

Press release – Rule of law in Poland: MEPs point to “overwhelming evidence” of breaches



Following Tuesday's vote on [amendments](#), the [draft interim report](#) will be tabled for final approval at committee level on Thursday morning, by chair [Juan Fernando López Aguilar](#) (S&D, ES).

The text focuses on the functioning of the legislative and electoral system, the independence of the judiciary and the rights of judges, and the protection of fundamental rights in Poland.

MEPs are deeply concerned that the situation in Poland has seriously deteriorated since Article 7(1) was triggered, despite hearings held with the Polish government in the Council following the December 2017 [European Commission proposal](#), multiple exchanges of views with MEPs, alarming reports by the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, and four infringements procedures launched by the Commission.

The following are among key concerns reflected in the text:

- the constitutional revision powers taken on by the parliament since 2015, the use of expedited legislative procedures, as well as recent developments pertaining to changes to the electoral law and elections organised during a public emergency;
- broad changes to the country's judiciary, enacted during the last few years, ranging from the way appointments are made, to disciplinary procedures, posing a serious risk to judicial independence;
- the situation of fundamental rights, particularly freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, academic freedom, freedom of assembly and association;

- the *de facto* criminalisation of sexual education, as well as hate speech, public discrimination, violence against women, domestic violence and intolerant behaviour against minorities and other vulnerable groups, including LGBTI persons, and the drastic limitation, coming close to *de facto* banning of abortion and limiting access to emergency contraceptive pills.

Consequently, it “calls on the Council and the Commission to refrain from narrowly interpreting the principle of the rule of law, and to use the procedure under [Article 7\(1\) TEU](#) to its full potential [...] for all the principles enshrined in [Article 2 TEU](#), including democracy and fundamental rights”. Noting that the last hearing in the Council “was held as long ago as December 2018”, the text urges the Council “to finally act [...] by finding that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the values referred to in Article 2 TEU, in the light of overwhelming evidence thereof”.

You can watch recordings of the debates on the report [here](#) and on the vote on the amendments [here](#).

Next steps

The amended text will be put to the vote on Thursday morning, with results expected in the afternoon. The interim report is scheduled to be debated and voted on in plenary in September 2020.

[Press release – COVID-19: EU must step up efforts to tackle medicine shortages](#)



In a report on the shortage of medicines, adopted by 79 votes to 1 and 0 abstentions, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee addresses the root causes of medicines shortages. It stresses the need for an increased EU response, as the problem has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis across Europe with a direct negative impact on patients' health, safety and the continuation of their treatment.

The report asks the Commission to use the upcoming [pharmaceutical strategy](#) to address the issue of availability, accessibility and affordability of safe medicines in Europe.

Return to EU independence in the health sector

In the approved text, MEPs call on the Commission to find ways to restore pharmaceutical manufacturing in Europe, giving priority to essential and strategic medicines as currently 40% of medicines marketed in the EU originate in non-EU countries, while 60 – 80% of active pharmaceutical ingredients are produced in China and India.

MEPs encourage the introduction of financial incentives, in line with state aid rules, to persuade producers to make active pharmaceutical ingredients and medicines in Europe. They also welcome the new EU health programme [EU4Health](#) to make medicines and medical equipment more available and more accessible.

Better coordination with and between EU countries

The report calls for member states to share best practices in stock management and create coordinated health strategies, including further use of joint EU procurement of medicines. It also calls on the Commission to create a European contingency reserve of medicines of strategic importance, along the lines of the [RescEU](#) mechanism. It should function as “an emergency European pharmacy” in order to minimise shortages. Equal access for all member states should be ensured through a new mechanism of just distribution.

To make medicines circulate more easily between EU countries, they also want more flexible rules on packaging formats, reuse procedures, longer expiry periods and the use of veterinary medicinal products.

Quote

After the vote, the rapporteur [Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé \(EPP, FR\)](#) said: “Public health has become a geostrategic weapon that can bring a continent to its knees. Our dependence on third countries has been exposed by the current pandemic. It is necessary to relocate certain types of production, to harmonise legislation and to strengthen cooperation between member states in order to achieve greater solidarity and to regain our independence. I call in my report for a genuine pharmaceutical industrial strategy.”

Next steps

The report is expected to be on the agenda of the September plenary session of the European Parliament.

[Press release – Car emissions: MEPs set end on gap between lab and real driving emission tests](#)



The Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee adopted on Tuesday an amendment to EU rules on measuring emissions from light passenger and commercial cars (Euro 5 and Euro 6) with 55 votes to 14 and 11 abstentions. MEPs want to substantially reduce NO_x emissions to address the serious problems caused by air pollution.

According to the [2019 Air Quality Report](#) by the European Environment Agency, air pollution led to more than half a million premature deaths in 2016 and is the number one environmental cause of premature death in the EU. As passenger cars produce 40% of total EU NO_x emissions, they are a significant source of air pollution, especially in urban areas.

Real driving emissions tests

Previously, pollutants such as NO_x emissions from cars and other vehicles were measured in a laboratory. The EU is the first region in the world to introduce real driving emissions (RDE) tests to measure such pollutants emitted by vehicles while driven on the road.

To address any uncertainties regarding technical measurement linked with the introduction of these [Portable Emission Measurement Systems \(PEMS\)](#), which measure emissions from engines while they are being used, the Commission introduced a so-called '[conformity factor](#)'.

The Environment Committee wants the conformity factor currently in place to be annually lowered, based on assessments by the [Joint Research Centre](#). This downward revision starts already with lowering the conformity factor from 1.43 to 1.32. It will cease to apply by 30 September 2022, after which only

the raw data from RDE tests will be used to determine compliance with EU emission limits, MEPs agreed.

The report also asks that the Commission establish by June 2021 more stringent requirements for the portable measuring equipment to be used for RDE tests.

Quote

Following the vote, Parliament's rapporteur on the file, [Esther De Lange](#), said: "Today's outcome is based on a broad agreement between the political groups. We have to be realistic about the discrepancy between emissions measured in laboratories and those measured in real-driving conditions by taking into account statistical and technical uncertainties linked to these measurements. At the same time, it's important to show ambition by gradual lowering the value for the conformity factor through annual downward revisions, based on the scientific assessments of the Joint Research Centre."

Next steps

The report is expected to be on the agenda of the European Parliament's September plenary session, after which negotiations can start with Council (representing EU member states).

Background

The EU General Court ruled part of the EC proposal to insert conformity factors illegal as it 'de facto' modifies the 80 mg/km NOx limit set by EU rules, whereas this can only be done through the ordinary legislative procedure. To avoid legal uncertainty, the General Court delayed the effects of the annulment by maximum 12 months, which will start once the appeal launched by the Commission is dismissed. To avoid undue burdens for the manufacturers that had already designed their vehicles, the Commission proposed to re-instate the previously adopted conformity factor through the ordinary legislative procedure.

Emission measurement in the automotive sector was the subject on an EP inquiry committee, set-up after the 'diesel scandal'. You can see the key recommendations [here](#).

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