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Strasbourg Flash

Weekly preview of the Greens/EFA group - 18-22 October 2010

EP priorities (full text below):

- **Reforming the commissioners' code of conduct (Mon., Weds.)**
- **Maternity and paternity leave in Europe (Mon., Weds.)**
- **Setting up the EU's external action service (Tues., Weds.)**
- **Poverty eradication and a minimum income (Tuesday)**
- **Agreeing the EU's budget for 2011 (Tues., Weds.)**
- **Hungarian red sludge disaster (Tuesday)**
- **Ethnic databases and the Roma in France (Tuesday)**
- **Economic governance and budgetary discipline (Weds. Thurs.)**
- **Europe's development aid budget (Weds. Thurs.)**
- **ACTA anti-counterfeiting agreement (Wednesday)**
- **Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought (Mon., Thurs.)**

Events:

- **Co-presidents press briefing (Tuesday)**
- **Hungarian red sludge disaster - press conference (Tuesday)**
- **European dairy policy - press conference (Wednesday)**

Reforming the commissioners' code of conduct

Mon. 18 Oct. - EP debate (legislative vote Weds. - Rangel reports)

Recent scandals with ex-EU commissioners have brought into focus the need to reform the commissioners' code of conduct. MEPs are set to vote on a framework agreement with the commission, which will give the EP a greater say on the reform of the code. This reform will have to address the continued receipt of 'transition payments' by ex-commissioners even after they have found salaried employment, as well as the problem of revolving doors and conflicts of interest in their subsequent employment. (see latest press release)

Maternity and paternity leave in Europe

Mon. 18 Oct. - EP debate (legislative vote Weds. - Estrela report)

MEPs vote on a controversial legislative proposal setting out EU rules on maternity leave. With opposition

to the proposals in council, it is up to MEPs to exert pressure. The Greens want ambitious EU-wide standards to address the differences between EU countries, including the introduction of minimum paternity leave. A relatively strong vote in committee, setting out a minimum of 20 weeks maternity and 2 weeks paternity paid leave, risks being seriously watered down by the plenary vote. (see latest press release)

Setting up the EU's external action service

Tues. 19 Oct. - EP debate (legislative vote Weds. - Grässle/Rapkay reports)

The EP is set to vote on the external action service's budget, as well as rules on how it will be staffed. Since the outset, the Greens have highlighted the need for the EEAS to ensure equality, notably gender equality and equality of geographical representation, through its recruitment and believe this is largely reflected in the final compromise to be voted by the parliament. Placing some of budget in reserve should help ensure the service is staffed according to political priorities. (see latest press release)

Poverty eradication and a minimum income

Tues. 19 Oct. - EP debate with council, commission and UN secretary general

Coming just after the international day of poverty eradication, MEPs will debate the need to tackle global poverty with the council and the commission, while UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon will also address the plenary session in the afternoon. The EP will also vote on a non-legislative report on combating poverty and social exclusion in Europe. Poverty eradication is a priority for the Greens, and the group believes a framework directive on minimum income would be a crucial step to this end in Europe.

Agreeing the EU's budget for 2011

Tues. 19 Oct. - EP debate (legislative vote Weds. - Trüpel/Jedrzejewska reports)

MEPs vote on proposals that broadly strike a balance between responding to the extra demands created by the Lisbon treaty, whilst limiting the growth in the EU budgets, in response to current budgetary difficulties. However, the Greens remain opposed to further funding for MEPs' assistants and believe greater savings were possible in other areas of the budgets, notably on funding for the controversial ITER project. This year's budget debate again underlines the need to agree a meaningful system of own resources for the EU. (see latest press release)

Hungarian red sludge disaster

Tues. 19 Oct. - European Parliament debate with the European Commission

The spill of hazardous sludge from an alumina plant in Hungary has caused international concern and raises a number of questions at EU level. The Commission needs to ascertain whether Hungary respected the applicable EU legislation, whilst the spill also raises questions about inspections, which are currently a national responsibility. More generally, there is a need to properly assess all similar sites across the EU to ensure there are not ticking toxic time-bombs in Hungary or other member states.

Ethnic databases and the Roma in France

Tues. 19 Oct. - European Parliament debate with the European Commission

Reports that the French police used ethnic databases to target the Roma community have come just as France was finalising its response to the European Commission. This latest evidence only serves to underline that France has flouted EU rules on discrimination. The Greens believe the Commission should push ahead with the infringement procedure it has launched on grounds of free movement but also believe it has a duty to tackle France on the more fundamental issue of minority discrimination. (see latest press release)

Economic governance and budgetary discipline

Weds. 20 Oct. - EP debate (non-legislative vote Thurs. - Feio report)

The EU commission has outlined plans to come forward with new EU legislation in response to the economic and budgetary crises. The EP will have a role in deciding this legislation and MEPs will adopt a report outlining their position this week. The Greens believe there needs to be a broad economic framework, including much better budgetary and macro-economic surveillance and economic policy coordination. This should target excessive surpluses as well as deficits, including incentives alongside proportionate sanctions.(see latest press release)

Europe's development aid budget

Weds. 20 Oct. - EP debate (legislative vote Thurs. including **Brantner**, **Lochbihler** reports)

MEPs will vote on a package of reports concerning Europe's development aid budget.

ACTA anti-counterfeiting agreement

Weds. 20 Oct. - European Parliament debate with the European Commission

Uncertainty surrounds a provisional agreement on the controversial Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) that has been reached. MEPs are calling on the Commission for greater transparency on the final agreement, as well as clarity on the ratification procedure and the legal basis for the signing and ratifying of the deal. The lack of transparency only compounds suspicions that the agreement goes beyond its basic anti-counterfeiting remit and encroaches on medicines and internet rights. (see latest press release)

Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought

Mon. 18 Oct. - shortlist; Thurs. 21 Oct. - vote in EP conference of presidents

The annual Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought will be decided in the European Parliament this week. A joint-committee meeting on Monday will determine the shortlist of 3 candidates from which the conference of presidents will choose the successful candidate on Thursday. There are a number of strong candidates for this year's prize. The Greens/EFA candidate is Israeli NGO Breaking the Silence, which works to shed light on the injustices of the Israeli occupation. (see press release)

Co-presidents press briefing

Tues. 19 Oct. ☞ 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. Streamed live at: <http://greenmediabox.eu/live/>

Hungarian red sludge disaster

Tues. 19 Oct. ☞ 16.00-16.30, European Parliament press room

Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** will host a press conference on the Hungarian red sludge disaster with the participation by video link of environmental experts from Hungary.

European dairy policy - press conference

Weds. 20 Oct. ☞ 10.00-10.30, European Parliament press room

German Green MEP **Martin Häusling** hosts a press conference on dairy policy in the EU.

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