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News | 18.11.2011

Plenary Round-up

Debriefing of the plenary session in Strasbourg 14-18 November 2011

Single European railway area

Legislative report

Committee on Transport and Tourism

Plenary debate Monday 14 November - vote Wednesday 16 November 2011

In general, the Greens were supportive of the Commission proposals, but did not agree with all aspects of the EP report.

The European Parliament adopted the report with a wide majority. The text adopted ensures national railway regulators are stronger, more independent and sufficiently staffed and funded. Railway operators will be given the option to appeal to the European Commission if a national regulator does not deliver a timely response or contradicts the Community law. Among the other positive results, some Green proposals aimed at improved noise policy and support for alternative energy sources were adopted such as the possibility for EU co-funding to retrofit rail vehicles with noise braking technology (amendment 79, Greens/EFA initiative), the free choice of electricity supplier as well as equitable pricing for the use of electricity transmission (amendments 115, 165, Greens/EFA initiative).

Greens were not happy to see some amendments adopted calling for so-called 'unbundling' between rail services and infrastructure. Both this topic and further liberalisation of domestic rail passenger markets will be separate proposals by the Commission in 2012.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Michael Cramer](#)

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Honeybee health and beekeeping

Initiative report

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)

Plenary debate Monday 14 November - vote Tuesday 15 November 2011

The ongoing decline of bee colonies will have disastrous consequences for the environment, biodiversity and food security in Europe if unchecked. There are many causal elements that need to be addressed. A fundamental change in conventional agriculture is needed to reverse the sharp decline of pollinator populations. Intensive agriculture is likely a major cause of bee colony collapse: monocultures including GMO reduce foraging opportunities and also need lots of pesticides in the longer term (even if it is misleadingly claimed that GM can decrease pesticide use). Bees exposed to pesticides can be killed immediately and these can be picked up in typical toxicity tests run by the agro-chemical industry (which conducts its own (non-independent) research). But there are also sub-lethal effects on digestion and behaviour, and also repeated exposure to neurotoxins can have a cumulative effect; these sub-lethal effects can act synergistically with other stresses to decrease immunity of the individual bee and the whole colony, increasing susceptibility to viruses and parasites and so contributing to mortality. The report which was voted through the agriculture committee did not sufficiently address these aspects of intensive agriculture, so since an initiative report cannot be amended, the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL tabled an alternative resolution. There were three main differences compared to the original : i) a clear call to ban the most damaging systemic pesticides toxic to pollinators, such as neonicotinoids, phenyl-pyrazoles and pyrethrinoids), following the precautionary principle. ii) beekeepers should not pay for contamination of honey by GMO which was not their fault, rather the agro-chemical industry should pay for testing and lost revenues, following the polluter pays principle.

iii) the CAP needs to change to overcome the general ecological problems of monocultures; mainstream farming needs to deploy crop rotation in order to use less pesticides and add diversity.

Although in the end the weaker original report of the AGRI committee was adopted, more than one third of all MEPs voted in favour of the alternative resolution, showing that there is a very significant portion of the EP opposing pesticides, monocultures and GMO.

- [Alternative Greens/EFA motion for resolution](#)
- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#) (in French only)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Bas Eickhout](#)

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Short selling and certain aspects of credit default swaps

Report by Green MEP Pascal Canfin

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Plenary debate Monday 4 July - vote Tuesday 15 November 2011

The European Parliament approved with a huge majority (502 in favor; 25 against, 109 abstentions) an agreement on new EU legislation, including a ban on naked credit default swaps (CDS) on the sovereign debt of European countries, as well as curbs to the practice of uncovered short-selling.

Among the good results :

- The agreement contains in particular a provision which as a general rule bans naked credit default

swaps and constitutes a major step forward in clamping down on sovereign debt speculation, which continues to wreak havoc across the Eurozone. A competent authority may temporarily suspend this general rule, where it believes on the basis of objective elements to be notified to ESMA (European Securities and Markets Authority) that its sovereign debt market is not functioning properly and in any case the suspension shall be valid for an initial period not exceeding twelve months from the date of its publication on the website of the relevant competent authority. The deal is a victory for the European Parliament, which fought to have a ban on naked CDS included in this legislation from the outset, and shows that Europe can act effectively to deal with the excesses of the financial system.

- Under the rules agreed, it will no longer be possible for a hedge fund to purchase CDS of sovereign debt without holding actual bonds of the countries involved. This will prevent cynical traders from speculating on the bankruptcy of a country.
- Other good outcomes for the Greens were achieved by the negotiation process such as the reintegration of buy in procedures and the deletion of the intraday exception mentioned above.
- The new rules will also allow better EU-level coordination in crisis situations. The European financial markets agency (ESMA) will in particular have the power to impose its decisions on equity markets on national regulators.

The only bad result is that the majority of the European Parliament would have preferred that ESMA had the same prerogatives on sovereign debt matters as for equity markets but, regrettably, this was refused by Member States in the negotiations.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)

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Climate change conference in Durban

Oral question with resolution

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Plenary debate Tuesday 15 November - vote Wednesday 16 November 2011

Ahead of the UN climate summit (COP17) in Durban in December, the European Parliament adopted a resolution setting out its position on the forthcoming climate change conference and its demands for the EU position. The Greens welcomed the clear message calling for the EU to commit to continuing the Kyoto Protocol through signing up to a second commitment period 2013 onwards, a key issue for the forthcoming summit. The resolution supported the Commissions analysis on how to achieve a 30% target and highlighted the fact that it is in the EU's own interest to step up its climate target from the current 20%.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Bas Eickhout](#)
- [Documentation of the conference 'The Green Race to Durban and Beyond' 09.11.2011](#)
- Web tool 'The Green Race' www.the-green-race.com/

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Economic governance

*Statements by the Presidents of the European Council, the Commission and the Eurogroup
Plenary debate Wednesday 16 November 2011*

In a plenary debate with Mr Van Rompuy, Mr Barroso and Mr Junker, Daniel Cohn-Bendit stated that "we need Keynes in Brussels!". The Greens/EFA Co-President called today the European Commission to set up a European Observatory of Investments needed in Europe. The European Commission and governments can't only look at stability and budget deficits to relaunch economies, but also at the need for investments in Europe. The Greens have long argued that the preoccupation with austerity is destructive for the wider EU economy.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit also warned the Presidents of the European Council and Commission that any Treaty change could only take place in the framework of a Convention which would gather the European Parliament and the national Parliaments.

- [Plenary speech by Green Co-President Daniel Cohn-Bendit](#)
- Greens/EFA press release ([FR](#) / [DE](#))

The open Internet and net neutrality in Europe

Oral question with resolution

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Plenary debate Wednesday 16 November - vote Thursday 17 November 2011

Net neutrality and open internet – a core principle on which the internet was founded – is increasingly coming under threat, both in EU member states and beyond. MEPs debated the question with the European Commission and adopted a resolution which aims to underline the importance of maintaining net neutrality. The Greens believe this principle should be enshrined in European legislation. This is the 3d time that the European Parliament has voted in favour of Net neutrality - despite heavy lobbying by some telecom operators. The Greens now hope that the Commission will follow and take necessary legislative measures that enshrine the principle of net neutrality.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)
- Plenary speech by Green MEPs [Philippe Lamberts](#) and [Sandrine Bélier](#)

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Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for nuclear research and training activities

Legislative report

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

Plenary debate Wednesday 16 November - vote Thursday 17 November 2011

The Greens believe the proportion of EU funds allocated to nuclear energy is far too high vis-à-vis safe and sustainable renewable energy, and that no more public money should be allocated to the ballooning costs of the ITER nuclear fusion project. This is especially urgent as construction of the reactor has yet to begin. Unfortunately MEPs adopted a set of reports on EU funding for nuclear energy research 2012-13. The Greens regret that the pro-nuclear majority in the EP fails to reflect the will of the majority of EU citizens. They also believe that EU nuclear research should focus solely on decommissioning, non-proliferation issues and addressing the public risks of radioactivity. This is a missed opportunity to free up € 2 billion that the EU needs in other domains.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)

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Combating illegal fishing at the global level

Initiative report by Green MEP Isabella Lövin

Committee on Fisheries

Plenary debate and vote Thursday 17 November 2011

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a major problem that threatens fish stocks worldwide. The European Parliament adopted with a wide majority a report by Green draftsman Isabella Lövin that highlights the particular responsibility of the EU to step up efforts to combat IUU fishing both by properly implementing EU rules and by pushing for greater international efforts. The report suggests various ways in which the international community should cooperate to end illegal fishing, an issue that is all the more necessary for the EU to lead on as it imports over 60 percent of its seafood.

- [Text of the report by Green MEP Isabella Lövin](#)
- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Isabella Lövin](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)

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Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up : 1 December 2011

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