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News | 01.03.2024

Debriefing of the February II 2024 plenary session

26 - 29 February 2024

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Nature Restoration Law: Final vote on bringing back nature

Members of the European Parliament adopted Tuesday the Nature Restoration Law (NRL), one of the central laws of the Commission's Green Deal. The law was passed despite opposition from a toxic coalition of the centre-right, some liberals and the far-right. The Nature Restoration Law will provide the EU with an important building block to mitigate the climate crisis and adapt to climate change.

Jutta Paulus MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the Environment Committee, commented:

"This law is about saving the basis for our survival, our nature. Only by restoring destroyed ecosystems can we stop the extinction of species and the EU climate targets achieved. The loss of biodiversity threatens farmers. Without intact ecosystems, there is no clean drinking water, no clean air, and no fertile soil. And only healthy ecosystems can mitigate the effects of climate change such as droughts, fires and floods."

Bas Eickhout, Greens/EFA MEP and Vice-president of the Environmental Committee, said:

"Now, it is important that we make the Green Deal future-proof for the next legislative period. The EPP

must show that they stand behind the Green Deal and the head of the European Commission from their own party and won't fall for the populist call of the far right.”

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Social media](#)
- [Video](#)

Protection of the environment through criminal law

MEPs adopted Tuesday the final agreement on the Environmental Crimes Directive. This Directive outlines criminal offences, puts forward sanctions to protect the environment more effectively and puts an end to environmental impunity in the EU.

Thanks to the Greens/EFA, the final text includes a new provision on 'qualified offences' which allows for more severe punishment in Member States when these offences cause destruction, or widespread and substantial, irreversible, or long-lasting damage to an ecosystem, a habitat or the quality of air, soil, or water. These qualified offences are also defined as comparable to ecocide.

Marie Toussaint MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Legal Affairs Committee, and shadow on the directive, commented:

“This new directive is a victory for the environment. For the first time, the EU recognises the intrinsic value of nature and ecosystems in criminal law. The outdated 2008 directive needed to be revised as a matter of urgency. With this new text, the EU is adopting one of the world's most ambitious pieces of legislation to combat environmental crime. It will allow for a more effective and better protection of individuals who suffer as a result of such damage.”

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Social media](#)

The murder of Alexei Navalny

Following the murder of Alexei Navalny by the Russian authorities last Friday, Members of the European Parliament heard Wednesday the testimony of Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, and debated the need for EU action in support of political prisoners and oppressed civil society in Russia.

At the request of the Greens/EFA Group, a resolution on “the murder of Alexei Navalny and the need for EU action in support of political prisoners and oppressed civil society in Russia” was adopted Thursday.

Sergey Lagodinsky, Greens/EFA MEP and Lead Rapporteur for the resolution, commented:

“The Russian government and Vladimir Putin personally bear criminal and political responsibility for the murder of their strongest opponent, Alexei Navalny. This raises particularly the question of legitimacy of Vladimir Putin.

"Navalny joined the list of critics of the Russian regime who have died after standing up against the

autocracy and kleptocracy of the Kremlin. The EU has to do everything possible to call out the flagrant violations of human rights of this repressive regime.”

The Greens/EFA call for the immediate return of Alexei Navalny’s body to his family as well as an independent investigation into his death.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Social media video](#)

Data collection and sharing by short-term accommodation services

The European Parliament voted in favour of the trilogue deal on data collection on short-term rentals. With this regulation, the collection and access to data on short-term rental accommodation services will be improved, allowing local authorities to enforce the rules in place.

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA MEP and rapporteur on the file, said:

“Occasional renting out of rooms went from being a way for people to make some extra cash to a full-blown business model driven by investors. By taking houses off the market and driving up prices, short-term rentals have a negative impact on affordable housing in big cities and touristic areas and put the liveability of neighbourhoods under pressure.”

The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the deal, which includes harmonising registration requirements for hosts, clarifying rules to ensure registration numbers are displayed and checked, an obligation for the platforms to combat illegal rentals by performing random checks and streamlining data-sharing between online platforms and public authorities.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Social media](#)

Protection of journalists and human rights defenders from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings

The European Parliament voted Tuesday on the outcome of trilogue negotiations on the Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) Directive. SLAPPs are a particular form of harassment increasingly used against journalists and others, such as environmental and human rights defenders and whistle-blowers.

The Greens/EFA Group have long fought for an end to the use of SLAPPs, which can be used by governments, corporations, or powerful individuals against critical voices.

Marie Toussaint MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the file in the Legal Affairs Committee, said:

“Until now those who seek to expose the truth have faced costly and damaging and court proceedings that are manifestly unfounded and abusive. For too long, governments, corporations and powerful individuals have been able to silence journalists, environmental and human rights defenders, and whistle-blowers.”

Diana Riba i Giner MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the file in the Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs Committee, commented:

“From the dozens of SLAPPs against Daphne Caruana Galizia open at the time of her assassination to the legal action taken by Shell against Greenpeace, it’s clear that the corrupt, rich, and powerful have been able to use the legal system to attack their critics. That’s why it’s welcome that we will finally have EU-wide legislation designed to protect those seeking to speak out.”

Although incomplete and imperfect, the agreed text is a first step towards better protection for those who speak out and complements the EU’s Whistleblowing Directive.

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

Ukraine

MEPs voted Thursday on a joint resolution on the need for unwavering EU support for Ukraine after two years of Russia’s war of aggression. Tuesday, MEPs also voted on the establishment of the Ukraine Facility, with up to €50 billion for the period from 2024 to 2027 in grants and loans for recovery, reforms, and state budget needs, as part of the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which was adopted with a large majority.

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

“Last Saturday marked the second anniversary of Russia’s unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal war against Ukraine. This year also marks the ten-year anniversary of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts of the Donbas Region. Over the two years since the full-scale invasion, Russia has indiscriminately attacked residential areas and civilian infrastructures. In this Ukraine’s urgent time of need we must step up and support Kyiv in their struggle against Russian aggression.”

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

“We welcome the establishment of the Ukraine Facility, which is urgently needed for Kyiv to be able to continue in its fight. It will ensure the EU’s continued financial support for Ukraine at a time where it is most crucial, with €50 bn in loans and grants. It will also allow for stable and predictable financing.

The Greens/EFA Group calls on the EU and all western allies to continue their steadfast support for Ukraine and accelerate their military assistance.

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

Gaza

MEPs debated Tuesday the ongoing war in the Gaza strip, the recent decision by the ICJ and the developments in UNRWA. The Greens/EFA reiterate their call for a permanent ceasefire and for the EU to use all the tools at its disposal to bring an end to this conflict and alleviate the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

- [Plenary video – Jordi Solé](#)

Need to overcome the Council deadlock on the platform workers directive

MEPs debated Monday the need to overcome the Council deadlock on the platform workers directive. It is estimated that at least 4 million of people working through digital labour platforms are misclassified as self-employed instead of employees.

This allows digital labour platforms to evade labour, tax and social security legislation that apply to employees. The vote in Coreper which took place earlier in February was not successful due to the negative vote of France and the abstention of Germany, Greece, and Estonia.

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA MEP and shadow rapporteur on the file, commented:

"It seems that the millions of euros spent by lobbies have paid off. Macron and the German liberals apparently consider that the profits of big platform companies like Uber and Deliveroo are more important than improving working conditions for the most precarious workers."

The Greens/EFA Group calls for an end to this deadlock, to ensure every worker is compensated fairly and can work safely.

- [Press release](#)

Green/EFA motions for resolutions

- [Murder of Alexei Navalny and the need for EU action in support of political prisoners and oppressed civil society in Russia](#)
- [Need for unwavering support for Ukraine, after two years of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine](#)

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