

Juncker's final State of the Union: What to expect

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News

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker is expected to use his showpiece state of the union speech in Strasbourg next week to call for the European border and coast guard to be strengthened.



Jean-Claude Juncker | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

According to a Commission insider, he is also expected to advocate rejected asylum seeker returns to be speeded up.

The issue of asylum has returned to the fore in recent weeks with a continuing influx of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Europe.

It will be his last state of the union address to MEPs before next year's European elections and before he steps down as President.

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The exact details are yet known but there will also probably be an ‘African package’ to provide new and stronger partnerships with African countries.

Juncker will, according to the Commission source, also use the much-awaited speech to explain further his ideas about how the EU can play a bigger role on the world stage.

Ahead of the speech on Wednesday, a senior EPP source in Parliament sought to deflect any criticism of Juncker, saying, “We will support him as we have done in the past. Most of the proposals the Commission have presented in the last four years have been approved by the parliament or are in the process of being approved.

“On the contrary, a lot of them, on subjects such as immigration and taxation, are still blocked in the Council. In other words, if someone is to blame about the performance and efficiency of the Juncker Commission it is the Council and not the Parliament.”

Juncker’s speech is one of the highlights of what promises to be a particularly busy plenary, with other key events being a vote on the copyright directive and a decision by MEPs on whether they back calls for Article 7 to be triggered against Hungary.

Many MEPs are supporting calls for the measures to be taken as a protest at what they see as the continuing decline in the rule of law in the country.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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