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A Greens/EFA take on the plenary week

Plenary week, 10-14 February 2020

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Future EU/UK relationship

Debate Tuesday, vote Wednesday

The European Parliament voted Wednesday on the negotiating mandate for the future EU-UK relationship in the upcoming talks with the UK on a future partnership. The standards set out in the Commission's proposal are ambitious but the Greens/EFA would like to see closer cooperation on sectorial issues, based on EU standards.

Philippe Lamberts MEP, President of the Greens/EFA group and Member of the UK coordination group in the European Parliament, commented:

"We have an interest in a relationship that is as close as possible and if we are to get an agreement, politicians on both sides will have to save face. Instead of the race to the bottom that the British government seems to want to pursue, the upcoming talks with the UK should be an opportunity to improve standards on areas where both lead. In some policy areas the UK is more ambitious than the EU and vice versa."

The Greens/EFA are calling for an association agreement that goes beyond trade and security and should, for example, include comprehensive provisions on citizens' rights, environmental cooperation and level playing field measures on gender equality.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Philippe Lamberts](#)

Further information

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Conclusion Free Trade Agreement EU - Vietnam

Debate Tuesday, vote Wednesday

MEPs voted Wednesday on the European Union's Free trade and investment protection agreements with Vietnam. The Greens/EFA group voted against the agreement on the grounds of the Vietnamese government's continuing human rights abuses, repression of opposition and organised labour and continued deforestation and illegal fishing, and also on the grounds of the absence of enforceable human, environmental and social provisions and exclusive rights for investors in the agreements. This is the first Free Trade Agreement (FTA) the European Parliament will ratify since the adoption of the European Green Deal strategy, and falls woefully short of its commitments.

Heidi Hautala MEP, Greens/EFA group coordinator in the International Trade Committee in the European Parliament, commented:

"Agreements between the EU and Vietnam are undoubtedly very important geopolitically, however, this was a wasted opportunity to support sustainable development and human rights. Vietnam has made progress in reforming its labour rights but has on the other hand failed to amend its penal code to allow workers to enjoy those very rights. Oppression has become more severe, even during the last stage of the finalisation of these agreements. That is why our group cannot yet support the deal."

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Text adopted - Resolution](#)
- [Text adopted - EU-Viet Nam Investment Protection Agreement](#)
- [EU-Viet Nam Investment Protection Agreement \(Resolution\)](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Anna Cavazzini](#)
- [Video – Saskia Bricmont](#)

Further information:

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Energy Projects ‘PCI List’ (Motion of Objection)

Joint debate Monday, vote Wednesday

The European Parliament voted Wednesday on an objection to the "PCI list" (Projects of Common Interest) of energy infrastructure projects, eligible for EU funding, which will include gas and other fossil fuel projects. The Greens/EFA group oppose the funding of new fossil fuel projects and have submitted an objection to the fourth Union list of projects of common interest, which prioritises European energy infrastructure projects giving them easier access to funding and faster permitting procedures.

The current list contains superfluous gas projects, locking us into a fossil future for decades to come. Greens want the current list to be scrapped and replaced by projects that are in line with our climate goals and the European Green Deal.

Ciarán Cuffe MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Industry, Research and Energy Committee in the European Parliament, comments:

"Given the severity of the climate emergency and the little time we have left to avert climate catastrophe, it is wrong to spend more public money on fossil fuel investments. We are past the time to channel public money into expensive and unnecessary fossil fuel projects when Europe should be investing in energy efficiency and renewables."

- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Marie Toussaint](#)
- [Video – Michael Bloss](#)
- [Infographic – how other groups voted](#)

Further information
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Humanitarian situation of refugees at EU external borders

Debate Wednesday

MEPs debated Wednesday on the Humanitarian situation of refugees at EU external borders.

Among them, Greens/EFA MEPs **Saskia Bricmont**, **Erik Marquardt** and **Tineke Strik** had just returned from a fact-finding mission to Croatia's border with Bosnia and Herzegovina and to refugee camps. They confirmed reports of violent returns of asylum seekers and migrants from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Tineke Strik MEP, Greens/EFA group Member who was on the fact-finding mission, comments:

"The only people who are insisting that illegal pushbacks are not happening in the EU's largest external land border are the Croatian authorities. The UN agencies, the Croatian Ombudsman, civil society and migrants and asylum seekers we spoke to showed us clear evidence that this is happening. People reported being beaten up by the Croatian police, being forcibly taken back to Bosnia and Herzegovina and given no information or denied access to the asylum system. Nearly 40% of the individuals pushed back are children."

The mission aimed at investigating the reports by civil society organisations and UN agencies highlighting that Croatian police is pushing back people and restricts their right to access international protection in Croatia. Our MEPs met with Croatian authorities, civil society organisations and UN agencies, and visited a reception centre in Croatia and two refugee camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- [Press release](#)
 - [Video - Saskia Bricmont, Erik Marquardt and Tineke Strik in Croatia](#)
 - [Social media](#)
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AI: Automated Decision-Making Processes

Oral Question on Monday, with IMCO resolution vote on Wednesday

MEPs adopted Wednesday a resolution, first initiated by the Greens/EFA Group, on automated decision-

making processes, which is the general term to include AI with less developed decision-making systems. The Greens/EFA are calling for the use of non-discriminatory data sets, transparent and explainable algorithms and strict supervision to protect the public from biased decision-making and breaches of our fundamental rights. The Commission will publish a first communication on the topic on 19th February.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Petra De Sutter](#)

Further information

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Illegal trade in companion animals

Debate Tuesday, vote Wednesday

The European Parliament adopted Wednesday, by a large majority, a resolution on illegal trade in companion animals.

Each year a significant number of companion animals are illegally traded across the Member States. It has become a major source of income for organised crime, with serious implications for animal welfare, public health and consumer protection.

The resolution, strengthened by a number of amendments co-tabled by our Green MEP working on the file, addresses a number of issues related to the illegal trafficking of companion animals. It calls for compatible systems of identification and registration, an EU Action Plan, improved law enforcement and tougher sanctions, and better cooperation, communication and training for customs and veterinary authorities.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Video – Francisco Guerreiro](#)

Further information

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Gender Equality Strategy

Debate Wednesday

MEPs held a debate Wednesday on the EU's Gender Equality Strategy, due to be published on 5 March.

The EU will finally have a Gender Equality Strategy that will mark the goals and actions to advance towards gender equality for the next years. The Greens/EFA Group have been asking for this strategy for last 5 years. We now want to see real commitment and ambition and not just nice words without concrete actions and targets. We call for an EU Strategy that includes:

- Legislative measures on Pay Transparency and to combat Gender-Based Violence.
- A clear commitment and actions to fight against the backlash on gender equality taking place in many member states (especially on sexual and reproductive health and rights) and to support women's rights organizations and activists on the ground.
- Action to include the gender perspective in the Green New Deal and a roadmap to implement gender budgeting in the EU.

- [Video – Terry Reintke](#)
- [Greens/EFA priority – Women's Rights](#)

Further information

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 - [Child labour in mines in Madagascar](#)
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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary debriefing: 13 March 2020

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