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Greens/EFA Round up

Debriefing of the Strasbourg plenary week 11-14 December 2017

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Panama Papers: Parliament sets out strong agenda for ending tax dodging

Debate on Tuesday, vote on Wednesday

The European Parliament voted with a large majority (492 in favour / 50 against / 136 abstentions) in favour of the final recommendations of the Inquiry Committee into the Panama Papers (PANA). The recommendations include a number of Greens/EFA demands:

- Establishing a Permanent Inquiry committee in the European Parliament to investigate scandals
- No EU funds should end up in tax havens or finance companies or intermediaries involved in tax havens
- Tax policies should be adopted in the European Union under co-decision, with equal decision-power from the European Parliament
- Offshore companies with links to the European Union should be subject to similar auditing and disclosure obligations as companies in Europe
- The Commission should investigate Member States for possible breaches of EU law
- Auditing and tax advising activities of accountancy firms should be separated to avoid conflict of

interest

However, to make tax justice a reality, the Commission must now turn this plan into legislative proposals to be adopted by Member States. *“While the Commission needs to be bolder, the real enemy of tax justice in Europe has been the prime ministers and presidents of EU governments. If member state governments continue to block progress on key tax legislation then the Commission should force their hand and present legislative tax proposals under co-decision in 2018.”* declared Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur **Molly Scott Cato**.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Greens/EFA press release](#)
- [Greens/EFA video](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Molly Scott Cato](#)
- [Greens/EFA and Panama papers](#)

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European strategy for low-emission mobility

Debate and vote on Thursday

As recent figures from the European Environmental Agency confirm, transport is the EU’s biggest climate problem. Transport greenhouse gas emissions in the EU have risen for the third consecutive year.

On Thursday, however, the European Parliament adopted a promising own-initiative report, containing a set of progressive measures under the draftsmanship of Greens/EFA MEP Bas Eickhout. This report forms the European Parliament's response to the Commission's low-emission strategy. It sets out a number of concrete measures that would help to bring about urgently needed changes and deliver net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The report reinforces the notion of distance-based road charging, instructs the European Commission to explore possibilities for harmonised international measures for kerosene taxation in aviation and the removal of VAT exemption on air passenger tickets. Among others, it also calls for:

- more renewables in transport and for more stringent standards for cars and vans
- phasing out of CO2 emitting cars
- a swift reduction of diesel cars and support towards the Commission stance of opening infringement procedures on member states that do not comply

See:

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green rapporteur Bas Eickhout](#)

Further information

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Białowieża forest: Commission vs Poland

ECJ hearing on Tuesday

In July, the European Commission referred Poland to the European Court of Justice over the continued logging in the protected Białowieża Forest. Białowieża is the last remaining primeval forest in Europe but trees that have lived for up to half a millennium are being cut to the ground. Illegal logging by the Polish government has led to 180,000 trees being felled this year. The ECJ has ruled that Poland must stop the logging immediately but the destruction has not ceased.

Polish Environment Minister Jan Szyszko attended the hearing but rejected European Commission accusations of breaking EU rules and even declared that “All activities carried out by the Ministry of the Environment in the Białowieża forest are compliant with national and EU law.” The European Court of Justice should issue its opinion on February 20.

- [Greens/EFA campaign “Save the Białowieża Forest”](#)

Further information

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Fishing: new legislation to regulate EU vessels outside EU waters

Debate on Monday, vote on Tuesday

MEPs voted on the outcome of negotiations on this important fishing legislation. The new legislation will mean that all EU vessels fishing in external waters will have to comply with EU-wide regulations. Greens/EFA MEP Linnéa Engström was the rapporteur for the parliament.

For the first time, all kinds of fishing activities by EU vessels outside Union waters will be regulated, including fishing on the high sea and in private agreements between EU ship-owners and third countries. This will do a great deal to safeguard the future of international fish stocks and communities dependent upon them globally.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green rapporteur Linnéa Engström](#)

Further information

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EU summit: progress on Brexit?

Debate and vote on Wednesday

EU leaders looked at the state of progress in the Brexit negotiations during the EU Summit on 14 and 15 December. Discussions focussed on whether or not sufficient progress has been achieved on citizens' rights, Ireland and the UK's financial obligations.

Ahead of the summit, MEPs set out the parliament's position by adopting with a large majority (556 votes in favour, 62 against, 68 abstentions) the joint resolution tabled by five political groups including the Greens/EFA. No need to say that the Greens/EFA voted in favour.

- [Text adopted by EP](#)
- [Plenary speech by Greens/EFA Co-President Ska Keller](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Greens/EFA and Brexit](#)

Further information

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Kebabs: Commission proposal may undermine food safety

Vote on Tuesday

MEPs voted on an objection to the Commission's proposals to change the rules relating to the addition of phosphate additives to meat preparations such as kebabs. Phosphate additives are already banned at EU level for use in döner kebabs and gyros but Member State implementation is patchy. The Commission is proposing to allow the use of phosphoric acid, phosphates and polyphosphates as food additives in kebabs.

Food additives should only be authorised where their use is safe. With serious concerns about the health impacts of phosphate additives, Greens/EFA objected to the proposal in order to protect consumer health. With the European Food Safety Authority due to complete a re-evaluation of the use of phosphates in all foods by the end of 2018, we believe that it would have been prudent to wait until this, before authorising their use in any more foods.

The objection, tabled by Greens/EFA MEP Bart Staes and S&D's Christel Schaldemose, received strong support (373/272/30), but fell just short of the required absolute majority of 376.

"The European Food Safety Authority's re-evaluation of the use of phosphate additives in all food is due by the end of 2018 and Greens/EFA will be watching the outcome closely", said Bart Staes after the vote.

- [Q&A on phosphate additives in kebab meat](#)
- [Press release](#)
- [Plenary speech by Green MEP Bart Staes](#)
- [Greens/EFA and food](#)

Further information

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Greens/EFA motions for resolutions

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 - [Situation in Afghanistan](#)
 - [Cambodia: the banning of the opposition](#)
 - [Cases of women prosecuted for miscarriage in El Salvador](#)
 - [Freedom of expression in Vietnam, notably the case of Nguyen van Hoa](#)
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