



## European Parliament Coming Week Highlights Committee meetings, Brussels

President's diary. On Monday, EP President Roberta Metsola will deliver an opening speech via video message at the European Summit of Regions and Cities and will travel to Malta, where she will meet the Speaker of the House of Representatives Anġlu Farrugia. On Tuesday, she will be on an official visit to Austria, where she will hold a town hall discussion with young people. On Wednesday, she will meet the Austrian Federal Minister for the EU and Constitution, Karoline Edtstadler, the President of the National Council of the Austrian Parliament, Wolfgang Sobotka, and the Federal Chancellor, Karl Nehammer, followed by a press point. On Thursday, President Metsola will meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, before participating in the European Council (followed by a press conference).

EU enlargement. The Foreign Affairs Committee will debate the way forward for EU enlargement with the Foreign Affairs ministers of some member states, ahead of the 21-22 March European Council. Ministers from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Denmark, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Austria are confirmed for the debate (Tuesday).

EU pharmaceutical rules. The Environment and Public Health Committee will adopt its position on the proposed reform of EU legislation on the authorisation, supervision and pharmacovigilance of medicinal products for human use, including streamlining the European Medicine Agency's structure and procedures. The update covers measures to tackle drugs shortages, ensure the security of supply and affordability of medicines, foster innovation, and strengthen environmental sustainability (Tuesday).

EU Defence Industrial Strategy. MEPs on the Subcommittee on Security and Defence will discuss with Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton the new European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), presented on 5 March (Tuesday).

EU farmers. The Agriculture Committee will quiz Agriculture Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski on the proposed measures to support farmers included in the so-called simplification package presented on 22 February. In a later debate, the Agriculture Committee will discuss the agricultural sector's contribution to EU climate objectives with Climate Action Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra (Tuesday).

EU sanctions against Russia. The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada Foreign Affairs Committee will discuss how to maximise the effectiveness of EU sanctions against Russia and ensure Russian assets are transferred to Ukraine (Wednesday).

**Link to all committee meetings [here](#)**

## European Commission Coming Week Highlights

<b>Tuesday</b>	Ms Mairead McGuinness in Paris: pays a visit to the European Securities and Markets Authority : meets with Ms Verena Ross, Chair, and Ms Natasha Cazenave, Executive Director, and dialogues with the staff; participates in the panel 'Leveraging EU capital base for a new growth cycle' at the 12th edition of the Euronext Annual Conference; pays a visit to the European Banking Authority : meets with Mr José Manuel Campa, Chairperson, and Mr François-Louis Michaud, Executive Director, and dialogues with the staff.
<b>Wednesday</b>	College meeting
<b>Thursday</b>	Ms Mairead McGuinness meets, via videoconference, with Mr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan, Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; delivers a keynote speech at the online event marking the launch the second phase of the Digital Finance Platform; with Mr Valdis Dombrovskis host a roundtable with stakeholders for an exchange of views on the future of The Capital Markets Union.
Link to Commission's weekly calendar <a href="#">here</a>	

## European Council and Council of the European Union Coming Week Highlights

<b>18 March</b>	<a href="#">Foreign Affairs Council</a> Agenda : Russian Aggression against Ukraine; Belarus; Situation in the Middle East; Current affairs.
<b>19 March</b>	<a href="#">General Affairs Council</a> Agenda: March European Council; European Semester; Future of Europe
<b>20 March</b>	<a href="#">Tripartite Social Summit</a>
<b>20 March</b>	<a href="#">EU-Ukraine Association Council</a>
<b>21-22 March</b>	<a href="#">European Council</a> Agenda: EU leaders will discuss continued support for Ukraine in the face of Russia's war of aggression, security and defence, the unfolding situation in the Middle East, enlargement, external relations, migration, agriculture and the European Semester
<b>22 March</b>	<a href="#">Euro Summit</a>
<b>24-25 March</b>	<a href="#">Informal meeting of fisheries ministers</a>



## Highlights Week 11 to 17 March 2024

### European Parliament.

#### Highlights Week 11 to 17 March 2024

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##### **Parliament adopts its calendar for 2025**

On Tuesday, MEPs adopted a proposal by the Conference of Presidents (EP President Metsola and political group leaders) for Parliament's 2025 calendar.

Next year, Parliament is scheduled to hold 15 plenary sessions, of which 12 are four-day sessions in Strasbourg, two are two-day sessions in Brussels, and a single one-day session commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day in Brussels.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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##### **EU sanctions: new rules to crack down on violations**

With 543 votes in favour, 45 against, and 27 abstentions, the European Parliament adopted a directive, agreed with member states, on criminalising the violation and circumvention of EU sanctions. It will introduce a common definition of, and minimum penalties for, violations.

###### **Next steps**

The law still needs to be formally approved by the Council, too, before it can become law. It will enter into force twenty days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU, after which member states will have one year to transpose it into national legislation.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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##### **Defective products: revamped rules to better protect consumers from damages**

On Tuesday, MEPs adopted new EU consumer-protection rules to better respond to increased online shopping, emerging technologies and the transition to a circular economy.

EU consumers will soon have easier access to compensation for damage caused by defective products. MEPs adopted revamped rules previously agreed on with EU governments on 14 December 2023, with 543 votes in favour, 6 against and 58 abstentions.

###### **Next steps**


The directive will now have to be formally approved by the Council, too. It will enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the EU Official Journal. The new rules will apply to products placed on the market 24 months after entry into force of this directive.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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##### **Parliament wants to improve consumer protection against misleading claims**

Parliament has adopted its position on establishing a verification and pre-approval system for environmental marketing claims to protect citizens from misleading ads.



The green claims directive would oblige companies to submit evidence about their environmental marketing claims before advertising products as “biodegradable”, “less polluting”, “water saving” or having “bio based content”. EU countries would have to assign verifiers to pre-approve the use of such claims, to protect buyers from unfounded and ambiguous advertising.

#### **Next steps**

Parliament adopted its first reading position with 467 votes to 65 and 74 abstentions. The file will now have to be followed up by the new Parliament after the European elections that will take place in from 6 - 9 June 2024.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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### **Cyber Resilience Act: MEPs adopt plans to boost security of digital products**

On Tuesday, Parliament approved new cyber resilience standards to protect all digital products in the EU from cyber threats.

The regulation, already agreed with Council in December 2023, aims to ensure that products with digital features are secure to use, resilient against cyber threats and provide enough information about their security properties.

Important and critical products will be put into different lists based on their criticality and the level of cybersecurity risk they pose. The two lists will be proposed and updated by the European Commission. Products deemed to pose a higher cybersecurity risk will be examined more stringently by a notified body, while others may go through a lighter conformity assessment process, often managed internally by the manufacturers.

#### **Next steps**

The legislation was approved with 517 votes in favour, 12 against and 78 abstentions. It will now have to be formally adopted by Council, too, in order to come into law.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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### **Road safety: deal on more robust investigations of traffic offences**

On Tuesday, Parliament and Council negotiators reached an informal deal strengthening EU member state cooperation in the cross-border investigation of traffic offences.

To prevent reckless driving while abroad, the updated rules will expand the list of traffic offences committed by non-resident drivers that trigger cross-border assistance possibly resulting in a fine for dangerous drivers. In addition to speeding, drink-driving or failing to stop at a red traffic light, EU legislators added dangerous parking and overtaking, crossing a solid line and hit and run offences, amongst other offences.

#### **Next steps**

The preliminary deal still needs to be approved by Council and Parliament. EU countries will have 30 months to transpose new provisions into national law and prepare for its implementation.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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The European Parliament has backed more effective EU rules for combined work and residence permits for third-country nationals.

The update of the Single permit directive, adopted in 2011, which established a single administrative procedure for delivering a permit to third-country nationals wishing to live and work in an EU country, and a common set of rights for third-country workers, was adopted with 465 votes in favour, 122 against and 27x



abstentions.

### **Faster decisions on applications**

In negotiations, MEPs succeeded in setting a 90-day limit for a decision to be taken on applications for a single permit, compared to the current four months. Procedures on especially complex files might get a 30-day extension and the time to deliver a visa, if necessary, is not included. New rules will introduce the possibility for a holder of a valid residence permit to apply for a Single Permit also from within the territory, so a person who is legally residing in the EU could request to change their legal status without having to return to their home country.

### **Next steps**

The new rules have to now formally be approved by the Council. Member states will have two years after the entry into force of the directive to introduce the changes to their national laws. This legislation does not apply in Denmark and Ireland.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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## **Parliament adopts its position on major reform of EU Customs Code**

Parliament's first reading position on proposed legislation was adopted with 486 votes in favour to 19 against and 97 abstentions.

The EU Customs Code needs a thorough revamp due to the exponential growth of e-commerce and many new product standards, bans, obligations and sanctions the EU has put in place in recent years. The reform introduces new tools and puts in place simpler processes to help customs authorities to work more efficiently and focus on checking the riskiest goods, shipments and traders.

### **Next Steps**

The file will be followed up by the new Parliament after the 6-9 June European elections.

Link to EP Report [here](#)

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## **Media Freedom Act: a new bill to protect EU journalists and press freedom**

MEPs on Wednesday gave their final green light to new legislation to protect EU journalists and media from political or economic interference.

Under the new law, adopted by 464 votes in favour to 92 against and 65 abstentions, member states will be obliged to protect media independence and all forms of interventions in editorial decisions will be banned.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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## **MEPs call for tougher EU rules to reduce textiles and food waste**

On Wednesday, Parliament adopted its proposals to better prevent and reduce waste from food and textiles across the EU.


MEPs adopted their first reading position on the proposed revision of the Waste Framework with 514 votes in favour, 20 against and 91 abstentions.

### **Tougher objectives to cut down food waste**

They propose higher binding waste reduction targets to be met at national level by 31 December 2030 - at least 20% in food processing and manufacturing (instead of 10% proposed by the Commission) and 40% per capita in retail, restaurants, food services and households (instead of 30%). Parliament also wants the Commission to evaluate if higher targets for 2035 (at least 30% and 50% respectively) should be introduced, and if so, asks them to come up with a legislative proposal.

### **Next steps**





The file will be followed up by the new Parliament after the 6-9 June European elections.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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## **Euro 7: Parliament adopts measures to reduce road transport emissions**

On Wednesday, MEPs gave their green light to new EU rules to reduce emissions from passenger cars, vans, buses, trucks and trailers.

With 297 votes in favour, 190 against and 37 abstentions, Parliament adopted the deal reached with the Council on the Euro 7 regulation (type-approval and market surveillance of motor vehicles). Vehicles will need to comply with the new standards for longer, ensuring they remain cleaner throughout their lifetime.

### **Next steps**

Council needs to formally approve the agreement as well before it can enter into force.

Link to EP report [here](#)

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## **MEPs agree to extend trade support for Moldova, continue work on Ukraine**

On Wednesday, MEPs endorsed the renewal of trade liberalisation measures for Moldova and amended the proposal on Ukraine to reinforce safeguards for EU farmers.

Parliament voted with 347 votes in favour, 117 against and 99 abstentions to amend the Commission's proposal to suspend import duties and quotas on Ukrainian agricultural exports to the EU for another year, from 6 June 2024 to 5 June 2025. MEPs referred the report back to the Committee on International Trade to start negotiations with the Council

The legislation gives the Commission the power to take swift action and impose any necessary measures should there be significant disruptions to the EU market, or to the markets of one or more EU countries due to Ukrainian imports, including an emergency brake for particularly sensitive agricultural products MEPs voted to amend the Commission's proposal to include more sensitive products and a wider reference date for calculating average volumes.

The liberalising measures are conditional on Ukraine's respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law, and its sustained efforts to fight corruption and organised crime.

### **Next Steps**

On Moldova, the measures will now have to be formally approved by EU governments. The new regulation should enter into force immediately when the current regulation expires. The current suspension expires on 5 June 2024 for Ukraine and on 24 July 2024 for Moldova. On Ukraine, the MEPs will start negotiations with the Council.

Link to EP Report [here](#)

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## **Deal on making firearms import and export more transparent to fight trafficking**

On Thursday, negotiators from Parliament and Council reached a provisional agreement on updating rules to trace import and export of civilian firearms more effectively.

The revised regulation aims to make import and export of firearms in the EU more transparent and more traceable, reducing the risk of trafficking. Under the updated and more harmonised rules, all imports and a vast majority of export of firearms for civilian use will be subject to closer supervision without compromising trade.

### **Next steps**

Parliament and Council will now both have to give their final green light to the provisional agreement. The regulation will enter into force after being published in the EU's Official Journal.

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## **Human rights breaches in Afghanistan and Venezuela**

On Thursday, the European Parliament adopted two resolutions on the respect for human rights in Afghanistan and Venezuela. Link to EP Report [here](#)

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## **EU Health Data Space to support patients and research**

EP and Council negotiators agreed on the creation of a European Health Data Space to ease access to personal health data and to boost secure sharing for the public interest.

The provisional political agreement on a European Health Data Space (EHDS), reached early on Friday by Parliament and the Belgian Presidency of the Council, outlines that patients will be able to access their personal health data electronically across the EU's different healthcare systems. The bill also gives health professionals access to their patients' data, based strictly on what is necessary for a given treatment, and patients will also be able to download their health record free of charge.

Electronic health records (EHR) would include patient summaries, electronic prescriptions, medical imagery and laboratory results (so-called primary use).

Each country would establish national health data access services based on the MyHealth@EU platform. The law would also create a European electronic health record exchange format, and outline rules on data quality, security and the interoperability of EHR systems that will be monitored by national market surveillance authorities.

### **Next steps**

The provisional agreement still needs to be formally adopted by both institutions before it can enter into law.

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## **European Commission.**

### **Highlights Week 11 to 17 March 2024 .**

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## **Commission takes stock of key achievements on migration and asylum**

Ahead of the March European Council, the Commission adopted today a Communication taking stock of the achievements in the area of migration and asylum over the last four years. From the beginning of the mandate, the von der Leyen Commission committed to a fresh start on migration and to work towards a sustainable EU framework to manage migration in an effective and humane way. The Commission has made progress on a two-track approach: putting in place sustainable reforms with the Pact on Migration and Asylum, while also working on targeted operational actions to support Member States.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **Commission proposes to open EU accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and updates on progress made by Ukraine and Moldova**

On Tuesday, the European Commission recommended to open EU accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and discussed the upcoming oral report to the Council on the progress made by Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to address the outstanding steps made in the Commission's Enlargement report of the 8th November. The Commission has also finalised proposals for the draft Negotiating Frameworks with Ukraine and Moldova, which will be submitted to the Council.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **The Commission decides to refer IRELAND to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failure to protect its peat bogs**

the European Commission decided to refer Ireland (INFR(2010)2161) to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failure to apply the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) to protect sites designated for raised bog and blanket bog habitats from turf cutting. The Habitats Directive requires Member States to designate their most precious natural habitats and to protect them from harmful activities. These sites in Ireland continue to be degraded through drainage and turf cutting activities, and insufficient action is being taken to restore the sites. These areas are biodiversity hotspots playing host to important insect and bird species. They are categorised as “priority” habitats under the Directive due to their unique qualities. Peat bogs are also vital carbon sinks when healthy, while a UN report estimated that Ireland's degraded peatlands emit 21.5 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year. Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **March infringements package: key decisions**

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 and grouped by policy area. The Commission is also closing 50 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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## **Commission opens formal proceedings against AliExpress under the Digital Services Act**

The Commission has opened formal proceedings to assess whether AliExpress may have breached the Digital Services Act (DSA) in areas linked to the management and mitigation of risks, to content moderation and the internal complaint handling mechanism, to the transparency of advertising and recommender systems, to the traceability of traders and to data access for researchers.

### **Next Steps**

After the formal opening of proceedings, the Commission will continue to gather evidence, for example by sending additional requests for information, conducting interviews or inspections.

The opening of formal proceedings empowers the Commission to take further enforcement steps, such as interim measures ordering to terminate or remedy an infringement of Article 28(1), and non-compliance decisions. The Commission is also empowered to accept commitments made by AliExpress to remedy the matters subject to the proceeding.

The DSA does not set any legal deadline for bringing formal proceedings to an end. The duration of an in-depth investigation depends on several factors, including the complexity of the case, the extent to which the company concerned cooperates with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.

The opening of formal proceedings relieves Digital Services Coordinators of their powers to supervise and enforce the DSA in relation to the suspected infringements of Articles 16, 20, 26, 27, 30.

The opening of formal proceedings does not prejudice its outcome or prejudice any other proceedings that the Commission may decide to initiate under other articles of the DSA. It is also without prejudice of enforcement actions undertaken by other authorities under other regulatory frameworks, for example, by the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **The Commission allocates €500 million to ramp up ammunition production, out of a**





## **total of €2 billion to strengthen EU's defence industry**

the Commission allocated the €500 million foreseen under the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP). This will allow the European defence industry to ramp up its ammunition production capacity to 2 million shells per year by the end of 2025.

The Commission also launched the Work Programme for the instrument for the reinforcement of the European defence industry through common procurement (EDIRPA) and the fourth annual Work Programme of the European Defence Fund (EDF).

Together, these programmes have a budget of almost €2 billion. Today's steps towards the reinforcement of the European defence technological and industrial base are taken in the wake of the adoption of the first ever European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and the associated proposal for a European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP).

[Questions and answers on ASAP and EDIRPA](#) Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **Commission proposes targeted review of Common Agricultural Policy to support EU farmers**

Delivering on its commitment to ease administrative burden for EU farmers, the European Commission has proposed to review certain provisions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), aiming to deliver simplifications while maintaining a strong, sustainable and competitive policy for EU agriculture and food.

These proposals, related to conditionality and CAP Strategic Plans, aim to reduce the burden related to controls for EU farmers, and provide them with greater flexibility for complying with certain environmental conditionalities. National administrations will also benefit from greater flexibility to apply certain standards.

[Memo on the Commission's package of support to EU farmers](#) Link to Commission statement [here](#)

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## **European Council and Council of the European Union Highlights Week 11 to 17 March 2024**

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### **Eurogroup, 11 March**

#### **In regular format:**

#### **Macroeconomic developments and fiscal policy in the euro area in 2025**

The Eurogroup adopted a statement on the fiscal policy orientation for 2025. Ministers took stock of the macroeconomic and fiscal developments and prospects in the euro area and exchanged views on the fiscal policy orientation for 2025.

#### **In inclusive format:**

#### **The future of the Capital Markets Union**

The Eurogroup adopted a statement on the future of the Capital Markets Union. The statement builds on almost a year of policy discussions on the future of European capital markets undertaken with ministers from all EU member states. The objective is for the statement to be presented to leaders at the Euro Summit in March 2024.

#### **Preparation of the March Euro Summit**

President Donohoe presented the main elements of the letter he will address to the President of the Euro Summit in his personal capacity, reporting on the work carried out in the Eurogroup since October 2023 and outlining the plans for the months ahead. Link to Council report [here](#)

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## **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Employment and social policy), 11 March**

Platform work

Employment and social affairs ministers endorsed the agreement reached with the European Parliament on the platform work directive. This new law aims to improve working conditions for platform workers and regulate the use of algorithms by digital labour platforms.

### **European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Semester**

Ministers held a policy debate on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the framework of the European Semester and the future social agenda.

During the discussion, they stressed the vital role of the Pillar as a compass for the EU's social policy and drew attention to ongoing challenges such as adapting to the green and digital transitions, demographic trends, risks to work-life balance, availability of affordable housing, and the cost of living.

### **A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**

Ministers endorsed a set of key messages from EMCO on the implementation of the Council recommendation 'A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee'. The aim of the recommendation, which was adopted in 2020, was to better support youth employment across the EU.

### **Social investment and reforms for resilient economies**

On Tuesday 12 March, at the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, employment and social affairs ministers took part in a policy debate with ministers of economic and financial affairs on the topic of social investments and reforms for resilient economies.

Ministers discussed what they considered to be the positive effects of social reforms and investments on economic growth and fiscal sustainability, and shared examples of recent employment and social reforms in their countries that had contributed to higher growth potential. They also reflected on how cooperation between the ECOFIN and EPSCO work streams could be further enhanced to better assess the impact of social investments and reforms on economic growth, fiscal sustainability and social cohesion in the European Semester context. Link to Council report [here](#)

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## **Economic and Financial Affairs Council, 12 March**

### **Social investments and reforms**

Ministers of economic and financial affairs were joined by employment and social affairs ministers in a debate on social investments and reforms for resilient economies.

Ministers discussed what they considered to be the positive effects of social reforms and investments on economic growth and fiscal sustainability, and shared examples of recent employment and social reforms in their countries that had contributed to higher growth potential.

### **Recovery and Resilience Facility**

Ministers exchanged views on the state of play of the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The Commission presented its mid-term evaluation of the RRF, taking stock of the progress achieved in implementing the facility so far.

The Council envisages to have a more extensive discussion and approve conclusions to provide steer and political impetus for the remaining implementation period of the RRF, in April.

### **Russia's aggression against Ukraine**

The Council took note of the state of play of the economic and financial impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The Commission updated ministers on the economic and budgetary situation in Ukraine.

### **G20 follow-up**

The Presidency and the Commission informed ministers on the main results of the G20 meeting of Finance

Ministers and Central Bank Governors of 28-29 February 2024 in São Paulo, Brazil.

**EU budget**

The Council approved its guidelines for the 2025 EU budget. The approved guidelines provide political guidance to the Commission in preparing the budget for next year. Link to Council report [here](#)

**European Court of Auditors  
Highlights Week 11 to 17 March 2024**

**Special report 04/2024:**

The ECA issued [Special report 04/2024](#): Reaching EU road safety objectives – Time to move up a gear

**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
<b>17 -18 March*</b>	Belgian Presidency IPC, IPC on Circular Economy -		Brussels Flemish Parliament
<b>24 - 26 March</b>	Belgian Presidency LXXI COSAC Plenary Meeting		European Parliament
<b>21 - 23 April 2024</b>	Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC)	Congress of Deputies	Spain TBC

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