

highlights



28 november-2 december 2011



Croatia: EU Membership Approval

Vote on Thursday

The Parliament is expected to give the green light on Thursday to Croatia becoming the 28th EU Member State. Members will approve the Croatian Accession Treaty, the result of six years of accession negotiations. The EPP Group has strongly supported Croatia, the country to become the first new EU Member State after Bulgaria and Romania joined the bloc on 1 July 2007.

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Internet: Fair, open and secure

Guaranteeing freedom of expression, free flow of information and internet access for everyone, while taking care of individual rights and businesses, represents the cornerstones of the EPP Group policy ap-



proach to internet. MEPs Angelika Niebler and Philippe Juvin will present the EPP Group Strategy Paper on 'Fair, Open and Secure Internet' at a Group Hearing on Thursday that will count the participation of some of the main stakeholders active on the www. This Paper is the result of six months of debates in the EPP Group Working Group on the Internet. EPP Group Vice-Chairman Manfred Weber will open the event.

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European Economic policies coordination

Vote on Thursday

The current sovereign debt crisis has clearly shown the need for an enhanced monitoring of the Member States' economic, employment and budgetary policies at EU level. The method for this, the so-called 'European semester', will be at the core of the debate between MEPs during the plenary session which will also discuss

the preparations for the next EU summit on 9 December and hear, for the first time, the new President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi.

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Funding for crisis-hit regions

Vote on Thursday

In some EU countries, current economic troubles have become a clear constraint to the smooth implementation of the European structural funds programmes. The Parliament will vote on proposals agreed with the Council to speed up funding for crisis-hit regions in the EU. Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, Latvia and Hungary in particular should benefit from special measures to help boost investment in jobs and growth and spur recovery. Rapporteur Danuta Hübner proposes a 'top-up' of 10% for the co-financing rate of the EU Structural Funds allocated to the countries affected

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press conferences

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Monday @ 11.00 hrs: Briefing on parliamentary agenda

Tuesday @ 10.30 hrs: **Paul Rübigen MEP** will participate in a press conference on 'Sustainable management of natural resources'

Tuesday @ 12.30 hrs: Chairman of the Tibet Intergroup, Vice-Chairman of the South Asia Delegation of the Parliament, **Thomas Mann MEP** will hold a press conference on Tibet

Tuesday @ 13.00 hrs: **Jan Olbrycht MEP** joined by other MEPs as well as the President of CoR, Mayors of Malmö and Bucharest, etc will take part in a press conference on the Covenant of Mayors

Tuesday @ 14.00 hrs: **Marco Scurria MEP** and others on 'Fostering EU-Latin America ICT Policy Dialogue'

Tuesday @ 14.30 hrs: Rapporteur **Carlos Coelho MEP** on the vote on the Schengen evaluation mechanism

Wednesday @ 11.00 hrs: **Richard Seeber MEP**, Rapporteur **Karl-Heinz Florenz MEP**, and **Pilar del Castillo Vera MEP** on the UN Climate Conference in Durban

Wednesday @ 16.00 hrs: **Maria do Céu Patrão Neves MEP** and others on 'Fish as a common good'

Thursday @ 10.00 hrs: **Tiziano Motti MEP** on tbc

Thursday @ 10.30 hrs: **Bogdan Marcinkiewicz MEP** and **Christian Ehler MEP** on the '2nd European Coal Days in Brussels'

Thursday @ 13.30 hrs: Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs **Carlo Casini MEP** and others, with participation of Parliament's President **Jerzy Buzek MEP**, on the vote on the code of conduct for MEPs



Negotiation agreement with Ukraine

Vote on Thursday

Following its Resolution of 27 October, the Parliament is to vote on its recommendations on the EU-Ukraine Agreement. The text clearly states that without reforms and respect for the rule of law in Ukraine, there will be no Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Besides respecting the principles of democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the opposition must no longer be constrained and should be able to participate in the parliamentary elections next year as well as in the Presidential elections scheduled for 2015. The EPP Group will support the European aspirations of Ukraine, without giving up EU fundamental values.

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Tackling early school leaving

Vote on Thursday

In 2009, more than six million young people in the EU left education and training achieving only their lower secondary diploma or less. The 'Europe 2020' Strategy has defined the reduction of early school leaving among its headline targets, aiming at lowering the current rate of 15% to 10% by 2020. On Thursday, the Parliament will adopt a Report on the strategy to tackle early school leaving in which the

MEPs defend the value of a 'second chance' education or alternatives to mainstream education, as explains EPP Group Spokesman on this Report, Seán Kelly. They will also call for lower pupil-teacher ratios and additional support for school-goers with special needs."

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EU financial instruments: strengthening Parliament's scrutiny

Vote on Thursday

The whole package of proposals for the revision of the EU financial instruments for external assistance is set for final approval. On Thursday, the plenary will vote on the compromise rules with national governments and the European Commission which allows MEPs greater scrutiny over EU development spending.

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Clear rules for MEPs

Vote on Thursday

With the new code of conduct rules, MEPs will

be obliged to declare their financial interests and remuneration to avoid conflict of interests. EP Rapporteur Carlo Casini, who led the work with all the political groups in gathering the broad consensus in the AFCO Committee, says: "Having compared the new code to all existing ones in the EU, we can say it guarantees the highest level of transparency".

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Persecuted Christians in the spotlight

The widespread persecution of Christians is an increasing phenomenon in Islamic countries of the Middle East. Aside from its obvious tragic and horrifying elements, what is the significance and meaning of this persecution? Why should the European Union be concerned? Why it is rarely mentioned in the Western media? These



will be the main topics of the EPP Group conference 'Persecuted Christians in the Middle East' on Wednesday.

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