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EURO ZONE CRISES: TIME FOR ACTION AND VISION

S&D Euro MPs condemned EU leaders' failure to face up to the Euro zone crisis and urged them to make a leap forward in economic governance. Speaking in a European Parliament debate in Strasbourg, S&D leader Martin Schulz condemned a deal between the French, German and British governments trading a treaty change on the stability pact, sought by Germany, for an EU budget deal to suit the British. Said Mr Schulz: "That is the reality of Europe. That is nothing to do with the Community spirit. It's actually tearing the EU apart." Martin Schulz also challenged Commissioner Olli Rehn to explain how Irish banks had passed stress tests six months ago and said of German Chancellor Angela Merkel that her actions were "a stress test for the Euro." S&D vice president responsible for economic and monetary affairs Stephen Hughes said: "We urgently need a leap forward in economic governance, vision and action, mutual solidarity and close coordination". S&D lawmakers warned that further tightening of the stability and growth pact will not be enough to resolve the Euro crisis. Mr Hughes said: "The path is clear: a financial transaction tax, a balanced system of economic policy coordination beyond mere surveillance and common debt management via a European Stability agency for Eurobonds".

THE PARLIAMENT STANDS UNITED IN 2011 BUDGET DEADLOCK

The Parliament is holding to a firm, united position in the deadlock over the EU budget for 2011. This was confirmed in the plenary debate on the 2011 budget negotiations with Commission President Barroso, Belgian Presidency representative Melchior Wathelet and Budgets Commissioner Lewandowski. S&D Group leader Martin Schulz warned EU ministers that their failure to respect the rights of the Parliament was about to plunge the EU into crisis. Speaking in a debate on stalemate over an EU budget package for 2011, Mr Schulz stressed that Euro MPs were not seeking more funds than ministers wanted to spend. Mr Schulz called for an agreement based on three core issues – flexibility to deal with unexpected expenditure over the next two years, commitment to full parliamentary involvement in discussions on both the EU's financial framework for spending after 2013 and proposals to reform the EU budget. Mr Schulz told the Parliament in Strasbourg that his Group was unanimously behind him. Full involvement of Parliament in future budget talks was "non-negotiable", he said. "Either we agree on these three requirements underlining the rights of this Parliament, or there will be no budget," he added. The House adopted a resolution by an overwhelming majority supporting this stance.

UNBIASED INFORMATION ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

The House adopted two draft laws that will stop Commission plans to allow pharmaceutical commercial campaigns. The decision will now allow accurate, independent and unbiased health information approved by national authorities to be made accessible to citizens. Members say that pharmaceutical companies must be able to provide basics, such as product characteristics, labelling and package leaflets as well as an accessible version of a drug's assessment report. Firms should also be allowed to provide certain other non-promotional information, for example on price or packaging changes, but only with the authorisation of the relevant Member State authorities. The S&D Group is pleased to have forced the right-wing to withdraw a possible loophole which would have allowed healthcare professionals to give uncontrolled information to patients.

IN SHORT

North Korean Hostilities - Speaking in Strasbourg, European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek strongly condemned the North Korea attack against the South-Korean island Yeonpyeong and welcomed the announcement of President Lee Myung-bak that intends to avoid the escalation of the worrying situation.

Anti-counterfeiting - S&D Euro MPs denounced their conservative opponents for voting down safeguards for people's basic rights in a complex global deal on copyright. S&D Group wanted stronger legal protection and a full assessment of the effects of a new Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) negotiated by the Commission and Council on behalf of the EU. But in a vote in Strasbourg, right-wingers defeated the proposals. S&D Group vice-president Véronique de Keyser told the press: "Respect for fundamental freedoms, privacy and data protection, respect for free internet, the neutrality of internet service providers and the safeguard of access to medicines are all at stake." The Commission claims that ACTA can bring progress in protecting the labelling of goods with their place of origin. There is no evidence that this is the case. The S&D Group deplored that the conservatives refused to ask the executive for clarification of this crucial issue.

European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) The EP approved €10.5 million in EGF aid to over 3,000 people in the Netherlands who lost their printing and publishing sector jobs last year, due to the economic crisis. The EGF was established to provide additional support for workers made redundant as a result of major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation or the financial crisis.

Fundamental Freedoms in Tibet In a cross-party resolution adopted in Strasbourg, the House condemns the increased crackdown on the exercise of cultural, linguistic, religious and other fundamental freedoms of Tibetans. It calls on Chinese authorities to guarantee "the freedom of all nationalities to use and develop their own spoken and written languages";

Safer Electronic & Electrical Products - Rules banning certain hazardous substances are set to be extended to more types of electronic and electrical equipment, including talking teddy bears and lab equipment, following a vote in Strasbourg. The update to EU legislation, agreed with Member States, also foresees a review that could consider adding new substances to the current blacklist. The report carried with 640 in favour, 3 against and 12 abstentions.

Moldova Gets the Green Light in EU Programmes – MEPs consented in Strasbourg to Moldova's participation in several European Community programmes and agencies, such as transport, food safety, customs, and aviation safety, so as to support Moldova's efforts to reform and modernize.

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