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Strasbourg Flash

Weekly preview of the Greens/EFA group - 22-27 November 2010

EP priorities (full text below):

- Hazardous substances in electrical goods (Mon., Weds.)
- Transparency for patients on prescription medication (Mon., Weds.)
- Phasing-out coal subsidies (Tues.)
- EU budget 2011 - stalemate (Tues.)
- Justice and freedom for Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo (Tues.)
- Bee population collapse and the role of the agro-industry (Tues., Weds.)
- ACTA anti-counterfeiting agreement (Tuesday)
- EU economic and fiscal governance (Wednesday)
- UN climate talks in Cancun (Weds., Thurs)
- Trade and climate change (Weds., Thurs.)
- Implementing EU legislation (Thurs.)

Other EU priorities:

- Protecting bluefin tuna and other endangered fish species (ICCAT meeting, ends Sat.)

Events:

- Co-presidents press briefing (Tues.)
- Hazardous substances in electrical goods (Weds., press conference, 14.00)

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Hazardous substances in electrical goods

Mon. 22 Nov. - EP debate (vote Weds. - **Evans** report - Greens/EFA)

The EP will vote on a final legislative agreement revising EU rules on hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment. Given the serious impacts of some substances used in these goods on health and the environment, the Greens wanted even stronger provisions, notably restrictions on additional hazardous substances (like PVC). However, the agreement is an improvement and will ensure the scope is extended

(e.g. to include toys with an electronic function), while opening the door to further substance restrictions.

* Press conference on Weds. 24 Nov. at 14.00 in EP Press Room *

Transparency for patients on prescription medication

Mon. 22 Nov. - EP debate (legislative vote Weds. - Fjellner reports)

The Greens have worked with other MEPs to transform this legislative proposal from one driven by the interests of the media and pharma industries (allowing them to 'inform' about prescription medication in the media - in other words advertising), into legislation setting out what information patients should have access to. The EP environment committee voted for better information on prescription medication based on patients' needs, rather than information to promote the commercial interests of pharma firms. (see press release)

Phasing-out coal subsidies

Tues. 23 Nov. - EP debate and vote (Rapkay report)

MEPs vote on a proposal to phase-out subsidies to coal mines, until now exempted from EU state aid rules. The Commission proposed phasing out operational subsidies by 2014, with social support permitted until 2026. Regrettably, the EP economic committee voted for continuing operational subsidies until 2018, following lobbying by coal producing regions. If the EU is serious about its energy and climate goals it needs to phase-out distorting fossil fuel subsidies. The Commission proposal is a bare minimum to this end. (see latest press release)

EU budget 2011 - stalemate

Tues. 23 Nov. - EP debate (resolution vote Weds.)

Following the breakdown of talks between the Parliament and Council, the EU's budget for 2011 is now in limbo. The EP, with the support of the Greens, had been willing to accept the reductions in the proposed budget being insisted on by the Council in return for guarantees it will have a greater role in future budgetary negotiations, as set out in the Lisbon Treaty. However, the stonewalling of a minority of member states prevented any deal. The Greens believe the Parliament should hold firm. (see latest press release)

Justice and freedom for Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo

Tues. 23 Nov. - European Parliament debate with the European Commission

This year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo remains imprisoned in China. The Chinese authorities have been pressuring international political leaders not to attend the prize-giving ceremony for the rights defender, which takes place in Oslo on 10 December. The Greens believe prominent EU politicians should not yield to this pressure and should step up their efforts to secure his release. To this end EP president Buzek should reconsider his decision not to attend.

Bee population collapse and the role of the agro-industry

Tues. 23 Nov. - EP debate with Commission (vote on resolution Weds.)

Bee populations have been crashing recently, thought to be due to a combination of factors including pesticides (including GM crops that express toxins), mites and parasites (which suppress bee immunity) but also climate change, monocultures and intensive agriculture and land use changes. There is a lack of data in the EU, with the agro-chemical industry withholding results of field trials on their pesticides or GMOs. The resolution calls for more independent research and availability of data for independent scientific scrutiny.

ACTA anti-counterfeiting agreement

Tues. 23 Nov. - Vote on resolution

There are serious concerns about the final agreement on the controversial Anti-counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) and its impact on basic freedoms and EU law making. MEPs want the Commission to carry out impact assessments before any ratification begins, and clarity on the ratification procedure and the legal basis for the signing and ratifying of the deal. The lack of clarity compounds suspicions that ACTA goes beyond a basic anti-counterfeiting remit, encroaching on basic rights, internet neutrality and global health. (see latest press release)

EU economic and fiscal governance

Weds. 24 Nov. - EP debate with Council president Van Rompuy and EU Commission

While ostensibly about the outcome of the recent EU Summit and proposals for a permanent EU crisis mechanism, clearly this debate will be framed in the context of recent developments in the Eurozone and sovereign debt crises. The Greens support proposals for a legally watertight crisis mechanism, as well as ensuring that taxpayers do not bear full responsibility for the rescue of EU member states in fiscal difficulties. The Greens believe there needs to be a more decisive response to the current crisis however. (see press release)

UN climate talks in Cancun

Weds. 24 Nov. - EP debate with the European Council and Commission

After being sidelined at last year's UN climate talks in Copenhagen, the EU must try and regain its credibility at this year's summit in Cancun. MEPs will vote on a strong resolution adopted by the environment committee. Among other things, the resolution calls for the EU to agree to the long overdue increase in its 2020 emissions reduction target (from 20% to 30%) and to live up to its promises to provide new and additional fast-start climate aid; this would ensure the EU plays a role in putting the UN talks back on track. (see blog)

Trade and climate change

Weds. 24 Nov. - EP debate (vote Thurs - **Jadot** report - Greens/EFA)

Just ahead of the UN climate summit in Cancun, the EP will vote on a report on trade and climate change from Green rapporteur Yannick Jadot. The report calls for trade rules that help instead of hindering efforts to address climate change. It also calls for stronger EU climate policy, notably endorsing the call for the EU to increase its 2020 emissions reduction target (from 20% to 30%) even if no binding international agreement is reached.

Implementing EU legislation

Thurs. 25 Nov. - EP debate and vote (**Lichtenberger** report - Greens/EFA)

The annual assessment by the EP on how community law is applied and implemented confirms the trend: persisting deficits in the implementation of EU legislation by member states and lack of proper control by the EU Commission. As with previous years, the implementation of EU environmental rules remains one of the major problem areas, notably in some Mediterranean member states. Green rapporteur Eva Lichtenberger calls on the Commission to give greater priority to enforcing EU legislation.

Protecting bluefin tuna and other endangered fish species

All week, ends Sat. 27 Nov. - International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

Serious quota reductions are necessary to give Atlantic bluefin (and other species) a chance of survival, as even the EU Commission has recommended. ICCAT has a sorry record of approving excessive quotas for fish species though and EU Mediterranean states pushed the EU to negotiate for quotas far in excess of those recommended by the Commission. There is also a need for stronger enforcement measures, as the fish (especially bluefin) are so valuable that the fishing industry goes to extreme lengths to flout the rules. (see blog)

Co-presidents press briefing

Tues. 19 Oct. ☞ 10.20-10.40, European Parliament press room

Press briefing with Greens/EFA co-presidents **Dany Cohn-Bendit** and **Rebecca Harms** on the key issues of the plenary session for the Greens/EFA group. Livestreamed at: <http://greenmediabox.eu/live/pressbriefing/>

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