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Debriefing of the May plenary session

2 - 5 May 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The impact of the war against Ukraine on women
2. EU oil embargo / Council and Commission statements - The social and economic consequences for the EU of the Russian war in Ukraine - reinforcing the EU's capacity to act
3. Use of the Pegasus Software by EU Member States against individuals including MEPs and the violation of fundamental rights
4. Electoral law: Election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage
5. Commission statement - Ongoing hearings under Article 7(1) TEU regarding Poland and Hungary
6. EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture
7. Discharge reports 2020 / Frontex
8. Conference on the Future of Europe

The impact of the war against Ukraine on women

On Thursday, Members of the European Parliament expressed strong support for women impacted by the war in Ukraine. In recent weeks, there have been a growing number of unofficial reports from survivors and intelligence reports about rape, sexual harassment and torture being increasingly used by the Russian army as a weapon of war against the civilian population in Ukraine. As 90% of those fleeing Ukraine are women and children, the Greens/EFA have pushed for a resolution specifically addressing the impact the war has on women.

Alice Bah Kuhnke, member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, comments:

"We strongly condemn the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war. Ukrainian women and girls are at risk every day. The EU must ensure that those who seek refuge here get access to psychosocial support and that their sexual and reproductive rights are upheld across the union. It is especially vital that the EU guarantees access to these essential services for women arriving in member states such as Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, where access to sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion and emergency

contraceptives is restricted. It is equally important to make sure that SRHR services are made accessible to those still in Ukraine."

Viola von Cramon, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's delegation to Ukraine, comments:

"Ukrainian women are currently experiencing terrible crimes like women not so long ago in Kosovo. Sexual violence and systematic rape as weapons of war are not unknown. Europe's recent history shows that we have not learned, and once again have not been able to protect women from these atrocities. Women who have become victims of sexual violence need legal assistance, but above all, and most of all, support for their physical and psychological suffering."

- Text Adopted
- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Instagram - Tilly Metz
- Social Media: Instagram - Kim van Sparrentak
- Social Media: Instagram - Viola von Cramon
- Video - Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana
- Video - Diana Riba i Giner
- Video - Kim van Sparrentak
- Video - Viola von Cramon
- Video - Tilly Metz
- Video - Heidi Hautala

EU oil embargo / Council and Commission statements - The social and economic consequences for the EU of the Russian war in Ukraine - reinforcing the EU's capacity to act

On Wednesday, during a debate in the European Parliament, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed to impose an oil embargo against Russia. The Greens/EFA have been urging for such an embargo as an essential step in countering Russia's war of aggression. Our Group is in favour of further extending the sanctions to all fossil fuels, including an embargo on gas, as well as an end to the use of nuclear technology and uranium imports from Russia. An energy embargo must be accompanied by social cushioning with regard to rising energy prices within the EU.

Sergey Lagodinsky, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on Russia and substitute member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, comments:

"An oil boycott will be a hard blow to the Russian economy. Along with gas, coal and oil are the drivers of Russian exports. An oil embargo and the exclusion of Russia's Sberbank from the SWIFT network represent another clear signal of European solidarity with Ukraine. We are sending a unified message to President Putin that the EU continues to be serious about effectively reacting to Russia's aggressions. At the same time, an energy embargo must be accompanied by social measures to balance out the impact of rising energy prices within the EU."

Ville Niinistö, Greens/EFA member of the Industry, Research and Energy Committee, comments:

"The next sanctions must include an embargo on gas, nuclear technology and uranium imports from Russia. This also means cutting off planned and unfinished projects. An example of this was set in Finland where the

Finnish energy company Fennovoima terminated its contract with Russian state firm Rosatom to build a nuclear power plant. This was a major win for the Greens in Finland, as it was a project that the Greens opposed from the start with a strong focus on criticising the geopolitical risks posed by Russian involvement and left the government in 2014 because of its licensing. The EU and its Member States must be coherent in our support for European energy sovereignty and the green deal transition in all energy investments in the future."

- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Terry Reintke
- Social Media: Twitter - Rasmus Andresen
- Video - Sara Matthieu
- Video - Ernest Urtasun
- Video - Terry Reintke
- Video - Mounir Satouri

Use of the Pegasus Software by EU Member States against individuals including MEPs and the violation of fundamental rights

On Wednesday, Members of the European Parliament debated the latest Pegasus revelations. Last week, it was revealed that Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was one of the targets of espionage. In April, it became known that Greens/EFA MEPs, **Diana Riba i Giner** and **Jordi Solé**, had also been spied on through the use of the Pegasus software. The debate was held at the request of the Greens/EFA group, despite initial opposition by the three majority groups in view of the start of the work of the Pegasus Inquiry Committee.

Saskia Bricmont, Greens/EFA coordinator for the Pegasus Inquiry Committee, member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, comments:

“Following the revelations of spying on several European Union officials, including the Commissioner for Justice, Didier Reynders, the news involving our colleagues Diana Riba I Giner and Jordi Solé, Catalan MEPs, who were also bugged using the Pegasus software, is intolerable. Parliamentary immunity and the fundamental rights of elected representatives have been violated. The defence of parliamentary democracy and the integrity of our institutions must be done permanently and jointly. If one of our members is attacked, we are all attacked.”

Diana Riber i Giner, Vice-Chair of the Pegasus Inquiry Committee, comments:

“The state of the freedom of the press in the EU is not in good shape when critical journalists have to reckon with being spied on. European opposition politicians should not have to worry about whether the secret service is reading and listening on behalf of their government.

We now have to shed light on the darkness and formulate clear guidelines that bring the use of this spyware under control. This requires common rules in the EU if we all want to stand by common democratic values.”

- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Hannah Neumann
- Social Media: Twitter - Viola von Cramon

- Social Media: Twitter - Jordi Solé
- Social Media: Twitter - Mounir Satouri
- Social Media: Instagram - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Instagram - Diana Riba i Giner
- Video - Saskia Bricmont
- Video - Jordi Solé
- Video - Hannah Neumann
- Video - Diana Riba i Giner
- Video - Marcel Kolaja
- Video - Sylwia Spurek
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos
- Video - Markéta Gregorová

Electoral law: Election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage

On Tuesday, a majority of Members of the European Parliament called on EU Member States to introduce transnational lists for the 2024 European elections. Likewise, a majority of MEPs endorsed the Greens/EFA call to lower the voting age to 16 in the European elections and to have gender-balanced lists.

The European Parliament's proposal would give all voters two votes each, one for candidates in national constituencies and one for an EU-wide constituency - with 28 additional candidates elected on the basis of transnational lists. The proposal also includes the creation of a new electoral commission. Following the Junqueras case, where a Greens/EFA MEP was stripped of his immunity, the electoral commission would be able to rule on disputes about members' immunity.

Member States must agree on a proposal for the reform of the European Direct Election Act by the end of this year, followed by the approval of all Member States before the law can enter into force.

Philippe Lamberts, President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, comments:

"The European Parliament is pushing the long overdue reform of European electoral law towards more democracy, more participation, more Europe and more gender equality. The vast majority of MEPs want the European elections to be the starting point for European debates and decisions. We call on all EU governments and parliaments to join the European Parliament's call for a stronger European spirit towards the European elections."

Damian Boeselager, Volt member and shadow rapporteur of the Greens/EFA group in the lead committee on constitutional affairs, comments:

"This is a giant step towards real European and parliamentary democracy. The recommendation to lower the voting age to 16, to make voting more accessible and easier and to introduce rules for gender equality are also big wins."

- Text Adopted
- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Daniel Freund
- Social Media: Twitter: Damian Boeselager

- Video - Damian Boeselager
- Video - Daniel Freund
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
- Video - Manuela Ripa

Commission statement - Ongoing hearings under Article 7(1) TEU regarding Poland and Hungary

On Tuesday, MEPs debated the Council's reluctance to move forward with the Article 7 proceedings against the governments of Hungary and Poland. The Greens/EFA Group stressed the need to take action on the rule of law violations. We urge the French Presidency to prioritise the Article 7 hearings at the next General Affairs Council in May, and call for the upcoming Czech Presidency to come out with recommendations, including a deadline to act, for the Polish and Hungarian governments.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, Greens/EFA MEP and European Parliament Rapporteur on the rule of law situation in Hungary, comments:

“This resolution, and we have made others in this Parliament, will certainly not be the last. But we need to continue to make them because the Article 7 procedure is still not taken seriously by the Council, just like the role of the Parliament, which, however, is the one that triggered the procedure with regard to the situation in Hungary. At the same time, it is also the real and serious impact on the lives of many Hungarians and Poles that is not being taken seriously today, as they have been left to their own devices. These are people who continue to be called European citizens, but who can legitimately feel a little abandoned.”

- Text Adopted
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Euro Écolos
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield

EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture

On Tuesday, the European Parliament adopted its report on the European Commission's action plan on organic farming. The Greens/EFA group supports this favourable report for the development of organic farming, which could be a major tool for achieving the objectives of the Farm to Fork strategy.

Claude Gruffat MEP, Member of the Committee on Agriculture, shadow rapporteur on the EU Action Plan for Organic Agriculture, comments:

"The report adopted today on the Organic Action Plan supports the development of organic farming. It recognises its economic interest for farmers and its value for public health. It supports agroecology, local production and short supply chains, but also the involvement of stakeholders and local authorities in the development of national and territorial organic plans. It stresses the need to better inform consumers about organic products and their promotion.

However, I deplore the rejection of various amendments that I had tabled on behalf of the Greens/EFA, in particular those aimed at including the objective of 25% organic agricultural land as well as that for ambitious support for the introduction of organic products organic in school canteens and collective catering."

- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Claude Gruffat
- Social Media: Twitter - Martin Häusling
- Social Media: Instagram - Claude Gruffat
- Social Media: Instagram - Martin Häusling
- Video - Claude Gruffat
- Video - Martin Häusling

Discharge reports 2020 / Frontex

Today, the European Parliament refused to approve the 2020 budget discharge for the European border management agency, Frontex. MEPs instead decided to postpone the vote. Fabrice Leggeri resigned from his post as Director of the agency following the revelation of various scandals, including Frontex's support for illegal pushbacks.

The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the EU Parliament's use of powerful political leverage in the face of Frontex's serious failures. The agency has still not met the demands of the Parliament's previous discharge report. It has continued to support illegal pushbacks and failed to address internal scandals. With a budget of €118 million in 2011, to be increased to €900 million by 2022, Frontex is the EU agency that receives the most money from the EU budget.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Greens/EFA Shadow Rapporteur for the Budget Discharge report for 2020 for EU Agencies, commented:

"The European Parliament is standing up to Frontex. The border agency cannot be allowed to get away with supporting cover-ups of illegal pushbacks and internal scandals. It is completely unacceptable that the Frontex Management Board refuses to publish the report of the EU's anti-fraud agency OLAF and to allow members of the EU Parliament to see it. We will not tolerate public money being wasted and used to break European and international law."

Tineke Strik MEP, Member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee, commented:

“The resignation of the director Leggeri offers a vital opportunity to appoint a leader who really cares for fundamental rights, and who ensures a fundamental change in the culture and methods of the Agency. However, in order to ban pushbacks, Member States and the European Commission should change their policies as well, and ensure that pushbacks are no longer acceptable and the protection of refugees becomes a common responsibility."

- Greens/EFA Press Release
- Social Media: Twitter - Tineke Strik
- Social Media: Twitter - Michèle Rivasi
- Video - Daniel Freund
- Video - Viola von Cramon
- Video - Bas Eickhout
- Video - Michèle Rivasi

Conference on the Future of Europe

As part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, 800 randomly selected citizens have voiced their demands on the future of the European Union. At last week's final plenary session, participants agreed on a set of 49 proposals. Among them are demands for more investments in climate and social issues, a reform of the EU's agricultural policy and an abolishment of national vetoes. The Greens/EFA will continue to make sure that citizens' voices are heard and policy recommendations implemented.

Daniel Freund MEP, Member of the EP delegation to the Conference on the Future of Europe, comments:

"We have done Europe's biggest experiment in democracy. At the suggestion of the Greens, we selected and invited 800 citizens on a representative basis and asked them about the future of the EU, what kind of policies they would like to see.

And what did the results show? It shows that the abolition of national vetoes, transnational lists in the European elections, real European citizenship, investment in Europe's future and not in corrupt autocrats, a more social, transparent Europe is not some federalist conspiracy, but what the majority of citizens want. There was 70, 80, 90% support from the citizens for the proposals that are on the table. And not only the citizens, but also the national MPs, the civil society, the governments have agreed to these proposals in the end.

And it is precisely the most ambitious proposals that will show whether this process is taken seriously. So, it is precisely the proposals that cannot simply be changed with a law, but for which we have to change the treaties. And that is why it is so essential that we now go to the Convention, that we really implement the most ambitious proposals in the coming months. That is what the Convention is for. It is for the citizens. It is for the future of the European Union."

- Text Adopted
- Social Media: Twitter: Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Greens/EFA
- Social Media: Twitter - Daniel Freund
- Social Media: Instagram - Jordi Solé
- Video - Daniel Freund

MORE

Greens/EFA motions for resolution

- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on threats to stability, security and democracy in West and Sahelian Africa
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on ongoing hearings under Article 7(1) TEU regarding Poland and Hungary
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the continuous crackdown of political opposition in Cambodia
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on Reports of continued organ harvesting in China
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the state of play of EU-Moldova cooperation
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the EU transport and tourism sectors
- MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on the case of Osman Kavala

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Press release

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