

Plenary highlights: Europol, asylum reform, Turkey visa liberalisation

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New powers for Europol to fight terrorism and international crime were approved by MEPs during May's plenary session in Strasbourg. They also called for any reform of EU asylum rules to be based on solidarity among member states and warned that Turkey still has to fulfil a number of conditions before its citizens can be granted visa-free travel to the EU. Read on for an overview of the plenary session's most important issues.

Tackling terrorism

[Europol](#), the EU's law enforcement agency, will get additional powers to tackle terrorism and international crime after MEPs approved on Wednesday new governance rules. These will allow the agency to respond to new threats faster and set up specialised units more easily. The new powers will be accompanied by strong data protection safeguards and democratic oversight tools. For more about Europol, [check out our infographic](#).

Asylum reform

Any [reform of the EU's asylum system](#) should be based on solidarity among member states as this will ensure the effective management of asylum applications, MEPs said in a debate on Wednesday with commissioners Frans Timmermans and Dimitris Avramopoulos. Currently asylum demands need to be dealt with by the first EU country the applicant entered.

Schengen

The EU's external borders need to be properly secured in order to restore the normal functioning of the [Schengen zone](#) of passport-free travel, MEPs said in a debate on Wednesday.

Turkey visa liberalisation

MEPs voiced serious concerns about Turkey's lack of progress in meeting the EU's conditions for liberalising its [visa regime for Turkish nationals](#) in a debate on Wednesday.

Greece

Parliament's centre-left groups - S&D, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA - as well as the conservative group ECR called on [Greece's](#) creditors and the International Monetary Fund not to impose more reforms on the country and advocated debt relief whereas the centre-right group EPP stressed the need for reforms during a debate on Tuesday.

Parental leave

EU countries should ensure that both mothers and fathers are able to take properly paid [parental leave](#) to encourage more men to take the leave and prevent women from

damaging their career prospects, MEPs said in a resolution adopted on Thursday.

Human trafficking

Member states should do more to protect the victims of [human trafficking](#), especially women and children as they are the most vulnerable, MEPs said in a resolution adopted on Thursday. Read our [interview with Catherine Bearder](#), the MEP who drafted the resolution.

Corporate taxes

MEPs welcomed on Thursday plans for EU countries to exchange tax reports by multinationals in order to help tackle aggressive tax planning, but insisted that the European Commission should have full access to the information.

China

[China's](#) export prices for products sent to the EU should be investigated until the country has fulfilled the EU's criteria for market economy status in order to counter dumping, MEPs said in a resolution adopted on Thursday. This should happen in compliance with the EU's and China's obligations in the World Trade Organization.

Gas pipeline

[Nord Stream 2](#), a project by Gazprom to build new pipelines from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea, goes against the objectives of the EU's energy union, MEPs said in a debate on Monday. Some MEPs argued that the project is not justified economically or in climate action terms and instead reflects geopolitical motives. The idea behind the energy union is to make it easier to transfer energy between EU countries and make Europe less dependent on fossil fuels. Read more about it in our [top story on the energy union](#).

Picture perfect

A group of popular Instagram users were invited by the Parliament to capture memorable plenary moments. Check out what pictures they took on the [Parliament's Instagram account](#).

Find out more

- Plenary press releases: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/plenary>
- Photo gallery on Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/european_parliament/sets/72157668207128505
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- Videos of the plenary session: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/>