



Parliament signals its priorities for EU-US summit

Plenary sessions

Ahead of the EU-US summit on 20 November, MEPs agreed their recommendations on positions the Council should take regarding key transatlantic issues such as economic co-operation, personal data protection, the introduction of a US travel fee and recent leaks of US classified military documents on Iraq.

The state of EU-US trade relations amid the economic crisis is a key issue for MEPs with a view to the next meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Council. Parliament restates its support for a barrier-free transatlantic market by 2015 but voices concern about differing rules on novel foods, genetically modified products and animal cloning, and stresses the need for US authorities to accept metric-only labelling of EU products.

The adoption of a joint EU-US action strategy for the protection of intellectual property rights, including negotiations on an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), is another important demand of the resolution, which was adopted by show of hands.

Torture in Iraq

The controversial disclosure by Wikileaks of US military information on alleged torture in Iraq gave rise to several impassioned speeches in Wednesday's debate ahead of today's vote.

The resolution calls for a transatlantic inquiry, saying that Parliament, "although aware that the leaking of classified military documents runs the risk of bringing military personnel in danger, is highly concerned over the recent serious allegations that torture has been condoned in Iraq". It "calls for this issue to be raised in the context of the EU-US summit with a view to an independent transatlantic inquiry".

US travel fee

MEPs express "serious concern" at the US Travel Promotion Act "and its discriminatory effect in applying only to travellers under the US visa waiver programme, as well as data protection concerns that it can only be paid with one of the four major credit cards, whose companies are all based inside the US". Since January, EU citizens from Member States that are part of the US Visa Waiver programme have to pay 14 dollars to travel to the US.

The EU, US... and the rest of the world

Parliament also lists its priorities on EU-US international relations, including the fight against global terrorism, the latest Middle East negotiations and the threat of nuclear weapons.

Regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict, MEPs welcome the new US approach to Israel. They say that further talks are needed and should lead "within an agreed time-frame, to a two-state solution with the state of Israel and an independent, democratic and viable State of Palestine". The Israeli government is urged to renew the moratorium on settlement building.

A call to "explore less intrusive alternatives" than collection of PNR data

Press release

Personal data protection has been a difficult area for EU-US relations recently, as in the case of the agreement on banking data transfers (Swift report). A general EU-US data protection agreement is now under discussion, as is a new agreement on the sharing of passenger flight data (PNR). Parliament will have a right of veto on both accords.

In a separate resolution on this subject, tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, ECR and GUE/NGL groups, Parliament stresses that PNR data should in no circumstances be used for data mining or profiling.

MEPs reiterate their call to the Commission to provide factual evidence that the collection, storage and processing of PNR data is necessary" in this respect. They also call on the Commission to "explore less intrusive alternatives".

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