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Plenary Round-up

Debriefing of the plenary session in Strasbourg 12-16 September 2011

Safety of offshore oil and gas activities

Initiative report
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
Plenary debate Monday 12 September - vote Tuesday 13 September 2011

The dangers of offshore oil and gas exploration were once again brought into focus by this summer's leak at a Shell platform in Scotland. Offshore exploration is subject to piecemeal regulation in the EU. The European Parliament adopted the initiative report but failed to address the real risks : Given the potentially disastrous consequences of an oil spill, the Greens believe priority should be given to measures to prevent any accidents. For this reason, the group not only proposed banning drilling in environmentally-sensitive areas like the Arctic, but also for the petroleum industry to invest more in measures to prevent and respond to accidents. Regrettably, the majority of MEPs failed to support these proposals.

The positive elements in the report adopted by the EP are notably the calls to strengthen the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and its powers to control offshore platforms. We also welcome the proposals to clarify the full liability of the responsible firms in case of accidents, the need for mandatory insurance and to develop emergency plans. However, overall the report falls short of responding to the cross-border risks posed by offshore exploration.

- Text adopted by EP
- Greens/EFA press release

Further information:
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Raw materials strategy for Europe

*Initiative report by Green MEP **Reinhard Bütikofer***

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
Plenary debate Monday 12 September - vote Tuesday 13 September 2011

The European Parliament adopted with a large majority the report from the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy drafted by Green MEP Reinhard Bütikofer on raw materials and rare earth elements. The Greens are concerned that the Commission is not giving enough attention to the core issue of resource efficiency, and this report aims to give guidance to the Commission to this end. The adopted report calls for the EU to follow an ambitious and coherent innovation strategy based on resource efficiency and the recycling of raw materials in order to promote the sustainability of European industry and thus its future competitiveness, looking also at trade. In this respect, an effective raw materials strategy also implies coordinating the efforts of the EU and member states. The key to this is developing an effective governance structure and the report makes clear proposals to this end.

With regard to raw material extraction within the EU, *"it is crucial to take account of the diverse land use interests, particularly the protection of natural habitats and biodiversity, as well as protecting social concerns. Environmentally-sensitive areas must be protected. When it comes to raw material extraction in the EU the focus must be put on our urban mines: the old laptops and cell phones that lie dormant in our households. A true cradle-to-cradle strategy must be ensured, so that waste becomes an old-fashioned term"* said draftsman Reinhard Bütikofer.

- Text of the report
- Text adopted by EP
- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Green rapporteur Reinhard Bütikofer

Further information:
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European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX)

Legislative report - codecision procedure
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Plenary debate and vote Tuesday 13 September 2011

The European Parliament adopted a final compromise revising EU legislation on FRONTEX, the EU's agency for external border operations. The result of the vote is as expected by the Greens. The final compromise will bring some improvements such as the creation of a Fundamental Rights Officer but as a whole the revision falls short of delivering the necessary democratic scrutiny of FRONTEX and fails to clearly provide for responsibility in the case of human rights violations. Green MEPs abstained in the final vote (while 431 MEPs voted in favour and 49 against) as the legislative revision will introduce some improvements to FRONTEX but does not go far enough in ensuring that basic rights are guaranteed on FRONTEX missions.

- Text adopted by EP
- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Barbara Lochbihler

Further information:
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Officially supported export credits

*Legislative report by Green MEP **Yannick Jadot** - codecision procedure*
Committee on International Trade
Plenary vote Tuesday 13 September 2011

The European Parliament voted on a final legislative compromise on EU rules on Export Credit Agencies (with an overwhelming majority of 643 in favour, 20 against and 9 abstentions).

The Greens welcomed the final vote, which will ensure that ECAs are more accountable for the impact of the projects they support. The text adopted will ensure better information of the Export Credit Agencies of the EU Member States (through an annual report made by the Commission). EU Member States will have to report on how ECAs perform according to EU global goals and commitments regarding the promotion of democracy and human rights, and the fight against climate change, on how they include environmental risks in their interest calculation (environmentally unsound investment projects might be charged with higher interest rates, in order to cover their real risks). Furthermore, Member States shall also inform on how ECAs operate with contingent liabilities (which could include off-balance sheet vehicles), which makes ECAs safer against failure and guarantees people that ECAs do not use public money to cover their losses.

- Text of the report
- Text adopted by EP
- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Green rapporteur Yannick Jadot

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Public access to documents

*Initiative report by Green MEP **Judith Sargentini***
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Plenary debate Tuesday 13 September - vote Wednesday 14 September 2011

While the Council and Commission are seeking to find new ways to restrict access to official documents in the context of the current review of the EU transparency regulation, the European Parliament adopted with a large majority the report on access to public documents by Green draftsperson/rapporteur Judith Sargentini. The report points to persistent shortcomings regarding access to documents in EU institutions and calls for measures to address this. By adopting a strong report calling for increased transparency of European documents, the European Parliament sweeps in front of its doors and imposes on itself stricter rules in this respect. According to Green draftsperson Judith Sargentini, *"it is the role of the parliament as the democratic link to EU citizens to ensure these documents are openly in the public domain"*.

- Text of the report
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Judith Sargentini
- Greens/EFA press release

Further information:
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Monitoring the application of EU law

*Initiative report by Green MEP **Eva Lichtenberger***
Committee on Legal Affairs
Plenary debate Tuesday 13 September - vote Wednesday 14 September 2011

The implementation and enforcement of EU legislation remains a major problem, as revealed in this report by Green draftsperson Eva Lichtenberger.

The report highlights the lack of timely and correct implementation by most Member States when it comes to implementing EU laws especially in the environmental sector, as well as the persisting problems with enforcement by the European Commission and the infringement procedure, was almost unanimously adopted. The report is very critical on how the Commission is fulfilling its role of Guardian of the Treaty. It reiterates that the discretionary power conferred by the Treaties upon the Commission in dealing with the infringement process must respect the rule of law, the requirement of transparency and openness and the principle of proportionality and must never endanger the very first aim of that power, which is to guarantee timely and correct application of Union law by the Member States. The report denounces the Commission's renouncement of the use of the infringement procedure as an essential tool to ensure that Member States apply Union law in a timely and correct way.

- Text of the report
- Text adopted by EP
- Greens/EFA press release (in German only)
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Eva Lichtenberger

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EU homelessness strategy

Question for oral answer to the Commission
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
Plenary debate Tuesday 13 September - vote Wednesday 14 September 2011

In a resolution initiated by the Greens/EFA and adopted with a large majority (578 votes in favour, 51 against and 22 abstentions), the European Parliament called on the European Commission and Council to stop ignoring the core issue of homelessness and to establish a European strategy to put an end to it by

2020.

For the Greens/EFA, homelessness is a not only a violation of fundamental rights, it is a violation of human dignity. An EU strategy must focus on five core elements: the prevention of homelessness, the reduction of its duration, the concentration of efforts on the most serious forms, the improvement of the quality of services for homeless people, and the supply of affordable housing. The European Parliament has taken the first step to this end and the Commission and Council must now act.

- Text of the oral question
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Karima Delli
- Greens/EFA press release

Further information:
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Economic crisis and the euro

Statements by the Commission and the Council
Plenary debate Wednesday 14 September

In the very tensed and confusing context of the situation in Greece and the spread of the crisis to other Member States, the European Parliament debated about the economic crisis and the Euro. The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, referred to the current crisis as *"the most serious challenge of a generation.[...] a fight for the jobs and prosperity of families in all the Member States; a fight for the economic and political future of Europe; a fight for what Europe represents in the world; a fight for European integration itself".*

The Greens have consistently argued for a far reaching and ambitious system of EU economic governance, based on democratic legitimacy, solidarity and discipline and including Eurobonds as a necessary step towards a fiscal Union, as the only structural solution to the crisis. EU leaders are slowly waking up to this reality; hopefully, not too late.

- Plenary speech by Green Co-President Rebecca Harms and Green MEP Pascal Canfin
- Greens/EFA press release (in French only)
- Greens/EFA press release on Oettinger Eurozone scandal
- A Green proposal for a comprehension emergency response to the Eurozone crisis (July 2011)

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Situation in Syria

Statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Plenary debate Wednesday 14 September 2011 - vote Thursday 15 September 2011

The Parliament adopted a resolution on Syria. While a coordinated EU response to the Syrian rising and the brutal crackdown by the Assad regime has gradually evolved, it has been slow. The increasingly excessive response from the Syrian authorities makes the position of Assad clearly untenable. The Greens believe the EU should do all it can to ensure the regime and the brutal crackdown are ended. In their motion for a resolution, the Greens/EFA supported the recent decision to further extend the scope of EU sanctions to the ban of Syrian oil and other petroleum products to the EU to respond to the increasingly violent crackdown and called however on the Council and on EU Member States to further step up sanctions on Syria by banning European companies investing in the Syrian energy sector, as EU Member States take about 95% of Syrian oil exports. The Greens/EFA motion for resolution also considers that the widespread and systematic violations of Syria's obligations under the international human rights law may amount to crimes against humanity.
The text adopted by the European Parliament calls on President Bashar al Assad and his regime to relinquish power immediately, and rejects impunity.

- Greens/EFA motion for a resolution
- Text adopted by EP
- Plenary speech by Green MEP Ulrike Lunacek
- Plenary speech by Green Co-President Daniel Cohn-Bendit on Libya, Syria and the Middle-East

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AND ALSO

New Greens/EFA Chair of Subcommittee on Human Rights

After Heidi Hautala (Finland) was elected as the new minister for development cooperation in the Finnish government, the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights elected its new chairperson. Barbara Lochbihler, Greens/EFA coordinator on Human Rights, was elected. *"Human rights is clearly a horizontal priority, which is relevant to almost all EU policy areas. As the recent events in North Africa and the Middle East have shown, it is important that the EU does not lose sight of its commitment to defend human rights and that this commitment does not play second fiddle to economic or geo-political interests"* she said.

Greens/EFA candidate to the Sakharov Prize

Every year, the European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought. This year, the Greens/EFA together with 3 other political groups decided to support the candidacies of Mohamed Bouazizi (Tunisia), Asmaa Mahfouz (Egypt), Ahmed al-Zubair Ahmed al-Sanusi (Libya), Razan Zaitouneh (Syria), Ali Farzat (Syria) on behalf of the 'Arab Spring'. Read more

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up : 30 September 2011

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Ivan Aleksic

Serbia/Mladić: Quote from MEP Prebilič

04.09.2026

Press release

Esma Nur Büyükgüçlü

[Serbia: Greens/EFA call for consequences after new spy…]

03.09.2026

Press release

ELG21

[Wildfires: Greens/EFA call for urgent Heatwave Action …]

28.07.2026

Press release

[European Commission significantly weakens its best wea…]

17.07.2026

Responsible MEPs

Reinhard Bütikofer

Member

Karima Delli

Member

Rebecca Harms

Member

Yannick Jadot

Member

Barbara Lochbihler

Member

Ulrike Lunacek

EP Vice-President, Member

Judith Sargentini

Member

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