

Packed schedule for last week of plenary before elections

Written by Martin Banks on 16 April 2019 in News
News

New legislation to prevent terrorist organisations spreading propaganda across the internet will be voted on by MEPs in Strasbourg during this week's plenary, the last before the European elections.



Photo credit: Press Association

The proposals, which include a one-hour time limit for such content to be removed, aim to strike a balance between stopping the spread of terrorism-related material while protecting freedom of expression and providing flexibility for smaller platforms to implement the rules.

MEPs will vote on the plans on Wednesday.

Ahead of the vote, an EPP spokesman said, "Our fight against terrorists is not limited to stopping their financing or information exchange between authorities. We want to stop terrorists from communicating their messages and their acts."

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"This is why on Wednesday, we will vote to support the concrete proposals on how to stop terrorist content from being disseminated on social media, namely that platforms should remove the content within an hour of being notified about it."

Today, Parliament will continue its series of debates on the Future of Europe with Latvian Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš.

An ECR source said that, in the debate, MEPs will continue to press the case for "an EU that treats all of its Member States equally - large or small - and does less but better by focusing on core specific issues such as security, migration and competitiveness."

During the plenary, MEPs are also expected to endorse the EU's next research and innovation programme.

"Our fight against terrorists is not limited to stopping their financing or information exchange between authorities. We want to stop terrorists from communicating their messages and their acts" **EPP spokesman**

With a proposed budget of €120bn over seven years, Horizon Europe aims to fund breakthrough research in areas such as health, energy and technology.

A Parliament source said it is "also remaining open to global partners and doing more to boost participation in the programme throughout the EU."

On this issue, an EPP spokesman said, "To compete on the global scene, the EU needs a stable framework for its long-term research and development for the future."

"This is why we have successfully pushed the European Commission and the Council to agree on the future Horizon Europe Programme before the European elections in May."

The Horizon Europe Programme will run from 2021 to 2027 and it will be the world's biggest research and development programme.

In an earlier vote, Parliament voted to allocate €120bn to the programme, giving more than half to the collaborative pillar where universities, research organisations and industry work together.

The EPP spokesman said, "We still want to keep these ambitions when budget discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021 to 2027 begin later this year."

Meanwhile, updates to the EU visa code that will see a link made between visa facilitation and cooperation on readmission will be voted by deputies later this week.

If approved, it means that from now on the EU will have a mechanism to use visa policy to encourage third countries to cooperate on the readmission of failed asylum seekers or migrants.

This provision has, in the past, been resisted by left-leaning members of the Parliament.

Today will also see Parliament seal the agreement on the interoperability of EU information systems.

Two pieces of legislation will close the gaps in data sharing essential for tracking criminals, preventing terrorist attacks and managing migration in the EU.

The move aims to connect all information gathered by border guards, law enforcement and customs officers, immigration officials and judicial authorities in order to detect people who pose a threat to citizens' security.

In a busy final plenary before the 23-26 May elections, new measures forcing greater clarity in online reviews and price comparison sites, a ban on the resale of event tickets bought by bots and a mobile-friendly website providing a single source of advice and dispute resolution for consumers all feature in legislation being voted on.

This means that in future the ingredients of identically-branded products could only vary if there was a legitimate reason, such as the local availability of raw materials, and consumers must be informed.

MEPs are this week also expected to endorse an overhaul of EU space policy that seeks to combine the existing programmes into one single framework.

The EU's well-established space systems Galileo and Copernicus, designed for satellite navigation and earth observation, will form part of an overarching system along with the new GovSatCom branch that aims to pool and share secure satellite communications capacities for Member State governments.

Meanwhile, Parliament will also debate and adopt a new legal framework for covered bonds which will provide issuing banks with more flexibility when securing collateral.

ECR MEP Bernd Lucke is Parliament's rapporteur on the proposals that will facilitate the re-financing of banks and allow them to lend more in the real economy, while also creating a single definition of the structural features of covered bonds in European Law.

As MEPs gear up for the elections next month, Romania, current holder of the EU presidency, is also on the agenda this week.

Following cases of alleged rule of law breaches in Romania and what some see as a campaign by the Romanian authorities against Laura Codruța Kövesi, Parliament's candidate for the post of European Chief Public Prosecutor, the EPP group requested a plenary debate on the topic.

The EPP spokesman said, "The Romanian Government must hear clearly that the EU will not stand by idly while the rule of law for Romanians is at stake and when Kövesi is being silenced for her fight against political corruption."

On Wednesday, MEPs will also hold a debate on last week's summit where an extension to Article 50 until 31 October was agreed between the UK and EU, and environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg is also due in Parliament to debate climate change with the environment committee.

About the author

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