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News | 30.04.2015

## **Greens/EFA Round up**

### **Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 27-30 April 2015**

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### **Shameful fishery discards are back**

*Debate Monday 27 April – EP plenary vote Tuesday 28 April*

The European Parliament had totally undercut the EU fish discard ban by introducing new loopholes

Tuesday. The so-called 'landing obligation' obligation' under the revised EU Common Fisheries Policy had been heralded as ending the controversial and wasteful practice of fisheries discards but the new rules adopted Tuesday will fundamentally undermine the intended ban. These loopholes will make the control and surveillance of the rules less effective but will also crucially allow fishermen to continue discarding masses of fish if fishermen claim they have been damaged by predators or are diseased. The Greens are extremely disappointed as this is a major setback for efforts to make our fishing industry more sustainable.

- [Press release \(DE/FR/EN\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

Further information

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## **Reducing plastic bag use**

*Tues. 28 April – debate and vote*

The European Parliament approved Tuesday new EU rules to reduce plastic bag use. The new rules oblige EU governments to adopt measures to drastically reduce the use of single-use plastic carrier bags. This is the first time the EU will have binding measures at EU level to reduce waste. EU member states will have to take action to reduce plastic bag use but they will be able to choose how to do it: either they introduce pricing for plastic bags or equally effective measures, or they deliver on ambitious reduction targets. The Greens fought hard for this new law and are glad Vice-President Timmermans abandoned his last minute threat to block the legislation.

- [Press release \(FR/DE/EN\)](#)
- [Facebook post and sharepic](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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## **Biofuels' climate problem and land use: problem unsolved**

*Tues. 28 April – EP plenary debate and vote*

The European Parliament adopted Tuesday new EU rules on biofuels. The rules aim to rectify the negative impact on the climate associated with indirect land use change (ILUC) due to biofuel production and the problems associated with diverting food and feed crops for fuel. Unfortunately the weak final compromise fails to do so. The cap on cropland based fuels allows for further increasing the use of food and feed based for fuelling transport, and the failure to properly account for the greenhouse gas emissions from ILUC towards decarbonisation targets will mean Europe's biofuel consumption will continue to lead to the

destruction of tropical rainforests, with major climate change implications. For the Greens, this is this is a major missed opportunity.

- [Press release \(FR/DE/EN\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

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## **Bangladesh tragedy and the textile industry's responsibility**

*Mon. 29 April – EP plenary debate; vote Weds.*

Two years on from the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh, MEPs debated and voted Wednesday on the ongoing efforts to make the global textile industry more responsible. The tragedy shone the spotlight onto the serious and legitimate questions about big textile firms and other industries and how they capitalise on sub-standard labour and safety conditions to maximise the profits on products they sell on European markets. The Greens are pleased with the adoption of a key paragraph asking for legislative measures to introduce an obligation on European companies to carry out due diligence all along their supply chain. The texts is strong on the responsibility of international brands and retailers in incentivising the garment sector to bring wages and labour standards down while maintaining high profit margins. Two years on, many firms have still not contributed to the fund that was set up to compensate the victims' families. We need to stop turning a blind eye to this.

- [Video - Remembering Rana Plaza: The road ahead](#)
- [Facebook \(with photo albums\)](#)
- [Latest press release \(FR/EN\)](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

Further information

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## **Light touch regulation of shadow banking funds**

*Tues. 28 April – EP plenary debate; vote Weds.*

MEPs voted Wednesday on new EU rules on money market funds. The Greens however have criticised this weak regulation and the failure of MEPs to stand up to the intense pressures of financial sector lobbyists. Shadow banking funds function like deposit banks and should therefore be subject to the same degree of regulation. Both the Financial Stability Board and the European Systemic Risk Board have recommended the phasing out of certain funds (namely Constant Net Asset Value Money Market Funds), due to the level of risk that these funds can create or spread and Members of the Parliament have ignored

this. Interestingly, two amendments prohibiting the funds to be established in tax havens and establishing remuneration and bonus limits equivalent to those previously adopted for the banking sector were defeated thanks to the Socialist group - the very same group continuously claiming to be the leading European political force against tax havens and in favour of pay limitation in the financial sector. The Greens now call on national governments to consider this move, as the EU position is evidently at odds with international efforts to regulate the shadow-banking sector.

- [Text adopted](#)

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## **EU budget discharge and problems with ITER nuclear fusion project**

*Tues. 28 April – EP plenary debate; votes Weds.*

Discharge was granted Wednesday by the European Parliament to the budget for the ITER nuclear fusion project. EPP, S&D and ALDE MEPs gave to the ITER budget despite the negative recommendation by the European Court of Auditors and the proposal from the Parliament's budgetary control committee to withhold discharge. This is a deeply disappointing development; the Greens have long underlined the serious questions surrounding the project, which so heavily relies on EU funding. Following Wednesday's vote, Green budgetary transparency spokesperson Igor Soltes pointed out that concerns have already been raised by the Court of Auditors about "further future cost overruns, delays, mismanagement in the ITER agency and the negative impact on other EU budget lines.

- [Text adopted](#)

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## **EP budget 2016 and MEPs' allowances**

*Tues. 28 April – EP plenary debate, vote Weds.*

MEPs voted Wednesday on the estimates of the European Parliament's budget for 2016. The Greens are opposed to the proposed budget increase. In particular, the group believes a compromise proposal to increase MEPs' staff allowance by €1,500 per month is indefensible at the current time. This is all the more pertinent given concerns about the lack of clear rules and limits regarding MEPs' local assistants i.e. staff hired in their domestic constituencies. During the vote, we asked that the vote on one of our amendments be verified. This allowed overturning the Chair's claim that the amendment had failed and introduced a paragraph into the text on the EP's environmental footprint, including on business class flights by MEPs.

- [Text adopted](#)

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## Europe's refugee shame and sea rescue

*Weds. 29 April – EP plenary debate and vote*

The European Parliament debated and voted Wednesday on the Mediterranean migration crisis. The unprecedented scale of the recent tragedies involving refugees in the Mediterranean has meant the issue is again at the top of the agenda. The Greens have proposed a permanent EU-funded search and rescue programme and believe the urgent introduction of such a system must be the number one priority. A Green amendment calling for a robust humanitarian European rescue operation was adopted. Clearly, we also need to combat smugglers, strengthen humanitarian aid and improve our asylum and migration policies. People in desperate situations will continue to flee and risk their lives to seek refuge in Europe and we cannot continue to let them die in doing so. The Greens strongly regret that the Parliament failed to adopt amendments pointing to the responsibility of Member States in the deaths of migrants at sea, on lifting visa requirements for Syrians. Despite no shortage of political rhetoric, the reality is that Europe's politicians do not want to address the core of the problem.

- [Press release \(DE/FR/EN\)](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Philippe Lamberts](#)
- [Plenary intervention – Ska Keller](#)
- [Text adopted](#)

Further information

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## Quicker access to funding for youth employment schemes

*Tues. 28 April – EP plenary debate; vote Weds.*

A proposal to increase the initial pre-financing amount of the European Youth Employment Initiative was approved Wednesday by the European Parliament. The proposal will lead to quicker transfer of money for Youth Employment projects under the so-called Youth-Employment Initiative. To achieve this, a technical change was introduced - an increase to 30% of the so-called pre-financing - so that more money can flow immediately to Member States which then should launch the projects quicker. The Greens welcome this move in efforts to address the high level of unemployment in the EU, and now calls on Member state governments that after receiving this higher pre-financing, they do all that is possible to bring the money to the Youth Projects immediately. Though economies have begun to recover, over 7 million young people in the EU are currently not in employment, education or training, and this number is growing. The Youth

Employment scheme, which entered into force in 2014, aims to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 in Europe are entitled to receive a good-quality offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months after becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

- [Text adopted](#)

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## **European Investment Bank's transparency and accountability deficit**

*Thurs. 30 April – EP plenary and vote*

A report assessing the European Investment Bank drafted by Green MEP Ernest Urtasun was adopted Thursday by MEPs. The report raises transparency concerns about how the EIB operates, as well concerns with its democratic accountability, which are highly relevant given the EIB's forthcoming role in the European investment plan, presented by Commission president Juncker. The report also highlights the need for the EIB to focus on supporting small-scale renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, and move away from funding non-renewable energy projects, such as the controversial Castor submarine gas storage project in Catalonia, amongst others. At a cost of several hundred million euros, the Castor project failed after triggering almost 1,000 small earthquakes. Due to a secretive clause according to which the state would accept the responsibility in the event of the project failing to be completed, the Spanish Executive has been forced to compensate the company. This will be funded through extra charges on consumers' gas bills over the next 30 years. Importantly, the report also underlines the role the EIB should play in the fight against tax evasion by refusing to work with entities in non-cooperative jurisdictions.

- [Press release \(DE/EN/FR\)](#)
- Text adopted (available soon)

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## **Counter-terrorism: an EU approach**

*Tues. 28 April – Commission proposals*

The European Commission outlined Tuesday its proposals on a European approach to counter-terrorism in response to this year's attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. The Greens have criticised the focus on more mass surveillance and data retention, which undermines the fundamental rights of ordinary innocent

citizens and totally fails to address the terrorist threat. Instead, we should be looking to strengthen security and law enforcement services and improve cooperation. The Commission should also tackle the root causes of radicalisation. There is a need to promote wider social and education initiatives, address discrimination and exclusion and create employment opportunities for people in communities at risk.

- [Press release \(DE/FR/EN\)](#)

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## **Greens/EFA motions for resolutions on:**

- [Situation of the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria](#)
- [The imprisonment of human rights activists in Algeria](#)
- [Situation in Nigeria](#)
- [Situation in the Maldives](#)
- [The case of Nadiya Savchenko](#)
- [The destruction of cultural sites perpetrated by ISIS](#)
- [Latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies](#)
- [Second anniversary of the Rana Plaza building collapse and progress of the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact](#)
- [Killing of students in Kenya by Islamic terror group Al-Shabaab](#)

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*Next issue of Greens/EFA Plenary Round-up: 22 May 2015*

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