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News | 29.10.2015

## **Greens/EFA Round up**

### **Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 26-29 October 2015**

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#### **EP tax investigation: a complete inquiry?**

*Mon. 26 Oct. – TAXE committee vote*

The European Parliament's special committee investigating tax issues voted on a report Monday, summarising the findings of the investigation so far. While the Greens voted in favour of the report, which contains some ambitious proposals, we criticise the incomplete nature of the investigation, with member states and corporations refusing to cooperate with Parliament. We also highlighted the unsatisfactory cooperation with the European Commission, notably as regards access to crucial documents relating to tax measures in EU member states (and the restrictive conditions under which MEPs are being allowed to partially access some of these documents). As a result, the Greens believe it is premature to conclude the investigation and are pushing for its extension and for full access to the relevant information.

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

Further information

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## **Preventing the trade in torture products**

*Mon. 26 Oct. – EP plenary debate; vote Tues. (Schaake report)*

On Tuesday, MEPs voted on proposals to revise EU trade rules, focusing on provisions to prevent the trade in goods which could be used for torture or capital punishment. The Greens were successful instrumental in ensuring this revision of EU rules includes clear and robust provisions, notably a catch-all clause ensuring that exports can be prohibited also for items that are not in the Regulation's banned list, if there is solid evidence that those are in fact used in torture and capital execution. This is an important measure for ensuring the EU is not contributing to inhumane practises in third countries, which are totally at odds with EU values.

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

Further information

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## **Strengthening the European citizens' initiative**

*Mon. 26 Oct. – EP plenary debate; vote Weds. (Schöpflin report)*

MEPs voted on a report Wednesday setting out how to strengthen the European Citizens' Initiative. The Greens/EFA believe the EU needs to do much more to promote and reinforce this instrument, which is important for the democratic credibility of the EU and for trying to dismantle the divide between the EU and its citizens. Unfortunately, MEPs failed to support a Greens/EFA proposal, calling for clearer obligations on the European Commission to legally follow-up on successful citizens' initiatives. The lack of proper follow-up from the Commission risks creating understandable frustration among citizens' groups, which have gone to the considerable effort of organising a successful ECI.

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

- [Plenary intervention - Josep Maria Terricabras](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Pascal Durand](#)

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## **Refugee crisis and EU governments' response**

*Tues. 27 Oct. – EP plenary debate*

MEPs debated the recent EU summit and meeting of EU leaders on the refugee crisis, ahead of the coming Valetta summit. Despite the dramatic situation in the Western Balkans, EU leaders are continuing to duck the necessary reform of the EU's asylum system. Instead, the focus is on strengthening border protection and keeping refugees out. While it is correct to try and improve the situation of refugees outside the EU, this cannot mean that the EU abdicates the responsibility to humanely respond to the crisis, both based on its values and its relative economic strength. The Greens call on the EU to urgently provide a coherent and organised response. There will be no lasting solution until EU governments finally agree on replacing the dysfunctional Dublin system with a functioning asylum and migration policy that is fit for the task.

- [Plenary intervention – Rebecca Harms](#)
  - [Social media](#)
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## **Diesel gate and the EU car pollution rules**

*Tues. 27 Oct. – EP plenary vote*

The European Parliament adopted Tuesday a resolution setting out its main demands in response to the so-called 'diesel gate' scandal regarding car pollutant emissions from Volkswagen and other car manufacturers. It has been an open secret that carmakers have been ducking the EU's rules to enable them to keep their highly polluting cars on the road. Volkswagen is not the only offender. The text makes clear that the European Commission needs to properly investigate the scandal, and that there also needs to be a thorough investigation to the role of Commission and Member State authorities. The EP calls for real driving emissions tests with no exemptions or exceedences in place for 2017. Unfortunately, an otherwise good text was undermined by the uncritical approach to dirty, diesel technology, following the adoption of an EPP amendment. The Greens strongly urge the Commission and EU governments to approve a revised tests for checking that production vehicles fully meet the EU pollutant limits on real driving emissions. It is technologically possible, as some car manufacturers are already meeting the EU norms, as well as far stricter US norms. There can be no more excuses.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Greens/EFA motion for resolution - mission measurements in the automotive sector](#)
- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)

- [Video – How the car lobby works](#)

Further information

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## **A real end to roaming and protection of net neutrality?**

*Tues. 27 Oct. – EP plenary debate and vote (del Castillo Vera report)*

MEPs adopted Tuesday the legislative agreement on the EU rules on the telecoms single market. The set of rules adopted today are being sold as a victory for consumers but this is a sham. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, this package poses a real threat to the principle of net neutrality that stands at the basis of the functioning and growth of internet as we know it. Our amendments calling for a proper definition of net neutrality, flexibility against zero rating and elimination of specialised services from the internet were defeated by the big political groups using the sheer number of MEPs voting according to the group line and not to the interest of their constituents. While the package is being sold as an end to roaming charges for mobile phone users, it is a hollow promise. The abolition of the word roaming is conditioned by another legislative act on the wholesale charges that might be approved in 2017, and new surcharges will appear and remain on an undefined term. Loopholes are all over the agreement and the promised single market is still a puzzle of 28 different markets. Telecoms firms can safely continue to charge more for the use of mobile phones when users travel in different EU member states.

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

Further information

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## **Commission work programme and better regulation**

*Tues. 27 Oct. – EP plenary debate*

As the Commission moved forward with its work programme for the next year, Greens/EFA co-president Philippe Lamberts called on Mr. Timmermans and Mr. Juncker to demonstrate that their ambition and sense of urgency goes beyond the nice words of their catalogue of proposals. Commending the Commission for its reactivity in the response to the challenge posed by the refugees, he demanded the same kind of initiatives to address all other emergencies. If for the Commission it's no longer "time for business as usual", then why so timid on tax rulings and fiscal competition, why insist on dubious "better" regulation or on TTIP, and above all, why do nothing on the VW cheating scandal and all its implications in matters of public health, consumer protection and environmental damages? It's time for the Commission to use its right of initiative for the better interest of European citizens – not for a coalition of corporate

ones.

- [Plenary intervention – Philippe Lamberts](#)

Further information

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## **Gender equality at the European Court of Justice**

*Tues. 27 Oct. – EP plenary debate; vote Weds. (Pinto report)*

The European Parliament adopted Wednesday a final agreement on increasing the number of judges at the European Court of Justice. While the Greens believe the increase is overstated, our Group was successful in including new provisions to provide for gender equality in the nomination of judges to the court. This provision is a major breakthrough and is the first legal requirement for gender parity in nominations to an EU institution, which the group hopes will become a precedent for other institutions.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Webarticle – Heidi Hautala](#)
- [Social media](#)

Further information

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## **Reforming GMO food and feed authorisations in Europe**

*Weds. 28 Oct. – EP plenary debate and vote (La Via report)*

The European Parliament voted Wednesday to reject a draft scheme under which EU member states could opt out of EU authorisations for genetically-modified food and feed. The Greens supported the rejection of the scheme, as it would facilitate EU GMO authorisations by allowing member states to opt out but without legal certainty for doing so, while failing to address the flawed risk assessment process. We regret however that our amendment calling for a moratorium was defeated. The Group believes the EU Commission should instead come forward with a new proposal that properly addresses the major flaws with the EU authorisation process.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Bart Staes](#)
- [Plenary intervention – José Bové](#)

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## **EU air pollution rules**

*Weds. 28 Oct. – EP plenary debate and vote (Girling report)*

The European Parliament voted Wednesday on a proposal to revise EU air quality legislation, setting out national limits on a range of air pollutants. The proposal strengthens the existing rules and extends the limits until 2030. The EP's environment committee strengthened the proposal by requiring binding commitments for 2025, as well as 2030, for all other pollutants except methane. With air pollution leading to almost 450,000 premature deaths in the EU each year, the Greens now urge EU governments to proactively engage with parliament to come to an agreement without weakening its ambition.

- [Text adopted](#)
- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Social media](#)

Further information  
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## **Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought**

*Thurs. 29 Oct. – Conference of Presidents decision*

The European Parliament awarded Thursday the 2015 Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought to Raif Badawi, who we nominated! This is deserved recognition of his role in promoting political and social debate in Saudi Arabia. It also puts the spotlight on the appalling human rights record of Saudi Arabia. The regime must take stock of this strong message and release Raif Badawi and all other imprisoned activists.

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

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*Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 27 November 2015*

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Wolfgang Vrede



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