



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

Statement by the President of the Commission and the President of the ECB on means to combat the economic crisis, in particular in the eurozone

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Wednesday, 18 - April 2012

The S&D Group supports the proposals of the socialist candidate, François Hollande, backing new measures for investment and growth in Europe. Reducing the deficit and public debt levels must be accompanied by policies encouraging growth, employment and investment. In order to stimulate investment, we need a financial transaction tax (FTT). If we do not introduce the FTT, European countries will be driven towards ever greater austerity. As recent studies show, more austerity will not lower the debt but instead lead to even greater deficits given that we have less growth in the medium term. In addition, we consider the fight against tax fraud and tax avoidance is a key source of income to increase public investment and strengthen Europe's international competitiveness and growth potential. As the recent study commissioned by the S&D Group shows, savings of up to €1 trillion can be made if we take decisive action against this practice.



Elisa Ferreira

Council and Commission statements on tax evasion

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The S&D Group calls on the Council and the Commission to find concrete ways of fighting tax fraud and tax evasion. The Group considers the fight against tax evasion is a key source of income to increase public investment and strengthen Europe's international competitiveness and growth potential. Recent evidence shows that tax evasion costs member states' budgets € 1 trillion every year, severely exacerbating their budget deficit and debt problems, and negatively affecting public investment, growth and employment. In the conclusions of the meeting held on 1 and 2 March, the European Council invited member states to improve the efficiency of tax collection and tackle tax evasion. Moreover, the Council and the Commission were asked to develop practical ways of improving the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion – including looking at relations with third countries – and to report by June 2012.



Richard Howitt

Human Rights in the World 2010 and the European Union's Policy on the Matter

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Tuesday, 17 - April 2012

A new EU Special Representative (EUSR) on Human Rights for the first time to be the face and voice for the European Union on human rights from pole to pole, will be the most significant outcome from this year's European Parliament Annual Human Rights Report. Rapporteur Richard Howitt who is also S&D Spokesperson on Human Rights pressed EU High Representative Baroness Ashton to agree the proposal as part of her current full review of the European Union's Human Rights policy, on which this report represents Parliament's formal input. Other key innovations proposed by Richard Howitt include a specific deadline for human rights specialists to be appointed for every country in which the EU is represented, for the European Council to establish inter-governmental consultations on human rights at the same level as other foreign policy discussions also for the first time and a requirement for third countries to sign up to the International Criminal Court (ICC) if they want improved trade terms with the EU. The report also contains deep condemnation of six EU countries who have failed to translate their support for the ICC in to their national law as required, of four countries in the European Neighbourhood who have currently refused to sign the UN's anti-torture protocol, whilst Richard Howitt names France and Britain for obstructing progress towards the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.



Véronique De Keyser

Situation in Syria

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Tuesday, 17 - April 2012

The S&D Group calls once again for an end to the violence in Syria and to the brutal repression from Bashar al-Assad's regime against its population. We hope that the efforts of Kofi Annan will deliver a positive solution including freedom for journalists, respect for civil liberties for all Syrian citizens and an end to arbitrary detentions. The international community and the UN Security Council in particular, have to live up to their responsibilities. The European Union must step up political pressure on Moscow and Beijing to stop obstructing action by the UN Security Council on the Syrian crisis. The crisis in Syria has an impact on the whole region. Following an S&D visit to Lebanon last week, our Group welcomes the efforts of the Lebanese authorities, their international partners, NGOs and the local population in assisting Syrian refugees and displaced persons in the north of the country, particularly as the inhabitants live under difficult economic conditions themselves. Needs are great and could increase with the arrival of new refugees and displaced populations. All possible means must be mobilised to provide the help these people need.



Liem
Hoang Ngoc

Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB)

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The legislative proposal provides for a common consolidated corporate tax base, meaning that companies and groups of companies operating in the internal market will be given the possibility to fill in a single tax file, effectively reducing red tape. The revenues of the tax will be allocated among the different Member States through an apportionment formula which takes into account three factors: employment, assets and sales.



Birgit
Sippel

EU-US agreement on the use and transfer of Passenger Name Records (PNR) to the US Department of Homeland Security

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The new Passenger Name Records (PNR) Agreement with the USA lacks adequate data protection standards, effective legal redress for EU citizens and suitable rules on the transfer of data to third countries. In addition, the data retention period of 10 years for crimes and 15 years for terrorism is far too long. For the Socialists and Democrats, it is important that the transfer of data is limited to its agreed purpose, such as the fight against terrorism and organised crime. We cannot jeopardize EU citizens' rights across the world. When negotiating with third countries, it is necessary to ensure that the same standards apply everywhere.



Alejandro
Cercas

Co-ordination of social security systems

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This dossier is an update of Regulations (EC) No 883/2004 and (EC) No 987/2009 to reflect changes in member states' national social security legislation and to keep up with changes in social reality that affect the co-ordination of social security systems. The present update focuses mainly on the social security of self-employed workers and aircrew members. We have ensured that the applicable legislation for aircrew members remains stable and the 'home base' principle should not result in frequent changes of applicable legislation due to the industry's work patterns or seasonal demands. This is in line with the demands of the trade unions representing this sector.



Pino
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Negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Armenia association agreements

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The S&D Group supports closer relations between the EU and Armenia and Azerbaijan. Association agreements with these countries are an important element of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative and the S&D Group fully supports them. For this association to be effective, the S&D Group believes that both countries need to reactivate negotiations to achieve progress on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The current status quo – which involves the occupation of the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, military build-up on both sides, bloody incidents on the frontier line and inflammatory rhetoric – is unacceptable and incompatible with European values. The S&D Group acknowledges the progress made by Armenia in the association agreement negotiations and calls on it to further improve democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the country. In this context, the S&D Group will closely follow the upcoming parliamentary elections in Armenia to ensure they are fully free and fair. The S&D Group recognises the strategic importance of Azerbaijan, including for the energy security of the EU, and calls on the country to be more pro-active in the negotiations on the association agreement. The S&D Group is concerned with the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan. It calls on the Azerbaijani government to fully respect freedom of expression, including for those who want to use the upcoming Eurovision song contest to highlight the country's democratic shortcomings.



Katarina
Nevedalova

Modernising Europe's Higher Education Systems

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This own-initiative report is in response to the Commission Communication on "Supporting growth and jobs - an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems". It follows Luigi Berlinguer's recent report on the Bologna Process in addressing the third-level education landscape in Europe. Modernisation of European Higher Education Systems must encourage people from different age groups and from all social strata to avail themselves of the opportunity to further their education and knowledge to allow the EU to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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