

Article – Coming up this week: sharing economy, money laundering, private security firms

Proposals to regulate private security firms, a blacklist of countries linked to money laundering and the opportunities and challenges of the sharing economy are just some of the topics covered by Parliament committees this week. In addition the House of European History will be officially launched this week, while the Parliament opens its door to the general public in Brussels.

On Tuesday afternoon, the foreign affairs committee votes on recommendations on how to strengthen oversight of private security companies operating in EU countries, as well as in EU missions abroad. Some of them have been repeatedly involved in incidents resulting in injury or even the loss of life.

On Wednesday the economic committee votes on a proposal by the European Commission to update a blacklist of countries linked to money laundering and terrorism financing. In January MEPs rejected a similar proposal because it did not include countries that facilitate tax evasion. According to EU anti-money laundering rules, citizens and firms of the listed countries who want to do business in EU countries have to be submitted to stricter checks.

Press Freedom Day is held on Wednesday and to mark it members of Parliament's human rights subcommittee discuss the state of press freedom on Thursday morning, with a focus on the growing threat of fake news.

The internal market committee votes Wednesday on a report on the sharing economy, which is when people offer products or services directly to other people using online transactions. Some well-known examples of this include Uber and Airbnb. The report being dealt with by Parliament assesses the benefits it brings, such as new jobs and more choice for consumers, but also looks at the issues it raises: workers' rights, taxation and consumer protection.

On Thursday Parliament President Antonio Tajani inaugurates the House of European History, a museum dedicated to European integration and Europe's recent history. The new museum will open to the public on 6 May.

Parliament opens its doors to the public in Brussels on Saturday, an opportunity for people to learn more about Parliament and the EU ahead of Europe Day on 9 May.

Commission takes new steps to enhance compliance and practical functioning of the EU Single Market

Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“EU rules protect and empower 500 million people in the Single Market. They can live, work and do business in any EU country. All of this is only possible when the rules are respected. Today’s proposals will help develop a culture of compliance. They will also help people and companies to have full access to online information and procedures both in their home country and abroad.”*

Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, added: *“Today we are delivering concrete tools to make the Single Market work better for citizens and businesses, so they can make full use of its opportunities. The Single Digital Gateway is also a strong incentive to modernise public administrations by developing ambitious and user-focused e-government strategies. And the new information tool Single Market Information Tool will further contribute to the Commission’s enforcement work, so that citizens’ Single Market rights are duly respected and EU businesses face fewer barriers when scaling up and entering new markets.”*

The three concrete initiatives adopted by the Commission today are:

1: A Single Digital Gateway: In the future, people and companies will have easier access, through a single digital entry point, to high quality information, online administrative procedures and assistance services. Any procedure currently available online for domestic users will be accessible to users from other Member States and in one additional EU language. 13 key administrative procedures will have to be made available online, including requests for a birth certificate, to register a car, start a business or register for social security benefits. According to the “once-only” principle, important data already collected by national authorities will only need to be submitted once and should then be made available to be reused in the most important cross-border procedures at the request of the user.

The Single Digital Gateway responds to users’ needs in a digital world. It could help companies save more than EUR 11 billion per year, and EU citizens up to 855 000 hours of their time annually. The initiative will benefit those moving to or doing business in another EU country, but also the many people and companies who decide to stay in their home country. It also incentivises Member States to adopt e-government strategies to offer modern and efficient public service.

2: A Single Market Information Tool (SMIT):

Single Market rights, for people as well as companies, can only be fully

exercised if the commonly agreed rules are fit for purpose and correctly applied throughout Europe. To ensure this, timely access to comprehensive, reliable, and accurate market information is crucial. The Commission can already request information directly from companies in the field of competition policy. The Single Market Information Tool will allow the Commission, in targeted cases, to source defined and readily available data (such as, for example, cost structure, pricing policy or product volumes sold) in cases of serious difficulties with the application of EU Single Market legislation.

This could prove valuable, for example, to collect information on suspected geo-blocking practices, to corroborate information on public tenders, or to obtain data on the pricing and underlying costs of cross-border parcel delivery. Such requests would be a measure of last resort and the information would be handled subject to strict confidentiality requirements.

3: A SOLVIT Action Plan:

The Commission will build on the success of [SOLVIT](#), a free of charge service which provides rapid and pragmatic solutions to people and companies all over Europe when they experience difficulties with public administrations while moving or doing business cross-border in the EU. The Action Plan aims to increase the use of SOLVIT by making sure that more citizens and businesses can easily access it and by improving data collection so that evidence from SOLVIT cases can be used to improve the functioning of the Single Market.

Background:

In 2015, the Commission presented its [Single Market Strategy](#) – a roadmap to deliver on President Juncker’s [political commitment](#) to unleash the full potential of the Single Market and make it the launchpad for European companies to thrive in the global economy. The Commission has already put forward [proposals on e-commerce](#), [guidance on the collaborative economy](#), steps to [modernise the EU’s standardisation policy](#), a [Start-up and Scale-up Initiative](#), and [measures to give a fresh boost to the services sector](#).

More information:

[Today’s IFS analysis reveals the failure of seven years of Tory Government – John McDonnell](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, commenting

on today's IFS analysis of the public finances, said:

"Today's analysis by the IFS reveals the failure of seven years of Tory Government.

"Despite promising to balance the books by 2015, the IFS says the UK's public finances 'compare unfavourably to other advanced economies' with the fifth largest deficit and the sixth largest debt pile.

"The IFS points to 'persistently poor economic growth' as one of the factors explaining the UK's poor public finances.

"It is clear that under the Tories working people have suffered from sluggish growth, soaring debt and stagnating pay.

"Only Labour has a proper plan for the public finances underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, which will allow us to grow the economy and deliver for the many, not the few."

We will put no limits on our ambitions for Glasgow

This Thursday, voters across Scotland will go to the polls to decide who runs their local council for the next 5 years.

China's big data regulation to boost healthcare, security

China is to issue its first regulation on how the big data from the health sector is collected, stored and used.

Jin Xiaotao, vice-minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, said the regulation will be issued soon, as the nation aims to safeguard public security.

Big data for the health industry includes patients' basic information and conditions, disease control and prevention, food safety, lifestyles and even genomes.

"This data concerns public health and national biological security," Jin said. "The new regulation is necessary, especially given that China seeks to develop healthcare data as an asset."

He said an independent management committee will be set up to ensure data security and that the regulation will define the basic rules on ownership, collection and usage.

The move comes after the State Council issued a multidepartment guideline in June to promote and regulate the use of big data in healthcare.

The guideline states that a centralized, uniform big data platform for healthcare is expected to be established by 2020 to standardize data collection, storage, reporting and security management.

"A central goal of the guideline is to improve people's health," said Jin, whose commission was among the departments that produced the document.

The guideline is also expected to play an important role in building a new economic pillar for China involving the application of big data.

Jin said the state-level strategy includes setting up a national healthcare big data center and seven regional centers as well as data research and innovation centers, which will be established with partner institutions from home and abroad.