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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 3-6 October 2016

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Greens/EFA motions for resolution

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Transparency

Tues. 4 October - Commission statement

Transparency was a big theme for the Greens/EFA group in the plenary week. Thanks to us, and following the recent scandal over former European Commission President Barroso's appointment by Goldman Sachs, the Commission appeared before the European Parliament on Tuesday to debate conflicts of interest for past and present Commissioners. However, the Commission stated that there was nothing wrong with their ethics rules, despite the fact that the majority of political groups asked for urgent reforms to the Commission's Code of Conduct. The debate also covered the implications of the recent Bahamas Leaks, in which former Commissioner Neelie Kroes was named.

- Blog post
- Plenary speech - Philippe Lamberts (FR)
- Plenary speech - Pascal Durand (FR)
- Plenary speech - Molly Scott Cato (EN)
- Plenary speech - Josep-Maria Terricabras (ES)
- Plenary speech - Ernest Urtasun (ES)
- Plenary speech - Max Andersson (SV)
- Plenary speech - Eva Joly (FR)

Weds. 5 October - Commission statement

On Wednesday, the Commission explained to MEPs its proposal on how to update the Transparency Register, to try and make it "de facto mandatory". The European Commission's proposals are a step towards greater lobby transparency in the European Union but more ambition is required. It will now be up to MEPs and the Council to negotiate the Inter-institutional agreement, and it remains to be seen whether or not MEPs will step up to the plate. The Greens call for greater transparency, including the publication of legislative footprints by both the Commission and Parliament, showing which lobbyists influenced legislation. At the same time, we have presented a Green Plan for Transparency in the European Parliament to ensure reforms are made in law (in the Rules of Procedure) on ethics, lobbying, transparency and oversight.

- Blog post
- Latest press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Lobby calendar

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GMO cultivation faces objection vote

Mon. 3 October - ENVI Committee, Wed. 5 October plenary vote

The ENVI committee voted Monday on three Greens/EFA objections to GMO cultivation, along with 2 objections to GMO commercialization, in the EU. The objections were put to a plenary vote Wednesday. The European Commission is trying to push through new GM maize for cultivation in the EU despite the fact that 17 Member States have banned them on their own soil, the majority of citizens are opposed, and the evaluation is incomplete.

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)
- See latest blog for background info
- GMO website

Further information
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Commission hearing on macro-economic conditionality for Portugal and Spain

Mon. 3 October - REGI and ECON committees

The REGI and ECON committees held a joint hearing with the EU Commission on the possible suspension of European Structural and Investment Funds for Spain and Portugal ("macro-economic conditionality"). This forms part of the structured dialogue between the European Parliament and the Commission that must be undertaken before the Commission presents its proposals and will be the first time the process has been triggered. During the hearing, the fundamental flaws of the macro-economic conditionality mechanism became evident. Suspending funds to Portugal and Spain would be completely counter-productive. At a time when solidarity within Europe is already fragile, sanctioning Member States would send a terrible message about the EU's ability and willingness to provide practical solutions to the economic crisis.

- Press release (ES)

Further information
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Legal Aid Directive will ensure minimum standards

Tues. 4 October - EP debate and vote

A large majority of MEPs adopted Tuesday the agreement reached between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on legal aid. The EU-wide Legal Aid Directive guarantees that, in instances where suspects and defendants cannot afford a lawyer, Member States must bear the costs. For the Greens, this agreement is a significant success for the European Parliament. The right to legal aid is the logical step on the path to EU-wide rights in criminal proceedings.

For the first time, a Directive provides minimum harmonised rules on how and when Member States should pay for a lawyer when someone is a suspect or accused person in criminal proceedings, or requested person in European arrest warrant proceedings (EAW). Thus we ensure the effectiveness of the right of access to a lawyer and strengthen mutual trust, mutual recognition and judicial cooperation among Member States.

- Text adopted

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Making sure trade policy protects human rights

Tues. 4 October - EP vote

A clear majority of MEPs adopted Tuesday a legislative report that revises EU trade rules, focusing on provisions to prevent the trade in goods that could be used for torture or capital punishment. Greens/EFA MEPs have been instrumental in ensuring this revision, which includes clear and robust provisions, notably: prohibiting transit through the EU for goods that are intended for torture or the death penalty in third countries; a ban on the advertisement and marketing of prohibited equipment at trade fairs and exhibitions in the EU; and the new "urgency procedure" which will make it quicker and easier for the European Commission to add new items to the list of prohibited or controlled goods. For the Greens, this clearly demonstrates that human rights and a coherent trade policy are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the two can be achieved together, provided there is the necessary political will.

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

Further information
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European Public Prosecutor's office and Eurojust

Tues. 4 October - EP debate; Weds. 5 October - EP vote

Ahead of the October Council meetings (JHA and Ecofin), the European Parliament voted on a resolution on EPPO and Eurojust, underlining key points that the Council needs to take into account in the ongoing negotiations on these files. Among the calls on the Council are: to include VAT frauds within the scope of the PIF directive; to abandon the so-called “damage criterion”; to give the final decision to an independent Court (such as the ECJ) in cases of conflict of competence between national authorities and the EPPO.

- Text adopted

Further information
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Ratification of the Paris agreement (COP 21)

Weds. 5 October - EP vote

The European Parliament voted Wednesday by a considerable majority in favour of European Union ratification of the Paris Agreement. The EU accompanied by 7 MS ratifications also pushed the ratifications over the threshold of 55% global emissions meaning Paris Agreement will enter into force 4 November 2016. It is vital that this decision is followed by swift ratification by rest of the Member States. This should also be a last wake up call for International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), currently meeting in Montreal to agree on a robust mechanism to curb aviation emissions in line with the Paris Agreement commitments.

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Plenary speech – Rebecca Harms (DE/EN)
- Social media
- Video (ICAO)
- Text adopted

Further information
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18th birthday Interrail pass for Europeans

Weds. 4 October - EP debate

MEPs debated Wednesday the idea of giving young Europeans a free Interrail ticket on their 18th birthday. For the Greens, this would give young people a great opportunity to experience Europe in a sustainable way. The Interrail is a railway ticket allows unlimited rail travel in and between all of 30 participating countries for a certain period of time.

- Plenary speech – Rebecca Harms (DE/EN)
- Social media

Further information
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Look ahead to European Council meeting

Weds. 5 October - Council and Commission statements

The Council and Commission made statements in advance of the next European Council meeting, due to take place 20 and 21 October, at which the EU-Canada Free Trade Agreement (CETA) is expected to be one key item on the agenda.

The Greens/EFA Group is co-organising the Citizen's CETA Summit in Brussels on 20 October. Find out more and register here.

- Plenary speech - Philippe Lamberts (FR)

Further information
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The need for a European reindustrialisation policy

Wed. 5 October - EP vote

MEPs voted Wednesday on a resolution on the need for a European reindustrialisation policy in light of the recent Caterpillar and Alstom cases. The Greens/EFA position focuses on four key topics: reviving the real economy through a sustainable reindustrialisation policy; the energy and sustainability transition; aligning trade policy to the reindustrialisation and transition objectives; socially responsible restructuring and quality job creation in future-oriented sectors.

Important green wording made it through to the final text, namely on the green economy (i.e. need for investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy, green public procurement, improve social and environmental investment criteria). Other issues we supported were also carried, such as the need for stopping tax evasion through increased convergence in fiscal, social and budgetary matters and the need for trade policy to be consistent with reindustrialisation objectives to preserve quality employment in the EU.

- Press release (EN/FR)
- Text adopted

Further information
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Women's rights in Poland

Weds. 5 October - Commission statement

The Commission made a statement about the situation in Poland concerning the threat to women's rights posed by proposals to criminalise abortion - part of a wider threat to fundamental rights in general there. The Greens invited a number of Polish women campaigning in defence of their rights to Strasbourg to share their stories with MEPs and press. The attacks on Polish women's rights are an attack on all women and a direct blow to European values. Women must have control over their sexual and reproductive rights. Women's rights are a fundamental human right.

- Social media

Further information
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Thailand, the case of Andy Hall

Weds. 5 October - press conference

On the initiative Greens/EFA MEP Heidi Hautala, the Group invited human rights activist Andy Hall to the European Parliament. We held a press conference with him, together with Lea Rankinen, to highlight his case and call on the Commission to pay more attention to human rights when trade policies are negotiated.

- Press conference - video on demand

Enforcement of EU law not sufficiently transparent

Thurs. 6 October - EP debate

MEPs debated Thursday the 2014 annual report on monitoring the application of Union law, an own-initiative strategic report from Greens/EFA Rapporteur Heidi Hautala. The enforcement of EU law is still not sufficiently transparent and open. The Commission is being afforded absolute discretion by the treaties but is displaying also an absolute lack of transparency in how it deals with infringement procedures. The enforcement of EU law is a stated priority from this Commission, but it is far from being achieved. The European Parliament should play a more structured role in monitoring with the Commission the application of EU Law by Member States and in the analysis of how accession countries and countries with association agreements with the European Union comply with EU law and in developing appropriate support to those countries.

Syria

Thurs. 6 October - EP debate

In a plenary debate about the situation in Syria, Green MEPs Rebecca Harms and Barbara Lochbihler stated that following the Russian attacks on hospitals and medical infrastructure, the European Union must make it clear to Russian President Vladimir Putin that the escalation of the conflict makes the return of normal relations between the EU and Russia impossible. For the Greens, the European Union must be prepared to use its economic weight and continue and extend sanctions against Russia.

With a no-fly zone not a prospect, and military operations not possible due to the risk of incalculable escalation, the only solution is to return to the negotiating table. The European Union must exert diplomatic and economic pressure on all parties, in particular Iran, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf states.

- Press release (DE/EN)
- Plenary speech – Rebecca Harms (DE)
- Plenary speech – Barbara Lochbihler (DE)
- Text adopted

Further information
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Food Contact Materials

Weds. 5 October - EP debate; Thurs. 6 October - EP vote

The European Parliament adopted Thursday a draft implementation report on Food Contact Materials, which aims to harmonise existing legislation governing the materials used in food production and packaging.

For the Greens, it is urgent to tackle the shortcomings in the implementation and enforcement of the existing legislation. The amendment introduced by the Greens and signed by 69 MEPs from different political groups to ban Bisphenol A (BPA), in all food contact materials, was voted by a majority of Parliament's members. This sends a strong signal to the European Commission, asking to stop the use of this harmful product at EU level.

Food contact materials (FCMs) are largely used in everyday life such as food packaging, kitchen utensils, tableware, etc. When put in contact with food, the different materials may behave differently, transferring their components to the food. In such cases, chemicals emanating from FCMs may endanger human health and/or adversely change the composition of the foodstuffs.

- Blog post
- Text adopted

Further information
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Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- Reindustrialisation
- Rwanda
- Sudan
- Thailand, notably the case of Andy Hall

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 28 October 2016

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Press release

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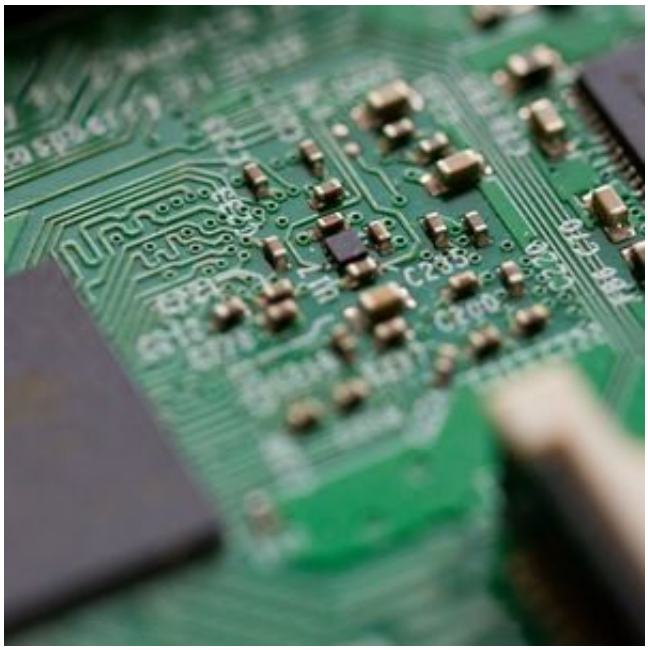


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