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Plenary Flash 15-18 January 2024

Hungary: Frozen Funds

In December, the European Commission caved into Viktor Orban's threats to derail EU support for Ukraine with the release of €10.2 billion of previously frozen funding to Hungary. Prime Minister Orban then proceeded to block the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework including EU financial support to Kyiv, at the European Council Summit. The blame for this disastrous situation, allowing Orban to hold EU decisions to ransom at each Council Summit, rests entirely at the feet of the Member State governments and their refusal to act on the democratic backsliding in Hungary. The Commission is failing in its duty as guardian of the treaties to defend European values and the rule of law by caving into Hungary.

It should be clear that Viktor Orban's voting rights in the Council are being abused for his personal interests, to serve his autocratic ambitions, which puts European democracy in danger. The Greens/EFA Group are calling on the Council to adopt recommendations under Article 7(1) and solve the issue of the Hungarian presidency; for the Commission not to release funding to Hungary under the RRF and Conditionality Regulation, and to trigger a new infringement procedure. The Greens have long been fighting for Article 7(2), which would remove voting rights in the Council needs unanimity of member states to work. The Belgian Presidency needs to put its efforts into building this unanimity, starting by adopting Council recommendations towards Hungary under Article 7(1).

Debate: Wednesday, 17 January

Greens/EFA MEPs: Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield MEP, Daniel Freund MEP

More: [Joint Letter signed by European Parliament Political Group Leaders](#)

Israel/Gaza Conflict

Next week, at the request of Greens/EFA, Members of the European Parliament will debate and vote on a resolution on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This debate will focus in particular on the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation. The Greens/EFA Group calls for a permanent

ceasefire, the release of all hostages and demands that journalists and aid workers working in the region be protected in accordance with international law. The EU must use all of the tools at its disposal in order to bring an end to this conflict, and alleviate the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Debate: Tuesday, 16 January

Vote: Thursday, 18 January

Greens/EFA MEP(s): Jordi Solé MEP

Fiscal Rules & Economic Governance

Next week, MEPs will vote on Parliament's trilogue mandate for the reform of the EU's fiscal rules. The proposed reform is overly focused on debt reduction and will lead to a return of austerity, at a time when we need to boost investment. The obsession with debt-reduction will force governments to choose between investments and social spending with enormous societal and political consequences.

Inflexible, one-size-fits-all budget rules will not only impede investment and cut social support to those who need it, they will destroy the political legitimacy of EU economic policy. The Greens/EFA call for rules that maintain debt sustainability instead of elevating an ideological objective to reduce debts above more pressing policy priorities such as the green transition and war on our doorstep. The Conservative, Liberal and even many Social Democratic politicians have failed to learn the lessons of the financial crisis.

Vote: Wednesday, 17 January

Greens/EFA MEPs: Philippe Lamberts MEP

More: [Vote on EU's Fiscal Rules will Entrench Austerity & Limit Capacity to Tackle Crises](#)

Support needed for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems to support sustainable fisheries

There will be several major debates on the future of the marine environment on Thursday, one of which on an EU Action Plan that foresees better protection from destructive fishing practices. The Greens/EFA Group highlights the benefits of marine protected areas both for biodiversity and for EU fishers that rely on healthy oceans for their activity.

Debate: Thursday, 18 January

Greens/EFA MEPs: Caroline Roose MEP, Ska Keller MEP

More: <https://www.greens-efa.eu/opinions/no-nature-no-fish/>

Plastic pellets and the impact on micro plastic pollution in the maritime and coastal habitats

On Thursday, MEPs, together with the Commission, will debate the recent ecological disaster off the coast of Galicia, with plastic pellets reaching Portugal, Spain, France and the Netherlands. The Greens/EFA Group calls for urgent measures to be taken to mitigate the impact on the environment and the marine fauna and ensure that international maritime transport is included in the on-going EU negotiations on measures to reduce the release of microplastics in the environment.

Debate: Thursday, 18 January
Greens/EFA MEP: Ana Miranda MEP

F-Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances

Following December's trilogue negotiations, MEPs will debate and vote on the phase out of gases, which create the hole in the stratospheric ozone layer, and of fluorinated gases (f-gases), including those in air conditioners and heat pumps. The Greens/EFA welcome in particular the revised f-gas Regulation, which will accelerate the transition towards natural alternatives, benefitting the climate, environment, health and EU industrial competitiveness.

Debate: Monday, 15 January

Vote: Tuesday, 16 January

Greens/EFA MEPs: Bas Eickhout MEP (Parliament Rapporteur for the Regulation on Fluorinated Gases), Pär Holmgren MEP (shadow for the Regulation on Ozone Depleting Substances)

More: [Greens/EFA Press Release on the f-gases Trilogue Agreement](#)

Empowering consumers in the green transition

The Greens/EFA Group has long demanded that consumers be given reliable information to make more sustainable choices when buying products and services. Next week, MEPs will vote on the Commission's proposal giving consumers stronger rights to ensure they can make more informed choices. This will help protect them against greenwashing and other unfair commercial practices, by banning things such as false green claims on the environmental performances of products, claims based solely on carbon offsetting, or premature obsolescence. This legislation is an important step towards more long-lasting products.

Debate: Tuesday, 16 January

Vote: Wednesday, 17 January

Greens/EFA MEP: David Cormand MEP

MORE

Fight against the resurgence of neo-fascism in Europe

The Greens/EFA condemn in the strongest terms the rise of neo-fascist and right wing-extremist movements in the EU and elsewhere. Neo-fascists parades in Italy and the newly revealed plan of German right-wing extremist party Alternative for Germany plan to deport people in massive scale show the growing and very concrete threat of democracy we need to firmly stand up against.

Debate: Tuesday, 16 January

Greens/EFA MEP: Terry Reintke MEP

Adding hate crime and hate speech to the list of EU crimes

MEPs are expected to vote largely in favour of adding hate crimes and hate speech to the list of EU crimes. The decision is needed to enable the EU co-legislators to establish minimum standards concerning

the definition of criminal offences and sanctions for hate speech and hate crimes, and to protect human dignity, prevent harm, ensure equality and combat hatred and intolerance, irrespective of the motivation.

Debate: Wednesday, 17 January

Vote: Thursday, 18 January

Greens/EFA MEP: Alice Bah Kuhnke MEP

Programme and Priorities for the Belgian Council Presidency

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo of Belgium will present the priorities of the Belgian Council Presidency. The Greens/EFA urge the Belgian Prime Minister to ensure the way is clear for the last major files of this mandate, including the MFF, directive on platform workers, funding for Ukraine, and more.

Debate: Tuesday, 16th January

Greens/EFA MEPs: Philippe Lamberts MEP, Saskia Bricmont MEP, Sara Matthieu MEP

Gender Dimension of the Cost of Living Crisis

This parliamentary report considers gendered poverty in the EU and calls on the European Commission to address the cost of living and energy crises facing the public and in particular the way women are disproportionately affected.

Debate: Wednesday, 17 January

Vote: Thursday, 18 January

Greens/EFA MEP: Alice Bah Kuhnke MEP

LINKS

- Group Presidents, Terry Reintke and Philippe Lamberts will hold the plenary session press briefing on Tuesday, 16th January at 11:00 AM.
- The full plenary agenda for the week can be found on the Parliament website [here](#).
- The plenary sessions can be followed [live here](#).

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Contact person



Mia Müller

Press assistant DE (German language)

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