European Parliament

# Conference on the Future of Europe: Key proposals and relevant positions taken by Parliament

**This background note includes an informal summary of Parliament's positions, ongoing work, and past resolutions related to the Conference Plenary proposals.**

On 30 April, the Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe adopted 49 proposals, which include more than 300 measures on how to achieve them. Below, a summary and links to EP position in related areas.

For further information, please contact the relevant press officer: **Press officers in Brussels/Strasbourg by policy area and language.**

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# Climate change and the environment

**Agriculture, food production, biodiversity and ecosystems, pollution**

In order to have safe, sustainable, just, climate responsible and affordable production of food in Europe, which safeguards biodiversity, the Conference Plenary proposes to redirect subsidies and strengthen incentives towards organic farming and sustainable agriculture including through certification of carbon removals. It also calls for a significant reduction of the use chemical pesticides and fertilizers, while still ensuring food security, as well as more research and innovation and better conditions for farmers.

To protect and restore biodiversity, the landscape and oceans, and eliminate pollution, the proposals say the EU needs to step up the protection of nature and biodiversity. There should be support to reforestation and binding national targets in Member States. Pollinators and other insects should be better protected and efforts to protect water sources and combat pollution in rivers and oceans must be stepped up. New constructions should foresee green spaces. The ban on single use plastics should be enforced and extended.

Key Parliament actions

- New EU farm to fork strategy to make our food healthier and more sustainable
- Biodiversity: MEPs demand binding targets to protect wildlife and people
- LIFE: Deal reached to invest €5.4 billion in climate and environmental projects
- Parliament adopts EU environmental objectives until 2030
- Common Agricultural Policy reform gets final approval from MEPs
- Parliament seals ban on throwaway plastics by 2021
- Sustainable forestry: Parliament's work to fight deforestation
- Parliament adopts deal to ensure access to environmental justice for EU citizens

**Climate change, energy, transport**

To enhance European energy independence, provide Europeans with sufficient, affordable and sustainable energy and to tackle climate change, the proposals suggest reducing dependencies from oil and gas imports. To this end, the EU needs to speed up the green transition, in particular through more investments in renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, more affordable public transport, improve infrastructure for cycling and promote (shared) use of electric vehicles. The EU should invest in high-speed and night trains to provide a credible alternative and facilitate the possibility to replace and discourage short distance flights. The EU must allocate adequate funding for the green and just transition and protection of workers and jobs and set-up an investment package for climate-friendly technologies to be financed through carbon border adjustment levies.

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Key Parliament actions

- EU Climate Law: MEPs confirm deal on climate neutrality by 2050
- The European Parliament declares climate emergency
- Energy Crisis: MEPs, Commission and Council debate new plans
- MEPs back plans to restock gas reserves before next winter
- Methane: MEPs want binding target to bring double win for climate and health
- Green Deal: key to a climate-neutral and sustainable EU
- COVID-19: MEPs extend relief measures for the transport sector and prevent ghost flights

**Sustainable consumption, packaging and production**

To become more circular, more autonomous, and less dependent, the EU must promote sustainable products to ensure all products placed on the EU market comply with high EU environmental standards. This should be done by establishing a transparent labelling system for all products sold in the EU regarding their environmental footprint using a QR-code and eco-score, or the Digital Product Passport. To avoid more waste (including export of waste), prevention and reuse targets must be set and an EU-wide return-scheme for packaging installed. The Conference Plenary also calls for rapid implementation of an ambitious sustainable textile strategy and measures to tackle early or pre-mature (including planned) obsolescence and EU actions that enable and incentivize consumers to use products longer and promote a right to repair.

Key Parliament actions

- Circular economy: MEPs call for tighter EU consumption and recycling rules
- Right to repair: MEPs want more durable and more easily repairable products
- MEPs want to strengthen new EU rules for design, production and disposal of batteries

**Information, awareness, dialogue and life-style**

To foster knowledge, awareness, education, and dialogues on environment, climate change, energy use, and sustainability, the Plenary proposes to create an interactive fact-checked information platform with regularly updated scientific environmental information, support information campaigns on eco-awareness, including a long-term EU campaign for sustainable consumption and lifestyle. The role and action of the EU in the area of environment and education should be increased by extending the EU's competence in education on climate change and environment and by extending the use of qualified majority decision-making on topics identified as being of 'European interest', such as the environment. The Plenary also wants the EU to develop a common European charter targeting environmental issues and provide educational courses and teaching materials (including on food production and biodiversity protection) for all in order to increase climate and sustainability literacy. A plant-

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based diet should also be promoted.


Key Parliament actions

> • Parliament adopts EU environmental objectives until 2030

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# Health

**Healthy food and healthy lifestyle**

To ensure that all Europeans have access to education on healthy food and access to healthy and affordable food, as a building block of a healthy lifestyle, the Conference Plenary proposes setting minimum standards for food quality, as well as food traceability, including by limiting the use of antibiotics and other animal medicinal products. Equally important is educating people about healthy habits from an early age and encouraging them to make safe and healthy choices, though better consumer information and labelling. They also recommend investing in research on the impact of the use of antibiotics and the effects of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in human health.

Key Parliament actions

- MEPs call for a more effective EU strategy to beat cancer & Final proposals on how to strengthen the EU's role in the fight against cancer
- The fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has long been a top priority for health MEPs
- European Parliament resolution on a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors

**Resilience and quality of healthcare systems**

Specific measures included in the proposals include ensuring adequate working conditions and harmonisation of training and certification standards for health professionals, as well as the creation of a European health data space. Investment in health systems should be increased, in particular public and non-for profit, infrastructure and digital health, and existing health research and innovation programmes should be further developed, coordinated and funded. The Conference Plenary also recommends ensuring strategic autonomy at EU level to avoid dependency on third countries for medicines and medical devices, as well as coordinated strategic stockpiling throughout the EU.

Key Parliament actions

- Health Union: a stronger role for the European Medicines Agency
- Health Union: medicines must be more accessible and affordable
- EU Health: MEPs call for a future-proof EU pharmaceutical policy
- Civil Protection: Faster EU response to large-scale emergencies
- EU4Health programme, worth 5.1 billion EUR, to help fix shortcomings exposed by COVID-19 and boost quality and resilience of EU health systems

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**A broader understanding of health**

The EU should adopt a holistic approach to health, addressing, beyond diseases and cures, health literacy and prevention, and fostering a shared understanding of the challenges faced by those who are ill or disabled, in line with the "One Health Approach", which should be emphasized as a horizontal and fundamental principle encompassing all EU policies. The Plenary recommends improving the understanding of mental health issues and ways of addressing them, including the development of an EU Action Plan on mental health. Moreover, first aid courses should be developed and made available free of charge, and a standard educational programme on healthy lifestyles, also covering sexual education, should be created.

Key Parliament actions

- Mental health debate in plenary (April 2022)
- EU strengthens its disease prevention and control capacity
- The European Parliament calls for a 2021-2027 EU action plan on mental health
- Parliament wants a European Health Union

**Equal access to health for all**

The adopted proposals recommend that a "right to health" should be established, to guarantee that all Europeans have equal and universal access to affordable, preventive, curative and quality health care. Access to existing treatments should be ensured, through facilitating cross-border cooperation, notably on rare diseases, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and highly specialised treatments. In order to achieve the necessary coordinated, long-term action at Union level, through an enhanced European Health Union, health and healthcare should be included among the shared competencies between the EU and its member states by amending Article 4 TFUE.

Key Parliament actions

- EU health policies should be patient-centred, including accessible and affordable medicines
- Equal access to cancer care across borders
- European Health Union: better disease prevention and cross-border cooperation

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# Stronger economy, social justice and jobs

**Sustainable Growth and innovation**

The Conference Plenary proposals call on the EU to shift to a sustainable and resilient growth model, considering the green and digital transitions with a strong social dimension in the European Semester, and empowering citizens, trade unions and businesses. They also suggest boosting European technology and innovation to make it a viable alternative to foreign technologies, including payment systems and single currency.

Key Parliament actions

- National recovery plans: historic opportunity for long-term sustainable growth
- Euro's global role in strategic interests of the euro area and its member states
- Plenary approved call to boost EU FinTech sector
- Green finance: Parliament adopts criteria for sustainable investments

**Enhancing EU's competitiveness and further deepening the Single Market**

The EU economy should become more resilient, competitive and strategically independent, to this end citizens propose promoting entrepreneurial culture where innovative businesses of all sizes, and in particular Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), as well as start-ups are encouraged and can thrive and contribute to more resilient and cohesive societies.

Key Parliament actions

- MEPs set priorities for EU economy in 2022 amid Ukraine crisis
- Parliament adopts InvestEU programme for strategic and innovative investments
- Plenary approves a call to urgently complete the Capital Markets Union

**Inclusive labour markets and stronger social policies**

The Conference Plenary propose to improve the functioning of labour markets so that they ensure fairer working conditions and promote gender equality, employment, including that of young people and vulnerable groups. The EU, Member States and social partners need to work to end in-work poverty, address the rights of platform workers, ban un-paid internships and ensure fair labour mobility in the EU.

The proposals suggest that social policy should focus on reducing inequalities and tackling poverty including child poverty and social exclusion. The EU competences should be

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strengthened in proposing harmonised legislation and minimum requirements to promote social policies and ensure equality of rights, including health.

Key Parliament actions

- Empowering Europe's youth to avoid a 'lockdown generation'
- Parliament adopts a more reactive and accessible European Globalisation Fund
- MEPs: give persons with disabilities genuine equal access to the labour market
- Parliament calls on member states to fully exploit the European Youth Guarantee
- EU must prioritise fight against youth unemployment, homelessness and poverty
- New disability strategy: Stepping up EU action for an inclusive Europe
- Coronavirus: Parliament approves €37 billion crisis response

**Fiscal and tax policies**

In order to boost future oriented investments focused on green and digital transition and preparedness for current and future challenges such as the social and economic impact of the war against Ukraine the Conference Plenary proposed to strengthening the EU own budget through new own resources. Proposals point to moving taxation away from people and SMEs and target tax evaders, big polluters and the digital giants.

Key Parliament actions

- Corporate tax transparency: MEPs okay new country-by-country reporting rules
- Parliament greenlights EUR 270 million programme to help tax authorities fight tax dodging
- Global minimum corporate tax rate: MEPs approve Commission's main ideas in committee vote
- MEPs adopt recommendations on reforming withholding taxes and simplifying tax systems
- MEPs adopt proposals for addressing harmful tax schemes and reducing the EU VAT gap
- MEPs put forward proposals for fairer and simpler taxation to help the economic recovery
- EU tax haven blacklist is not catching the worst offenders
- Tax information sharing must improve significantly, MEPs warn
- EU must step up its game against harmful tax practices, says Parliament

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# EU in the World

**Foreign affairs, security and defence**

In the area of foreign and security policy, the proposals stressed that the EU should stop taking foreign and security policy decisions by unanimity, and instead switch to qualified majority decision taking. That is in line with repeated calls from the European Parliament, which also wants to see Europe react faster and with more resolve.

The EU must be able to speak with one voice and act as a truly global player, and strengthening the role of the EU High Representative is essential. In its dealings with third countries, the EU must make good use of its collective political and economic weight to nudge states, organisations and individuals to comply with its fundamental principles.

In the area of defence and security, proposals point to dialogue promotion and guaranteeing peace, with an EU armed force to be used for self-defence and pre-empting military action. The force could be deployed outside the EU only in exceptional circumstances and with a UN mandate.

In February, the European Parliament supported such ambition in a resolution calling for the creation of a multinational EU 'rapid entry force' that can be mobilised in a security emergency.

**International trade**

In the field of trade, the proposals suggest diversification of supply chains as a means of strengthening Europe's autonomy in key sectors. A way to achieve this goal, echoed in several resolutions by the European Parliament, is through ambitious trade negotiations, which are better concluded as an EU bloc rather than as individual countries.

Currently there are a number of trade agreements in various state of readiness with countries as diverse as Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, Australia and the Mercosur countries, In charge of scrutinizing the negotiation process and the resulting agreements, the Parliament has often called for conducting these negotiations as transparently as possible, a request repeated among the proposals of the working group. Ratification of trade agreements should also happen faster, the group stressed.

The Conference Plenary insist: the rules for companies competing on the internal market must be equal and fair. Parliament agrees: a legislative proposal on creating fair competition by

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counteracting foreign subsidies on the internal market is currently going through the law-making process, while another one that would open up foreign public procurement markets to EU companies is nearing the end of the process.

The proposals draw a strong connection between foreign policy, trade and European values and core European goals, by strengthening the ethical and environmental dimension of its trade and investment relations. They aim to link international trade with climate policy measures, to ensure that decent work standards are fully applied through global value chains, that human rights standards and trade union rights are upheld and that goods are imported to the EU respecting the goals of sustainable development. Similarly to the European Parliament, the Conference Plenary proposes enforcing trade and sustainable development chapters in the free trade agreements of the Union. The EU is currently in the legislative process of updating the rulebook of its preferential trade program for developing countries: similarly to what the Parliament's Trade Committee is set to suggest, the working group also pushes for stronger conditionality provisions and effective monitoring and dialogue processes with the countries benefiting from this unilateral arrangement.

In foreign and defence policy and trade, multilateralism must prevail, proposes the Plenary, in concert with the European Parliament's main foreign policy and trade resolutions.

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# Values and rights, rule of law, security

**Upholding EU values across all EU countries**

Values enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights are non-negotiable, irreversible and necessary conditions for EU membership. To make these values tangible, the Plenary proposes a European citizenship statute and a statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations. A European public sphere (including audiovisual and online media outlets) should be developed, including by further EU investment. Annual conferences on the rule of law (following the Commission' Rule of law Report) with delegations from all Member States (citizens, civil servants, parliamentarians, local authorities, social partners and civil society) should be organised. The 'Conditionality Regulation' and other rule of law instruments should be effectively applied, and a similar approach may have to be put in place even in areas not relevant to the EU budget.

Key Parliament actions

- Rule of Law conditionality: Commission must immediately initiate proceedings
- EU values in Poland: MEPs concerned about continuous deterioration
- Rule of law in Poland and Hungary has worsened
- European democracy and the role of political entities in the social media era
- Parliament demands a legally binding, effective mechanism to protect EU values
- Rule of law: the Commission's annual report still needs improvements, MEPs say
- Civil society: Parliament calls for EU rules and strategy to counter threats
- MEPs push for game-changer rules for pan-European civil society

**Media independence and the fight against disinformation**

Proposals are also put forward to promote media independence and pluralism, as well as media literacy, including through legislation addressing threats, potentially at business model level. EU competition rules should be strictly enforced to prevent monopolies and ensure independence from undue interference. Quality journalism should be promoted and an EU body for disinformation and interference is among the key proposals, complemented through more efforts to promote media literacy, including through mandatory school trainings. Online platforms should also have to issue clear statements about the algorithms they use, while safeguarding free speech and privacy.

- EU rules needed against abusive lawsuits targeting critical voices
- Media freedom: EP warns of attempts to silence critics and undermine pluralism
- Daphne Caruana Galizia journalism prize goes to Pegasus Project
- Digital Services Act: agreement for a transparent and safe online environment

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**Data protection and cybersecurity**

The Plenary wants to boost data protection and make it more citizen-oriented. To this end, the current rules should be more strictly enforced, for example by increasing the sanctions for violations and by creating stronger enforcement mechanisms. Other proposals aim to boost privacy by making sure that it is taken into account in the design process and as a default option, and wants to better protect children's data, for example by creating a separate category of sensitive data. Also, the Plenary wants to better protect people and institutions from cyber-threats by reinforcing the EU agency for cybersecurity (ENISA), and by improving coordination between national cybersecurity authorities.

Key Parliament actions

- Digital Services Act: agreement for a transparent and safe online environment
- Legislative train: the e-Privacy regulation
- Essential infrastructure and resilience: EP committee approves position
- Cybersecurity: MEPs strengthen EU-wide requirements against threats

**Anti-discrimination, equality and quality of life**

The EU should develop transparent quality of life indicators including economic, social and rule of law criteria, aiming to raise social standards and a common EU socio-economic structure. Proposals also call for public investment in education, health, housing, physical infrastructures, care for the elderly and people with disabilities, as well as additional investment to guarantee appropriate work/life balance for citizens. Taxing large corporations, fighting access to tax havens and eliminating their existence in the EU to fund priority areas such as education and research is also proposed. The proposals also ask for EU-wide criteria on anti-discrimination in the labour market (and outside of it) and incentivizing (subsidies, temporary quotas) the hiring of people in vulnerable groups.

- 'Right to disconnect' should be an EU-wide fundamental right, MEPs say
- Parliament's efforts towards an anti-discrimination directive
- EU must step up its game against harmful tax practices, says Parliament

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# Digital transformation

**All Europeans should have access to digital solutions**

Equal access to the internet is a fundamental right of every European citizen. The Conference Plenary sees investing in high-quality and innovative European digital infrastructure as a basis for successful digital transformation. This includes ensuring fast, affordable, secure and stable internet access everywhere in the EU and developing 5G and 6G networks. The EU has to avoid vendor lock-in and make sure all people have in practice access to the internet as well as hardware. European digital services should also become interoperable and strive for sustainable green solutions.

Key Parliament actions

- €30 billion for infrastructure projects connecting EU regions
- Data governance: Parliament approves new rules boosting intra-EU data sharing
- Standards for the green and digital transitions: statement by Internal Market Committee Chair Anna Cavazzini
- Tap into the potential of the data economy for better services and jobs, say MEPs
- Parliament supports European digital transformation programme
- Digital Europe: opportunities for industry; conditions for the gigabit society

**Digital skills key for successful digital transformation**

The proposals emphasise that the EU has to ensure that all European citizens from all age groups can benefit from digitalisation, by empowering them with the necessary digital skills and opportunities, including ensuring access to formal and non-formal digital literacy and skills trainings and education. The Plenary proposes creating EU level standard programmes and curricula concerning the risks and opportunities of the internet, online rights of users and the netiquette. Additional EU certification relating to digital skills would aid young people in their future careers. The suggested measures include also developing more training initiatives to retrain and upskill workers to remain competitive in the job market.

Key Parliament actions

- Put digital skills at the heart of education and training policies

**Safe and trustworthy digital society – cyber security and disinformation**

The EU should ensure effective and swift implementation of existing legislation and have more powers to enhance cyber security in order to have a safe, resilient and trustworthy digital

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society. Strengthening capacities of Europol/European Cybercrime Center, building up joint European cyber defence capabilities against large-scale attacks, and ensuring resilient infrastructure and alternative communication channels in case of black-outs, are a few concrete measures proposed. On disinformation, enhancing digital literacy and critical thinking is key, additionally to legislation and guidelines for online platforms and social media companies to address disinformation vulnerabilities and implementing transparency measures. Human oversight and control of decision-making processes in using AI and algorithms is needed.

Key Parliament actions

- Cybersecurity: MEPs strengthen EU-wide requirements against threats
- Parliament backs new EU cybersecurity competence centre and network
- Digital Services Act: agreement for a transparent and safe online environment
- Parliament leads the way on first set of EU rules for Artificial Intelligence

**Data sovereignty**

Proposals aim to provide people with better control over their own data, to increase awareness over and better enforce existing data protection rules in the EU. GDPR needs to better implemented, including by non-EU companies, while not creating additional burdens for SMEs. Users need clear information on how their data is used and by whom. Requests for permanent deletion of data need to be followed through in a timely manner. If companies do not comply with rules on data protection, sanctions proportionate to their turnover must be applied. Citizens need to be helped if they encounter issues with opt-outs, while EU-wide rules on ending intrusive behavior, revoking data access and sanctioning fraudsters are needed.

Key Parliament actions:

- Digital Services Act: agreement for a transparent and safe online environment
- Deal on Digital Markets Act: EU rules to ensure fair competition and more choice for users
- Frances Haugen to MEPs: EU digital rules can be a game changer for the world
- Data governance: Parliament approves new rules boosting intra-EU data sharing
- Parliament calls for improved implementation and enforcement of the GDPR
- Data protection: MEPs, experts discussed how landmark EU rules have been applied in practice
- MEPs highlight the potential of the data economy for jobs
- EPRS: The future of data protection and privacy: How the European Parliament is responding to citizens' expectations

**Digital innovation for a sustainable economy: human-centric approach**

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Measures to strengthen the economy and the single market through digitalisation include introducing a "human-centric" approach to working by ensuring a right to disconnect. EU companies need incentives to be socially responsive and keep high quality jobs in Europe. There should be human oversight when AI is used in the work place and transparency of algorithms. The potentials of a trustworthy and responsible AI, as well as blockchain technology and cloud services need to be fully exploited. Additional support for remote work is needed through reliable and fast internet, digital training and ergonomic office equipment for home. SMEs and start-ups need fair access to funding and fewer legal burdens to help pursue cross-border activities. Businesses need access to secure data, while the digitisation of public services needs to be encouraged. The Conference Plenary also supports introducing a European common digital identity, promoting open source software in education and creating a European app for information on consumption and nutrition products.

Key Parliament actions:

- 'Right to disconnect' should be an EU-wide fundamental right, MEPs say
- MEPs: Companies must no longer cause harm to people and planet with impunity
- New proposal on protection of the rights of platform workers
- Parliament leads the way on first set of EU rules for Artificial Intelligence
- Artificial intelligence: the EU needs to act as a global standard-setter
- MEPs debate new "AI Act" with EC VP Margrethe Vestager
- MEPs call for an ethical framework to ensure artificial intelligence respects EU values
- MEPs want more support for digital innovation and AI applications

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# European Democracy

**Citizens information, participation and youth**

In order to increase citizens' participation in European democracy and ensure that their voice is heard at all times, the Conference Plenary proposes to improve the information provided to them by creating an official website summarizing how they can participate on the democratic decisions, a digital platform to share citizens' ideas, questions and views as well as a mobile application presenting EU policies in a clear language. Citizens' assemblies whose outcome should be taken on board by the institutions should be held periodically. To reflect interests of young people in the legislation, an impact assessment of all EU legislation on the youth should be performed. The Plenary also called for a minimum level of education on the EU, both at schools and through civil society organisations. The EU must further support civil society and free, pluralistic and independent media. The protection of journalists and fight against disinformation and foreign interferences must be a priority too.

Key Parliament actions

- Give Europeans a stronger voice: ways to enhance participatory democracy
- Civil society: Parliament calls for EU rules and strategy to counter threats
- EU rules needed against abusive lawsuits targeting critical voices
- European media needs support to recover from pandemic and face future challenges
- Transparency, EU values, and pluralism: new rules for European political parties

**Democracy and elections**

To strengthen European democracy, the Conference Plenary points out that the EU should firstly strengthen common democratic values in its borders so that it can promote its democratic model in external countries. To improve the democratic element of the EU, the European Parliament should have the right to trigger an EU wide referendum. The EU electoral law should be amended so that Union-wide list for the election of some Members is introduced and it is ensured that all citizens can participate on the vote. The President of the Commission should be elected directly or through a lead candidate system. The Plenary also proposed to grant more rights to the European Parliament including the right of legislative initiative and the right to decide on the EU budget.

Key Parliament actions

- Rule of Law conditionality: Commission must immediately initiate proceedings
- EU elections: MEPs want transnational lists and all countries to vote on 9 May
- Parliament's right of initiative: proposals to strengthen EU democracy

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**EU decision making process**

The EU must improve its capability to act, says the Conference Plenary. To that end, all issues decided in the Council by way of unanimity should be decided by way of a qualified majority, with the exception of an admission of new membership to the EU and changes to the fundamental principles of the EU. To improve the transparency of decision-making, the meetings of the Council and the European Parliament should be broadcasted online. For better accountability, the European Parliament's right of inquiry should be strengthened, concluded the Plenary. To make the EU more comprehensible, the names of EU institutions could be changed so that they resemble names of national institutions. A new debate should be re-opened to consider adopting an EU constitution.

Key Parliament actions

- MEPs are expected to table a resolution during Parliament's 2-5 May plenary session to call for a revision of the Treaties. After this, the responsible committee may submit to Parliament a report containing proposals, addressed to the Council, for the amendment of the Treaties.

**Subsidiarity**

The Plenary considers subsidiarity a key principle for the EU functioning. It therefore proposed national Parliaments and regional parliaments that have legislative power to be granted the possibility to suggest a legislative initiative to the European level. The Committee of Regions should be given an enhanced role in the EU's institutional architecture and social partners and organised civil society should be better included in the decision-making process.

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# Migration

**Legal migration**

The Conference Plenary proposes launching a communication campaign across EU in order to heighten awareness among EU companies recruiting non - EU nationals of the existence of European Cooperation Network of Employment Services (EURES), the EU Immigration Portal and the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals. It also proposed to offer the possibility of online matching of supply and demand of skills in the country of departure and on the basis of assessment criteria. The EU should encourage Member States to simplify the process of reception and integration of legal migrants and their access to the EU labour market. EU should also promote upwards convergence on working conditions throughout the Union to combat inequalities of working conditions and to ensure workers' rights. Efforts to inform and educate citizens of the Member States about the topics related to migration and integration should be increased.

Key Parliament actions

- New EU Blue Card rules for highly qualified immigrants wishing to work in Europe
- Parliament demands new EU rules to support legal labour migration
- Legal migration options would reduce irregular flows and boost economy, say MEPs

**Irregular migration**

The proposals aim to improve Frontex's transparency and accountability at the external EU borders and to further adapt EU legislation to address human smuggling and trafficking, sexual exploitation, hybrid attacks by countries instrumentalising migrants and violations of human rights.

Key Parliament actions

- Human trafficking: stronger measures to protect women, children and migrants
- Frontex: MEPs to investigate alleged violations of fundamental rights
- Respect of fundamental rights by Frontex: European Parliament inquiry launched
- MEPs withhold discharge of EU border control agency Frontex' accounts
- MEPs end visit to Latvia and Lithuania to assess situation at Belarus' borders
- Poland-Belarus border: MEPs alarmed by humanitarian and political crisis
- Asylum and migration: Civil Liberties Committee delegation concludes its mission to Greece

**Common European Asylum System**

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Enhanced common rules for the first reception of migrants, incl. guaranteeing the safety and health of all migrants, in particular pregnant women, children, unaccompanied minors and all vulnerable people should be applied across EU countries.

EU financial, logistical and operational support for local authorities, regional governments and civil society organizations for first reception and integration of refugees and regular migrants in the EU or repatriation of irregular migrants should be increased.

Revisiting of the Dublin system in order to guarantee solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility including the redistribution of migrants among Member States. Adopting EU common rules concerning procedures for the examination of claims for international protection in Member States, to be applied uniformly to all asylum seekers in respect of human dignity and international law.

Asylum seekers and refugees should, during the process of the residence procedure, attend language, integration courses, professional training, and activities. Those asylum seekers with relevant qualifications should be given access to the labour market, when possible with the aim to strengthen their self-reliance.

Key Parliament actions

- A strong EU Asylum Agency to support asylum systems in the member states
- Asylum: more solidarity among EU member states and funds for frontline countries
- Bringing together internal and external aspects towards improved governance of migration
- Migration and asylum: presentation of draft reports for screening and force majeure regulations
- Press conferences on asylum and migration management and asylum procedures
- EU Parliament adopts two funds for asylum and border policies
- Asylum border procedures: MEPs warn of fundamental rights challenges
- Ukraine: EU must protect all children fleeing the war

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# Education, culture, youth and sport

**Education: integrated, future-proof and equal**

The Plenary proposes to coordinate EU education programmes, while respecting the national and local contents. Equivalence of diplomas, and recognition of professional degrees, non-formal learning and learning periods abroad must be ensured, including through certified minimum standards in core subjects. Citizens must be educated about EU democracy, values and history via a common civic education module. A dedicated EU organization must coordinate media literacy and critical thinking classes to tackle fake news. School curricula must include "soft skills", such as listening and dialogue, resilience, self-study, result-orientation.

Everyone should learn about environmental sustainability and its connection to health, while making biodiversity a mandatory subject. There should be support for teacher training in creative and state-of-the-art teaching methods. Access to hardware and broadband connectivity must be prioritized, to meet the educational needs of all children. Joint EU teaching materials should be introduced, e.g. in areas of climate change, sustainability and digitisation.

Key Parliament actions:

- Citizenship education: MEPs demand a common curriculum to educate about EU values, institutions and history
- Fight against racism: end segregation in schools,combat discriminatory stereotypes in curricula
- European Parliament asks for concrete steps to make European Education Area a reality

- MEPs call for measures to close the digital gap in education
- MEPs achieve significantly more funding for the Erasmus+ mobility
- Shaping EU's digital education policy: MEPs call to ensure equal access

**Youth: support in working life and social protection and "youth test" of the EU legislation**

Young people should be more involved in decision-making, e.g. through citizens' panels with children of 10 to 16 years. European representatives could meet schoolchildren in their schools while an EU "Youth Test" should be applied to all new EU legislation and policies. Voting at European Parliament elections could be considered from age of 16 and national parties should put younger candidates on European election lists. Pupils (starting at 12 years of age) must be able to participate in observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations, as part of their formal education. More EU financing under NextGenerationEU should be devoted to European Youth Guarantee. Young people's internships and jobs must include fair remuneration, putting end to youth minimum wages and banning unpaid internships outside formal education.

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Young people's access to social protection and affordable housing should be ensured, and "brain drain" must be prevented with the help of EU funding. Detailed youth plans for crises (e.g. health crisis or war) should minimise the impact on young peoples' studies, work and mental wellbeing.

Key Parliament actions:

- European Year of Youth 2022: MEPS ask to include youth in European and national policymaking
- MEPs call to empower Europe's youth to avoid a 'lockdown generation'
- MEPs approve new Social Fund to support young people
- Solidarity Corps: Parliament ensures more access to young people with limited opportunities and more quality of the offered activities
- MEPs secure a more inclusive Erasmus+ programme

**Culture: fostering EU identity and strengthening diversity**

The culture of exchange, European identity and European diversity should be strengthened. travel and professional mobility should be extended to local representatives, and exchange possibilities should be accessible to all. New elements in existing EU exchange and mobility programmes (such as civic service within the European Solidarity Corps, and cultural passes within DiscoverEU) should be considered. Stronger focus must be placed on multilingualism from an early age, and minority and regional languages should be better protected through a designated EU institution to promote language diversity. There should be a mandatory competence in another EU language starting from elementary school, teaching a language of the neighbouring EU country in cross border areas, as well as a certifiable standard in English.

Europe Day (9 May) should become an EU-wide public holiday, initiatives should be put in place to protect and celebrate European cultural heritage, and professionals, particularly in any future crises, should be protected through EU law.

Key Parliament actions:

- MEPs call for a status of artist and minimum social standards for cultural workers
- EU's new culture programme: MEPs secure significantly more funding
- The new Erasmus+ programme will now include adult learners
- MEPs call for a durable cultural heritage policy to constrain effects of pandemic
- "One million signatures for diversity": MEPs discuss potential minority protection laws

**Sports: ensure healthy living, promote diversity, strengthen European identity**

Sports in the EU should contribute to defending EU values (gender equality, fairness and inclusiveness), to healthy lifestyle and healthy ageing, as well as to celebrating European

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diversity. There should be more attention and support for local and traditional sport and non-professional sports. It also suggests to use sports as a tool for showcasing European identity, by organising more inter-EU sports events, creating EU sports teams and displaying EU symbols at sporting events.

Key Parliament actions:

- MEPs ask for values-based EU sports model and to channel funds into amateur and grassroots sport
- MEPs: EU recovery instruments must also support young people and sports sector

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