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News | 18.04.2019

Greens/EFA Debriefing

Plenary week, 15-19 April 2019

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Climate

Open ENVI meeting Tuesday, 14:00

Climate activist Greta Thunberg addressed the Environment Committee of the European Parliament. The Greens/EFA group had suggested inviting her earlier this year to speak in plenary but the majority of the other groups namely EPP, ALDE and ECR opposed the invitation. Greta's visit follows the visit of a group of 60 climate activists from the Fridays for Future movement during the first plenary session in April, also on the invitation of the Greens/EFA group.

Ahead of the meeting, **Bas Eickhout**, climate spokesperson for the Greens/EFA group declared: *"Climate activists like Greta Thunberg are not asking for our applause, but for action. The solutions are there but the political will is missing. If the climate were a bank, the governments would have saved it long ago."*

As an answer to the requests of the climate movement, our Group presented its 10 priority measures to

save the climate including measures how to finance the green transition.

- [Video Greta Thunberg and Bas Eickhout](#)
- [10 priority measures to save the climate](#)
- [How to find and spend money for saving our planet](#)

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Rule of law

Vote Wednesday

A majority of MEPs adopted Wednesdaytwo complimentary programmes that will help support the rule of law in the EU.

MEPs confirmed the partial outcome of the inter-institutional negotiations on the **Rights and Values Programme**. The report authored by Greens/EFA MEP Bodil Valero contains measures to support civil society organisations in Member States working to promote human rights and democracy in the EU. Almost €1 billion could be allocated to the scheme, and it will become easier for smaller organisations to apply for EU funds.

Bodil Valero, Greens/EFA rapporteur on the **Rights and Values Programme**, said:

"In several countries we see the rule of law under threat as the pillars of democracy are being undermined by corruption and the autocratic whims of leaders like Viktor Orbán. The Rights and Values Programme will help provide support for those organisations that work tirelessly for democracy, human rights and the values we all share, in countries where the rule of law is wavering.

The **Justice Programme** includes greater support for citizens, civil society and legal experts and contribute to the development of justice in the EU, based on the rule of law, on mutual recognition and mutual trust between judicial professionals.

Heidi Hautala, Greens/EFA rapporteur on the **EU Justice Programme**, commented:

"Access to justice and the independence of judiciaries across the EU are under threat. That's why we need the tools to support the judicial officials and today's vote on the Justice Programme will provide exactly that.

Texts adopted

- [Justice Programme](#)
- [Rights and Values Programme](#)
- [Press release](#)

Further information

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Frontex - European Border and Coast Guard

Debate and vote Wednesday

MEPs adopted Wednesday the mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex. The agreement reached in trilogue negotiations will result in an unprecedented and unbalanced expansion of Frontex' and its resources. Despite increasing the agency by 10,000 extra border guards, the deal will not strengthen the rescuing of migrants and refugees at sea.

For the Greens/EFA Group, the increased operational role of the Agency should go hand in hand with strong fundamental rights safeguards and a very clear system of accountability and responsibility of the Agency for its actions, as Frontex will become the only EU Agency bearing law enforcement tasks and empowered to use force.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Video – Ska Keller](#)

Further information

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CO2 emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles

Debate Wednesday, vote Thursday

The European Parliament voted Thursday by a large majority to approve the new CO2 emissions standards for trucks and other heavy goods vehicles.

Greens/EFA rapporteur, Bas Eickhout, successfully pushed for ambitious reduction targets for trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles. Trucks and heavy goods vehicles will have to reduce their CO2 emissions by 15% by 2025, and by 30% by 2030, compared with 2019 levels.

Bas Eickhout, European Parliament's rapporteur on the proposal, Greens/EFA MEP and leading candidate in the European elections, said:

"Trucks and new heavy goods vehicles will need to play their role in driving down emissions, putting us on the road to climate protection and the Paris climate goals. High CO2 standards are a step towards making the road transport takes its fair share of the collective fight against climate change."

In addition, the European Parliament succeeded in introducing a 2% sales benchmark for zero- and low-emission vehicles as of 2025 to incentivise manufacturers to invest in alternatives to polluting diesel trucks. Trucks and other heavy good vehicles produce around one quarter of CO2 emissions in the road transport sector in the European Union.

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

Further information

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Whistleblower protection

Debate Monday, Vote Tuesday

The European Parliament has approved Tuesday, by a very large majority, the outcome of trilogue negotiations on the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive. The ground breaking EU-wide law will give legal protections to those who wish to come forward when they encounter illegality and wrongdoing in the work place.

Benedek Jávor MEP, Greens/EFA spokesperson on transparency and democracy, commented:

"For the first time across the EU, those who wish to expose corruption, wrong doing and illegality in the workplace will be able to come forward safe in the knowledge that they will have legal guarantees and rights to protection. This Directive has been a long time coming and is a shining example of how the EU can directly improve the lives of citizens.

For the Greens/EFA Group, whistleblowers deserve the utmost protection no matter where they are, not persecution and prison cells. Now it's up to the Member States to turn this Directive into national law and we call on all EU countries to improve on the standards of this text and make it as wide ranging, comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

Our Group also co-hosted an event in Strasbourg on the future of the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive with Lux Leaks Whistleblower Antoine Deltour.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Julia Reda](#)
- [More on whistleblowers](#)

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EU-US trade talks

Monday

The Council of Ministers adopted the mandates for the European Commission to negotiate trade agreements with the USA while the European Parliament had rejected negotiations on the basis of the two mandates on the 24th of March 2019. The Greens/EFA Group rejects opening trade talks with Trump so long as the US wants to opt-out of international obligations to counter climate change.

Reinhard Bütikofer, trade spokesperson for the Greens/EFA group and member of the delegation for relations with the USA:

"The starting positions are very far apart with the US side is insisting on the inclusion of the entire agricultural sector, which the EU has so far categorically ruled out.

We need a fair partnership, but not a deal at the expense of the environment and European standards. The Commission and the Council are undermining the EU's negotiating position by trying to avoid a transparent debate out of fear of public opinion. "

- [Press release](#)

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Investigation into conflict of interest surround Czech PM Andrej Babiš

CONT hearing Monday 19:00

Commission Oettinger appeared Monday before a closed-door session of the Budgetary Control Committee (CONT) to update the Parliament on the progress of the investigation into the conflict of interest surrounding Czech PM Andrej Babiš. He admitted that the Commission had been notified already last summer but got only active in the beginning of this year.

Bart Staes, Member of Budget Control Committee for the Greens/EFA group, said:

"The European Commission has failed to complete the investigation on time. They should have reacted much earlier to the alerts of a possible conflict of interest which would have permitted to conclude the investigations before the European elections. They should not hide behind official deadlines or processes but provide results as soon as possible. It would be shameful that the Czech citizens will go to vote in the European elections without a final result of the inquiry."

The Commission launched an investigation following pressure from Transparency International and the Greens/EFA group after TI revealed Babiš to be the beneficial owner of the Agrofert group of companies, which have received large amounts of EU funds. The Commission's own legal service has found that Babiš is in conflict of interest with his role as PM and as a recipient of EU funds through Agrofert.

On Wednesday, Czech police have finalised their investigation and proposed to the state prosecutor to charge six people including Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and his wife for their alleged roles in the Stork's Nest scandal involving the fraud CZK 50 million in EU funds.

- [Press release](#)

Further information

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Copyright

Monday

The Council of Ministers adopted the Copyright Directive, including ancillary copyright for press publishers and a de facto obligation for Internet platforms to use upload filters.

Julia Reda, Vice-President of the Greens/EFA group and shadow rapporteur on the Copyright Directive, commented:

"The opportunity for a modern copyright directive has been lost, the new law makes everyone a loser. Artists, authors and small publishers will not get their fair remuneration and internet users will have to live with limited freedoms. "

Last month, the Greens/EFA group had joined the protests of millions of people and received a petition of over 5 million people against this law.

See previous [press release 26 March](#)

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Better enforcement and modernisation of EU consumer protection rules

Vote Wednesday, 12:00

The European Parliament adopted by a large majority Wednesday new rules on better enforcement and modernisation of EU consumer protection. A certain number of these rules are welcomed, especially the ones imposing a number of transparency requirements for online marketplaces and comparison websites in order to better protect the consumers when buying online. But on one of the key provisions of this revision, i.e. the unfair practice of dual quality of products, the agreement is a missed opportunity to ensure that no second-class products are sold within the EU since it provides for an open list of exemptions for traders to adapt their products and does not guarantee either that consumers will be clearly informed of such adaptations. Instead of banning the practice by adding to the blacklist of unfair commercial practices as requested twice by the European Parliament, the agreement found will force authorities to investigate complaints on a case-by-case basis. This will put the burden on consumers to prove they have been misled.

Julia Reda Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur commented:

"The practice of large companies selling products of differing quality in different countries under the same brand undermines the notion of the Single Market and is an affront to consumers. In effect, multinational companies are treating certain EU citizens as second class based on the country they come from. It's unfair

for consumer rights and detrimental to people's health to let companies get away with selling same-branded products of different qualities in different countries.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Video – can you spot the difference?](#)
- [Video – Julia Reda](#)

Further information:

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

Wednesday

The Prime Minister of Latvia, Krišjānis Kariņš, debated the future of Europe in plenary. In his speech, Greens/EFA Co-President **Philippe Lamberts** mentioned agricultural policy, refugees and minority rights as key issues where the Greens/EFA Group would like the Latvian government to change policies.

- [Press release](#)
- [Video – Philippe Lamberts](#)
- [More on The Future of Europe](#)

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Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- [Brunei](#)
- [Cameroon](#)
- [China, notably the situation of religious and ethnic minorities](#)

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