



Oireachtas Digest on Europe

Week : 30 May to 5 June 2022 | Ref: 20-22



Seirbhís Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Service

Spotlight

Last Week

European Parliament:

No parliamentary meetings were scheduled in Brussels, as the week was set aside for committee delegations/visits linked to topics falling under their responsibility

European Commission:

European Semester Spring Package: On Monday, the Commission published the Spring 2022 Economic Forecast which projects the EU economy to continue growing in 2022 and 2023. However, while the EU economy continues to show resilience, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created a new environment, exacerbating pre-existing headwinds to growth, which were previously expected to subside.

State of Schengen Report 2022: On Tuesday, the Commission presented the State of Schengen Report 2022. This is the first time the Commission is presenting such report, following last year's Schengen Strategy.

REPowerEU: Commission establishes the EU Energy Platform Task Force to secure alternative supplies: On Wednesday, the Commission set up a new Task Force within its Directorate-General for Energy, to provide support to the EU Energy Platform and implement the REPowerEU goal of supply diversification.

European Defence Fund: The Commission announced the adoption of the second annual work programme of the European Defence Fund (EDF). The EDF 2022 work programme will allocate up to a total of €924 million in funding.

European Council and Council of the European Union:

23 May: [Eurogroup](#)

23 May: [Council of the European Economic Area](#)

23 May: [General Affairs Council](#)

24 May: [Agriculture and Fisheries Council](#)

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European Court of Auditors

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) published special report 11/2022 "[Protecting the EU budget: Better use of blacklisting needed](#)"

Coming Week:

European Parliament: MEPS hold Committee and political group meetings, Brussels

Commission:

On Monday, Mr Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture, in Ireland, meets Mr Charlie Mc Conalogue, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine; meets representatives of the National Council of the Irish Farmers' Association; addresses the opening session of the 11th World Potato Congress; visits local farms.

College meeting on Wednesday, Weekly Calendar [here](#)

On Thursday, Ms Kadri Simson, European Commissioner for Energy, in Dublin, Ireland: meets Mr Eamon Ryan, Minister for Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport ; meets members of the Oireachtas Committee; holds a roundtable meeting with energy stakeholders.

European Council and Council of the European Union:

30 May: [Special meeting of the European Council, 30-31 May 2022](#)

June 2: [Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council](#)

June 2: [General Affairs Council \(Cohesion\)](#) EU ministers responsible for cohesion policy are invited to endorse the draft Council conclusions on the Commission communication on the 8th Cohesion Report "Cohesion in Europe by 2050".

June 3: [Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council](#)

June 3: [Foreign Affairs Council \(Trade\)](#) Trade ministers will exchange views on the state of WTO reform; discuss the current state of trade relations between the EU and the United States; they will also have an exchange of views on recent developments and the main guidelines in trade relations with China.

European Parliament: – Coming Week Highlights Committee and political group meetings, Brussels

Ukraine/European Council. EP President Roberta Metsola will address EU leaders gathering for a special meeting of the European Council that will focus on the war in Ukraine, energy, defence and food security. Her address will be followed by a press conference at around 17:00 (Monday).

Recovery and Resilience Facility. MEPs in the Economic and Monetary Affairs and Budgets committees will evaluate the state of play on the use of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which allows the Commission to raise funds to help member states implement reforms and investments in line with the EU's priorities (Monday).

Green Deal/Taxonomy. The Economic and Monetary Affairs and Environment, Public Health and Food Safety committees will hold a public hearing with experts on the Commission's proposal to classify, under certain conditions, specific gas and nuclear energy as transitional activities contributing to climate change mitigation (the so-called taxonomy). The two committees are expected to vote on whether to veto the proposal on 14 June (Monday).

Ukraine/Solidarity Lanes. MEPs in the Agriculture Committee will debate plans to open Solidarity Lanes between the EU and Ukraine to help the country to export grain, but also to import the goods it needs, from humanitarian aid to animal feed and fertilisers, with the Commission (Monday).

Ukraine/temporary protection. The Civil Liberties Committee will take stock of EU support to Ukraine and solidarity between member states, and particularly of the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive, activated on 4 March to offer those fleeing the war decent reception conditions and swift integration in EU countries (Monday).

Frontex. The Civil Liberties Committee will discuss with Frontex how the EU's border agency is being managed following the resignation of former executive director Fabrice Leggeri and the process to appoint its new chief (Monday).

Plenary preparations. Political groups will prepare for the 6-10 June plenary session in Strasbourg, where MEPs will discuss and vote on eight key legislative files that are part of the Fit for 55 package – aimed at drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving climate neutrality by 2050-, assess the situation in Ukraine, review the latest report on Turkey and hold a question time session with the Commission. Plenary is expected to give a final green light to the new international procurement instrument. There will be the prize-giving ceremony for this year's cinema LUX audience award, and a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the Common Agriculture Policy.

Link to all committee meetings [here](#)



Highlights of Week 30 May to 5 June 2022

European Parliament.

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European Commission.

Highlights Week 30 May to 5 June 2022.

European Semester Spring Package:

On Monday, the Commission published the Spring 2022 Economic Forecast which projects the EU economy to continue growing in 2022 and 2023. However, while the EU economy continues to show resilience, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created a new environment, exacerbating pre-existing headwinds to growth, which were previously expected to subside. It also poses additional challenges to the EU economies related to security of energy supply and fossil fuel dependency on Russia.

Linking the European Semester, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and REPowerEU

The case for reducing our dependency on fossil fuels from Russia has never been clearer. REPowerEU is about rapidly reducing our dependence on Russian fossil fuels by fast-forwarding the clean transition and joining forces to achieve a more resilient energy system and a true Energy Union.

The European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) - at the heart of NextGenerationEU - provide for robust frameworks to ensure effective policy coordination and to address the current challenges. The RRF will continue to drive Member States' reform and investment agendas for years to come. It is the main tool to speed up the twin green and digital transition and strengthen Member States' resilience, including through the implementation of national and cross-border measures in line with REPowerEU.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

State of Schengen Report 2022

On Tuesday, the Commission presented the State of Schengen Report 2022. This is the first time the Commission is presenting such report, following last year's Schengen Strategy. This report is part of the Commission's initiative to reinforce the Schengen governance through a yearly reporting exercise presenting the state of Schengen, identifying priorities for the year ahead and monitoring progress made at the end of a given year. The State of Schengen report will serve as basis for discussions of Members of the European Parliament and Home Affairs Ministers in the Schengen Forum on 2 June, and in the upcoming Schengen Council on 10 June.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

REPowerEU: Commission establishes the EU Energy Platform Task Force to secure alternative supplies

On Wednesday, the Commission set up a new Task Force within its Directorate-General for Energy, to provide support to the EU Energy Platform and implement the REPowerEU goal of supply diversification. Following a mandate from the European Council in March 2022, the Commission and Member States have established the EU Energy Platform to coordinate measures to secure energy supplies for the EU, including through the voluntary common purchase of pipeline gas, LNG and hydrogen. The new Task Force will help deliver on the REPowerEU objective of reducing our dependence on Russian fossil fuels, by enabling Member States and neighbouring countries to have access to alternative energy supplies at affordable prices in the coming years.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

European Defence Fund: €1 billion to boost the EU's defence capabilities and new tools for defence innovation

The Commission announced the adoption of the second annual work programme of the European Defence Fund (EDF). The EDF 2022 work programme will allocate up to a total of €924 million in funding. One week after the Joint Communication on Defence investment gaps, the Commission unlocks new funding to invest together and better in strategic defence capabilities. Additionally, the 2022 work programme introduces a series of new tools to promote defence innovation, all under one new umbrella called the EU Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS). Already announced in the Commission's Defence Package of 15 February 2022, EUDIS will work in close partnership with EDA's Innovation Hub.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

European Council and Council of the European Union Highlights Week 30 May to 5 June 2022.

Eurogroup, 23 May

Ordinary meeting

Macroeconomic and fiscal developments in the euro area

Ministers discussed macroeconomic developments on the basis of the Commission's spring forecast. In view of the current economic challenges, the Eurogroup has discussed the appropriate policy response on the basis of the updated economic forecast, with a focus on fiscal policy.

Executive Director of the ESM

Following the call for applications for the post of Executive Director of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the Ministerial Round held an exchange of views on the candidatures received.

Draft budgetary plans

The Commission has presented its opinions to ministers on the updated draft budgetary plans for Germany and Portugal. The Eurogroup subsequently issued a statement.

Session in inclusive format

Banking Union

Ministers discussed the draft work plan for completing the Banking Union; in doing so, they have relied on the progress made at the Eurogroup meeting in an inclusive format on 3 May and on the work carried out since then by the High Level Working Group.

Link to Council report [here](#)

Council of the European Economic Area, 23 May

At its 54th meeting, the Council of the European Economic Area (EEA) held a policy debate on reducing strategic dependencies in the fields of raw materials and energy.

Ministers also assessed the general functioning of the EEA Agreement.

The meeting was chaired by Mikuláš Bek, Minister for European Affairs of the Czech Republic, on behalf of the Council of the European Union. Other participants were Anniken Huitfeldt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Dominique Hasler, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, and Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

Link to Council report [here](#)

General Affairs Council 9 May

Conference on the Future of Europe

The General Secretariat of the Council will shortly present a document analysing the modalities for implementing the proposals and on which the Council could rely when returning to this issue at the General Affairs Council on 21 June.

Rule of law in Hungary

The Council held a consultation on the rule of law in Hungary (article 7(1) TEU procedure).

These were the issues raised by the European Parliament in its reasoned proposal of September 2018, which launched this procedure. The talks focused in particular on the independence of the judiciary, the functioning of the constitutional and electoral systems, freedom of expression and the fight against corruption.

Extraordinary European Council (30-31 May)

The General Affairs Council prepared the extraordinary European Council on 30-31 May, where EU leaders will address the following issues: Ukraine, defence, energy and food security.

European Council (23-24 June)

Ministers held an exchange of views on the draft annotated agenda for the European Council on 23-24 June 2022.

In addition, the items included in the list of legislative and non-legislative A items were adopted without debate.

Conclusions on the development of the European Union's cyber defence

The Council adopted the conclusions on the development of the European Union's cyber defence. The conclusions are drawn from the Strategic Compass, the EU action plan to strengthen the EU's security and defence policy by 2030. It provides for the Union to develop cyber defence by improving its ability to prevent cyber-attacks.


Link to Council report [here](#)

Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 24 May

Agriculture

Solidarity with Ukraine and market situation, especially after the Russian invasion

The Commission briefed the Ministerial Round on the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Corridors aimed at facilitating the



overland export of agricultural products from Ukraine in order to reach the European and world markets. The aim is to overcome the Russian blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports and ensure that Ukraine remains fully integrated into global agricultural markets and continues to contribute to global food security. Alternative transport routes and supply chains between the EU and Ukraine are intended to enable Ukrainian exports and free up storage capacity for future harvests in the country. This will also help to reduce the pressures that markets face in terms of delivery volumes and prices. This will be achieved through cooperation between the Commission, Member States, Ukrainian authorities, EU and Ukrainian transport companies, infrastructure managers, rail vehicle owners, ships and vehicles, international financial institutions and all other relevant actors in the region.

Ministers welcomed the Commission's action and its action plan for EU-Ukraine solidarity corridors. They agreed that, thanks to its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU is self-sufficient and secure in most basic agricultural products. Ministers reaffirmed that, even in the current difficult circumstances, the CAP ensures food security for people in the EU and income support for EU farmers. The biggest problem remains the affordability of food, especially for low-income households, and the prices of inputs (energy, fertilizer, feed, etc.) in agriculture. The impact of these high prices on overall food security was also a cause for concern.

Commission's short-term outlook for EU agricultural markets – Spring 2022

Highly pathogenic avian influenza

Conclusions on this issue were adopted unanimously. Ministers stressed that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is a cross-border animal disease that can spread widely and have serious socio-economic consequences that affect agriculture and trade.

Link to Council report [here](#)

Economic and Financial Affairs Council, 24 May

Economic and financial consequences of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine

The Council held an exchange of views on the economic and financial aspects of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. In view of the deteriorating economic situation as a result of the war and rising inflation, ministers discussed the coordination of the economic policy response. They also exchanged views on the European response to Ukraine's financing needs, including possible additional EU macro-financial assistance. The European Commission has also informed them of the state of play in the implementation of the economic and financial sanctions.

Economic recovery in Europe

Following an explanation by the European Commission on the state of play in implementing the Reconstruction and Resilience Facility (ARF), ministers took stock of this issue.

A blueprint for Europe (background information)

The European Commission also presented its REPowerEU plan, published on 18th May, followed by a consultation on structural solutions to the energy crisis.

Capital Markets Union: European long-term investment funds (ELTIFs)

The Council adopted its position on the proposed amendment to the Regulation on European Long-Term Investment Funds (ELTIFs) to make these investment funds more attractive. This proposal is part of the Capital Markets Union package, a plan to create a single market for capital, the aim of which is to ensure that investment and savings flow to all Member States so that they benefit citizens, investors and businesses.

The legal framework for ELTIFs shall set out detailed contractual conditions on eligible assets and investments, diversification and portfolio composition, ceilings for leverage and distribution. ELTIFs are the only type of fund that target long-term investments and can be distributed across borders to both professional and retail investors.

Link to Council report [here](#)



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

Date	Meeting	EP Committee	Location
May (tbc)	Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on the debt crisis in developing countries	DEVE	EP, Brussels
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.