

**What's hot in the European Parliament in the fall of 2015?**  
**Podcast interview with John Robinson, Political Officer at the U.S. Mission to the EU**  
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My name is John Robinson, I am a Political Officer at the U.S. Mission to the EU, I have been here for about a year and I follow Russia, Eastern Europe and the European Parliament.

The United States is interested in the European Parliament because what happens there has a tremendous impact on US interests. In fact our current Ambassador, Ambassador Anthony Gardner, has developed a real interest in the European Parliament and the entire Mission is very much engaged as well. Our Ambassador however is traveling to Strasbourg quite often, several times a year and meets with MEPs here in Brussels regularly. In the Parliament we are dealing with of course bilateral issues, probably the issue that everyone knows best is TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which the Parliament has talked a lot about. But we are also dealing with a lot of issues that do not have an explicit transatlantic angle but at the end of the day what happens on this side of the Atlantic here in Europe has a tremendous impact on what happens in the United States.

In AFET, which is the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament, I expect that this Fall there is going to be important discussions on the Russia/Ukraine crisis will continue, as well as the conflict in Syria and Iraq and the spillover into the migration crisis as well

LIBE, which is the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee is one of the most important committees in the European Parliament and one that we follow with great interest. LIBE deals with migration issues, and as mentioned before with AFET, we expect migration and developments in the Southern Neighborhood to continue to be a major focus on the committee's discussions in the next few months. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks LIBE also put the EU Passenger Name Record Directive back on the agenda. EU PNR is intended as a tool to help European authorities monitor foreign fighters, prevent terrorist attacks, and improve security. And we believe there could be a plenary vote in the Parliament by the end of the year or early next year.

IMCO, the Internal Market and Consumer Committee (IMCO) and ITRE which is the Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE), these are the lead committees on the Digital Single Market also called DSM. We are expecting them to debate a draft report on the European Commission's DSM strategy, and there could be a full EP plenary expected in coming months. The way the EU goes on DSM is of huge importance to the United States –

The Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee which is ECON has worked in the past few months on new regulations on financial market benchmarks. These are standards against which the performance of a security, mutual fund or investment manager can be measured. Currently no jurisdiction outside the EU has put this in place and we have raised concerns with MEPs and others that the EU could find itself isolated. The Council, Commission and Parliament are currently discussing a final text, which could come up for a vote in the EP plenary by the end of the year or maybe even early next year.

ENVI, is the Environment, Public Health and Food Committee. ENVI is scheduled to vote sometime in October – on a Commission proposal that would allow individual EU Member States to limit the use of an opt out on authorized biotech food and feed. It is looking like ENVI will reject the Commission’s proposal, which many including the United States would consider a positive development.

The EP’s International Trade Committee (INTA) is the lead committee on T-TIP, and this has been extremely active on the file over the past year. The EP plenary actually approved a resolution on T-TIP in July, which basically laid out where the Parliament stands on various elements of a potential agreement. Given how high profile T-TIP is, I’m sure it is going to be a constant topic of discussion over the next few months, but there’s no pending action to. Negotiations are still ongoing, so action will return to the Parliament only once USTR and the European Commission’s DG Trade have reached an agreement.

The European Parliament is one of the most important EU institutions, and it is one that we follow with great interest. I’ve only scratched the surface of the wide range of issues under discussion of interest to the United States but one thing sure it is going to be a busy fall, and we’re hoping to see a lot of progress on important transatlantic issues.