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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 18-22 January 2016

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Car pollution laws and real driving emissions tests

Monday 18 January. – EP plenary debate

Parliament debated a proposal by the EP lead committee to reject a draft comitology measure that would weaken the pollution limits set in EU car emission legislation in 2006. The draft measure would undermine and delay the enforcement of current NOx limits for diesel vehicles through the application of conformity factors allowing for exceeding the limit multiple times, de facto legalising the current infringement of the EU law by manufacturers that have not fitted vehicles with NOx abatement technology that achieve the emissions levels in "normal use" as the law requires. The Greens have led calls to reject this proposal and are urging the Commission to come back with a real driving emissions test with no exemptions and which ensures all cars approved for the market comply with the EU's pollutant limits. Unfortunately, the EPP and S&D groups succeeded in postponing the vote. The vote will take place during the next plenary session in Strasbourg (1-4 February 2016).

- speech by Green MEP Bas Eickhout
- latest Greens/EFA press release

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Parliament inquiry committee on car pollution scandal

Thursday 21 January - EP plenary vote

The European Parliament voted to approve the composition of the new parliamentary inquiry committee, set up to investigate the car pollution scandal. The 45 member committee will include 3 Green members: Greens/EFA co-president Rebecca Harms (DE), Bas Eickhout (NL) and Karima Delli (FR) (the Greens/EFA group also has 3 substitute members: Julia Reda, Claude Turmes and Bronis Rope). The committee will have a chairperson and 4 vice-chairs.
The committee, which will begin its work next month, will deliberate for 12 months, holding hearings with key representatives from the European Commission and national authorities. It will investigate the regulatory breakdown in the EU, both as regards the illegal manipulation of pollutant emissions tests for cars and the failure to ensure the pollutant limits for cars, set out in EU law, were implemented. The committee will produce an interim report on its findings after 6 months and conclude with a final report summarising its findings and making policy recommendations.

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Poland and the rule of law

Tuesday 19 January. – EP plenary debate

The controversial legal and constitutional changes in Poland regarding the public broadcaster and the judiciary was discussed by MEPs. While it is important to await the precise analysis of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, there can be no doubt that the laws passed and pending would compromise the independence of the media and the judiciary. It is welcome that the Commission has announced it will monitor the laws under the new EU rule of law framework. In her speech, Greens/EFA Co-President Rebecca Harms called on the ruling majority to ensure full respect of the rule of law and to listen to the increasingly vocal movement of Polish citizens who oppose the changes threatening freedom of the media and the independence of the judiciary. Resolutions on the situation in Poland will be voted during the next plenary session in Strasbourg (1-4 February 2016).
The Greens/EFA also debated on the situation in Poland with Mateusz Kijowski, Polish civil opposition KOD leader, during their Group meeting.

- speech by Greens/EFA Co-President Rebecca Harms
- video "Keeping Poland and Europe together" (EN- with PL subtitles)
- latest Greens/EFA press release
- EFA news article on Silesia and the situation in Poland
- KOD leader Mateus Kijowski during Greens/EFA Group meeting

Further information
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Presumption of innocence in criminal trials

Tuesday 19 January – EP plenary debate; vote Weds. 20 Jan.

European Parliament adopted with a large majority a final legislative agreement, which establishes the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings in EU law. The presumption of innocence is a fundamental principle of the rule of law and a democratic justice system and it is important that this is now enshrined in EU law. The final agreement on the law includes a number of important provisions insisted on by the Greens, which will help ensure the rules strengthen fundamental rights across Europe. Legal guarantees for the presumption of innocence and the right to be present at trial will be harmonised and strengthened in Member States' laws on criminal proceedings.

- Greens/EFA press release
- Text adopted

Further information
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Envisaged changes in Danish asylum and migration law

A scandalous new asylum and refugee law, which has been introduced by the Danish government, was supposed to be discussed by MEPs on parliament's civil liberties committee. The law, which has received criticism from international rights organisations, would introduce draconian measures, including confiscating the property of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Denmark.
Since no meeting of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affaires took place in order to decide whether or not the issue should be debated in the parliament's plenary session, the Greens/EFA requested to add a Council and Commission Statements on the Envisaged changes in Danish asylum and migration law to the plenary agenda on Wednesday morning. Our request was not voted but the Parliament decided that the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affaires will debate this issue next Monday 25th January.
To be continued.

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Sugar in baby food and EU rules

Wednesday 20 January – EP plenary vote

Great news for babies and children. The EU Parliament voted to reject draft EU rules, which would have allowed higher levels of sugar in baby foods than those recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Greens/EFA proposed rejecting the rules to address the health risks associated with excessive sugar consumption, like obesity, particularly for infants and children, who are the most vulnerable consumers. The Greens/EFA amendment calling for a ban on GMOs and nanos in processed cereal food and baby food was adopted but the call for zero tolerance to pesticides was unfortunately taken out of the resolution. As a whole, the Greens/EFA welcome that the European Parliament has today voted to put the health of babies and children ahead of the profit margins of the food industry.

- Motion for resolution
- Greens/EFA press release
- Social media
- Web article by Green MEP Keith Taylor
- Text adopted

Further information
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EU-Kosovo move a step closer

Wednesday 20 January. – EP debate; vote Thurs. 21 Jan.

The European Parliament voted to approve the EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement (report by Green MEP and EP vice-president Ulrike Lunacek). This agreement is a landmark in Kosovo's relationship with the EU and its development as a European state. For the first time, the EU and Kosovo will enter into a contractual agreement, which is another important step on Kosovo's path towards EU integration. The strong majority in favour of the agreement (468 votes in favour, 102 against and 81 abstentions) gives a major positive signal to Kosovo's citizens and economy. The implementation of the agreement will help institutionalise the reform process. The next step needs to be visa liberalisation for Kosovo's citizens.

- Speech by Green rapporteur Ulrike Lunacek
- Text of the recommendation
- Greens/EFA press release
- Text adopted

Further information:
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Other highlights

Programme of activities of the Dutch Presidency of the EU

- Plenary speech by Philippe Lamberts

COP 21 - Statement by Laurent Fabius, President of the Paris Climate Conference

- Plenary speech by Yannick Jadot

Greens/EFA motion for resolutions:

- peace process in Colombia
- Ethiopia
- situation of EU citizens under detention in India
- situation in North Korea
- implementation of Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union
- implementation of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine
- EU's priorities for the UN Human Rights Council sessions of 2016

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