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News | 17.12.2009

Greens/EFA Round-up 14-17 December 2009

Debriefing of the plenary session in Strasbourg

Toy safety

Codecision procedure
Relevant committee: Internal Market and Consumer Protection
Debate Monday 14 December 2009

At the request of the Greens/EFA Group, the European Commission made a statement to the plenary on toy safety. This comes in the wake of a recent German study that concluded the legislation allows too high quantities of substances that are carcinogenic or otherwise harmful. The purpose of our request was to ask the Commission to react on these allegations and indicate which measures could be proposed to address the issue, including a possible modification in the threshold levels.
Reacting in plenary, the Commission said they cannot propose immediately to modify the relevant values since they need proved scientific evidence which needs timely tests.
Greens/EFA were the only major political group which voted against the Toys Directive in December 2008 precisely for these reasons. This story is a case of bad implementation of the precautionary principle by the Commission and demonstrates the Commission's inconsistency pushing for a fast-track procedure in December 2008 in order to have the directive adopted. The precautionary principle implies taking stringent measures without waiting for a consensus among the various scientific opinions. It is possible, necessary and urgent to change the directive. CMRs should be banned from toys.

See:
- Study by German Institute (summary in English)
- Plenary speech by Heide Rühle (video)
- Greens/EFA press release

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Microfinance facility

Codecision procedure
Relevant committee: Employment and social affairs
Debate Monday 14 December 2009 - vote Wednesday 16 December 2009

In July 2009, the European Commission proposed the setting up of a Microfinance Facility The Facility is meant to provide microcredits to unemployed people or people at risk of losing their job without access to the credit market. The Commission proposed to finance the Microfinance Facility by cutting the budget of the Progress programme for the period 2010-2013 by 100 Mio Euro. Greens opposed the idea of financing the facility throughthe PROGRESS instrument, especially as microcredit can already be funded under the Structural Funds. If the Member States wanted, a much bigger budget to finance microcredits would be available there.

The EP adopted the report but for this specific reason Greens voted against in plenary because this paves the way for the instrument to be financed by using money from PROGRESS, another social policy-related fund that will therefore be reduced.

See:
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Elisabeth Schroedter (video)
- Greens/EFA press release (DE)

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Access to documents

Resolution further to oral question - Rule 115 (5)
Relevant committee: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Debate Tuesday 15 December 2009 - vote Thursday 17 December 2009

The EP adopted (by a majority 341 + 206 - and 20 abstentions) the compromise resolution signed by all Groups except the EPP. The resolution deals with improvements needed to the legal framework for access to documents following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.
The victory is the result of a good cooperation between the S&D (socialists), ALDE (Liberals), Greens/EFA and GUE (communists). It is a defeat for the EPP which tried to obstruct the will of a majority of EP to express clear demands to Council and Commission on the future developments on citizens access to documents in the EU.

See:
- Greens/EFA motion for a resolution
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Heidi Hautala (video)

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Sakharov Prize: Russia

Official ceremony in plenary

Greens/EFA welcome the award of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Memorial, Ludmila Alexeyeva, Oleg Orlov, Sergey Kovalev and all human rights defenfers in Russia. It was a Greens/EFA initiative to nominate Memorial as a candidate to this award.
Twenty years after the death of Andrei Sakharov it is timely that a Russian recipient is finally awarded for the first time.The EU however needs to do far more to protect activists at risk in Russia and across the world.

See:
- Video of the award ceremony
- Greens/EFA press release
- Website of Memorial
- More about the Sakharov Prize

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Budget

Relevant committee: Budgets
Debate Tuesday 15 December 2009 - vote Thursday 17 December 2009

The budget itself was approved in blocks with a large majority. Unfortunately, we did not have enough support to succeed in getting the carbon storage out of the recovery plan.
On the budget resolution, which was also approved, Greens were more successful in getting their amendment on climate change and financing of developing countries approved, as well as our amendment on making better use of the cohesion policy against climate change. On the bad side, our group lost its amendment against a permanent Dairy Fund. Looking at their amendments and proposals already adopted in committee stage and in first reading, Greens can be satisfied with the outcome.

See:
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Helga Trüpel (video)

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Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Council and Commission statements
Debate Wednesday 16 December 2009 -vote Thursday 17 December 2009

The EP adopted the common resolution signed the five major parliamentary groups. Among the main points, the resolution draws attention to MONUC's vital role and to the fact that its mandate and rules of engagement must be implemented with determination and on a permanent basis in order to guarantee the population's security more effectively and without in any way supporting Congolese units which fail to respect human rights. It also encourages the building of military barracks and camps as a matter of urgency and recommends that the Government of the DRC promote stockpile security, accountability and management of arms and ammunition as an urgent priority.

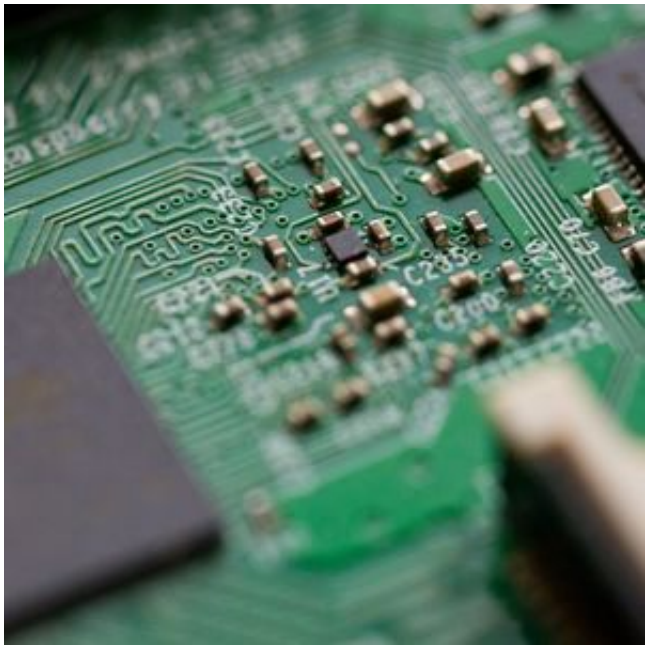
See also:
- Greens/EFA motion for a resolution
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Isabelle Durant (video)
- Greens/EFA press release (FR)

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