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Debriefing of the February I plenary session

5-8 February 2024

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EU 2040 Climate Targets

MEPs held a debate following the Commission’s presentation of its proposed 2040 climate target for the EU.

The Commission recommends a 90% reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 (compared to 1990 levels). The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change stressed that the EU has already exhausted its fair share of the remaining global greenhouse gas budget to keep a maximum of 1.5° global warming and urges the EU to aim for a higher level of ambition to minimise our emissions.

The Greens/EFA Group are calling for net-zero GHG emissions reduction by 2040. The EU needs to live up to the commitments made at the COP28 climate conference to phase out oil, coal, and gas to save the climate, boost investments into electrification, renewable energies and insulation of buildings and make our economy and industry fit for global competition. Replacing fossil fuels with a massive deployment of renewables and energy efficiency must be at the forefront of the EU’s path towards climate neutrality.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA Group and Vice-Chair of the Environment

Committee, commented:

"The analysis clearly shows that more ambition is better for the climate, our health, and our economy. However, when it comes to fossil fuels, the Commission recognises that an economy free of fossil fuels will be cheaper for our citizens and our industry and it will cut off dependence on foreign autocrats. But the Commission does not go so far as to propose a fully renewables-based economy by 2040. Instead, it still relies on nuclear and carbon capture even in the energy sector. This is both expensive and unnecessary and is above all counterproductive in our race for global competition for green technologies. We need a full phase-out of all fossil fuels in EU law now. We cannot linger any longer: We need a strong green industrial policy and to ramp-up European investments. The climate and our economy depend on it."

Pär Holmgren MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Environment Committee, commented:

"It is not enough to simply look 16 years ahead and hope for technological development or fantasise about new nuclear power to reduce emissions sometime in the late 2030s. We need to align all legislation with the Paris Agreement this decade. Right now, the EU will not meet our current climate targets. Member States need to step up urgently."

- Press release
- Social media

Farmers' Protests

MEPs debated Wednesday the ongoing farmers' protests unfolding across Europe. The roots of these protests are in our economic system which is failing our farmers: small farmers are struggling with rising costs as the agro-industry giants profit.

The Greens/EFA Group calls for a profound reform of the CAP, adapting the national CAP strategic plans, and changing the system so all farmers can make a decent living from what they produce - instead of the enormous benefits enriching those who control the agro-industrial monopolies; inputs like pesticides, fertilisers, seeds, pharma, on one side and retailers and their unfair trading practices on the other. While many are exploiting the dissatisfaction of farmers across the Union to push an anti-green, anti-ecological, or even far-right narrative, the Greens/EFA stand in solidarity with farmers and peaceful protests - the producers of our food and custodians of our biodiversity. It is essential that we fix the social and economic aspects of the system so we can help farms adapt to the massive challenge of climate change and work towards a fair and just green transition, in collaboration with farmers across Europe.

Tilly Metz MEP, Greens/EFA member of the Agricultural Committee, commented:

"The farmers' protests come as no surprise to us. For too long, the EU agricultural policies have favoured big agri interest over the small farmers. And hardworking farmers find it difficult to make ends meet. Farmers are on the frontline of climate change, and already have to adapt to a hotter and drier climate. They know very well that without nature there is no food."

- Press release - Greens/EFA call on Commission and Council to fix EU's broken agricultural policies
- Video – Philippe Lamberts
- Social media - Letter to EU Commission calling for urgent action in response to farmers' protests
- Social media – Farmers' protests

Plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed

The European Parliament voted Tuesday on its new genomic techniques (NGTs) report, recently adopted by the Environment Committee.

The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament has criticised the Commission's plan to exempt NGTs from certain rules of the existing legal framework on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). By exempting the vast majority of NGTs (category 1 NGTs), from GMO risk assessment, monitoring, traceability and consumer labelling, the Commission fails to respect consumer's right to information as well as the precautionary principle, laid down in the EU.

Tilly Metz MEP, Greens/EFA Group Member of the AGRI Committee, commented:

"The alleged benefits of new genetic technologies do not justify exempting genetically modified products from existing rules on safety checks and transparency for consumers and will hinder the transition to sustainable agriculture. Even the United States has introduced labelling and traceability in the use of new genetic engineering techniques, while the EU is lagging far behind."

The Greens/EFA are calling for the Commission's proposal to be rejected, as it will once again benefit the genetic plant pharma industries to the detriment of farmers.

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Allegations of Russian interference in the democratic processes of the European Union

The European Parliament adopted Thursday a resolution on allegations of Russian interference in the democratic process of the European Union.

This debate follows media reports that MEP Tatjana Ždanoka had regular dealings with Russia's FSB's Fifth Service while serving as an MEP. We welcome the swift response of the European Parliament in launching official investigations into the matter. We also urge Latvian authorities to immediately assess whether or not Ms. Ždanoka can continue to sit as a Member of the European Parliament.

Sergey Lagodinsky MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the resolution on Russian interference, commented:

"Attempts at espionage and foreign interference with the European Parliament are major threats to our democracy. It is the duty of all political groups to recognise and fight these attempts, no matter their source. In the current case of an MEP accused of interacting with Russian intelligence authorities, we demand and support a complete internal examination and call on the competent authorities to thoroughly investigate."

Heidi Hautala, Greens/EFA MEP, European Parliament Vice-President and Chair in office of the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members, commented:

"We should not be naive, the European Parliament is not an espionage free zone. Now, an MEP is suspected of contacts with the Russian secret service. This case will be thoroughly investigated by the bodies of this House. However, it should not be treated as an isolated incident. At the moment, The Parliament is not sufficiently prepared to meet and combat the kind of threats that certain foreign powers, such as Russia, pose."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Rule of law and media freedom in Greece

MEPs voted Wednesday on a resolution on the rule of law and media freedom in Greece, despite a blocking attempt by the EPP Group.

The situation in Greece is drastically deteriorating under the EPP government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis. The country has seen the criminalisation of opponents of the government, failings in the rule of law, a crackdown on media freedom, the use of surveillance technologies at the border, attacks on LGBTIQ rights, and the criminalisation of both migrants and the NGO workers attempting to provide support to asylum seekers.

The Greens/EFA Group calls for the need for the Commission to look into the situation in Greece and to use all tools, including infringement procedures and financial measures, to stop violations of EU law. The EPP should stop shielding their ally in Athens from scrutiny.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield MEP, Greens/EFA co-signatory to the resolution, commented:

"The EPP would have you believe that Greece is a paradise of economic development, beautiful beaches, and a thriving democracy following the dark days of the financial crisis. But, behind the picture-perfect propaganda; fundamental rights, democracy and media freedom are under severe attack in Greece.

"*The use of surveillance technologies at the border and the criminalisation of both migrants and the NGO workers attempting to provide support to asylum seekers is shameful and must end."*

Petros Kokkalis MEP, Greens/EFA new member from Greece and co-signatory to the resolution, said:

"*This is the first time that the European Parliament is obliged to castigate the state of rule of law in Greece in the half century since the fall of the military Junta. This is a blight on Greece brought on by the New Democracy government.*

"A democracy that spies on journalists, opposition politicians, government and military officials, one that obstructs the work of independent authorities, oversteps the constitution, intimidates independent media with Slapps and manipulates parliamentary committees to shield those involved from justice is not a New Democracy, it's a maleocracy."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Two years of war on Ukraine: Unwavering EU Support

MEPs debated Tuesday the outcome of the 1st of February European Council Summit, with particular focus on the war on Ukraine. The Greens/EFA urge for quick delivery of support for Ukraine via the newly agreed Ukraine Facility.

- Press release - Greens/EFA welcome aid package for Ukraine

Quality Traineeships in the EU

The European Parliament held a debate Tuesday on quality traineeships in the EU, to ensure trainees are paid fairly. This follows the European Parliament's call last June for the Commission to come up with a strong legislative proposal to ensure internships are paid fairly. The Greens/EFA Group calls on the Commission to act on this call from 8 months ago and deliver its proposal.

- Sign our petition to ban unpaid internships
- Social media

Condemning Norway's recent decision to advance seabed mining in the Arctic

MEPs voted Wednesday on a resolution condemning Norway's recent decision to advance seabed mining in the Arctic. MEPs called on Norway to apply the precautionary principle and support the existing international moratorium on deep sea mining. The Greens/EFA have long called for a stronger protection of deep seabeds as well as the Arctic region.

- Text adopted
- Social media

TEU priorities for the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

MEPs voted on a resolution Thursday defining the EU's priorities for the 68th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Women and girls, particularly those who experience intersectional forms of discrimination, continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and the risk of social exclusion. Ahead of the UN CSW session, we ask the Council and EU Member States to take a unified position and commit to advancing towards a feminist foreign policy, to address the systemic root causes of women's poverty and to prioritise the investment in all public services and infrastructures.

- Text adopted

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- New wave of mass arrests in Belarus of opposition activists and their family members
- Increased number of executions in Iran, in particular the case of Mohammad Ghobadlou
- Recent attacks on Christmas Eve in Plateau State in Nigeria
- Russiagate: allegations of Russian interference in the democratic processes of the European Union
- Situation in Serbia following the elections
- Further repression against the democratic forces in Venezuela: attacks on presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado

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- EU's response to the increase in energy prices in Europe
- Situation of human rights in Haiti in particular related to gang violence
- Death of Mahsa Amini and the repression of women's rights protesters in Iran
- Media freedom crackdown in Myanmar, notably the cases of Htet Khine, Sithu Aung Myint and Nyein Aye
- Recent humanitarian and human rights situation in Tigray, Ethiopia, notably that of children
- Resolution on Russia's escalation of its war of aggression against Ukraine

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary debriefing: 1 March 2024

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Opinion

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Press release

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Press release

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