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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 21-24 November 2016

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EU-Turkey relations

Tuesday 22 November - plenary debate

The Greens/EFA group has called for accession negotiations with Turkey to be put on hold for as long as the Erdogan regime continues to flout fundamental rights. Visa liberalisation is also impossible until the Turkish government meets the necessary conditions. So long as the EU-Turkey deal is the only response to the refugee crisis, the Member States leave themselves dependent on President Erdogan. If we want to solve the refugee crisis, the EU must take matters into its own hands. Member States should finally fulfil their commitments on the resettlement of refugees and the EU must stop returning refugees to Turkey. Nevertheless, our group reaffirms its principle support for constructive EU-Turkey relations.

- Latest press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Text adopted

Further information
Sabine Meyer - Advisor on Foreign Affairs
sabine.meyer@ep.europa.eu

Conflict minerals trialogue

Tuesday 23 November

The European Parliament and Council reached Tuesday a final agreement on new EU regulation aimed at tackling the problem of conflict minerals. This legislation is intended to stop the financing of armed groups through trade in conflict minerals by forcing companies to source responsibly. While the original proposal was for a voluntary certification scheme, we have helped deliver binding legislation. This deal is a major breakthrough in responding to the problem of conflict minerals and shows the EU is finally accepting the seriousness of this problem. For the first time in Europe, firms involved in the extraction and trade of minerals will be obliged to check whether their supply chain has links to armed conflicts and human rights abuses, and to address problems where they occur. Though we regret that many companies who import products containing conflict minerals, or who only import a small volume of risk materials, will not be included in the reach of the legislation, this is nonetheless a positive and welcome step forward.

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

Council and Commission Statements on the outcome of COP22

Wednesday 23 November – plenary

The outcome of the COP22 was debated in Plenary Wednesday following the end of the international meeting in Marrakech last Friday. The Greens have been pushing for clear policy commitments and financing to ensure that the ambitions agreed in Paris are delivered. We welcome the resolve of the global community to deliver an effective and unified response to climate change. In Marrakech, the message from scientists and policy makers was clear: the momentum away from fossils to renewable energy is unstoppable and moving backwards would only damage the long-term prospects for the economy and for jobs. It is therefore critical that the European Union ramps up its own ambition, increasing the pace of energy savings and renewables penetration instead of slowing down in the forthcoming energy legislation.

- Latest press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Our climate campaign blog

Further information
Guillermo Rodríguez Robles - Climate Change Campaigner
guillermo.rodriguezrobles@ep.europa.eu

EU Parliament refuses to refer CETA to the ECJ

Wednesday 23 November - plenary vote

MEPs rejected Wednesday a call from a coalition of MEPs, including Greens/EFA members, to refer the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Referring CETA to the ECJ has been a demand of the Greens/EFA group for some time. We are extremely disappointed with this decision. Given the huge controversy around the deal, and the serious questions that have been asked regarding its compatibility with EU Treaties, there was a clear-cut case for asking the Court to express a view. Indeed, various legal experts, including the German Association of Judges and an Advocate General of the ECJ itself, have argued that investment court systems could be incompatible with EU law. The Parliament had an opportunity to prove that it was willing to stand up for the common good and ensure that this deal is not merely nodded through. Unfortunately, it failed.

- Press release (DE/EN/ES/FR)
- Our TIPP/CETA campaign

Martin Koehler – Advisor on International Trade
martin.koehler@ep.europa.eu

Commission discussion on Code of Conduct

Wednesday 23 November - Commission college

The Commission discussed Wednesday a proposal on extending the cooling off period for Commissioners. Despite indications from President Juncker that a new Code of Conduct was forthcoming, they have not presented a new proposal. The Greens/EFA Group strongly regrets this (lack of) decision. One would think, given the recent scandals that the Commission would want to act quickly to assure citizens that they are taking ethics seriously. To many citizens, the revolving door between the EU Commission and big business looks far too cosy. We are demanding a strong proposal to rebuild trust (Kroes, Barroso, Oettinger).

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)
- Background information - conflicts of interest

Further information
Pam Bartlett Quintanilla - Transparency and Democracy Campaigner
pamela.bartlettquintanilla@ep.europa.eu

Emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants

Wednesday 23 November – plenary debate

The European Parliament adopted Wednesday a long-overdue revision of the National Emissions Ceiling Directive, a key part of EU air quality legislation, which sets out national limits on a range of air pollutants. Air pollution is the cause of premature deaths of over 400,000 people per year in the EU. The Greens/EFA group did not endorse the final agreement, which is substantially weaker than the European Commission's original proposal. During the trialogue process, instead of increasing the ambitions to align with cost effective potential based on climate policy targets as was recommended by the impact assessment commissioned by the European Parliament, the Commission proposal was watered down. Methane targets were removed from the law and ammonia emission targets were weakened under pressure from the

agriculture lobby. This is a missed opportunity to finally get serious about the crisis in public health caused by poor air quality.

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

Further information
Terhi Lehtonen – Advisor on environmental issues
terhi.lehtonen@ep.europa.eu

EP calls on Commission not to renew authorisation of bentazone

Wednesday 23 November - plenary vote

The European Parliament Wednesday refused to renew the authorisation for the use of bentazone, an active substance used in pesticides. The Commission intended to renew its approval for a further 15 years, although the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had confirmed that the toxicity test were incomplete and both the consumer risk assessment and the groundwater exposure assessment were not finalised.

Moreover, the decision would ignore the Ombudsman's proposals to improve the Commission's pesticide approval system (by restricting the practice of approving a substance while simultaneously requesting data expected to confirm its safety).

The Commission's repeated attempts to push pesticides through while ignoring public health warnings are alarming. The Greens call on the Commission to take into account the European Parliament's clear rejection and to withdraw its proposal.

- Press release (FR)
- Text adopted

Further information
Corinna Zerger – Advisor on Food Safety and Quality
corrina.zerger@ep.europa.eu

Sign language and professional sign language interpreters

Tuesday 22 November - Debate - Wednesday 23 November - plenary vote

The European Parliament adopted Wednesday, by an overwhelming majority of 661 MEPs in favour, a resolution on sign language and professional sign language interpreters. The Greens have always been strong advocates of reinforcing and advancing inclusion and accessibility, notably with regards to sign language. The Greens/EFA website is accessible in International Sign Language. Our amendments asking for more resources for sign language interpreters and adding sign language to school programmes were adopted. Overall, we are extremely pleased with this very good outcome.

- Text adopted

Further information
Philine Scholze - Advisor on Employment & Social Affairs
philine.scholze@ep.europa.eu

Umbrella Agreement on data protection

Thursday 24 November - LIBE vote

The European Parliament Civil Liberties Committee adopted Thursday, with a significant majority, the EU-US data protection agreement for police and law enforcement authorities ("Umbrella agreement"). The report, from Greens/EFA MEP Jan Philipp Albrecht, gives consent to an umbrella agreement on data protection. For the first time, there will be a binding agreement on data protection when it comes to police and judicial cooperation between the EU and the US. This 'Umbrella agreement' on data protection sets high standards: persons concerned have clear rights to information and EU and US citizens will have the right to appeal. The agreement is internationally binding and is about to be finally agreed upon by the Obama administration. The plenary vote is expected on Thursday 1 December.

- Press release (DE/EN/FR)

Occupational retirement provision

Thursday 24 November - plenary vote

MEPs adopted Thursday a report on activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision. The Commission's proposal was aimed primarily at encouraging cross-border provision of pensions so as to improve provision of workplace pensions. The Greens stress the importance of adequate state pensions as the first priority and first line defence against old-age poverty. Pushing people into defined contribution schemes, where they bear all the investment risk themselves, especially in an environment of protracted low returns on bonds and shares, may make government finances look better in the short term but is not a sustainable solution.

Nevertheless, we are pleased that the report includes an obligation to include environmental, social and governance assessments in the investment and risk management procedure. It also provides legal clarity that an environmentally responsible investment strategy cannot be attacked in court simply because it won't achieve the maximum return on investment.

- Text adopted

Further information
David Kemp - Advisor on Economic and Monetary Affairs
david.kemp@ep.europa.eu

Ségolène Royal at Dieselgate hearing

Thursday 24 November - EMIS hearing

The EMIS enquiry committee heard from French Environment Minister, Ségolène Royal. The Minister initiated a Commission of Experts at the end 2015 to investigate emission tests at French car manufacturers. In August 2016, the public learned that the final report was lacking crucial information, including information on defeat devices of the French car manufacturer Renault.

- Press conference with MEPs Bas Eickhout and Karima Delli on Dieselgate and the hearing of Ms Ségolène Royal
- Summary of the hearing of Ségolène Royal (EMIS inquiry committee)

Further information
Terhi Lehtonen – Advisor on environmental issues
terhi.lehtonen@ep.europa.eu

EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women

Wednesday 23 November – debate - Thursday 24 November – plenary vote

The European Parliament adopted Thursday, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution on EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women. MEPs sent a very strong message: The European Parliament wants the EU to join the Istanbul Convention, the Commission to propose legislative initiative combating violence against women and the Council to adopt the unanimous decision of identifying violence against women as an area of crime under Article 83 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which we can only hope the Commission upholds.

- Webarticle - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- Social media
- Text adopted

Further information
Georgia Tsaklanganos - Advisor on Women's Rights and Gender equality
georgia.tsaklanganos@ep.europa.eu

Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

- Situation in Belarus
- Situation of the Guarini Kaiowa people in Brazil
- Case of Gui Minhai, jailed publisher in China
- Case of Ildar Dadin, prisoner of conscience in Russia
- Situation in Syria
- EU-Turkey relations

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

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Press release

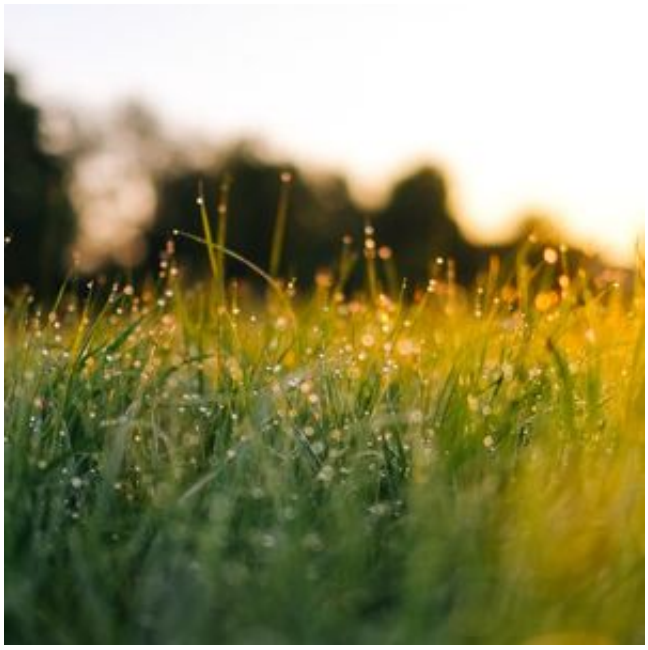
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