



Strasbourg Flash

Priorities for the Greens/EFA group for 22-25 October 2012

Single seat for the European Parliament

All week; Thurs. 25 Oct. - EP Conference of Presidents

The long-running question of the EU Parliament's multi-seat operation will be brought into focus, as the EP packs two Strasbourg plenary sessions into one week. While this innovative solution may yet be struck down by the Court, the move has ensured the current inefficient and wasteful operating method is back on the agenda. The additional cost, environmental damage and public unpopularity of the multi-seat operation means the question cannot be ignored. The Greens continue to push to have the issue debated in the EP plenary, a point the group will make at the Conference of Presidents.

EU future financing 2014-20: EP red lines

Tues. 23 Oct. - Plenary debate and vote

MEPs will vote on an interim report on the EU's multiannual financial framework for 2014-20, preparing the way for the EU budget process proper. The Greens believe the EU budget should be a key instrument for stimulating economic recovery, with more investment in research, education, green technologies, and the sustainable transformation of our energy sector. The Commission's proposals fail to reflect this ambition and must be increased. It is also high time to introduce a meaningful system of own resources for financing the EU budget to end the damaging annual haggling.

Strasbourg priorities press briefing

with Greens/EFA co-presidents **Dany Cohn-Bendit** and **Rebecca Harms**

Tuesday, 23 October, 10.30-10.50 - Press Conference Room EP, Strasbourg

EU budget 2013 - getting real

Mon. 22 Oct. - Plenary debate; vote Tues.

MEPs will vote on the EP's position for the 2013 EU budget, drawing a line in the sand for negotiations with the Council. In contrast with EU governments, which want to short-sightedly slash the overall budget, the Greens believe the EP should vote to allocate an appropriate level of resources to R&D, structural funds and other economy-stimulating measures. As ever, the Greens oppose plans to waste large sums of taxpayers' money on the ITER nuclear fusion research pipe-dream. The vote takes place against a backdrop of a funding crisis for EU projects in the member states.

Signing off on the 2010 budget

Tues. 23 Oct. - EP plenary votes (Macovei reports)

After previously withholding discharge for the budgets of the Council and three EU agencies, the EP is set to reconsider the cases. All three agencies - the Environment Agency, Medicines Agency and Food Safety Authority - have taken steps to address the problems raised by MEPs, although the Greens are concerned about conflicts of interest in the latter two. The Greens support a proposal to give the EP a say in the appointment of agency directors, with a view to strengthening democracy and avoiding such conflicts. The Council has again failed to deliver the transparency necessary for a budget discharge.

EU-US trade and pressing concerns

Mon. 22 Oct. - Plenary debate; vote Tues. (Moreira report)

With moves to negotiate an EU-US free trade agreement underway, the EP will vote on its position on a future agreement. The Greens are concerned about the precedent this FTA could set, notably for the multilateral trade system. It is unrealistic that the necessary regulatory convergences required for an FTA could be achieved, given the various layers of regulatory decision-making in the US. The Greens also have concerns about the very diverse definitions of "public services" in eventual service liberalisation negotiations, as well the question of food imports and GMOs.

Ending disproportionate data retention

Tues. 23 Oct. - Plenary debate with Commission

With a planned review of the EU's controversial rules on data retention to be postponed, the EP is set to debate the issue with the Commission. The Greens have long expressed concern about the disproportionate nature of the rules, with member states storing citizens' private data for up to 24 months. With police and security authorities having far-reaching access to this data, the system is subject to abuse with little evidence it has led to any improvement in fighting serious crime. Against this background, the Greens believe the legislation should be repealed.

HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED OVERLEAF

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Gender balance on the ECB board

Mon. 22 Oct. - Econ committee vote; plenary vote Thurs.

The EP's economic and monetary affairs committee will vote on a new nominee to the executive board of the European Central Bank, with a plenary vote later in the week. The Greens led criticisms about the failure to consider any female candidates for the vacancy, which led to the process being delayed. Despite previous assurances that female candidates would be considered, the nominee Yves Mersch is the sole candidate. It is time for the EP to take a stand about the lack of female representation in the EU's highest economic and financial decision-making bodies.

EU economic governance and the EP's role

Thurs. 24 Oct. - Plenary debate; vote Fri. (Gauzes report)

The EU Parliament was granted a consultative role in the new European system of economic governance and MEPs' vote on a report on the 'economic semester' represents the first input to this. The Greens have long outlined concerns with the one-sided focus on pro-cyclical fiscal contraction in response to the Euro crisis. The group also believes there is a need to take into account the imbalances caused by budget surpluses, and not just deficits. Introducing new intergovernmental responses outside the treaties is also no basis for resolving the crisis.

Regulating financial and commodity markets

Thurs. 24 Oct. - Plenary debate; vote Fri. (Ferber reports)

MEPs vote on important new EU rules on the market for financial instruments. The Greens are strongly in favour of imposing limits on high frequency trading. With the damages of commodity speculation very evident, particularly in food markets, the Greens believe this needs to be curbed and are pushing for position limits to this end. The group also wants to ensure a high level of investor protection, notably by ensuring financial advisors recommend products in their clients' interest and not merely to secure higher commission: the plenary needs to redress this.

Sakharov prize winner to be chosen

Fri. 25 Oct. - EP Conference of Presidents

The winner of this year's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought will be chosen by the presidents of the different political groups at the Conference of Presidents. The decision will be made from a shortlist of three candidates, which was decided by a joint meeting of the human rights, development and foreign affairs committees last month. The nomination proposed by the Greens/EFA group for this year's prize is made up of Iranian human rights activists Nasrin Sotoudeh and Jafar Panahi. The prize will be awarded in December.

Outside the EP - other EU priorities

Boardroom quotas for women

Tues. 23 Oct. - EU Commission proposal (poss.)

The Commission is expected to present much-anticipated proposals to address the under-representation of women in senior management. There is no shortage of sufficiently qualified women in the workforce, with more female university graduates than male, but representation of women on executive boards remains unacceptably low, at 14%. The voluntary approach to addressing one of the major remaining barriers to gender equality has failed and the Greens support the introduction of binding boardroom quotas to stimulate the push towards balanced boardrooms.

Aid for the most vulnerable in Europe

Tues. 23 Oct. - EU Commission proposal

A new fund for the most deprived people in the EU will be proposed by the Commission. After controversial moves to abolish an existing scheme under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, which provided food aid to the most vulnerable people, the Greens were to the fore in pushing for the scheme to instead be updated and made part of EU social funds. The Greens believe that this crucial scheme, which provides aid to millions, is more appropriately dealt with as part of EU social policy, instead of as a means of using up agricultural surpluses.

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