the European Council and the Council as well as, in a separate vote, to the European Asylum Support Office, both for the financial year 2017.

Council’s discharge could be denied on grounds of failure to cooperate in supplying the information it needs. The EASO spending might not be approved due to shortcomings in management and procurement procedures.

Plenary debates on Monday will precede both votes.

The discharges were postponed by MEPs in March this year and are now returning for a final vote. The Parliament has denied discharge to the European Council and the Council every year since 2011.

Procedure: Discharge

2018/2168(DEC) - Council

2018/2208(DEC) - EASO

Debate: Tuesday, 22 October

Vote: Wednesday, 23 October

Further information

Draft report on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of European Council and Council for year 2017

Press release on committee vote (20.02.2019)

Profile of rapporteur (on Council): Isabel GARCÍA MUÑOZ (S&D, ES)
Profile of rapporteur (on EASO): Petri SARVAMAA (EPP, FI)
Procedure file: Council

Procedure file: EASO

Main arguments behind the disagreement between the Parliament and the Council - EP Thinktank
EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
MEPs debate climate and ecological emergency

Parliament will discuss the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis with Council and Commission on Wednesday afternoon.

MEPs will give their input on the “European Green Deal” announced by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen when she presented her programme in plenary. The strategy aims to encompass action on climate, environment, sustainability, health and food safety.

Members are also set to reiterate their call on EU leaders to deliver on a formal commitment to a carbon-neutral EU economy by 2050, ahead of the UN climate talks to take place in December.

Procedure: Topical debate (Rule 162)

Debate: Wednesday 23 October

Further information

EP research: Hearings of the Commissioners-designate: Frans Timmermans – Vice-President: European Green Deal


EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
MEPs debate how EU money was spent in 2018

Parliament will debate with EU Court of Auditors president Klaus-Heiner Lehne and Budget commissioner Günther Oettinger on Wednesday how EU money was spent in 2018.

MEPs are likely to discuss the recurring differences in how EU funds are absorbed and how EU projects are carried out in different member states. They may call for EU funds to be disbursed in a simpler way to avoid irregularities.

The debate launches the EU 2018 budget discharge procedure in which the European Parliament will check the EU’s finances, based on the EU Court of Auditors’ (ECA) assessment and recommendation by the Council.

EU spending in 2018 was €156.7 billion, representing 1% of EU gross national income and approx. 2% of total public spending in member states. Upon release of the 2018 Audit report, the Court of Auditors congratulated the EU for being consistent for the third year in a row in meeting high standards of accountability and transparency when spending public money.

Background

Parliament is monitoring the implementation of the EU budget, by scrutinising each year how the Commission and other EU institutions have spent EU taxpayers’ money, assessing to what extent this money has contributed to achieving the EU’s political objectives.

MEP’s will vote on closure of the EU 2018 accounts in March 2020.

Procedure: Discharge

2019/2802(RSP)

Debate: Wednesday, 23 October

Further information

EU 2018 audit report for 2018 in 23 languages

Procedural steps and documents for the 2018 discharge

Discharge procedure: how Parliament scrutinises the EU budget

EU budget discharge procedure explained by the EU Commission
MEPs to denounce member states’ move to weaken bee protection from pesticides

MEPs could send the Commission back to the drawing board in a vote on Thursday, after member states watered down draft measures to protect bees.

The draft proposal from the European Commission was intended to incorporate into EU law the European Food Safety Authority’s (EFSA) 2013 guidance to cut the use of pesticides that harm bees. EFSA proposed that pesticides should be tested to protect bees from both acute and chronic exposure. The pesticides would only remain available on the market if they pass these new tests.

However, most EU member states opposed the provisions, forcing the Commission into a compromise to keep on board only provisions that protect bees against acute exposure.

Political groups therefore tabled an objection to the draft. If adopted, the Commission will need to come up with a new proposal.

MEPs also held a debate with the Commission and EFSA on the matter in the Environment Committee.

Procedure: Objection to comitology act (binding)

Vote: Thursday, 24 October

Further information
EP research - farming without plant protection products
Free photos, video and audio material
Human rights and democracy resolutions

Parliament will hold urgent debates on the following human rights, democracy and rule of law topics on Thursday 24 October, at around 10.00, with the votes following at 12.00.

- Uganda, notably the proposed bill to impose capital punishment of homosexual acts,
- Egypt,
- Indonesia's proposed new Criminal Code.

Procedure: non-legislative resolutions

Debate/vote: Thursday, 24 October

Further information

EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material
Other topics on the agenda

Other topics for debate and vote include the following:

• Taking forward the horizontal anti-discrimination directive, Council and Commission statements, debate Tuesday
• The situation in Iraq, in particular the violent suppression of young people’s and students’ protests, Statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, debate Wednesday
• High level UN political declaration on Universal Health Coverage, Council and Commission statements, debate Wednesday
• Appointment of EBA Executive Director Farkas as Chief Executive AFME, Oral question to the Commission, debate Thursday