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News | 08.03.2024

Plenary Flash 11 - 14 March 2024

GREENS/EFA priorities for the plenary session

On the agenda this week: Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, Artificial Intelligence Act, European Media Freedom Act, Vehicle Emissions Standards, Green Claims Directive, European Cross-border Associations, Animal Welfare

Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

On Tuesday, MEPs will vote on the trilogue deal of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). The EPBD is an update to an existing EU law introducing new measures to deliver a climate-neutral building stock by 2050. With this file, the Greens/EFA aim to protect people from energy poverty and bring down bills by making Europe's buildings more energy efficient. The deal reached in trilogue prioritises renovation funding for vulnerable groups, enhances renter protections, and sets a clear pathway towards achieving a more efficient building stock in Europe. European Parliament Rapporteur Ciarán Cuffe will hold a press conference after the vote on Tuesday at 15:00. You can follow online [here](#).

Debate: Monday 11 March

Vote: Tuesday 12 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Ciarán Cuffe

Artificial Intelligence Act

The AI Act is the world's first legislation on artificial intelligence and contains harmonised rules on the placing on the market of such systems and models. It distinguishes between 3 categories of AI systems, prohibited, high risk and low-risk systems, and contains specific obligations for general purpose AI models (like GPT3, the model underlying "ChatGPT").

The Greens/EFA Group has consistently been advocating for a human-centric approach to AI, that puts fundamental rights at the core of AI legislation and has succeeded in adding multiple obligations to the text, which will have a significant impact on how systems are developed and used in the Union (examples:

mandatory fundamental rights impact assessments or environmental obligations). In addition, we managed to ban a limited number of the most unethical practices in the EU, which are: real time biometric mass surveillance (with narrow exceptions), AI systems used to recognize emotions in certain domains, or AI used in certain instances of predictive policing. While we did not manage to achieve a full ban on all forms of biometric mass surveillance, the final text allows for stricter rules on national level – which we will use to continue the fight against mass surveillance in all Member States.

The result of the negotiations is a “two-tiered approach”, meaning that there will be lighter transparency obligations for all models (such as their energy consumption) and stricter rules for the most powerful ones, which will be designated via the newly established “AI Office” in the Commission. It will be essential to remain vigilant and assess how robust and future-proof this regulation will be in regulating the rapidly evolving technology around AI.

Debate: Tuesday 12 March

Vote: Wednesday 13 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Sergey Lagodinsky

European Media Freedom Act

Next week, MEPs will vote on the trilogue deal on the European Media Freedom Act, which is aimed at protecting journalists and the freedom and plurality of media across Europe. The Greens/EFA Group has long fought for EU-level rules to address issues such as high media market concentration, the fair allocation of state funding and the independence of public service media and national regulatory authorities. We have managed to include strong safeguards in regards to the protection of journalistic sources. After the latest trilogue agreements, we also applaud that for the first time, it is written in black and white in EU law that governments or private interests must not interfere in the media’s operations and editorial decisions. The allocation of state advertising, sometimes used as an instrument to asphyxiate certain media and favour others, must from now on be transparent and fair. State ownership and potential influence must also be disclosed.

Furthermore, the text in the agreement no longer refers to the possibility of spying on journalists on the basis of vague "national security" imperatives as was in the Council text. This is a victory for all defenders of press freedom and democracy.

Debate: Tuesday 12 March

Vote: Wednesday 13 March

Greens/EFA MEPs: Diana Riba (CULT), Daniel Freund (LIBE), Marcel Kolaja (IMCO)

Vehicle Emissions Standards

On Wednesday, MEPs will vote on vehicle emission standards (Euro 7). The current standards are already more than a decade old and lag far behind the current state of the art. This is the last generation of standards in the transition to electric cars and therefore the only chance to make the 100 million combustion engines still sold until 2035 cleaner. It has failed to do so. Thanks to a collaboration between the auto industry and conservative parties, standards for cars remain the same, only those for trucks improve, but minimally. Cars have cynically been chosen over the health of many Europeans who still die prematurely every year from air pollution.

Vote: Wednesday 13 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Bas Eickhout (ENVI)

Green Claims Directive

On Tuesday, MEPs will vote on the report on the green claims directive adopted by the ENVI and IMCO Committees.

With this new legislation, the Parliament takes an important step against greenwashing and the use of misleading claims regarding the sustainability of products. It further informs consumers and empowers them to support a clean and circular economy. They will receive transparent, comparable and verified product information based on solid data, which will help them understand which products are truly environmentally friendly and allow them to make more sustainable choices.

Member states will have 18 months to transpose the directive. It will apply to SMEs 30 months after its entry into force.

Debate: Monday 11 March

Vote: Tuesday 12 March

Greens/EFA MEPs: Bas Eickhout (ENVI) Kim Van Sparrentak (IMCO)

European Cross-border Associations

Democracy does not end at a country's border. Civil society organisations are at the heart of every democracy. Making them strong and truly European is a safeguard for our future. The Greens/EFA have long been calling for a statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations, and authored an EP resolution on the subject in 2022. The publication in September 2023 of the Commission's proposal for a Directive on a European Cross-border Association (ECBA) is a concrete follow-up of this. It reflected the demands of civil society and the EP, and constituted a breakthrough for all those fighting to support democracy across European borders, and was a first step towards protecting civil society as a whole throughout the Union. The JURI committee further improved the Commission proposal and the plenary will adopt this position next week.

Debate: Tuesday 12 March

Vote: Wednesday 13 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Sergey Lagodinsky

Animal Welfare

On Thursday, at the initiative of the Greens/EFA Group, MEPs will debate the revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. Much of the EU-level legislation to protect animals dates back more than a decade, and needs updating in light of new scientific findings, both to improve animal welfare and to ensure equal standards amongst farmers. Several European Citizens' Initiatives have focused on animal welfare, including the successful ECI End the Cage Age, which collected over 1.4 million signatures. In the wake of the Parliament's inquiry committee on Animal Transport, chaired by Green MEP Tilly Metz, the Commission published its proposal on animal transport at the end of 2023 – however the other elements of the long-awaited package are not yet on the table. The Greens/EFA call on the European Commission to deliver the outstanding legislative proposals that it repeatedly promised throughout this term, including a proposal for a regulation on animal welfare labelling.

Vote: Thursday 14 March
Greens/EFA MEP: Tilly Metz

MORE

- **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive**

On Tuesday, the Council and the Commission will take part in the plenary debate on the state of play of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. See our latest press release [here](#).

Debate: Tuesday 12 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Heidi Hautala

- **Ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention of the International Labour Organization**

On Tuesday, MEPs will debate the Council decision to invite Member States to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization.

Debate: Tuesday 12 March

Greens/EFA MEP: Kira Marie Peter-Hansen

LINKS

- Group Presidents, **Terry Reintke** and **Philippe Lamberts** will hold the plenary session press briefing on Tuesday, 12 March at 11:00 AM.
Location: Daphne Caruana Galizia Press Room, Weiss N-1/201 or online via [European Parliament website](#). Journalists can ask questions remotely via Interactio.
- The full plenary agenda for the week can be found on the [Parliament website](#).

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