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Debriefing of the March 2024 Plenary Session

11-14 March 2024

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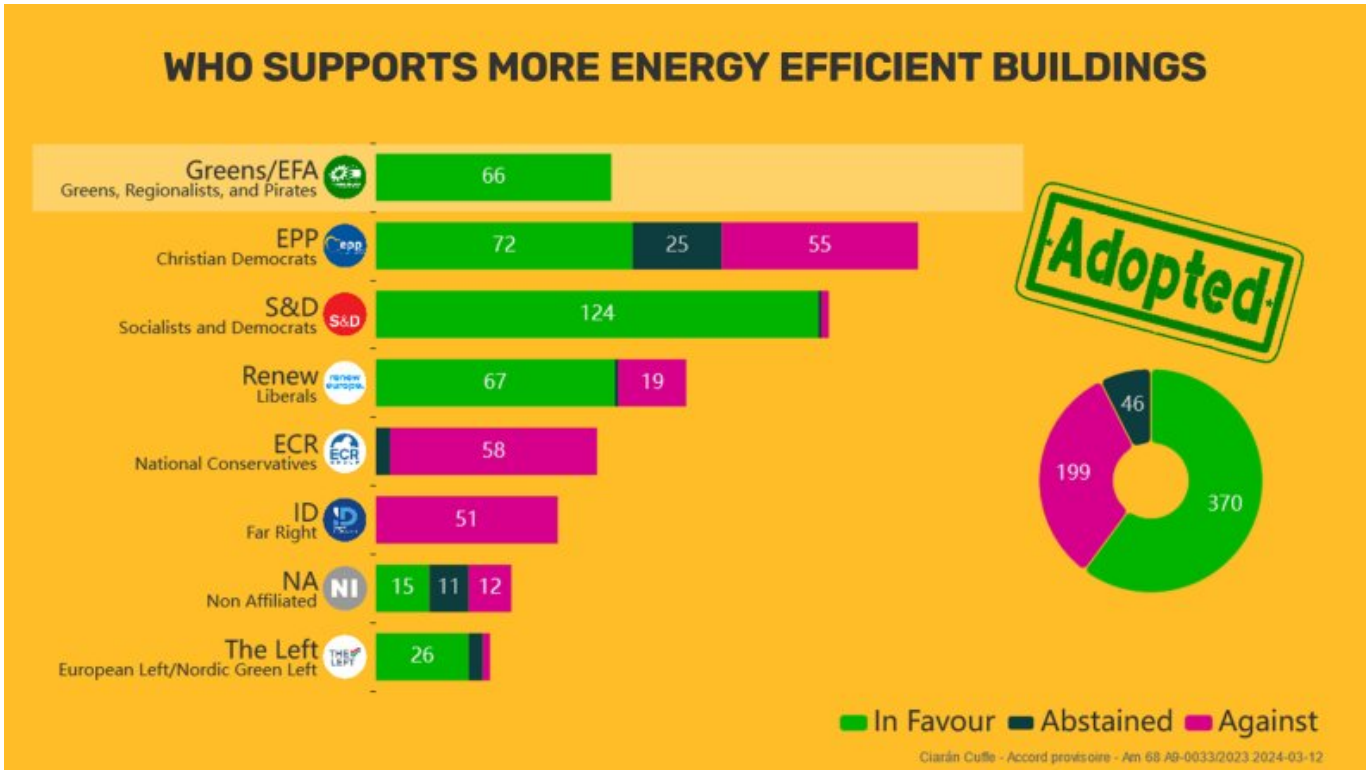
Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

The European Parliament voted Tuesday in favour of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), despite sustained attacks from the conservatives. The EPBD is an update to an existing EU law introducing new measures to deliver a climate-neutral building stock by 2050. This is the first step towards a carbon neutral building stock by 2050. This law is set to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the efficiency and renewable industries.



Ciarán Cuffe, Greens/EFA MEP and European Parliament Rapporteur on the directive, commented:

“This law is not only good for the planet, it is also good for people. It will lower energy bills for everyone, prioritise renovation funding for vulnerable groups and enhance renter protections. This is the Just Transition in action: we have set a pathway to achieve a climate neutral building stock, and we have paved that pathway with measures to ensure that the people who can least afford to renovate are protected and prioritised along the way.”

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Expansion of rail infrastructure in Europe

MEPs adopted, Tuesday, with an overwhelming majority, a report by Greens/EFA MEP Tilly Metz on the expansion of rail infrastructure in Europe. The new rules will benefit passengers as well as freight transport. The European Commission’s own impact assessment predicts a potential increase of up to 4% of rail transport on the existing network from implementing the proposed rules, without any further investments needed.

Tilly Metz, Greens/EFA MEP and EP Rapporteur, commented:

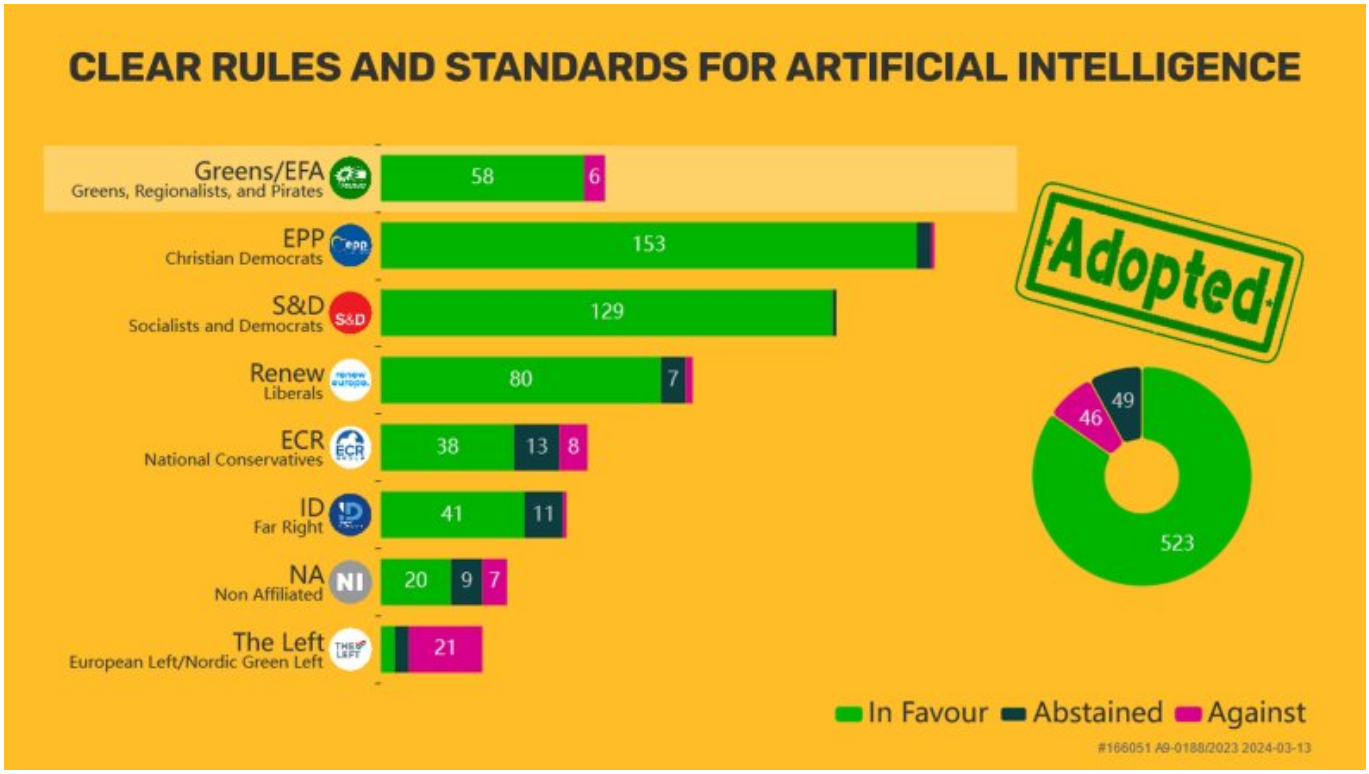
“This marks a big step in making Europe's transport sector climate neutral. The new rules will facilitate this transition and ensure a more optimal use of rail tracks!”

- Text adopted

- Social media

Artificial Intelligence Act

The European Parliament voted Wednesday in favour of the historic AI Act, marking a significant step towards ensuring ethical governance of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across the EU. The Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament has fought to ensure robust safeguards to protect fundamental rights and democratic principles, as well as the environment in the AI Act. The Act, the first of its kind globally, is a comprehensive legislative framework designed to regulate the development, deployment, and use of AI systems.



Kim van Sparrentak MEP, Greens/EFA Group shadow rapporteur in the IMCO Committee, commented:

"The adoption of the AI Act represents a historic milestone. The EU is the first in the world with solid rules for ethical AI. By setting clear rules and standards for the development and deployment of AI systems, we are paving the way for a future where technology serves society while respecting fundamental rights and democratic principles."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

European Media Freedom Act

The European Parliament voted Wednesday in favour of the outcome of trilogue negotiations on the European Media Freedom Act, which is aimed at protecting journalists and the freedom of and plurality of media in the EU. The Greens/EFA Group has long fought for EU-level rules to address issues such as high media market concentration, the fair allocation of state funding and the independence of public service media and national regulatory authorities.

Diana Riba i Giner MEP, shadow rapporteur for the file in the CULT Committee, commented:

“The freedom of the press is under severe threat in Europe with the assassinations of journalists, the closures of independent outlets and the concentration of media under private or government connected conglomerates. The Media Freedom Act will enshrine in law that governments or private interests must not interfere in the editorial decisions or media operations.

Daniel Freund MEP, shadow rapporteur for the file in the LIBE Committee, commented:

“This is a victory against the oligarchs and autocrats who want to crush independent voices and bend them to their whim. We have seen how in countries like Hungary, the government has transformed the media landscape from a series of independent outlets to a wall of pro-government propaganda piping to the same tune.”

- Text adopted
- Press release

Vehicle Emissions Standards

On Wednesday, MEPs voted on vehicle emission standards (Euro 7). The current standards are already more than a decade old and lag far behind the current state of the art. This is the last generation of standards in the transition to electric cars and therefore the only chance to make the 100 million combustion engines still sold until 2035 cleaner. It has failed to do so. Thanks to a collaboration between the auto industry and conservative parties, standards for cars remain the same, only those for trucks improve, but minimally. Cars have cynically been chosen over the health of many Europeans who still die prematurely every year from air pollution.

- Text adopted

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive

The Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER) adopted Friday the agreement on the corporate sustainability due diligence directive. But this last-minute agreement significantly weakens the Directive.

Heidi Hautala, Greens/EFA MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Shadow rapporteur in the Legal Affairs committee, said:

“Finally, the EU Member States got their act together and reached an agreement on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. The price of the agreement was a significant dilution of the level of ambition of the legislation. The scope of the directive will be limited to companies with over one thousand employees instead of five hundred. High-risks sectors were deleted entirely and the legislation's entry into force will be further delayed.

“The behaviour of the Council and Member States in recent months has been reprehensible and damaging to the credibility of EU decision-making. Instead of respecting the December trilogue agreement, already a balanced compromise, Member States engaged in endless rounds of horse-trading and last-minute attempts to water down the legislation.”

- Press release
- Social media

Green Claims Directive

On Tuesday, MEPs voted in favour of the report on the green claims directive adopted by the ENVI and IMCO Committees.

With this new legislation, the Parliament takes an important step against greenwashing and the use of misleading claims regarding the sustainability of products. It further informs consumers and empowers them to support a clean and circular economy. They will receive transparent, comparable and verified product information based on solid data, which will help them understand which products are truly environmentally friendly and allow them to make more sustainable choices.

Member states will have 18 months to transpose the directive. It will apply to SMEs 30 months after its entry into force.



- Text adopted

European Cross-border Associations

Members of the European Parliament adopted Wednesday the report on the Directive on a European cross-border Association (ECBA) the Commission presented last September. The proposal for a directive follows Greens/EFA Rapporteur Sergey Lagodinsky's resolution on 'A statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations' adopted in February 2022. It also picks up on the numerous and longstanding calls from civil society dating back to the previous millennium, to give associations a European legal form and EU-wide protection.

Sergey Lagodinsky, Greens/EFA MEP and European Parliament Rapporteur for the report, commented:

"A vibrant and lively civil society is a cornerstone for our democracy. In voting for this report, a broad majority of MEPs show they share this objective with the Greens/EFA Group. For years, profit oriented interest representations can be established but only today we elevate civil society to the European level. Democracy does not end at country borders. Civil society organisations allow for the participation and engagement of individuals. That is why they are the heart of democracy, in Member States and throughout the EU. Making them strong and truly European is a safeguard for our European future."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Social media

Animal Welfare

At the initiative of the Greens/EFA Group, MEPs debated the revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. Much of the EU-level legislation to protect animals dates back more than a decade, and needs updating in light of new scientific findings, both to improve animal welfare and to ensure equal standards amongst farmers. Several European Citizens' Initiatives have focused on animal welfare, including the successful ECI End the Cage Age, which collected over 1.4 million signatures.

The Commission published its proposal on animal transport at the end of 2023 – however the other elements of the long-awaited package are not yet on the table.

Green MEP and Chair of Parliament's inquiry committee on Animal Transport, Tilly Metz, said:

“The new Commission must make animal welfare a priority, publish the three missing proposals and ensures that any animal welfare legislation is properly implemented.”

The Greens/EFA call on the European Commission to deliver the outstanding legislative proposals that it repeatedly promised throughout this term, including a proposal for a regulation on animal welfare labelling.

- Social media

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- The repressive environment in Afghanistan, including public executions and violence against women
- Closer ties between the EU and Armenia and the need for a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia
- Immediate risk of mass starvation in Gaza and the attacks on humanitarian aid deliveries
- Return of Romanian national treasure illegally appropriated by Russia
- The case of Rocío San Miguel and General Hernandez Da Costa, among other political prisoners in Venezuela

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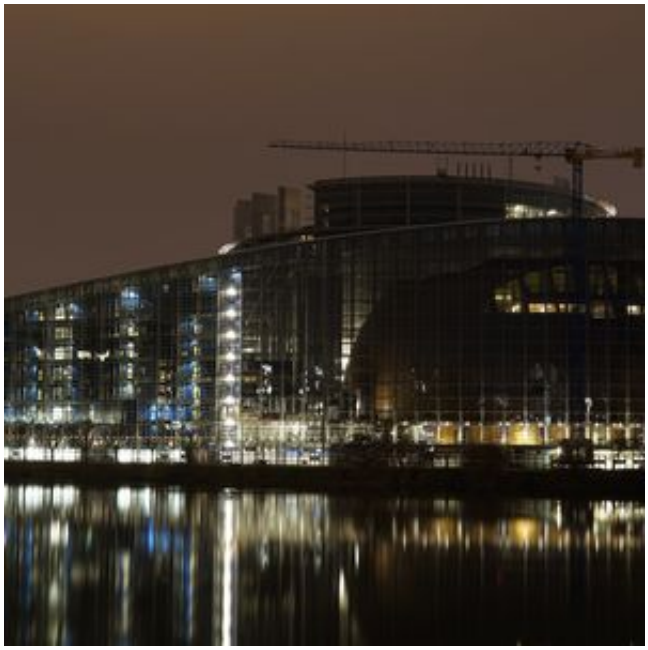

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