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News | 13.05.2011

Plenary Round-up

Debriefing of the plenary session in Strasbourg 9-12 May 2011

Bilateral investment agreements with 3rd countries

Debate Monday 9 May - Vote Tuesday 10 May
Legislative report - Committee on International Trade
Rapporteur : **Carl Schlyter** (Greens/EFA)

The European Parliament voted on legislation to regulate bilateral investment agreements between EU member states and third countries. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is now an EU competence but the EU cannot yet conclude international agreements. This legislation aims to set out the conditions governing bilateral agreements in the interim.
The Green rapporteur wanted to ensure all investment agreements are compatible with EU norms, particularly including social and environmental legislation, as well as increasing transparency in international arbitration. However, the EP plenary vote endorsed a bad vote from the EP's trade committee: the crucial Article 5 about the review of existing Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) of the Member States and Article 6 about the possibility to withdraw the authorization of a BIT were considerably weakened. The Greens/EFA amendments on better transparency rules were defeated. The Greens/EFA MEPs voted against the report which would give the go-ahead to bilateral investment agreements that are in conflict with core EU principles. The report was however adopted by the European Parliament (345 votes in favour and 246 against).

- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Carl Schlyter - video
- Text of the report
- Text adopted by EP

Further information:
Martin Köhler, Greens/EFA adviser on International Trade, martin.koehler@europarl.europa.eu

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2009 discharge of the EU budget

Debate and vote Tuesday 10 May
39 reports - Committee on Budgetary Control

A series of 39 reports on the discharge of the 2009 EU general budget and the budgets of the other EU institutions and agencies were debated and voted in plenary.
The EP refused to grant discharge to the Council's budget as the Council refused to cooperate with the EP on the discharge procedure. MEPs also refused to grant discharge to the budgets of the EU police college and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) due to irregularities. The EP was particularly critical of the EMA, notably as regards the quality of its procurement procedures and the possibble conflicts of interest by its experts .

- Greens/EFA press release on European Medecines Agency
- Plenary speech by Bart Staes - video

Further information:
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Migration flows and asylum and their impact on Schengen

Council and Commission statements
Debate Tuesday 10 May

The turmoil in North Africa and resulting rise in refugees has led to a controversial debate on EU asylum and border policies. The push by some member states to reintroduce border controls is at odds with the purpose of the Schengen system. The Greens believe Schengen is a crucial and overwhelmingly positive EU achievement and believe the Commission and Council should seek to strengthen, rather than scale back, the system.
During the plenary debate with the Council and the Commission, Greens/EFA Co-President Daniel Cohn-Bendit criticised the lack of solidarity among EU states towards North African refugees and called for temporary permits to be delivered to refugees.

- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Daniel Cohn-Bendit - video

Further information:
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Transparency Register

Debate Tuesday 10 May - Vote Wednesday 11 May
Legislative report - Committee on Constitutional Affairs

With lobbying transparency again high on the agenda after recent MEP corruption scandals, the European Parliament voted on an inter-institutional agreement for a joint register for lobbyists to the European Parliament and Commission. This vote partially strengthened the existing registers. The Greens welcomed the improvements as a step in the right direction but called for further steps to strengthen the register as soon as possible.
Notably, the Greens believe that the register should be mandatory for all lobbyists. A Green amendment calling for the register to be made mandatory as part of any future review was adopted as well as a request to introduce legislative footprint. The joint register will include greater information on the clients of lobbyists and finances but will not provide the full financial transparency about the amounts and the sources of lobbying funding. The Greens/EFA group will definitely push for this in the new working group on EP reform. To be continued.

- Greens/EFA press release
- Plenary speech by Gerald Häfner - video
- Text adopted by EP

Further information:
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Nuclear safety 25 years after the Chernobyl disaster

Debate Tuesday 10 May%
Oral question

25 years on from the Chernobyl disaster, the nuclear accident at Fukushima has once again thrown the spotlight on the safety of nuclear power or the lack thereof. Public concern about nuclear safety is rising across the EU and the nuclear industry is scrabbling to try and assuage these concerns. The proposed EU nuclear stress tests appear to be little more than a stunt by the nuclear industry to lull the public back to a false sense of security on nuclear. The Greens last week expressed concern about draft criteria proposed by regulators from member states with nuclear energy (WENRA) and are urging EU energy commissioner Oettinger to ensure that any EU nuclear stress tests apply the strictest criteria. The plenary debate with the EU Energy Commissioner Günter Oettinger was the opportunity for the Greens to ask once more for genuine stress tests on nuclear power plants in Europe. If they are to be meaningful, EU stress tests must be exhaustive and assess all risks. This means assessing the risk of terrorist attacks, as well as the impact of plane crashes, and human error. They must not be reduced to a list of the technical specifications of nuclear reactors aimed at withstanding earthquakes or floods.

- Greens/EFA press release about the stress tests
- Plenary speech by Rebecca Harms - video
- Green assessment of the draft stress tests
- E-mail campaign on stress tests
- Greens/EFA resolution on nuclear safety after Fukushima

Further information:
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Situation in Syria

Debate Wednesday 11 May
Statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

The EU's response to the democratic uprising in Syria, and the brutal repression by the Assad regime, has again been slow and indecisive. While the move towards sanctions against the regime is welcome, the continuing delay is incomprehensible. The priority should be to ensure an immediate end to the violence and arbitrary arrests and the release of all political prisoners and peaceful protesters.
The Greens believe the EU should freeze negotiations on an association agreement with Syria, and step up efforts to support the opposition movement.

- Plenary speech by Daniel Cohn-Bendit - video

Further information:
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Novel foods

Debate Wednesday 11 May
Statement by the President of the Delegation to the Conciliation Committee

Negotiations between the European Parliament and Council on EU rules on 'novel foods', which were dominated by the debate on "food from clones and their offspring", collapsed in March.
During the plenary session this week in Strasbourg, MEPs debated the next steps. The Greens believe food from cloned animals and their descendants should not be placed on the market. At least, in order to ensure the freedom of choice for consumers, foodstuffs from clones and their offspring must be clearly labelled as such.

- last press release on clone food
- plenary speech by Bart Staes

Further information:
Corinna Zerger, Greens/EFA adviser on food safety and quality, corinna.zerger@europarl.europa.eu

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European fisheries sector crisis due to rise in oil prices

Debate Monday 9 May - vote Thursday 12 May
Oral question with resolution

The European Parliament today voted in favour of a resolution calling for increased subsidies for the

fishing sector to cover increased fuel costs. The Greens have criticised the call as wrongheaded, and welcome the fact that the Commission has publicly stated it will not propose any fuel subsidies for the fishing industry. This vote sends a bad signal in the early stages of the CFP reform. One should be reminded that at present, the fishing industry (as well as some others) is exempt from the fuel tax, which is already to a significant extent a kind of subsidy.

- Greens/EFA motion for resolution
- Greens/EFA press release
- Text adopted by the Parliament

Further info:
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Small Business Act Review

Debate Wednesday 11 May - vote Thursday 12 May
Oral question with resolution

The Greens voted in favour of the resolution on SBA review which was adopted with a large majority. The resolution calls for going beyond the usual SMEs issues and to focus also on access to R&D and innovation, development of skills, and actions for SMEs participation in the transition to a resource efficient economy. Our Green amendment calling for banks to finance the real economy and welcoming proposal for Common Corporate Consolidated Tax Base was adopted.

- Article on SBA
- Text adopted by the Parliament

Further info:
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Recommended

Press release

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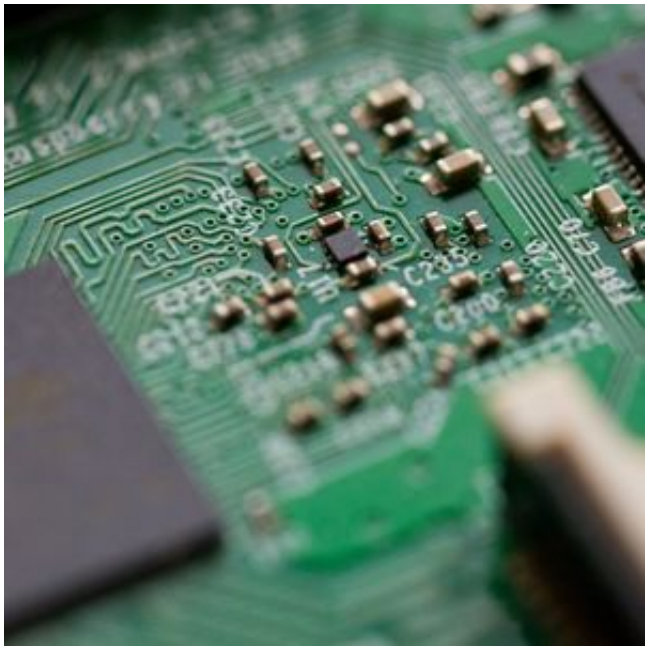


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Rebecca Harms

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Bart Staes

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