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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 12-15 December 2016

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LuxLeaks appeal trial

Monday 12 December, 11:30am, Luxembourg: Press conference

The appeal of Antoine Deltour, Raphael Halet and Edouard Perrin began on Monday. In June, Antoine and Raphael were given suspended sentences and a fine. Greens/EFA MEPs Pascal Durand, Benedek Javor, Sven Giegold and Claude Turmes held a press conference in Luxembourg, alongside invited whistleblowers from Germany, Hungary, Ireland and Spain. We also participated in the solidarity gathering outside the court room, alongside NGOs.

- Joint Statement by whistleblowers and Greens/EFA MEPs
- Video – social media

Further information
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4th Railway Package: missed opportunity for progress

Monday 12 December: debate, Wednesday 14: vote

MEPs voted Wednesday on the fourth railway package. For the Greens/EFA Group, the report is deeply disappointing and is a missed opportunity for progress. Whilst the technical pillar is satisfactory, the Greens/EFA group has strong concerns regarding the PSO and Governance files. We voted against the political pillar of the proposal, as the new rules will not bring any real improvements. The rules for tendering don't include enough environmental and social criteria, for instance in the case where transfer of staff from one company to another becomes necessary and there are numerous loopholes to undermine fair EU-wide competition. The new rules for separation within companies provide for unnecessary bureaucracy but not for an impartial management that would benefit customers, taxpayers and the companies themselves.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Normalisation of the accounts of railway undertakings
- Domestic passenger transport services by rail
- Single European railway area

Further information
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New Greens/EFA co-presidents and bureau announced

Tuesday 13 December

The Greens/EFA group has chosen its co-presidents for the second half of the 2014-2019 parliamentary term. The group elected Ska Keller and confirmed Philippe Lamberts as its co-presidents. A new Bureau has also been elected.

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Video – social media
- Greens/EFA co-presidents
- Greens/EFA Bureau

Commission Statement: rule of law in Poland

Tuesday 13 December: plenary debate

The Parliament debated Wednesday the state of rule of law and democracy in Poland. The Greens/EFA Group will call for the use of Article 7, for the Constitutional Tribunal is still prevented by the government from acting effectively. Last week, representatives of the Polish government announced their intention to withdraw Poland's signature from the Istanbul Convention; this week, the Parliament restricted the freedom of assembly. For the Greens, the situation is intolerable. After Hungary, we are experiencing a systematic restraint on the fundamental rights of all citizens in Poland. We will continue to be on the side of Polish citizens and will fight together to ensure that basic rights in Poland are not further restricted.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Social media

Further information
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Sakharov Prize

Tuesday 13 December: plenary

The European Parliament has awarded Tuesday the 2016 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar. With this award, the European Parliament is supporting the fight against the terrorist "Islamic State" and their practices of brutal abduction and sexual enslavement of women. In honouring them with the EU's most prestigious human rights award, we also extend our support to all women who oppose oppression and enslavement.

- Press release (DE/EN)
- Social media

Further information
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Commission Statement: Energy Union Package

Tuesday 13 December: plenary debate

MEPs debated Tuesday the Commission’s Energy Package, which contains a series of proposals on the future energy policy of the European Union. The proposals fall far short of what is needed to match the ambitions agreed under the Paris Agreement and the Commission's rhetoric on making Europe number one in renewables. See our most recent press release and blog for details.

Further information
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Parliament's rules of Procedure

Tuesday 13 December: plenary vote

The European Parliament has amended Tuesday the Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Following the recent scandals involving Neelie Kroes and Günther Öttinger, the Greens are pleased to have secured measures which will help improve transparency and integrity in the European institutions. European Commissioners will now face a more stringent review, and the European Parliament will be able to suspend the process where there is a suspected conflict of interest. We are also pleased to have improved the rules governing our own house. Thanks to our amendments, MEPs will only be able to meet with registered lobbyists.

This report represents the outcome of two years of work on revising the European Parliament's rules of procedure. The Greens/EFA group has secured a series of measures to improve transparency, including measured adopted from the report of Pascal Durand, which will see an enhanced check of potential conflict of interests both at the beginning of the legislature and in case of a major portfolio change. Other positive measures include: a more precise declaration of side incomes by MEPs; a ban on lobby side jobs; an improvement on the functioning of the ethical Advisory committee.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Blog from our Transparency and Democracy campaign
- Text adopted

Further information
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Commission: Labour mobility package - coordination of social security systems

Tuesday 13 December

The European Commission has announced Tuesday its proposals on EU social security coordination. For the Greens, this proposal could undermine "social Europe". The proposals include a problematic tightening of the rules on equal treatment and access to benefits regards to non-workers. For example, EU citizens currently receive unemployment benefits in the country in which they last worked. Under the Commission's proposals, citizens would only receive benefits if they have worked in that country for at least three months. We are however pleased that the Commission has held firm and resisted the demands of some Member States for an indexation of child benefits. All children should be equally valued across the EU. Another positive step is the inclusion of specific coordination rules for long-term care benefits, as

these were currently not properly covered.

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)

Further information
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Revision of the Research fund for Coal and Steel

Wednesday 14 December: plenary debate

MEPs adopted a report Wednesday on the revision of the research fund for coal and steel. The Greens voted against, as this text aims to increase the competitiveness of community coal. Despite this negative result, we nevertheless managed to slightly improve the final text with our amendments. These include a deletion of oil shales from the scope of the fund, the inclusion of support for ground-breaking technologies in the steel sector and a request to provide the maximum transparency possible on expert group documents.

- Text adopted

Further information
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Council and Commission statements ahead of European Council

Wednesday 14 December: plenary debate

The European Parliament held a debate Wednesday, ahead of the European Council meeting.

In reaction, the Greens made clear that the European Council needed to send a strong message that it will not simply stand by and watch the horrendous atrocities happening in Aleppo. The European Union needs

to take action to ensure that those Syrians who have managed to flee bombs and terror will receive international protection.

The European Union is not delivering even on those things that have already been agreed. Less than 10,000 people have been relocated from Greece and Italy. And to make matters worse, the Commission is even planning on sending refugees back to Greece. This shows not only a lack of solidarity, but a lack also of common sense. On migration, it seems the only thing that Member States can agree to do is to close Europe's doors. But if we are not true to our own principles, we will become a laughing stock in the world.

Other key topics included Security and EU-Russia relations. There was also an informal meeting of the 27 leaders to discuss the Brexit process.

- Video - Ska Keller

European Parliament presidency: Greens/EFA candidate

Thursday 15 December

The Greens/EFA group nominated Thursday British MEP Jean Lambert as their candidate for the presidency of the European Parliament. This election comes at a crucial moment, both for our parliament and for the entire European Union, and it is crucial that we have a candidate that will represent and defend the core values of the EU

- Press release (EN/FR)

Vote on Emission Trading System (ETS) in Environment Committee

Thursday 15 December: committee vote

On Thursday the ENVI committee voted on the much-needed reform of the Emissions Trading System (ETS). The so called EU 'cornerstone policy' in the fight against climate change has been largely malfunctioning, and has not being able to deliver a carbon price high enough to properly incentivise the

reduction of green-house gases within EU industry.

While it falls short of the overhaul that would have been needed to make ETS the climate policy flagship it is claimed to be, the outcome of the ENVI vote is a significant improvement to the Commission proposal and the current ETS. To our biggest regret, we lost the amendments to rebase the starting point of the cap to real emissions instead of starting the phase with allocation above reality. The compromise also includes a number of early Christmas presents for many of the EU's biggest polluters. A new 10 billion subsidy scheme for the most power intensive industries will be carved out from the common EU pot, seriously diluting incentives for the sector to green their power sources. On the upside, the ENVI report took some first steps towards aligning EU climate instruments towards Paris ambition and tackling the historical surplus hanging over the carbon market.

- Press release

Further information
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Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- Mass graves in Iraq
- Situation in Rohingya Minority in Myanmar
- Cases of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy and Ilham Tohti

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 16 December 2016

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