
European Parliament Press Kit for the European Council of 23 and 24 March 2023

In this press kit, you will find a selection of the European Parliament's press releases that show MEPs' priorities in relation to topics on the summit agenda.

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola will represent the European Parliament at the summit, address the heads of state or government at 15.00 and hold a press conference after her speech.

When: Press conference at around 15.30 on 23 March

Where: European Council press room and via [EbS](#).

EU leaders will meet to discuss Russia's war against Ukraine and the EU's continued support for the country, competitiveness, the single market, how to boost the EU's economy, trade, migration and energy-related issues.

Additional information can be found on the [European Parliament's website](#).

Plenary debate ahead of the European Council meeting

In a [debate with Presidents Michel and von der Leyen on 15 March](#), MEPs reviewed the outcomes of the 9 February EU summit and outlined their expectations for the 23-24 March European Council.

They highlighted the urgent **need for the EU to improve its competitiveness and urged for action to ensure fair conditions for EU manufacturers**, in light of the current protectionist measures by the US. They stressed the need for more investment, welcomed moves towards an EU raw materials strategy, demanded more ambition in cutting red tape, asked to boost European capital markets, and a renewed vigour in the EU's trade diplomacy, to achieve new free trade deals with the US and other democracies.

MEPs also called on the Council to **address the common European problem of migration**, by ensuring that all member states take their fair share of migrants and asylum-seekers and by fighting the illegal activity at the EU borders leading to human tragedies.

Russia's war against Ukraine

In a [resolution adopted on 16 February](#), marking one year of Russia's war against Ukraine, MEPs strongly condemned Moscow's aggression and **reiterated their unwavering solidarity** with the people and leadership of Ukraine.

They reaffirmed their **support for providing military assistance to Ukraine for as long as is necessary** and called for serious consideration to be given to delivering Western fighter jets and helicopters, appropriate missile systems and substantial increases in munitions delivery to Kyiv. Ukraine must not only be able to defend itself, but also to regain full control of its entire internationally recognised territory.

Looking ahead, MEPs demanded that the legal regime - which allows for Russian assets frozen by the EU to be confiscated - be completed. These assets should then be used to reconstruct the country and to compensate the victims of the war. They also underline that, once the war ends, **Russia will have to be subject to severe reparations** to contribute substantially to the reconstruction of Ukraine.

MEPs reiterated their **support for the European Council's decision to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine last summer**. They also called on Ukraine, the Commission and the Council to work towards the start of accession negotiations this year, while stressing that EU accession also remain a merit-based process with respect for relevant procedures and conditional criteria.

In a debate and a [resolution adopted on 2 February](#) ahead of the EU-Ukraine summit, MEPs demanded the EU "**work towards the start of accession negotiations** and to support a roadmap outlining the next steps to enable Ukraine's accession to the EU single market". They also invited the Ukrainian authorities to introduce substantial reforms to effectively align with EU membership criteria as soon as possible.

Parliament also urged EU member states to **increase and accelerate their military assistance to Kyiv**, in particular the provision of weapons, but also essential political, economic, infrastructural, financial and humanitarian support.

[Addressing European leaders during the special European Council on 9 February](#), European Parliament President Metsola called for unity in support of Ukraine and said that "**Ukraine still needs more support. Ukraine needs weapons**. In this next phase of war, more heavy armour will be required. Tanks, jets and long-range defence systems must be considered and here we must move quickly. There is no time for complacency. That is how we can help achieve peace. Peace with dignity. Peace with freedom. Peace with justice."

Further reading

[Provide Ukraine with military aid for as long as necessary, MEPs say](#)

[Resolution: One year of Russia's invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine](#)

[Timeline: how the EU supported Ukraine in 2022](#)

[How the EU is supporting Ukraine in 2023](#)

[MEPs say work on Ukraine's EU future must start now](#)

[Ukraine war: MEPs push for special tribunal to punish Russian crimes](#)

[MEPs call for a firmer response to Russian threats to European security](#)

MEPs to contact:

[David McALLISTER](#), (EPP, DE) Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

[Nathalie LOISEAU](#) (Renew, FR) Chair of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence

[Michael GAHLER](#) (EPP, DE) Standing Rapporteur on Ukraine

[Andrius KUBILIUS](#) (EPP, LT) Standing Rapporteur on Russia

Economy and Competitiveness

In two reports on the [economic policy coordination aspects and on employment and social priorities](#), adopted on 15 March, MEPs endorsed their economic, employment and social priorities for the year ahead, **focusing on the reform of economic governance rules and improved social protection for EU workers**.

MEPs emphasise the need to rapidly **complete the review of the EU's economic governance system**, preferably before the general escape clause, which was activated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ends. MEPs broadly agree with the Commission's ideas presented in December 2022 and stress that the revised rules must allow sufficient leeway to member states to enact crisis resolution measures. They do however caution against relying too heavily on debt sustainability analyses for the updated rules, arguing that this could undermine transparency, and hamper ownership and predictability.

MEPs also say that the Commission should do more to encourage **better fiscal coordination**, saying that "it is still largely random if the aggregation of national fiscal policies results in a euro area fiscal stance which is appropriate and consistent with the unified monetary policy" led by the European Central Bank.

[Addressing European leaders during the special European Council on 9 February](#), European Parliament President Metsola highlighted with regard to competitiveness and the European economy: "Let us speed up **investment in Europe**, to put the European economy back on a stable path of growth and to make us even more competitive. We do not need to reinvent the

wheel - NextGenerationEU funding is still ready and available. Together with a **revision of the MFF** that will allow us to redistribute funds into tranches that were less of a priority when we were negotiating it.”

In a [resolution adopted on 16 February](#) - in response to the Commission’s “[Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age](#)” - MEPs called on the Commission to work on plans to **redeploy, relocate and re-shore industries in Europe**. They stress the importance of enhancing the EU’s manufacturing strength in strategic technologies like solar and wind energy, heat pumps, and batteries.

They demand the **scaling-up, and improved commercialisation of, strategic technologies** to bridge the gap between innovation and market deployment. Fast and predictable permitting procedures to set up new projects to deploy renewable energy sources as quickly as possible are also needed, according to MEPs.

The **overall objective of EU policy must be to secure European leadership in clean energy technologies and improving Europe’s existing industrial base** while assisting in its transformation to produce high-quality jobs and economic growth to reach the goals of the Green Deal. To achieve this, MEPs say, the EU must take measures to have a larger production capacity more quickly for affordable, secure and clean energy intended for use by industry and to increase energy savings and energy efficiency measures.

MEPs also highlight the importance of **secure access to critical raw materials** to achieve the EU’s ecological and digital transformations. Strategic European projects need faster and more transparent permitting, according to MEPs.

Following a [ceremony](#) and [debate](#) on 18 January, Parliament adopted a resolution on the 30th anniversary of the **EU single market** outlining the most pressing **challenges facing the single market today and recommendations for the way forward**.

Three decades since its creation, MEPs call for renewed commitment and political will from member states and EU institutions, as well as a **specific action plan for 2030** and beyond, in order to further strengthen and develop the single market, especially in areas such as services, energy, telecommunications and the digital single market.

Recent shocks to the single market (Brexit, the pandemic and Russia’s war on Ukraine) had a serious impact on its integrity and resilience and further highlighted the **importance of unity and cooperation between member states**, MEPs note. They say that tools such as the [Single Market Emergency Instrument \(SMEI\)](#) will prove key to preventing supply chain shortages and keeping the single market functioning smoothly in times of crisis. Having developed and grown in response to challenges over the years, the **single market must again transform itself in order to remain a motor for EU integration**, says the resolution. Among the most recent changes, MEPs highlight new rules for the [Digital Markets Act](#), [Digital Services Act](#), [common charger](#) for electronic devices, [product safety](#) and [consumer credits](#) - all essential to enhancing

consumer protection and the wellbeing of EU citizens, both online and offline. MEPs call again on the Commission to “come up swiftly” with its announced legislative proposal on the right to repair.

Further reading

[MEPs outline their 2023 economic and social priorities](#)

[President Metsola to Special European Council: Important day for European unity](#)

[Resolution: An EU strategy to boost industrial competitiveness, trade and quality jobs](#)

[Green Deal Industrial Plan: securing the EU's clean tech leadership](#)

[30 years of the EU single market: Time to face new challenges](#)

MEPs to contact

[Cristian-Silviu BUȘOI](#) (EPP, RO) Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

[Irene TINAGLI](#) (S&D, IT), Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

[Anna CAVAZZINI](#) (Greens/EFA, DE), Chair of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

[Dragoș PÎSLARU](#) (Renew, RO), Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

[Estrella DURÁ FERRANDIS](#) (S&D, ES), rapporteur on employment and social priorities (**S&D, ES**)

Energy

On 14 March, [Parliament adopted draft measures to increase the rate of renovations and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions](#). The proposed revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive aims to substantially reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy consumption in the EU building sector by 2030, and make it climate neutral by 2050. It also aims to increase the rate of renovations of energy-inefficient buildings and improve information-sharing on energy performance. MEPs are now ready enter into negotiations with Council to agree on the final shape of the bill.

MEPs and the [Swedish Presidency of the Council agreed on new energy saving targets in both primary and final energy consumption in the EU](#), on 10 March. Member states should collectively ensure a reduction of energy consumption of at least 11.7% at EU level by 2030 (compared to the projections of the 2020 Reference Scenario). A robust monitoring and enforcement mechanism will accompany this objective to make sure member states deliver on their national contributions to this binding EU target.

MEPs and the Council Presidency also agreed on annual energy savings by member states of 1.5% (on average) until 2030. The annual energy savings will begin with 1.3% in the period until the end of 2025, and will progressively reach 1.9% in the last period up to the end of 2030. The targets should be achieved through measures at local, regional and national levels, in different sectors - e.g. public administration, buildings, businesses, data centres, etc. MEPs insisted that the scheme should in particular cover the public sector, which will have to reduce its final energy consumption by 1.9% each year. Member states should also ensure that at least 3% of public buildings are renovated each year into nearly-zero energy buildings or zero-emission buildings. The agreement also establishes new requirements for efficient district heating systems. The provisional agreement will now have to be endorsed by both Parliament and Council.

On 14 February, Parliament Plenary confirmed a [deal](#) reached with the Council in December 2022, saying that member states applying to receive additional funds through an **amended recovery and resilience plan will be required to include measures to save energy, produce clean energy and diversify energy supplies**, as foreseen in the EU's [REPowerEU](#) plan.

The new rules will cover measures retroactively from 1 February 2022, with some limited exceptions. MEPs made sure that these measures are designed to support investments to tackle energy poverty for vulnerable households, SMEs and micro-enterprises. MEPs convinced EU countries to allocate at least 30% of their spending under REPowerEU to multi-country measures, addressing existing bottlenecks in energy transmission, distribution and storage as well as increasing cross-border flows, even if carried out by one EU country. MEPs also achieved introducing new transparency rules concerning the 100 final recipients who receive the highest amount of funding. These rules will apply to the entirety of the recovery and resilience plans.

Further reading

[MEPs back plans for a climate neutral building sector by 2050](#)

[Parliament and Council negotiators agree on new rules to boost energy savings](#)

[REPowerEU: Energy measures to be added to national recovery plans](#)

MEPs to contact

[Ciarán CUFFE](#) (Greens/EFA, IE), rapporteur for the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

[Niels FUGLSANG](#)(S&D, DK), rapporteur on Energy Efficiency Directive

[Siegfried MUREȘAN](#) (EPP, RO), co-rapporteur on REPowerEU chapters in recovery and resilience plans

[Eider GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL](#) (S&D, ES), co-rapporteur on REPowerEU chapters in recovery and resilience plans

[Dragoş PÎSLARU](#) (Renew, RO), co-rapporteur on REPowerEU chapters in recovery and resilience plans

Migration

In her speech at the special European Council on 9 February, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said that migration is a challenge that “necessitates a European response. And even if complex and multifaceted we have - and we can - find agreements that go far beyond the immediate.”

She stressed that with regard to the European Pact on Migration and Asylum “we already have a plan” and demanded finalising the reform of the Asylum and Migration legislative framework before the end of this legislative period. “We have no time to lose. It is imperative that negotiations begin between the two co-legislators within the next months, to allow enough time to strike the right balance and find an approach that is humane and fair with those seeking protection that is firm with those who are not eligible and that is strong with those who exploit the most vulnerable on our planet.”

The Civil Liberties Committee is set to vote on Tuesday 28 March on **four key legislative proposals**, which are part of the abovementioned Pact. They concern asylum procedures, the management of arrivals, screening at borders and crisis response. Once endorsed by plenary – expected during the 17-20 April session - MEPs will be ready to negotiate the final form of these texts with the Council.

In a [plenary debate](#) with the Swedish Presidency and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on 1 February, MEPs presented their views on how to deal with the migratory challenges facing Europe.

MEPs wish to see **results in the field of migration and asylum policy**, after years of discussions among member states in the context of increasing irregular arrivals of persons, a majority of whom do not qualify to remain in the EU. Some speakers called for borders to be protected more effectively, including by setting up fences, which some wish to see financed with European funds. Several MEPs referred to the need to increase the rate of people being returned to their countries of origin or transit.

Others proposed processing asylum applications in the territory of third countries, as a way to reach the most vulnerable persons. They also talked about improving cooperation with non-EU countries and addressing the root causes of migration. Some speakers considered that search and rescue operations at sea by NGOs should be subject to a common code of conduct. Others insisted that, to be credible, EU migration policy must respect human rights and combine responsibility and solidarity towards refugees.

Noting that an aging population in Europe makes labour migration necessary, several MEPs advocated opening legal pathways into the EU. Finally, some underscored that the EU response to the large number of Ukrainian refugees arriving following the war showed that a different approach is possible and that migration can also be seen as an opportunity.

Further reading

[President Metsola to Special European Council: Important day for European unity](#)

[MEPs urge the EU to deliver a credible migration and asylum policy](#)

MEPs to contact

[Juan Fernando LÓPEZ AGUILAR](#) (S&D, ES), Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, rapporteur for the regulation for Crisis and Force majeure

[Tomas TOBÉ](#) (EPP, SE), rapporteur for the [Regulation for Asylum and Migration Management](#)

[Birgit SIPPEL](#) (S&D, DE), rapporteur for the [Screening Regulation](#)

[Fabienne KELLER](#) (Renew, FR), rapporteur for the [Asylum Procedures regulation](#)

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