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News | 14.03.2014

Greens/EFA Round-up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 10-13 March 2014



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Plastic bags and the environment

Legislative report (Green MEP Margrete Auken)
Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Committee vote Monday 10th March 2014

New rules aimed at reducing the use of single-use plastic carrier bags were voted on by the EP's environment committee Monday. Green MEP Margrete Auken, who is shepherding the legislation through Parliament, believes we should move to swiftly phase-out these bags, as one of the low-hanging fruit solutions to the pervasive problem of plastic waste in the environment. This means strengthening the proposals to include ambitious and obligatory European reduction targets and a requirement that plastic bags should always come at a cost, with member states open to decide how this should be.

- [Press release \(EN/DE\)](#)

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Remember Fukushima

3rd Anniversary
Tuesday 11th March 2014

On the third anniversary of Japan's tragic tsunami and the Fukushima catastrophe, Green MEP Michèle Rivasi hosted a press conference with the last man living in the area surrounding the Fukushima nuclear power plant, Matsumoto, looking at the ongoing consequences. The Greens will also hold a symbolic action and minute of silence at the European Parliament to remember the victims of the tsunami and nuclear disasters.

- [Video – Remembering Fukushima \(FR\) - Youtube](#)
- [Memorial action photo - Twitter](#)
- [Memorial action photo – facebook](#)
- [Memorial action photos - facebook album](#)
- [Memorial action photos - flickr](#)

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EU seed legislation

("Plant reproductive material" regulation)

Legislative report (Silvestris report)

Committee on Agriculture

Plenary debate Monday 10th March 2014 – vote Tuesday 11th March 2014

MEPs voted almost unanimously to reject draft EU regulation on seed production and marketing on Tuesday. The draft legislation would seriously restrict the freedom of operators working in the sector, hitting small-scale farmers and seed breeders. The Greens have been pushing for the controversial proposal from the European Commission to be rejected and welcomed the clear outcome, which puts pressure on the Commission to withdraw its proposal and come up with a new text. We need rules that promote a broad range of genetic diversity in our crop populations to enable us to adapt to climate change and pest and diseases. Despite claims by the Commission, market concentration is also a serious problem with major consequences for farmers, agro-biodiversity, innovation and long term food security; those dominant corporations are often also agro-chemical giants, who tailor-make the seeds they breed for use with the pesticides and fertilisers they also sell.

- [Food campaign article \(EN\)](#)
- [Press release \(EN/DE/FR\)](#)
- [Video – Seed Diversity means Food Security \(EN/DE/FR/NL\) - Youtube](#)
- [Video – Seed Diversity means Food Security \(EN/DE/FR/NL\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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EU financial supervision

Own-initiative report (Green MEP Sven Giegold report)

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Plenary debate Monday 10 March 2014 – vote Tuesday 11th March 2014

MEPs voted Tuesday for a report by Green MEP Sven Giegold, which aims to ensure a more coherent structure and approach for the EU's financial supervisory system. The report acknowledges the major improvements that have been made but highlights areas where the system could be made more effective and coherent. The report calls for greater efficiency and more power for European supervisory authorities, with a view to ending the power struggle with national authorities, which undermines EU financial supervision.

- [Press release \(EN/DE\)](#)
- [Plenary speech – Sven Giegold \(DE/EN\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Money laundering

Legislative report (Green MEP Judith Sargentini report)

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Plenary debate and vote Tuesday 11th March 2014

Important new EU legislation aimed at tackling money laundering was approved by MEPs Tuesday. The draft law reinforces EU measures for preventing the use of the financial system for money laundering. It includes crucial proposals from Green draftsman Judith Sargentini obliging member states to introduce publicly-accessible business registers, including information on the real beneficiaries of legal arrangements like trusts and also improves data protection rules in the Directive. This will help expose those behind shell companies and other opaque company structures, which are at the heart of all money laundering schemes and also serve tax evasion purposes.

- [Press release \(EN/DE\)](#)
- [Plenary speech – Judith Sargentini \(NL/EN\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Genetic resources and benefit sharing

Legislative report (Green MEP Sandrine Belier)

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Plenary vote Tuesday 11th March 2014

MEPs confirmed Tuesday a legislative agreement on rules on access to genetic resources and benefit sharing paving the way for Union ratification of the Nagoya Protocol under the UN Convention for Biological Diversity. Biopiracy is a major problem in biodiversity rich developing countries, flying in the face of poverty reduction measures, notably for indigenous communities. These rules go some way towards protecting the rights to fair sharing of benefits for poorer countries and regions regarding use of the genetic resources they host. The Greens would have preferred a larger scope for mandatory benefit sharing obligations but neither the Commission nor EU governments wanted to go beyond the bare minimum.

- [Press release \(FR\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Data protection

Legislative report

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Plenary debate Tuesday 11th March 2014 – vote Wednesday 12th March 2014

Crucial legislative proposals revising EU data protection rules were backed by an overwhelming majority of MEPs Wednesday. Green draftsman Jan Philipp Albrecht faced down heavy industry lobbying and wants to ensure a high level of protection for EU citizens. The legislation introduces overarching EU rules on data protection, replacing the current patchwork of national laws. Key issues include the 'right to erasure', explicit consent regarding data use and sanctions for non-compliance. Provisions on data transfer to third countries are very much in focus after the Snowden revelations. After over two years of stalling, the ball is in the court of member state governments to agree a position and start negotiations, so we can respond to citizens' interests and deliver an urgently needed update of EU data protection rules.

- [Press release \(EN/DE/FR\)](#)
- [Plenary speech – Jan Philipp Albrecht \(EN\)](#)
- [Respect My Privacy campaign](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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NSA surveillance and fundamental rights

European Parliament inquiry (Moraes report)

Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Plenary debate Tuesday 11th March 2014 – vote Wednesday 12th March 2014

The final report of the EP's inquiry into the mass surveillance revelations was adopted by MEPs Wednesday. The Greens believe the final report delivers a strong and clear message by calling on the US to end its bulk collection of data without individual suspicion. It should also offer proper redress possibilities, including to EU citizens. Until then, the EU should end data sharing with the US by suspending the Safe Harbour decision and the TFTP (SWIFT) agreement. Mass surveillance programmes need to be brought to a halt in the EU also. The report furthermore stresses the need for adoption of the Data Protection Package in 2014, putting individuals back in control of their personal data and includes a Green proposal for a 'digital new deal' to strengthen an independent European IT industry offering safe and secure products and services.

Unfortunately the Green amendment calling on Member States to offer protection to Edward Snowden, whose written testimony was discussed on Monday in LIBE, and amendment plus demand to suspend the TTIP negotiations as well as to condition consent to any future TTIP agreement to ending mass surveillance, were defeated, though the report does link the two.

- [Press release \(EN/DE/FR\)](#)
- [Video: NSA Inquiry and Protection for Snowden - Jan Philipp Albrecht - Youtube](#)
- [Plenary speech – Jan Philipp Albrecht \(EN\)](#)
- [Protect Snowden campaign page](#)
- [Plenary action to support Edward Snowden - Twitpic](#)

- [Plenary action to support Edward Snowden - Facebook](#)
- **Plenary action to support Edward Snowden - Flickr**
- [Text adopted](#)

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Phasing out super greenhouse F-gases

Legislative report (Green MEP Bas Eickhout)

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Plenary debate Tuesday 11th March 2014 – vote Wednesday 12th March 2014

The use of climate-damaging F-gases is set to be wound down under an agreement on new EU legislation struck by Green rapporteur Bas Eickhout. The final law was confirmed by MEPs this week. With F-gases having a high global warming effect (up to 23,000 times that of CO₂), and their use having risen 60% since 1990, EU action was essential. The new rules will ensure a reduction of almost 80% from the sector by 2030. They include a ban on the use of F-gases in new commercial refrigeration from 2022, as well as other bans. These rules will stimulate innovation in the sector and be of immediate benefit to the numerous innovative European companies already leading in the cooling sector by stimulating demand for natural refrigerants. It will also pave the way for international action to phase out the use of such gases.

- [Press release \(EN/DE\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Shale gas, fracking and environmental impacts

Legislative report (Zanoni report)

Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Plenary vote Wednesday 12th March 2014

MEPs confirmed Wednesday a legislative agreement on new EU rules that fail to make environmental impact assessments for fracking compulsory. The Greens were critical of the outcome, which is a major setback compared to a previous vote by the European Parliament, which originally voted to include fracking. However thanks to the European Council the potentially devastating environmental impact of the controversial fracking process will not be assessed. The lack of an obligation for a basic standard of assessment and public participation, as provided for by EIAs, could lead to risky shale gas projects being bulldozed through in spite of environmental concerns and public will. This overshadows other improvements in the rules leaving the Greens with no choice but to vote against.

- [Press release \(FR/EN/DE\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Nanomaterials and EU labelling

Motion for Resolution

Plenary vote Wednesday 12th March 2014

A motion tabled by the Greens to reject new rules on the labelling of nano-materials in food products was supported by the European Parliament Wednesday. The rules proposed by the Commission would have meant nanomaterials used in food additives would no longer have to be labelled on food products. The Greens want to prevent these exemptions. Thankfully, the European Parliament stopped the Commission in its tracks and defended existing labelling provisions. We believe consumers have a right to know what is in the food they are eating.

- [Press release \(EN/FR\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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EU-IMF Troika Inquiry

European Parliament inquiry (Karas / Hoang Ngoc & Cercas reports)

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs & Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Plenary debate Wednesday 12th March 2014 – vote Thursday 13th March 2014

The final report of Parliament's inquiry into the role of the EU-ECB-IMF troika was endorsed by MEPs Thursday. With very serious allegations of maladministration and contraventions of EU and international law being levied against the Troika, the Greens led the push for this inquiry. The group supports the findings of the report, which is critical of the Troika's role, highlighting its complacency in relying on flawed forecasts in drawing up punitive assistance programmes. These programmes, with their one-sided focus on fiscal consolidation, have placed an excessive burden on the most vulnerable members of society and were rightly criticised. It has also highlighted potential conflicts of interest and the worrying lack of democratic accountability of the Troika. Importantly, MEPs also called to retrospectively activate the direct recapitalisation of the banking sector in member states under assistance programmes. The commitment to investigate further during the next term is also welcome.

- [Press release \(EN/FR\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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Ukraine

Motion for resolution

MEPs debated the situation in Ukraine and adopted a resolution Thursday. The dramatic escalation by Russia represents a breach of international law, the likes of which has not been seen in Europe for decades. The move provides a real test to European foreign policy and international diplomacy and it is essential that the EU finally speaks with one voice on Russia. The interests of those peaceful demonstrators who spent months in Maidan Square in support of democratic change and closer ties to Europe must be to the fore. Through the resolution we also called for the export of arms from EU member states to Russia to stop and for support for projects that decrease our energy vulnerability due to imports from Russia.

- [Plenary speech – Rebecca Harms \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Greens/EFA motion for resolution](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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TTIP Beware: EU-US Trade Agreement

Fourth TTIP negotiation round, Brussels

Monday 10th – Friday 14th March 2014

The fourth round of the EU-US trade negotiations (TTIP) were held in Brussels this week. There are real concerns that TTIP could threaten core EU standards and rules, whether as regards the protection of public services, intellectual property, food safety, GMOs, geographical indications, health or environmental standards. The Greens demonstrated that they do not agree with the TTIP agenda as it stands, in a photo action in Strasbourg, which coincided with a protest rally by EU and US civil society groups outside the European Commission's DG Trade in Brussels on Thursday. Instead of blindly pushing ahead with backdoor negotiations on this potentially far-reaching agreement, the Commission should be heeding the growing opposition from civil society and the public to TTIP and suspend negotiations. We've also launched a website this week to monitor the negotiations more closely and highlight the concerns of the many stakeholders who could be affected by the deal, including EU citizens.

- [TTIP campaign website](#)
- [TTIP campaign twitter](#)
- [Group photo action - facebook](#)
- [Group photo action - flickr](#)

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ALSO Greens/EFA motions for resolution on:

- [Russia: sentencing of demonstrators involved in the Bolotnaya Square events](#)
 - [Recent legislation further criminalising homosexuality in Uganda and Nigeria](#)
 - [Security and human trafficking in Sinai](#)
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- <https://www.facebook.com/greensefa>

Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 4 April 2014

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Opinion

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