News | 06.07.2012

Greens/EFA Round-up

Debriefing of the plenary week Strasbourg 2-6 July 2012

Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)

Recommendation
Committee on International Trade
Plenary debate Tuesday 3 July - vote Wednesday 4 July 2012

After a vain attempt by the Christian Democrats (EPP) to refer ACTA back to Committee in order to wait for the ECJ opinion, the European Parliament today voted with a large majority (39 votes in favour; 478 against; 165 abstentions) to refuse its consent to the ratification of the ACTA anti-counterfeiting trade agreement by the European Union. The vote to reject ACTA effectively ends the prospect of the EU acceding to the treaty.
The Greens/EFA group, which has been active on ACTA since the outset of the negotiations, welcomed the vote. In addition to concerns about data protection and internet freedom, there were equally legitimate concerns about the potentially far-reaching implications of ACTA on fundamental rights, freedom of establishment and access to vital medicines. For the Greens, this vote is the just and democratic response to the mass mobilisation by citizens across Europe against ACTA. That's why Green MEPs brandished posters in the hemicycle saying "Hello democracy, goodbye ACTA".
However, the Commission's representative after the vote announced that the Commission would continue to pursue the European Court of Justice opinion, in order to discuss its results with the ACTA partners and then come back to Parliament on the issue.
Democracy should keep an eye open.

- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Jan Philipp Albrecht
- Text adopted by EP
- ACTA Diary
- 50 reasons to reject ACTA
- Video on ACTA
- Pictures of the action in plenary - 4 July 2012
- Act on ACTA website

Further information:
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European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals

Own-initiative report
Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
Plenary debate Monday 2 July - vote Wednesday 4 July 2012

The European Parliament today adopted a report setting out recommendations for improving animal welfare across Europe. The Greens/EFA group voted in favour and welcomed the report but expressed regret at the failure to clearly call for a reduction in transport times for animals (8 hour limit), one of the key issues for EU legislation.

On the positive side, for the first time, the European Parliament has called for a new system of early intervention to ensure that animal welfare legislation with long transition times is implemented properly in all Member States (several Member States are still not in compliance with the ban on battery cages six months after a deadline that they had over a decade to prepare for). Animal welfare standards should be promoted in trade policy, with equivalent standards for imports to the EU. Greater financial resources for animal welfare should be provided through the CAP (with a mandatory requirement for inclusion in Rural Development Programmes) and research funds, with greater resources for FVO inspections. The creation of a new EU Animal Welfare Framework Law to provide common principles and standards for welfare across the EU such as the principle of duty of care to individual animals and ensuring the competence of animal handlers is aralso one achievement in this report.

- Greens/EFA press release
- Text adopted by the EP

Further information:
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Single European railway area

Legislative report
Committee on Transport and Tourism
Plenary debate Monday 2 July - vote Tuesday 3 July 2012

A legislative agreement on new EU rules on the single European railway area was voted on by the European Parliament. The Greens broadly welcomed the legislative deal. It provides for strong independent national regulators to guarantee the effective functioning of the European rail sector, as well as ensuring complaints are dealt with in a timely manner. The final deal also includes Green proposals to ensure rail operators have proper choice as regards their energy providers and to reduce noise pollution from freight rail.

- Text adopted by EP

Further information:
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Customs enforcement of intellectual property rights

Legislative report
Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection
Plenary debate Monday 2 July - vote Tuesday 3 July 2012

Proposals to toughen EU rules on customs enforcement of intellectual property rights were voted on by MEPs. The Greens believe the proposed scope of IP rights is far too wide and that customs officials should only be responsible for addressing trademark and copyright counterfeiting. The group also believes that certain goods in transit should not be subject to the rules, with major concerns about the impact on developing countries' access to generic medicines (not intended for the EU market). Expanding the scope to small items will also hit small consumers and online shoppers.
Considering that Green key amendments on goods in transit, patents and small consignments were all rejected, the Group voted against this report which was unfortunately adopted by a conservative and liberal majority.The Regulation includes a much too wide scope, including patents. Most of the IPRs covered have not much to do with protection of health and safety, and rather with commercial disputes which customs authorities are not equipped to handle. Small consignments are also kept under the scope of the Regulation. To be continued in second reading.

- Text adopted by EP

Further information:
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Threat posed by chartering to flag state responsibilities under the CITES Convention

Oral question
Committee on Fisheries
Plenary debate with the Commission Thursday 5 July 2012

Proposed changes to the CITES international convention on endangered species risk opening the door to more illegal fishing. The changes, which concern who is responsible for controlling catches on chartered boats, would create a loophole that could be exploited by unscrupulous sections of the fishing industry to bypass EU and international rules tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Unfortunately, EU environment commissioner Potocnik supports the changes. During the plenary debate, the
Greens wanted to change his mind before a key CITES meeting at the end of July. Unfortunately as soon as he had spoken, the EU Commissionner left the chamber and didn't even listen to the debate!

- Text of the oral question
- Web article
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Isabella Lövin

Further information:

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Financial aid in the field of the trans-European transport and energy networks

Legislative report
Committee on Budgets
Plenary debate Wednesday 4 July - vote Thursday 5 July 2012

The European Parliament endorsed a legislative agreement giving the go-ahead for a pilot phase for EU project bonds for financing energy, transport and telecommunications projects in EU member states. The Greens have supported project bonds since the outset as an important tool for helping to revitalise Europe's flagging economy. Clearly, this scheme is just a drop in the ocean and the group hopes project bonds are adopted permanently and on a much larger scale, with a focus on sustainable projects.
The Greens voted in favour of the report which was adopted by a wide majority.

- Text adopted by EP

Further information:
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EU response to crisis in Syria

Debate with Commission
Plenary Debate with High Representative Catherin Ashton Wednesday 4th July 2012

The alarming situation in Syria has continued to deteriorate as the world has watched on. The Annan Plan was stillborn and the international community has failed to provide any alternative in spite of the rapidly multiplying death toll in Syria. MEPs debated the situation in Syria and the EU's response with the EU foreign policy high representative Cathy Ashton. The Greens have repeatedly called for measures to support the democratic opposition, tougher sanctions against the regime and greater efforts to prevent the arms trade to Assad regime.

- Plenary speech by Green MEP Hélène Flautre
- Latest EP resolution on Syria (February 2012)

Further information:
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Breaches of Schengen rules

Council and Commission statements
Plenary debate Wednesday 4 July 2012

While EU governments are trying to change the rules of the Schengen border-free system with a view to reintroducing border controls (and excluding the EP), internal border controls continue to be only exceptionally allowed under Schengen. Notwithstanding that, national authorities in a number of countries are carrying out de facto controls on their borders with other Schengen members. These stealth border controls (which include standard checks on cross-border buses to Germany and other controls in the Netherlands) are illegal and the Commission should act against them. That's what the Greens stressed in the debate with the Council and Commission in plenary session.

Further information:
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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up : 14 September 2012

Recommended

Press release

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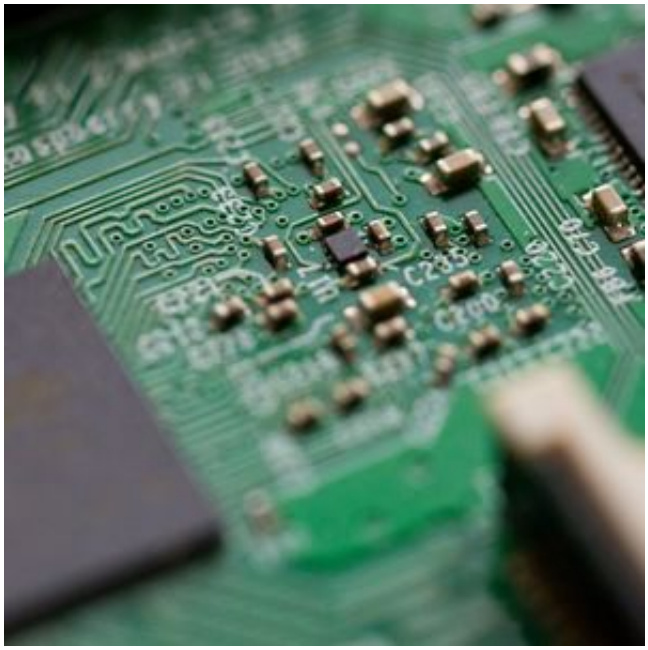


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Jan Philipp Albrecht

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