



Plenary session

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Key points

Selected highlights include:

MEPs return to Strasbourg for the second plenary session in September. The House will debate and vote on three conciliation agreements on opening up the EU's railway market. Parliament will also debate and vote on a report on the setting up of the European Institute of Technology. Parliament holds its key debate on immigration, focusing on legal migration and the fight against illegal immigration. The House also returns to the issue of secret detentions and transfers following the report it adopted in February into CIA activities. "Dangerous toys imported from China" will be a key issue for the European Parliament with MEPs debating and voting on a resolution. MEPs will also vote on a report on the right to vote and stand in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in another Member State.

Monday 24 September 2007

The session opens with a debate on a report **renewable energy** which calls on the Commission to present by the end of 2007 at the latest a proposal for a renewable energy legislative framework. The report also urges the Commission to propose a sectoral approach within the legislative framework, setting clear and realistic binding targets for the electricity, transport and heating and cooling sectors.

The last point on Monday evening is a joint debate **on the community's railways** with MEPs set to debate and vote on three conciliation agreements. The agreements, dealing with the opening up of the rail market, a European licence for train drivers and the rights of rail passengers, were reached in June this year after the Council accepted the EP's final demand for a review every five years of any exemptions Member States grant their domestic railway networks from the rules on passenger rights.

Away from the plenary, at 7pm, MEPs will reduce the current five candidates for the **2007 Sakharov Prize** to a short-list of three during a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Development Committee, and the Human Rights sub-Committee. More information on the candidates and the prize [can be found here](#).

Tuesday 25 September 2007

Tuesday starts with a joint debate on **sugar**. To avoid an arbitrary reduction of quotas which would penalise the various stakeholders of the European sugar industry, the way the restructuring regime operates must be improved, says the EP Agriculture Committee. Two consultative reports are set to provide Parliament's response to the European Commission's plans for speeding up reform of the sugar sector.

MEPs will also debate and vote on a resolution on the **import of dangerous toys manufactured in China**. The recent recall of 21 million toys by US manufacturer Mattel over concerns they contain lead has raised alarm. MEPs on Parliament's Internal Market Committee had a face to face meeting with EU Consumer Commissioner **Meglana Kuneva** on 12 September to assess the level of danger to European children. She confirmed her faith in existing safety rules and said she had launched a two month review of all existing checks. Commission Vice-President **Günter Verheugen** in charge of Enterprise and Industry will also take part in the debate.

The House will then turn to a legislative report on the **setting up of the European Institute of Technology**. A proposal to set up the Institute is backed in a first-reading report by the Industry Committee. However, MEPs in the committee want the EIT's name to include "innovation" and say it should be established only after a pilot phase in which two or three "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" run projects, to test its feasibility. MEPs in the committee also want the Council to negotiate the EIT's funding with Parliament.

Plenary session

MEPs then focus on a report on working towards a **common European foreign policy on energy**. "The Energy Charter Treaty should be the cornerstone of the common European foreign policy on energy," says a report by the Foreign Affairs Committee. The own-initiative report, by committee Chairman Jacek **Saryusz-Wolski** (EPP-ED, PL), also advocates creating a post for a "High Official of Foreign Energy Policy", to co-ordinate the EU's activities in the field, and recommends diversification and increased energy efficiency to improve the EU's energy security.

Wednesday 26 September 2007

The key debate of the week is on **immigration focusing policy plans for legal migration and the fight against illegal migration** with the participation of Commission Vice-President **Franco Frattini**. The House will also debate two own initiative reports relating to immigration on a policy plan for legal migration and policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration.

The afternoon sees the European Parliament return to a well known issue with a debate **on secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers involving Council of Europe member states**. Parliament's report drafted by Claudio **Fava** (PES, IT) and adopted in February, deplored the passivity of some Member States in the face of illegal CIA operations, as well as the lack of co-operation from the EU Council of Ministers, was approved with 382 votes in favour, 256 against with 74 abstentions.

The House will vote on a report from Andrew **Duff** (ALDE, UK, Liberal Democrat East of England) on the **right to vote and stand in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in another Member State**. A Commission proposal that would make it easier for EU citizens to stand or vote in European Parliament elections while living in Member States other than their own is being put forward the Constitutional Affairs Committee. However, the committee's consultation report also inserts two new provisions to improve the portability of electoral rights within the EU: one on multiple candidatures and the other on deprivation of electoral rights.

Thursday 27 September 2007

The House will debate a non-binding report on **equality between women and men in the EU (2007)**. MEPs call on the Commission to propose awareness-raising campaigns, the exchange of best practice, dialogues with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives. They also say the Commission should monitor compliance by Member States with existing Community policy on male-female equality, particularly employment policy.

NB: All European Parliament plenary sessions are broadcast live in 23 languages via the European Parliament's website and previous sessions can also be accessed on demand. [To access live or past broadcasts, click here.](#)

A pre-session briefing will be held at the European Parliament in Brussels at 11am on Friday 21 September 2007 - PHS 0A50. An audio recording of this pre-session briefing can now be [found on the European Parliament website here.](#)

A last minute pre-session press briefing will be held in Strasbourg on Monday 24 September 2007 at 4.30pm - Room LOW N-1/201.

The draft agenda for the Strasbourg plenary 24-27 September 2007 [can be found here.](#)

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Transport

Third rail package set for approval - opening up the rail market and European licenses for train drivers

A6-0314/2007 : Railway transport of passengers: opening to international competition, Rail Market Access proposal (amend. Dir. 91/440/EEC, Dir. 2001/14/EC). 3rd package

A6-0315/2007 : Railway transport: certification of train crews and drivers. 3rd package

A6-0313/2007 : Railway transport: international rail passengers' rights and obligations. 3rd package

Procedure : Codecision (3rd reading)

Joint debate : 24.09.07

Georg JARZEMBOWSKI (EPP-ED, DE)

Rapporteur

Gilles SAVARY (PES, FR)

Rapporteur

Dirk STERCKX (ALDE, BE)

Rapporteur

The House will vote on three conciliation agreements on the third railway package. The agreements, dealing with the opening up of the rail market, a European licence for train drivers and the rights of rail passengers, were reached in June this year after the Council accepted the EP's final demand for a review every five years of any exemptions Member States grant their domestic railway networks from the rules on passenger rights.

The vote will bring to an end a legislative process on passenger rail services which was launched in 2004 and follows on from earlier rail packages dealing with freight traffic.

Liberalising the rail market: international routes first

International passenger rail services within the EU will be opened up to competition from 1 January 2010. However, the Commission must make an assessment of the situation no more than two years after the directive enters into force, to see if further liberalisation, to include domestic services, should be envisaged. Parliament's rapporteur on this directive was Georg **Jarzembowski** (EPP-ED, DE).

A European licence for train drivers ... and one day for other staff?

Under this directive, which will apply from 2009, train drivers must hold a certificate stating that they meet minimum requirements relating to medical fitness, basic education and general professional skills.

The European Railway Agency will draw up a report 18 months after the directive enters into force, to identify any other train staff performing safety-critical tasks who should be subject to a similar system of licences. Following pressure from Parliament, whose rapporteur was Gilles **Savary** (PES, FR), no more than 12 months after this the Commission must present a report accompanied, if appropriate, by a proposal for a new law.

Basic rights for all passengers

The regulation on the rights and obligations of rail passengers was originally intended to apply only to passengers on international journeys but MEPs successfully fought to include passengers on domestic journeys.

Under the deal reached between the two institutions, when the law enters into force in 2009 all rail passengers will enjoy a set of basic rights (e.g. regarding rail companies' liability for passengers and their luggage, and the right to transport of people with reduced mobility).

Member States may exempt long-distance domestic rail services from the provisions of the regulation on non-basic rights (e.g. the right to take a bicycle on the train), for an initial period of five years, which may subsequently be extended for two further periods of up to five years. Urban, suburban and regional services can be granted an indefinite exemption from those same provisions.

When the law enters into force, compensation in the event of delays on cross-border services will be 25% of the fare for a delay of 60 minutes or more and 50% for a delay of 120 minutes or more, but only if the operator can be held responsible for the delay. And eventually these arrangements will apply to all long-distance services.

Parliament's rapporteur Dirk **Sterckx** (ALDE, BE) said "This agreement is the outcome of extremely arduous negotiations. The fact that it was so difficult to persuade all Member States to grant basic rights to rail passengers shows how poorly railway authorities treat their customers nowadays. By reaching this agreement we have done all rail passengers in the Union a service. In its original proposal the European Commission wanted to grant rights only to international passengers. Now all passengers will enjoy a range of basic rights. We had to make concessions, notably on transition periods. That is a pity but we had to get the new Member States on board."

The chair of Parliament's negotiating team, Vice-President Alejo **Vidal-Quadras** (EPP-ED, ES) said: "This is a genuinely European law. It gets away from old-fashioned obsessions with national borders and gives basic rights to passengers on all railway journeys (not just to those on international services, as the Council wanted). In particular, passengers on all long-distance journeys will be treated the same, whether or not their journey crosses national borders."

Urban transport

Debate : 25.09.07

The Commission will make a statement on its Green Paper on urban transport which has yet to be published. The Green Paper will examine whether obstacles to successful urban transport policies exist at the EU level. In addition, it will examine where, whilst fully respecting the subsidiarity principle, there is a consensus among stakeholders to develop and implement joint solutions.

The Green Paper forms the basis for the development of a European policy on urban transport as part of European transport policy. The Green Paper will address all transport modes, including walking, cycling, motor cycles and motor vehicles, and will cover both urban freight (and logistics) and passenger transport. The Green Paper on urban transport is foreseen for adoption by the Commission in the autumn of 2007.

Consumers

Chinese toy story - not a new film but a serious concern for MEPs

Commission statement
Debate : 25.09.2007

MEPs will debate the issue of dangerous toys manufactured in China. The recent recall of 21 million toys by US manufacturer Mattel over concerns they contain lead has raised alarm. MEPs on the Internal Market Committee had a face to face meeting with consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva on 12 September to assess the level of danger to European children. She confirmed her faith in existing safety rules and said she had launched a two month review of all existing checks.

China world's leading toy manufacturer

The fallout for US toy giant Mattel has been huge. As well as recalling over 20 millions toys its reputation has already been severely tarnished by reports of conditions in Chinese toy factories. China is the world's number one producer of toys due to cheap labour and manufacturing costs.

Speaking of international trade, Commissioner **Kuneva** told MEPs that "from factory floor to supermarket shelf often spans the globe". A report in October is due to assess the Chinese response to the safety issues raised. Günter **Verheugen** - Commissioner for Industry will take part in the debate. The House will vote on a resolution on this topic.

Some of the toys affected by the safety fears are some of Mattel's biggest sellers including Batman toys and Sesame Street's "Big Bird" and "Elmo" characters. Accessories to the iconic "Barbie" doll have also been recalled over lead contamination fears - although Ken has remained on the shelves unscathed.

MEPs worried

The festive season may be some time off but the toys that will be sold in Europe during the festive season are already arriving in large numbers from China. British MEP Arlene **McCarthy** who chairs the Internal Market Committee asked fellow MEPs and the Commissioner: "Can we reassure parents by saying that their children will receive safer toys in time for Christmas?"

Ms McCarthy reminded fellow Members that she had previously called for "tougher controls to intercept dangerous goods at the border and stronger national inspection and enforcement to ensure dangerous toys don't reach the shelves".

Rapid Alert system

RAPEX is an EU-wide rapid alert system for non-food dangerous products, coordinated by the Commission and linking market surveillance authorities in 30 European countries. When authorities take restrictive measures (ban on sale, withdrawal from the market, recall from consumers, ...) concerning a product posing a serious risk for the health and safety of consumers, they must notify the Commission which validates the notifications, translates it and distributes it to the authorities in all other Member States – there is then a formal obligation on Member State Authorities to take follow up measures on their national markets and to inform the Commission.

According to the latest issue of the RAPEX report (RAPEX is the European Commission's Rapid Alert System for dangerous consumer products), in 2006 most notifications concerned the following categories of

products, which accounted for almost 75 % of all notified products

1. toys (221 notifications, 24%),
2. electrical appliances (174 notifications, 19%),
3. motor vehicles (126 notifications, 14%),
4. lighting equipment (98 notifications, 11%),
5. cosmetics (48 notifications, 5%).

Immigration

Immigration: legal migration and the fight against illegal migration

Key Debate : 9am, 26.09.07

Lilli GRUBER (PES, IT)

Rapporteur

Javier MORENO SÁNCHEZ (PES, ES)

Rapporteur

The Council and Commission will make statements on immigration, in particular on the events during the summer and the role of Frontex as part of a joint debate. The European Parliament will also debate two own-initiative reports relating to immigration on a policy plan for legal migration and policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration.

Frontex is an EU agency based in Warsaw. It was created as a specialised and independent body tasked to coordinate the operational cooperation between Member States in the field of border security. The activities of Frontex are intelligence driven. Frontex complements and provides particular added value to the national border management systems of the Member States.

Legal migration

Lilli **GRUBER** (PES, IT) will present an own initiative report for the Civil Liberties Committee on a policy plan on legal migration which says that illegal immigration cannot be countered unless means and channels of legal immigration are established at the same time, since the two phenomena are closely linked.

According to Eurostat the number of third-country nationals legally resident in the 27 EU Member States is approximately 18.5 million (whilst nearly 9 million EU citizens are resident in a Member State other than their own.

The report supports the intention of the Commission to define the conditions of entry and stay for other selected categories of economic immigrants, including unskilled or low-skilled workers.

No brain drain but 'brain circulation'

The Civil Liberties Committee welcomes the Commission Communication on circular migration and partnerships for mobility between the EU and third countries. The committee agrees that the damaging effects of 'brain drain' must be avoided, fostering instead 'brain circulation'.

'Blue card'

The report also supports the creation of an EU work permit (the so-called blue card) to facilitate the free movement of 'brains' within Europe and the transfer of personnel within multinational companies.

Media

The report also emphasises the particular responsibility of the media (in particular European public radio and television broadcasters) in the dissemination of an accurate image of immigration and in countering stereotypes.

Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals

Javier **MORENO SÁNCHEZ** (PES, ES) will be presenting a second own initiative report on policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration. The report stresses that irregular migrants must not be treated like criminals and recalls that many of them risk their lives seeking freedom or the means of subsistence in Europe.

The number of third-country nationals in an irregular situation in the EU appears to be, according to somewhat conflicting estimates, between 4.5 m and 8 m.

Opposition to holding centres

The committee reiterates its firm opposition to the idea of setting up reception or holding centres for illegal immigrants or asylum seekers outside the Union's borders and in immigrants' regions of origin.

The regularisation issue

The report recalls that numerous Member States have carried out regularisations or said they will do so, and that these decisions are, in the present state of law, a matter for the discretion of the Member States but quite often a signal of lack of appropriate measures in place to deal with a phenomenon which forms a part of societies in most Member States and believes that en masse regularisation of illegal immigrants should be a one-off event since such a measure does not resolve the real underlying problem.

Frontex

The report deeply regrets the fact that some Member States have failed to honour their undertakings to provide logistic and human support for its operations. The committee also considers that, in the face of the migratory flow from the African continent towards Europe, Southern Member States on the external frontiers of the Union, notably smaller Member States, such as Malta and Cyprus, are currently shouldered with a disproportionate burden which calls for the strengthening of measures for the joint management of the Union's external borders.

Justice and home affairs

Secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers

Council and Commission statements - secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers involving Council of Europe member states (reports Fava and Marty)

Debate : 26.09.07

MEPs will debate secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers involving Council of Europe member states. These statements follow on from the European Parliament report into the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners adopted in February 2007 and the report by Dick Marty for the Council of Europe.

Parliament's report drafted by Claudio **FAVA** (PES, IT), deplored the passivity of some Member States in the face of illegal CIA operations, as well as the lack of co-operation from the EU Council of Ministers, was approved by 382 votes in favour to 256 against and 74 abstentions.

On 17 July, Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee heard from Council of Europe rapporteur Dick **MARTY** on his report on secret detentions and illegal transfers of prisoners by the CIA in Europe. The European Parliament adopted a report on the same subject in February, and most MEPs at the latest hearing welcomed the similar conclusions reached by both institutions. Others, however, took issue with Mr Marty's refusal to reveal his sources.

Presenting his report to a joint meeting of the Committees on Civil Liberties and Foreign Affairs and the Sub-committee on Human Rights, Mr Marty said that the US government has clearly stated that it has fully respected the sovereignty of European countries during its activities in the "war on terror", and that kidnappings in Europe would not have been possible without the participation of the national intelligence services concerned. He said there was a "wall of silence that confronts us from almost all national governments" and that this silence "continues to mask serious human rights violations."

Research and innovation

Industry Committee backs creation of a European Institute of Innovation and Technology

A6-0293/2007 : European Institute of Technology

Procedure : Codecision (1st reading)

Debate : 25.09.07

Reino PAASILINNA (PES, FI)

Rapporteur

A proposal to set up a European Institute of Technology (EIT) is backed in a first-reading report by the Industry Committee. However, MEPs in the committee want the EIT's name to include "innovation" and say it should be established only after a pilot phase in which two or three "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" run projects, to test its feasibility. MEPs in the committee also want the Council to negotiate the EIT's funding with Parliament.

"Innovation is Europe's Achilles' heel. It should be our main objective to increase our innovation capacity. We need more innovation in Europe to remain globally competitive in the future and to guarantee growth in jobs. The EIT could help us to realise that goal", said EP rapporteur Reino **PAASILINNA**(PES, FI).

Solve budgetary problems

"I hope Commission and Council will come up with a realistic solution for the budget soon. The Council has already expressed its wish to establish the EIT but before we can adopt the proposal in plenary, we have to make sure that there is a stable financing concept", Mr Paasilinna added.

The institute's overall budget of an estimated €2.4 billion for the first six years is to be funded from a combination of private and public sources. The committee agrees with the Commission that €308.7 million should come from the Community budget. However the Budgetary authority (Parliament and Council) has yet to agree on a budget line from which to take the funds. As plans for the EIT did not exist when the 2007-2013 Financial Perspective was decided, the Commission proposed taking the necessary amount from the "margin under the ceiling" of the "Competitiveness for growth and jobs" heading, i.e. appropriations that have not been assigned to a given policy. MEPs in the committee propose further sources, such as unspent funds that would otherwise be returned to the Member States, or loans and contributions from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The Commission also suggests financing the EIT partly through existing Community instruments such as the Framework Programme for Research, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme or the Lifelong Learning Programme. Committee members, however, stress that applications from Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) or their partner organisations should in no way be privileged over other applications. Furthermore, funds stemming from those programmes should not finance establishment and administration costs directly associated with the EIT or the KICs but rather the mobility of researchers or research programmes.

KICs should be legally autonomous from the EIT

The committee proposes to rename the EIT "European institute of Innovation and Technology" so as to reflect its primary focus on innovation.

The EIT will have a two-tier structure: a Governing Board that selects higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders to form partnerships called "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" (KICs). In contrast to the Commission's plans, Industry Committee MEPs want KICs to be "legally autonomous from the EIT".

Although KICs will have "substantial overall autonomy to define their internal organisation and working methods", MEPs in the committee also propose to lay down some basic rules for their composition: Every KIC should consist of at least three partner organisations, situated in at least two different participating states and including at least one higher education institution and one private company.

EIT label on qualifications

MEPs in the committee reject the Commission's proposal for the EIT itself to award degrees and diplomas. Instead they ask for an EIT mark to be added to qualifications awarded through the higher education institutions within the KICs.

Pilot phase with two or three KICs

Committee members also propose introducing the idea of a "pilot phase" into the text. At the latest two years after the entry into force of the regulation establishing the EIT, the Governing Board would select two or three KICs "in areas that help the EU to face today's and tomorrow's challenges, such as climate change, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency or the next generation of ICT".

The EIT could select additional KICs after the adoption of its first "Strategic Innovation Agenda" (SIA), a concept also incorporated in the text by the Industry Committee. This SIA should identify the EIT's long-term strategic areas "in fields of key potential economic and societal interest which are likely to generate the greatest innovation added value". The EIT would have to draw up an SIA by the end of 2011 at the latest and thereafter every seven years. Acting on a proposal from the Commission, Parliament and Council shall then adopt this agenda.

Constitutional affairs

Making it easier for EU citizens living abroad to stand or vote in EP elections

A6-0267/2007 : European elections: exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament, preventing citizens from voting or standing twice (amend. Dir. 93/109/EC)

Procedure : Consultation

Vote: 26.09.07 - no debate

Andrew DUFF (ALDE, UK)

Rapporteur

A Commission proposal that would make it easier for EU citizens to stand or vote in European Parliament elections while living in Member States other than their own is being put forward by Andrew DUFF (ALDE, UK) for the Constitutional Affairs Committee. However, the committee's consultation report also inserts two new provisions to improve the portability of electoral rights within the EU: one on multiple candidatures and the other on deprivation of electoral rights.

First, the committee proposes abolishing the current prohibition on standing for election in more than one Member State, provided that the country of residence permits multiple candidatures. Second, it seeks to ensure that the country of residence is not automatically obliged to prevent a citizen from voting if he or she has been deprived of his or her electoral rights in another Member State. The committee feels that in both cases, it should be up to the Member States concerned to decide, case by case, so as to prevent discrimination.

Boosting turnout

Rapporteur Andrew **Duff** (ALDE, UK) believes that the present system discourages people from exercising their electoral rights as EU citizens, and notes that the turnout in European Parliamentary elections fell from 63% in 1979 to 46% in 2004. The committee hopes that by amending the proposal, it can boost the number of people choosing to exercise their electoral rights to the full.

No discrimination

The committee report aims to "make sure that all Member States respect equal opportunities for all EU citizens", noted Mr Duff. EU citizenship, which confers certain electoral rights, was established by the Maastricht Treaty of 1993. This stipulates that any citizen has the right to stand and vote in European Parliament elections in the Member State where he or she resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that state.

Information exchange isn't working

The Commission's proposal aims to ease the administrative obstacles that an EU citizen faces when voting or standing for the European Parliament election in a Member State other than his own. In particular, it proposes abolishing the information exchange system currently used by Member States' electoral authorities, on the grounds that it has proven too cumbersome to work properly.

Agriculture

Sugar: more compensation for restructuring, say MEPs

A6-0309/2007 : Restructuring of the sugar industry

A6-0310/2007 : Common organisation of the markets in the sugar sector

Procedure : Consultation x 2

Joint debate : 25.09.07

Katerina BATZELI (PES, GR)

Rapporteur

To avoid an arbitrary reduction of quotas which would penalise the various stakeholders of the European sugar industry, the way the restructuring regime operates must be improved, says the EP Agriculture Committee. Two consultative reports are set to provide Parliament's response to the European Commission's plans for speeding up reform of the sugar sector.

The reform launched in 2006, which was meant to restore the balance to the European sugar market by cutting prices and production, has not produced all the desired effects. The restructuring regime, intended to give financial incentives to the less competitive producers to leave this sector, has only led to the withdrawal of 2.2 million tonnes (Mt) from the market in the first two years. The target is a reduction of 6 Mt by 2010.

In May 2007, the Commission unveiled a package of proposals seeking to make this regime more attractive to encourage producers to give up around 3.8 Mt in quotas. If this goal is not reached in 2010, it wishes to apply a linear reduction to the Member States' quotas.

The Agriculture Committee, while supporting the Commission's objectives, is proposing a number of amendments designed chiefly to increase the compensation to producers and to the regions. The two reports are being put forward by Katerina Batzeli (PES, EL) under the consultation procedure.

Optimising the restructuring regime

To encourage greater abandonment of quotas, MEPs in the committee call for firms to have the option of restructuring in two stages: those which have already renounced quotas should be able - once the forecasts for 2008/2009 have been published - to increase their applications for renunciation by 30 April 2008.

As another way of encouraging producers to withdraw from production more quickly, MEPs in the committee suggest increasing the restructuring aid introduced in 2006 to €625 instead of €218.75 for 2008/09.

The committee also stresses the need for undertakings to devise business development plans to diversify revenue and employment. It adds that restructuring plans must be prepared in consultation with growers and that the growers must be informed about their future before the sowing period.

Special cases: small growers and bioethanol

Under the Commission proposal, beet growers will be able to take the initiative to renounce quotas up to 10% of the undertaking's quota. MEPs in the committee believe that in this context priority must be given to small-scale growers so that they can renounce on favourable terms the right to transport beet.

The committee also calls for 100% compensation in the case of firms which partially dismantle their production facilities provided they shift towards bioethanol production. Until now, the aid granted for partial dismantling was 35%.

Boosting aid for producers and regions

MEPs in the committee repeat one of the amendments adopted at the time of the 2006 reform (Fruteau report) which called for growers to receive 50% of the aid paid under the restructuring fund. The Commission, in its latest proposal, seeks to set the figure at 10%. In the first two years of the reform this same could vary from Member State to Member State provided it is not less than 10%.

The committee wants to increase from €237.5 to €260 euros per tonne of quota renounced the additional aid to beet growers - which the Commission proposes to grant for 2008/09 and retroactively for growers who have already abandoned production over the two years of the reform.

They also call for aid for diversification paid to the regions affected by restructuring to be kept at the current level of €109.5 per tonne of quota for sugar renounced up to 2009/10 (the regulation adopted in 2006 provides for this aid to fall to €93.80 in 2008/09 and €78 in 2009/10).

Linear reduction of quotas in two stages

If a linear reduction of national quotas is needed in 2010, the Agriculture Committee believes this too should be carried out in two stages. The first stage should concern only Member States or undertakings which, for 2008/09, would not have made a voluntary renunciation or would have renounced less than 13.5% of their quota. In a second stage, the formula proposed by the Commission would be used. The Agriculture Committee also proposes taking into account any renunciations made by Member States and undertakings when calculating the final reduction.

Withdrawal from the market

Given the full implementation and entry into force from 2010 of the 'Everything But Arms' initiative (which will allow developing countries to export sugar duty-free to the EU), MEPs in the committee believe it is essential to extend up to 2015 the application of the scheme allowing preventive withdrawal of a part of production if there is a surplus on the European market.

In addition, the committee wants the Commission to take any decision on withdrawals for 2008/09 by 4 February 2008 (instead of 16 March, as in other years) so that beet growers can act accordingly before the sowing season.

Following the debate and vote in plenary, the Council of Ministers, which has the final say, should adopt its position shortly afterwards.

Agriculture

Urgent procedure for report on direct support schemes and support schemes for farmers set aside for year 2008

Click here : Common agricultural policy CAP: direct support schemes and support schemes for farmers, as regards set aside for year 2008 (derog. Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003).

Urgency and possible debate: 25.09.2007

Neil PARISH (EPP-ED, UK)
Chair of Agriculture Committee

Parliament will be asked to use the so-called urgent procedure on a report relating to the direct support schemes and support schemes for farmers, as regards set aside for year 2008. If the urgent procedure is accepted, the European Parliament will debate the issue on Tuesday 25 September. Neil Parish (EPP-ED, UK, South West Conservative) is the Chair of the EP Agriculture Committee.

The European Commission has proposed to set at 0% the obligatory set-aside rate for autumn 2007 and spring 2008 sowings, in response to the increasingly tight situation on the cereals market. In the EU-27, a lower than expected harvest in 2006 (265.5 million tonnes) led to tightening supplies at the end of marketing year 2006/2007 and to historically high prices. Intervention stocks have shrunk from 14 million tonnes at the beginning of 2006/2007 to around 1 million tonnes now in September, mainly composed of maize held in Hungary. Reducing the set-aside rate from 10% to 0% is expected to increase output by at least 10 million tonnes.

Set-aside was introduced to limit production of cereals in the EU and applied on a voluntary basis from 1988/89. After the 1992 reform, it became obligatory i.e. producers under the general scheme were required to set-aside a defined percentage of their declared areas in order to be eligible to direct payments. With the 2003 reform, they received set-aside entitlements, which give the right to a payment if they are accompanied by eligible land put into set-aside.

External relations

Call for a "High Official" to coordinate EU foreign policy on energy

A6-0312/2007 : Towards a common European foreign policy on energy

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 25.09.07

Jacek SARYUSZ-WOLSKI (EPP-ED, PL)

Rapporteur

"The Energy Charter Treaty should be the cornerstone of the common European foreign policy on energy," says a report by the Foreign Affairs Committee. The own-initiative report, by committee Chairman Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP-ED, PL), also advocates creating a post for a "High Official of Foreign Energy Policy", to co-ordinate the EU's activities in the field, and recommends diversification and increased energy efficiency to improve the EU's energy security.

The report calls on the Council and Member States to "create a solidarity mechanism" to deal with crises arising from disruptions of supply, infrastructure damage, or any other emergency. It also proposes appointing, "with the approval of the Council and the Commission, a "double-hatted" High Official of Foreign Energy Policy", who would be "responsible for co-ordinating all policies under the scope of the common European foreign policy on energy, thereby contributing to the EU's ability to protect its energy security interests in negotiating with the EU's external partners."

Diversification and energy efficiency

The report prescribes various ways to reduce Europe's dependence on foreign sources of energy. It regards it as "vital for the EU to continue to lead the global fight against climate change," and to promote energy-saving technologies in all external relations. To this end, MEPs in the committee emphasise the need to create a "common European foreign policy on energy, covering security of supply, transit and investment, and the promotion of energy efficiency and energy savings."

Members in the committee also call on the Commission and the Member States to pursue "active policies at the highest political level so as to enable the Community to diversify its natural gas sources," and noted that in all priority initiatives aimed at diversification, "special priority should be given to environmentally safe and renewable energy sources."

Foreign suppliers and investors

The committee gives its support to "all efforts aimed at overcoming the existing dependencies of Member States on [...] energy imports from countries that systematically violate the letter and spirit of the UN Charter," and stressed that a comprehensive European foreign policy on energy must "contribute to the promotion and implementation of the values and interests of the European Union and the main aims of its foreign policy."

It also supports the Commission's intention to "take appropriate measures to prevent uncontrolled investment of state-owned foreign companies in the EU's energy sector, in particular, the gas and electricity transmission networks." On the subject of Russia, in particular, MEPs in the committee say that "the energy partnership between the EU and Russia can only be based on the non-discrimination and fair treatment principle and on equal market access conditions."

Finally, the report says that "in addition to the need for Russia to ratify the Charter, the EU should negotiate a formal framework document on energy relations with Russia in the context of the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement."

EU missions in Chad and the Central African Republic

Debate: 26.09.2007

Vote: 27.09.2007

MEPs will debate the European Security and Defence Policy EU missions to eastern Chad and the north of the Central African Republic. Parliament will vote on a resolution on this topic. The Council has recently emphasised the urgent need to address the destabilising impact of the Darfur crisis on the humanitarian and security situation in neighbouring countries.

In this context, it asked its competent bodies to continue planning with a view to a possible decision on a bridging operation, in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy, in support of a multidimensional UN presence in Eastern Chad and North-Eastern Central African Republic with a view to improving security in those areas.

Energy

A roadmap for renewable energy in Europe

A6-0287/2007 : Road Map for renewable energy in Europe

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 24.09.07

Britta THOMSEN (PES, DK)

Rapporteur

Britta THOMSEN (PES, DK) for the Industry, Research and Energy Committee will be tabling an own-initiative report on a roadmap for renewable energy in Europe which calls on the Commission to present, by the end of 2007 at the latest, a proposal for a renewable energy legislative framework. The report also urges the Commission to propose a sectoral approach within the legislative framework, setting clear and realistic binding targets for the electricity, transport and heating and cooling sectors.

Boosting renewables

The committee emphasises the importance of creating and implementing Renewables Action Plans (RAPs) at Community and national levels and stresses that these should serve to contribute to a real Common European Energy Policy.

The report regrets both that regional and local authorities in the EU continue to show too little interest in harnessing and using renewable energy sources. MEPs in the committee deplore the fact that the EU target of a 12 % renewable energy contribution to the EU energy mix by 2010 will, in all likelihood, not be met.

"Enormous development potential of offshore wind energy".

The report stresses the enormous development potential of offshore wind energy and the significant contribution it could make to Europe's independence from energy imports and to climate protection, while pointing out that enormous efforts are still needed to fully develop this potential. The committee therefore calls on the Commission to draw up an offshore wind energy action plan, embodying an efficient European approach to offshore technology and promoting stronger interconnections.

Heating and cooling - double the amount by 2020

On heating and cooling, MEPs in the Energy Committee calls on the Commission to ensure that any proposal for a framework directive for renewables contains strong measures for the promotion of renewable heating and cooling with the aim of increasing its share in the EU from the present level of approximately 10% to at least double that amount by 2020.

Transport and biofuels

The report welcomes the Commission's proposal for promoting biofuels and other renewable energies for transport by means of imposing a binding target of 10%, provided that it can be proved that such fuels are produced in a sustainable way. The committee stresses that the sustainable use of biofuels would reduce oil dependency and CO2 emissions in the transport sector, however the committee finds that a fair balance between food and energy production should be sought.

Human rights

Implementation of the moratorium on the death penalty

Debate: 25.9.2007

The House will debate and vote on a resolution on the implementation of the moratorium on the death penalty. In February 2007, MEPs adopted a joint resolution on the initiative in favour of a universal moratorium on the death penalty. The resolution says that the Parliament is deeply concerned by the fact that national laws still exist, or have been reintroduced, in dozens of countries around the world, providing for the death penalty and the execution of thousands of human beings each year.

In April, MEPs reiterated their request, urging the EU and its Member States to submit a moratorium resolution -- immediately. The Parliament called on the EU's institutions, together with the Council of Europe, "to support the World Day against the Death Penalty by declaring **10 October, as from 2007, a European Day against the Death Penalty.**" Poland has maintained its opposition to the European Day Against the Death Penalty. The Portuguese Presidency had hoped that all EU partners would sign the declaration establishing a European Day against Capital Punishment during an international conference set for 9 October, in Lisbon.

The European Union campaigns towards the universal abolition of the death penalty. This stance is rooted in the belief in the inherent dignity of all human beings and the inviolability of the human person, regardless of the crime committed.

Economic and monetary affairs

International Financial Reporting Standard 8

Vote: 27.09.2007

MEPs are to set out their views on the proposed adoption of International Financial Reporting Standard 8, following the publication by the Commission of a new analysis of the impact of this new accounting standard. Once endorsed by the EU, these standards apply to listed companies.

The European Commission is proposing that IFRS 8, drawn up by the International Accounting Standards Board, be approved as a replacement for the existing international accounting standard (IAS14) relating to the way in which companies present information on the performance of different segments of their business.

In April 2007, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee proposed a draft resolution to Parliament expressing concern at the proposed approval of IFRS 8, on the grounds that it offered too much flexibility to company managements in how they present the information, thereby making comparison between companies more difficult. There was also concern that, by endorsing IFRS 8, the EU would be importing a standard directly from the United States model without having conducted an adequate impact assessment.

The Commission has since produced an analysis of the impact of introducing IFRS 8, which it continues to support. This was presented to the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee by Internal Market Commissioner Charlie McCreevy on 11 September 2007. While the original resolution, tabled in April this year, is on the agenda for the plenary session, the committee will meet on Monday evening in Strasbourg to consider the issue afresh in the light of the analysis presented by the Commission.

The endorsement of accounting standards is delegated to the Commission under legislation adopted by the Council and Parliament in 2002, but the EP still has the right to scrutinise proposals before the Commission acts. While Parliament's position in such cases is not formally binding, when it comes to financial services legislation, the Commission has undertaken to take the fullest possible account of Parliament's views.

External/international trade

MEPs to question Commission on strategic partnership with Brazil

Oral Question to the Commission
Debate : 25.09.07

Several MEPs (see list hereunder) will be putting the following questions to the Commission on the negotiations on an Interregional Association Agreement with Mercosur and the new bilateral strategic partnership with Brazil. Mercosur is a Regional Trade Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, founded in 1991. Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru currently have associate member status.

Venezuela signed a membership agreement on 17 June 2006, but before becoming a full member, its entry has to be ratified by the Paraguayan and the Brazilian parliaments.

During the EU-Brazil Summit of 4 July 2007, the EU and Brazil pointed out that 'they attach high importance to strengthening EU - Mercosur relations and are committed to concluding the EU - Mercosur Association Agreement'.

In its INI/2006/2035 resolution (see link below) on economic and trade relations between the EU and Mercosur, the European Parliament stressed that the conclusion of an Association Agreement between the EU and Mercosur should be regarded as a priority strategic objective for the EU's external relations. The European Parliament reaffirmed the need for the EU to conclude, as soon as possible, a full, ambitious and balanced Association Agreement with Mercosur, based on three pillars: a political and institutional chapter reinforcing democratic dialogue and political cooperation, a cooperation chapter promoting sustainable economic and social development, and a trade chapter.

Nevertheless, the Commission has released its Communication of 30 May 2007 on a bilateral strategic partnership with Brazil, which sends contradictory signals to the regional priorities set above.

In view of the above, the MEPs ask:

Could the Commission set out the latest developments in the Mercosur negotiations?

Could the Commission explain how the bilateral strategic partnership with Brazil presented in its Communication of 30 May 2007 could be pursued without undermining the bi-regional approach that should be the cornerstone of our relations with Latin America in general and, in particular, with Mercosur?

Could the Commission state that this new partnership will not harm the regional balance and will not be to the detriment of the EU trade and economic relationship with other Latin American partners?

Erika Mann, Carlos Carnero González, Javier Moreno Sánchez and Emilio Menéndez del Valle, on behalf of the PESGroup, Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna and Małgorzata Handzlik, on behalf of the EPP-ED Group, Ignasi Guardans Cambó and Gianluca Susta, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Cristiana Muscardini and Eugenijus Maldeikis, on behalf of the UEN Group, Caroline Lucas, on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group, Jens Holm and Helmuth Markov, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group are putting the questions to the Commission.

Free movement of services

MEPs to call for the harmonisation of law on the obligations of service providers

A6-0294/2007 : Obligations of cross-border service providers

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 26.09.07

Lasse LEHTINEN (PES, FI)

Rapporteur

The European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer protection committee is proposing an own initiative report on the obligation of cross-border service providers drafted by Lasse LEHTINEN (PES, FI).

MEPs in the committee note that the Services Directive (to be transposed into national law by 28 December 2009) creates a new overarching legal framework of the cross-border provision of services but "does not address the substantive obligations of service providers" nor the remedies of the customer.

Community law does not provide any general regulation of the legal relationship between providers of services and customers through provisions of secondary law. Relevant rules within the laws of EU Member States vary considerably. This places the additional burden upon the provider and the customer to inform themselves of the diverging legal conditions in other Member States. This concerns the cases in which the service provider does not perform a service or performs it badly, as well as the additional cases in which the safety of the customer in connection with the service is compromised.

MEPs in the committee propose to harmonise the laws relating to the obligations of service providers. The purpose is to enable small and medium sized businesses to appreciate their obligations and associated risks and chances in cross-border transactions and, at the same time, to enhance confidence of the consumer to avail himself of cross-border services. They are convinced that these kinds of general measure will dynamise the cross-border provision of services within the internal market.

In the opinion of MEPs in the committee, the EU, before setting up any new rule should "examine the impact of existing and upcoming legislation in the internal market to the field of obligations of cross-border services providers and the need for a possible broad horizontal instrument". They call on the European Commission to "submit, within 12 months, a work programme for an appropriate assessment".

Women's rights/Equal opportunities

Male-female equality in Europe

A6-0290/2007 : Equality between women and men in the European Union

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 27.09.07

Piia-Noora KAUPPI (EPP-ED, FI)

Rapporteur

A report by the Women's Rights Committee on equality between women and men in the EU in 2007 takes as its starting point the fourth annual Commission report on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in policy areas.

Two major initiatives in 2006 had a bearing on gender equality in the EU: the Commission's adoption of the Roadmap for equality between women and men for 2006-2010, and the adoption of the Pact for Gender Equality. While welcoming these initiatives, the report of the Women's Rights Committee, drafted by Piia-Noora Kauppi (EPP-ED, FI), makes numerous proposals for promoting gender equality further.

Employment and pensions: women still disadvantaged

MEPs call on the Commission to propose awareness-raising campaigns, the exchange of best practice, dialogues with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives. They also say the Commission should monitor compliance by Member States with existing Community policy on male-female equality, particularly employment policy. A study on how Member States implement Community legislation is recommended, along with "appropriate action in the event of non-transposition or infringement".

The committee advocates gender analysis of the impact of pension reforms on women's lives in the EU as well as the dissemination of best practice on the working environment policies that allow for an effective work-life balance.

Female immigrants and "multiple discrimination"

Women immigrants and those from ethnic minorities can suffer "multiple discrimination", both racial and gender-based, stress MEPs. At the same time the committee argues that immigrants entering the EU must be made aware of the values and existing laws and social conventions on gender equality in the host countries' societies.

Trade agreements and gender issues

Noting that one effect of increased globalisation is the feminisation of poverty, MEPs call on the Commission to ensure that all future trade agreements, for example those within the framework of the WTO, are also scrutinised in the light of gender issues.

Gender equality targets needed

Member States are called upon to develop specific gender equality objectives and targets within the EU Social Inclusion Strategy in order to combat poverty and social exclusion, including a set of policy actions to support non-traditional and one-parent families.

Mainstreaming gender issues into regional development

Lastly, the report argues that EU regional development strategies should take more account of gender equality. The European Social Fund should support measures to improve women's access to the labour market. And regional funds should have a gender budget line for promoting gender equality and for surveys assessing the impact of policies relating to the situation of women.

No let up in fight against racial discrimination

A6-0278/2007 : Implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 27.09.07

Kathalijne Maria BUITENWEG (Greens/EFA, NL)

Rapporteur

Parliament will debate and vote on an own-initiative report tabled by the Civil Liberties Committee on the application of the Racial Equality Directive of 2000. MEPs believe more needs to be done to implement the directive in full, notably on issues such as legal redress, the burden of proof in racial discrimination cases, awareness-raising, data collection and the independence of anti-discrimination bodies.

Directive 2000/43/EC, known as the Racial Equality Directive, was due to be implemented by all Member States by 19 July 2003. The directive was revolutionary at the time of its adoption because it did not limit protection against discrimination to the area of employment but also covers social security, education and access to housing.

However, according to the draft report of the Civil Liberties Committee, authored by Kathalijne **Buitenweg** (Greens/EFA, NL), questions remain as to the directive's real impact.

Not all Member States have fully implemented it in their national law. Not many cases are brought to court, which the rapporteur believes may be due to the length and complexity of the procedures. Proving discrimination is notoriously difficult, and the directive's rules on the burden of proof have not been properly applied in some Member States.

Data on race and ethnicity - a useful tool, despite concerns

The collecting of sensitive data, which could be needed to establish indirect discrimination or to assess the extent of discrimination in society, continues to raise concerns and fears in many Member States. The committee "underlines that additional guarantees should be provided for data on race and ethnicity, as these data could be diverted and used for other purposes in the justice and home affairs field" but it does believe such data - for example, statistics on racist crime and on employment - are needed as a tool to combat discrimination.

Moreover, the report urges the EU institutions "to continue to use the situation of ethnic minorities, particularly women and minors, in applicant countries as a criterion for the purpose of assessing preparedness for accession to the European Union".

Independence and funding of equality bodies

Although nearly all Member States now have bodies responsible for equality issues, the report questions whether all such bodies will be able to carry out their functions independently as required by the directive,

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and whether these bodies have sufficient funding to operate effectively. MEPs believe the Commission can play a role in monitoring the independence of these bodies.

Culture

Europe's cultural heritage only a click away?

A6-0296/2007 : i2010: digital libraries

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 26.09.07

Marie-Hélène DESCAMPS (EPP-ED, FR)

Rapporteur

Access to Europe's cultural heritage should be made much easier through the creation of the European digital library, the Committee on Culture and Education says in a non binding report. The committee is backing a Commission plan to set up a European digital library as a direct access point to the European cultural heritage and stresses the importance of multilingual access to the databases.

For a large number of people, particularly young people, the Internet has become one of the principal means of access to knowledge. Therefore, says the committee, it is important to make use of the digital technology to promote, safeguard and disseminate the wealth and diversity of the European cultural heritage as widely as possible.

In the own-initiative report by Marie-Hélène **DESCAMPS** (EPP-ED, FR) MEPs in the committee back the setting up of a digital library in as a single, direct and multilingual access point to the European cultural heritage. The long term aim of the initiative should be to establish a tool that covers all categories of cultural material - not only books, but also audiovisual material. In the initial phase however focus should be put on text material free of copyright.

The committee stresses the importance of having a multilingual interface that gives direct access to the content in all EU languages. It should also be possible to conduct the searches in all languages.

MEPs in the committee say that existing initiatives in Europe that connect libraries and give access to national European library collections should contribute to the creation of the European digital library. As for funding, the committee says new methods of financing must be developed - including partnerships with the private sector.

The European Commission's proposals were outlined in a paper put forward in September 2005, after six Heads of State and their respective Governments called in April that year for the creation of a virtual European library.

Education

Better statistics needed for Lifelong Learning

A6-0307/2007 : Statistics on education and lifelong learning

Procedure : Codecision (1st reading)

Vote : 25.09.2007 - no debate

Nikolaos SIFUNAKIS (PES, GR)

Rapporteur

The Committee on Culture and Education in a legislative report is backing the Commission proposal for a new regulation to assure better statistics on Lifelong Learning. The committee insists that Parliament should have more influence, with the new procedures on implementation (comitology). The report by Nikolaos Sifunakis (PES, GR) is a result of a compromise with the Council, allowing the procedure to be finished after this first reading.

In order to better coordinate the policies of Lifelong Learning in the Member States it is becoming more important to have comparable statistics and indicators on education, training and lifelong learning. In the past decades, statistics on Education and training were developed through a gentlemen's agreement between the countries concerned.

When it comes to implementing the measures of the new regulation, for instance defining what data should be collected and assuring that the statistical data is collected and transmitted in the right way, the Commission will be assisted by specialists in the Statistical Programme Committee.

The Committee of Culture and Education emphasises in the report that this work should be carried out according to the new rules on comitology, the so-called "regulatory procedure with scrutiny" which gives the Parliament a right to veto.

Lifelong learning should begin at nursery, says Culture and Education Committee

A6- 0326/2007 : Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems

Procedure : own-initiative

Debate : 25.09.2007

Tomáš ZATLOUKAL (EPP-ED, CZ)

Rapporteur

Member States should be investing more in pre-school education, the Committee on Culture and Education states in the non-binding report on efficiency and equity in education by Tomás Zatlouka (EPP-ED, CZ).

The report underlines the importance of more effective training and education as a response to the cuts in public budgets and to the challenges of globalisation, demographic change and technological innovation.

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MEPs in the committee believe that the efficiency and equity can be achieved individually if investment and reform are focused on the early stages of education, and calls on the Member States to invest much more in pre-school education, as this would be an efficient way of creating a good basis for the future education.

MEPs in the committee give recommendations on how to bring more efficiency into the primary and secondary education, and call on the Member States to support more training of teachers.

When it comes to university studies, the committee supports the plans to modernise universities, and ask the Member States to create good conditions for increasing investment from public and private sources.

Regional policy

Reduced excise duty on rum from French overseas departments

A6-0318/2007 : Reduced rate of excise duty on "traditional" rum produced in French overseas departments

Procedure : Consultation

Vote : 25.09.07

Gerardo GALEOTE (EPP-ED, ES)

Rapporteur

MEPs will vote on a report on a proposed Council Decision would authorise France to charge a reduced rate of excise duty on imports of rum distilled in its overseas departments. This rum cannot compete on Community market unaided, due inter alia to rising wage costs and to the need to recoup investments made to meet Community standards on emissions and safety.

Reduced-rate quota

The reduced rate of duty would apply to a quota of 108,000 hectolitres pure alcohol (HPA) from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2012. This would replace a current quota of 90,000 HPA, which has been used up. The current quota represents less than 8.68% of the Community market, and the proposed 18,000 HPA increase concerns no more than 1.5% of that market for a six-year period.

Wage and compliance costs

The minimum hourly wage in the overseas departments rose 24% in 2001-2006. These departments have invested over €45.5 million since 2001, including €21.3 million (47%), on environment protection measures. Distilleries can offset compliance costs only by shipping more rum to the Community market.

Consumption and market shares

Whereas rum consumption in France rose 20% overall in 2000-2005, the overseas departments' market share rose only 16%, constituting a relative decline in the market. These departments' distilleries sell over 50% of their output to mainland France and their share of the total Community market is currently about 20%.

Turnover and jobs

In Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique, the sector generates an annual turnover of €250 million and provides some 40,000 jobs, 22,000 of them directly. The French authorities estimate that removing the reduced rate would result in a loss of 50% to trade outlets (mainly in mainland France) and thus in the closure of 75% of the distilleries. The reduced rate system allows for the maintenance of 11 distilleries in Guadeloupe, 9 in Martinique, 3 in Réunion and one in Guyana.

Agenda of plenary session

DRAFT

24-27 SEPTEMBER 2007 (Strasbourg Plenary)

Monday, 24 September 2007

5-10pm

Opening of part-session and order of business

One-minute speeches (*Rule 144*)

SARYUSZ-WOLSKI - Towards a common European foreign policy on energy

THOMSEN - Road Map for renewable energy in Europe

Oral Question to the Commission Negotiations on an Interregional Association Agreement with Mercosur and the new bilateral strategic partnership with Brazil

Joint debate - COMMUNITY RAILWAYS

JARZEMBOWSKI:- Development of the Community's railways

SAVARY - Certification of crews operating trains and locomotives

STERCKX - International rail passengers' rights and obligations

Tuesday, 25 September 2007

9-11.50am

(possibly) Votes (*Rule 134*)

- Council and Commission urgent procedure - direct support schemes and support schemes for farmers, as regards set aside for 2008

Joint debate - SUGAR

BATZELI (x 2) - Restructuring of the sugar industry

Commission statement - Dangerous toys manufactured in China

12noon - 1pm

Votes

Rule 43(1) of the Rules of Procedure

COSTA - (x 3 reports) "Air services" EC/Panama, EC/Kyrgyzstan and EC/Jordan

NIEBLER - Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the EC-Israel

MARKOV - Participation of Bulgaria and Romania in the Agreement on Cooperation and Customs Union EEC-San Marino

PARISH: National aid granted by Finland for seeds and cereal seed

GALEOTE - Excise duty on rum

Rule 80 "Codified versions": SPERONI (x 6)

- Passenger hand-holds on two-wheel motor vehicles

- Stands for two-wheel motor vehicles

- Rear registration plate of two or three-wheel motor vehicles

- Competition to transport by rail, road and inland waterway

- Rear-view mirrors for wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors

- Roll-over protection structures of wheeled agricultural or forestry tractors

Rule 131: "Implementing powers conferred on the Commission"

- SIFUNAKIS - Statistics on education and lifelong learning

Plenary session

3-5pm, 9pm - midnight

Council statement on implementation of the moratorium on the death penalty

PAASILINNA - European Institute of Technology

MANTOVANI - Qualifications framework for lifelong learning

ZATLOUKAL - Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems

PARISH - Agriculture - direct support schemes and support schemes for farmers, as regards set aside for 2008

5-5.30pm

Commission statement on Green Paper on clean urban transport

5.30-7pm

Question Time to the Commission

Wednesday, 26 September 2007

9-11.50am - KEY DEBATE

Joint Debate - IMMIGRATION

-Council and Commission statements - Immigration: in particular events during the summer and the role of Frontex

- GRUBER: Policy plan on legal migration

- MORENO SÁNCHEZ: Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals

12noon - 1pm

Votes

DUFF - Right to vote and stand in elections to the European Parliament for EU citizens residing in another Member State

3-5.30pm

Council and Commission statements - Secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers involving Council of Europe member states (Fava and Marty reports)

Council and Commission statements - Operation PESD in East Chad and north of the Central African Republic

5.30-7pm

Question Time to Council

9pm - midnight

LEHTINEN - Obligations of Cross-Border Service Providers

DESCAMPS: 2010: Digital libraries

Oral question to the Commission on European strategy on children's rights
(possibly) Reports under Rule 134

5.30-7pm

Question Time to Council

Thursday, 27 September 2007

10-11.50am

BUITENWEG - Implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin

KAUPPI - Equality between women and men in the EU (2007)

12noon - 1pm

Votes

Codes for parliamentary procedures

A series	Reports and recommendations
B series	Resolutions and oral questions
C series	Documents of other institutions
*	Consultation procedure
** 	Cooperation procedure (1st reading)
** 	Cooperation procedure (2nd reading)
***	Assent procedure
*** 	Codecision procedure (1st reading)
*** 	Codecision procedure (2nd reading)
*** 	Codecision procedure (3rd reading)

Abbreviations

BG	Bulgaria	IE	Ireland	AT	Austria
BE	Belgium	IT	Italy	PL	Poland
CZ	Czech Republic	CY	Cyprus	PT	Portugal
DK	Denmark	LV	Latvia	RO	Romania
DE	Germany	LT	Lithuania	SI	Slovenia
EE	Estonia	LU	Luxembourg	SK	Slovakia
EL	Greece	HU	Hungary	FI	Finland
ES	Spain	MT	Malta	SE	Sweden
FR	France	NL	Netherlands	UK	United Kingdom

Political groups

EPP-ED	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats
PES	Socialist Group in the European Parliament
ALDE/ADLE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
IND/DEM	Independence and Democracy Group
UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group
ITS	Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty Group
NA	Non-attached MEPs

Political groups in the European Parliament

Political groups in the European Parliament

Situation as at: 20 September 2007

	EPP-ED	PES	ALDE	UEN	GREENS/ EFA	GUE/ NGL	IND/ DEM	ITS	NA	Total
AT	6	7	1		2			1	1	18
BE	6	7	6		2			3		24
BG	5	5	5					3		18
CY	3		1			2				6
CZ	14	2				6	1		1	24
DE	49	23	7		13	7				99
DK	1	5	4	1	1	1	1			14
EE	1	3	2							6
EL	11	8				4	1			24
ES	24	24	2		3	1				54
FI	4	3	5		1	1				14
FR	17	31	11		6	3	3	7		78
HU	13	9	2							24
IE	5	1	1	4		1	1			13
IT	24	14	13	13	2	7		2	3	78
LT	2	2	7	2						13
LU	3	1	1		1					6
LV	3		1	4	1					9
MT	2	3								5
NL	7	7	5		4	2	2			27
PL	15	9	5	20			3		2	54
PT	9	12				3				24
RO	9	12	8					6		35
SE	6	5	3		1	2	2			19
SI	4	1	2							7
SK	8	3							3	14
UK	27	19	12		5	1	10	1	3	78
Total	278	216	104	44	42	41	24	23	13	785