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Debriefing of the December plenary session

11-14 December 2023

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European Council Summit

MEPs debated Wednesday the upcoming European Council Summit (EUCO), taking place in Brussels on December 14 & 15. At the EUCO, EU leaders are scheduled to discuss a range of pressing issues for the bloc including: Ukraine, the Middle East, the MFF, and enlargement. Ahead of the EUCO summit, Hungarian PM Viktor Orban is threatening to block assistance to Ukraine and Kyiv's progress towards EU membership. The Greens/EFA Group calls on EU leaders not to give in to Orban's blackmailing tactics and to push ahead with EU support for Ukraine. Leaders of the main democratic political groups in the European Parliament sent a [letter](#) to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Some positive news still came from the EUCO. Our Group welcomes the decision to open accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. A disappointing agreement was also reached on the revision of the EU's seven-year budget. The amount is one third of what Commission President von der Leyen proposed and substantially lower than what is needed.

Greens/EFA Group President Philippe Lamberts MEP, commented:

“We welcome the news that Ukraine and Moldova can start the accession process and take their rightful

place as EU Members. EU leaders have avoided the worst possible outcome and managed to show support to Ukraine by opening accession talks. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has backed down from his threats of a veto over Ukraine. However, if this is the result of a ten-billion-euro bribe then this is an unacceptable way for the EU to do business.”

- [Press release - EUCO](#)
- [Press release - Rule of Law in Hungary](#)

Fiscal rules

The European Parliament’s Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON) voted in favour Monday on the reform of the EU’s fiscal rules. Sadly, a reform of these rules is likely to force more austerity on national governments and limit the amounts they can spend in times of crisis.

Europe urgently needs a departure from the counter-productive and inconsistently applied ‘Stability and Growth Pact.’ However, the reform of the fiscal rules as it stands is overly focused on debt reduction and will lead to further austerity, at a time when we need to boost investment. The EPP’s dogmatic obsession with debt-reduction will make governments choose between investments and social spending with enormous societal and political consequences.

Philippe Lamberts MEP, President of the Greens/EFA Group and Member of the ECON Committee negotiating this file, commented:

“A decade and a half since the financial crisis and politicians from the EPP, S&D and Renew Groups still have failed to grasp the impact of hard-line fiscal policies on people’s lives and on the economy. Today’s vote will make it harder for national governments to borrow and spend on projects that are needed to overcome the multiple crises we face and to ensure that we have a strong economy that is able to handle future ones.”

- [Press release](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Social media - Video Philippe Lamberts](#)

COP28 - world climate conference

On the initiative of the Greens/EFA, MEPs debated Thursday the outcome of the 28th World Climate Conference in Dubai. Our Group welcomes the last-minute breakthrough towards phasing out oil, coal, and gas in energy systems.

Bas Eickhout, Greens/EFA member of the European Parliament delegation to COP28, commented:

“The World Climate Summit marks a breakthrough to end the fossil fuel era. For the first time ever, the world commits to exit from oil, gas, and coal. The clear commitment to reach the target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degree goes beyond the Paris World Climate Summit. The business model of the fossil lobby faces the end. Investing in renewables will save the planet from the brink of collapse and boost investments. The COP28 ended with more than expected, still more efforts will be needed to reach the 1.5 target.”

Jutta Paulus, Green/EFA member of the European Parliament delegation to COP28, commented:

“We are facing the end of the fossil era. We shall not rely on commitments only. We now face the task of setting clear and binding dates for the phase out of oil, coal, and gas. Commitments to the end of the fossil era need to be translated into clear climate targets. We call on the European Commission to present a clear plan on how to make the EU climate neutral by 2040.”

- [Press release](#)
 - [Greens/EFA demands – COP28](#)
 - [Social media](#)
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Rainbow families

MEPs voted Wednesday on the Report on the Regulation for cross-border recognition of parenthood, which urges the European Council to adopt the regulation with unanimity. Rainbow families continue to face discrimination, in particular when exercising their free movement rights in the EU. There are still eleven Member States in which a child cannot have two women or two men as their legal parents.

All Member States are bound to act in the best interest of a child, including by safeguarding the fundamental right of every child to family and the prohibition to discriminate against a child based on their parents' marital status or sexual orientation, or the way the child was conceived. The regulation aims to ensure the right to family and equal treatment of all children in cross-border matters.

Sergey Lagodinsky MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the Regulation for cross-border recognition of parenthood in the Legal Affairs Committee, comments:

“It is the duty of Member States to protect and safeguard the rights of the child. These fundamental rights include the right of each child to have a family, and the right to freedom from discrimination based on their parents' marital status or sexual orientation, or the way the child was conceived.”

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA MEP and Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTIQ rights, comments:

“We Greens/EFA welcome the passing of this vote in the European Parliament, which calls on the European Council to adopt this regulation with unanimity. Every family must be equal under European law, and it is imperative that this includes Rainbow Families.”

- [Text adopted](#)
 - [Press release](#)
 - [Social media](#)
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Israel/Gaza debate

Members of the European Parliament debated the need to release all hostages, to achieve a humanitarian ceasefire and the prospect of the two-state solution.

- [Plenary video - Jordi Solé](#)

Sakharov Prize

On 12 December, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Jina Mahsa Amini and the women of Iran. The Sakharov Prize is awarded to individuals and organisations defending human rights and freedoms. The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the awarding of the prize to Jina Mahsa Amini and the women of Iran.

Mental Health

The European Parliament adopted Tuesday a report on Mental Health. The report reflects Greens/EFA priorities, such as equal access to high-quality and affordable mental health care and treatment for all individuals, especially those who belong to marginalised and vulnerable communities.

The report also emphasises the importance of improving prevention and reducing environmental and societal risk factors, and the need to improve young people's mental health.

We stand for a Europe that values the well-being of every individual and provides equal access to mental health care and treatment. We need an EU strategy to guarantee the right to mental health services, especially for young people.

- [Text adopted](#)
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Addictive design of online services and consumer protection in the EU single market

The European Parliament adopted a proposal calling for rules against addictive design of apps and smartphones. The report is aimed at tackling how big tech companies design products to keep consumers glued to their devices. It introduces a number of new concepts for consumer law in the text, which will be of particular importance for the Commission's current overhaul of consumer protection legislation.

- [Text adopted](#)
 - [Press release](#)
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[in Tibet](#)

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