



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

Conclusions of the European Council meeting

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Tuesday 23 - October 2012

We are glad that at least some steps forward were made with the agreement to implement the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) in the course of 2013 – although we deplore the lack of clarity on the timeframe.

The progress made is thanks to French president François Hollande's insistence on swift action. His strong social-democratic voice is making a positive difference in Europe, delivering on the promises made at the June Council Summit.

We strongly support full SSM membership for member states that are not yet part of the eurozone. This new supervision mechanism must ultimately be under the responsibility of the European Central Bank. All steps on this path to a banking union must involve a strong role for the European Parliament.

With more than 25 million people unemployed in Europe today, we must take action for our citizens and provide jobs and a decent standard of living. We urgently call for a more social Europe.



Eider Gardiazabal Rubial

General budget of the EU for the financial year 2013

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Monday, 22 - October 2012

The S&D Group deplores that the right-wing and liberal parties in the Parliament (the EPP and ALDE groups) refused to accept many of its proposals on European programmes for job creation and research. The EU budget is designed as an investment budget and the evidence shows that just cutting spending will not get us out of the crisis.

The Socialists and Democrats are resolved to reject an agreement with the Council if payments for Erasmus scholarships – but also for all programmes that are already underway – are not guaranteed.



Libor Roucek

Elections in Georgia

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Friday, 26 - October 2012

The S&D Group welcomes the outcome of the elections in Georgia on 1 October. The elections not only met the standards of OSCE (the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and the Council of Europe, but enabled a peaceful, democratic and orderly transition of power. This is a significant milestone that shows the maturity of Georgia's democracy.

We encourage the new government and the opposition to work together to advance Georgia's reform and integration processes, and in particular to pay greater attention to the issue of social and workers' rights. We look forward to the conclusion of negotiations on a new association agreement between the EU and Georgia, including a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement.



Tanja Fajon

Consular protection for EU citizens abroad

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Thursday, 25 - October 2012

The file provides the Parliament's view on the proposed directive on 'Consular Protection for Citizens of the Union Abroad', in the context of a consultation procedure.

The work on the file was mostly unproblematic and the main discussions revolved around whether the EU delegation or the lead state (as originally proposed by the European Commission) should co-ordinate consular protection in third countries. Our purpose was to seek to ensure a clear role for EU delegations in third countries and broaden the definition of unrepresented citizens to those who are represented but cannot access their embassy or consulate in normal circumstances.

These functions of European Union delegations include co-ordinating burden sharing and facilitating co-operation between member states' diplomatic and consular services at a local level; co-ordinating emergency planning; the provision of information to unrepresented citizens including through Commission and member state websites, and – where appropriate – allowing the EU delegations themselves to be entrusted with consular tasks.



Jörg
Leichtfried

Community regime for the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual-use items

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Tuesday, 23 - October 2012

This dossier deals with export authorisations for dual-use goods. These are highly sensitive goods that can be used for both military and civil purposes.

Tight regulation is essential to avoid the misuse of these items and the current legislation can be improved. Therefore several amendments were tabled, mostly with cross-party support from the S&Ds and ALDE, GUE/NGL and the Greens. In particular we looked at a stricter notification process to avoid loopholes. Furthermore, special attention was given to the rise in cybercrime and violations of human rights.



Antigoni Pa-
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European Year of Citizens, 2013

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Monday, 22 - October 2012

The European Year of Citizens in 2013 gives a new momentum to the debate on EU citizenship and puts informed and effective implementation of all citizens' rights at the top of the political agenda. EU citizens must be fully aware of the broad range of rights granted to them under European Union law and the new rights acquired through the Lisbon Treaty. They must be able to enjoy these rights without discrimination and a greater awareness can help to stimulate and strengthen active democracy and citizens' participation, which is vital in view of the European elections in 2014.



George
Sabin Cutas

EU-Russia trade relations following Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

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Thursday, 25 - October 2012

The EU is one of Russia's strategic trade partners, ranking as its first source of imports, its main export destination and a key investment partner. On the other side, Russia has become the EU's second source of imports (with a value of €158.6 billion) and its fourth destination for exports (€86.1 billion).

This resolution therefore welcomes Russia's admission as a member of the WTO and underlines how it can facilitate trade flows between the EU and Russia, while stimulating economic growth and job creation on both sides. It also underlines the potential for concluding a new partnership and co-operation agreement as a further opportunity to contribute to an enhanced partnership. Another important element outlined is the implementation of the so-called 'common steps towards visa-free travel' as an element of EU-Russia trade and investment relations.

The text does however warn against restrictive measures. These have included a ban on imports of live animals from the EU, legislation favouring domestic producers in public procurement, decisions establishing seasonal import duties and new legislation imposed by Russia concerning a recycling scheme for vehicles.



Inés Ayala
Sender

Discharge 2012: EU general budget - Council

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Tuesday, 23 - October 2012

Inés Ayala Sender, the S&D rapporteur for the budget discharge, has tried to find a constructive way through this thorny issue and to promote open dialogue between the Council and the Parliament over how the Council discharge should be carried out, especially as the previous 'gentleman's agreement' has become obsolete since the Spanish Presidency. In recent years the European Parliament has carried out the discharge procedure separately for each institution or body, based on the fact that the different institutions now implement the separate budget attributed to them in the annual budget procedure. All but the Council have accepted this separate discharge process carried out by the budget committee on behalf of the Parliament, leading to a plenary vote for each body.

Sadly, the Council continues to refuse to co-operate with requests for information from the budget committee. Given this lack of willingness to co-operate – and the unlikelihood of any developments in the next few days – it seems logical for the Parliament to maintain its position and refuse to discharge it again. Although the budget committee voted clearly against granting discharge, it also recognised the need to propose to plenary a specific inter-institutional relationship between the institutions. The text adopted in Committee establishes a solid basis for future progress for the first time.

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