



Absent & Voting

The outrageous non-behaviour of the European Union

With a participation ratio of 47 out of 61, 14 MEPs missing - a shocking number of absentees was shown Friday morning, on the first day of VeUMEU, and those only increased in the next hours. Besides, as silent as some participants were, should their presence be even counted in at all?

The behaviour, or rather the non-behaviour that many displayed became even more noticeable in contrast with the well-prepared ones. From hiding behind their leaders, not being familiar with the schedule and procedure to leaving the venue early, it was clear by the end of the day that not everyone takes their position seriously. Participants have to be reminded that they should, in fact, participate, and that it is our duty as the press to point out their failings to do so. In the wake of the upcoming EU elections it is further our duty to inform the public about those who work hard to represent them well and those who can barely be present.

“It’s a matter of knowing what the counter arguments are to our position and preparing for those”, said Mario Joseph Mastrocola. The NI leader has been one of the best prepared members of the EU parliament, making contributions regularly to the debate on asylum and migration management. His arguments use an empirical basis that he wished others would follow more. Mastrocola was not the only one who called out the left wing’s stances for being not specific enough and too ideological. ECR leader Xhafa Dea proposed them to “stop crying tears of pity” and come up with concrete solutions. After the first round of the discussion she complained that there isn’t much to debate, if her opposition can’t make their arguments clearer.

Letter from the Vice-Editor

As we close the first day of VeUMEU 2024, the press team is eager to announce the constructive work undertaken both by the members of the Parliament and the ministers of the Council. In the second edition of our official newsletter EUnow!, you will find delightful insights on yesterday’s discourses.

Before evaluating, I would like to point out the assistance provided by our EPRS experts both during their lectures and through their presence at the chambers. Plus, the throughout delivery of the opening speeches by our event organizers enabled us to begin our VeUMEU 2024 journey with the kindest hearts.

Greatly observed by all who were present at the event yesterday, one may characterize the first day by the challenges stemming from the participants getting caught off-guard by the rapid depth-delving into the legislative process. Though it can’t be thought apart from the post-event preparation of the participants, it is obvious that the first day proved to be rather full of surprises for many of them.

Last but not least, the press team puts emphasis on the significance of the very first legislative processes by both chambers and foresees an even more elaborated discourse to be witnessed during the second day of the event. To close with, the press is keen to prioritize the importance of enjoying the second day of the event as much as possible, given that a longer and more deliberative day stretches before us.

*Vice-Editor in Chief,
Bora Askinoglu*



Vague statements, generalisation - do MEPs fail to deliver substance as a result of inadequate preparation? The leaders of all factions made contributions, spoke multiple times and delivered their opening speeches well. However, their individual and leadership skills have to be evaluated differently and their whole groups have to be taken into account. ID's leader Arianna Guida has been complimented by many for her strong performance on the debate floor, distracting from her fellow group members' behaviour. When questioned by the press about the regulations, Sara Bizzotto and Sofia Fattoretto referred to their leader as soon as the talk went beyond a surface level, making their own uncertainty obvious.



Despite this, Bizzotto and Fattoretto took part in the discourse, which cannot be said about everyone. During the conversation about amendments, even president Giovanni Gereschi asked the silent members to participate. It might not be realistic to expect every single MEP to speak up, but the disinterest shown by several individuals in involving themselves in any form was very visible during the unmoderated, informal discussions. They might think that sitting silently in the back row such as EPPs Fabio Tenani (who only reluctantly was willing to answer questions and refused to be recorded, probably thinking this will spare him a mention in the paper) or standing quietly in the vicinity of their group, staring blankly into the distance such as his colleague Sonia Geraldine Gunawan (EPP) would make them unnoticeable.

Trying to blend in and drown in the bigger groups of EPP and S&D seems to be a strategy for some members, in order to pass these three days without any effort. A clear example of this is one of the members of the S&D who said that he started to prepare only the day before VeUMEU and doesn't plan on speaking. While he feels some guilt towards his members and has some doubts about his plan, he thinks that it is easy to get a pass in a big group like S&D. He makes it clear that many S&D members behave like this and rely on only two to three hard working individuals, who wrote the

position papers. Federico Claps, the leader of S&D has previously enthusiastically stated: "The S&D is a very cohesive group and we will not stop doing that. We will be united." Fellow active member Daria Lupan has supported Claps's claims in an official interview, keeping up appearances. It seems easy to be a harmonious group, when half of your group doesn't bother raising their voice in the first place.

What S&D and EPP don't realise is that their lack of teamwork and preparation are unavoidably reflected in their performance. On the other hand, groups like The Left and ECR have shown the opposite. ECR met multiple times before May 3rd, marking their determination for this weekend. Their arguments support each other, and instead of being individual statements they represent a united front. Similarly, the Left, despite missing a member since the start, have been eager to speak. Both groups can be seen communicating well with each other during breaks and informal debates. While navigating a bigger group like S&D and EPP certainly brings more challenges, MEPs and leaders can't use this as an excuse for such inconsistent and unprepared behaviour.

Thankfully, the Council behaved well, right?

The Minister of Slovenia, Kiheon Nam, admitted to not even knowing that he was supposed to hold an opening speech. "It was noticeable who prepared themselves well", remarked Alexander Kraut, minister of Finland. Those who didn't, he pointed out, spoke broad and general in their opening speeches and missed to follow their own countries' perspectives. The state of the council was made apparent by the no-show of the minister of Romania (Giulia Lovergine), when being called upon stage during the press conference. It is the duty of the ministers to represent their countries, but this obligation falters, when someone is, well, conspicuously absent.

After the first day, we want to applaud all those who have shown themselves prepared, but this should be the norm. We have to question the standards of the EU and urge all members of the Parliament and ministers of the Council to take their duties seriously. There was a Study Guide provided and the official schedule was clear, even a workshop conducted. How much more hand holding do our politicians need in order to do their jobs?

Journalist Moana Jomchai Hemsuthipan

Not So Green...

The position of the Greens during the debate for the Regulation on Asylum and Migration

The Green Party turns out weak in keeping its agenda promises. From the slogan "for a welcoming Europe," which sees environmental disasters and absolute poverty at the apex of the causes of migration, it has shifted to mentioning ecological migration through derisory mentions of the "environmental" migrant who leaves his or her country "due to the shortage or lack of water and food."

Ecology and the environment, climate change with its consequences did not find (like expected) space in the debate held yesterday in the Parliament, regarding the regulation on asylum and migration. This was not only confirmed by the position paper, in which the party lists the factors of economic and political migration, but also by Riccardo Donà, a Green MP from the Czech Republic: “We are strictly focusing on migration without asking ourselves what the causes are and not considering the environmental issue. We are focusing on the answer to the problem, leaving out the causes, among which the ecological one obviously counts. It is true, we have to underline the link between climate issues and migration.”

A notable discrepancy is apparent within the party between the position of the Green spokeswoman Marija Mihajlovic and that of the parliamentarian. In fact, despite Donà's confirmation, the leader responding to the allegations during the press conference believes that she addressed the issue extensively, speculating that this was probably done while the press was absent. “Talking about illegal immigration, of course it is also referred to,” she mutters, pointing out that “I cannot speak for others. Everyone has their own role, some colleagues work behind the scenes, others edit, and still others use their oratorical skills in speeches. We added our voice to our Party's demands in the amendment of Article 7.” An appreciable statement about the Party's internal management, but in the end it still leaves many doubts about the question posed and suggests that the environmental issue has really been forgotten.

This is also not belied by the substantive changes to Article 7, proposed by The Left Party and supported by the Greens, which concerns the improvement and admission of legal and efficient corridors, as well as repatriations. To the issue of the latter, in fact, security criteria to be followed to ensure respect for human rights were added, namely that, in order to facilitate repatriation, through collaborations with third states, the 1951 Geneva Convention and all its additional protocols must necessarily be respected. This second amendment was necessary to secure the support of the Renew Party and conclude the common amendment by the Left, the Greens, Renew and S&D.



Moreover, in the interview with MP Giulia Cosoli, the article that seemed to be targeted by the Greens was initially Article 3, which was about strengthening border security. “We don't

want to create A and B migrants that promote a system that facilitates the entry of people with degrees and from which Europe can profit. All are welcome”.

So again, no trace of environmentalism or migration related to the rising temperatures, prolonged periods of drought, monsoon rains and floods. A reality that will become increasingly present and with major consequences. The data are speaking, particularly the one conducted in 2021 by the World Bank, which assumes that more than 216 million people will be forced to migrate within their own countries by 2050 due to the climate crisis. Who will protect the rights of these people when they arrive at European borders?

A party which sees itself at the forefront of the struggle for a more sustainable world, in which human rights are guaranteed and refugees welcomed and integrated, which has grandly called for a common European pact on migration with Safe Channel for migrants, but which does not push for the recognition of environmental migrant status.

The question remains unanswered: dear Green Party, where did you lose your environmentalism?

Journalist Niccole Petrucci

Theory or facts?

As the first day of the Venice Universities Model European Union finally went by, we had the pleasure to assist in the European Parliament's debates, as all MEPs were filled with anticipation to represent their political factions the best. The topic at hand, the regulation on asylum and migration, promised to ignite passionate discussions and shed light on pressing issues, as the complexities of the policy were brought to the forefront of discussion. As participants engaged in passionate dialogues surrounding the regulation on asylum and migration, it became evident that enthusiasm alone could not surmount the intricate challenges inherent in addressing this pressing issue.

Throughout the parliamentary debate, Eurodeputies demonstrated a commendable level of engagement and eagerness to contribute to the discussion, although their efforts were often hampered by a lack of in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Many proposals presented during the debate were theoretical in nature, focusing on abstract principles rather than practical solutions to real-world challenges, as the absence of nuanced perspectives from European political parties further compounded the limitations of the discourse, depriving discussions of vital insights and innovative solutions.

The Parliamentary debate served as a microcosm of the broader challenges confronting migration policy discourse. MPEs often found themselves grappling with the intricate nuances of asylum and migration regulations, revealing glaring gaps in foundational knowledge.

As participants endeavored to navigate these complexities, it became increasingly evident that a more holistic and multifaceted approach was necessary to address the various dimensions of migration policy.



Many participants grappled with a shallow understanding of the subject matter, relying on superficial knowledge to inform their contributions. This limitation hindered their ability to engage meaningfully with the topic and propose pragmatic solutions.

While theoretical debates have their place, translating ideas into effective policies requires a thorough understanding of practical considerations and constraints—a skill set that appeared underdeveloped among some participants.

In summary, as the first day drew to a close, the regulation on asylum and migration has provided a platform for meaningful discourse and reflection. While the discussions revealed certain challenges, including a need for deeper understanding and practical application of concepts, they also underscored the participants' commitment in engaging with complex policy issues. As the first day of the simulation comes to an end, there is a recognition of both the progress made and the areas of improvement. Moving forward, there is an opportunity for continued growth and collaboration among participants, paving the way for more informed and effective policy making in the future, as they will have the coming days to improve and learn something new each day.

Journalist - Rebecca Basso

Punish One Hundred, Teach None

Identity and Democracy would never agree with a federal European Union model, as they constantly advocate for the strong independence of member states and national sovereignty, even if it means going against EU citizens' benefits and privileges. In their position paper on the regulation, we can clearly perceive their hostility towards the Schengen Agreement of 1985, because they believe that the agreement has limited member states' control over migratory fluxes, and thus has contributed to the free circulation of illegal migrants within the EU territory. Is the Schengen Agreement endangering the safety of EU citizens,

or is the Identity and Democracy party pushing its nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric too far? The great majority of students, commuter workers, tourists, legal and illegal migrants who live in Europe would suggest the latter. Luckily, it is not difficult to guess what they would actually think, because data shows us that 3.5 million people cross the internal border daily for various reasons, while almost 1.7 million citizens are employed in a Schengen country that is not their place of residence. The agreement is so important that it allows citizens of member states to freely travel to non-member countries as well, such as Norway and Iceland. The annulment of this agreement would probably worsen the working environment for many people, including over three hundred thousand of French, Italian and German workers that commute to Switzerland every day.

Not only is the Schengen agreement making many people's lives easier on a daily basis, but also it has set the foundation for improved communication between member states' police forces. Direct exchange of information between authorities through the Schengen Information System has strengthened the cross-border surveillance of suspects, which the ID could actually cherish as a positive example of border control. It is clear at this point that the opportunity to travel freely within 26 different countries is truly a benefit for all the people, citizens and not, that live and visit Europe. Distancing ourselves from other countries and closing the borders are truly terrible choices to make, because as human beings we have historically developed faster through constant contact with our neighbours. Another pivotal example of the fact that we're never better off alone is the collective aversion to Brexit and its consequences, which highly impacted both the economy and the social cohesion of the country. Even though it's difficult to find something not regrettable about Brexit, the ID stated that we can learn from the UK to be more efficient and effective if we rely on the Union's help without letting them control us too much. If one member state is going through a delicate situation and needs to have broader control of the country's security, the Schengen Border Code allows single states to temporarily reintroduce border control and keep internal borders under tighter surveillance, while still being part of the Schengen area. These measures helped manage difficult situations for many countries, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, without posing a threat to member states cohesion.

Given all this information, it seems really difficult to dislike the Schengen agreement, so difficult that even members of the same party are not precisely agreeing on this topic. The leader of the party stood firmly on her position against the agreement, another member seemed to believe that it is actually useful for the EU citizens to have such freedom and be able to travel without many restrictions. Other than being useful for everybody living in the European Union, the agreement is also a great symbol of the member states' unity and the ability of citizens to finally cooperate for the benefit of all nations.

Journalist Giulia Ottaviani

Refugees: from Vulnerable to Weapons

In order to show his agreement towards the Proposal of Regulation on Asylum and Migration, MEP Shevchenko Artem (EPP) chose to make the Parliament aware that refugees are used by Putin as a weapon against us. The European Union must then “show that it is a reality that works”, by better regulating this phenomenon.

Starting from being very curious about this statement, I ended up being very disappointed.



The link between EU migration policy, defense and foreign issues could have been very interesting, above all nowadays: we all know in fact that the relations of the EU with Russia are very tense. But during my interview I found Artem quite confused about the connection he made.

At the basis of his argument there are “real” and “not real” refugees, defined by him as “just a hybrid weapon in the hands of our enemies, who wish bad things for Europe”. How is it possible?

The problem starts with all those people, such as economic migrants, who, since they are not escaping a war, “pretend to be victims, but come here just to receive economic benefits as social welfare”. As an example he mentions migrants from Afghanistan and Eritrea. In fact, here there is no war anymore, as instead happens in Ukraine, whose asylum seekers are used by him as an example of “real refugees”. Of course they are - in his words - “real refugees”, but maybe he should also update himself on the serious economic and humanitarian crisis currently going on in Afghanistan, and become aware that Eritrea has a dictatorship to which human rights are almost unknown.

He claims that a solution to stop the arrival of the false refugees is needed. How? Cutting social benefits for them. Furthermore, he finds himself being in agreement with some aspects of the right and far right MEPs, with whom he shares the slogan “we are not the welfare office of the whole world”, as the leader of ID claimed yesterday morning.

Still, even if asked, the explanation of how refugees can be a weapon in the hands of Putin and of the enemies of Europe against us is missing. When this question is asked again, he explains that these “not real migrants” are actually deceived by who attracts them to come to Europe. “They just pay

money to these refugees, they give them a generous promise that they can come here and will be helped in crossing the border of the EU. But in this way they are actually deceived because at the end they are left without any help”.

Basically, together with some people coming here because of a real need for protection, there’s a majority attracted here by a promise of better life and “to have money”. Here comes the need for the European Union to select, to give priority “to those that are ready to be integrated in our society , respect our laws, our values, and want to work to contribute to our welfare, and are not just willing to use our system for their benefits”.

All this with the aim of finally explaining that this is a mechanism that weakens Europe. Acting in a united way to select and let enter Europe only the so-called “real migrants”: this is the way for Europe to show its solidity and strength (and defend itself).

According to this reasoning, then, the “false refugees” are created by persons who attract them to Europe on false grounds. Once here, they can be used by external enemies of Europe because of their effect of weakening Europe: in fact they just want to take the benefits of staying here, without involving themselves in anything beneficial for the member countries.

Here is how people escaping from poverty, authoritarian regimes, persecutions of any type are transformed into a danger for the Union, even as a weapon in the hands of our “enemies”. While the very idea of “enemies of Europe” is itself questionable, one core value of Europe is peace, and starting speaking of “enemies” is dangerous, above all in these times - what Artem explained to us is not an admissible reasoning and it is totally misleading. If we want to have a stronger Europe being able to tackle defense and security issues, the recipe should be that of becoming more united and stronger inside Europe, not to raise walls against vulnerable individuals who just need protection of their lives and human rights.

Journalist Alice Fraglica

Not Just Beautiful Words: We Need to Take Action

Today is the first and last day for Giorgia Sala in her role as a party leader of Renew Europe. In our interview she talked about the position and strategy of Renew Europe regarding the Asylum and Migration Regulation. As a centrist party, Renew Europe offers a pragmatic and action-oriented approach to EU decision-making, focusing on concrete solutions rather than ideological rhetoric.

According to the party leader, Renew Europe emphasizes the importance of effectiveness of regulation, particularly in managing migration. "It's not just talking about solidarity, freedom, and a great way to manage migration," the leader stated "but proposing ways to control migration and really manage it for the better. That is why we really agree on the proposal because it's not only about feelings and beautiful words, but it's a way to really treat migrants in a humane way."

One of the key advantages of Renew Europe's centrist approach lies in its ability to foster compromise and consensus within EU institutions. By advocating for autonomy in contributing to the system based on each State's population and GDP, Renew Europe seeks to strike a balance that satisfies all stakeholders. "Our main point about this is that every state decides how to contribute to the system because we know that not every State has the same facilities and the same possibilities", Sala said. "The contribution from every state depends on the population and their GDP," she explained, highlighting the party's commitment to inclusivity and equitable decision-making.

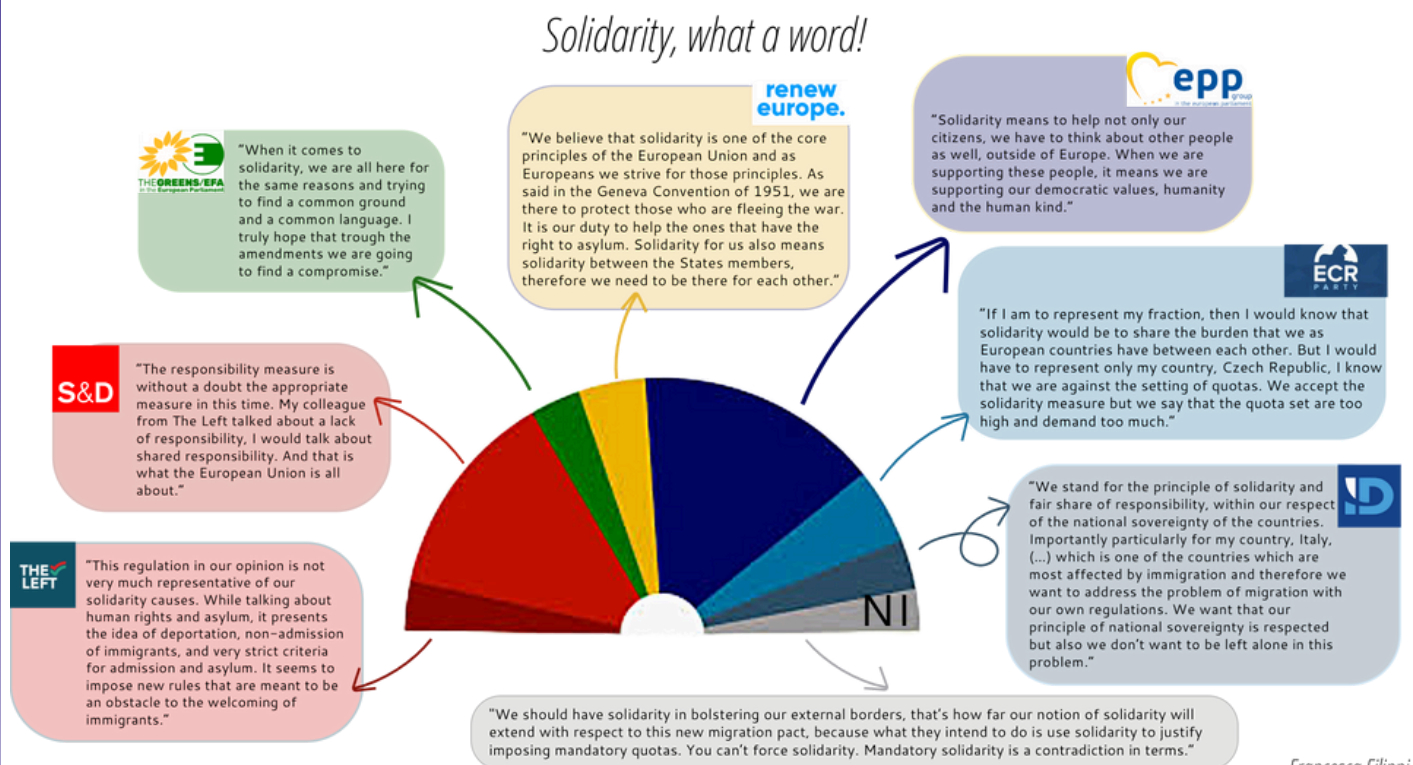
Renew Europe has taken a strategy of joining hands with other parties in this regulation. Collaboration with other parties, such as The Left, Greens, and S&D on key

amendments demonstrates the party's commitment to finding common ground and advancing shared objectives. "We really share the same ideas and the same values. So this could be a strategic move in order to arrive at something important", Sala said.

Renew Europe, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration, has been observed to have differences of opinion within the party, particularly between Hungary and Romania. The Romanian member's perspective on the Asylum and Immigration Regulation exhibited a slightly right-leaning inclination. However, the intra-party differences observed between Renew Europe Romania and Hungary are understood to be natural due to the diverse backgrounds of party members. "Even though we might have some things we do not agree with, we are all in the same party and share the same ideas. So we are really trying to do the best for the Regulation."

In conclusion, Renew Europe's centrist position, characterized by pragmatism and unity, plays a crucial role in promoting stability and effectiveness within the EU. By prioritizing concrete action and inclusive decision-making, the party navigates challenges, fosters compromise, and advances the interests of citizens across member states.

Journalist Hyejeong Yoon



Francesca Filippi

Council is in Safe Hands: A Brief catch-up with the President

The press team is honored by the presence of the President of the European Council, Ms Mutlu, having accepted our request for a brief interview. She delivered us her valuable thoughts on the conduct of the discussion in the Council. Her insights signal the prospects of the very first discussions undertaken in the chamber of the ministers. During the session, the chair ran the opening speeches of the fellow ministers and thus the position of representative countries was brought up to stage. Thank you, Ms President, for giving us the opportunity to hear about your opinions regarding the opening moves of the Council.

Before leaving you with her interview from yesterday, I would like to provide some more insights about Ms President, as she has already been interviewed by our fellow journalist Francesco Girardi before the event.

As provided by Girardi, Ms. Mutlu is currently studying Business Administration at Ca' Foscari University of Venice as a freshman.

Since I was raised in Türkiye's capital, Ankara, I was accustomed to a highly bureaucratic atmosphere. My involvement with MUNs/MEUs has led me to cultivate a deep love for the way the system functions, and it has become a significant part of my life. Between 2019 and 2023, I attended over 20 conferences while holding almost every position possible, including chair board member, director general, under-under the secretary general. This year's VeUMEU will mark both my comeback to the conference scene and my very first conference as a university student. To be sincere, I'm thrilled to be back, and this is a unique chance to work with such an incredible bunch of individuals.

This experience is going to be amazing for me because VeUMEU has a very skilled academic staff, and it gives me the impression that diplomacy is still thriving. Compared to my previous conferences, this one is different since it is a multicultural setting and the organizers and attendees are all interested in international relations and politics, so they all know what we are trying to portray.



My expectation is that everyone will have an enlightening experience as the enthusiasm for debating and diplomacy endures.

Now, let's proceed with our recent catch-ups with the President of the Council.

Honorable President, we would like to ask you about the work done by the ministers at the Council so far. Given that you were emphasizing on the formal language that has to be used by the members of the Council, do you have any comments on the competitiveness of fellow ministers?

To be honest, I am shocked at how much they absorbed throughout the workshop. They put a lot of effort into their speeches, and nearly all of them finished the allotted three minutes, which is impressive. Since they are, after all, "ministers" speaking for their own nations, there may be misunderstandings surrounding the language. After a few sessions, I think they will grow accustomed to the language. Regarding competitiveness, I feel like we have a fantastic discussion and debate ahead of us, but it's still too early to speak about.



As we concluded the first general debate and listened to the minister's statements, do you have any thoughts on the direction that the proposal may take in coming discussions? Do you see an improvement of the proposal or foresee more abstentions?

Given what the majority of the ministers said in their addresses, I think things will go in the direction of cooperation. I am eager to witness the moment when ministers take sides and engage in opposing discourse. Together, we shall observe what occurs. It's encouraging to see that the ministers' minds are still evolving about the proposal.

Last but not least, would you like to comment on the minister's forgetfulness of yielding their time back to the presidency?

Yielding the remaining time is a crucial part of the

procedure, and they have to be familiar with it. But it comes with experience, so I am tolerating and gladly reminding them & also expecting them to totally adapt until following debates.

Thank you again Ms Mutlu for your valuable insights. We, as the press team, wish you the best out of your work and hope that the chair's commitment will continue to contribute to the smooth running of the Council in the coming days of the event.

Bora Askinoglu and Francesco Girardi

Clouding Words

From the very beginning, the proposal for a Directive on the consumers' protection against greenwashing has been demonstrated to constitute a crucial part of the ongoing talks. The participants actively engage in discussing its components whether firmly supporting the document's adoption or expressing a high willingness to make their contribution through advancing extra provisions. The Slovak Republic is not an exception. The minister has delivered a brilliant speech highlighting the country's unwavering commitment to the successful passage of the Directive, thus enhancing environmental sustainability on the European Union level. Nevertheless, what represents a matter of concern is the usage of certain vocabulary incompatible with the role of such a high official.



Carelessly mentioned, the “direct impact” of the lack of consumer protection on Slovakia's objective of green transition does not bear any specific meaning and seems to be simply intended to “decorate” the speech, thus distracting listeners from an important blank spot. While recognizing the urgency of measures to be adopted and describing individual steps of Slovakia in this regard, the minister struggles to come up with any remedy apart from educational programs. Such a coincidence serves to reassure the emptiness of the bright expressions used and leads to doubts about the real determination of the country to tackle the issue raised.

At the same time, the minister seeks to make an impression of complete openness and great eagerness to

collaborate via sharing an ostensibly confidential piece of information on its comprehensive plan of amendments.



“Transparency and accuracy” are to be particularly promoted in drafting modifications of the proposal, and it remains only to guess what exactly confers the character of confidentiality on the mentioned points since the official's colleagues cover them as self-evident while shedding light on the noteworthy ones. The discussions could become significantly more substantial if the minister reduced the extent of vagueness that characterises the proposed amendments by voicing the opinion not only during the opening speeches time while chattering about non-relevant topics. Considering the speed of rumours spreading, it would be well-justified to clarify as much as possible at the very beginning, therefore, strengthening the overall sense of trust.

Today, we will see if the obscure measures are transformed into a clear amendment to vote upon. Whether the reason for such a blurred stance lies in the lack of relevant legislation or the minister's unpreparedness, the second version seems quite viable since it is hard to expect anything else from a person calling herself “the least responsible minister here”. For this reason, we are drawing the attention of participants to the necessity of a clear position presented to avoid any misunderstanding and reach a positive outcome of deliberations. The second day is ahead, as well as the time to correct the flaws made yesterday and fully dive into deliberations.

Journalist Aĝlaia Gulakova

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) seems to have a distorted definition of what qualifies and entails its presence as “an independent” and “self-regulating” advertising body in the country. Its claim to be “responsible for promoting, regulating and enforcing the highest standards in marketing communications in Ireland” is paired with an emphasis that the body has been functioning for over four decades now.

While this number could be a testament to its work in ensuring the highest and most truthful advertising practices in Ireland, it also portrays a degree of complicity among the Irish population and government for letting the biases and impartiality loom large for the greenwashing issue. Accordingly, to what extent can its existence be justified in the transitioning process of a *green* Ireland?



Sara Cincotti, the Minister of Ireland, repeatedly mentioned this issue in the last two interviews we did with her, the first being on 27 April 2024 and the latest at today's Council Debate at the Venice Universities Model European Union 2024. During the debate, she proposed that encouraging awareness among customers regarding their possible unsustainable purchases was crucial and active participation for their conscious and well-informed decisions was needed.

However, the primary agencies were the actual destructive forces hindering the green transition, and they should have been the ones held accountable for the issue(s). This latter argument from the Minister of Ireland, nevertheless, became the problematic point eroding her well-nuanced remark regarding the customers.

Her premises on holding the primary agencies and firms accountable were not grounded by the country's ASAI, "We need to, of course, as I said to you in our interview, make sure that the ASAI itself is transparent because if that's not the case, we cannot expect firms to be accountable." This is exactly where the loophole lies.

The minister's expectation for ASAI, a body financed by the advertising industry, was naïve and it could plunge the whole situation into a dire prerequisite as here ASAI had to be the initiator, a leading-by-example kind of concept, while still being the tokenized problem. Here, ASAI is a wolf in sheep's clothing and the minister was lost within the idiom to which these phrases are assigned.

Furthermore, in the research published by Adfree Cities in August 2020, Ralph Underhill exposed a critical juncture that should have put a halt to ASAI: "Through the [ASAI], marketing companies are left to regulate themselves despite the fact that they are the ones actively trying to manipulate us. They fund the [ASAI] and exclusively staff the panels in control of producing the rules that govern advertising.

They are also part of the group that decides whether complaints are valid, ..." If this does not sound concerning enough, he proceeded to find that "... the action taken against the advert has rarely been more than simply stopping it—when it has probably already run for a sizable proportion of its intended campaign length." Underhill's finding must be the call for a tougher and stricter measure through which the Minister of Ireland can strongly push for an alternative body and not a mere expectation. All in all, complicity can be opaque and the Minister of Ireland is in danger of increasing its opacity by relying on too long for the unreciprocated expectations.

Journalist Boy Ertanto

Inferences from an Interview with the Estonian Minister

We have the pleasure to interview the Minister of Estonia, Miss Michelle D'Andrea, regarding the recent meeting held within the Council to amend one of the most important and debated directives. In particular, we are talking about the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU. The amendment of this directive that aims at strengthening the consumers' protection within the European Common Market and is particularly interesting due to the impact that the transition to a more sustainable economy has in the world nowadays. Let's openly say that Estonia self-imposed a particularly strict environmental agenda characterised by ambitious goals.

Could you provide us with an example of what your country is proud about?



Good morning everybody, I thank you for having the opportunity to explain to the European citizens what the Estonian point of view consists of. We wish to be able to become the European leaders of the green transition, being able to lead other member states towards this path.

In doing this, we have to cite the Consumer Protection Act that entered in force in 2007, a remarkable legislative document of which Estonia couldn't be prouder of. This law enlists all those practices considered fraudulent during the product's promotion. Another act worth to be mentioned is the Advertising Act, approved in 2008, which strictly regulates the basic requirements presented in order to avoid misleading information.

That looks impressive considering the years in which Estonia approved those futuristic regulations! About the competences of the European Union. What are currently the policy areas in which the EU could be inspired by the Estonian legislative body?

In this case, we find it important to highlight that our legislation seriously considers the importance of specific words such as: environmentally friendly, ecologically safe, made by sustainable source or any other words with a similar meaning. Recently, through an amendment of the Consumer Protection Act, it has been made possible to legally prosecute those corporations that utilize such distorted terminology with a fraudulent intention.

It is not possible to not agree to a similar proposal. Regarding your role in the Council of the European Union, what is the specific amendment proposal in which your government is interested in?

We discussed with the other Member State about the possibility to add to the Article 1 of the Directive the advertising speeches an amendment in order to cover not only the written aspects of the 'environmental claims' but also the oral ones. Furthermore, we are seriously considering aiming at compelling producers to add a comprehensible and understandable vocabulary aimed to communicate efficiently the chemical composition and or the ingredients of the products to be sold within the European Common Market. The scientific utilisation by the corporations of a complex terminology could result in the dangerous practice of greenwashing. A common established table of terms agreed by the European agencies is the best solution to prevent the abuse of this system.

Today's debate appeared particularly harsh in the eyes of the experts who followed the meeting and this is probably caused by the impact that this Directive could have on the European corporations. Did you encounter any hostilities during your proposal?

Surely the impact that this topic could have on the European supply chain is of great concern for the legislators and therefore it is understandable the concern behind some ministries. I would like to say that, when I was representing Estonia, together with Finland and Denmark and proposed this amendment, we did not encounter hostilities coming from the other Member States.

This is the result of the wise production of political ideas.

We thank you again for your time and your dedication, also wishing a good job, hoping that the transition to a greener economy could occur as soon as possible!



Journalist Francesco Girardi

Czech Republic's Solo Act

It was a slow start to today's council affairs with every minister reiterating their commitment to Europe's quest for green transition and sustainability, without surprises or shocks. After the initial gathering ministers started to ramp up motions concerning consumer protection, and yet there was still only silence from the Czech minister, Stefan Gataric. It puzzled me because reading the position paper of the Czech Republic on green transition would make you think that they would have much more to say. But it wasn't about disagreeing with the premises of motions or the concept of the proposal, it was simply not caring about something that is not a priority for them.

To bounce back from the covid-19 pandemic, the Czech Republic planned the recovery and resilience program. After their plan got the green light from the Council in September 2021, it got a major update in October 2023. This included a new section called REPowerEU with an additional grant allocation of €680.5 million. The goal of the plan is to make big changes by mixing reforms and investments. The reforms deal with problems that hold back long-term growth,



while the investments aim to speed up the move to a greener, climate conscious economy. The EU contribution, grants and loans combined, totals 9.2 billion euros, or 4.1 % of the country's 2019 gross domestic product. Nearly half, specifically 42%, of the total allocation in the Recovery Plan is set for initiatives targeting climate goals. Among these, substantial investments are directed towards renewable energy, which is the Czech Republic's biggest environmental liability, with a budget of 480 million euros. Also, funds are allocated for upgrading neighbourhood heating networks, phasing out coal fired boilers, and enhancing energy efficiency in both residential and public buildings, totaling 1.6 billion euros. The plan additionally includes nature conservation and water management with a budget of 141 million euros and sustainable mobility receives a significant boost with an investment of 1.1 billion euros.



You have to pull the big levers before the small ones is what was conveyed to me this afternoon by the minister. When I asked him about consumer protection he said: "A-ha we want to change so we can bring more consumers to the green transition because there are more and more consumers who want changes but it is a question of time" and on the false advertisement motion "I don't see the problem in that now but it is better to have legislation sooner than later". Not really answering the question, you see that the Czech Republic is interested in huge infrastructure and societal change and not interested in specific legislation about consumers. But when asked about regulation suppressing small business owners he states: "I think no, it's easier now to open a small business because they can use that to their advantage, I can only see the problem with the big car industry in Czechia, it is a different starting point".

Although we talked about the big investments and reforms they are making, the Czech Republic is still near the bottom of the EU with respect to the environment, they score quite well with most indicators except they have the third highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in the EU. The share of industry in the Czech economy is one of the highest in the EU, which means higher energy intensity. Coal accounts for around 40 per cent of electricity production, and nearly half of household heating, which is partly why the country records some

of the EU's worst emissions rates from heating homes. What is the solution? The minister said: "Time, time, the deadline is August 2026". Czechia glided through today's council but I don't think it will be the same story for Saturday.

Journalist Jona Budanko

Navigating Climate Change: Finland's Regulatory Response and Sustainable Transition

As climate change emerges as a paramount challenge for the European Union, Finland stands as a pioneering force in implementing regulatory measures to address this global threat. With a steadfast commitment to sustainability, Finland has enacted transformative policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions and fostering a green transition. This article examines Finland's proactive stance towards climate change mitigation, analyzing the impact of its regulations on carbon reduction and sustainability promotion within the EU context. Through a critical lens, we explore Finland's innovative approaches, including the National Climate Act and initiatives like the Finnish Green Deal for Early Childhood Education, highlighting the nation's role in shaping a socially fair and effective green transition.

Through the interview with Mr. Alexander Kraut, the Finnish minister for the Council, we can reach the answer of this question: **How has Finland's government implemented regulations to address climate change and what impact have these measures had on reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainability?**

Climate change is one of the biggest dangers to the European Union (EU) in the 21st century. Not only does it have a threatening nature in the EU, but it also has massive consequences regarding social stability and migration due to its global character, putting pressure on the EU.



The EU's citizens see this in a similar way. For them, "Climate change and environment" is the second most important topic for the future of Europe, according to the Eurobarometer 2024. Also, the EU has to follow its international obligations following for instance the United

Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the Paris Agreement of 2016. Consequently, in 2021 the EU adopted the European Green Deal for climate neutrality in the EU until 2050. The EU has already touched on the problem of misleading or missing product information for customers, which has a big impact on the environment through buyer's preference for more sustainable products. To prohibit these practices, the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive 2005/29/EC and the Consumer Rights Directive 2011/83/EU were passed. These measures, however, could not ban these completely.

Finland acknowledges the importance of green transition and even is one of leading countries regarding this matter. The report of the International Energy Agency for 2023 stated that 48% of the total energy consumption in Finland comes from renewable sources, putting it at second place in the EU with almost twice as much as the EU's average (23%).¹ Additionally, multiple initiatives have been started to ensure the green transition of Finland. A National Climate Act has been passed in 2022, trying to reach climate neutrality in 2035, 15 years earlier than the rest of the EU. We also stress the importance of education in this context. This is why we designed, for instance, the Finnish Green Deal for Early Childhood Education. Only by education and information can the green transition can be socially fair and effective, leaving nobody behind.

Consequently, the Finnish Government is willing to comply with the directive under discussion and also highly welcomes the protection of consumer rights by providing necessary information and by banning the wrong one. It is, however, of central importance to ensure that these details are comprehensible for everyone. We thus demand a change in the formulations of the proposed directive in Article 1 and Article 2, emphasizing even more the need for providing information in an understandable manner to the customer, especially in view of old people, who represent an ever-increasing share of the population. The usage of too specific language could result in discouraging buyers from comparing the environmental consequences of products, thus diminishing the impact of the directive under discussion.



Journalist Maryam Kalhor

Trojan Horse in Europe

Delivering Insights from Hungarian Minister's interview

Good morning, Minister Cherednik. We followed with interest the operations of your government characterized by particular ostracism towards the distributive policies proposed by the European Union regarding the migrant crisis that Europe is facing. Since the Hungarian government is often labelled as having controversial positions regarding the asylum issue, could you clarify to us the intentions of your executive?

Dear Press, thank You for this interview, I'm glad to comment the issue. To begin with, we do not agree with such an occurred 'label' of controversial asylum policy. It is made to be coherent, consequent, and serving national interests. We aim at combating the abuses of the asylum process and at fostering integration of refugees into society through language education. The Hungarian government doesn't think in terms of 'the more the better' and primarily tries to not only receive refugees just to welcome them but also to enhance the Hungarian society. Let's live realistically, making empty promises and wasting our citizens' welfare is not our modus operandi. Many countries' administrations perceive immigration as a capital flow no matter what the long-term consequences are while we prefer our people over the profit. Hungarian government repeatedly stated that illegal migration poses a serious threat since it is a channel for terrorism and extremism. In our opinion, Member States' freedom is the primary goal of our representatives. Once again, it should be done following citizens' opinions, safety provisions, and realistic evaluation of what our society wish for the future.



As you reminded us, human traffickers are an important element that compromises the stability of the European migration system. What could be done according to the Hungarian government to limit the spread of this phenomenon?

Hungary implemented several measures to combat human trafficking. The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) reviewed Hungary's compliance with its obligations under the Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings. We were praised for our efforts to criminalize human trafficking, develop a national strategy and conduct information campaigns. Identifying victims of human trafficking among

asylum seekers and illegal migrants was performed with insufficient measures although the national police made all possible efforts to not separate these people. Hungary enhanced national policy to combat human trafficking thanks to the EU.

It is of great importance to cooperate with the Baltic countries as they massively began combating human trafficking. We encourage the prolongation of cross-border checking within some countries of the EU and the creation of new ones. How can we immigrants in our territory if other EU countries do not comply with their obligations? We want to build schools for children, not prisons for illegal migrants. Since we started to successfully combat human trafficking at the domestic level, EU called out for 'mutual trust between the Member States and to third countries.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum is currently debated within the Council of the European Union. How do you perceive the advancement of the new European proposal to establish a more shared common policy among the member states to face the migration crisis properly?

Hungary does not agree with the provisions of the proposal due to many reasons. We fully support strengthening measures to combat illegal migration and smuggling of migrants. But it encourages the absence of any internal border controls for people, though we already put forward its necessity. On top of that, Brussels does not provide Hungary with financial support to curb the flow of illegal migrants at the external border of the EU.

Going back to the pact, the shared common policy contains a distributed proportion of disembarked persons which does not take into account the countries' opinion. Some countries face notable difficulties in facing those issues, therefore, implementing such a general regulation is not the proper solution. Recently we began feeling a continuous pressure from the EU making us believe that this idea was doomed to fail at the beginning and the failure of promises of some is being shaped to become a burden for each.

Hungarian newspapers underlined how this more harmonized policy could be considered a trojan horse capable of disintegrating the current domestic migration system of Member States. Is the Hungarian Government convinced that a similar scenario could be a plastic representation of the future?

Newspapers always speak in superlatives, we all know that, but they are not completely wrong. Nobody knows the situation within the national borders better than a Member Country, so for the sake of maximizing everyone's utility and policy efficiency, countries should themselves keep managing domestic regulations. We do not exclude cooperation, but not at the imposed conditions. We did not assure something that is beyond our jurisdiction and capabilities just to be witty. We remember our duties, the EU doesn't!

Journalist Francesco Girardi

