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Greens/EFA debriefing of the plenary session

18-22 January

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Portuguese Presidency

During the debate on the Portuguese Council Presidency, the Greens/EFA urged the Prime Minister Costas to revisit, along with the Commission, the current proposals on the Common Agricultural Policy and the EU-Mercosur trade agreement in order to bring them in line with the European Green Deal. The Greens/EFA group is looking forward to working with the new Council Presidency on a strong and ambitious European Climate Law, supporting vaccine rollout across the EU, and ensuring that recovery funds contribute to a greener, more social and resilient union.

- Greens/EFA demands for the Portuguese Presidency
- Video - Philippe Lamberts
- Video - Jordi Sole
- Video - Francisco Guerreiro
- Video - Yannick Jadot
- Video - Tineke Strik
- Video - Sven Giegold

- Video - Terry Reintke
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
- Social Media - Twitter: Philippe Lamberts
- Social Media - Twitter: Philippe Lamberts
- Social Media - Twitter: Francisco Guerreiro (Portuguese)

Vaccination Strategy

During the debate on the global strategy for COVID-19 strategy, the Greens/EFA group called on the European Commission to ensure transparency and equity. The Greens/EFA group supports an European approach and a coordinated effort among the EU countries. During the debate, Greens/EFA MEPs also stressed the priority of global solidarity and ensuring the swift and fair distribution of vaccines to citizens in less developed countries, which could be facilitated by means of a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights.

Tilly Metz MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, said:

“A European approach to fighting the pandemic is the correct way out of this crisis. National go-it-alone approaches are detrimental to the common European strategy.

“Transparency creates trust; we call on the European Commission to fully disclose the contracts and publish the liability rules. Vaccine manufacturers must not dodge their responsibilities, regular liability rules must apply, as with vaccines for other illnesses. We demand more transparency about the conditions of approval, availability, use of public money and clinical data.

“Globally, no one is safe until everyone is safe. We support the global vaccination initiative COVAX and call for the European Union to support the waiver of intellectual property rights for COVID 19 products and treatments for the duration of the pandemic, as requested by South Africa and India at the international level, so that access to vaccines does not depend on the economic weight of countries."

- Greens/EFA Press release
- Video - Philippe Lamberts
- Video - Tilly Metz
- Video - Michèle Rivasi
- Video - Margrete Auken
- Video - Rasmus Andresen
- Video - Piernicola Pedicini
- Video - Jutta Paulus
- Social Media - Twitter: Philippe Lamberts
- Social Media - Twitter: Tilly Metz (French)
- Social Media - Twitter: Jutta Paulus (German)

Inauguration of the US Presidency

Following the Inauguration of the new President of the United States that took place on the 20th of January, the MEPs debated on the challenges that President Biden and Vice-President Harris will face, and on the future of EU-US relations. The Greens/EFA group celebrate the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as President and Vice-President of the US, and call on joint action to confront the climate crisis and other global threats.

Ska Keller, President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, commented:

"*We would like to congratulate President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris, and wish them and their entire team success in dealing with the immense challenges they face. They are charged with uniting US society, getting a grip on the Covid crisis and making America a reliable and constructive partner on the global stage again. The EU and US need to work together as close friends if we are going to overcome the climate crisis, tackle global threats to health and support democracy and human rights worldwide.*

"The outgoing president leaves behind a divided society that needs uniting. The violent riots in recent weeks are the sorry and deliberate results of years of lies and misinformation, often distributed by major internet platforms. The rioters, as well as many Republicans, attempted to overturn the results of democratic elections and threaten the rule of law. The Capitol riot lays bare the weakness of democracy to those who wish to destroy it, both in the US and the EU. All democrats must defend our open societies against hatred and violence."

Reinhard Bütikofer, Member of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the United States, added:

"*Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will have to almost square the circle in order to lift US society out of a deep national crisis. The new American president faces the Herculean task of leaving behind the poisoned legacy of his predecessor, while Trumpism obviously has not ceased to play a role. On the international stage, expectations are huge that Donald Trump's strategy of division and the abandonment of multilateral agreements will be reversed as soon as possible.*

"President Biden has taken promising steps even before taking office, with his announcement to prioritise climate protection and re-join the Paris climate agreement, and is boosting confidence in the US as an international actor. We hope for similar renewal efforts with regard to the WHO and the WTO. We wish the new President, Vice-President and their entire administration the strength and energy to unite American society and to set a new course for re-invigorated transatlantic relations."

- Video - Ska Keller
- Video - Alice Kuhnke
- Video - Reinhard Butikofer
- Video - Ciaran Cuffe
- Video - Marcel Kolaja
- Video - Salima Yenbou
- Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA sharepic
- Social Media - Twitter: Ciaran Cuffe
- Social Media - Facebook: US rejoins Paris Agreement

Decent and affordable housing

During the Plenary, MEPs debated and voted on an INI report led by Greens/EFA MEP Kim van Sparrentak addressing the housing crisis. The tabled text recognises housing as a fundamental right, and establishes the need to put people, and not market interests, at the centre of a socially just recovery. With the approval of this report, the European Parliament calls on the EU Member States and the Commission to achieve an ambitious renovation wave that prioritises emission reductions while tackling energy poverty, and also calls on the Commission to develop proposals to tackle the so-called financialisation of the housing market, to combat homelessness and discrimination with an EU level goal to end homelessness by 2030 and to develop an integrated housing strategy that prioritises investment in social, public and affordable housing. The text also demands an inclusive approach to housing, especially for those most exposed to the housing crisis and affected by poverty and precarity.

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA MEP and European Parliament Rapporteur for the 'access to decent and affordable housing for all' report, comments:

"Today's vote is a clear signal that Europe needs a more social housing policy, an end to homelessness by 2030, equal access to the housing market and climate-friendly housing. There is a housing crisis all over Europe: people across Europe face unaffordable rents, outdated and rundown housing and unsatisfactory living conditions. In urban areas in particular, many people find themselves in untenable situations that are driving them further out of the city. The Commission needs to propose an integrated strategy on affordable and social housing. Investment in reasonably priced, social and energy-efficient housing should be a priority for the economic recovery.

"Homelessness is a severe violation of human rights, yet it has almost doubled in the EU over the last ten years. The Commission should take stronger action to support Member States in reducing and eradicating homelessness and propose a goal to end it by 2030. The Commission and Portuguese Council Presidency must urgently push for an EU framework alongside national strategies to address the current housing and homelessness crisis."

- Text adopted
- Greens/EFA Press release
- Video - Kim van Sparrentak (Rapporteur)
- Video - Ciaran Cuffe
- Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA video
- Social Media - Twitter: Kim van Sparrentak
- Greens/EFA petition: A home for everyone is possible

Gender Equality Strategy

The European Parliament adopted a progressive report in response to the Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025) proposed by the European Commission. The report acknowledges the link between the climate crisis and gender equality and considers recent backlashes against gender and women's rights, and the feminisation of precarious work sectors. With the adoption of this report, the European Parliament calls for increased funding towards the eradication of gender-based violence. The Greens/EFA group welcomes the initiative extending the areas of crime to encompass specific forms of gender-based violence in accordance with Article 83(1) of the TFEU but recalls that these new legislative measures should be complementary to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

Alice Kuhnke, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the report and coordinator in the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, comments:

"We need concrete actions proposed for women and girls who are particularly vulnerable to multiple threats of discrimination and the most marginalised women in society. This report comes at a critical time and sends a strong signal from the Parliament that the Commission needs to take account of and respond to the needs of all women in Europe.

"The Greens/EFA group have been calling for a stronger connection between climate change and gender for a long time. We know that women and girls are particularly vulnerable to climate change and its dreadful effects. That's why this report calls on the Commission to deliver on the commitment of the renewed Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, and to introduce an EU gender and climate change focus.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has put women on the forefront and further deepened existing inequalities, in particular for the most marginalised women in society. It's backwards and abhorrent that certain member states, such as Hungary and Poland, have used this crisis as an opportunity to introduce new measures to limit access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, attacking on transgender and intersex peoples' rights and to roll back on work to combat gender based violence."

- Text adopted
- Greens/EFA Press release
- Video - Diana Riba i Giner
- Video - Alice Kuhnke
- Video - Terry Reintke
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
- Video - Sylwia Spurek
- Social Media - Twitter: Alice Kuhnke

Humanitarian situation of refugees and migrants at the EU's external borders

Following the reports on the dire situation in Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Canary islands and elsewhere, the European Parliament held a debate on the conditions faced by refugees and migrants on the EU's external borders. The Greens/EFA Group called for an end to the humanitarian crisis, the reception of refugees and the creation of an inquiry committee regarding the alleged role of the EU border agency Frontex in illegal pushbacks.

Tineke Strik, Greens/EFA coordinator in Migration in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, has commented:

"*The inhumane and dangerous situation facing refugees and migrants in the camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Greece and elsewhere is shameful. European governments must not continue to ignore the humanitarian catastrophe on our borders. We must stop the spiral of deterrence through inhumane conditions and illegal pushbacks.*

"The Greens/EFA group calls on the Portuguese Council Presidency to launch an initiative to transfer people in need from the camps to places where their rights and safety can be guaranteed. European governments must allow the many cities and municipalities that are willing to take in refugees to be able to assist them.

"Illegal pushbacks deny refugees the right to asylum and threaten their lives. Yet, the serious allegations of pushbacks taking place at the EU's borders, with the knowledge or even complicity of national and European border guards, have yet to be properly investigated. The European Parliament must set up a committee of inquiry to look into the evidence of pushbacks, and to investigate the allegations of involvement by Frontex and national authorities."

- Video - Tineke Strik
- Video - Saskia Bricmont
- Video - Erik Marquardt
- Video - Romeo Franz

Human rights situation in Turkey

On Thursday, the plenary debated and voted on an urgency resolution regarding the human rights situation in Turkey, in particular, the case of Selahattin Demirtaş and other prisoners of conscience. The plenary urged for the immediate release of all the political prisoners. The Greens/EFA group and its green partners want to raise awareness concerning the case of Cihan Erdal, a member of the youth wing of Turkey's Green Left Party who was detained on 25 September 2020 while visiting his family in Turkey. On 7 January 2021, he was indicted together with Selahattin Demirtaş and more than 100 defendants as part of the so-called "Kobane case". In Cihan's case, the evidence provided consists on two "retweets" of the HDP's official statement from October 2014. The indictment calls for 38 counts of life sentence without parole.

Ska Keller MEP, President of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, commented:

"Cihan Erdal is a peaceful human rights activist and an academic. It is beyond absurdity that he is facing an indictment calling for 38 counts of aggravated life sentence based on the evidence of two tweets, while Cihan was only trying to make Turkey a better place. We ask for his immediate release and call for an end to this travesty of justice.

"We are also extremely concerned about the targeted attacks on the youth wings of political parties, as well as the brutal crackdown on peaceful student protests legitimately defending academic freedom. We strongly condemn this violence and wish to express our solidarity with those peaceful protesters."

Sergey Lagodinsky MEP, Chair of the EU-Turkey delegation of the European Parliament, added:

"Political persecution in Turkey and harassment of its students, human rights defenders, activists, academics, journalists and opposition politicians must stop. Any normalisation of official EU-Turkey relations and any move on the positive agenda as offered by the European Council is fully dependent on a tangible improvement of the civil and human rights situation and rule of law in Turkey. Releasing political prisoners from Turkish prisons would be a good start."

- Text adopted
- Joint statement (Greens/EFA, EGP, FYEG): Turkey to release political prisoner Cihan Erdal
- Greens/EFA press release
- Video - Sergey Lagodinsky
- Video - François Alfonsi
- Social Media - Twitter: Greens/EFA

Reforming the EU's list on tax havens

The European Parliament adopted a resolution that demands a more transparent and independent decision-making process in the listing or delisting of jurisdictions on the EU's list of tax havens. The text calls for stricter criteria that should be also applied to EU countries.

Sven Giegold MEP, financial and economic policy spokesperson of the Greens/EFA group comments:

"Today's resolution is an important step in the fight against tax avoidance and evasion by large corporations and wealthy individuals. We have a broad majority in the European Parliament that no longer wants to stand silently by and watch the bottomless tax competition between states. Tax havens cause great injustice, both within and outside the EU. Governments around the world lose direct tax revenues of €360 billion every year because of tax havens. The EU list of tax havens has the potential to bring real change. However, the countries on the current EU list of tax havens account for just 2% of corporate tax avoidance. Our goal is to get all tax havens on the list. The fact that there is such a broad majority for far-reaching reforms in the European Parliament is a strong signal for greater tax justice.

"The list is only suitable as an instrument for greater tax justice if the EU governments put an end to double standards and lax criteria. Countries with a tax rate of zero percent, such as Bermuda and the Cayman Islands, must automatically be put on the EU list of tax havens. EU governments must also screen trading partners such as the UK and the US and put them on the list if they fail to meet the criteria. We call on EU governments and the European Commission to apply the same criteria to all countries within or outside the EU in order to maintain credibility and to crack down on tax havens in the EU.

"The citizens of the EU will ultimately have to pay for the tax losses caused by tax havens and their wealthy beneficiaries. That is why the listing process must be formalised, with proper involvement of the European Parliament."

- Text adopted
- Greens/EFA Press release
- Video - Sven Giegold
- Video - Kira Marie Peter-Hansen
- Video - Ernest Urtasun
- Video - Claude Gruffat

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