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Greens/EFA debriefing of the plenary session

14-18 December

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Council Conclusions on the MFF, Rule of Law and the Climate Law

This week, MEPs debated and voted on a resolution on the outcome of last week's European Council summit on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 (MFF), the InterInstitutional Agreement, the EU Recovery Instrument and the Rule of Law Regulation. The vote came after agreements in the European Council last week and negotiations between the Parliament and the Council last month.

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

"It's good to see at the 11th hour the Council give its support to the Recovery Fund, MFF and climate targets; the economies hit hardest and the climate simply couldn't wait any longer. But there have been some worrying trends. There's been a sad show of destruction by the governments of Hungary and Poland who wanted to hold the recovery fund hostage for their anti-democratic agenda. In light of such blackmail we all need to stand strong and united."

Philippe Lamberts MEP, President of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, has

commented:

"For the first time our group will support an MFF package. Thanks to the efforts of our MEPs in the Parliament and in the negotiations we have succeeded in agreeing a long-term budget that goes further than ever on climate, biodiversity and gender. It is a testament to the power of negotiation and compromise on which this union is built that we have agreed on such a solid long-term budget in such divisive and turbulent times. The MFF and Recovery Package are urgently needed to kick start the Covid recovery and get the Green Deal off the ground."

- Text adopted: MFF, Rule of Law Conditionality and Own Resources
- Text adopted: protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in Member States
- Press Release
- Video - Ska Keller
- Video - Rasmus Andresen
- Video - David Cormand
- Video - Bas Eickhout
- Video - Daniel Freund
- Video - Tineke Strik
- Social Media - Twitter
- Social Media - Twitter

Digital Services Act

On Tuesday, the European Commission presented the Digital Services Act, which will set new rules for market-dominant digital companies like Facebook, Google and co. The long-awaited Digital Services Act is supposed to unify the Digital Single Market, create control for online platforms and to ensure fair competition, but it falls short of expectations. On 21st October, MEPs had called on the EU Commission to present a clear legal framework for online platforms, to formulate guidelines for dealing with tips on illegal content and to put an end to arbitrariness in blocking and deleting content by online platforms. Today's announcement kicks off negotiations between the Commission and the European Parliament and Council.

Kim van Sparrentak, Greens/EFA group Member of the International Market and Consumer Protection Committee, commented**:**

"We welcome the European Commission's move to end the Wild West style Internet giants and to make online platforms accountable for how they spread content and when they remove content from users. We are also happy the Commission has heard our calls for clear and transparent procedures on how to handle content online. Unfortunately, the Commission has not quite taken the power over our fundamental rights out of platforms' hands. The Commission has missed an opportunity to break the supremacy of the big internet companies."

Marcel Kojala, Pirate Party and Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the DSA in the Culture and Education Committee, and Coordinator in the Internal Market and Consumer Protections Committee, said**:**

"These proposals do not touch upon the business model of spying on users and spreading hate and disinformation. Personalised online advertising analyses and links our behaviour on the Internet and turns private interests into profit for Google, Facebook and Co. Unfortunately, the Commission has not dared to stop this unfair business practice and to join the European Parliament's demand for a strict limitation of targeted advertising and a prohibition of non-consensual cross-context behavioural advertisement."

Greens/EFA MEPs: Alexandra Geese, Patrick Breyer, Kim Van Sparrentak, Marcel Kolaja

- Commission's Proposal
- Press release
- Social Media - Facebook Video
- Social Media - Facebook Post
- Social Media - Twitter
- Greens/EFA Online campaign 'My content my rights'
- 'Put rights and freedoms at the centre of the upcoming Digital Services Act' - a blog by MEPs Alexandra Geese, Patrick Breyer and Marcel Kolaja

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Drinking Water Directive

This week, following a debate in Parliament, the President of the European Parliament has announced the approval of the outcome of negotiations on the EU Drinking Water Directive ("Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption"). Stricter limits will apply to lead and, for the first time, to endocrine disruptors such as Bisphenol A in drinking water, and measures against water loss through damaged pipes. The revision of the Drinking Water Directive stems from the first successful European Citizens' Initiative: "Right2Water".

Sven Giegold MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur for the Drinking Water Directive, commented:

"EU-wide clean drinking water is a great success for the initiative from civil society. We owe it to the efforts of civil society that our drinking water will be cleaner in the future. For the first time, limit values for endocrine disruptors and stricter values for lead will make tap water cleaner. All of Europe will see the roll out of public drinking water dispensers.

"Clean drinking water protects the environment and consumers. Publicly available drinking water will save money and reduce plastic waste. Many people will no longer have to buy bottled drinking water and can switch to tap water. Access to clean water is a human right that the supporters of the European Citizens' Initiative have asserted this at the European-level. This is a great step forward for civic engagement. Now it's a matter of implementing the directive in all member states. Mandatory public water dispensers must be installed quickly to ensure access for all."

- Text adopted
- Press release
- Video - Sven Giegold (shadow rapporteur)
- Video - Bas Eickhout
- Video - Benoît Biteau
- Video - Sylwia Spurek
- Social Media - Facebook Post

European Year of Rail

On Monday, the European Parliament approved the proposal to make 2021 the “European Year of Rail”. The Greens/EFA group welcomes this proposal, expected to kick off “the rail renaissance”, and considers this a big success and a step forward towards a more sustainable transport system.

We call on the Commission and the Member States to speed up the completion of missing cross-border train connections and services, eliminate bottlenecks and promote the reintroduction of night trains throughout Europe. This shift in the transport system should include the development of sustainable and affordable alternatives to planes, that prioritise the needs of passengers, aiming for phasing out short-haul flights (under 500km) and combustion engines by 2030 in order to achieve our climate targets.

- Text adopted
- Video - Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg (Rapporteur)
- Video - Jakop G. Dalunde
- Social Media - Twitter

Transitional provision for agricultural funds

During the plenary session, the Commission presented this proposal to ensure continuity for the transitional period (2021 - 2022) while the CAP reform is still under negotiation. The Greens/EFA voted against the negotiation mandate approved back in May 2020 because it cements a backward-looking agricultural policy. The transitional proposal includes very few changes, and, disappointingly, maintains the same structure for distributing funds.

However, the Greens/EFA group welcomes some changes included in the proposal during the negotiations, like the additional technical assistance for smaller and peripheral Member States, which will be helpful in preparing the new CAP, and the fact that the multiannual agro-environmental, organic and animal welfare commitments no longer need to be shortened. Besides that, this Transitional Regulation includes funds from the Next Generation EU and the European Recovery Instrument in order to support the agricultural sector affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each year, the EU spends 35% of its budget (50 billion euros) on the Common Agricultural Policy.

- Text adopted
- Video - Sylwia Spurek
- Greens/EFA’s dossier on CAP 2020

A New Strategy for European SMEs

This week, the European Parliament adopted a report that takes into account the impact of the COVID crisis on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as a response to the Commission’s Strategy on SMEs that was published last March. The Greens/EFA Group considers SMEs to be the backbone of the European economy. They should be central to the recovery and to achieving an environmentally sustainable and fair economy.

The Greens/EFA Group particularly welcomes how this proposal is linked to the European Green Deal and that it includes a perspective on gender equality. The text calls for a regulatory and financial framework to enable SMEs and SME associations to offer environmentally sustainable goods and services. It also calls for measures to increase the percentage of female company founders and managers, and for the collection of gender-disaggregated data to improve policy decisions.

- Text adopted
- Video - Henrike Hahn (shadow rapporteur)
- Video - Claude Gruffat
- Commission's SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe (March 2020)

Brexit: Future relations between the EU and the UK

On Friday, the plenary held a debate on the future relations between the EU and the UK, as well as votes on contingency plans in the case of no deal. During the Conference of Presidents of the Parliament that took place on Thursday, the European leaders agreed to push ahead with a vote on a potential Brexit deal before the end of the year. The Greens/EFA group considers that speeding up the consent procedure before the end of the year will not enable adequate time for the accurate and needed democratic scrutiny of any potential deal regarding the future relationship with the UK.

The contingency measures, in case there is no agreement reached on a future relationship between the EU and the UK focus on transport access and reciprocal fishing rights. These are needed to ensure that a no deal UK exit from the transition period will cause the least amount of disruption possible.

Regarding the decision of the Conference of Presidents**, Greens/EFA president Philippe Lambert** commented**:**

"Today's decision by a majority of the European Parliament's group presidents to expedite the consent process of a yet-to-come EU-UK treaty deals a severe blow to the credibility of the European Parliament as a legislative body. Indeed, it makes a joke of the scrutiny process of a treaty massive in both size and political importance, that should now be expedited in just a few days."

Greens/EFA president **Ska Keller** added:

"*Especially after the successful battle around the budget, the recovery plan and the rule-of-law conditionality, we thought that the days which saw the European Parliament making big stances only to cave in down the road were over; sadly, they are not.*"

Grace O'Sullivan, Greens/EFA MEP shadow rapporteur on the Brexit contingency measures in case of no-deal - Fisheries, said:

"December the 31st marks the end of an era when Brexit becomes a harsh reality. These measures are a bare but crucial minimum in terms of protecting livelihoods and links with our partners."

Texts adoped:

- Basic road freight and road passenger connectivity at the end of the transition period with regard to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union
- Air connectivity following the end of the transition period with regard to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union

- Aviation safety at the end of the transition period with regard to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union
- Fishing authorisations for Union fishing vessels in United Kingdom waters and fishing operations of United Kingdom fishing vessels in Union waters
- Press Release
- Greens/EFA take on Brexit
- Social Media - Twitter

ECI - Minority SafePack

During this week's plenary, the European Parliament tabled its own resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative, "Minority Safepack", which aims to ensure respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU. The initiative calls for legislative proposals in nine distinct areas, including regional and linguistic community funding, equality for stateless minorities and the creation of a Language Diversity Centre. Over 1.1 million European Citizens have signed the ECI. The Greens/EFA particularly supported the Parliament's call for the Commission to propose legal acts to address their concerns.

This ECI was one of the first priorities of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, which was set up in January 2020.

François Alfonsi, EFA MEP and Co-Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, national communities and languages, said:

"The European Citizens' Initiative Minority Safepack has placed the issue of Minority rights on the European Union's agenda, a question which bears the brunt of decades of conflicting relations in several Member states. The European Union must be more democratic, more inclusive and more diverse."

Tatjana Ždanoka, EFA MEP and campaigner for linguistic minority rights, said:

"EU law grants the right to have a residence, to work, to provide services, to participate in local and European elections to EU citizens in all Member States other than their own. But EU law does not grant these rights to stateless persons. A solution could be as follows: the Member State declares that persons who do not hold the nationality of any country, who reside in a Member State and are holders of a travel document issued by that Member State are to be in possession of the same rights that EU law grants to EU citizens."

EFA MEP, **Diana Riba,** said:

"Today Europe has a double chance. On the one hand: it can establish a framework of protection for its diversity, in its multiple expressions. On the other hand, the adoption of these measures can strengthen the Citizens' Initiative, as an indispensable tool for the democracy and legitimacy of the European project. I call on the Commission not to evade its responsibility, and to commit itself to responding to more than one million European citizens who call on it to protect diversity, a fundamental value of the Union.

- Text adopted
- Video - Rasmus Andresen

- Video - François ALFONSI
- Video - Diana Riba i Giner
- Minority SafePack Initiative

Resolution on a Council configuration on Gender Equality

The European Parliament has approved a resolution that calls for the creation of a Council configuration on Gender Equality, an assembly where representatives of the Member States can discuss legislative measures to address challenges in the field of women's rights and gender equality. The Greens/EFA supports this call and believes that all European Institutions must adapt their structures to deliver results on combating gender inequality.

With this resolution, the Parliament has urged the Council to adopt an intersectional approach, which takes into account the distinct forms of discrimination faced by women belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, racialised women, older women, women with disabilities, Roma women, LBTI women, refugee and migrant women, and women at risk of social exclusion.

We consider instruments such as this to be vital to advance in the fight against the discrimination that women are still facing in Europe and that has increased with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Text adopted
- Video - Alice Kuhnke
- Video - Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana
- Video - Hannah Neumann
- Video - Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield

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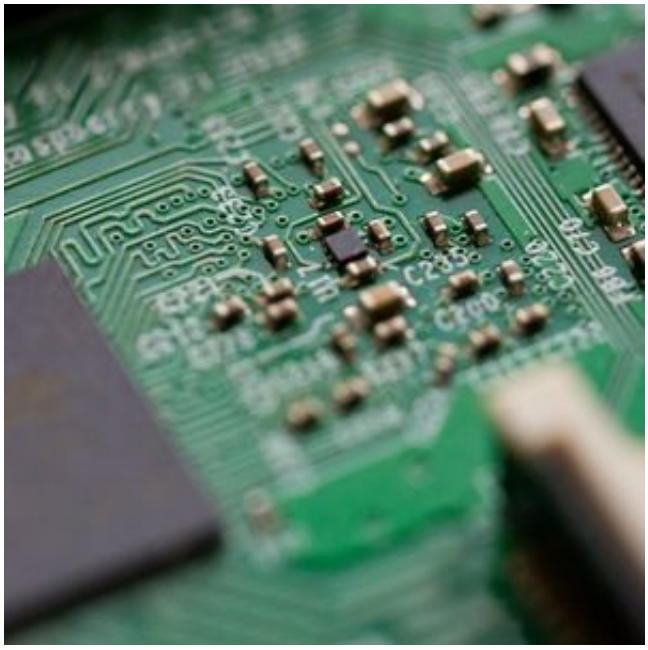
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Contact person



Katy Cadwallader

Human Resources Officer

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