

Oireachtas Digest on Europe

Week : 25 April to 1 May 2022 | Ref: 15-22

Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais
Houses of the Oireachtas Service

Spotlight

Last Week

European Parliament:

EP Special Committee on COVID-19. On Tuesday, the special committee elected Kathleen Van Brempt as its Chair, alongside four Vice-Chairs, and will commence its review of the EU's response to the pandemic.

EP inquiry committee for Pegasus and other spyware launched. On Tuesday, Parliament's new inquiry committee investigating the use of Pegasus and other spyware had its first meeting, electing a Chair and three Vice-Chairs.

Digital Services Act. On Friday, Parliament and Council reached a provisional political agreement on the Digital Services Act (DSA). Together with the Digital Markets Act, the DSA will set the standards for a safer and more open digital space for users and a level playing field for companies for years to come.

European Commission:

EU cohesion policy: The Commission adopted its Partnership Agreement with Germany and Lithuania, laying down Germany's investment strategy for 2021-2027

European Council and Council of the European Union:

No meetings were convened.

Coming Week:

European Parliament:

Committee and political groups' meetings, Brussels

Commission:

College meeting Wednesday. Commission's weekly calendar here

European Council and Council of the European Union:

No Meetings scheduled.

European Parliament– Coming Week Highlights

Committee and political groups' meetings, Brussels

President's diary. EP President Roberta Metsola will meet the Director General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), Ville Itälä, on Thursday. On Friday, the President will meet the Ambassador and Head of the United Kingdom Mission to the EU, Lindsay Croisdale-Appleby, and European Data Protection Supervisor Wojciech Wiewiórowski, as well as deliver the opening address at the opening of the temporary exhibition "When Walls Talk", at the House of European History.

War in Ukraine/women. The Women's Rights Committee will adopt a resolution and an oral question on the impact of Russian aggression on women. MEPs will look into the many unofficial reports that refugees are at increased risk of trafficking and sexual exploitation and that women are at risk of becoming victims of rape as a weapon of war (Monday).

Foreign subsidies to firms. The International Trade Committee will vote on new rules to allow the

European Parliament– Coming Week Highlights

Committee and political groups' meetings, Brussels

Commission to investigate if companies receive subsidies – for example capital injections or tax exemptions - from non-EU countries, and take countermeasures when necessary. The goal is to ensure fair competition by extending state aid rules beyond the EU (Monday).

EU Digital COVID Certificate. A proposal to extend the validity of the EU Digital COVID Certificate for another year, before it expires on 30 June, will be voted on by the Civil Liberties Committee (Thursday).

Parliament's right of initiative. The Constitutional Affairs Committee will vote on proposals that would consolidate Parliament's right to propose EU laws and start EU legislative procedures. The text addresses issues related to Parliament's existing right of initiative in several areas and seeks to establish a general direct right of initiative for the only EU institution that is directly elected (Thursday).

Conference of Presidents/Stoltenberg. The EP President and political groups' leaders (Conference of Presidents) will hold a debate with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (Thursday).

Plenary preparations. Political groups will prepare for the 2-5 May plenary session where MEPs will debate the situation in Ukraine and the EU's response to the war, hear from Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and hold the first question time with European Council President Charles Michel. MEPs will also debate and vote on the final recommendations of the Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence, changes to the EU electoral law and a proposal for a common charger for mobile phones and other small electronic devices.

Final Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Almost one year after the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe, its Plenary will meet to conclude its work. It is expected to reach a consensus on the final set of proposals prepared by the nine Working Groups, which will then be delivered to the Executive Board in anticipation of the Conference's final report (Friday and Saturday).

Link to full weekly agenda here

Highlights of Week 18 to 24 April 2022

European Parliament.
Highlights Week 18 to 24 April 2022.

EP Special Committee on COVID-19

On Tuesday, the special committee elected Kathleen Van Brempt as its Chair, alongside four Vice-Chairs, and will commence its review of the EU's response to the pandemic.

Specifically tasked with looking into how the European response to the pandemic and the lessons learned can contribute to future action in a variety of EU policy areas, the new committee held its constitutive meeting, and elected its members.

Link to EP report here

EP inquiry committee for Pegasus and other spyware launched

On Tuesday, Parliament's new inquiry committee investigating the use of Pegasus and other spyware had its first meeting, electing a Chair and three Vice-Chairs.

The new committee is tasked with investigating the use of Pegasus software and other equivalent spyware, and held its constitutive meeting on 19 April. In this first meeting, MEPs also heard from experts who outlined their research into Pegasus and other equivalent spyware.

Background

Following the alleged use of the Pegasus surveillance spyware against journalists, politicians, law enforcement officials, diplomats, lawyers, business people, civil society actors and other citizens, the European Parliament decided in March to establish a new committee of inquiry to investigate the use of Pegasus and other surveillance spyware, and whether this use has breached EU law and fundamental rights. The Committee is scheduled to submit a final report after 12 months.

Link to EP report here

Digital Services Act:

On Friday, Parliament and Council reached a provisional political agreement on the Digital Services Act (DSA). Together with the Digital Markets Act, the DSA will set the standards for a safer and more open digital space for users and a level playing field for companies for years to come.

Under the new rules, intermediary services, namely online platforms - such as social media and marketplaces - will have to take measures to protect their users from illegal content, goods and services.

Next steps

The text will need to be finalised at technical level and verified by lawyer-linguists, before both Parliament and Council give their formal approval. Once this process is completed, it will come into force 20 days after its publication in the EU Official Journal and the rules will start to apply 15 months later.

From 23 to 27 May, a delegation from the EP's Internal Market Committee will visit several company headquarters (Meta, Google, Apple and others) in Silicon Valley to discuss in person the Digital Services Act package, and other digital legislation in the pipeline, and hear the position of American companies, start-ups, academia and government officials. Link to EP report here

European Commission.
Highlights Week 18 to 24 April 2022.

EU cohesion policy:

The Commission adopted its Partnership Agreement with Germany and Lithuania, laying down Germany's investment strategy for 2021-2027.

State Aid

The European Commission has approved a €7 billion French scheme aimed at providing investment support towards a sustainable recovery. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework.

Link to Commission statement here

European Council and Council of the European Union
Highlights Week 18 to 24 April 2022.

No meetings were convened.

Inter-parliamentary Meetings with National Parliaments
French Presidency of the EU Council

Date	Meeting	EP Committee	Location
25 April	Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the EU's subsidiarity mechanism	JURI	EP, Brussels
New Date 17 May	Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the first expected results of the Conference on the Future of Europe (exact title tbc)	AFCO	EP, Brussels
May (tbc)	Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the debt crisis in developing countries	DEVE	EP, Brussels

15 - 16 May	**Conference on migration challenges**	**French Presidency**	**Senate, Paris**
27 June	**Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the current EU foreign and security policy challenges (exact title tbc)**	**AFET**	**EP, Brussels**
TBC	**Exchange of views on best practice regarding political budgetary scrutiny with selected national parliaments (including parliaments from the Visegrad Group - V4 countries)**	**CONT**	**EP, Brussels**

Sources: Websites of: European Parliament European Commission, European Council and Council of the European Union Council, European Court of Auditors and European Ombudsman.