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Plenary flash 26 - 29 April 2021

Greens/EFA priorities for the part-session

Joint debate: EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Ahead of the deadline of the final EU-UK trade deal negotiations, the European Parliament will vote on the implementation of the withdrawal agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol on Tuesday. The Greens/EFA Group wants the EU to build the strongest possible relationship with the UK, without sacrificing standards. The implementation of the level playing field provisions are important so that social, environmental and fiscal dumping will not occur.

The Greens/EFA Group calls for an increase of the European Parliament's involvement in the implementation of the trade deal and the full compliance with EU data protection laws in the context of the trade deal. This agreement is unprecedented and, therefore, the scrutinizing role of Parliament should reflect this. The Greens/EFA Group believes that voting on the trade agreement is needed to avoid an accidental no-deal.

Debate & vote: Tuesday 27 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Philippe Lamberts

More:

- Greens/EFA welcome that deal has been reached but insist on time for parliamentary scrutiny
- Rubber-stamping of Brexit deal ignores European Parliament's responsibilities
- Brexit: Future EU-UK relationship

Chinese counter sanctions on EU entities, MEPs and MPs

A statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will be made about the Chinese counter sanctions against EU entities and MEPs and MPs. On the 22nd of March, the Chinese government listed sanctions against Greens/EFA Member Reinhard Bütikofer and fellow MEPs, the Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee, as well as Belgian Green MP Samuel Cogolati and MPs from the Netherlands and Lithuania, think tanks and academia experts. The move by the Chinese authorities followed the decision to place certain Chinese officials on the EU's sanctions list for human rights violations against the Uighur people in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

For the Greens/EFA Group, the reaction of China is unacceptable, disproportionate and unfounded. The EU adopted sanctions, based on a solid legal basis, against middle-ranking Chinese officials and CCP-party members responsible for serious human rights violations, which are an attack against the values that the Parliament represents: Democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Parliament cannot put the EU-China comprehensive agreement on investment (CAI) on the agenda as long as these sanctions are in place against its own Members. Consideration of the CAI and any ratification procedure must be put on hold.

Debate: Wednesday 28 April, **Vote:** resolution to be voted at the next plenary (17-20 May)
Greens/EFA MEP: Reinhard Bütikofer (Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the People's Republic of China)

More:

- Greens/EFA condemn sanctions against MEPs by Chinese government
- Greens/EFA welcome targeted sanctions against Chinese officials & others
- China: Forced labour and the situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang

EU-Turkey relations

The recent protocol incident in Turkey demonstrated how the relationship between the EU and Turkey has stalled and deteriorated. Nevertheless, the Commission and Council have pursued an opening of relations to the regime whilst Turkish democracy and rule of law are still under attack and human rights and gender equality are being undermined on a daily basis.

The Greens/EFA Group demands that the European Commission and Council bring democracy, fundamental rights, the rule of law and gender equality to the forefront of any renewed relations with Turkey. The EU needs to be a reliable and credible ally to the Turkish civil society and the many imprisoned members of opposition parties, journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers and academics.

Debate: Monday 26 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Sergey Lagodinsky

More: Prisoners of conscience in Turkey

Russia - Navalny, Ukraine border and Czech Republic diplomatic conflict

The Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will make a statement about the recent events concerning Russia: the current situation in Ukraine; the case of Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who has been on a hunger strike for three weeks; and the recent reports of the involvement of Russian GRU intelligence services in the 2014 explosion of an arms depot in the Czech Republic.

The Greens/EFA Group condemns Russia's provocations at the Ukrainian border, the incarceration and treatment of Alexei Navalny, as well as malign interference in the Czech Republic, and demands the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Council to demonstrate the EU's solidarity by taking appropriate countermeasures.

Debate: Wednesday 28 April. **Vote:** Thursday 29 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Sergey Lagodinsky

More:

- European parliament leaders call for solidarity over russian attack in the Czech republic
- Meeting of EU Foreign Ministers
- EU Human Rights Sanctions

European Council and Commission statements - Covid certificate

On Wednesday, the European Parliament will debate the proposed EU “Digital Green Certificate”, along with the accessibility and affordability of vaccines. With vaccinations in Europe increasing and testing facilities improving, this tool is supposed to bring back freedoms to all European citizens. Free universal testing and the assurance of nondiscrimination between vaccinated and unvaccinated people are non-negotiable and key to a fair certificate. Additionally, the data gathered for the certificate has to stay in Europe and be strictly protected. Fair access and equality between all member states has to be ensured. The Digital Green Certificate cannot become the only tool in combating the pandemic; a dramatic increase in vaccine production and distribution is also necessary.

Debate & Vote: Wednesday 28 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Tineke Strik (shadow rapporteur)
More:

- Vaccination certificate must not lead to discrimination
- European Council Summit: quote from Philippe Lamberts MEP

Digital taxation: OECD negotiations, tax residency of digital companies and a possible European Digital Tax

The European Parliament is voting its position on the ongoing international tax negotiations at G20/OECD level. These negotiations have a twofold objective: design rules to tax more fairly the digital economy and

more specifically digital giants and end the race to the bottom by introducing a minimum effective tax rate.

The Greens/EFA are very supportive of these international tax negotiations and are therefore also supporting the European Parliament's position in these. There is a large majority in the Parliament to call for comprehensive and effective rules at international level to stop tax dodging. Moreover, the European Parliament will welcome through plenary amendments the recently announced Biden tax plans which include a minimum effective tax rate of 21% on multinationals.

Debate & Vote: Wednesday 28 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Damien Carême (shadow), Sven Giegold (coordinator of FISC committee)
More:

- Apple ruling wake-up call for EU on tax legislation
- Victory for tax justice

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme 2021-2027

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) aims at promoting, strengthening and defending EU values, supporting the fight against all forms of violence, and creating opportunities for engagement and democratic participation. It is part of the Justice, Rights and Values Funds, as well as the Justice programme below.

In times when democracy and rule of law across the EU are facing challenges, the Greens/EFA has put the adoption of a strong CERV Programme at the core of the Group's priorities. One of the major achievements in the negotiations is the inclusion of a Union Values strand among the specific objectives of the Programme. With the approval of the final trilogue agreement, the CERV Programme will allow for more support to be given to grassroots projects promoting, strengthening and defending EU Values and the respect for the rule of law, fighting against all forms of violence in particular gender-based violence, and creating opportunities for democratic dialogue and participation, including enhanced transparency and good governance.

Debate: Tuesday 27 April. **Vote:** Wednesday 28 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Alice Kuhnke (Rapporteur)

Justice programme 2021-2027

The proposal for Regulation introduces the next Justice Programme for the period 2021- 2027, as part of the Justice, Rights and Values Funds. The programme has the general objective of contributing to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, mutual recognition and mutual trust between justice professionals in cross-border proceedings.

For the Greens/EFA Group, well-functioning judiciaries in Member States are crucial for accurate application of EU legislation. Building from the common European values, the Regulation acknowledges respect for the rule of law, non-discriminatory access to justice for all, in particular for people in a

vulnerable situation, and gender-equality as core objectives of this programme. It is equally important that all relevant stakeholders, including civil society actors, are involved in the development of the legal system and therefore can access funding under this programme.

Debate: Tuesday 27 April. **Vote:** Wednesday 28 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Heidi Hautala (Co-Rapporteur)

Preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online

On Wednesday, the Parliament will debate the regulation on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online. The regulation aims to set out the parameters on content removal and the liability of service providers.

The Greens/EFA Group welcomes the protections of educational, journalistic, artistic and research publications and the insurance that only public content can be removed.

However, the Greens/EFA Group dismisses the regulation due the impact on SMEs with the threat of fines, the lack of independent removal authorities and the far too wide reaching cross border removal orders. Protection of the fundamental rights of free speech and media freedom remain a priority.

Debate: Wednesday 28 April. **Vote:** Thursday 29 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Patrick Breyer (Shadow rapporteur)

More: Opinion Piece: Terrorist Content Online Regulation

Rail passengers' rights and obligations

On Tuesday, the report on the rail passengers' rights and obligations is going to be debated. Rail passengers' rights are key in creating a sustainable rail system with an increase in demand. Quality service, reliable times, accessibility and a focus on users' demands, including inter-modality with cycling, all play an important role in providing a good rail system.

The Greens/EFA Group is disappointed to see the watering down of the ambitious goals widely supported by the Parliament in the first reading and demand that the ten amendments brought by the Group will reinstate the core of the Parliament's position. The Greens/EFA Group calls for the reduction of the pre-notification period for assistance of persons with disabilities, through-ticketing with right for compensation and re-routing including the right for the passengers after 60 minutes to have their own alternative arrangements reimbursed, no "force majeure" cause as loophole for compensation and all this for trains covering all distances.

Debate: Wednesday 28 April. **Vote:** Thursday 29 April
Greens/EFA MEP: Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg (Shadow rapporteur)

More: More compensation and greener commuting for rail passengers

2019 Discharge Reports

Every year the Budgetary Control Committee looks into the "discharge" reports for all EU institutions and agencies. The main aims of the discharge procedure are: verifying whether the EU budget has been legally and efficiently used and spent; checking whether the simplification of the legal bases has reduced the error rate and allowed for a more user friendly access to the EU funds; and checking whether the 2019 EU budget implementation was more efficient and effective than the previous one.

The Greens/EFA are particularly concerned about in who's pockets the EU money truly ends up and have been calling for a critical and constructive approach in the discharge reports. For example, by pushing towards greater transparency, improving the gender-balance across EU Institutions and bodies, further improving Parliament's environmental footprint, whistle-blowers and anti-harassment protection, conflict of interest and revolving doors prevention. For the 2019 discharge reports, the Group is particularly concerned about unresolved harassment cases in the EESC and numerous serious issues at Frontex, including breaches of fundamental rights, non-declarations of lobby meetings, severely delayed recruitment of key staff and weak policies around mobbing.

Debate: Tuesday. **Votes:** Tuesday 27 April, Wednesday 28 April & Thursday 29 April

Greens/EFA Shadow Rapporteurs: Viola Von Cramon Taubadel (European Commission); Daniel Freund (European Parliament); Mikulas Peksa (Other Institutions); Bas Eickhout (Agencies); Michèle Rivasi (European development Fund and Joint Undertakings)

European Defence Fund

The Commission proposal on the European Defence Fund (EDF) means that EU budget funding is increased from around EUR 600 million under the current MFF to EUR 8 billion for the next. This will make the EU one of the continent's biggest investors in military research.

The Greens/EFA Group want a strong, modern, common European security and defence policy which is human-rights based, transparent, and accountable to the Parliament. The EDF has a very weak ethics mechanism, no transparency features and the European Parliament has no control over implementation for the upcoming seven years. The EDF risks increasing inefficiency in the sector, the duplicating of projects, and more defence industrial overcapacities which drive harmful European arms exports. Greens/EFA advocate an alternative model which would rely on pooled national budgets, and address not only joint R&D, but also acquisition, maintenance, training and security of supply.

Debate & vote: Thursday 29 April
Greens/EFA MEPs: Michael Bloss (shadow rapporteur)

More:

- Parliament votes for stricter criteria, control and transparency
- European Defence Fund boost for the defence industry with no Parliamentary scrutiny
- Deal on EU fund a worrying gift to defence industry, but bans funding for killer robots

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Recommended

Press release

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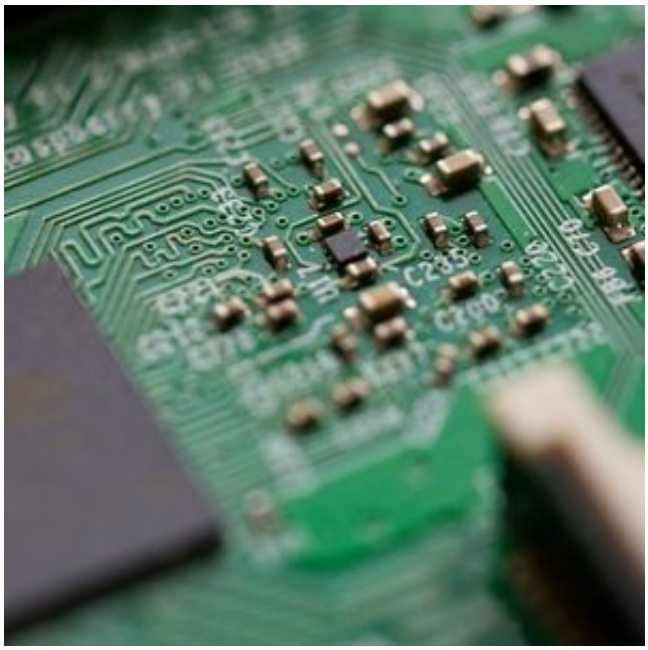


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