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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 12-15 June 2017

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- Panama Papers follow-up and the rule of law in Malta
- Preparation of the European Council of 22 and 23 June 2017

Tax justice: Country by country reporting

ECON/JURI Committee vote Monday

The European Parliament has taken a first step Monday to curb tax secrecy, which allows businesses to minimise shift profits to tax havens. A joint meeting of the Economic and Monetary Affairs and Legal Affairs committees voted to improve the Commission's proposals for public country-by-country reporting. This would require all companies operating within the EU to publish financial information for all territories in which they operate, including those outside the EU.

After the Luxleaks, Panama Papers and Malta Files scandals, we need to put an end to secrecy and stop the

giant companies, which shift their profits and pay very little tax. We want to ensure that companies disclose information in all countries where they operate without exemption, so that we know what's going on in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Ireland but also Panama, Cayman Islands or Liechtenstein.

However, we voted against an ALDE/EPP-backed proposal that would allow companies to apply for unlimited annual exemptions if they argue this is commercially sensitive information. This could open up a loophole and leave the public in the dark about the activities of big business. Consequently, the Greens/EFA refused to back the mandate for beginning negotiations with the European Council and the Commission and will continue to challenge this decision in the parliament in plenary in July.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Blog post

Further information
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Glyphosate renewal

Plenary debate Tuesday

The European Parliament held a debate Tuesday on glyphosate in response to the Monsanto Papers. These papers have implications that go well beyond glyphosate. There is a wider issue of the lack of transparency in the EU's assessment of active substances. They highlighted the urgent need for an in-depth investigation by the Commission into undue influence from Monsanto on the outcomes of the EFSA and ECHA assessments on glyphosate. They also show the need for change to legislation so that the assessment of active substances by EU agencies can be fully scrutinised by independent experts. We want to see conclusions based only upon studies that are in the public domain and peer-reviewed. This increased level of transparency would help increase public trust in the important work these agencies do. Members of the Greens/EFA group have filed a case with the European Court of Justice demanding public access to the studies used by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in assessing the safety of glyphosate.

There was a broad consensus among political groups that this situation is not acceptable. The health Commissioner failed to address the questions properly, MEPs said that would the Commission not be able to investigate possible undue influence by Monsanto, the Parliament would have to take care of this investigation itself.

On Thursday, the European Citizens' Initiative on glyphosate reached one million of signatures. Greens/EFA called on the Commission and Member States to unite & ban glyphosate.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA MEP Bas Eickhout

Further information

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Energy efficiency labelling

Debate and vote Tuesday

The European Parliament has voted Tuesday in favour of the final agreement on revisions to EU rules on energy labelling. At long last, a more simple and easier to understand colour-coded A-G system will be available for consumers. The Greens/EFA group welcomes a decision that will see consumers benefit from simplified energy labelling, but regrets the lengthy transition for so many products. There is no excuse for pushing back the implementation for energy consuming products until 2030 or even beyond. The current system will remain in place for certain appliances, while the new one will be applied to others. This coexistence will unfortunately cause confusion for a long time. There is no time to waste and the Greens/EFA will push the Commission to act (more) swiftly.

- Text adopted
- Press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA MEP Claude Turmes

Further information
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2016 report on Kosovo

Debate Tuesday, vote on Wednesday

The European Parliament has backed (474 votes in favour, 134 against and 64 abstentions) a report from Greens/EFA rapporteur Ulrike Lunacek on Kosovo. The report forms the Parliament's response to the Commission's annual progress reports on candidate and potential candidate countries.

This vote once again sends a strong signal that the future of an independent Kosovo lies in the European Union and reconfirms the prospect of EU membership. Kosovar parties and politicians are urged to answer this signal from the European Parliament in a constructive manner and in a European spirit, and to fulfil the two remaining benchmarks on the way to visa liberalisation for the benefit of the citizens of Kosovo.

The report also calls for the continuation of the dialogue with Serbia and the quick implementation of agreed commitments, and urges parties to swiftly form a government to continue Kosovo's path towards the EU.

- Press release
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA rapporteur Ulrike Lunacek
- Text adopted

Further information
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Effort sharing regulation and President Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the Paris agreement

Debate and vote Tuesday and Wednesday

The European Parliament adopted a report Wednesday on the so-called 'effort sharing regulation' (ESR), setting out binding greenhouse gas emission limits for Member States in order for the EU to deliver on its commitment under the Paris Agreement. The ESR is the EU's largest climate instrument that regulates emissions of the sectors that are not covered by the EU ETS, i.e. transport, agriculture, buildings and waste.

This came only a few hours after a (European Parliament) plenary debate criticising US President Trump's economically and environmentally backwards decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. While the Greens/EFA welcome that so many European leaders have lined up to condemn Trump's reckless decision and to pledge their renewed commitment to the climate agreement, the group now urges EU member States to take their responsibilities and ensure that Europe delivers on its promises on the international stage.

New targets agreed in the 'effort sharing regulation' are a positive step towards curbing emissions, but they are not strong enough to honour the commitments made under the Paris Agreement. The pace of transition needs to be significantly stepped up.

- Text adopted
- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Social media
- Q&A on effort sharing regulation
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA MEP Bas Eickhout
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA Co-President Ska Keller

Further information

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Panama Papers follow-up and the rule of law in Malta

Plenary debate Wednesday

Thanks to a Greens/EFA initiative, the Maltese Prime Minister was invited to the Parliament to explain the role of Maltese politically exposed persons or companies mentioned in the Panama Papers. As a result of the Panama Papers, we know that Minister Mizzi and Prime Minister Chief of Staff Schembri have offshore structures created by Mossack Fonseca. More recently, several reports from the Maltese Anti-Money Laundering intelligence unit (FIAU) were leaked reporting serious suspicion of money laundering towards Mr Schembri and the Pilatus Bank in Malta but no police investigations have been opened to clear things out. This is why our group has sent a letter to the European Commission to check whether Malta has been compliant with the Anti-Money Laundering Directive and with the Capital Requirements Directive prescribing the licensing of banks. The financial and economic policy spokesperson for the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament, **Sven Giegold** says that the EU Commission must initiate an investigation into whether the Maltese Government has violated the EU money-laundering directive. In addition, the Greens/EFA published a report in January about Maltese tax law, allowing large companies to pay as little as 5% corporate income tax there, an efficient way for companies to shift their profits from other countries and reduce their tax contribution.

- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA MEP Sven Giegold
- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA MEP Eva Joly
- Press release

Further information
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Preparation of the European Council of 22 and 23 June 2017

Debate Wednesday

Key topics for the Council will include migration and security and defence. During the plenary debate, Greens/EFA Co-President Ska Keller stated: "*Much greater solidarity in supporting refugees is urgently needed. It is deeply disappointing that the Member States are seemingly unable to agree on a fair allocation of asylum seekers in Europe and have dropped this decision from their agenda. The heads of state and government need to look at the root causes that lead to violent conflicts, radicalisation and people fleeing from their homes. More money for the arms industry is not an adequate answer. Improved cooperation could save billions of euros, money that is urgently needed to prevent conflicts and violence in the world*"

- Plenary speech by Greens/EFA Co-President Ska Keller
- Press release

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30 years of Erasmus+

Parliament celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus+ programme by welcoming 33 Erasmus participants from each country taking part in the programme. Celebrations include an exhibition and debates.

With 4000 students being involved at any one time, it’s clear that the Erasmus+ programme has been a massive success in bringing students from all over Europe together and in allowing them to experience totally different environments. However, like any system, there are always ways to make it better.

- Read our proposals

Our MEPs and staff share memories on the 30th anniversary of Erasmus+.

- See pictures

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Lobby register and transparency

Conference of Presidents, Thursday

On Thursday, the European Parliament’s Conference of Presidents adopted the Parliament's mandate to begin negotiations on the new lobbying Transparency Register with the European Commission and the European Council. The mandate, which was only made public through a leak, was negotiated in a "Contact Group" composed of all political groups, which met behind closed doors. While some NGOs were invited to a meeting, upon the insistence of the Greens/EFA group, they did not receive a copy of the mandate.

The Parliament is missing a great opportunity to counteract the impression of the people of Europe that politics in Brussels is conducted behind closed doors. For the Greens, the European Parliament has to commit to transparency if it wants others to follow suit. Our group supported a more ambitious mandate to integrate some of the proposals contained in the Giegold report on transparency, accountability and integrity of the EU institutions (to be voted in September).

- Blog post
- Press release

Further information
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Support for Ahmed H

Political groups in the European Parliament (Greens/EFA, S&D, ALDE, GUE/NGL) show support to Ahmed H., a refugee who is accused of terrorism in Hungary and jailed for 10 years.

- See pictures of the action

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- The case of Afgan Mukhtarli and the situation of media in Azerbaijan
- Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Human Rights in Indonesia
- Pakistan, notably the situation of human rights defenders and the death penalty
- Humanitarian situation in Yemen

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 7 July 2017

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