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Greens/EFA Round-up

Debriefing of the plenary week Strasbourg 7-11 October 2013

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Permitted health claims made on foods

Motion for resolution
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Plenary debate Monday 7th October 2013 - vote Wednesday 9th October 2013

Concerns that tumours and abscesses could be allowed in processed or minced pork meat products prompted the Greens to propose rejecting draft EU rules on limiting controls in slaughterhouses. Under current EU rules, veterinarians perform inspections and checks to determine whether meat is fit for human consumption but the European Commission had proposed relaxing these rules and limiting checks. The Greens were concerned that this could leave dangers to human health remaining undetected and mean food not fit for human consumption could enter the food chain. Happily, a majority of MEPs agreed.

- Plenary speech by Carl Schlyter
-

  Texts adopted (not yet available)

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Manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products

Legislative Report
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Plenary debate and vote Tuesday 8th October 2013

After much controversy and lobbying (and last month's false start) proposals aimed at strengthening EU rules on tobacco products were voted on by MEPs Tuesday. A majority led by the EPP decided to do the bidding of the tobacco industry and voted for weaker rules than had been proposed by the Commission and adopted by the public health committee, clearly at odds with citizens' interests and public health. This included lowering the percentage of packaging covered by pictures and health warnings, rejecting a ban of slim cigarettes and granting menthol, the number one flavouring designed to make smoking more attractive, an eight-year exemption from the ban of characterizing flavours. Despite these weakenings, the new rules are still a significant improvement over the status quo so the Greens voted in favour in the final vote.

- Press Release (EN/DE/FR/ES)
- Plenary Speech Carl Schlyter (SV/EN)
- Text adopted

Further information:
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Assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (incl.shale gas)

Legislative Report
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Plenary debate Tuesday 8th October 2013 – vote Wednesday 9th October 2013 MEPs voted Wednesday on proposals to revise EU legislation on environmental impact assessments (EIAs). The Greens strongly welcomed the vote which explicitly make EIAs compulsory for non-conventional fossil fuel exploration and extraction involving hydraulic fracturing, notably shale gas. These projects should be subject to the same standard of assessments as other activities with potential negative impacts. Although not banning fracking, this ensures a basic standard of assessment and public participation, preventing projects being bulldozed through in spite of environmental concerns and public will.

- Press Release (EN/DE/FR/ES)
- Plenary Speech Sandrine Bélier (FR)
- Text adopted

Further information:
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Flight times and safety

Legislative Report
Committee on Transport and Tourism
Plenary debate Tuesday 8th October 2013 – vote Wednesday 9th October 2013 The Greens criticised a majority of MEPs Wednesday for accepting proposals from the European Commission revising EU rules on flight times. The Greens proposed their rejection due to concerns the Commission's draft would lead to an increase in flight times and more strenuous working conditions for pilots, with the safety risks that this clearly entails. Major concerns had been raised by pilots' unions and other stakeholders and there are already well-documented cases of overworked, exhausted pilots falling asleep in the cockpit, so it is totally wrongheaded to seek to increase flight times and allow tougher work schedules.

- Press Release (EN/DE/FR)
- Plenary Speech Michael Cramer (DE/EN)
- Texts adopted (not yet available)

Further information:
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Flow of refugees as a result of the conflict in Syria

Motion for Resolution
Plenary debate & vote Wednesday 9th October 2013 The scale of Syria's humanitarian crisis is alarming,

with over 2 million estimated refugees and 4.5 million internally displaced. The European response so far has been minimalist and disorganised, with EU member states abdicating responsibility. Against this background, MEPs Wednesday adopted a resolution calling on Member States to take up fully their responsibilities to protect refugees from Syria. The Greens believe there is an urgent need for a proactive and coordinated EU response responding to the scale of the crisis and seeking to accommodate Syrian refugees and have produced an infographic showing the pathetic scale of the response thus far. Activating the temporary protection directive would be a crucial step to this end.

- Press Release (FR)
- Infographic (EN)
- Plenary Speech Judith Sargentini (NL/EN)
- Texts adopted

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Rise of right-wing extremism in Europe

Plenary debate Wednesday 9th October 2013 Right-wing extremism has been steadily growing in a number of EU member states over the past years and in the context of the economic crisis. The intolerance encouraged and spread by far right political groups is a direct challenge to democracy and the democratic norms on which the EU is founded. The latest tragic murder in Greece has brought the focus on its far-right, neo-fascist party Golden Dawn in particular. MEPs debated the situation with the Commission and Council, with a view to exploring a European response.

- Plenary Speech Ska Keller (DE/EN)

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European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR)

Legislative report

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Debate Wednesday 9 October - vote Thursday 10 October 2013

Following yet another tragedy involving a migrant boat in the Mediterranean near Lampedusa, and despite the outpouring of rhetoric from ministers and bigger political groups, concrete proposals remain absent. On Tuesday, EU governments and politicians continued to block attempts to ensure EU border policies can focus on saving lives at sea and deciding which countries take responsibility for those saved.
The European Parliament endorsed a legislative agreement on setting up a new European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). The Greens have criticised the focus of the proposed system and hit out at weak provisions on assisting refugees in distress at sea. The new EUROSUR border surveillance system falls far short of what is needed to save the lives of those who get into difficulty in European waters. EU member states will have to inform FRONTEX if they are aware of refugees in distress but there is no requirement for them to actually take proactive steps to improve the rescue of shipwrecked refugees by increasing the use of patrol boats in areas that are dangerous for refugees. In addition, they can only request surveillance of the Mediterranean Sea by FRONTEX for the purpose of preventing illegal immigration but not for saving lives.
The Greens are also concerned about the general focus of the EUROSUR system, which aims to seal off Europe's borders, using intrusive new technologies (like drones and satellites).

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Rebecca Harms (DE/EN/FR)
- Texts adopted

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Alleged transportation and illegal detention of prisoners in European countries by the CIA

Motion for resolution following oral question procedure
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Plenary debate Wednesday 9 October - vote Thursday 10 October 2013 One year after the report of Green MEP Hélène Flautre on European complicity in illegal rendition and secret detention of prisoners by the CIA after the events of September 11, 2001, the European Parliament adopted a follow-up resolution that urges the EU and the Member States to continue the quest for truth and justice. According Green MEP Flautre, the European Commission and the Council are hiding behind an alleged lack of legal competence and it is now clear that they have not done anything. The Member States' ostrich-like approach remains dominant.
But the case is not closed yet. With Lithuania being one of the countries most deeply involved, the Lithuanian Presidency should be a turning point for accountability, reparations to victims and the

assignment of responsibilities. Lithuania cannot go through its presidency while continuing to ignore these issues. Bringing these issues out into the light would strengthen public confidence in the EU's democratic institutions.

- Press Release
- Plenary Speech Hélène Flautre (FR)
- Texts adopted

Further information:
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Suspension of the SWIFT agreement as a result of NSA surveillance

Plenary debate Wednesday 9th October 2013 The EP will debated the latest revelations about covert surveillance by secret services, notably that the US secret service (NSA) covertly accessed private data of EU citizens via the SWIFT bank transfer system. The Greens believe this totally undermines the EU's agreement with the US on accessing SWIFT information and that the agreement, which in any case has insufficient data protection provisions, should be scrapped. The affair has wider implications, notably faith in the EU-US trade negotiations, and the Greens have called for talks to be suspended.

- Plenary Speech Jan Philipp Albrecht (EN)
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Situation of the Roma people

Plenary debate Wednesday 9th October 2013 Discrimination against the Roma community is unfortunately again in focus, following incidents in a number of EU member states, notably Sweden, France and Greece. Clearly, there are deficiencies in the implementation of the EU Roma framework and the Commission must do more to enforce the race equality directive and all applicable legislation and guarantee fundamental rights and EU norms are being respected. There needs to be a much greater focus on discrimination.

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Plenary Speech Hélène Flautre (FR)

2013 Sakharov Prize Laureate

Decision taken by the Conference of Presidents
Thursday 10 October 2013 The winner of this year's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought is the Pakistani campaigner for girls' education Malala Yousafzai. She was awarded the prize upon a decision by the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents on the basis of a shortlist of three nominees voted by the Foreign Affairs and Development committees. The Greens/EFA's nominee, US whistleblower Edward Snowden, was included in the shortlist. For the Greens, this inclusion has been a recognition by the Parliament of his role in shedding light on the mass surveillance practises of the US and European secret services. Further information:
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ALSO

Greens/EFA motion for resolutions on urgencies:

- Iraq
- Clashes in Sudan and subsequent media censorship

Further information:
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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 25 October 2013

Recommended

Press release

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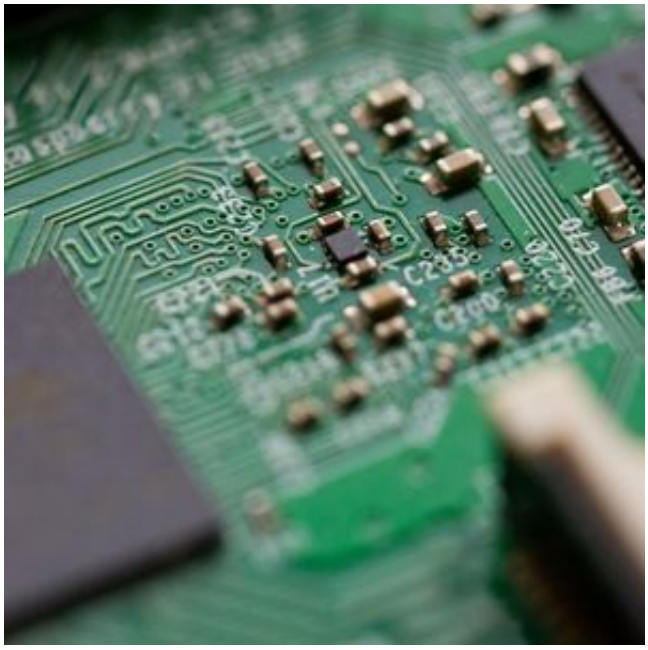


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