



Strasbourg Flash

Priorities for the Greens/EFA group for 13-17 February 2012

Homelessness and EU wide action

Mon. 13 Feb. - EP debate with Commission

The extreme cold weather across Europe has had a devastating impact in many countries, with homeless people naturally acutely affected. MEPs are set to discuss this with the Commission. The Greens believe there is a need for EU-wide action on homelessness, while the EP has previously called on the Commission to propose a European strategy, with the goal of ending homelessness by 2020. Homelessness is not only a violation of fundamental rights, it is a violation of human dignity and we should not need a tragic cold snap to act.

Milk and dairy sector reform falls short

Tues. 14 Feb. - EP debate; vote Weds. (Nicholson report)

MEPs will vote on new EU rules on contracting and supply management in the dairy sector. The Greens regret that the compromise reached fails to go far enough in promoting the effective organisation of dairy farmers. The current system - with structural overproduction and a handful of dominant players in the processing and wholesale industry who can set artificially low prices - threatens the continued survival of small farmers. Farmers should instead be supported to cooperate to manage their supply and strengthen their bargaining position.

Strasbourg press briefing by Greens/EFA co-presidents

Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Rebecca Harms

Tuesday, 14 February, **10.20-10.40**

Press Conference Room EP, Strasbourg

Eurobonds and the EU crisis response

Tues. 14 Feb. - EP debate with Commission; vote Weds.

With the latest agreement by member states on a fiscal compact naturally having failed to draw a line under the crisis, MEPs are set to debate the issue of Eurobonds with the Commission. The EU Commission set out the case for Eurobonds - or 'stability bonds' as they are euphemistically known - in November. It is clear that the sole focus on budgetary consolidation has failed and that a more comprehensive response is needed. The Greens have long argued for Eurobonds to play a central role in this response.

Controversial EU-Morocco trade protocol

Tues. 14 Feb. - EP debate; vote Thurs. (Bové report)

The EP will vote on whether or not to give its consent to the inclusion of a new protocol on agriculture and fisheries in the EU-Morocco trade agreement. Green draftsman José Bové not only has problems with the overall direction of the agreement - with blanket liberalisation against the interests of small producers - he has also raised doubts about the legality of the agreement, notably the inclusion of the self-governing territory of Western Sahara. To this end, the Greens hope the EP will overturn the vote of the trade committee.

Press conference Tues. 11-11.30 EP press room

Food aid for the most vulnerable

Tues. 14 Feb. - EP debate; vote Weds. (Siekierski report)

A compromise solution on a scheme under the CAP, which provides food aid to the most vulnerable persons in the EU, is set to be approved by MEPs. The compromise follows the lines of a Green proposal made last year and would see the scheme continued until 2013 (around €500 million per year). This will give all involved sufficient time to prepare for a change in the scheme, rather than ending it abruptly. In the longer run, the food aid scheme needs to be reformed and given the broader remit of lifting people out of food poverty.

Russian democracy and elections

Weds. 15 Feb. - EP vote on resolution

Ahead Russia's presidential election, MEPs will adopt a resolution outlining concerns. Recent demonstrations have underlined the extent of opposition to Vladimir Putin and frustration with restrictions on democracy. The EP previously called for a re-run of last year's Russian parliamentary election. The Greens believe the EU should call on Russia to immediately implement reforms necessary to ensure fair elections and condemn the deterioration in human rights and democracy, and crackdowns on the peaceful protests.

HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED OVERLEAF

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Social aspects of EU economic policies

Weds. 15 Feb. - EP debate & vote (Cornelissen report & others)

Ahead of the EU summit in March, the EP will set out its opinion on the priorities for social and economic policy in the EU, as part of the Annual Growth Survey 2012. The report by Green draftsperson/rapporteur Marije Cornelissen underlines that the one-sided focus on fiscal consolidation is at odds with the EU's objectives for 2020 to increase employment and reduce poverty. The Greens believe EU leaders should support the creation of sustainable and quality jobs, while investing in education and combating poverty and unemployment.

Press conference Tues. 17-17.30 EP press room

Syria and the global reaction

Weds. 15 Feb. - EP debate with Commission; vote Thurs.

As the violence against opposition demonstrators by the Syrian authorities intensifies, notably in Homs, we are no nearer to a coherent international response. Following the shameful UN resolution veto by China and Russia, the Greens believe the EU needs to take firmer action against the Assad regime. Europe also needs to do more to support the Syrian people and promote open communications, so these crimes against humanity do not take place behind closed doors. The violence needs to stop and the Assad regime end.

Democracy in Hungary and EU action

Thurs. 16 Feb. - EP vote on resolution

Concerns remain about Hungary's slide away from democracy. The EU Commission underlined problems with three specific reforms affecting the independence of the judiciary, the central bank and data protection authority. But this misses the more fundamental assault on democratic norms through Hungary's new constitution and media laws. The EP is set to adopt a resolution on Hungary and the Greens believe the EP should push forward with a procedure under Article 7 to address the more general democratic scale back in Hungary.

Product origin rules and Israeli settlements

Thurs. 16 Feb. - EP debate and vote (Menendez report)

MEPs will vote to give their consent to a convention on rules of origin for the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Greens believe the EU should support countries in the MEDA neighbourhood and believe the establishment of a convention on regional rules of origin is an important measure to improve economic opportunities in the region and south-south cooperation. However, the group is concerned that the Commission has failed to resolve problems that prevent the correct identification of products from illegal Israeli settlements.

Other EU issues

EU-China relations and airline emissions

Tues. 14 Feb. - EU-China summit

In addition to the usual items on the agenda, such as human rights concerns, the inclusion of aviation in the EU's emissions trading scheme (ETS) will feature prominently at this year's EU-China summit. China has announced a ban on its airlines participating in the ETS, notably a ban on the purchase of emissions permits, despite this being required of all airlines looking to operate in Europe. In the absence of international action on airline emissions, the Greens believe the EU needs to hold firm and is legally justified in doing so.

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