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News | 26.03.2015

Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Brussels plenary 25 March 2015

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Tax policy

Vote Wednesday 25 March

MEPs debated the Commission's Tax transparency "package" which was presented last week. The only tangible proposal concerns automatic information exchange for tax rulings between EU tax authorities. We have argued that information on at least the most outrageous rulings have been subject to exchange obligations since the late 1970s, the violation of which is subject to the special TAXE committee. So while we welcome the new proposal, we deplore that the existing obligations were never implemented.

Also, the Commission's proposal has two key shortcomings. It does not lead to public transparency, and it does not cover third country rulings (such as Swiss rulings).

Moreover, the "package" includes an announcement to study the possibility of introducing country-by-country tax reporting for multi-nationals, i.e. extending what we achieved for banks to all sectors of the economy.

Finally, the Commission announced to review the Code of Conduct on Business Taxation and to work on

quantifying the scale of tax evasion and avoidance. We welcome this, although future measures will be difficult to assess given the lack of detail. The work of the Code of Conduct group is shredded with secrecy, and more public deliberations would certainly be most welcome. Access to the Code of Conduct documents of the past will also be key to the work of the special committee (TAXE).

- [Plenary intervention – Molly Scott Cato \(EN\)](#)

Further information:

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Annual Tax Report

Vote Wednesday 25 March

The European Parliament has adopted Wednesday its annual taxation report. The Greens had initiated this yearly exercise some years ago, before the Luxleaks scandal. The report reiterates that €1 trillion of potential tax revenue is lost every year in the EU due to tax fraud and tax avoidance. Unfortunately, it makes only few proposals on how to tackle this massive problem. We hope that the special Luxleaks committee will generate the necessary reform ideas and the momentum to implement them. We welcome that the report calls financial transaction tax revenue to go towards the EU budget, as well as positive references to the need to study minimum corporate tax rates and country by country tax reporting. We also welcome the call on Member States when implementing the Anti-Money Laundering directive to ensure transparency on beneficial ownership to the greatest extent possible. Unfortunately, our amendments on ecological taxation and social indicators were rejected, as was our proposal for a definition of tax havens.

- [Text adopted](#)

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Macro-financial assistance to Ukraine

Vote Wednesday 25 March

MEPs approved Wednesday a €1.8 billion EU loan to Ukraine. This so-called macro-financial assistance needs to be disbursed urgently to Ukraine against a real risk of default and amid pressing financing needs.

However, the aid package is far from being an ideal instrument as it is based on the same conditionality as the International Monetary Fund programmes and is mainly based on loans. Moreover, the decision to base MFA only on loans instead of a combination of loans and grants is grounded on the consideration that Ukraine as a middle-income country. The fact the Ukraine is at war and that its future is highly uncertain is not taken into account.

Since urgency is key here, avoiding a default of Ukraine is the priority. However, we should open the

debate on more appropriate financing instruments, on the medium-term sustainability of Ukrainian debt and the impact of economic reforms on the society.

The Greens favour a financial aid policy based on grants and a much more important allocation of resources to institution building programmes. We believe a wider and more structured debate on financing and support policy to Ukraine is needed and not just act with ad hoc solutions always dictated by urgency.

The social consequences of the reforms are tough: gas prices for households are expected to triple in the coming weeks and the social safety net to compensate for such rise could not be sufficient; retirement and unemployment benefits are to be cut substantially; unemployment is rapidly increasing.

- [Text adopted](#)

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Minimum rates of pay in the transport sector

Debate Wednesday 25 March

The European Parliament debated Wednesday working conditions and the application of the minimum wage for lorry drivers, leaving MEPs thoroughly divided on the issue. The discussion comes after Germany's decision earlier this year to apply the German minimum wage also to foreign drivers. The European Commission is currently assessing the German measures and their impact, as the issue has implications for the transport sector across the EU.

In response to this debate, the Greens yesterday welcomed to Brussels more than 20 representatives from lorry driver unions across the EU, to stand in solidarity with them and to demand 'respect for the law and respect for drivers'. Existing social legislation is already in place, notably on driving and rest times, digital tachographs, in the services directive, the posting of workers directive and 'Rome I' but more often than not, member states fail to implement and enforce it.

The Greens are thus calling on the Commission to table proposals to protect drivers' social rights and working conditions. The Commission must promote minimum standards and fair pay in the transport sector, and ensure good practice is implemented, as the mobile workforce in this sector is particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Exempting lorry drivers or other transport workers from basic labour law amounts to social and wage dumping. Such a race to the bottom in labour standards must be avoided at all costs.

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

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Roma Discrimination and Social Exclusion

Debate and vote - Wednesday 25 March

MEPs discussed Wednesday the pressing issue of how to tackle discrimination against the Roma community, Europe's largest ethnic minority group. The question of the recognition of the Roma genocide in WWII was also put before the Parliament. The Roma face challenges when it comes to many aspects of day-to-day life: housing, education, employment and healthcare to name a few; and are often subject to physical aggression and racist attacks. With International Roma Day approaching on April 8, the Greens are eager to highlight the fact that integration policies for Roma people in Europe are failing. In order to find a viable and effective strategy to encourage Roma integration and to empower individuals from Roma backgrounds, the Greens call for the Roma community to take a leading role in the dialogue. We continue our long fight for such a strategy on Roma inclusion as the Parliament now prepares a resolution on Roma rights and the Roma genocide. The resolution will be voted on in April.

- [Webarticle and plenary intervention – Bodil Ceballos](#)

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