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Debriefing of the December plenary session

13 - 16 December 2021

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- Oral question - MeToo and harassment

MEASURES FOR THE EXTERNAL BORDER WITH BELARUS

On the initiative of the Greens/EFA Group, the European Parliament debated the Commission's proposed measures to tackle the situation on the Belarussian border. The proposals will allow Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to 're-direct' asylum seekers to a formal border crossing point, where they can be detained for up to 16 weeks. They reduce the reception conditions these Member States must grant asylum seekers. They also allow them to apply asylum procedures with fewer safeguards and to delay the registration of asylum claims for up to four weeks. Since the emergency measures were published, the Commission has put forward a new proposal for a Regulation which would give all Member States the option to apply these harmful derogations in a situation of 'instrumentalisation'. MEPs from across the political Groups raised the fact that these measures do nothing to help Member States at the borders. Instead, they undermine the right to seek asylum and put people's lives – as well as our EU values – in danger. The practice of push backs is banned under the Geneva Convention.

The Greens/EFA Group demands that the Commission change course and come out with a plan that respects human rights and the right to asylum.

- Plenary Speech Tineke Strik
- Plenary Speech Erik Marquardt

- Plenary Speech Viola von Cramon-Taubadel
- Plenary Speech Damien Careme
- Press release

DIGITAL MARKETS ACT

On Wednesday (December 15), the European Parliament voted on the Digital Markets Act, which, along with its sister legislation the Digital Services Act (DSA), has been heavily lobbied and debated. A few large online platforms (such as Facebook, Google, Apple, Amazon and Microsoft) increasingly control the entire digital ecosystem and have expanded in a network effect. These companies act as gatekeepers and can prevent new market entrants from competing with them. Such practices negatively impact competition and innovation across the single market and limit consumer choice. With this milestone report, the European Parliament has reinforced the initial proposal of the Commission to the benefit of consumers.

The Greens/EFA pushed for a ban on targeted advertising, in this particular context on minors. We also pushed for some interoperability provisions which, for example, would enable users to communicate with contacts on WhatsApp even if they are using Signal. Internal market rules must put the interests of consumers at their centre.

Marcel Kolaja MEP, Member of the Pirate Party and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, comments:

"Today the European Parliament laid another milestone on the road to democratising the internet. With interoperability, we will not be stuck in dominant social networks that monetize our data and target us with commercial offers based on our biggest fears or keep us locked in information bubbles. The European Parliament has sent a strong message to all internet users, who often do not have another choice than to accept the rules of dominant service providers, that Europe truly is fighting for their right to choose."

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Marcel Kojala
- Plenary Speech Alexandra Geese
- Plenary Speech Kim van Sparrentak
- Plenary Speech Rasmus Andresen
- Plenary Speech Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
- Plenary Speech Anna Cavazzini

SITUATION AT THE UKRAINIAN BORDER AND RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF UKRAINE

This week, the European Parliament voted on a resolution on the situation at the Ukrainian-Russian border which was adopted with a large majority. The Greens/EFA fully support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. We call on the EU to impose additional economic sanctions and to exclude Russia from the international payment system SWIFT if Russia continues to escalate tensions.

Viola von Cramon MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for Ukraine and negotiator on the resolution, comments:

“The EU cannot stand by while Russia bullies its close partner and threatens a scenario similar to the invasion and annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas. We demand a de-escalation of tensions and an immediate end to human rights violations in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. The EU continues to support the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and this position must be consistent: the EU must become independent of Russian gas and show energy solidarity with Ukraine.”

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Viola von Cramon-Taubadel
- Plenary Speech Bronis Rope
- Plenary Speech Marketa Gregorova
- Plenary Speech Sergey Lagodinsky
- Plenary Speech Jakob G. Dalunde

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: CYBERVIOLENCE

On Monday (December 13), the European Parliament voted on a report on combating gender-based cyberviolence. Gender-based cyberviolence is a continuation of offline gender-based violence, which has increased with the rapid spread of mobile information and the use of social media. This online form of gender-based violence is an extension of the offline form and tends to be more severe for people in vulnerable situations, such as women belonging to racialized communities, women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ people. The absence of a harmonised definition of gender-based cyberviolence at EU level has led to differences in the way Member States tackle it. The Greens/EFA Group are calling for a comprehensive directive to combat all forms of gender-based violence, including cyberviolence, which is the best way to put an end to gender-based violence.

Sylwia Spurek MEP, Greens/EFA Vice Chair of the FEMM Committee and co-rapporteur on the file, comments:

“Gender-based cyberviolence has a devastating effect on individuals’ dignity and lives. It is part of a continuum of violence and often spills over into the offline world. It particularly affects activists, female journalists and politicians, women, and LGBTIQ people. It's about human rights and democracy"

“While this form of gender-based violence knows no borders, we still lack a common definition at EU-level, leaving victims with varying levels of protection across Member States. The definition of the categories of gender-based cyberviolence also vary across countries, leading to several gaps and differences in the ways in which it is tackled.

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Sylvia Spurek
- Plenary Speech Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
- Plenary Speech Alexandra Geese

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS IN POLAND

In recent weeks, Poland has proposed worrying legislative initiatives regarding sexual and reprodutive health and rights. This includes the creation of a pregnancy ‘registry’ that would amount to the surveillance of women and the creation of an Institute for Family and Demography with the power to collect data on pregnancies and miscarriages. These latest initiatives are part of a long decline in the rule of law in Poland

and the undermining of fundamental rights.
On Wednesday evening, the European Parliament discussed the plans to further undermine fundamental rights in Poland, in particular regarding the standards of the European Convention of Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

The Greens/EFA Group called for this debate. The Commission and Council must use all possible tools available to preserve the rule of law in Poland and to protect fundamental rights, and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Dr. Sylwia Spurek MEP, Vice Chair of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality committee, comments;

"Polish women live in fear. These are legitimate concerns. Based on the actions and ideas of the Polish government. Not only women in Poland live in fear, but also LGBTIQ people, refugees and migrants. It's time for the Commission to finally apply the conditionality regulation and use other available powers to prevent further human rights violations by the Polish government. We will always stand with everyone who defends freedom and fundamental rights."

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Sylwia Spurek
- Plenary Speech Terry Reintke
- Plenary Speech Alice Kuhnke
- Joint Letter - Concerns over breaches of the rule of law and further restrictions of fundamental rights in Poland

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AN EU BAN OF THE USE OF WILD ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES

Over one million EU citizens signed the EU Stop Circus Suffering petition, demanding the European Commission ban the use of wild animals in circuses in the European Union. On Thursday (16 December), in response to an oral question posed by MEPs, representatives of the European Commission refused to introduce such a ban, stating that it was out of their competence. They nonetheless recognised that concerns exist regarding illegal wildlife trade, public health, and security. NGOs and several scientific opinions show that the practice of using wild animals in circuses has no educational or cultural value, while being highly detrimental to the welfare of wild animals. The Greens/EFA Group has long called for a ban.

Eleonora Evi MEP, Vice-President of the Intergroup on Animal Welfare of the European Parliament, comments:

"We are disappointed with the decision taken today by the European Commission following the Parliament's call for the introduction of an EU-wide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses.

"The Commission has called on countries such as Italy, which currently have no ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, to introduce restrictions, bringing them into line with the majority of European countries where there are total or partial bans. We will continue to pursue an EU-wide ban until no animals have to suffer living in cages while performing for people's entertainment. The EU has the competence to act and the moral obligation to do so."

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Eleonora Evi
- Plenary Speech Tilly Metz
- Plenary Speech Francisco Guerreiro

- Plenary Speech Manuela Ripa
- Plenary Speech Caroline Roose

#METOO AND HARASSMENT

In October 2017, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the global “Me Too” campaign on sexual harassment. The resolution included several demands that have not been implemented yet: mandatory training on harassment prevention for all MEPs, professional and independent expertise in the internal procedures to deal with harassment cases, and an independent audit on the existing protocols.

On Thursday, the Parliament adopted a resolution regarding sexual harassment in the European Institutions. The resolution called for stronger measures against sexual harassment, including mandatory training for all MEPs on harassment prevention. The Greens/EFA Group called for an independent audit on the existing protocols, which is also included in the resolution. The same day a social media photo action was organised, where MEPs shared photos with signs in favour of the resolution.

- Resolution adopted by European Parliament
- Examples of Social Media Photo Action Tineke Strik, Kim van Sparrentak, Tilly Metz, Saskia Bricmont,
- Plenary Speech Terry Reintke
- Plenary Speech Ernest Urtasun
- Plenary Speech Sylwia Spurek
- Plenary Speech Hannah Neumann

GREENS/EFA ELECT PRESIDENTS & VICE PRESIDENTS OF GROUP

This week, the Greens/EFA Group elected their co-Presidents Ska Keller and Philippe Lamberts to serve as leaders of the Group until the current Parliamentary term ends in 2024. The Greens/EFA also elected the Vice Presidents of the Group.

Full list of elected positions

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