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Brussels Agenda

Weekly preview of the Greens/EFA group - 8-12 Nov. 2010

EP priorities (full text below):

- **Phasing out coal subsidies (economic committee vote, Tues.)**
- **EU rules for hedge funds (plenary debate Weds., vote Thurs.)**
- **Transatlantic data protection (plenary debate Weds., vote Thurs.)**
- **EU funds for energy efficiency and renewables (plenary debate and vote Thurs.)**

Other EU priorities:

- **EU enlargement strategy and accession prospects (Commission, Tues.)**
- **Meeting Europe's energy challenges - 2011-20 strategy (Commission, Weds.)**
- **Reforming EU cohesion funds (Commission, Weds.)**

Greens/EFA events:

- **General Motors restructuring and job protection in Belgium - EU Commission intervention (press conference, Tues.)**
- **US elections and their impact on EU-US relations (hearing, Weds.)**
- **Strengthening European disaster response (hearing, Weds.)**

Phasing out coal subsidies

Economic affairs committee legislative vote - Tues. 9 Nov.

The EP economic affairs committee votes on a proposal to phase-out subsidies to coal mines, until now exempted from EU state aid rules, with coal producing regions (notably in Spain and Germany) lobbying to weaken the proposal. Clearly, with the industry in decline, there is a need to support restructuring and the retraining of workers in the sector. However, the Greens believe that if the EU is serious about its energy and climate change goals it needs to phase-out distorting fossil fuel subsidies, which give this dirty fuel source an unfair advantage over other energy sources. The Commission proposal is a bare minimum to this end.

EU rules for hedge funds

Plenary debate Weds. 10 Nov. - legislative vote Thurs.

MEPs are set to vote on a compromise proposal on new EU rules for 'alternative funds' (including hedge

funds) after a deal was reached between the Council and Parliament. Meaningful EU-level regulation is necessary to limit the damaging role of speculative funds, as seen both in the financial crisis and currently in bond markets. However, the Greens are concerned that the deal falls short of what is required to effectively regulate hedge funds and that the provisions on the access of third country funds to the European market are insufficient. (see latest press release)

Transatlantic data protection

Plenary debate Weds. 10 Nov. - vote Thurs.

MEPs will discuss a forthcoming data protection agreement with the US. The Greens want to ensure this agreement guarantees respect of civil liberties and ensures EU data protection rights are respected if data gets transferred to the US. EU policy on the exchange of passenger records with the US will also be on the agenda. The Greens believe current data transfers to the US should be immediately halted, as there is no proper mandate and the US system undermines EU data protection law. (see latest press release)

EU funds for energy efficiency and renewables

Plenary debate Thurs. 11 Nov. - vote Thurs.

With a deal having been reached on how to allocate unspent funding under the EU's economic recovery package, MEPs vote to approve the redistribution of these funds. The work of Green MEPs was crucial in ensuring this unspent funding will be redirected towards energy efficiency and renewables projects, which will have a real economic stimulus effect and help the EU achieve its energy and climate goals. (see press release)

EU enlargement strategy and accession prospects

Tues. 9 Nov. - Commission proposal

The EU Commission will adopt its 2010 enlargement package, setting out its general strategy Commission on enlargement, as well as assessing the membership applications of Albania and Montenegro, and the progress of other candidates for EU membership in the region. The Greens have long advocated the accession of western Balkan countries as soon as they are ready. The Greens also strongly believe that Turkish EU membership is crucial for the future of the EU and for Europe's strategic well-being, and believe the Commission should clearly state this, counteracting the polemic in some member states towards Turkish accession.

Meeting Europe's energy challenges - 2011-20 strategy

Weds. 10 Nov. - Commission proposal

The EU Commission is set to present its energy strategy for 2011-20. Energy efficiency and saving must be priorities of the strategy if the EU is to achieve its energy security and climate goals for 2020 and beyond (MEPs vote on a report on the EU energy efficiency action plan on Tuesday). The Greens have long called for the EU target of 20% energy savings by 2020 to be binding and this should be central to any strategy. Nuclear energy is dangerous and expensive, with the waste problem unresolved, and it should have no place in the strategy.

Reforming EU cohesion funds

Weds. 10 Nov. - Commission proposal

The European Commission will outline its plans on future priorities for and reform of EU cohesion policy in the 5th Cohesion Report. The Greens want to introduce the concept of GDP plus as an indicator for future regional development and want greener structural funds.

General motors restructuring and job protection in Belgium - Commission intervention

Tues. 9 Nov. 13.30 - press conference, European Parliament, Press Room PHS 0A50, with Belgian Green MEP Bart Staes

US elections and their impact on EU-US relations

Weds. 10 Nov. 16.30-18.30 - Greens/EFA hearing, European Parliament, Room ASP 1G3

This hearing will examine how the composition of the US Congress in the aftermath of this week's elections could affect transatlantic relationships. The hearing, which brings together experts in US and transatlantic policy, also comes at a timely juncture with preparations underway for the upcoming EU-US Summit.

Strengthening European disaster response

Weds. 10 Nov. 9-11.15 - Greens/EFA hearing, European Parliament, Room ASP 3G2

With the European Commission having just presented proposals for strengthening EU crisis response, this hearing will bring together experts to discuss the Commission's proposals and how to strengthen EU disaster response.

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