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News | 22.10.2021

Debriefing of the October II plenary session

18-21 October 2021

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Poland: Rule of Law Crisis and Abortion Ban

On Tuesday, the Parliament debated the rule of law crisis in Poland with Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, and Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. A resolution on the topic was adopted on Thursday. The Greens/EFA Group are calling on the Commission and Council to take action against the Polish government's attacks on the rule of law and fundamental rights. The European Parliament has decided to take the Commission to court over its failure to implement a mechanism that withholds EU funds from member states that violate the rule of law. The recent judgement by the Polish government-controlled 'Constitutional Tribunal' over the primacy of EU law vs national law has aggravated the already worrying rule of law crisis in Poland and further contributed to the erosion of European values.

The plenary session also held a debate in recognition of one year passing since the de facto abortion ban in Poland. It has been a year since the 'Constitutional Tribunal' effectively outlawed abortion in Poland, in an clear attack on women's rights that was condemned by the Greens/EFA group and the European Parliament, and was met with protests of Polish citizens.

Ska Keller MEP, co-President of the Greens/EFA Group, comments:

"What the Polish government is doing is an attack on the very existence of the European Union itself. This is a union of democracy where the same rules apply to everyone. The Polish government has questioned these

fundamental pillars. When a Member State questions the fundamentals, the Commission must act. The Polish government has rejected the chance for dialogue; now it is time for the Commission to defend the citizens of Poland and to defend this union, which is built on the rule of law and justice.”

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press Release](#)
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- [Plenary Speech Ska Keller](#)
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Global Tax Deal and Pandora Papers

On Wednesday, following the initiative of the Greens/EFA Group, the Parliament debated the global tax deal as endorsed by the G20 Ministers of Finance on 13th October. As part of this deal, 136 jurisdictions have agreed on a new set of tax rules for multinational companies. It is the first time in history that so many countries are involved in high-level tax negotiations. The global tax deal will oblige the world's largest and most profitable companies to pay more taxes in countries where they do business. Most importantly, the deal includes a minimum effective tax rate of 15% for large companies. The Greens/EFA Group have long called for a minimum effective tax rate to end the practice of multinationals not paying their fair share. At the end of October, the global tax deal will be endorsed at the G20 Summit in Rome.

On Thursday, in a victory for the Greens/EFA Group, Members of the European Parliament adopted a report on the Pandora Papers. This happened in the wake of the revelations by the ICIJ and others into global tax avoidance, tax evasion and money laundering. The report was a Greens/EFA initiative. For the first time, this report sees the European Parliament condemn the role of the United States as a hub for financial and corporate secrecy. The report calls for the granting of access for the UK financial sector to the Single Market to be made conditional on the UK respecting EU tax and anti-money laundering standards.

Ernest Urtasun MEP, Greens/EFA Vice President and shadow rapporteur on the Pandora Papers resolution, comments:

“It’s time to end the kind of financial secrecy that enables powerful, corrupt or criminal individuals and organisations to hide wealth offshore. Tax havens increase inequalities, enable criminality and undermine social policies. The G20 leaders should start a global initiative to revise the automatic exchange of tax information between countries, when they meet in Rome at the end of this month. The OECD should be given the mandate to strengthen the global governance of enforcement on anti-money laundering standards. G20 leaders must ban shell companies and outlaw financial secrecy practices.”

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Global Tax Deal Press Release](#)

- [Plenary Speech Ernest Urtasun](#)
- [Plenary Speech Damien Carême](#)

Farm to Fork Strategy

On Tuesday evening, MEPs voted on the European Commission's Farm to Fork strategy. The Farm to Fork strategy is at the heart of the European Green Deal. The strategy lists 27 actions covering food production, processing, retailing and waste, and forms a comprehensive (although not exhaustive) take on the EU food system. In this report, the Greens/EFA Group successfully advocated for the reduction of pesticides and antibiotics, as well as mandatory origin labeling of all food, mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labeling, mandatory due diligence throughout the supply chain and a binding link between national strategic plans of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the European Green Deal. This strategy will ensure that food products are free from negative environmental impacts on our health and the climate, as well as protecting biodiversity. The Greens/EFA Group particularly welcomes the fact that the report calls for binding targets, which will support the strategy's ambitious objectives for a clean, healthy, zero-pollution environment to complement the vision of the European Green Deal.

Tilly Metz MEP, Greens/EFA Group shadow rapporteur on the Farm to Fork Strategy in the Agriculture Committee, comments:

"Yesterday's vote in the European Parliament shows that we are ready for the shift to sustainable food production. This strategy is the first EU policy to take a holistic approach to food production, from soil to field to plate. The Greens/EFA Group has not only pushed through a call for concrete reduction targets for pesticide use, but has also successfully lobbied the Parliament to demand better animal welfare standards and clear targets for reducing the use of antibiotics in livestock. Likewise, the Commission should finally make good on its promise to ban exports of pesticides to third countries which have long since been banned in the EU."

- [Press release](#)
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UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, UK (COP 26)

This week, Members of the European Parliament debated the EU's position ahead of the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. In a final vote on the resolution on Thursday, the EP gave its mandate for the Parliament's delegation at COP26.

The upcoming COP26 summit will define whether or not the world is on track to stay below 1.5°C, how we fund the transition of our economies, and how we support the most vulnerable countries and communities. Six years after the Paris Agreement, COP26 will be an important moment to take stock of the state of play, but also to increase commitments and establish a clear action plan on how to achieve climate goals in the short-, medium- and long-term. Without urgent climate action, the latest science confirms that we are likely to reach 1.5°C of global temperature rise by 2030. The draft resolution includes important calls, supported by the Greens/EFA group, urging all countries to step up ambition to close the gap towards the 1.5°C target, recognising that fossil fuels have no long-term role in the EU's energy mix and that member states should adopt national phase-out plans as soon as possible in order to

reach climate neutrality by 2050. Thanks to the Greens/EFA Group, the resolution calls on the UK Presidency to make every effort possible to ensure that developing countries and civil society are able to attend COP26 despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Greens/EFA member of the EP delegation to the COP26, comments:

“The COP26 needs to be about immediate action. To stay in line with the climate goals, the exploration and development of new oil and gas fields has to stop now. Yet, since the Paris Agreement, fossil financing has only grown. Even after vowing to phase-out fossil subsidies, G20 members still provide at least three times as much international public finance for fossil fuels as for clean energy. This has to stop. It is high time that we put our money where our mouth is. Every cent spent on fossil fuel infrastructure hinders the transition towards a climate neutral economy.

“Glasgow needs to be the moment that marks the end to fossil fuel investments, both public and private. We therefore call on the European Commission and EU member states to show leadership and declare the end to fossil fuel financing, and translate it into binding legislation.”

- [Plenary Speech Pär Holmgren](#)
- [Plenary Speech Yannick Jadot](#)
- [Plenary Speech Jutta Paulus](#)
- [Plenary Speech Ville Niinistö](#)
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- [Plenary Speech Margrete Auken](#)
- [Plenary Speech Ciaràn Cuffe](#)
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General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022

On Wednesday 20th October, Members of the European Parliament voted in favour of greater climate protection, biodiversity and research to be part of the EU budget 2022. Due to the efforts of the Greens/EFA Group, the budget sees an increase for climate protection and biodiversity, for research and development, and an increase for the European Environmental Agency to strengthen its capacities by supporting the implementation of key EU policies such as the European Green Deal. Another key achievement is supporting the transition of sustainable transportation in the EU. This is a strong position for the European Parliament for future dialogue negotiations. After the plenary vote, the next step will be the budget conciliation procedure between the three institutions. The budget is expected to be adopted before the end of the year.

Henrike Hahn MEP, shadow rapporteur for the Greens/EFA group for the EU budget 2022, comments:

“We made this budget not only greener but also future-oriented. The EU Budget 2022 will play an important role to implement the Paris climate targets by 2030 at the latest. We need more speed, more ambition and clear decisions on how to invest taxpayers' money in the best way protecting the climate and environment. We need strong research and development for green technology, for decarbonization and a strong European economy.

“More than 450 million euros are now additionally allocated to research and development, and we have over 760 million euros for priorities such as Humanitarian Aid, EU4Health, Erasmus+ and Rights and Values. We can go well into the future negotiations on a 2022 budget with a strong parliamentary position that knows

what future needs.”

- [Press Release](#)
- [Plenary Speech Henrike Hahn](#)

Frontex

On Thursday, the Parliament's plenary granted – by tight majority - the discharge for the EU's border agency, Frontex, for the year 2019. This vote was not supported by the Greens/EFA Group due to concerns regarding fundamental rights violations, an ongoing OLAF investigation and insufficient transparency. Back in April 2021, the Parliament postponed the 2019 discharge for Frontex requesting clarifications and corrective measures on the way the agency carries out its activities (including managing its finances, its recruitment and procurement procedures, its transparency procedures and access to documents). Echoing the critical findings of the report by Frontex Scrutiny Working Group (FSWG), the Greens/EFA Group believe that discharge should not be granted to the Agency before these issues are resolved.

One of the key sections of the adopted resolution on the 2019 discharge to Frontex is the creation of a budgetary reserve of €90 million, which constitutes around 12% of the Agency's draft 2022 budget. This reserve will be made available once specific conditions outlined in the report have been met. These conditions call for improvements in fundamental rights monitoring, recruitment and financial procedures. The Greens/EFA Group was successful in further strengthening those conditions through its amendments.

Even though the Parliament reinforced the "fundamental rights dimension" of the instrument and gave more importance to measures related to search and rescue operations, the Greens/EFA Group remains very concerned about serious allegations of human rights violations involving both Frontex and EU member states.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Plenary Speech Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Plenary Speech Saskia Bricmont](#)

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