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Greens/EFA Debriefing

Plenary week, 11-15 March 2019

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Climate action : debate, resolution and other activities

Debate Wednesday, 13 March, 9-10am, vote Thursday

The time to address global emissions and prevent climate catastrophe is running out. That is why the Greens/EFA group have pushed for an urgent debate with resolution on climate action on Wednesday.

Greens/EFA Vice-President and climate spokesperson **Bas Eickhout** declared :"*More and more young people are getting tired of politicians that have nice words for them but don't take action against climate change. In the last weeks of this parliamentary term we need to take bold steps to get serious on climate protection. We must raise our emission reduction targets to net zero by 2050, and beyond 55% by 2030. EU Member States must commit to strong reduction targets before the UN global climate summit in September.*

Conservative MEPs in particular must stop consistently putting the lobby interests of the fossil fuels, finance

and automotive industries before the needs of citizens and the planet. We have no time left to limit global warming to 1.5°C, as proposed by the IPCC."

The Parliament adopted the resolution by a large majority (369 votes in favour, 116 against, 40 abstentions) which includes our key amendment calling for an increase of the EU 2030 target to 55% reduction compared to 1990 levels. The European Parliament also endorsed the objective of reaching net zero GHG emissions by 2050 at the latest. By that date, there is no other option the EU should be fully based on renewables. This is not yet accepted by the EP as a whole but the Greens will continue to campaign for it.

All in all, this is a big victory for the climate. The resolution also welcomes the climate demonstrations for climate justice, and their calls for greater ambition not to overshoot the 1.5°C climate limit.

To mark the occasion of the climate debate, the Greens/EFA group together with GUE and S&D invited 60 representatives of Fridays for Future and the European Student Climate Strike movement, from 18 different countries to the European Parliament to follow the debate and to listen to their demands. On Friday, there will be a Europe-wide #fridaysforfuture climate march including Greens/EFA MEPs and the #youthforclimate activists who attended the plenary debate in Strasbourg.

- Greens/EFA motion for resolution
- Text adopted
- Video – Bas Eickhout
- Press release
- Send your climate slogan
- More on climate

Further information:
Yan Dupas – Advisor on environmental issues
yan.dupas@ep.europa.eu
Michel Raquet – Advisor on energy
michel.raquet@ep.europa.eu
Delphine Chalençon - Climate Change Campaigner
delphine.chalencon@ep.europa.eu

Final trilogue on Whistleblower Protection Directive

Monday, 11 March

Final trilogue negotiations took place between the European Parliament, Commission and Council on the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive. The Directive will give legal guarantees and protection to those individuals who want to speak out when they encounter wrong-doing in the work place.

The Directive will now oblige all EU countries to adopt standards to protect whistleblowers, such as clear reporting channels, confidentiality, legal protections and sanctions for those who attempt to persecute

whistleblowers.

“Finally, those who wish to speak out will be given the support they deserve with protection from criminal and civil liability, so they can speak up without fear. We managed to overcome the threats from countries like Germany and France that they might block the whole initiative, so this deal is truly a victory for the truth which will help hold employers to account.” said Greens/EFA MEP ***Benedek Jávor****.*

Being the driving force campaigning for whistleblower protection, the Greens/EFA welcome the outcome of the trilogue negotiations.

- Blog post
- Press release
- More on whistleblowers

Further information:
Pam Bartlett Quintanilla - Transparency and Democracy Campaigner
pamela.bartlettquintanilla@ep.europa.eu

Brexit Withdrawal Agreement in UK Parliament - Second vote and more

Tuesday, 12 March

A few weeks ahead of the scheduled departure of the UK from the EU, the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement has failed to pass the UK House of Commons for the second time on Tuesday in a massive defeat of 149 votes. The previous attempt failed to pass the Commons with the biggest electoral defeat for a UK government in recorded history.

A plenary debate on Brexit in the context of the forthcoming European Council meeting of 21 and 22 March 2019 took place on Wednesday.

“Now it's time for the UK government to fundamentally re-assess its approach to Brexit. Under no circumstances can the UK be allowed to crash out of the EU without a deal in just 17 days. The UK needs to put serious proposals on the table to move past this current deadlock. We cannot continue to witness Theresa May's travelling circus of Co2 and hot air to Brussels, London, Dublin and Strasbourg, so long as Westminster is unable to agree with itself.

If the UK requests an extension to Article 50 and lays down a clear plan for overcoming the current impasse in the UK, then the EU-side should consider it. However, if the UK Parliament cannot come up with a serious plan, then the question must be put back to the people." declared Greens/EFA Co-President **Philippe Lamberts**.

On Thursday evening, the UK House of Commons voted to extend the Article 50 period and delay Brexit. The day before, the Commons voted against leaving the UK without a deal, which comes a day after voting down the Withdrawal Agreement. The UK will have to agree with the EU 27 how long the extension will be for at the next European Council summit on the 21st and 22nd of March.

"The UK has spent the last two years dashing back and forth, and is still unable to find a consensus back home. Any extension cannot be just for the sake of yet more shouting and arguing in the House of Commons. Instead of aiming for a losing hattrick and holding a third vote on the Withdrawal Agreement, it's time to ask the British people if they really want this deal or whether they want to stay in the EU." said Greens/EFA Co-President.

- Video – Philippe Lamberts
- Press release 12 March
- Press release 15 March
- More on Brexit

Further information:
Helena Argerich i Terradas - Advisor on Constitutional Affairs
helena.argerich@ep.europa.eu
Mélanie Vogel - Advisor on constitutional affairs
melanie.vogel@ep.europa.eu

European citizens' initiative

Debate Monday 11 March, vote Tuesday 12 March

The European Parliament finally approved the reform of the EU Citizens' Initiative with a very large majority (535 votes in favour, 90 against and 41 abstentions). The outcome is mixed, but a number of important improvements were made that make it worthwhile.

Most importantly, since the European Commission would not agree to proposing legislation in response to successful ECIs we made sure that the European Parliament would take a stronger role in ensuring a proper follow-up of Citizens' Initiatives. From now on, every successful ECI will trigger a debate in the European Parliament, which opens the opportunity for the Parliament to make recommendations to the Commission on how it should follow up on the ECI. Plus, after the Commission decides on how it wants to follow up, the European Parliament will have the opportunity to organise another debate to assess the Commission's response and then it can use its powers to pressure the Commission to deal properly with citizens' concerns.

On a more negative side, our main goal of obliging the European Commission to legislate in response to successful ECIs was not possible to achieve, for legal reasons. In addition, the open source software that citizen groups were using to collect signatures will need to be phased out from 2023 onwards. This is a blow for organisations who wanted to have control over their own software and be able to introduce improvements quickly, in line with the needs of users.

- Text adopted
- Blog post
- Video – Josep Maria Terricabras

Further information:
Helena Argerich i Terradas - Advisor on Constitutional Affairs
helena.argerich@ep.europa.eu

Mélanie Vogel - Advisor on constitutional affairs
melanie.vogel@ep.europa.eu
Pam Bartlett Quintanilla - Transparency and Democracy Campaigner
pamela.bartlettquintanilla@ep.europa.eu

Tax haven blacklist

ECOFIN meeting Tuesday 12

European Union Finance Ministers (ECOFIN) have just agreed to further expand the list of jurisdictions included on the **EU's tax haven blacklist** and which countries will remain on the grey list for further scrutiny. The blacklist, which is designed to promote a responsible tax policy worldwide and to ensure that the European Union's international partners adhere to the same standards as EU Member States, now also includes: the United Arab Emirates, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Dominica, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Oman, Vanuatu and Aruba.

"The EU's tax blacklist is beginning to have an impact with 60 non-cooperative jurisdictions having started to change or abolish some of their more harmful tax laws and 35 agreeing to become more transparent. There are of course some glaring omissions to the list that need to be included in future lists such as Switzerland, and if the criteria were stricter, the largest offshore financial centres such as the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Bahamas would end up on the blacklist where they belong."

"As Oxfam showed last week, if the same criteria were applied to EU Member States, then five of them would be on the list, which is why the EU must step-up the pressure on its own Members to stop dodgy tax practices." said Greens/EFA financial affairs spokesperson, **Sven Giegold**.

- Press release

Further information
František Nejedlý – Tax Justice Campaigner
frantisek.nejedly@ep.europa.eu

Vote on Clean Air for All Resolution

Debate 14 February, vote Wednesday, 13 March

Air pollution continues to be the number one environmental cause of early death in the EU, with estimates of over 400 000 premature deaths per year. In May 2018, the Commission published its Clean Air for All

communication, while at the same time referring France, Germany and the UK to the ECJ for failing to respect limit values for NO_2.

By adopting the resolution of the Environment Committee “Clean Air for All” with a large majority (446 in favour, 146 against and 79 abstentions), the European Parliament sends a strong signal that the European Union should step up its action for air quality, including by reviewing air quality standards in line with WHO recommendations. In light of the dieselgate scandal, the Greens/EFA amendment calling for the adoption of collective redress procedures in the EU to protect consumers against massive fraud was adopted.

- Text adopted

Further information:
Yan Dupas – Advisor on environmental issues
yan.dupas@ep.europa.eu

Urgency for an EU blacklist of third countries in line with the Anti-Money Laundering Directive

Debate on Tuesday, vote on Thursday

EU Justice Ministers blocked last week the adoption of an updated European Anti-Money Laundering Blacklist. The list is designed to be a key tool in the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing in the EU. There has been heavy lobbying of Member States against the adoption of the blacklist by some countries on the proposed list such as Panama, Saudi Arabia and others or by jurisdictions against an autonomous EU list like the United States. The Greens/EFA group have called for a plenary debate with resolution.

The motion for resolution supporting the Commission's list of high risk third countries in terms of money laundering and terrorist financing was carried by a large majority. By adopting this resolution, the Parliament shows its support to the Commission in front of the Council's disappointing rejection and calls on the Commission to come up with a new updated list as soon as possible.

- Video – Sven Giegold
- Text adopted

Further information:
Lídia Brun Carrasco - Advisor on Economic and Monetary Affairs
lidia.bruncarrasco@ep.europa.eu
Catherine Olier - Advisor on Economic and Monetary Affairs
catherine.olier@ep.europa.eu
Aleksejs Dimitrovs - Advisor on legal affairs, civil liberties, justice and home affairs
aleksejs.dimitrovs@ep.europa.eu

EU human rights sanctions regime

Debate Tuesday, 12 March, 15:00, vote Thursday

Members of the European Parliament clearly voted in favour (447 votes in favour/70 against /46 abstentions) of the creation of an EU-wide human rights sanctions regime, that would allow for the freezing of assets and visa bans against individuals who have committed grave violations of human rights. For years, the Greens/EFA group have been at the forefront of the push for such a regime, which would complement the existing country and thematic sanctions.

There are on-going discussions between EU Member States on the political opportunity of a targeted human rights sanctions regime at EU level. The European Parliament's vote sends a clear signal to EU Member States and the EEAS to develop this regime without delay.

"An EU-wide human rights sanctions regime would be an essential part of the EU's foreign policy and would embolden the EU to act as global human rights defender. Europe must be able to close our banks and borders to those who attack human rights and this proposal will give us the tools to do exactly that" said **Heidi Hautala**, co-author of the 'European human rights violations sanctions regime' resolution.

- Text adopted
- Press release

Further information:
Raphael Fišera - Advisor on Human Rights
raphael.fisera@ep.europa.eu

Recommendation for opening of trade negotiations between the EU and the US

Debate on Wednesday 13, vote Thursday 14

On 19 January, the Commission has issued two draft mandates for trade negotiations with the US that are now awaiting approval by the Council. The Council Presidency says it wants to wait for the resolution of the European Parliament.
In 2017, Trump pulled the United States out of the Paris Accord, and EU leaders such as Macron said they would reject trade deals with countries who were not signed up to Paris.

Member States are divided whether to start formalized negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with the Trump Administration, given his bullying tactics and his decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate.

The same division has shown up in the Parliamentary vote. Across party divisions and country affiliations, a majority voted to recommend Council to not approve the negotiation mandates.

- Video – Yannick Jadot
- Press release

Further information:
Martin Koehler – Advisor on International Trade
martin.koehler@ep.europa.eu

Gender Balance in EU economic and monetary affairs nominations

Debate Tuesday 12, Vote Thursday 14

Following the selection of three male candidates for top EU financial roles, on the 5th of March, the Parliament sent a letter to Council and Commission on the lack of respect for the principle of gender balance in the drawing-up of shortlists for selection procedures leading to appointments of key staff in EU financial institutions.

The Parliament debated the gender balance for top EU roles on Tuesday. The Green/EFA are shocked that the 3 recent appointments to top positions in Economic and Monetary Institutions were selected from an all-male shortlist of candidates. For us, gender equality in top positions needs to be achieved.

The Joint Motion for Resolution on the Gender Balance in EMU institutions was carried by a wide majority (453+/50-/71abs) and the three appointments were voted. The Greens voted against seeing the top posts at the European Central Bank, the European Banking Authority, the Single Resolution Board being allocated exclusively to men and called on the European Parliament to commit itself to reject any candidate which comes from an all-male shortlist.

However, we succeeded in having our amendment adopted asking for the requirement to reject non-gender balanced shortlists to be included in the future Gender Action Plan. We also succeeded in asking for full transparency of the process so that there can be public scrutiny, including the call for the publication of all applicants and the shortlists, as well as the reasons for their shortlisting.

- Text adopted
- Video – Sven Giegold

Further information:
Lídia Brun Carrasco - Advisor on Economic and Monetary Affairs
lidia.bruncarrasco@ep.europa.eu
Helena Argerich i Terradas - Advisor on Constitutional Affairs
helena.argerich@ep.europa.eu

Debate with the prime minister of Slovakia on the Future of Europe

Tuesday, 12 March, 17:00-19:30

The Prime Minister of Slovakia, Peter Pellegrini, debated the future of Europe in plenary on Tuesday evening. Greens/EFA Co-President Ska Keller intervened on behalf of the Group.

Ska Keller focused her speech on democracy and civil liberties and more specifically on freedom of speech. She called on Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini to investigate the murder of journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kusnirova.

The EU must take the protection of journalists seriously and ensure there will be no more deaths. We need to do more to protect our democracies!

- Video – Ska Keller

- More on Future of Europe debates

Further information:
Mélanie Vogel - Advisor on constitutional affairs
melanie.vogel@ep.europa.eu

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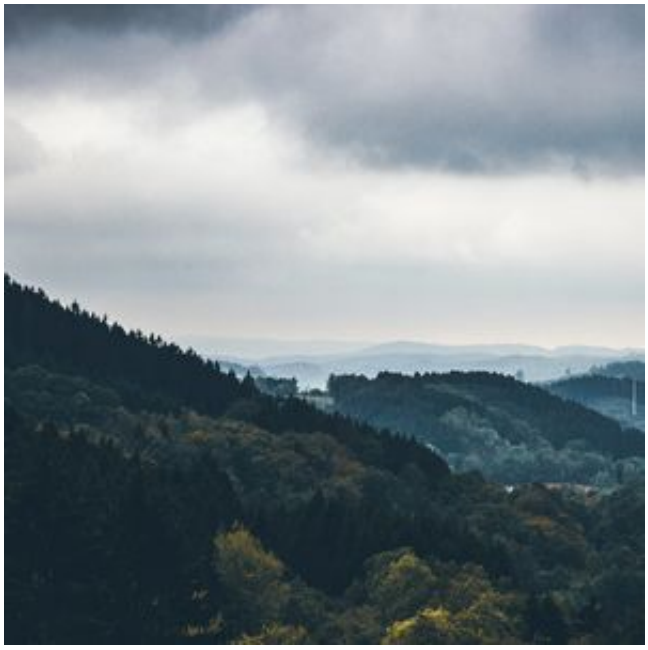
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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 29 March 2019

Recommended

Press release

sebastian-johann



Commission launching an attack against nature

04.11.2026

Press release

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