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Debriefing of the April Plenary Session

22 - 25 April 2024

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Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament approved the Commission's legislative proposal from the 15th of March to abolish, exempt or derogate from the environmental standards governing the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). During today's vote, the Greens/EFA Group again opposed this legislation, which weakens the CAP's environmental conditionality rules and even goes so far as to remove fundamental ecological and agronomic elements that have been in place for decades, sliding back to 2013 and even to 2003 on good farming practices beneficial not only for climate and biodiversity, but also for farmers' adaptation to climate change and reducing their dependencies on pesticides, fertiliser and feed.

The Greens/EFA Group has made concrete proposals to improve farmers' revenues: a fairer redistribution of CAP subsidies towards small & medium farms, a guarantee that prices paid to farmers reflect the evolution of production costs, and better protection against unfair imports from third countries. Today those who, only weeks ago, were side by side with farmers in the streets claiming they were fighting for better revenues for farmers just voted down all those proposals.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Greens/EFA Vice President and Vice President of the Environmental committee,

comments:

"With this vote, the Parliament is making a mistake, with serious consequences for the survival of farmers and our food security. The changes introduced by the Commission removes or weakens important parts of the GAEC good farming practice standards that enable farmers to adapt to climate change and reduce dependencies on costly pesticides, fertiliser, and feed. These changes also undermine the EU's climate, biodiversity, soil protection, and protein strategies.

- Text adopted
- Press release

Gender Based Violence Directive

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament voted in favour of the Gender Based Violence Directive. This is the first ever piece of EU legislation on violence against women and domestic violence, establishing harmonized minimum standards across the EU for the protection of women and girls from several forms of violence, including cyberviolence. It is a major victory for the feminist movement and a huge step forward in terms of tackling violence against women and girls at EU level. The Greens/EFA Group has long been in the forefront in calling for this directive.

Diana Riba i Giner MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur directive in the Women's Rights and Gender Equality committee, comments

"This is a historic victory for feminists and the fight for gender equality across Europe. Finally, the EU is taking big steps towards the first ever legislative document combating gender-based violence on EU level. However, the initial ambitious proposal for a new directive was severely watered down by the Council's restrictive approach, especially with regards to the exclusion of rape as a criminal offence from the directive. Nevertheless, for many member states this directive establishes new minimum standards that will help to improve the lives of women and girls in all their diversity and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence in our society."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

EU Forced Labour Regulation

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament voted on the "Regulation on Prohibiting products made with forced labour on the EU market". The plenary vote will take place tomorrow. This new legislation marks a crucial step towards putting human rights at the core of the EU's trade policy and the single market. The new regulation will block goods linked to forced labour from accessing the EU market and ensure that those products that are already on the market have to be removed. This EU ban will complement other efforts to address the root causes of forced labour in EU value chains, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.

Anna Cavazzini, Greens/EFA MEP, Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the file, comments:

"We will finally no longer have products made with forced labour. A total of 27.6 million people worldwide are victims of forced labour, and the solar panels or T-shirts they produce often end up in our stores and then in our homes. This is now over. The EU will use its market power to fight forced labour around the world. This new law is a milestone for sustainable supply chains. This is good news for consumers, and also for European companies, which are currently suffering from imports dumping from regions with forced labour."

Saskia Bricmont MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the International Trade Committee, comments:

"This regulation is a huge victory in the fight against human exploitation. For years now, the Greens/EFA Group has been at the forefront fighting for a law to ban forced labour. Despite the very difficult negotiations with the Member States, we managed to ensure that the ban fully applies to products made with state-imposed forced labour. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in imposing that remediation should be a condition to lift a ban on a product. But the regulation at least acknowledges the relevance of taking meaningful action against forced labour through remediation for victims."

- Text adopted
- Social media

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive

The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the adoption of mandatory EU due diligence legislation, which it has long called for. For the first time, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights will be codified in EU law and businesses will be obliged to conduct environmental and human rights due diligence in their chains of activities. Beneficiaries of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) will be the millions of people in modern slavery and other victims of corporate negligence and abuse. Responsible companies will also benefit from a level playing field and businesses will finally get more engaged in the fight against climate change. The Greens/EFA Group has long championed legislation that will improve the lives of countless people and create a more socially responsible business environment.

Heidi Hautala MEP, European Parliament Vice-President, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the Directive in the Legal Affairs committee, and chair of the European Parliament Working Group on Responsible Business Conduct, comments:

"The vote today represents the culmination of years of work and is a joint achievement by a broad coalition of actors, including lawmakers, civil society organisations, leading businesses, academia, and trade unions. The directive would surely have failed in the Council without an unprecedented push from all these actors, and the great work of the Belgian presidency.

- Text adopted
- Press release

Right to Repair & Eco-design

On Tuesday, MEPs voted in favour of the Right to Repair and the Eco-design Regulation. These long-awaited victories will revolutionise our consumption habits, not only by extending the lifespan of consumer products, resulting in substantial savings for consumers, but also by paving the way for the creation of numerous jobs, and saving billions in energy and raw materials. The Greens/EFA Group has long been

advocating for an overhaul of current practices, and welcomes both these files, which pave the way towards a more affordable, sustainable, and circular future for consumers.

Sara Matthieu MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the Eco-design Regulation for the ENVI committee, comments:

"The new law on circular product design is a victory in our fight for the environment and the climate. Our clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, and a long list of other products will be designed to be more repairable, reusable, and recyclable. This law will also prohibit manufacturers from destroying their unsold and returned clothes and shoes in incinerators or dumping them in landfills, putting an end to a reckless practice that harms our planet.

Anna Cavazzini MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on Right to Repair for the IMCO committee, comments:

"The new right to repair law is a true revolution. By making repair faster, easier, and more affordable, we weaken the power of corporations like Apple, who will no longer dictate the lifespan of our products.

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Economic governance reform

MEPs voted Tuesday on the outcome of trialogue negotiations for the reform of the EU's economic governance framework, otherwise known as the EU's fiscal rules. The reform is overly focused on debt reduction and will lead to a return of austerity, at a time when the EU urgently needs to boost investment. The unnecessary and ideological obsession with debt-reduction will force governments to choose between investments and social spending. This approach has failed to learn the lessons of the financial crisis and will result in enormous socio-economic costs with long lasting effects. The Greens/EFA Group call for rules that maintain debt sustainability instead of prioritising debt reduction over more pressing policy priorities such as the green transition and war on our doorstep.

Philippe Lamberts MEP, President of the Greens/EFA Group, and member of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, comments:

"These new budgetary rules will impose a straitjacket on all EU Member States. It will deprive governments of the financial resources needed to guarantee a thriving economy, social services, and climate action. This obsession with debt reduction will inevitably lead to a return of austerity, at a time when the EU urgently needs to boost investment.

Texts adopted:

- Effective coordination of economic policies and multilateral budgetary surveillance
- Speeding up and clarifying the implementation of the excessive deficit procedure – amending Regulation
- Requirements for budgetary frameworks of the Member States – amending Directive

- Press release
- Social media

Hungary

MEPs voted on Wednesday on the situation surrounding the rule of law in Hungary. The Greens/EFA Group have spearheaded efforts for this mandate for the European Parliament to hold the Council and Commission to account over the situation in Hungary. The latest resolution contains a comprehensive review of developments in Hungary since 2022 and calls on the Belgian Presidency of the Council to move forward with recommendations under the Article 7 procedure ahead of hearings in June. The resolution also reminds the Council that the upcoming Hungarian Presidency of the Council is deeply problematic with potential for follow-up action by the next mandate of the European Parliament. The Greens/EFA Group will continue to fight for the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights in Hungary and anywhere European values are under threat.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Greens/EFA Group Member and European Parliament Rapporteur on the situations in Hungary, comments:

"Today's report takes stock of just how far Hungary has fallen from the path of European values and the rule of law. It's sad that we end another Parliamentary mandate with no end in sight to the rule of law crisis. Instead of continuously attempting to bargain with Orban, the Council must move forward on the Article 7 process. It's time for the Council to finally issue recommendations to Hungary on how to improve the situation.

- Text adopted
- Press release

Anti-Money Laundering

On Wednesday, members of the European Parliament voted on the agreements on a series of laws that will ramp up the EU's fight against money laundering. The Anti-Money Laundering package will see the creation of a new EU AML Authority (AMLA), and update and widen the scope of existing rules to close loopholes for money laundering in Europe. New rules will apply to football clubs and agents, high net worth individuals, luxury goods such as private jets, cash limitations, along with a meaningful blacklist of third countries. There will be new limitations on cash and crypto-assets, and measures against golden visas.

Kira Peter Hansen MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, comments:

"Today's vote on the anti-money laundering package is a huge leap forward in the fights against illicit financial flows in Europe. The new rules will cover areas that previously could attract illicit funds but had fallen under the radar of authorities or out of the scope of previous legislation. New rules will apply to football clubs and agents, high net worth individuals, luxury goods such as private jets, cash limitations and politically exposed persons. Finally, there will be a meaningful blacklist of third countries with poor money laundering records.

Texts adopted

- The sixth Anti-Money Laundering Directive
- Anti-Money Laundering Regulation
- Establishing the Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism

- Press release

Ethics Body

On Thursday**,** the European Parliament voted on the agreement reached on the joint creation of a new EU Ethics Body. The Greens/EFA Group have long been calling for an EU Ethics Body to help improve the integrity and accountability of the EU institutions, with Daniel Freund's report on the need for an EU ethics body back in 2021. The Greens/EFA Group led the push following the Qatargate revelations to move forward on negotiations for the body.

Daniel Freund MEP, Greens/EFA Group Rapporteur on the EU Interinstitutional Body for Ethical Standards, comments:

"The stories of lobbyists drafting vital laws, Commissioners walking through the revolving door and corrupt politicians hiding bags of cash under the bed must end. The new EU Ethics Body is a ground-breaking first step to better enforce rules for politicians, to fight corruption, and to protect the integrity of EU institutions.

"The inclusion of checks on individual cases by independent experts is essential to guarantee that this body will be effective. It's quite clear that the institutions' reliance on self-regulation has failed to stop cases of corruption or the misuse of power. Independent experts will help ensure that the public interest counts more than the money behind big lobbying firms and large corporations.

"It is very welcome that we will finally have an ethics body to improve the accountability of the EU institutions, which we have long fought for. However, we will not stop fighting to improve the Ethics Body, to give it more teeth and more scope in order to make the EU institutions a beacon of integrity and accountability."

- Press release
- Social media

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- Azerbaijan, notably the repression of civil society and the cases of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu and Ilhamiz Guliyev
- Proposed repeal of the law banning female genital mutilation in The Gambia
- Attempts to reintroduce a foreign agent law in Georgia and its restrictions on civil society
- The new security law in Hong Kong and the cases of Andy Li and Joseph John
- Iran's unprecedented attack against Israel and the need for de-escalation and an EU response
- Russia's undemocratic presidential elections and their illegitimate extension to the occupied territories
- New allegations of Russian interference in the European Parliament, in the upcoming EU elections and the impact on the Union

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