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Debriefing of the December Plenary Session

12-15 December 2022

Table of Contents

1. **Corruption affair in the European Parliament/Qatar**
2. **Pay transparency**
3. **Sean Binder case**
4. **Aviation agreement with Qatar**
5. **Statement by Hannah Neumann on Iran**
6. **European Council Summit & the rule of law**
7. **2022 Sakharov Prize**
8. **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**

Corruption affair in the European Parliament/Qatar

On Thursday, the European Parliament voted for a series of measures aimed at strengthening the fight against corruption, following the revelations in the ‘Qatargate’ scandal. The measures include a cooling off period for former MEPs to prevent revolving doors, prohibiting financial ties with lobbyists, stricter rules on ‘friendship groups’, improved whistleblower protection, strengthening the capacities of OLAF and the EPPO, strengthening of the Transparency Register and extending it to third parties, a Special Inquiry Committee and a bureau Vice President tasked with anti-corruption.

Philippe Lamberts MEP, President of the Greens/EFA Group, comments:

“The revelations have shocked but not surprised us. Corruption is possible when the light of transparency and accountability is missing. Right now, we must shine that light on our institutions. We need to urgently reform our institutions to build back the trust that this institution deserves as the House of European democracy. We need the tools to prevent any potential corruption cases in the Parliament and beyond.”

“From tightening the obligations to register lobby meetings from changing the rules around gifts, travel, and expenses. We have the will and the chance for a total overhaul of our ethics system. Today’s vote shows the

Parliament stands united in the fight against corruption and we take the opportunity to bring about real and far-reaching reforms.”

Terry Reintke MEP, President of the Greens/EFA Group, comments:

“We are shocked and angered by the Qatargate revelations, but we are turning this anger into resolve. We will root out and prevent corruption across the EU institutions. We must take this opportunity to bring about the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and integrity, and it will take the strong and united will of all democratic political groups in this House.

“Our Group has long called for an independent ethics body with the power of investigation and subpoena to look into any possible breaches of trust across the EU institutions. We need an Inquiry Committee in the Parliament to look into the scandal and we should have a position in the Bureau devoted entirely to anti-corruption. We must create an environment where it is impossible for the abuse of power for private gain to take place.”

- [Text Adopted](#)
- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
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- [Social Media – Twitter: Erik Marquardt](#)
- [Social Media – Twitter: Jordi Solé](#)

Pay Transparency

On Thursday, the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission reached an agreement on a new EU directive on pay transparency. The directive aims to ensure equal pay in the EU by highlighting the pay gap and giving employees more rights when it comes to pay. Greens/EFA strongly welcome the outcome of the trilogue negotiations.

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, Greens/EFA MEP and European Parliament rapporteur for the Pay Transparency directive in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, comments:

“With this pay transparency agreement, the EU makes it clear the gender pay gap needs to be closed. That women are paid less than men should be a thing of the past. Today, we are making it clear that the EU takes gender equality seriously. Pay transparency is one of the best tools we have to close the pay gap and we are left with an ambitious agreement that can help end pay inequality in the EU. This directive will be written into the history books.

“In the trilogue negotiations we managed to strengthen the text so that employers with more than a hundred employees had to publicly disclose their pay gap.’ The legislation will strengthen both employees, union representatives and trade unions in highlighting and raising equal pay issues. At the same time, we will put an end to secrecy clauses and ensure that employees are not prevented from talking about their pay.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media – Twitter: Kira Marie Peter-Hansen](#)

Sean Binder case, Lesbos, Greece

On 10th January, more than 20 humanitarian workers will go on trial on the Greek island of Lesbos for charges related to their efforts to assist refugees in need. Charges, which Amnesty International has described as “trumped up”, “unfair”, and “baseless”.

On Tuesday, Greens/EFA MEP Grace O’Sullivan was joined in the European Parliament by two of the defendants, Sean Binder, and Peter Wittenburg, along with their lawyer. Together, they called for the Greek authorities to drop the charges.

Activists face spurious charges for helping people, while Europe turns a blind eye to human rights abuses on our borders. This is not fair, and organizations involved in helping people at sea have the full solidarity of the Greens/EFA.

- [Watch the press briefing here](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Grace O’Sullivan](#)
- [Social Media - Twitter: Saskia Bricmont](#)

Aviation agreement with Qatar

Karima Delli, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism, comments:

“Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, has reaffirmed her willingness to do transparency on all the legislative files that may be under the influence of networks linked to foreign interests.

Following her words, in an email for internal use, I invited the TRAN Committee, which I chair, to make sure that this requirement of transparency on all the past legislative works and on current bilateral agreements is guaranteed.

The ongoing ratification procedure of the aviation agreement with Qatar does not make any exception. It is my duty to ensure that all the conditions of transparency will be brought together at the moment of the beginning of the procedure in the European Parliament.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media – Twitter: Karima Delli](#)

Statement by Hannah Neumann on Iran

On Monday, the Iranian regime announced the addition of MEP Hannah Neumann to their list of sanctioned individuals

Hannah Neumann, Chair of the Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula and Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, comments:

“In the end, this is good news because it shows that the Iranian regime cares about what I say. It shows that it tries, by all means, to stifle freedom of speech of those who denounce the atrocities and crimes it commits. The executions must stop right now.”

“I can assure you that my fight for freedom in Iran, and all around the world, will continue unabated. And my full solidarity is with all those protesting peacefully in the streets of Iran and in regime prisons.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Social Media – Instagram: Greens/EFA](#)
- [Social Media – Twitter: Hannah Neumann](#)

European Council Summit & the rule of law

On Monday night, a meeting of EU Permanent Representatives agreed to a package deal on several files under the Czech Presidency of the Council. The deal includes an agreement on the long delayed global minimum tax rate for multinationals of 15%, the unblocking of €18 billion of aid to Ukraine, the approval of the Hungarian Recovery and Resilience Plan and the continuation of the conditionality mechanism for Hungary with a suspension rate of 55%. The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the approval of the long-blocked files but laments that so many vital files were held up for so long by the national veto of the Hungarian government.

Terry Reintke MEP, Greens/EFA Group President, comments:

“The agreement to maintain the conditionality mechanism is very welcome. It shows that member states have finally agreed that Orbán went too far. It shows that there is a majority for action on the rule of law in the Council. The conditionality mechanism is alive. This deal shows that the EU is using the tools at its disposal to start tackling the rule of law crisis in Europe.”

“The aid package to Ukraine is long overdue and essential to support the brave Ukrainians fighting against Putin’s war of aggression. However, the fact that Viktor Orbán’s veto held up urgent aid to people suffering from the war in Ukraine is unacceptable. We must never let bullying and blackmail win out.”

Philippe Lamberts MEP, Greens/EFA Group President, comments:

“The approval of the global minimum corporate tax rate is welcome and long overdue. For too long, large corporations have been able to play EU national tax rates off against each other in a race to the bottom. This deal is the first step on the road to tax fairness for multinationals.

“However, this is no way to do business. We cannot have key files constantly up in the air because an autocrat like Viktor Orbán is trying to put the squeeze on his fellow EU leaders. It’s time to end national vetoes in the Council if the EU is to have effective policy making moving forward.”

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2022 Sakharov Prize

The Greens/EFA welcome the award of the Sakharov Prize to the brave people of Ukraine. The decision was taken unanimously by the Parliament's Conference of Presidents. The European Parliament also adopted a joint resolution on “90 years after the Holodomor: recognising the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

Viola Von Cramon, Vice-Chair of the delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee and Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs:

“This award recognizes Ukrainians who are fighting on the ground for their rights and our common democratic values. While this award will not bring back the lives of those lost and it cannot prevent more tragedies, we hope it will show our respect and continued support to the Ukrainians.”

“The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine leaves behind a trail of brutality, massacres, and torture. That is why we also welcome the common resolution that our Parliament is about to adopt condemning the Russian regime’s manipulation of historical memory. This resolution will recall the cruelty of the Soviet regime that caused the artificial famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine and committed a genocide against the Ukrainian people.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
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Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

On Tuesday, the negotiators of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission reached an agreement on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the agreement.

Manuela Ripa, Greens/EFA MEP and shadow rapporteur for the Greens/EFA Group, comments:

“CO2 is becoming the new currency of world trade. The border adjustment tax on carbon ensures that the external costs of harmful emissions are finally internalised into the final costs. This is an important step towards green global trade.”

“Today's decision to introduce a carbon border adjustment tax sets new standards for European and global industrial production. Averting CO2 will be rewarded and the switch to climate-neutral processes will finally be set in motion worldwide. In this way, third countries will also be given strong incentives to take stricter climate protection measures.”

- [Greens/EFA Press Release](#)
- [Manuela Ripa Press Release](#)
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