



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
Tuesday 3 July at 10.10 LOW N-1/201

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Hannes Swoboda

- Conclusions of the European Council meeting (28-29 June 2012)*
- Programme of activities of the Cyprus Presidency*

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Wednesday, 04 - July 2012

*For the first time, EU leaders not only talked about growth but decided on concrete actions. The implementation of these measures will take time, but the signal is very important. Social-democrat leaders' insistence to back fiscal discipline with concrete measures to promote growth and employment made a difference compared to previous summits.

*The Cypriot Presidency is a European Presidency and President Christofias is not representing only Cyprus, he is representing the Union in these six months and this has to be respected. We are in agreement with the Cypriot Presidency. We need to combine economic policy with social policy. We need a clear programme to combat unemployment, especially the high rates of youth unemployment. We look forward to a very fruitful and successful Presidency.



David Martin

Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement between the EU and its Member States

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Tuesday, 03 - July 2012

The controversial Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) is a plurilateral agreement aimed at coordinating global enforcement of anti-counterfeiting and anti-piracy legislation. The Commission negotiated on behalf of the EU with 10 countries. These negotiations began in secret and our Group was successful in pushing the Commission for more transparency. Many problems have been identified in the final text. The vague definition of "commercial-scale" and the potential threats to civil liberties show that ACTA would do more harm than good. An attempt by the right-wing to delay the consent vote in INTA was rejected, and Parliament will vote now on final consent. Without Parliament's consent, ACTA cannot come into force in the EU.



Silvia Adriana Ticau

Recording equipment in road transport

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Monday, 02 - July 2012

The objective of the new regulation is to enforce stricter rules on driving and rest time (social rules) which will increase the protection of drivers and road safety. The new regulation improves tachograph's functions, allows the use of GNSS, as well as the use of wireless communications for roadside checks which in turn reduces the number of vehicles being stopped for a check and promotes harmonised interface with other ITS applications. Personal data and geo positioning will only be accessed after verifiable consent from the driver. Member states shall not impose on drivers the presentation of forms attesting their activities whilst being away from their vehicle. The report is a good balance between improved road safety and working conditions on one hand, and the respect of the drivers' private life and data on the other hand.



Göran Färm

Project bonds - a new financial tool for growth

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During a pilot phase 2012-2013, €230 million will be set aside in guarantees to support the issuing of bonds for European infrastructural projects.

"In this situation, with tough restrictions on national budgets and capital requirements for banks, we need to find new ways forward to increasing investments for growth." says Göran Färm, S&D, the MEP in charge of the negotiations. By backing project companies with a guarantee from the EU budget and the European Investment Bank, the bonds issued by these companies will be safer and more attractive to capital market investors such as pension funds and investment funds in general. The risk for the EU budget is strictly capped to the contribution made.

"This is a way to make investments in infrastructure projects more attractive to investors, like pension funds, without excessive risks for tax-payers. New financial instruments could become a key part of the growth strategy now being called for by many member states, as well as by the US and G20"



Paolo
De castro

Common rules for direct support schemes for farmers

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Wednesday, 04 - July 2012

This vote in plenary seeks to strengthen the negotiating position of the Parliament in the future reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. The report aims to align the main rules of the CAP that is the direct payments, to the Lisbon Treaty, which introduced the ordinary legislative procedure in the agricultural matters. It is a very important issue since it defines the new prerogatives of the European Parliament. The report has been endorsed by an overwhelming majority in the Committee on Agriculture but the Council significantly opposed to the strengthening of parliamentary powers by virtue of the Treaty.



Luis Manuel
Capoulas
Santos

Direct payments to farmers (2013)

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This house has worked quickly to guarantee the approval of this dossier in due time in order not to compromise the payments to farmers in 2013. This dossier relates to the transitory year for direct payments to farmers, between the current and the reformed Common Agricultural Policy, and defining the country by country national envelopes for that year. Some ad-hoc provisions were introduced in order to guarantee consistency of previous transfers to rural development and direct payments to farmers mostly in new member states. This regulation should provide for a smooth transitional year, accommodating the phasing-in effect of new member states and relying on the adoption of a crisis reserve for unforeseen events.



Véronique
De Keyser

EU policy on the West Bank and East Jerusalem

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The Parliament should first and foremost call for the protection of the Palestinian population, including Arab Bedouin communities, and their rights in Area C and East Jerusalem, which is essential for keeping the two-state solution alive. Israel, as occupying power, must respect its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law towards this population, also through an immediate, complete and permanent freeze of all construction or expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law. The Parliament should also call for an end to the arbitrary and excessive use of administrative detention without formal charge or trial against Palestinians by Israeli authorities and for the release of Palestinian political prisoners and administrative detainees. On the other hand, Israeli settlers responsible for violent attacks against Palestinian civilians should be held accountable, as the lack of accountability creates impunity.



Bernhard
Rapkay

Creation of unitary patent protection

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In times of economic and social crisis, the unitary patent is a key achievement of the Group and confirms its commitment to support Europe's innovative resources. The unitary patent that will be granted in the 25 MS based on a single application should reduce costs by 70% for applicants, roughly down from 32000 Euro which is now the costs for patent protection valid in 27 MS. Patent proprietors should pay one common annual renewal fee for European patents with unitary effect. The unitary patent complies with EU law. Exceptions established in EU secondary law are contemplated in Art. 8, including the Community Plant Variety Regulation and the Biotech Directive, and also restricted acts under the legal protection of computer programmes. Background information on computer programmes protection, used by the Greens to justify their no vote: Computer programmes are protected by EU copyright law. We should be cautious and strike a clear demarcation line between different legal instruments. Copyright law and patent law are aimed at different aspects of computer software, of high technicality. The unitary patent creates special conditions for SMEs, which are the backbone of the EU economy (for instances, level of renewal fees, reimbursement for translations), but it is also respectful of the size of the market and geographical representation on Europe's innovation map (no. of patents per MS), thereby ensuring equity.



Olle
Ludvigsson

Access to basic banking services

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The aim of this report is to establish a right for all EU consumers to open and run a basic payment account. Everyone should have access to the standard transactions of everyday life, regardless of factors such as financial situation, employment status, credit history or place of residence in the Union. Therefore, in the negotiation within the ECON committee, our Group has notably supported the inclusion of all services providers and all consumers in the legislative proposal, a large number of services included in the basic banking account without any limitation on the number of transactions allowed, and a price as low as possible if free approach is not adopted by the member states.

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