Spotlight

Last Week

European Parliament:

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen at the IMCO meeting: On Monday, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection heard from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen. According to Ms Haugen the Digital Services Act (DSA) has the potential to be a "global gold standard" and inspire other countries to “pursue new rules that would safeguard our democracies”. She warned, however, that rules need to be strong on transparency, oversight and enforcement, otherwise “we will lose this once-in-a-generation opportunity to align the future of technology and democracy”.

Weapons of mass destruction: In a report adopted on Tuesday, Committee on Foreign Affairs MEPs call for policies to move forward the reduction and elimination of all nuclear arsenals and create conditions to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Artificial intelligence: Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Age AIDA. Artificial Intelligence regulation should focus on the level of risk associated with specific uses, according to a draft report presented in the AIDA special committee on Tuesday.

Poland-Belarus border: In a plenary debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Wednesday afternoon, MEPs expressed their deep worries over the dramatic crisis currently unfolding at the Polish-Belarusian border. They also repeated their strong condemnation of the current tactics of the Belarusian dictatorial regime of funneling migrant flows to the EU’s external borders, escalating the situation with neighbouring countries, in particular Poland, as revenge for European Union sanctions.

EU Asylum Agency: Legislation endorsed on Thursday by the European Parliament upgrades the existing mandate of the EU Asylum Support Office (EASO), which has been operational since 2011 and is based in Valletta, Malta.

Corporate tax transparency: On Thursday, MEPs gave the green light to new rules obliging big multinationals to publicly declare the taxes they pay in each EU country, in order to undermine tax avoidance.

Poland: Restrictive law on abortion: In a resolution adopted on Thursday by 373 votes in favour, 124 against and 55 abstentions, MEPs call on the Polish government to ensure that no more women in Poland die because of restrictive law.

New rules for European political parties: On Thursday Parliament proposed several ways to strengthen European democracy in a report assessing the existing rules on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations.

New rules for fair minimum wages in the EU: In a vote on Thursday, MEPs on the Employment and Social Affairs Committee backed laying down minimum requirements to protect wages across the EU, either by establishing a statutory wage (the lowest wage permitted by law), or by allowing workers to negotiate their wages with their employers. The new legislation should apply to all workers in the EU who have an employment contract or employment relationship.

Conference on the Future of Europe The second online European Citizens’ Panel, focusing on European democracy / values and rights, the rule of law, and security, met on 12-14 November.

European Commission:

Support for workers in automotive sector in Spain: On Monday, the Commission proposed to support 320 dismissed workers in the automotive sector in the Aragón region in Spain, who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed €1.4 million from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) will help these people find new jobs through further education or training.

State Aid. The European Commission has approved a €4.5 billion Italian scheme to support companies and the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak.

Central clearing. On Wednesday, Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union Mairead McGuinness announced the Commission’s proposed way forward for central clearing.
**Autumn 2021 Economic Forecast:** The EU economy is projected to keep expanding over the forecast horizon, achieving a growth rate of 5%, 4.3% and 2.5% in 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. Growth rates for the euro area are projected to be identical to those for the EU in 2021 and 2022, and 2.4% in 2023. This outlook depends heavily on two factors: the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pace at which supply adjusts to the rapid turnaround in demand following the re-opening of the economy.

**Drinking water:** Commission refers IRELAND to the Court of Justice of the European Union over unsafe drinking water: The Commission has decided to refer Ireland to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failure to comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive (Directive 98/83/EC). The Directive requires Member States to ensure that water intended for human consumption is wholesome and clean. It requires that drinking water is free from micro-organisms and parasites, and from substances which could pose a potential danger to human health.

**Statement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the outcome of COP26**

Link to statement [here](#)

**European Council and Council of the European Union:**

On Monday, the Eurogroup ministers discussed Macroeconomic developments; Digital euro; Economic governance review; Banking union and Single Resolution Fund updates.

On Tuesday, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council discussed Energy prices and inflation, Financial services, Economic governance and recovery.

On Thursday, Foreign Affairs Council discussed EU-US trade relations; WTO reform and preparations for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference; Implementation and enforcement of EU trade agreements; Trade and sustainable development.

**Coming Week:**

**European Parliament:**

Committee and groups meetings, Brussels

**Commission:**

College Meeting Wednesday;

On Wednesday, Ms Mairead McGuinness receives Mr Michael McGrath TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of Ireland;

**European Council and Council of the European Union:**

Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 15 November

Foreign Affairs Council, 15 November

Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 16 November

General Affairs Council (Cohesion), 18 November

**European Parliament Week 46**

Coming Week Highlights Committee and Political Groups meetings,

**Monetary Dialogue with ECB President Lagarde.** MEPs in the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee will meet with ECB President Christine Lagarde for their regular monetary dialogue. They are
European Parliament Week 46
Coming Week Highlights Committee and Political Groups meetings,

set to discuss the ECB’s revised inflation target as well as the consequences of a rapid increase in housing costs. (Monday)

**EU Digital Covid Certificate/changes in some member states.** MEPs in the Civil Liberties Committee will discuss with the Commission the application of the digital COVID certificate in EU member states, as well as recent changes in countries like Austria and France regarding the validity of vaccination certificates and their implications for the freedom of movement. (Thursday)

**Golden passports and visas.** MEPs on the Civil Liberties Committee will discuss a draft report calling on the Commission to propose rules on national schemes granting citizenship or residence rights to non-EU nationals in exchange for investment. Parliament has repeatedly asked for more stringent rules to avoid loopholes that benefit tax evaders and criminals. (Thursday)

**Improving the EU’s response to the migration and asylum crisis.** The legislative work on the proposal to set up a new instrument to tackle the migration and asylum crisis in one or several member states, to ensure they are given support rapidly when needed, will begin in the Civil Liberties Committee. The Commission’s proposal includes the possibility to grant immediate protection to displaced people fleeing armed conflicts in their home countries. (Thursday)

**Rule of law missions to Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Slovakia.** The Civil Liberties Committee will discuss the recent visits to Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Slovakia to assess the situation of the rule of law and fundamental rights in these member states. (Thursday) (tbc)

**Stopping global deforestation.** The Environment Committee will debate with Commissioner Sinkevičius the proposed new legislation that Parliament called for to stop EU-driven global deforestation and forest degradation by obliging companies placing products on the EU market to carry out due diligence. (Thursday)

**Plenary preparations.** Political groups will prepare for the 22-25 November plenary session, where MEPs will debate and vote on the reform of the common EU Farm Policy, on measures to improve gender equality in the EU, on the EU’s role in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic by helping vaccinate the world and on a future-proof EU pharmaceutical policy. Also on the agenda will be the debate on the outcome of the October EU summit, the EU’s budget for 2022, a legislative initiative calling for new EU rules on legal labour migration, and the introduction of a European Social Security number with a personal labour card.

**Conference on the Future of Europe.** The second round of the European Citizens’ Panels continues online. The Panel will focus on better ways of living, protecting our environment and health, redirecting our economy and consumption, towards a sustainable society, and caring for all (Friday to Sunday).

Link to all committee meetings

European Commission
Coming Week Highlights

**College Meeting Wednesday**

On Wednesday, Ms Mairead McGuinness receives Mr Michael McGrath TD, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of Ireland;
European Council – Council of the European Union

Coming Meetings

**Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 15 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

- Forest strategy for 2030. Ministers will aim to approve conclusions on the EU forest strategy for 2030. Presented by the Commission in July this year.
- Market situation. Based on information provided by the Commission and member states, ministers will hold an exchange of views on the market situation for agricultural products.
- Other matters. EU ministers will hear from the Commission about the progress of the annual consultations with the United Kingdom on fishing quotas for 2022. The role of the Council is to provide guidance to the Commission, which leads the consultations with the UK, and ultimately to approve the proposal for fishing quotas before consultations are formally closed.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

**Foreign Affairs Council, 15 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

EU foreign affairs ministers will discuss current affairs. They will then take stock of the recent developments in the Western Balkans, followed by a debrief on the situation in the Sahel.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

**Foreign Affairs Council (Defence), 16 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

In the morning, ministers will attend the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board meeting. EU defence ministers will then review current affairs. Ministers will then have a discussion on EU training missions.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

**General Affairs Council (Cohesion), 18 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

Ministers in charge of cohesion policy will hold a policy debate on the contribution of cohesion policy programmes to the recovery, the green and digital transitions, and economic, social and territorial cohesion. They will focus on the synergies between cohesion policy funds and other EU instruments, especially the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

**Foreign Affairs Council (Development), 19 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

Development ministers will discuss water in external action, with a focus on Central Asia. In the margins of the meeting, they will have an informal exchange with Samantha Power, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

**General Affairs Council, 23 November**

**AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

Link to full agenda [here](#)

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen at the IMCO meeting

On Monday, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection heard from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen. According to Ms Haugen the Digital Services Act (DSA) has the potential to be a “global gold standard” and inspire other countries to “pursue new rules that would safeguard our democracies”. She warned, however, that rules need to be strong on transparency, oversight and enforcement, otherwise “we will lose this once-in-a-generation opportunity to align the future of technology and democracy”.

Ms Haugen’s revelations on Facebook’s practices and how they impact on users and their fundamental rights were troubling to MEPs. They expressed their concerns on, among other issues, the exploitation of children and teenagers’ mental health and on micro-targeting, including for political purposes. Questions focused on how to make the platforms more accountable and to ensure that risk assessment and risk mitigation provisions in the proposed Digital Services Act (DSA) are strong enough to avoid abuses, polarisation, and address risks to democracy.

Members also asked Ms Haugen for her views on regulating not only illegal but also harmful content, on content moderation tools and whether targeted advertising should be banned. They also wanted to know what safeguards she would like to see included in EU digital laws, wondering if the package currently on the table was sufficient. Enforcement tools to make sure the DSA has teeth, the transparency of algorithms, giving academic researchers, NGOs and investigative journalists access to platforms’ data, were other issues addressed at the hearing.

In her replies, Ms Haugen emphasised the importance of ensuring that companies like Facebook publicly disclose data and how they collect them (on ranking content, advertising, scoring parameters for example) to allow people to make transparent decisions and prohibit “dark patterns” online. Individuals in these companies, not committees, should personally be held accountable for the decisions they make, she added.

Link to EP report here
Link to video recording here

Weapons of mass destruction:

In a report adopted on Tuesday, Committee on Foreign Affairs MEPs call for policies to move forward the reduction and elimination of all nuclear arsenals and create conditions to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The ongoing erosion of the global non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control architecture is, MEPs warn, being worsened by the rapid development of new and potentially destabilising technologies such as artificial intelligence-enabled weapon systems, hypersonic missiles, and drone technologies.

In the committee’s report, which analyses challenges and prospects for multilateral arms control and disarmament regimes for weapons of mass destruction, MEPs express fears that withdrawal from major arms control treaties, or the lack of such treaties, would seriously damage the international arms control regimes that have provided certain stability for decades. This would also undermine relationships between nuclear-weapon states, they add. Strongly opposing to the use of weapons of mass destruction as a means to solve geopolitical disputes, MEPs call on all nuclear states to consider decreasing the role and the salience of nuclear weapons in their security concepts and doctrines.

Link to EP report here
Artificial intelligence: Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Age. AIDA

Artificial Intelligence regulation should focus on the level of risk associated with specific uses, according to a draft report presented in the AIDA special committee on Tuesday.

The draft text, presented by the rapporteur, says that the public debate should shift towards a focus on the enormous potential of AI, which offers humankind the unique chance to improve almost every area of our lives. AI could help combat climate change, pandemics and global hunger, and enhance quality of life through personalised medicine.

According to the draft document, AI can substantially increase productivity, innovation, growth and job creation. The EU should not regulate AI as a technology; instead, the type, intensity and timing of regulatory intervention should solely depend on the type of risk associated with a particular use of an AI system. The text warns that the EU is currently falling behind in the global tech race that will determine the future political and economic global power balance. In order to remain both economically competitive and a global power, the EU needs to become a global power in AI, the text say.

The draft report identifies policy options for unlocking the potential of AI in health, environment and climate change, competitiveness, and the labour market. It notes that autonomous AI systems are at odds with the information duties laid down in the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which has led to legal uncertainty and lack of cooperation in the health sector.

Link to EP report here

Poland-Belarus border:

In a plenary debate with EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell on Wednesday afternoon, MEPs expressed their deep worries over the dramatic crisis currently unfolding at the Polish-Belarusian border. They also repeated their strong condemnation of the current tactics of the Belarusian dictatorial regime of funnelling migrant flows to the EU’s external borders, escalating the situation with neighbouring countries, in particular Poland, as revenge for European Union sanctions.

Vice President Josep Borrell repeated that the European Union is currently engaging in wide ranging diplomatic efforts together with the countries of origin in order to find solutions and prevent more trafficked migrants from arriving in this way. At the same time, he stressed that Belarus authorities must provide humanitarian assistance to the people trapped in the Belarusian border area, including providing access for humanitarian organisations to the region and to allow for humanitarian corridors. He also announced an upcoming discussion on expanded EU sanctions.

During the debate, several MEPs voiced alarm over the deteriorating humanitarian situation at the Polish-Belarusian border, with people trapped between border forces being exposed to winter weather conditions. They urged the Polish authorities to end the ongoing aggressive pushbacks of migrants back into Belarus, and to accept assistance from the EU’s agencies in handling the humanitarian situation, deploring that this support has been refused so far. Other MEPs focused on the urgent need for aid organisations to have direct access to the Polish-Belarusian border in order to help the migrants stranded there.

Link to EP report here

EU Asylum Agency

Legislation endorsed on Thursday by the European Parliament upgrades the existing mandate of the EU Asylum Support Office (EASO), which has been operational since 2011 and is based in Valletta, Malta.

The new agency will provide operational and technical assistance to member states at their request. This will include, for example, helping to identify and register third-country nationals or by assisting national authorities to manage the international protection procedure - including in crises and relocation and resettlement situations - and more generally with the implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

It will also be tasked with developing operational standards, analysis and guidelines as well as training on
asylum-related matters.

Link to EP report here

**Corporate tax transparency:**

On Thursday, MEPs gave the green light to new rules obliging big multinationals to publicly declare the taxes they pay in each EU country, in order to undermine tax avoidance.

Multinationals and their subsidiaries with annual revenues over €750 million - and which are active in more than one EU country - will now have to publish the amount of tax they pay in each member state. This information will also need to be made publically available on the internet, using a common template and in a machine-readable format.

According to the agreement approved by MEPs, to facilitate the use of the information provided and to increase transparency the data provided by companies will need to be broken down into specific items. These include the nature of the company’s activities, the number of full-time employees, the amount of profit or loss before income tax, the amount of accumulated and paid income tax and accumulated earnings.

Link to EP report here

**Poland: Restrictive law on abortion**

In a resolution adopted on Thursday by 373 votes in favour, 124 against and 55 abstentions, MEPs call on the Polish government to ensure that no more women in Poland die because of restrictive law.

They reiterate their strong condemnation of the Constitutional Tribunal’s ruling of 22 October 2020 imposing a near-total ban on abortion and putting women’s health and lives at risk. They urge the Polish government to swiftly and fully guarantee access to safe, legal and free abortion services for all women.

MEPs regret that, due to this restrictive legislation, women have to seek unsafe abortions, travel abroad to obtain abortions or carry their pregnancy to term against their will, including in cases of fatal foetal impairment. Parliament thus calls on member states to cooperate more effectively to facilitate cross-border access to abortion, for example by granting Polish women access to a free and safe abortion in other national healthcare systems.

Link to EP report here

**New rules for European political parties**

On Thursday Parliament proposed several ways to strengthen European democracy in a report assessing the existing rules on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations. The report was adopted with 428 votes in favour, 092 against, and 49 abstentions.

MEPs underline that funding for European political parties and foundations is conditional on respect for EU values. They welcome the reinforcement of monitoring provisions and the procedure for infringements, including sanctions and the recovery of funds. However, rules should be adapted to also ensure respect for EU values by the constituent parties of each European political party. To achieve this, MEPs say the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations needs to be strengthened.

Link to EP Report here

**New rules for fair minimum wages in the EU**

In a vote on Thursday, MEPs on the Employment and Social Affairs Committee backed laying down minimum requirements to protect wages across the EU, either by establishing a statutory wage (the lowest wage permitted by law), or by allowing workers to negotiate their wages with their employers. The new legislation should apply to all workers in the EU who have an employment contract or employment relationship.
According to the draft law, member states have to assess and report on whether statutory minimum wages are sufficient by using criteria to put in place decent working and living conditions and include elements such as purchasing power and the poverty rate. Member states in which the minimum wage is protected exclusively via collective agreements will not be obliged to introduce statutory wages or to make these agreements universally applicable.

The draft directive explicitly aims to strengthen and extend the coverage of collective bargaining and protect workers by providing them with a minimum wage via these negotiations. Member states in which collective bargaining is available to less than 80% of the workforce, should take active steps to promote this tool. To design the best strategy for this purpose, they should consult social partners and inform the European Commission of the adopted measures.

Moreover, it will be explicitly forbidden to undermine collective bargaining or collective agreements on wage setting. Workers must be able to join a trade union and cannot be obstructed from doing so.

Link to EP report here

Conference on the Future of Europe

The second online European Citizens’ Panel, focusing on European democracy / values and rights, the rule of law, and security, met on 12-14 November.

Following a first round of sessions that took place in the European Parliament in Strasbourg in September and October, the European Citizens’ Panels continued their work online throughout November. Their recommendations will be drafted, endorsed and then presented and discussed in the Conference Plenary in December and January.

Link to EP report here

European Commission. Highlights Week 45.

Support for workers in automotive sector in Spain

On Monday, the Commission proposed to support 320 dismissed workers in the automotive sector in the Aragón region in Spain, who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed €1.4 million from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) will help these people find new jobs through further education or training.

The lockdown measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shortage of semiconductors forced car companies to interrupt or significantly slow down their production. Despite the wide and successful use of short-time work schemes, some manufacturers had to shut down production leading to job losses. Thanks to the EGF, 320 workers laid off from 50 Aragón businesses in the automotive sector in Spain will receive targeted active labour market support to help them return to work.

The €1.4 million of EGF funds will help the Aragón authorities finance measures ranging from career guidance and individualised job-search support, to acquiring new or additional skills, to advice on starting an own business. Training will also help improve digital skills and knowledge on new industrial production processes, therefore contributing to the digital transition in the car industry. Participants can receive allowances for taking part in these measures and a contribution to their commuting expenses.

The total estimated cost of the support measures is €1.7 million, of which the EGF will cover 85% (€1.4 million). The region of Aragón will cover the remaining amount (€0.3 million). Aragón’s public employment
service (INAEM) will contact workers eligible for support and will manage the measures.

Link to Commission statement here

**State Aid**

**Italy.** The European Commission has approved a €4.5 billion Italian scheme to support companies and the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework. It is in the form of limited amounts of aid to support companies particularly affected by the coronavirus and the restrictive measures that the Italian government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. Under the scheme, limited amounts of aid will take the form of: (i) direct grants up to €1,000 for companies registered between 1 January and 31 December 2018, whose business activity started in 2019; and (ii) direct grants up to €150,000 for companies that, following the coronavirus outbreak, have experienced a worsening of their economic performance, compared to 2019. The aid amount per beneficiary will be calculated taking into account any previous support granted by the Italian Revenue Agency to the company itself or to one of its affiliates.

Link to Commission statement here

**Central clearing.**

On Wednesday, Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union Mairead McGuinness announced the Commission's proposed way forward for central clearing.

The Commission remains of the view that over-reliance on UK-based central counterparties (CCPs) for some clearing activities is a source of financial stability risk in the medium term and will pursue its work to develop the capacity of EU-based CCPs as a means to reduce such over-reliance. However, in order to address possible short-term financial stability risk, linked to an abrupt interruption in access to clearing services, the Commission will soon propose an extension of equivalence for UK-based CCPs.

Link to Commission statement here

**Autumn 2021 Economic Forecast:**

The EU economy is projected to keep expanding over the forecast horizon, achieving a growth rate of 5%, 4.3% and 2.5% in 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively. Growth rates for the euro area are projected to be identical to those for the EU in 2021 and 2022, and 2.4% in 2023. This outlook depends heavily on two factors: the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the pace at which supply adjusts to the rapid turnaround in demand following the re-opening of the economy.

At almost 14% in annual terms, the rate of GDP growth in the EU in the second quarter of 2021 was the highest reading on record – as high as the unprecedented fall in GDP in the same period last year, during the first wave of the pandemic. The EU economy regained the pre-pandemic output level in the third quarter of 2021 and moved from recovery into expansion.

Domestic demand is set to continue to drive this expansion. Improvements in labour markets and a projected decline in savings should contribute to a sustained pace of consumer spending. The implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) is also starting to play an important role in boosting private and public investment.

Link to Commission statement here

**October infringements package:**

In its regular package of infringement decisions, the European Commission pursues legal action against Member States for failing to comply with their obligations under EU law. These decisions, covering various
sectors and EU policy areas, aim to ensure the proper application of EU law for the benefit of citizens and businesses.

The key decisions taken by the Commission are presented below and grouped by policy area. The Commission is also closing 46 cases in which the issues with the Member States concerned have been solved without the Commission needing to pursue the procedure further.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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**Drinking water: Commission refers IRELAND to the Court of Justice of the European Union over unsafe drinking water**

The Commission has decided to refer Ireland to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failure to comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive (Directive 98/83/EC). The Directive requires Member States to ensure that water intended for human consumption is wholesome and clean. It requires that drinking water is free from micro-organisms and parasites, and from substances which could pose a potential danger to human health.

The European Green Deal sets for the EU a Zero Pollution ambition. Full implementation of the standards enshrined in EU legislation is important to effectively protect human health and safeguard the natural environment.

In Ireland, the level of the chemical substance trihalomethanes (THMs) in drinking water has long exceeded the parametric value established in the Drinking Water Directive in a number of water supply zones across the whole country. Drinking water provided in 30 water supply zones in Ireland, serving a population of more than 200,000 citizens, continues to exceed the safe levels of THMs. These chemicals are formed in drinking water due to the disinfection process. Exceeding the parametric value of trihalomethanes can entail potential risks to human health.

The Commission sent a letter of formal notice to Ireland in 2018, followed by a reasoned opinion in May 2020. The reasoned opinion concerned 44 water supply zones across the whole country. Since the reasoned opinion, 30 water supply zones remain in breach of the THM value.

Whilst the Commission welcomes the fact that Ireland has made progress in addressing elevated levels of THMs in the drinking water, today, more than three years after the opening of the infringement case, a number of water supply zones still do not comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive. The Commission is therefore referring Ireland to the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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**Statement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on the outcome of COP26**

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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**European Council and Council of the European Union**

**Highlights Week 45.**

**Eurogroup, 8 November**

**Macroeconomic developments**

The Eurogroup discussed macro-economic developments, including inflation, and policy prospects in the euro area. Ministers took stock of and exchanged views on energy prices and inflation developments within the
euro area ahead of the Commission’s autumn forecast.

**Digital euro**

The Eurogroup discussed policy objectives and the uses of the digital euro in the context of the fast pace of digitalisation in the global economy, and its impact on the euro area and the common currency, and took stock of related initiatives and developments at international level.

**International meetings**

The president of the Eurogroup briefed ministers on the international meetings he attended in October (G7 and World Bank and IMF annual meetings).

**Economic governance review**

The Commission presented the relaunched economic governance review, with a focus on the euro area dimension. Ministers discussed the process through which Eurogroup (and Eurogroup in the inclusive format for relevant items) meetings will consider the governance review, and held an initial discussion on how the Eurogroup could address challenges to the coordination of fiscal and economic policies within the euro area and to the functioning of EMU in a post-COVID economic environment.

**Banking union and Single Resolution Fund updates**

The Eurogroup was briefed by the institutions on the main results of the bi-annual monitoring report on risk reduction indicators. Ministers also took stock of the preparations for the introduction of the common backstop to the Single Resolution Fund, as agreed in November 2020.

Link to Council report [here](#)

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**Economic and Financial Affairs Council, 9 November**

**Economic governance and recovery**

Ministers exchanged views on the EU economy following the COVID-19 pandemic, and on the implications of recent developments for economic governance. They discussed the future of the EU’s economic governance framework and gave their initial views on the way forward. This topic will be discussed further and ministers will continue their consultations in order to reach a broad consensus in due course.

**Energy prices and inflation**

Ministers discussed the recent steep increase in energy and consumer prices and the associated policy implications. They exchanged views on the Commission’s toolbox of measures that the EU and its member states can use and are already using to address the immediate impact of energy price increases.

**Financial services**

Economy and finance ministers held a policy debate on a set of legislative proposals mostly aimed at implementing the outstanding Basel III agreements, i.e. reform measures intended to help reinforce the resilience of the EU banking sector and strengthen its supervision and risk management. The exchange of views was preceded by a presentation of this package of proposals by the Commission.

**International meetings**

The Slovenian presidency and the European Commission provided information and follow-up on the meetings of G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and on the IMF annual meetings of 13-14 October 2021.

Link to Council report [here](#)

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**Foreign Affairs Council (Trade), 11 November**

**EU-US trade relations**

The Council took stock of recent developments and discussed how to maintain and strengthen the current positive momentum in bilateral trade relations between the EU and the US. The main focus was on the announcement (of 31 October) on trade in steel and aluminium and the prospects for future engagement,
in particular with regard to the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC).

**WTO reform and preparations for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference**
The Council discussed recent developments in the WTO reform process and preparations for the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation to be held in Geneva from 30 November to 3 December.

**Implementation and enforcement of EU trade agreements**
The Commission presented its report on the implementation and enforcement of EU trade agreements under the agenda item "Miscellaneous" and called for good cooperation with Member States to continue.

**Trade and sustainable development**
Ministers also discussed the ongoing review of the implementation and enforcement of the sustainable development chapters in EU trade agreements under the agenda item "Miscellaneous". The Netherlands, with the support of Belgium and Luxembourg, invited the Commission to share its first impressions of the outcome of the consultation with EU stakeholders (concluded on 31 October) for revision and to inform the Council of the next steps in this process.

Link to Council report [here](#).

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**European Court of Auditors**

**Annual report on the EU Joint Undertakings for the financial year 2020,**
The auditors have signed off the 2020 accounts and the underlying transactions of all the EU’s Joint Undertakings (JUs) – the EU’s public-private partnerships with industry and research groups. In the seventh of their ten-year life span, most JUs have already implemented approximately 2/3 of their activities within Horizon 2020, the EU’s framework programme funding research and technological development. The auditors also note that the JUs have exploited synergies to maintain business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate its possible impact on their service delivery.

Link to Audit report [here](#).

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**Slovenian Presidency of Council of the European Union**

**Programme for Inter-Parliamentary Events**

Activities organised by the Slovenian Parliament and the European Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>EP Committee</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date tbc (tentative: November)</td>
<td>High-Level Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe.</td>
<td></td>
<td>EP/Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Nov</td>
<td>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the CAP reform</td>
<td>AGRI</td>
<td>Remote meeting/EP Brussels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Nov</td>
<td>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on violence against women</td>
<td>FEMM</td>
<td>Remote meeting/EP Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>2nd Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on Evaluation of Eurojust's activities</td>
<td>LIBE</td>
<td>Remote meeting/EP Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Interparliamentary Committee meeting on Rule of Law</td>
<td>LIBE</td>
<td>Remote meeting/EP Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Interparliamentary Committee meeting on actualities of the EU Foreign Policy</td>
<td>AFET</td>
<td>Remote meeting/EP Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 – 30 November</td>
<td>LXVI Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (LXVI COSAC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ljubljana tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022 23 -24 January</td>
<td>Meeting of the Secretaries-General of the European Union Parliaments (EUSG)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ljubljana/National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022 28 -29 March</td>
<td>Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ljubljana</td>
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**Sources:** Websites of: European Parliament European Commission, European Council and Council of the European Union Council, European Court of Auditors and European Ombudsman.