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News | 11.06.2021

## **Greens/EFA debriefing of the plenary session**

**7-11 June 2021**

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- The conflict of interest of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic
- The European Citizens' Initiative, "End the Cage Age"

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### **EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives**

The European Parliament has adopted the report on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - "Bringing nature back into our lives" - which, among other things, endorses the Commission's goals for protecting and restoring biodiversity. These include establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea to form a trans-European nature network, as well as launching an *EU Nature restoration plan* to restore degraded ecosystems and manage them sustainably. The Commission also plans to set targets in relation to reducing pesticide and fertiliser use, increasing the percentage of agricultural land under organic farming and the use of high biodiversity landscape features.

In recognition of the urgency of the biodiversity crisis and the lack of effective action taken so far, the report adopted by the European Parliament calls for a legally binding EU Biodiversity Law, in the same kind of spirit as the EU Climate Law. It also calls for the Commission to submit a legislative proposal for

the establishment of a common framework for the protection and sustainable use of soil, as well as wide-ranging measures in relation to forestry and agriculture.

**Ville Niinistö, Greens/EFA MEP** and shadow rapporteur in the Environment Committee, comments:

*"Biodiversity is the existential foundation of all life on our planet. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sends a strong message that we need to urgently scale up nature protection in the EU. European countries do not have the credibility to demand, for example, a halt to deforestation in the Amazon, if we are not ready to defend our own nature within the EU. The Parliament's vote this week is our chance to call on the Commission to take action, including introducing a legally binding EU Biodiversity Law, in the same spirit as the EU Climate Law."*

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video: Saskia Bricmont](#)
- [Video: Ville Niinistö](#)
- [Video: Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg](#)
- [Video: Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Video: Benoît Biteau](#)
- [Video: Grace O'Sullivan](#)
- [Video: Jutta Paulus](#)
- [Video: Rosa D'Amato](#)
- [Video: Pär Holmgren](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Saskia Bricmont](#)
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- [Social media: Twitter - Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Benoît Biteau](#)
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- [Social media: Twitter - Rosa D'Amato](#)
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## EU Digital COVID Certificate

The European Parliament has adopted the legislative framework for EU-wide "Digital COVID Certificates" for those who have been vaccinated against, tested for or recovered from Covid-19. In order to ensure freedom of movement, the proposal seeks to establish interoperability and mutual recognition of national certificates by establishing one unified EU certificate.

The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the agreement to ensure freedom of movement during the pandemic by providing a common EU tool. However, we're concerned that the EU Digital COVID Certificate should not be a precondition for exercising free movement rights, and equal weight shall be granted to any of the certificates issued under the umbrella of the COVID-19 Certificates in order to avoid any possible discrimination based on vaccination status. Member States must also guarantee equal opportunities for all by ensuring universal, accessible and timely COVID-19 testing possibilities. It is also crucial that the system has high standards of data protection.

**Tineke Strik, Greens/EFA MEP** and shadow rapporteur in Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs comments:

*"This certificate will make travel within the EU easier again. This is something many Europeans have been waiting a long time for and now we can say that free movement of people is soon a reality again. We also managed to guarantee important rights: no invasion of privacy, no inequality through expensive tests and no discrimination. It is welcome that the certificate must meet the highest standards for privacy. Data on the certificate may not be stored when it is scanned and travel movements cannot be tracked. We will closely monitor if Member States will respect these safeguards, and if they will not impose additional travel restrictions without a very urgent and evidence-based reason."*

- Texts adopted: [Union citizens](#) - [Third-country nationals](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video: Tineke Strik](#)
- [Video: Tilly Metz](#)
- [Video: Michèle Rivasi](#)
- [Video: Marcel Kolaja](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Tineke Strik](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Tilly Metz](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Michèle Rivasi](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Marcel Kolaja](#)
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## **The effects of the waiver of the WTO TRIPS agreement on Covid-19 vaccines, treatment, equipment and manufacturing capacity in developing countries**

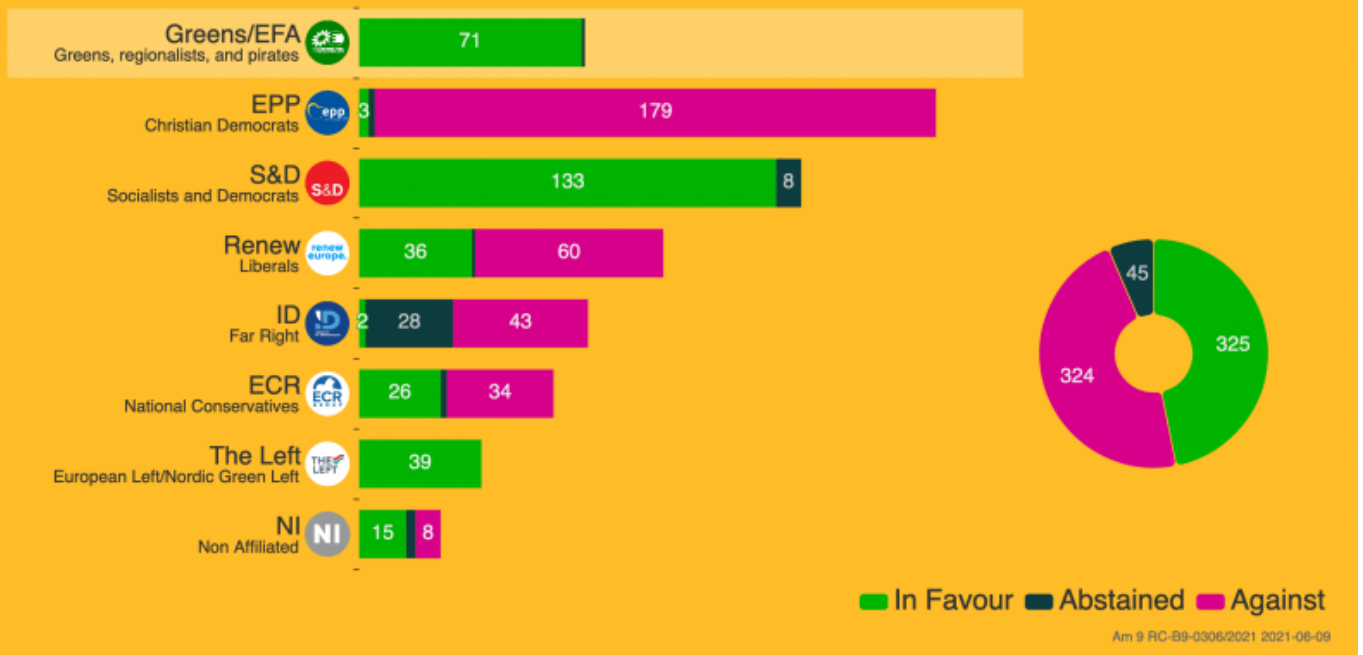
This week, the European Parliament voted in favor of a Greens/EFA amendment expressing clear support for a temporary lifting of intellectual property rights on Covid-19 vaccines and other related medical products as part of the TRIPS waiver resolution. The resolution also calls for increased production and manufacturing capacity in developing countries.

The Parliament now expects the Council and the European Commission to defend this position internationally, supporting a temporary lifting of intellectual property rights at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and to start negotiations as soon as possible. This signal from the Parliament comes at the right time, as the TRIPS Council has now announced to start text-based negotiations on the waiver, which the EU has not endorsed to date, despite broad international support.

**Sara Matthieu** MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the resolution, comments:

*"While some countries are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, the situation in South Asia and Latin America is extremely worrying. Given the scale of this crisis, we cannot limit ourselves to a logic of charity, where developed countries satisfy their own needs before responding to those of the poorest countries. The Greens/EFA Group also insisted that vaccines should be free of charge. It would be unacceptable for citizens in the poorest countries to pay for vaccinations while those in the richest countries have free access to them. Global vaccination is key to ending the pandemic."*

## Temporarily lift intellectual property rights on Covid-19 vaccines



Temporarily lift intellectual property rights on Covid-19 vaccines

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Tilly Metz](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Sara Matthieu](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Ska Keller](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Philippe Lamberts](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Greens/EFA Group](#)

## The European Parliament's scrutiny on the ongoing assessment by the Commission and the Council of national recovery and resilience plans

The Parliament has debated the national recovery and resilience plans as called for by the Greens/EFA Group. Our MEPs sent a letter to the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) national plans submitted by the Member States.

The Greens/EFA Group has concerns that some of the RRF plans submitted so far contain elements of "greenwashing" and fail to meet the 37% climate-related spending target as set out in the regulation. The letter contains an annex of examples of problems with the national plans submitted so far, in order to highlight to the Commission where action is needed to make the recovery plan an ambitious springboard for the green transition.

**Damian Boeselager, Volt MEP** and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur the RRF, comments:

*"We have a solid Parliamentary majority calling on the Commission to do its job: ensure that all the countries of the EU spend European money towards a green and digital transition, and not on national pet projects."*

*"Most of the submitted plans have shortcomings, be it greenwashing, lack of ambitious reform, or investment projects harming our environment. President Von der Leyen can make it right, if she addresses these rotten tomatoes. But she will need to stand up to national governments and defend our European goals.*

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#) (Greens/EFA Group)
- [Press release](#) (EFA)
- [Video: Damian Boeselager](#)
- [Video: Ernest Urtasun](#)
- [Video: Alexandra Geese](#)
- [Video: Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Video: Jordi Solé](#)
- [Video: Piernicola Pedicini](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Damian Boeselager](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Ernest Urtasun](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Alexandra Geese](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Jordi Solé](#)

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## **Systematic repression in Belarus and its consequences for European security following abductions from an EU civilian plane intercepted by Belarusian authorities**

On Sunday 23rd May, Belarusian authorities forced a Ryanair passenger plane, which was flying from Athens to Vilnius, to land in Minsk. The authorities arrested two of the flight's passengers, Roman Protasevich, an independent journalist from Belarus, and his partner Sofia Sapega. During the European Council Summit the next day, the heads of state and government decided to go ahead with the fourth package of targeted sanctions against Belarusian officials and entities.

**Ska Keller**, President of the Greens/EFA Group, condemned the incident, saying,

*"The forced landing of the passenger plane is an act of state terrorism. Targeted sanctions are a good first step, but the European Union must remain firm."*

The Greens/EFA call on the EU to stand with the people of Belarus in their aspirations for a free and democratic future, and effectively counter the ongoing repression by the Lukashenka regime. The EU must come up with a resolute response and consider further actions.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Video: Viola von Cramon-Taubadel](#)
- [Video: Markéta Gregorová](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Markéta Gregorová](#)

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## **Preparation of the G7 summit of 11th-13th June and the EU-US Summit**

Members of the European Parliament discussed their expectations for the G7, which will take place from 11th to 13th June. The seven members - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States - plus the EU will discuss the global recovery from COVID-19, free and fair trade and the fight against climate change, as well as other major security issues such as Belarus and Israel/Palestine.

Following this meeting, Commission and Council Presidents, Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel, will meet the US President, Joe Biden, on 15th June in Brussels.

The Greens/EFA call on the G7 to come forward with a clear commitment to a minimum effective tax rate of 21% this Saturday, at the G7 meeting of Finance Ministers in London. Internationally, we are close to a historic moment in which we will finally set the floor to tax competition. Unfortunately, countries seem closer to agreeing on a 15% minimum effective tax rate, although the United States is open to negotiating a higher rate. The Greens/EFA call on Member States to form a coalition of the willing and go ahead with a plurilateral introduction of a higher minimum effective tax rate.

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

*“We call for the EU governments and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to stop blocking a temporary suspension of intellectual property rights for Covid-19 vaccines and support US President Joe Biden, South Africa and India. We urge for the EU and the G7 to show global solidarity.”*

**Ska Keller MEP**, President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, comments:

*“We are at a crossroads in the fight against climate change. It is the European Commission's turn to come up with a climate package that fits the needs of fundamental change in climate action, saves the Green Deal and makes the EU a credible international partner. Ahead of COP26, it is now the time to team up with global leaders and to become a real climate champion in saving the climate, making climate action socially just and creating jobs for the future.”*

- [Press release](#)
- [Video: Philippe Lamberts](#)
- [Video: Reinhard Bütikofer](#)
- [Video: Heidi Hautala](#)
- [Video: Sven Giegold](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Philippe Lamberts](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Reinhard Bütikofer](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Sven Giegold](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Greens/EFA Group](#)

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## **The rule of law situation in the EU and the application of the conditionality regulation 2020/2092**

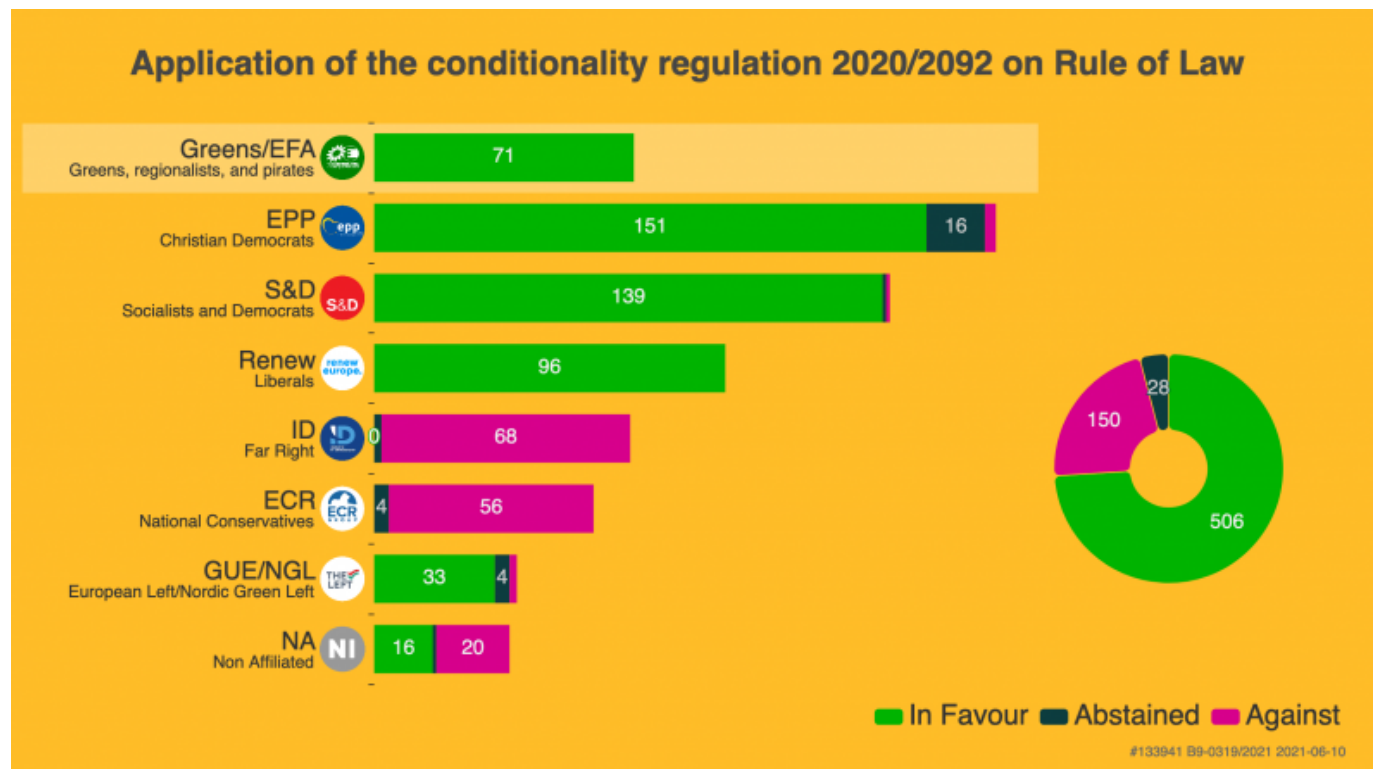
On Wednesday, the Parliament discussed the current situation of the rule of law in the Union with a particular focus on the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation. Despite a clear request from the Parliament in March, the Commission did not start the application of the Regulation by 1st June. The resolution was overwhelmingly adopted, with several requests addressed to the Commission and the Council, and will reserve its right to initiate court proceedings regarding the Commission's failure to act.

The Greens/EFA Group calls for the mechanism to be used to protect the rule of law. It is time for the Commission to show it is willing to act to defend European values.

**Terry Reintke MEP**, Greens/EFA negotiator and LIBE rapporteur on the Rule of Law Mechanism, comments:

*“People in Poland, Hungary and elsewhere need to know that the Commission is on their side and will fight*

*for their rights as EU citizens. The Commission should not need pressure to act on defending the treaties, but if they keep refusing to act, pressure is what they will get. We are taking action against the Commission to make them do their job and defend the rights of European citizens. We, as the Parliament, will not allow the Commission to sit idly by as far-right populist governments rip apart the rule of law in Europe.”*



Application of the conditionality regulation 2020\_2092 on Rule of Law

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video: Daniel Freund](#)
- [Video: Terry Reintke](#)
- [Video: Sylwia Spurek](#)
- [Video: Tineke Strik](#)
- [Video: Diana Riba I Giner](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Daniel Freund](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Terry Reintke](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Tineke Strik](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Diana Riba I Giner](#)
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## The conflict of interest of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Following the debate that took place in the May plenary, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on the conflict of interest of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Andrej Babiš. It has been three years since the Greens/EFA demanded that the Commission carry out an audit to check the alleged conflict of interests of the Czech Prime Minister. The audit report, published on 23rd April, confirms that, while being Prime Minister of the EU Member State, Mr. Babiš has retained ties to the Agrofert group and

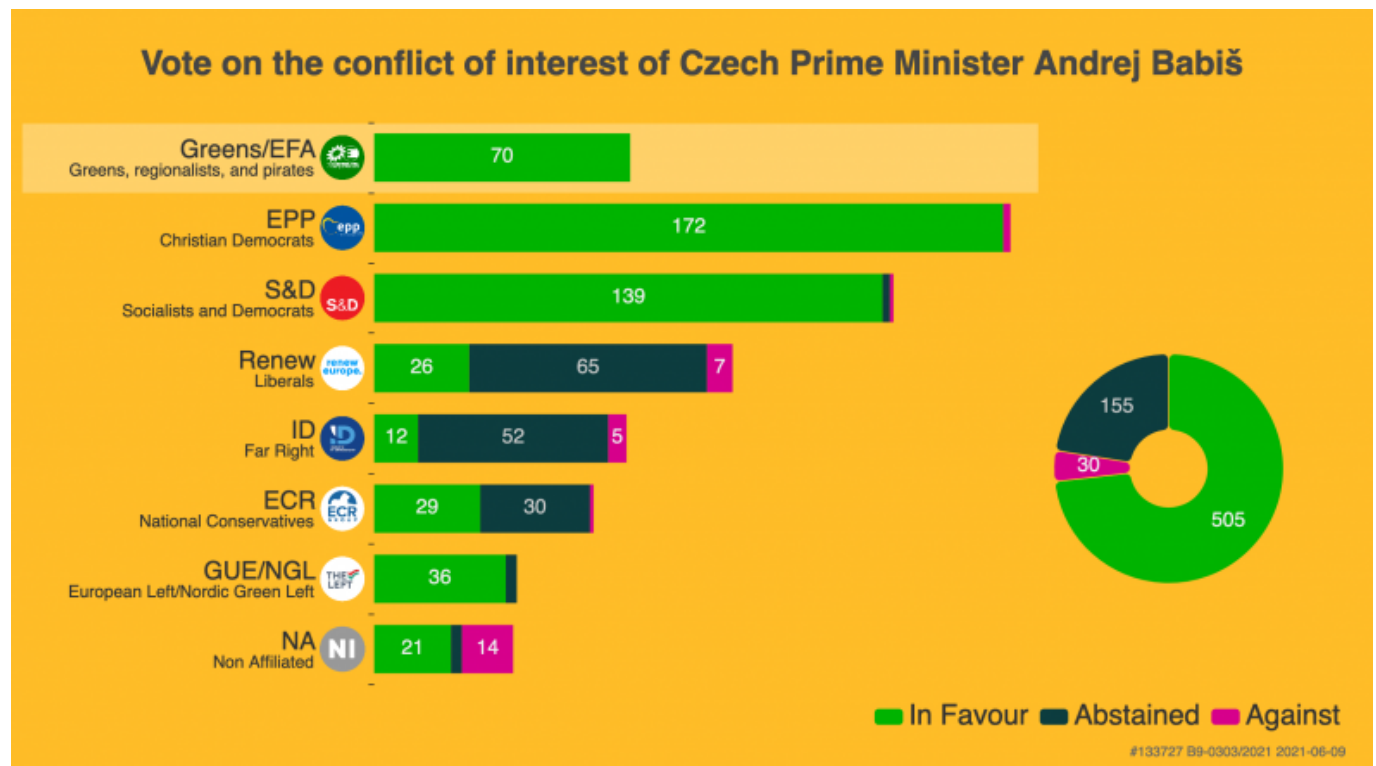


remains its ultimate beneficiary, putting him in a serious conflict of interest.

The Greens/EFA Group calls on the Council and the Commission to fully address the issue of Babiš' conflict of interest in order to protect and enforce the legal requirements of EU legislation. All funds received by Agrofert Group since 2017 that are in breach of the EU Financial Regulation and the Czech law on conflict of interests should be returned in full. Czech and European taxpayers should not have to bear the burden of the Czech PM's conflict of interest.

**Mikuláš Peksa, Pirate Party MEP** and Greens/EFA Coordinator in the Budgetary Control Committee, comments:

*"It's very welcome that one of the first acts of the new European Public Prosecutor was to open an investigation into Prime Minister Babiš. Particularly, when in Czechia the public prosecutor was forced to resign under political pressure, in a worrying attack on the rule of law. It's good to see our Renew colleagues so wholeheartedly support the rule of law mechanism this week, but we hope that they also support this motion calling out the conflict of interest around their ally Babiš. Upholding ethics, trust and democratic principles must transcend party politics."*



Vote on the conflict of interest of Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš

- [Press release](#)
- [Text adopted](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Mikuláš Peksa](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Greens/EFA Group](#)
- [Social media: Twitter - Greens/EFA Group](#)

## The European Citizens' Initiative, "End the Cage Age"

This European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is the first to address the issue of farmed animals and was signed



by over 1.4 million citizens, making it the 6th most successful ECI with the 3rd highest signature count so far. Citizens called to end the use of cages in farming, arguing that this practice is incompatible with animal welfare and that alternative non-cage housing systems are already available and commercially viable. In the European Union, there are over 300 million animals kept in cages for all or part of their lives.

The Greens/EFA Group supports the ECI, and calls for a ban on the use of cages throughout the EU by 2027. A clear phase-out of this practice is beneficial to ensure animal welfare and to provide a level playing field for farmers across the EU as they improve their welfare standards. Existing Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds must be better targeted to support farmers in this shift to non-cage systems. Currently, less than 2% of CAP's rural development funds are directed towards animal welfare. Farmers should receive a fair price for their efforts towards greater animal welfare, and imports should be held to the same cage-free standard to address citizens' concerns.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Video: Francisco Guerreiro](#)
- [Video: Tilly Metz](#)
- [Video: Benoît Biteau](#)
- [Video: Thomas Waitz](#)
- [Video: Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg](#)
- [Video: Pär Holmgren](#)
- [Video: Caroline Roose](#)
- [Video: Eleonora Evi](#)
- [Video: Claude Gruffat](#)
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*Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary debriefing: 9 July 2021*

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24.04.2024

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Jeroen Steeman

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