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Strasbourg Flash

Weekly preview of the Greens/EFA group - 13-17 December 2010

EU priorities (full text below):

- Single permit for work and residence in Europe (Mon., Tues.)
- European Protection Order (Tues.)
- EU rules on the trafficking in human beings (Tues.)
- EU budget 2011 - next episode (Tues., Weds.)
- Eurozone crisis and response (EP Tues., EU summit Thurs.-Fri.)
- Energy efficiency and saving in the EU (Tues., Weds.)
- Toy safety in Europe (Tuesday)
- European Citizens' Initiative (Weds., Thurs.)
- Afghanistan strategy (Weds.)

Events:

- Co-presidents press briefing (Tues.)

Single work and residence permit
Mon. 13 Dec. - EP debate; legislative vote Tues. (Mathieu report)

The ostensible aim of the proposals for a single work and residence permit is to simplify the often-complicated procedures for third country nationals looking to work in EU countries and creating a common and simplified administrative process. While supporting this aim, the Greens are concerned that, as the proposal stands, a number of crucial issues are unresolved, notably as regards the scope and whether and how to include posted workers and seasonal workers.

European Protection Order
Tues. 14 Dec. - EP debate and legislative vote (Hedh, Bauer report)

This proposal aims to ensure that the protection provided in one EU member state, especially to female victims of violence, is guaranteed in any other member state to which the person moves. Violence against women continues to be a major problem and the Greens believe that victims should enjoy the same level of protection throughout the EU. Introducing a European Protection Order will help ensure this and the

Greens hope a strong positive vote in the EP will convince recalcitrant member states in Council.

Trafficking in human beings
Tues. 14 Dec. - EP debate and legislative vote (Jimenez Becerril, Romero Lopez report)

MEPs vote on proposed EU rules on human trafficking. The Greens support the compromise agreement reached with Council, although the group would have preferred stronger provisions on victims' protection, support and rights (notably residence permits for victims). The rules will also strengthen provisions on the prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking crimes across the EU by establishing common definitions of trafficking crime and appropriate minimum penalties, as well as providing for cross-border prosecutions.

EU budget 2011 - stalemate
Tues. 14 Dec. – EP plenary debate; vote Weds.

After the breakdown of talks on the 2011 budget, the Commission outlined a new proposal. For the Greens, the new offer from the Council on the core issues does not offer substantial improvements. The proposal on budget 'flexibility' falls short of the current provisions, while on the crucial issue of formalising the role of the EP in future negotiations on the EU financial framework, there is hardly any improvement.The EP will vote on the broad budget headings next week but a vote on the key issues of flexibility and ITER has been postponed.

Eurozone crisis and response
Tues. 14 Dec. - EP debate with Commission; EU summit Thurs.-Fri.

Ahead of the EU summit, the EP will adopt a resolution on the Eurozone crisis and the EU response. The current response has failed to prevent contagion spreading, with the rescue packages fundamentally flawed and signs that austerity measures are exacerbating the problems. While the Greens support attempts to create a permanent stability mechanism defined under co-decision, including 'eurobonds', 2013 will be far too late. We urgently need emergency measures, including provisions for debt restructuring and resolution.

Energy efficiency and saving in the EU
Tues. 14 Dec. - EP debate; vote Weds. (Bendtsen report)

The Commission will present its long-awaited energy efficiency action plan after the EU energy summit on 4 February and this report aims to set out the EP position. Ambitious EU measures on energy saving and efficiency are essential if Europe is to respond to the challenges of energy security and climate change. They also make economic sense, create jobs and save consumers money on their energy bills. The Greens support in particular the inclusion of the long-standing Green call for the EU's 20% energy saving target to be made binding.

Toy safety in Europe
Tues. 14 Dec. - EP debate with Commission

The Greens raised concerns about the toy safety directive when it was passed in 2008. Since then, more evidence has emerged on the potentially serious consequences of allowing toys to contain substances that are carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction (CMRs) and other hazardous substances. Concerns about EU measurement systems for chemicals in toys and certification also remain. The Greens believe the rules should be revised to expand the list of restricted substances in toys and to ensure better surveillance, notably of imported toys.

European Citizens' Initiative
Weds. 24 Nov. - EP debate; legislative vote Thurs. (report incl. **Häfner**)

The Greens have long championed the need for a European Citizens Initiative (ECI), as means of strengthening the democratic rights of citizens and giving them a greater say in and over EU affairs. After a unanimous vote in the EP constitutional affairs committee, MEPs negotiated a compromise with Council, which will ensure this crucial democratic provision is activated in a clear, simple and user-friendly way. Among the notable improvements, signatories will now only need to come from ¼ of EU member states. (see latest press release)

Afghanistan strategy
Weds. 24 Nov. - EP debate; vote Thurs. (Arlacchi report)

This report takes a critical look at the Afghanistan 'strategy', 9 years into the intervention. The Greens supported the report in the foreign affairs committee, as it is unusually outspoken on the intervention's shortcomings. However, the report fails to provide meaningful proposals on how to address these flaws, notably on the crucial question of how to bring the intervention to an end. The Greens believe military escalation (as in the new 'counter-insurgency' strategy) will not work and that peace negotiations are the only effective course to take.

Co-presidents press briefing

Tues. 14 Dec. 10.20-10.40, European Parliament press room

Press briefing with Greens/EFA co-presidents **Dany Cohn-Bendit** and **Rebecca Harms** on the key issues of the plenary session for the Greens/EFA group. Livestreamed at:
http://greenmediabox.eu/live/pressbriefing/

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