



European Parliament Coming Week Highlights Committee and political groups' meetings - Brussels

President's diary. EP President Metsola will be in Rome on Monday, where she will address the Vertice international summit "Italy – Africa. A bridge for common growth". On Tuesday she will be in Denmark for an official visit, where she will meet the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Søren Gade, and participate in a Town Hall discussion with young people. Back in Brussels on Wednesday, she will attend a ceremony in honour of former European Commission President Jacques Delors, before addressing the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the European Union, during a New Year's Reception. On Thursday at 10.00, she will address heads of state or government at the special European Council, followed by a press conference at around 11.00.

Priorities of the Belgium Presidency. Belgium's ministers will continue presenting their priorities in meetings with parliamentary committees, this time in the fields of Home Affairs, migration, health, and food safety). Belgium holds the rotating Presidency of the Council until the end of June 2024 (Monday).

Anti-Money Laundering Agency host city. In a public hearing organised by Parliament and Council, nine candidate cities bidding to host the future Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism Authority (AMLA) will present their proposals and answer questions. The seat will be determined for the first time by a joint vote of Parliament and Council later in spring. The cities applying are: Rome, Vienna, Vilnius, Riga, Frankfurt, Dublin, Madrid, Paris and Brussels. (Tuesday).

Child Sexual Abuse online. Current derogations from EU e-privacy rules, which allow companies to voluntarily detect child sexual abuse material and remove it, will expire in August 2024. As the passage of new permanent rules before August is uncertain without a Council mandate to negotiate on it, the Civil Liberties Committee will vote on a temporary extension of the derogations (Wednesday).

Plenary Preparation

Plenary preparations. Political groups will prepare for the 5 - 8 February plenary session, where MEPs will assess the results of the 1 February Special EU summit with Presidents Michel and von der Leyen, which will focus on the review of the EU's long-term budget and on aid for Ukraine. They will also debate Russia's war against Ukraine two years after the invasion and Europe's continuous support for the country, debate and vote on their position for talks with Council on a new law on plants obtained by new genomic techniques, and debate and take a final vote on instant payments in euro. MEPs will also vote on resolutions on the situation in Serbia following the elections, on the rule of law and media freedom in Greece and will debate the future of Europe with Romania's President Klaus Iohannis as part of the "This is Europe" debate series.

Link to all committee meetings [Here](#)

European Commission Coming Week Highlights

Tuesday	Ms Mairead McGuinness at the European Parliament and Council joint public hearing for hosting the seat of the Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA);.
Wednesday	College Meeting
Wednesday	Ms Mairead McGuinness meets with members of Chambers Ireland; delivers a speech at Ibec's Outlook 2024 event (Brussels).
Thursday	President Ursula von der Leyen participates in the Special European Council meeting.
Link to Commission's full weekly agenda here	

European Council and Council of the European Union Coming Week Highlights

29 January	General Affairs Council Agenda : Presidency priorities; Defence of democracy; Annual rule of law dialogue;
30-31 January	Informal meeting of defence ministers
1 February	Special European Council , Agenda: Mid-term revision of EU long-term budget 2021-2027
2 February	EU-ASEAN ministerial meeting
2-3 February	Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers - Gymnich,



Highlights Week 22 to 28 January 2024

European Parliament.

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MEPs warn that European values are being eroded across the EU

A draft report on the state of the rule of law in 2023 endorsed by the Committee on Civil Liberties on Tuesday paints a concerning picture of the state of European values.

Reacting to the latest Commission's annual rule of law report, MEPs are deeply concerned that democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights across the EU are eroding, in a draft report adopted with 42 votes in favour, ten against, two abstentions. They also criticise specific countries where major problems are identified.

Next steps

The draft report is set to be voted in plenary in the upcoming February I plenary session, on 5 - 8 February.

Link to EP report [here](#)

Trafficking in human beings: deal on new EU rules

Parliament and Council negotiators reached a provisional deal to revise rules on preventing and combating human trafficking on Tuesday.

The informal agreement reached by Parliament and Council on Tuesday night will expand the scope of the current directive to include forced marriage, illegal adoption, exploitation of [surrogacy](#) and better support for victims.

Next steps

Parliament and Council will have to formally approve the agreement. The new rules will come into force twenty days after their publication in the EU Official Journal, and member states have two years to implement the provisions. Link to EP report [here](#)

Anti-Money Laundering Agency: host city candidates to present their bids

On 30 January, the nine applicants to host the EU's future watchdog on fighting money-laundering and terrorist financing will present their candidacies in a public hearing.

Where: European Parliament in Brussels, Antall building, room 2Q2

When: Tuesday 30 January 2024, 08:30 - 20:00 CET

Background and next steps

Next, the seat of the agency will be determined by a joint vote of Parliament and Council.

Parliament and Council have reached provisional agreements on other parts of the package of measures against money-laundering and terrorist financing. Before the package can enter into law, the co-legislators need to formally adopt the laws, which they have committed to doing before the EU elections in June 2024.

Link to EP report [here](#)

New rules to promote standard-setting innovation in new technologies

The Legal Affairs Committee adopted on Wednesday, with 13 votes for, no votes against and 10 abstentions, its position on new rules to support the so-called standard-essential patents (SEPs). These patents protect cutting-edge technologies, such as Wi-Fi or 5G, which are essential to a technical standard, meaning that e.g. no Internet of Things (IoT) products can be developed without using them. They also play a key role in the development of connected vehicles, smart cities and technologies to mitigate climate change.

The aim is to encourage SEP holders and implementers to innovate in the EU and create products based on the latest standardised technologies that will benefit businesses and consumers.

Next steps

The agreed text needs to be adopted by Parliament as a whole before talks with Council on the final shape of the legislation can start.

Link to EP report [here](#)

New Genomic Techniques: MEPs want to ban all patents for NGT plants

The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on Wednesday adopted its position on the Commission proposal on New Genomic Techniques (NGT), with 47 votes to 31 and 4 abstentions.

MEPs agree with the proposal to have two different categories and two sets of rules for NGT plants. NGT plants considered equivalent to conventional ones (NGT 1 plants) would be exempted from the requirements of the GMO legislation, whereas for NGT 2 plants this legislation adapts the GMO framework to those NGT plants.

MEPs also agree that all NGT plants should remain prohibited in organic production as their compatibility requires further consideration.

Next steps

Parliament is scheduled to adopt its mandate during the 5-8 February 2024 plenary session, after which it is ready to start negotiations with EU member states.

Link to EP report [here](#)

Holocaust Remembrance Day: "Hitler did not win!"

On Thursday, Irene Shashar, a survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, addressed MEPs in a plenary session in Brussels to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Link to EP report [here](#)

Belgium Presidency debriefs EP committees on priorities

Ministers are holding a series of meetings in parliamentary committees to present the priorities of the Belgian Presidency of the Council.

Link to EP report [here](#)



European Commission.

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Commission proposes measures to improve the availability of in vitro diagnostics

The Commission is proposing more time for companies to apply the In Vitro Diagnostic Medical Devices Regulation (IVDR), under certain conditions. With this revision, the Commission aims to ensure patient care by improving the availability of these essential healthcare products. The Commission is also proposing measures to enhance transparency in the Medical Device sector including by speeding up the launch of some elements of the European Database on Medical Devices – EUDAMED.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Commission proposes new initiatives to strengthen economic security

The Commission adopted five initiatives to strengthen the EU's economic security at a time of growing geopolitical tensions and profound technological shifts. The package aims to enhance the EU's economic security while upholding the openness of trade, investment, and research for the EU's economy, in line with the June 2023 European Economic Security Strategy.

The proposals are part of a broader three-pillar approach to EU economic security by promoting the EU's competitiveness, protecting against risks and partnering with the broadest possible range of countries to advance shared economic security interests.

The initiatives adopted aim at:

- further strengthening the protection of EU security and public order by proposing improved screening of foreign investment into the EU;
- stimulating discussions and action for more European coordination in the area of export controls, in full respect of existing multilateral regimes and Member States' prerogatives;
- consulting Member States and stakeholders to identify potential risks stemming from outbound investments in a narrow set of technologies;
- promoting further discussions on how to better support research and development involving technologies with dual-use potential;
- proposing that the Council recommends measures aimed at enhancing research security at national and sector level.

Future EU actions will continue to be informed by the on-going risk assessments and by strategic coordination with Member States to reach a shared understanding of the risks that Europe faces and of the appropriate actions. Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Commission decides to register two new European Citizens' Initiatives

The Commission decided to register two European Citizens' Initiatives, entitled 'Ban on conversion practices in the European Union' and 'European Citizens' Initiative in Defence of Agriculture and Rural Economy in Europe'.

Next Steps

Following registration, the organisers have six months to open the signature collection. If a European Citizens' Initiative receives one million statements of support within one year from at least seven different Member States, the Commission will have to react. The Commission will have to decide whether to take action in response to the request or not, and will be required to explain its reasoning.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Commission proposes to improve European Works Councils to strengthen transnational social dialogue

The Commission proposes to revise the European Works Councils (EWCs) Directive to further improve social dialogue in the EU. EWCs are information and consultation bodies that ensure that employees are involved in decisions related to transnational issues. They concern companies with more than 1,000 employees operating in at least two EU or European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

Next steps

The Commission's proposal amending the European Works Council Directive will be discussed by the European Parliament and the Member States. Once adopted, Member States will have one year to incorporate the Directive into national law. The new rules will then start to apply two years later. During the two-year period, parties can adapt their EWC agreements to the revised requirements.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Commission launches the European Ports Alliance Public Private Partnership to fight organised crime and drug trafficking

The Commission and the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, together with Member States, ports authorities, European associations, EU Agencies (Europol, EMCDDA) and representatives from customs and law enforcement authorities are launching the European Ports Alliance Public Private Partnership. The partnership aims to bring all relevant stakeholders together, to form solutions to protect ports from drug trafficking and criminal infiltration.

This follows up on the EU Roadmap to fight Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime and is in line with President von der Leyen's commitment to take action in 2024 to fight drugs smuggling and criminal infiltration into European ports.

Next steps

Following the launch event, the Public Private Partnership will meet annually at ministerial level, to identify remaining challenges, set strategic priorities and exchange on progress made. Senior official meetings will take place to prepare and follow up on the priorities set by the annual ministerial meeting.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Practical arrangements for the participation of Commissioners in European and national elections


The Commission has issued, based on guidelines adopted in 2019, a reinforced guidance on ethical standards for Members of the Commission who take part in electoral campaigns for the European Parliament. In addition, dedicated guidelines have also been developed regarding participation in election campaigns at Member State level.

Both guidelines build on opinions of the Commission's Independent Ethical Committee and will ensure the coherent application of the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Commission.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

President von der Leyen launches Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has today launched the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture, a new forum mandated to shape a shared vision for the future of the EU's farming and food system.



The Strategic Dialogue, announced by the President in her 2023 State of the Union address, will address challenges and opportunities raised by the participants to the Dialogue, such as a fair standard of living for farmers and rural communities, supporting agriculture within the boundaries of our planet and its ecosystems, exploiting the huge opportunities offered by knowledge and technological innovation, and promoting a thriving future for the EU's food system in a competitive world.

Professor Peter Strohschneider has been appointed as chair, based on his longstanding experience, notably as chair of the Federal government of Germany's "Commission for the Future of Agriculture".

The Strategic Dialogue brings together key stakeholders from across the whole agri-food chain, including farmers, co-operatives, agri-food businesses, and rural communities; as well as non-governmental organisations and civil society representatives, financial institutions and academia. A series of thematic meetings will be organised after the launch meeting, taking place in the first half of 2024.

The Council and European Parliament will be involved in the process and the Chair, Professor Strohschneider, will regularly inform and exchange views with both institutions on the Dialogue.

By combining different perspectives, the Dialogue aims to foster the creation of new solutions and to bring about a common vision for the future of the EU agriculture and food sector by summer 2024. The chair, working in collaboration with the Dialogue participants, will define the precise format of the conclusions.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

ICJ: Joint Statement by the High Representative and the European Commission

We take note of today's order of the International Court of Justice on South Africa's request for the indication of provisional measures.

The EU reaffirms its continuing support to the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

Orders of the International Court of Justice are binding on the Parties and they must comply with them. The EU expects their full, immediate and effective implementation.

The right of each Party to submit arguments in respect of jurisdiction, admissibility or the merits remains unaffected by the today's decision on the South Africa's request for the indication of provisional measures.

European Council and Council of the European Union Highlights Week 22 to 28 January 2024

Foreign Affairs Council, 22 January


Russian war of aggression against Ukraine

The Foreign Affairs Council discussed the Russian aggression against Ukraine, after a VTC intervention by Ukraine's Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba, who briefed his EU counterparts on the latest developments on the ground.

Situation in the Middle East

The Foreign Affairs Council held a discussion on the situation in the Middle East and held separate exchanges on this topic with: the Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia - Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jordan - Ayman Safadi, and Egypt – Sameh Shoukry, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit, as well as the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Palestinian Authority Riyad al-Maliki.

During the first discussion with minister Katz, EU ministers agreed that the catastrophic situation in Gaza -



the rising death toll among civilians, wide-spread hunger, a serious lack of humanitarian deliveries and access, and Israeli hostages held for over 100 days – is the absolute and most imminent priority.

Link to Council report [here](#)

Informal meeting of trade ministers, 22-23 January

Link to Council report [here](#)

Agriculture and Fisheries Council, 23 January

Belgian presidency work programme

The Belgian presidency presented its work programme for the first half of the year in the field of agriculture and fisheries. During this period, the Belgian presidency will focus on ensuring food security and autonomy, as well as on further enhancing the sustainability of food production and consumption.

Strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture

The Council received information from the Commission, represented by Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, and the Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski, on the organisation of the 'Strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the European Union'.

Trade

Against the backdrop of a trade surplus of 58 billion EUR for the year 2023, ministers exchanged views on the various opportunities and challenges linked to agrifood trade, based on information from the Commission.

Forest monitoring framework

EU agriculture ministers also discussed a Commission proposal to establish an EU-wide forest monitoring framework. This framework would enable the collection of harmonised data on the condition and management of EU forests, and it would cover all forests and other wooded land across the EU. The collected data would help member states and forest managers to improve forest resilience.

The proposed regulation also aims to support member states in establishing and updating voluntary integrated long-term forest plans.

Link to Council report [here](#)

EU-Egypt Association Council

The tenth meeting of the Association Council between the European Union and Egypt took place in Brussels on 23 January 2024. The event marks the 20th anniversary since the Association Agreement entered into force in 2004 and confirmed the robust and multifaceted partnership between the two parties.

Link to Council report [here](#)

Informal meeting of justice and home affairs ministers, 24-26 January

Link to Council report [here](#)



European Court of Auditors

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Special report 01/2024

The ECA issued [Special report 01/2024](#): Reducing carbon dioxide emissions from passenger cars – Finally picking up pace, but challenges on the road ahead

European Committee of the Regions (CoR)

Link to European Committee of the Regions Home Page [here](#)

Link to European Committee of the Regions News Page [here](#)

Inter-parliamentary meetings and conferences during the Parliamentary Dimension of the Belgian Presidency

1st Semester - 1st January - 30 June 2024

Version 21 Nov 23

Date	Meeting	Host	Location
29 January	IPC on Artificial Intelligence	Walloon / Brussels Parliament/ French Community Parliament)	TBA
28 -29 January	Meeting of the Secretaries General from the National Parliaments of Member States and the European Parliament (EUSG)	Senate	Madrid

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12 -13 February	European Parliamentary Week 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference on the European Semester Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (Conference under Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the European Economic and Monetary Union). 	BUDG ECON EMPL	European Parliament Brussels
18 -19 February	14th Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol pursuant to Article 88 TFEU and the EUROPOL Regulation (EU) 2016/794	LIBE	Ghent
3 - 5 March	24th Interparliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security and the Common Security and Defence Policy (IPC CFSP/CSDP)		Bruges
7 March	International Committee Meeting on the occasion of International Woman's Day	FEMM	European Parliament Brussels
17 -18 March*	Belgian Presidency IPC, hosted by Flemish Parliament		Brussels
24 - 26 March	Belgian Presidency LXXI COSAC Plenary Meeting		European Parliament
21 - 23 April 2024	Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC)	Congress of Deputies	Spain TBC
*The Belgian regional parliaments will host IPCs as part of the parliamentary dimension of the Belgian Presidency.			

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