

Press release – Statement by EP Conference of Presidents on long-term EU budget and Rule of Law



The Conference of Presidents (EP President and political group leaders) met today and reaffirmed the European Parliament's position regarding the deal reached with the Council on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) regulation, the related Inter-institutional Agreement (IIA), the related set of unilateral and joint declarations, and the regulation on Rule of Law conditionality.

The European Parliament already adopted its opinion on the Own-Resources Decision on 16 September, well in time to allow the Council and subsequently the Member States to ratify the Decision by the end of 2020.

We ask the Council to adopt the package and begin the ratification process as soon as possible. The European Parliament's leadership deeply regrets this delay and reiterates that the agreements reached (on both the MFF and the Rule of Law) are a closed deal and can in no way be reopened.

No further concession will be made on our side.

Press release – Independent Ethics

Body: strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU



Dr Christoph Demmke, Professor of Public Management, University of Vaasa, Finland, will present “[Conflict of interest policies: effectiveness and best practice in Europe](#)”. The study analyses the effectiveness of relevant rules, policies and practices within member states regarding conflict of interest for top political appointments.

Dr Markus Frischhut, Professor, Jean Monnet Chair “EU Values & DIGitalization for our CommuNITY (DIGNITY)”, at MCI / The Entrepreneurial School, Innsbruck, Austria will follow with “[Strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body](#)”. Based on a comparison covering France, Ireland and Canada, this study proposes an ‘Independent Ethics Body’ (IEB) via a new interinstitutional agreement.

When: Thursday 19 November 2020, 14.00 – 15.20

Where: European Parliament in Brussels, Altiero Spinelli building, room 1G-3 (remote participation)

Background

In its 2017 [resolution on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions](#), Parliament insisted that “EU institutions must strive for the highest possible standards of transparency, accountability and integrity”. This was also addressed by EC President von der Leyen in June 2019, during the Commission election process in the European Parliament.

Find [here](#) the full agenda of the meeting and other useful documents.

You can watch the meeting [live](#). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, journalists are strongly advised to follow it online.

Vienna Migration Conference 2020: EASO and ICMPD strengthen cooperation

The Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Ms Nina Gregori, participated at the Vienna Migration Conference 2020 organised by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) which took place virtually on 18 November 2020. On the margins of the event, EASO and ICMPD virtually exchanged letters which aim at reinforcing cooperation and collaboration.

The Vienna Migration Conference, ICMPD's annual flagship event, offers a key platform for top-level discussion on migration in Europe and beyond.

EASO's Executive Director actively participated as a panellist in three sessions at the workshop on "Schengen and EU Asylum: Strategies for Progress". Ms. Gregori giving her insights on the condition of the Schengen area in times of COVID-19, as well as the reform process of the CEAS.

Speaking at the 1st Session on the State of play of discussions in the EU following the European Commission's proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, Ms Gregori expressed her hope that the new Pact and the related Proposals serve as an impetus to take forward the discussions in a constructive way. "It's an attempt aiming at balancing responsibility and solidarity, and it provides the basis for constructive negotiations that could unblock the stalled discussions," stated EASO's Executive Director during her intervention. Ms Gregori also referred to the limitations of EASO's current mandate and the need to progress on the Proposal for a European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

"Shedding light on the key issues to be resolved: strategies for progress" was the topic of the 2nd discussion, in which EASO's Executive Director focused her intervention on the border procedure and the solidarity mechanism.

When enquired on the way forward and whether there are other 'deliverables' that can be expected in the short-term, Ms Gregori highlighted the swift adaptation both of EU Member States and EASO to the "new normal" caused by the ongoing pandemic and the opportunity that this pandemic has given asylum services to rethink and adapt the way they work effectively and efficiently. Ms Gregori also mentioned EASO's important work on resettlement, aiming at making sure that legal pathways remain a viable option.

"We need to invest more – politically but also practically – in advancing the Common European Asylum System," stated the Executive Director of EASO during her closing remarks. Looking further into the future when all the other proposed CEAS instruments will also be adopted, Ms. Gregori expressed her confidence that the EUAA will be ready to significantly step-up the very

tangible assistance being provided to Member States' asylum and reception practices.

Cooperation between the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

On the margins of the Vienna Migration Conference, the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Ms. Nina Gregori and the Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) Dr. Michael Spindelegger, virtually exchanged letters reiterating their commitment on the close cooperation between both parties.

The long-standing collaboration between EASO and ICMPD in the fields of their respective activities had made clear that there was a need for a joint framework to structure cooperation in matters of common interest. This need was addressed through a series of consultations between the parties, which resulted in an agreement these areas of cooperation.

The letters establish the different modalities and objectives, including the exchange of information and practices. They pave the way for the two parties to continue building on the excellent collaboration to-date, providing high quality expertise in the fields of migration and asylum.

More information on the ICMPD Vienna Migration Conference 2020 can be found [here](#).

Article – New EU industrial strategy: the challenges to tackle



European enterprises have been hit hard by the [Covid-19 pandemic](#), as many have had to shut or reduce their workforce while finding new ways to work within new restrictive measures. Before making the necessary digital and green transitions, industry in the EU needs to recover from the pandemic.

During the November plenary, MEPs are set to reiterate their call for the European Commission to revise its March 2020 proposal on the EU's [new industrial strategy](#). In a [draft report](#) adopted on 16 October, the members of the industry, research and energy committee demanded a [shift in the EU approach to industrial policy](#) in the wake of the pandemic by helping businesses cope with the crisis and face the digital and environmental transitions.

How the Parliament foresees the EU's industry landscape

Industry represents more than 20% of the EU's economy and employs about 35 million people, with many millions more jobs linked to it at home and abroad. In addition it accounts for 80% of goods exports. The EU is also a top global provider and destination for foreign direct investment.

In the context of the new industrial strategy, the EU should enable companies to contribute to its [climate-neutrality](#) targets – as outlined in the [Green Deal](#) roadmap – support firms, particularly **small and medium enterprises** in the transition to a digital and **carbon-neutral** economy and help create high-quality jobs, without undermining the EU's competitiveness.

According to MEPs; such a strategy should consist of two phases: a recovery phase to consolidate jobs, reactivate production and adapt to a post-Covid

period; followed by reconstruction and industrial transformation.

Read about [the main EU measures to kick-start the economic recovery](#).

Empowering smaller firms to achieve sustainable growth

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the EU economy, accounting for more than 99% of all European business. The industrial strategy should focus on them, as many have contracted debts due to national coronavirus measures, reducing their investment capacity, which is likely to trigger sluggish growth in the long-term.

Helping industry recover from the socio-economic crisis

The Covid [Recovery Fund](#) is part of the first phase in responding to the emergency and should be distributed according to the level of damage suffered, challenges faced and amount of financial support already received through national aid schemes.

Preference should be given to companies and smaller firms oriented towards the digital and environmental transformation and thus investing in [environmentally sustainable activities](#).

MEPs want to:

- Ensure that the green and digital transitions are fair and socially just and are followed by initiatives to train workers
- Create a new impact assessment of the potential costs and burdens of the transition for European companies, including small and medium-sized enterprises
- Make sure that state aid provided in the emergency phase does not lead to permanent distortions in the single market.
- Bring strategic industries back to the EU

[Press release – REACT-EU: additional support of €47.5 billion agreed to address impact of COVID-19](#)



On 18 November, European Parliament and Council concluded negotiations on providing assistance to foster crisis repair in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences, and preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the EU economy (REACT-EU).

REACT-EU will provide €47,5 billion over the next two years. The resources will be made available through the EU Structural Funds, with €37.5 billion allocated for 2021 and €10 billion for 2022. Operations covered by the agreement should be eligible as of 1 February 2020. Moreover, EU countries will be allowed to use these additional resources until the end of 2023, beyond the original Commission proposal of 2022.

Resources will be allocated in accordance with the partnership principle, involving local and regional authorities, as well as relevant bodies representing civil society and social partners.

Other issues agreed:

- 0,35% of resources will be allocated to technical assistance, focused especially on member states badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and those that may experience difficulties in preparing their programmes;
- Investment will be focused on the sectors most affected by the economic fallout of the pandemic;
- a pre-financing rate of 11% of the additional resources allocated to programmes for the year 2021;
- Member states will be able to allocate part of the additional resources to the European Social Fund, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Youth Employment Initiative as well as cross-border programmes (Interreg);
- an amount corresponding to aid intensity of EUR 30 per inhabitant will be allocated to the outermost regions;
- the breakdown of resources will be set out at a later stage by the Commission by means of implementing acts;
- the Commission will endeavour to approve any dedicated operational programme or any amendment to an existing programme within 15 working

days;

- EU support should be made more visible – activities linked to the use of the additional resources must contain a reference to being “funded as part of the Union’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic”.

Quotes

Co-rapporteur Andrey Novakov (EPP, BG) said: “2020 is the EU year of disruption but also the year of repair. REACT-EU is a textbook example of cohesion policy being part of the recovery. Businesses and healthcare took a hard hit and this funding will be a breath of fresh air. We hope that the Council will overcome its internal divisions to allow recovery funding to flow across the EU.”

Co-rapporteur Constanze Krehl (S&D, DE) said: “I am glad that member states agreed with our view – REACT-EU must focus on the social consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, and the regions and people who have been hit hardest by the crisis. This includes cross-border projects, and support for the most deprived people and youth. All spending must respect the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Paris Climate Agreement – this should be self-explanatory, but it is good to remind member states of these obligations.”

Next steps

Parliament and Council are now expected to endorse the content of the agreement. The regulation will enter into force one day after its publication in the Official Journal.

Background

REACT-EU is a proposal made by the Commission to address the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of an amendment to the [Common Provisions Regulation](#) governing the current cohesion policy programming period. It follows two earlier proposals relating to cohesion policy, the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Initiative Plus (CRII+), which both modified the rules for regional spending in order to facilitate recovery. The REACT-EU additional resources will come from the [European Union Recovery Instrument](#).