

[Streamlining public procurement within the EU for more efficient public spending](#)



The Council today adopted a set of conclusions centred on how efficient public procurement rules and practices, combined with increased public spending, can accelerate the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and lead to a sustainable and more resilient EU economy.

In these conclusions, the Council calls on all authorities involved, be it European, national or regional, to coordinate closely their actions for achieving the following objectives:

- Enhancing efficiency of public procurement to boost recovery and to tackle future crises,
- Setting the right incentives for innovative and sustainable investment and growth in the EU through public procurement,
- Contributing through public procurement to a more resilient EU economy.

The Council calls in particular on the Commission and the member states to use public procurement as a strategic tool to foster sustainable and innovative growth, while reducing administrative burdens and compliance costs at the same time.

Furthermore, the conclusions focus on the need for a level playing field in public procurement to ensure fair competition for a competitive European economy.

[Press release – MEPs set out blueprint for a new Industrial strategy](#)



In a report adopted on Wednesday with 486 votes in favour, 109 against, and 102 abstentions, MEPs call on the Commission to come up with a revised industrial strategy, as the [original strategy](#), published in March 2020, coincided with the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and came out before the [Next Generation EU](#) plan was set up. It could therefore not take into account the impact of the pandemic on European industries.

The new strategy should have two distinct phases, one focusing on recovery and the other on reconstruction and building resilience. The first should focus on maintaining the smooth functioning of the single market, mainly by recapitalising enterprises, saving jobs and adapting production to a post-COVID “new normal”. The second phase should aim to help reconstruct and transform European industry by pursuing the objectives of the twin transitions and reinforcing the EU’s industrial sovereignty and its strategic autonomy, which require a competitive industrial base and massive investment in research and innovation.

Managing the twin transitions: environmental and digital

MEPs stress that the new strategy should in particular help the EU achieve climate-neutrality, deliver on the European Green Deal, manage the twin green and digital transitions and create high-quality jobs.

It should contain a strong social pillar, address the social consequences of structural change and help hard hit regions to recover economically and socially.

MEPs also highlight the importance of a research-based European pharmaceutical industry to safeguard high-quality manufacturing and guarantee affordable medicines for all patients in need. They call again for a plan to mitigate the risk of medicine shortages.

“Our blueprint for a new and powerful industrial strategy shows that the European Parliament is committed to providing the EU with a vision for its

industry that has been missing for too long”, said lead MEP [Carlo Calenda](#) (S&D, IT).

[Press release – Parliament wants to better protect consumers from unsafe products](#)



The resolution on product safety in the Single Market was adopted on Wednesday with 688 in favour (eight against and one abstention).

MEPs emphasise that all products circulating within the EU must comply with product safety rules – whether manufactured inside or outside the EU – in order to assure fairer competition between companies, guarantee traceability, and provide reliable product information to consumers. They urge online platforms and marketplaces to take proactive measures to tackle misleading practices.

Better market surveillance needed

MEPs insist that if EU rules are not respected, products that pose a safety hazard, contain dangerous chemicals, or have unsafe software must be effectively recalled from the EU market and that the market surveillance system has to be improved. They also stress that it is key to adapt product safety rules to the digital transition. Emerging technologies must be safe and secure. To guarantee this, effective checks must be developed to test high-risk products that use Artificial Intelligence, they say.

The resolution refers also to the lessons learned during the COVID-19

pandemic, underlining that it is of paramount importance that products used in emergencies, especially medical and protective equipment, are safe.

“Existing product safety rules have to be made fit for the digital age, since products with emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence embedded in them challenge these rules. All products sold in the EU must be safe, regardless of if they are sold online or offline, produced in or outside the EU, or include emerging technologies or not. However, innovation should not be held back by red tape. We have to concentrate on closing these existing legal gaps,” said Rapporteur [Marion Walsmann](#) (EPP, DE).

New Consumer Agenda

Ahead of the vote, MEPs discussed on Monday the [New Consumer Agenda](#) with Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders. The Commissioner emphasised that both Parliament’s product safety and [sustainability](#) reports shed light on many of the long-term priorities outlined in the new strategy.

MEPs welcomed the new agenda, but also drew attention to a number of issues, including how passenger rights have been widely breached during the pandemic, with consumers receiving no reimbursement or having to wait too long for it.

Catch up with the debate [here](#).

[Press release – Media freedom: EP warns of attempts to silence critics and undermine pluralism](#)



In a resolution adopted with 553 votes to 54 and 89 abstentions, Parliament points to “attempts by governments of some member states to silence critical and independent media and undermine media freedom and pluralism”. MEPs are particularly concerned about the state of public service media in some EU countries, where they have become an “example of pro-government propaganda”.

They stress that media freedom, pluralism, independence and the safety of journalists are crucial components of the right to freedom of expression and information, and are essential to the democratic functioning of the EU. “Freedom of the media has been deteriorating in recent years”, warns the text, and the COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated this deterioration.

Protect journalists better, particularly women

MEPs see a “growing pattern of intimidation aimed at silencing journalists”, citing the murders of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Ján Kuciak and his fiancée as examples of the risks faced by investigative journalists. They call on public figures to refrain from denigrating journalists, and insist on the legal obligation to investigate all attacks, highlighting that female journalists are especially vulnerable and should be given additional protection.

Excessive media concentration threatens pluralism

The resolution notes that when media ownership is concentrated in the hands of too few people, pluralism is put at risk, making it more difficult to challenge the spread of disinformation. MEPs demand that EU countries take action to avoid excessive concentration and guarantee transparency. They criticise governments for invasive interference in public advertising, and make clear that EU funds must not be spent on government-controlled media or political propaganda.

In this respect, Parliament also calls on the European Commission to assess in each member state how transparent the ownership of media outlets is, as well as private and government interference in the sector, in its annual rule of law assessment. MEPs insist that attempts to damage media freedom and pluralism should be considered a serious and systematic abuse of power that goes against fundamental EU values.

Online hate speech and disinformation

MEPs want a more robust legal framework to prevent and combat increasing online hate speech and call for more collaboration between online platforms and law enforcement authorities. They stress that platforms' voluntary actions are "necessary yet still insufficient" in tackling disinformation, illegal content and foreign interference. Nonetheless, they "must not become private censors" and the removal of illegal content must be subject to safeguards.

Finally, the adopted text highlights concerns about foreign democratic interference seeking to polarise and nullify pluralism and warns of the potentially harmful consequences of manipulating information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quote

[Magdalena Adamowicz \(EPP, PL\)](#), rapporteur, stated: "Today we witness democracy being withdrawn, power taken with lies. There is no freedom without media independence, no democracy without media pluralism. Media should serve the truth, not lies. It should serve voters, not those in power, and should be a check on power. Media should protect democracy, but media can also kill it. That is why it must be independent".

[Press release – Parliament wants to](#)

grant EU consumers a “right to repair”



The resolution on a more sustainable Single Market was adopted with 395 in favour, 94 against and 207 abstentions.

MEPs call on the Commission to grant consumers a “right to repair” by making repairs more appealing, systematic, and cost-efficient, whether by extending guarantees, providing guarantees for replaced parts, or better access to information on repair and maintenance.

They also insist on increasing support for second-hand goods markets, call for measures to tackle practices that shorten the lifetime of a product, and endorse sustainable production. MEPs reiterate their [demand](#) for a common charger system to reduce electronic waste and want products to be labelled according to their durability (e.g. a usage meter and clear information on the estimated lifespan of a product).

Remove obstacles that prevent repair, resale, and reuse

To encourage sustainable business and consumer choices, MEPs push for more sustainable public procurement as well as responsible marketing and advertising. For example, when environmentally friendly claims are made in advertisements, common criteria should be applied to support such a claim – similar to obtaining ecolabel certifications. The resolution also calls for the role of the EU ecolabel to be boosted so that it is used more by industry and to raise awareness among consumers.

Finally, the adopted text proposes new rules for waste management and the removal of legal obstacles that prevent repair, resale, and reuse. This will also benefit the secondary raw material market.

“The time has come to use the Green Deal objectives as the foundation of a single market that promotes durable products and services by design. To achieve this, we need a comprehensive set of rules that facilitates clear and simple decisions in place of technical amendments that lack political courage and which confuse both consumers and businesses. By adopting this report, the European Parliament sent a clear message: harmonised mandatory labelling indicating durability and tackling premature obsolescence at EU level are the way forward,” said Rapporteur [David Cormand](#) (Greens/EFA, FR).

Background

According to a Eurobarometer survey, [77%](#) of EU citizens would rather repair their devices than replace them; [79%](#) think that manufacturers should be legally obliged to facilitate the repair of digital devices or the replacement of their individual parts.