



Spotlight

Last Week

European Parliament: There were no parliamentary meetings in Brussels as the week was set aside for committee delegations/missions in relation to topics falling under their responsibility

European Commission:

State Aid. The Commission has ranked Vueling first among the air carriers that have applied for the portfolio of up to 18 daily slots at Paris-Orly airport. These will be made available by Air France to remedy possible undue competition distortions following its recapitalisation by the French State, as approved by the Commission in April 2021.

Columbia. On Tuesday, the EU and Colombia agreed on a "Memorandum of Understanding on an Agenda of enhanced political and sectoral dialogue and cooperation for the next decade", signed by High Representative Josep Borrell and the Vice-President and Foreign Minister of Colombia, Marta Lucía Ramírez in New York, in the presence of President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the Republic of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez.

New Erasmus+ app with an integrated European Student Card. The Commission launched the new Erasmus+ application, marking a new milestone in the digitalisation of the Erasmus+ programme. The new application, available in all EU languages, will provide a digital European Student Card to each student, valid all across the European Union.

SURE. The Commission has published its second report on the impact of SURE, the €100 billion instrument designed to protect jobs and incomes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). On Wednesday, the Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the new EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) for the period 2024-2034. The Commission is proposing to improve some of the key features of the scheme to better respond to the evolving needs and challenges of GSP countries as well as reinforce the scheme's social, labour environmental and climate dimension.

September Infringements. The Commission issued its 'September Infringements'; which is part of its regular package of infringement decisions where the European Commission pursues legal action against Member States for failing to comply with their obligations under EU law. Ireland is mentioned under four headings.

European Council and Council of the European Union:

On Tuesday, the main topics discussed at the General Affairs Council were the state of play in EU-UK relations; EU Covid 19 coordination; European Council meeting on 21-22 October; and the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Coming Week:

European Parliament: This is Committee and Group meetings week in Brussels.

There are two interparliamentary conferences; On Monday, the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting "Turning the tide on cancer: the view of national parliaments on Europe's Beating Cancer Plan" and on Tuesday the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (SECG)

Commission: Mr Maroš Šefčovič holds a videoconference call with Mr Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Defence. College meeting is on Wednesday.

European Council and Council of the European Union:

Competitiveness Council meets on Tuesday and Wednesday.

European Parliament

Plenary and Committee – Coming Week Highlights

WEEK 39

Committee and group meetings, Brussels

ECB/Lagarde. Members of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee will quiz European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde on the state of the Euro Area. Inflation, risks to price stability, disorderly market reactions after the pandemic and the review of the ECB's monetary policy strategy are among the topics likely to be raised (Monday).

Budget control/FRONTEX. Following a decision by Parliament in April to postpone clearing of the accounts (so-called discharge) of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the Budgetary Control Committee will vote on whether or not the discharge should be granted. MEPs needed clarification on a series of issues, e.g. delays in recruiting fundamental rights officers, gender imbalance, reported cases of harassment and meetings with lobbyists not on the EU transparency register (Monday).

Revision of the trans-European networks for energy (TEN-E). The Industry and Energy Committee will vote on its position on the new EU guidelines for selecting the projects to be financed. The selected Projects of Common Interest should improve connection between national markets, secure supply and promote renewables. Financing of fossil fuels and hydrogen and carbon capture should also be addressed (Tuesday).

2022 EU budget. The Budgets Committee will set its negotiating position on the EU budget for 2022. MEPs want the budget to support the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and lay the foundations for a more resilient Union (Tuesday).

European Public Prosecutor/ Kovesi. Members of the Budgetary Control Committee will discuss with EU chief Prosecutor Laura Kövesi how the EU Public Prosecutor's Office has fared in its first few months fighting against financial crimes. The Office's workload, its lack of staff as well as the appointment procedures of the delegated prosecutors are likely to be raised by MEPs (Friday).

Rule of law/Hungary. A Civil Liberties Committee delegation will travel to Budapest to assess the situation regarding the rule of law, media freedom, the education system and minority rights. MEPs will meet, among others, the Mayor of Budapest, Members of the Supreme and Constitutional Courts, the Fundamental Rights Commissioner, NGOs and journalists (Wednesday to Friday).

European Citizens' Panels/Conference on the Future of Europe. The European Citizens' Panels will continue their discussions with the third 200-citizen meeting in Strasbourg. It will focus on climate change, the environment and health. The Panels will put forward recommendations that will feed into the Conference deliberations and ultimately into the report on its final outcome (Friday to Sunday).

2021 Sakharov Prize. The nominees for this year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought will be presented to MEPs in a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Development committees and the Human Rights Subcommittee (Monday).

Plenary preparations. Political groups will prepare for the 4-7 October plenary session, where MEPs will discuss the future of EU-US relations and vote on resolutions on the humanitarian crisis along the EU-Belarus border and the Belarusian regime's hybrid warfare against the EU, on the state of the EU's cyber defence capabilities and on an EU-Taiwan partnership. They will also debate and vote on the use of artificial intelligence by the police, on how to meet the EU's ambition for zero road deaths by 2050, on opportunities and security challenges in the Arctic, on the reform of the EU Asylum agency and on the EU trust fund and the facility to support refugees in Turkey.

Link to all committee meetings [here](#)



European Commission

Coming Week Highlights

On Monday, Mr Maroš Šefčovič holds a videoconference call with Mr Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Defence. Also on Monday, Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius in Ireland: visits 'Wild Atlantic Nature', a LIFE programme project, at the Slieve League Special Area of Conservation; meets Mr Charlie McConalogue, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and with representatives of fishers' organisations, at Killybegs Harbour.

College meeting is on Wednesday

Link to full Commission calendar [here](#)

European Council – Council of the European Union

Coming Meetings

Competitiveness Council (Research), 28 September

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Research ministers will be invited to approve conclusions on a global approach to research and innovation, and exchange views on governance and implementation of the European Research Area.

The Slovenian presidency will inform on the current situation of Institutionalised European Partnerships and on the virtual GenderAction conference.

The European Commission will give an update on the current situation of association of third countries to Horizon Europe.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

Competitiveness Council (Internal market and industry), 29 September

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Ministers responsible for internal market and industry will have a policy debate on the implementation of the updated new industrial strategy for Europe, with a focus on the 'Fit for 55' package from an industrial perspective.

Ministers will also debate future-proof policy making for the competitiveness of the EU and further fostering of the single market.

The European Commission will inform on the annual report of the Single Market Enforcement Task Force (SMET), and the Greek delegation will present the joint ministerial declaration on innovation procurement in the EU.

The Slovenian presidency will give an update on the unitary patent and the Unified Patent Court.

Link to full agenda [here](#)

Slovenian Presidency of Council of the European Union

Programme for Inter-Parliamentary Events

Activities organised by the the Slovenian Parliament and the European Parliament

Date	Meeting	EP Committee	Location
27 September	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting "Turning the tide on cancer: the view of national parliaments on Europe's Beating Cancer Plan"	BECA	Brussels / Remote
28 September	Inter-parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (SECG)	BUDG EMPL ECON ENVI	Remote / Ljubljana
25 –26 October	Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol	LIBE	EP Brussels / Remote
Date tbc (tentative: November)	High-Level Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe.		EP/Brussels
October (possibly week 41 or 43)	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on Artificial Intelligence policies and strategies at EU and national level	AIDA	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
9 Nov	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the expectations of national Parliaments for the Conference on the Future of Europe	AFCO	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
18 Nov	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the CAP reform	AGRI	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
30 Nov	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on violence against women	FEMM	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
TBC	2nd Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on Evaluation of Eurojust's activities	LIBE	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
TBC	Interparliamentary Committee meeting on Rule of Law	LIBE	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels



TBC	Interparliamentary Committee meeting on actualities of the EU Foreign Policy	AFET	Remote meeting/ EP Brussels
28 – 30 November	LXVI Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (LXVI COSAC)		Ljubljana tbc
Date tbc (tentative: November)	Inter-parliamentary Committee meeting on the Evaluation of Eurojust's activities		EP/Brussels
2022 30 – 31 January tbc	Meeting of the Secretaries-General of the European Union Parliaments (EUSG)		Ljubljana/National Assembly
2022 4 - 5 April tbc	Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC)		Ljubljana
Format: physical meetings or VC (video conference) – a decision will be taken approximately three months in advance			



Highlights of Week 38. 20 to 26 Sept 2021

European Parliament. Highlights Week 38.

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European Commission. Highlights Week 38.

State Aid.

France. The Commission has ranked Vueling first among the air carriers that have applied for the portfolio of up to 18 daily slots at Paris-Orly airport. These will be made available by Air France to remedy possible undue competition distortions following its recapitalisation by the French State, as approved by the Commission in April 2021. As a result of today's decision, Vueling will obtain the 18 daily slots at Paris-Orly airport and start operating new routes as of November 2021.

On 5 April 2021, the Commission approved French plans to grant up to €4 billion for the recapitalisation of Air France through its holding company. The measure was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework, provided in particular that France implemented additional measures to preserve effective competition. A Monitoring Trustee was appointed by Air France and its holding to monitor and ensure compliance with the different commitments under the Commission's decision.

Vueling is one of Europe's leading low-cost airlines, with special relevance in the Spanish domestic market, as well as in France and Italy. Vueling belongs to International Airlines Group (IAG), which also includes Aer Lingus, British Airways, Iberia and Level. Vueling has a fleet of over 100 planes.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

New Erasmus+ app with an integrated European Student Card

The Commission launched the new Erasmus+ application, marking a new milestone in the digitalisation of the Erasmus+ programme. The new application, available in all EU languages, will provide a digital European Student Card to each student, valid all across the European Union.

By using the new app, which works on Android and iOS systems, students will be able to:

Browse and select their destination among their university's partners;

Sign their online learning agreement;

Discover events and useful tips about their destination, and get in touch with other students; and,

Obtain their European Student Card to get access to services, museums, cultural activities and special deals in their host university and country.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

Columbia: agreement on memorandum of understanding

On Tuesday, the EU and Colombia agreed on a "Memorandum of Understanding on an Agenda of enhanced political and sectoral dialogue and cooperation for the next decade", signed by High Representative Josep Borrell and the Vice-President and Foreign Minister of Colombia, Marta Lucía Ramírez in New York, in the presence of President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the Republic of Colombia, Iván Duque Márquez.

The Memorandum of Understanding highlights the importance of EU-Colombia relations and the intention to take forward and to deepen and strengthen our longstanding ties.

The Memorandum identifies five priorities to guide the development of EU-Colombia relations:

- The successful implementation of the 2016 peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC as a contribution to global peace and stability;
- The ambitious agenda on the environment, climate change, resilience and biodiversity;
- The economic and social agenda including the digital agenda that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth and economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union and Colombia;
- The agenda of solidarity, around the Venezuelan refugee and migratory crisis and its impact on Colombia and the region as well as all facets of migration; and
- The multilateral agenda and cooperation on global and regional foreign policy issues to strengthen multilateralism and a rules based global order.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

SURE

The Commission has published its second report on the impact of SURE, the €100 billion instrument designed to protect jobs and incomes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report finds that SURE has been successful in cushioning the severe socio-economic impact resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. National labour market measures supported by SURE are estimated to have reduced unemployment by almost 1.5 million people in 2020. SURE has helped to effectively contain the increase in unemployment in the beneficiary Member States during the crisis. Thanks to SURE and other support measures, this increase in unemployment has turned out to be significantly smaller than during the global financial crisis, despite the much larger fall in GDP.

Link to statement [here](#)

New Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)

On Wednesday, the Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the new EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) for the period 2024-2034. The Commission is proposing to improve some of the key features of the scheme to better respond to the evolving needs and challenges of GSP countries as well as reinforce the scheme's social, labour environmental and climate dimension.

The GSP Regulation is a unilateral trade tool that removes or reduces import duties from products coming into the EU from vulnerable low-income countries, supporting poverty eradication, sustainable development, and their participation in the global economy. The Commission's proposal makes the EU's GSP more focused on reducing poverty and increasing export opportunities for low-income countries. It aims to incentivise sustainable economic growth in low-income countries and offers new room for engagement on environmental and good governance issues.

Link to Commission statement [here](#)

September 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.

Key decisions taken by the Commission which include Ireland are:

- The Commission is calling on Ireland to correctly reflect all the elements of the Environmental Quality Standards Directive (Directive 2008/105/EC, as amended by Directive 2013/39/EU), into its national law.
- The Commission is sending a reasoned opinion to Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg, requesting them to transpose into their national laws the EU rules on the acquisition and possession of firearms.
- The Commission decided to open infringement proceedings against Bulgaria, Ireland, Latvia, and Portugal by sending letters of formal notice for non-conformity of their national legislations with EU rules on the right to information in criminal proceedings (Directive (EU) 2012/13).
- The Commission decided to send a reasoned opinion to Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden for not having notified the Commission about the full transposition of the European Electronic Communications Code.

Link to September Infringements [here](#)

European Council and Council of the European Union Highlights Week 38.

General Affairs Council, 21 September

State of play in EU-UK relations. Ministers assessed the state of play in EU-UK relations, in light of recent events regarding the implementation of the protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovič updated ministers on the latest developments, including his recent visit to Ireland and Northern Ireland, and ministers reiterated their support to the European Commission's approach.

They highlighted the need to identify long-term, flexible and practical solutions to address the issues experienced by citizens and businesses in relation to the practical implementation of the protocol, while respecting the principles underpinning the protocol. They reiterated that the EU will not agree to a renegotiation of the protocol, which is the agreed solution between the UK and the EU to the problems caused by Brexit for the island of Ireland.

EU COVID-19 coordination. Ministers exchanged views on the EU coordination on COVID-19 after the summer break. They discussed vaccination-related issues and travel measures.

European Council meeting on 21-22 October. Ministers had a first exchange about the annotated draft agenda for the 21-22 October European Council: coordination of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, review progress on digital issues, preparations for COP26 in Glasgow (climate) and COP15 in Kunming (biodiversity) and for upcoming summits with third countries, such as with the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Eastern Partnership among other subjects.

Conference on the Future of Europe. The presidency gave an update on the Conference on the Future of Europe, after the launch of the European citizens' panels on 17 September and in the run-up to the October plenary. Delegations had the opportunity to exchange views on these issues.



Link to Council report [here](#)

European Court of Auditors

Special report 22/2021 “Sustainable finance: More consistent EU action needed to redirect finance towards sustainable investment”,

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) published special report 22/2021 “Sustainable finance: More consistent EU action needed to redirect finance towards sustainable investment”.

Link to report [here](#)

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