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News | 13.03.2015

Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 9-12 March 2015

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Other priorities:

- Services trade and liberalisation: TISA mandate

Lux Leaks and tax evasion: EP investigation

Monday 9 March - Special committee meeting A new special parliamentary committee started work Monday on its investigation into tax evasion and dumping in Europe. The Greens played an instrumental role in pushing for the committee to be set up, and will continue to push for an ambitious roadmap with concrete proposals in favour of transparency and fairness. With the committee having been established for an initial period of six months, it is imperative that it will act decisively in its investigation. The Greens call on other political groups to take this enquiry seriously, as it must be made clear that corporations can no longer avoid their tax responsibility. We are still awaiting responses or alternatives from other groups to our proposals, and hope that the inaction witnessed over the past few weeks will be compensated for by concerted efforts in the coming weeks.

- Special Committee Roadmap – Draft input from the Greens (EN/FR)

International Women's Day and Gender Equality

Sunday 8 March – International Women's Day
Monday 9 March - EP plenary debate; vote Tuesday MEPs voted Tuesday on a non-legislative resolution in favour of changing policies to achieve equality between women and men. While the assessment of the situation in 2013 stressed the need for policy changes in key areas such as wage equality, reproductive rights, and combating violence against women, we would argue that this process must be accelerated. The issue of maternity and paternity leave in particular must be addressed, as the Maternity Leave Directive is at risk of being scrapped. On International Women's Day, 8 March, the Greens highlighted the under-representation of women when it comes to decision-making on Climate Change issues. We strongly support female empowerment at all levels of climate negotiations.

- Press release (FR/DE)
- Press release (ES)
- Webarticle - Maternity Leave Directive
- Social media

Lorry design and road safety

Tues. 10 March – EP plenary debate and vote The European Parliament voted Tuesday to approve new EU rules on truck weights and dimensions. The Greens welcomed the final legislation, which will provide for safer lorry cab design. While the deal is far from perfect, it is certainly an improvement based on what was initially proposed, both from an environmental and road safety perspective. This important measure will save lives on the roads, notably of cyclists. Unfortunately, due to lobbying from the big truck manufacturers, the measures cannot be introduced before 2021. Crucially, this vote does not change the existing ban on cross-border (or EU wide) use of gigaliners.

- Press release (EN/DE)
- Text adopted

Further information:
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Cutting credit card fees

Tues. 10 March –vote The European Parliament approved Tuesday new EU rules on credit and debit card fees. The Greens welcomed the new legislation, which is aimed at curbing excessive fees paid by many retailers for accepting payment cards. The Greens welcome the new rules as it will boost business for small retailers and improve the situation for consumers. This legislation will directly bring down excessive interchange fees by €6 billion and, as such, provide an antidote to the Visa and MasterCard duopoly. Following intense lobbying by banks and credit card firms, the final agreement includes some loopholes,

but luckily, they will expire in five years.

- Press release (EN/DE)
- Text adopted
- Social media

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Services trade and liberalisation: TISA mandate

Tues. 10 March – Publication of negotiation mandate The EU negotiating mandate for the controversial TISA negotiations on a global agreement for the trade in services was published Tuesday, two years after negotiations began. While this step will now make it very difficult for the Commission and the Council to block requests for more transparency in trade negotiations, for the Greens this is too little and far too late. The mandate is the tip of the iceberg as it contains very little details. The negotiating documents however, have all the concrete content of the talks, but these remain secret. There are major concerns with these negotiations, notably as regards the potential inclusion of vital public services, such as health or water provision. The Greens are opposed to any liberalisation of public services by the back door.

- Press release (EN/DE/FR)

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EU enlargement - annual progress

Tuesday 10 March – EP plenary debate; vote Wednesday The European Parliament adopted Wednesday a report assessing the current situation in Kosovo, drafted by Green MEP and EP draftsperson on Kosovo, Ulrike Lunacek. While acknowledging the clear message of support issued by this vote, Lunacek also stated that the recognition of the statehood of Kosovo is long overdue. Europe's youngest state - seven years after declaring independence - is not yet a fully-fledged member of the international community, with five EU countries still refusing to recognise it as a country. The report adopted calls on the government in Pristina, and the European Parliament, to push for visa liberalisation for the citizens of Kosovo, and urges Pristina to endeavour to provide a better quality of life, and a promising future for the Kosovar people. There are, however, serious concerns about recent allegations of corruption within EULEX – an EU deployment of police and civilian resources to Kosovo. We welcome that both the EU Ombudsperson and OLAF decided to start independent investigations.

- Press release (DE/EN)
- Text adopted

Further information:
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EU summit: Energy Union and Ukraine

Weds. 11 March – EP plenary debate The Greens addressed EU leaders ahead of this month's Council meeting. We were disappointed with the backward looking nature of the Commission's initial proposals on a European energy union, which focused more on fossil fuels and nuclear. We call on the EU to make the Energy Union a modern, forward-looking project focused on renewables and efficiency. The EU should also show more unity on Ukraine and Russia. In addition to the role of Russia and the question of sanctions, there is also the need to address the situation of those suffering on the ground, particularly in eastern Ukraine.

- Plenary intervention – Rebecca Harms (German with English subtitles)

Transparency and anti-Corruption

Vote Wednesday 11 March The European Parliament adopted Wednesday a report on the fight against fraud, including VAT fraud. It includes a call on the European Commission to introduce a legislative proposal on the protection of whistle-blowers, an issue the Greens have long campaigned for, having nominated whistle-blower Edward Snowden for the Sakharov prize in 2013. Green Transparency spokesperson Benedek Jávor linked this development to the recent case of Lux Leaks and identified the key role whistle-blowers play in a democratic society and the protection they deserve for their service to human rights globally and to the citizens of Europe.

- Press release (EN/DE/FR)
- Text adopted

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Russia, the rule of law and Nemtsov's murder

Wednesday 11 March – EP plenary debate; vote Thursday MEPs voted Thursday by a large majority to adopt a resolution on the situation in Russia. This follows Wednesday's debate with EU foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini on the murder of Boris Nemtsov and the state of Russian democracy. The Greens welcome this move, as the tragic murder of the opposition leader drew attention once again to the need for a united EU approach towards the current state of democracy in Russia. A united approach must be asserted on the issue of sanctions, and in supporting civil society and pluralism in Russia. That noted, Russia must in turn heed its obligations as a member of the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

- Press release (EN/DE)
- Greens/EFA motion for resolution
- Text adopted

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Counter-terrorism cooperation with third countries and human rights

Weds. 11 March – EP plenary debate; vote Thurs. The European Parliament adopted Thursday a resolution on EU cooperation with third countries on counter-terrorism. For the Greens, protection of human rights cannot be an afterthought for the EU in its cooperation with third countries in the Middle East and North Africa on counter-terrorism. The report comes after recent moves by the EU to establish closer cooperation with third countries in the Middle East and North Africa on counter-terrorism will be debated by MEPs. A recent cooperation agreement with the League of Arab States does not even include a human rights clause. There is a need for any cooperation or agreement with third countries to be based on the rule of law and defence of human rights and for the process to be carried out in a transparent manner.

- Press release (EN/FR)
- Greens/EFA motion for resolution
- Text adopted

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SEE ALSO:

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions on :

- Recent attacks and abductions by Daesh in the Middle East, notably of Assyrians
- South Sudan, including recent child abductions
- Tanzania, notably the issue of land grabbing

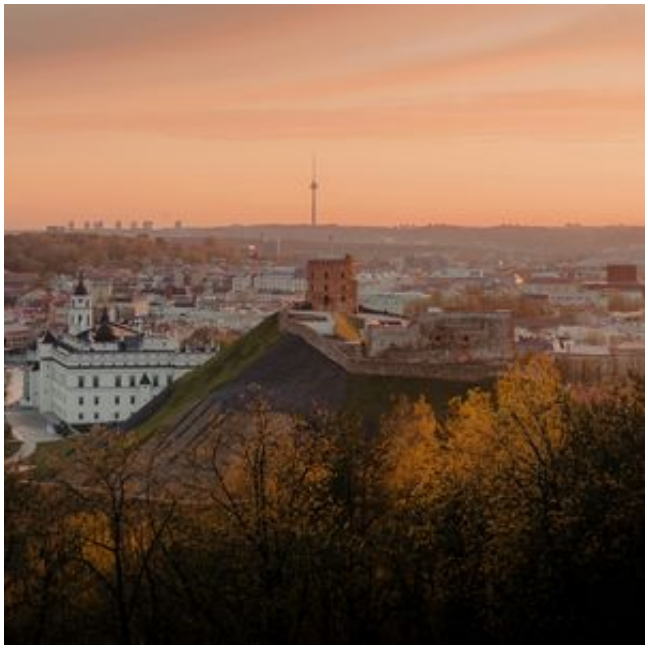
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