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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 5-8 October 2015

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EP Plenary session

Car pollution rules in Europe after the Volkswagen scandal

Tues. 6 Oct. – EP plenary debate

It has long been an open secret that European carmakers have been ducking the EU's rules to enable them to keep their highly polluting cars on the road. Volkswagen is far from the only offender. Beyond the illegal nature of emissions manipulation, there are issues of regulatory enforcement and loopholes. The EU Commission and governments must require manufacturers to recall vehicles with defeat devices. However we also finally need robust pollutant emissions tests based on real driving conditions and greater EU-level powers to ensure these rules are respected. In this context, the Greens/EFA group has written to the European Commission setting out necessary action to be taken in response to the scandal.

- [Greens/EFA letter to the European Commission - in English](#)
- [Lettre à la Commission scandale Volkswagen - en français](#)
- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Rebecca Harms \(DE/EN\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Bas Eickhout \(EN\)](#)

Further information

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Air pollution and industrial emissions rules

Tues. 6 Oct. – EP plenary debate; vote Weds.

MEPs have endorsed Tuesday an agreement on new EU rules limiting pollutant emissions from medium-sized combustion plants (between 1 and 50 MW) as regards particulate matter, SO2 as well as NOx –currently in the spotlight with the infamous VW dieselgate. While EU rules on larger industrial plants already exist, introducing emissions limits to cover these medium-sized plants is another crucial step for tackling the problem of air pollution on an EU-wide basis. While the Greens believe stricter rules would

have been feasible and clearly in the public's interest, the parliament nonetheless ensured stronger limit values and limited exemptions compared to the very lax position put forward by EU governments. As such, it is an important step forward.

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

Further information

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Hollande and Merkel debate

Tues. 6 Oct – EP plenary debate; Weds. debate with Merkel and Hollande

French president Hollande and German chancellor Merkel take part Wednesday in a debate with political group leaders in the EP plenary, with the refugee crisis expected to dominate. The crisis was also the subject of a debate on Tuesday. The two heads of state stumbled from one crisis to the next without properly solving the underlying problems and this makes it hard to have confidence in their ability to act. The Greens believe the solidarity crisis is a real threat to the EU, with core elements of the Union like free movement having been placed under severe strain by this crisis. The group continues to push for a comprehensive solution, with an overhaul of the Dublin asylum system to create a permanent binding scheme for relocating asylum seekers across the EU, based on a fair distribution key, as well as a legal entry scheme for refugees.

- [Press release \(DE/EN\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Rebecca Harms](#)

Turkey's worrying escalation

Weds. 7 Oct. – EP plenary debate

The growing violence in Turkey threatens the stability of the country and the region. The Greens have called on EU governments and the institutions to be far more proactive, exerting pressure on all parties to the conflict to stop the violence and restart the peace process. In this context, our Group has initiated a cross-political group appeal for peace in Turkey two weeks ago. The EU needs to engage with the Turkish government and a coordinated response needs to be developed by Commission president Juncker, Council president Tusk and EU foreign policy high representative Mogherini. We held a joint press conference with MEPs from the GUE and S&D with leading Kurdish politician and rights activist Leyla Zana (winner of the 1995 Sakharov Prize), to address the concerning situation in Turkey.

- [Press conference with Leyla Zana](#)

Further information

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Syria

Weds. 7 Oct. – EP plenary debate

The European Parliament debated Wednesday the crisis in Syria. For the Greens, interventions against Islamic State (IS) by the US-led coalition Russia show that there can be no military solution to this multi-dimensional conflict. The Greens call for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire in Syria. The only option for military action can be a clearly defined 'Responsibility to Protect', based on an UN Mandate. The Greens call on EU governments to adopt a Common Position on the Syrian conflict focusing on a UN-centred and led political process.

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

Further information

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EU payment service rules

Thurs. 8 Oct. – EP Plenary debate

The European Parliament adopted Thursday new EU legislation on payment services within the EU. The new rules include provisions scrapping surcharges on credit and debit cards, which should come into force within two years. For the Greens, scrapping payment surcharges for online payments is a major boost for consumers. The new rules bring a number of other benefits to consumers, such as the right to refund for direct debit transactions or reduced liability for unauthorised payments. Unfortunately, EU governments are insisting on including a number of exceptions that will limit the application of the rules in the telecommunications sector.

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

Further information

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Around the plenary

Corporate tax avoidance, rulings and the EU response

Tues. 6 Oct. – Council of EU finance ministers

EU finance ministers adopted Tuesday new EU rules for automatic exchange of tax information between member states and, notably, the tax rulings agreed with corporations, which were the subject of the Luxembourg leaks revelations in November 2014. The Greens regret that the final legislation adopted is weaker than what had been proposed by the EU Commission and notably that this information will not be used to support future state aid investigations. In itself, the initial proposal was already not an appropriate response to the Luxleaks scandal because a similar obligation existed since the 1970s but had not been properly applied. The Greens call for all tax rulings to be made public as soon as possible.

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

Further information

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Data, privacy rights and the Facebook ruling

Tues. 6 Oct. – European Court of Justice decision

The European Court of Justice issued Tuesday its judgement in a case concerning the transfer by Facebook of the data of EU citizens to the US under 'Safe Harbor'. The court found that the transfer of private data to the US by Facebook is at odds with EU data protection rules. With this ruling, the ECJ has declared the 'Safe Harbor' decision by the European Commission as invalid. The Greens welcome the court's verdict, which makes clear that transfers of masses of Europeans' personal data by companies like Facebook to the United States are in breach of the fundamental right to data protection.

- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Video - Max Schrems, Europe versus Facebook, interviewed by Jan Albrecht](#)

Further information

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EU railway rules

Thurs. 8 Oct. – Council of EU transport ministers

EU transport ministers agreed Thursday on their position on the 4th Railway Package, setting out rules governing the rail sector in Europe. This paves the way for negotiations with the European Parliament to finalising the legislation. The Greens will push for greater transparency of financial flows to make sure that public money will be used to make rail transport more efficient and environmentally-friendly.

In this context, the Greens particularly welcome that this week's Council of EU transport ministers was dedicated to cycling. Ministers adopted a declaration on cycling as a climate friendly transport mode, calling on the European Commission to set up an action plan.

- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- [Social media – cycling as a mode of transport](#)

Further information

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Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- [Death penalty](#)
- [Situation in Thailand](#)
- [The case of Ali Mohammed al-Nimr](#)
- [See our press release \(FR\)](#)

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