



PARLIAMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

From the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the
European Parliament

SEPT I PLENARY

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KEY ISSUES

PARLIAMENT CONDEMNS DEPORTATION OF ROMA

The S&D Group led the Parliament to adopt a strong condemnation of repatriations of Roma recently carry out by some European countries ruled by the right, following a tight vote in Strasbourg.

Welcoming the vote, S&D Vice-Presidents Hannes Swoboda and Monika Flásková Benová, said:

"Today the Parliament has reinstated the EU fundamental opposition to xenophobia and violation of citizens' rights which over the last months have been shaken by some member states' rightist policies on Roma and the Commission's weak reaction. "Our group will keep following closely the developments of this issue and start over the next weeks a number of fact-finding missions to Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and other European countries to monitor the Roma situation and its compliance with EU legislation".

In the resolution adopted by 337 votes to 245 with 51 abstentions, EP says the Member States in question should immediately "suspend all expulsions of Roma". Parliament "rejects any statements which link minorities and immigration with criminality and create discriminatory stereotypes" as well as "the inflammatory and openly discriminatory rhetoric" (...) "lending credibility to racist statements and the actions of extreme right-wing groups". MEPs also argue that fingerprinting the Roma is illegal and violates the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. EU legislation on free movement stipulates that "the lack of economic means can in no circumstances justify the automatic expulsion of EU citizens". Restrictions on freedom of movement can be imposed "solely on the basis of personal conduct, and not of general considerations of prevention or ethnic or national origin."

EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES: “A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS”

S&D Euro MPs claimed victory after a crucial Strasbourg vote backed employment guidelines for Member States to implement in the next four years. Group spokesman on employment and social Affairs, Alejandro Cercas said to the media: "The Parliament wants to mainstream employment into the EU's economic strategy for 2020 because we need to correct imbalances. We need more than economic policies alone. We need policies with a real heart.

Member States should create more and better jobs and increase the employment rate to 75% of the active population by 2020, states the resolution on the EU employment guidelines which was adopted by 566 votes to 59 with 66 abstentions. Meanwhile, the employment rate for vulnerable groups unskilled women workers, people with disabilities and people with migrant backgrounds - should be increased by 10% by 2014. MEPs believe that 90% of 15-24 year-olds in the EU should be either in education, training or employment.

BARROSO’S STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH

Europe's present and future were discussed as Commission President Barroso presented his first "State of the Union" speech in Plenary. Announcing several initiatives Barroso promised better economic governance to deal with this crisis and avert future ones. He said the Commission would unveil proposals on September 29 for stronger national budget monitoring, promising that "we will match monetary union with true economic union", while making sure that economic fundamentals are improved as "a debt generation makes an unsustainable nation". On the job front he said he aimed to restore growth and jobs via the "Europe 2020 strategy" with the creation of a "European Vacancy Monitor" to help people find jobs. He also said his aim was to promote sustainable development and create 3 million "green-collar" jobs by the end of the decade. Steps that could help this included agreement on an EU-wide Patent and a promised 38 billion euro of savings for companies by cutting red tape.

"I didn't like your speech" was the emphatic conclusion of Socialist and Democrat leader Martin Schulz. He was critical that Barroso had not touched on the current state of the EU: "The state of the Union today is not good. You and your Commission are failing to play the role given you by the treaties, at least not in full measure." Mr Schulz promised to support the Commission in efforts to defend the "community method" against "intergovernmentalism". He strongly condemned what he termed "a witch-hunt" against the Roma.

IN SHORT

Welcome for the Suspension of Woman’s Death Sentence in Iran The S&D Group welcomed the announcement by the Iranian Government that the death sentence for Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani has been suspended. S&D speaker for human rights, Véronique de Keyser, said: "We hope that this announcement means that she will never face a death sentence again." The European lawmakers highlighted that the resolution passed in Strasbourg, calls for an end to all death sentences for adultery or homosexuality. Ms De Keyser added: "The suspension of the death sentence proves that the dialogue with Iran about human rights remains open."

Financial Regulation MEPs on welcomed in Strasbourg the financial supervision package that was endorsed by the Council on Tuesday but insisted this was the first step towards a regulatory system and not the final product. A large number of MEPs welcomed the proposal for a coordinated approach on bank levies so as to avoid competitive distortions between national markets. Even though the G-20 is not ready to adopt such measures, MEPs urged the Commission and Council to take a lead and tackle the issue at EU level.

EP Tights Rules on Animal Testing –EP banned using great apes in animal testing as it drastically tightened rules to scale back the number of animals used in scientific research. After two years of heated debate on how to protect animals without scuppering scientific research, the EP agreed to reduce the number of animal tests in Europe and enforce stricter rules for animals used in research.

Combating Violence Against Women A call to establish a "European Year of Combating Violence against Women", within the next five years, has been backed by a majority of MEPs, who signed up to a written declaration urging the Commission to take action.

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