

OCTOBER PLENARY 2011

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**EUROPEAN SUMMIT: "PROGRESS BUT NOT FINAL DECISIONS" SAYS SCHULZ**

In Strasbourg, Council and Commission Presidents rushed to Plenary to debate with Members the deal on saving the euro agreed by EU leaders only six hours earlier. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy summarised for MEPs the main points of the agreement: a write down of 50% of Greece's debt (a so-called hair cut), increased firepower for the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) to prevent contagion, bank recapitalisation to establish trust in the EU banking system, fiscal consolidation and structural reform and measures to stimulate the growth in the EU. "Last night we took crucial political steps," he said.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso announced that he would appoint Commissioner Olli Rehn as his right-hand man with responsibility for all economic and monetary affairs including the euro. "Having a commissioner tasked especially with the euro shows that we want euro governance to happen within a communal framework," Barroso told the House.

The decision of the European Summit, offered "progress but not complete solutions to the crisis" declared Martin Schulz, the President of the Socialist and Democrat Group in the European Parliament. Martin Schulz lamented the slow response to the crisis from the EU leaders. "If these decisions had been taken a year ago, we wouldn't be in this position today" Martin Schulz argued.

"The social imbalances that we have in Europe continue. I would have liked us to talk about tax evasion and to agree to fight this problem with all possible means" he added. "The heads of state and government who took these decisions worth hundreds of billions of euros to stabilise the banks all object when we call for a small increase in the Globalisation Adjustment Funds for social projects. That's the reality today."

As for the possibility of treaty changes suggested by the Council, Schulz demanded full involvement for the Parliament and its president. The European Parliament is the basis of European democracy. Without the Parliament, there can be no treaty changes. The Treaty of Lisbon gave us important powers and we will use them to defend the interests of European citizens" warned Martin Schulz.

## PARLIAMENT VOTES FOR A GROWTH BUDGET 2012

Parliament aimed at a 2012 budget for growth, employment and innovation in the Union and at supporting development and democracy in neighbouring countries. In general, and largely following the proposals of lead spokesperson on the 2012 budget, S&D Group Member Francesca BALZANI, European lawmakers sought to restore the draft budget proposed by the Commission, which the Council cut in July. Parliament's position implies an increase in payments of 5.2% as compared to this year's budget, resulting in a budget of €133.1 billion. The budget resolution was adopted with 431 votes in favour, 120 against and 124 abstentions.

"This budget demonstrates our desire to strengthen the EU, create a competitive economy in order to relaunch growth," said Parliament's President Jerzy Buzek. A 21-day conciliation period starts in November, with meetings foreseen on 8 and 18 November. Furthermore, there are budget trilogues foreseen on 3, 10 and 14 November. If Parliament and Council can agree, the final budget could be approved at the December I session in Brussels.

### IN SHORT

**Public Procurement to Include Social and Environmental Objectives** - EU rules on public procurement contracts should be reformed to make it easier for small firms to bid for them, said the House in a vote in Strasbourg. This includes enabling authorities to award contracts not just to the lowest bidder, but importantly to the most innovative, or to those offering the greatest environmental or social benefits. Public procurement accounts for roughly 17% of EU GDP. Putting taxpayers' money to the best possible use is vital to relaunch our economy and create jobs, especially in time a crisis, says the parliamentary resolution. The Commission is to put forward major legislative proposal for a revision of EU public procurement in December. [Resolution in full - click on 25.10.2011](#)

**Europe Must Adopted a new legal framework for Restructuring** - In the wake of recent announcements of closure by large industrial groups like Arcelor Mittal in Belgium and Nokia in Romania, the S&D Group called during a plenary debate in Strasbourg for a new legal framework to be put into place regarding the role of the Commission in transnational restructurings. S&D Group Employment Committee MEPs called for clear rules and control mechanisms similar to those which exist in the area of mergers and acquisitions including ex-ante assessment powers. This would allow the Commission to assess the attainability, soundness and objectiveness of the restructuring on the basis of a clear business plan handed over to the Commission in advance. S&D Members believe that this power can be based on article 9 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU which includes the promotion of a high level of employment, adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health.

**More Support for Single Mothers** - EU Member States should help single mothers by setting up "family centres" to provide them with temporary accommodation, advice and education, says a resolution passed by a show of hands in Plenary. The resolution calls for tax deductions for single-parent households and other incentives for companies to employ single parents or provide on-site childcare facilities as well as access to training, vocational training and specific scholarships funding by the European Social Fund and Member States. [Resolution in full - click on 25.10.2011](#)

**Opening Up EU Labour Markets** - European lawmakers called in Strasbourg for Bulgarian and Romanian job-seekers to be granted unrestricted access to all Member States' labour markets by the end of this year. Citizens of both countries currently face labour market restrictions in 10 of the 27 EU member states, which will only be lifted after 2013. No negative effects have been reported in those Member States that have allowed

workers from Member States that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 onto their labour markets, notes the resolution, which passed by a show of hands. On the contrary, official figures, including figures from the Commission, proved that workers from Eastern Europe brought economic growth in the destination countries evaluated at around 1% of the GDP" [Resolution in full - click on 25.10.2011](#)

**Maternity Leave Revisions** - It has been a year since the House called for an extension to maternity leave to 20 weeks on full pay and in Strasbourg S&D Group Member and rapporteur on the issue Socialist Edite Estrela asked a representative of the Polish Presidency why no progress has been made on revising the rules. Radosław Młeczko, Vice Minister for Labour and Social Policy said that it would be difficult to reach a compromise on revising maternity leave rules based on the Parliament's amendments extending leave for mothers and fathers. During the parliamentary debate, Estrela pressed for a rethink of the role of mothers in our society. She said that in order to reach the 75% employment rate for women set out in the EU 2020 strategy, further measures to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life must be implemented. It is now up to the member states to react to the EP's amendments before the proposal can move on.

**EU Socialists and Democrats Win on Removing Child Porn Websites** - The Parliament backed an S&D call for removing child porn websites, following a year of negotiations on a new EU directive. The new provisions include better protection measures such as the removal of child porn websites; more effective prosecution of criminals; and special support for victims. The key elements in the fight against child abuse are the harmonisation of criminal offences and penalties, and better preventive measures. "It is now up to each individual Member State to transpose and implement the rules that have been adopted today as effectively and quickly as possible, and fully demonstrate their commitment to protecting children from abuse", said Claude Moraes, S&D spokesperson on civil liberties, justice and home affairs. [Resolution in full - click on 27.10.2011](#)

**Smarter Use of Antibiotics says the Parliament** - Tighter controls on the use of antimicrobials - such as antibiotics - are needed to fight growing bacteria resistance, says a resolution adopted by Parliament on Thursday. Virtually untreatable "superbugs" claim the lives of around 25,000 people in the EU each year, a figure that MEPs fear could grow. EP's resolution which was adopted by a show of hands makes non-binding recommendations for the EU and Member States. "The growing ineffectiveness of antibiotics is already a serious problem today and a potential health time bomb for the future. We need a clear EU and international strategy to prevent misuse in agriculture and medicine, as well as to encourage the development of new antibiotics." said Parliament's Public Health Committee chair and S&D Group Member Jo Leinen. [Resolution in full - click on 27.10.2011](#)

**Doing More for People with Disabilities** - The EU needs to get more people with disabilities into jobs and include provisions on disability in more of its other policies, says Parliament in a resolution, passed in the Chamber, on the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020. [Resolution in full - click on 25.10.2011](#)

**Air Passenger Data Exchange Must Include Stringent Safeguards** - A new agreement on the transfer of EU air passengers' personal data to the Australian Customs Service was approved by the EP. The data will be used to prevent terrorist offences and serious transnational crime and will be retained by the Australian authorities for a maximum of 5 and half years. The agreement will be in force for 7 years "The PNR agreement with Australia is a good precedent in view of other similar agreements, like the one being negotiated with the US, to ensure that the exchange of data with our partners will be limited to the fight against terrorism and international crimes, and that there will be

equivalent standards on EU citizens' data protection across the world", said S&D rapporteur on data protection, Birgit Sippel MEP. [Resolution in full - click on 27.10.2011](#)

**Parliaments Stands Strong for Christians in Egypt and Syria** - In a resolution adopted by a show of hands, MEPs strongly condemn the killing of peaceful protesters in Egypt and Syria and call on both countries' authorities to protect Christian communities. With respect to Egypt, the Parliament condemns the killing of protestors, and stresses the importance of an independent and transparent investigation. Furthermore, Parliament condemns actions inciting inter-confessional conflict, urges Syrian authorities to provide reliable and efficient protection for the Christian communities, and expresses support for Christians in the country. [Resolution in full - click on 27.10.2011](#)

**Tunisia's Elections** - MEPs praised the successful conduct of last Sunday's elections to Tunisia's Constituent Assembly in their initial findings released in Strasbourg and congratulated the people on turning out to vote in huge numbers. While noting some imperfections, they declared that the elections met international standards and called on Tunisia to start building a new democratic state.

**Tymoshenko Trial Could Jeopardise EU-Ukraine Association Agreement** - MEPs consider, in a resolution, that the conviction of Ukrainian former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko as a violation of human rights and an abuse of the judiciary. The resolution urges the Ukrainian authorities to ensure that legal proceedings in any appeal against Ms Tymoshenko's conviction or in trials of other members of the former government are fair, transparent and impartial. MEPs insist that Ms Tymoshenko should be allowed to participate fully in the political process both now and in the forthcoming elections in Ukraine. [Resolution in full - click on 27.10.2011](#)

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