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## **Greens/EFA Debriefing**

### **Plenary week, 25-28 March 2019**

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### **Copyright Directive**

*Debate and vote on Tuesday, 26 March*

For the Greens/EFA group, the Copyright directive, specifically its Article 11 creating a new right for press publishers' (also called the link tax), and its Article 13 on upload filters, poses a serious threat to online freedom of expression and access to information and the right to privacy on the Internet. The text in its current form threatens users, small businesses and a free and open internet. That's why Greens/EFA urged all MEPs to vote against Articles 11 and 13. The Greens/EFA group had joined the protests of millions of people and received a petition of over 5 million people against this law.

A majority of Members of the European Parliament voted against the free internet, thus ignoring the concerns expressed by citizens. The agreement adopted will make upload filters the norm and restrict possibilities of expression due to licencing obligations that are impossible to fulfil.

The Greens/EFA and other political groups had repeatedly presented alternatives to these critical provisions on upload filters and on press publishers' rights, but Christian Democrats and rapporteur Axel Voss had rejected all mediation attempts and, against the previous position of the European Parliament, had also pushed through upload filters for small companies.

*“Obliging platforms to use upload filters will lead to more frequent blocking of legal uploads and make life difficult for smaller platforms that cannot afford expensive filter software. The majority of MEPs today missed the opportunity to give the European Union a modern copyright law that protects both artists and users,”* said Julia Reda, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA Group and member of the Pirate Party.

- [Video - Julia Reda](#)
- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Blog post](#)

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## **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund**

*Debate Tuesday 26, March, vote Wednesday, 27 March*

The European Parliament voted Wednesday to block spending from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund to be spent on fossil fuels. EU regional funds are essential for the development and prosperity of some of the EU's less developed regions, as they have a direct influence on the lives of citizens: quality employment, new infrastructure, and improved quality of life.

**Davor Škrlec**, Greens/EFA spokesperson on regional development, commented:

*"It's very welcome that the rest of the Parliament has heard our call to stop EU regional development funding from being spent on fossil fuels. EU funds should be used as the backbone of our transition to a circular economy and clean, zero-carbon, affordable energy for all citizens, while safeguarding our environment and improving biodiversity. Today, the European Parliament has followed the lead of the Greens/EFA group and sent a clear message that there should be no space for fossil fuels in EU funds and that we must move to sustainable investment."*

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video - Davor Škrlec](#)

Further information

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## **Framework for sustainable investment**

*Debate and vote on Thursday, 28 March*

The European Parliament adopted Thursday its position on financial standards for defining what can be considered as sustainable economic activities and sustainable investments.

The proposals, put forward by Greens/EFA rapporteur, Bas Eickhout, aim to make the financial sector more sustainable and shift financial flows from the most polluting sectors to cleaner ones, where more investment is needed to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. For the Greens/EFA group it is clear that we must bring financial flows in line with the global climate goals, and that sustainable investment needs to become the norm, not the exception.

Such standards will provide transparency and security for investors who wish to invest in green financial market products, and will help financial flows to be directed towards investments that are needed for the European economy to move towards net-zero emissions. Negotiations with the Council should begin in the

new legislature.

**Bas Eickhout**, Greens/EFA rapporteur and leading candidate in the European elections commented:

*"Today's vote is a step closer to greener financial markets, which will provide standards for green investments and more transparency for pension funds, insurance companies and private investors. The European Parliament has improved on the European Commission's proposal, making sure that such standards do not allow for greenwashing and that minimum social standards are respected. Parliament has made it clear that coal, nuclear and gas infrastructure cannot be considered sustainable investments. Unfortunately, a majority of conservatives and liberals prevented the introduction of a 'brown list', which would have allowed investors to identify and take action against the most environmentally harmful investments."*

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Bas Eickhout](#)

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## **Report on financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance (TAX3 committee)**

*Debate on Monday, 25 March, vote on Tuesday, 26 March*

The European Parliament approved the special committee on taxation's (TAX 3) final report, which calls for EU Member States to take bold steps in order to tackle tax evasion, tax avoidance and money laundering. The report calls for more progress in the fight against tax avoidance and evasion by EU Member States, in light of numerous tax scandals of the last few years and public pressure around the

issue.

The report calls for decision-making power on tax issues to move away from the unanimity rule in the Council, as over the last five years, progress on tax issues has been vetoed by some Member States seeking to gain at the expense of others.

The report also calls on the European Commission to work 'immediately' on the creation of a European financial police force. The Commission is also invited to develop a European framework for cross-border investigations in the tax and financial fields.

The adopted text calls for an end to citizenship and residency by investment schemes, otherwise known as Golden Visas, which undermine the fight against tax avoidance, and for a European Anti-Money Laundering cooperation mechanism.

“These kind of smart, practical solutions are exactly the kind of ambition that must now be shown by EU Member States in the fight against tax evasion and avoidance.” commented Sven Giegold, Greens/EFA economic affairs spokesperson.

- [Video - Molly Scott Cato](#)
- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)

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## Mobility package vote postponed

*Debate on Wednesday, 27 March*

The vote on the mobility package did not take place Wednesday as initially planned. Following a chaotic conduct of negotiations by the three rapporteurs and inadequate planning of the vote, the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, announced that the package would be referred back to the Transport Committee, to be voted on in April. No less than 1,200 amendments had been tabled, and the language translations were only available after a considerable delay. The debate still took place, despite our Group's call for it to be postponed.

Karima Delli, Greens/EFA group Chair of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, commented:

*"The President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani has once again shown poor leadership skills and postponed a predictably chaotic vote. The Greens/EFA group will continue to fight against modern slavery on Europe's roads, against the exploitation of truck drivers and for fairer working conditions."*

- [Press release](#)

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## Recent developments on the Dieselgate scandal

*Debate on Monday, 25 March and vote on Thursday, 28 March*

MEPs adopted Thursday a resolution on recent developments concerning the Dieselgate scandal. Internal Market Commissioner Elżbieta Bienkowska recently announced that the European Commission has brought an action countering the judgment of the European Court of Justice that annulled pollution permits. Germany and Hungary formally support the Commission in this appeal procedure. The Commissioner also stated that a draft regulation, which would allow legal thresholds to be exceeded, will be presented shortly. The European People's Party sided with the far right and refused to co-sign the

resolution on Dieselgate.

Now more than three years since the scandal broke, the current EU strategy falls short of the action needed to properly address the Dieselgate legacy. Most action now lies with the Member States, many of whom seem more willing to defend industry over public health.

Bas Eickhout, Greens/EFA climate spokesperson and leading candidate in the European elections, commented:

*"Every year, around half a million people die prematurely from air pollution across Europe and yet three and half years after the emissions cheating scandal we still have 43 million dirty diesel cars on our roads. Inaction on this enormous health and environmental crisis by the European Commission amounts to complicity in this scandal. The European Parliament is once again calling on the European Commission, to act in the interest of European citizens and not just for the profits of a handful of companies."*

Action is urgently required to tackle one of the main sources of air pollution in Europe and reduce hundreds of thousands of premature deaths every year.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Bas Eickhout](#)

Further information

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## **Debate on the rule of law in Malta and Slovakia**

*Debate Monday 25 March and vote Thursday 28 March*

The European Parliament adopted Thursday a resolution on the state of the rule of law in the EU - with a focus on Malta and Slovakia. The resolution highlights serious concerns with the rule of law in both countries and calls for urgent measures to be taken to guarantee media freedom and democracy, including the separation of powers.

In the final resolution, all Greens/EFA amendments were adopted, including calls for an independent international investigation into Daphne Caruana's murder in Malta, and an investigation into the possible political links behind the murders of Jan Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová in Slovakia. The Greens/EFA group also called for additional resources for Europol and Eurojust for investigations into similar cases, and to call upon the Member States to phase out all existing citizenship by investment and residency schemes as soon as possible.

The Greens/EFA Group calls for a permanent monitoring mechanism at EU level to be set up to proactively check for possible violations of the rule of law in the EU Member States in the future.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Video – Sven Giegold](#)

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## **Votes on the 2017 'discharge'**

*Debates and votes on Tuesday, 26 March*

The European Parliament adopted the discharge procedure, signing-off on the spending of European institutions and agencies for 2017. The Greens/EFA group took this final opportunity ahead of the European elections, to table amendments aimed at strengthening transparency, tackling conflicts of interest, promoting gender equality and combating harassment within the institutions, which were all adopted.

The Greens/EFA Group have also used the discharge procedure to tackle ethics questions from other institutions, including around the Selmayr-gate hiring incident in the European Commission and the conflict of interest scandal engulfing Czech PM Andrej Babiš.

*“Our group can be proud of having made progress in advancing attitudes in this Parliament, so that its Members can finally be held accountable for the use of their expenses. If we are to build trust in our EU institutions then we must ensure that they are free from conflicts of interests and that standards of ethics and impartiality are adhered to. The Greens/EFA group will continue to fight for EU institutions that are fair, transparent and cost effective.”* said **Bart Staes**, Greens/EFA Member of the Committee on Budgetary Control.

- [Video - Bart Staes](#)
- [Texts adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)

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## **Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment**

*Debate and vote on Wednesday, 27 March*

The European Parliament voted Wednesday to confirm the Single Use Plastics Directive.

The Directive, which was agreed between the three main EU institutions back in December, will see a ban on single-use items such as straws, cutlery and cotton buds, as well as a complete ban on plastic cups and food containers made out of expanded polystyrene.

Margrete Auken, spokesperson on plastics for the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament commented:

*"The Greens/EFA group have long been calling for an end to the consumption of single-use plastics, which is why it's welcome that the rest of the Parliament, the Commission and Council are waking-up to the dangers of plastic pollution. The Single Use Plastics Directive is just the start and must be used as a catalyst for change on how we as a society produce less waste and become more sustainable and of all applications of "oxo-degradable" plastic."*

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Margrete Auken](#)

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

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Press release

Wolfgang Vrede



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