



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
Tuesday 10 February at 10.10 LOW N-1/201

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**Gianni
Pittella**

Preparation of the informal European Council

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Wednesday 11 February 2015

Debts have to be fully reimbursed. However the renegotiation of the Greek debt and in particular the extension of the terms of its bailout should no longer be considered a taboo. It is now time to invest in economic growth to reduce deficits and public debt. The S&D Group has always fought for this approach in the European Parliament. The Greek people's decision to end austerity through growth and reforms should be respected by all the EU institutions and member states alike. The S&D Group is ready to fully co-operate with the Greek government, which is expected to strengthen the fight against tax evasion, tax avoidance and corruption.



**Knut
Fleckenstein**

Situation in Ukraine

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We are witnessing a grave escalation of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The last round of talks by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine on 31 January ended without results. However, there can be no military solution to the conflict. Therefore political and economic pressure on Russia, which is militarily and financially backing the separatists, must be enhanced and new diplomatic initiatives must be launched. The S&D Group therefore welcomes the decision by French President Hollande and German Chancellor Merkel to visit Kiev and Moscow on 6 and 7 February.



**Birgit
Sippel**

Resolution on anti-terrorism measures

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The European Parliament will vote on a resolution on anti-terrorism measures, strongly condemning the recent Paris attacks and all other acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivations. We ask for a balanced approach to security. This includes an evaluation and, if needed, a subsequent revision of existing measures. Alongside any new security measures, there must also be progress on the reform of the data protection package, which has been blocked by EU member states for several years. The current Commission proposal for an EU-PNR system does not meet the high standards for fundamental rights which have been introduced by the European Court of Justice's judgement on the Data Retention Directive.



**Victor
Bostinaru**

Humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria caused by IS violence

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We are deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Iraq and Syria as a result of the control of parts of their territories by Daesh (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant'). The extreme violence employed and indiscriminate killings have led to a large number of civilian victims – including a high proportion of women and children – and an unprecedented number of displaced persons and refugees inside and outside Syria and Iraq. Moreover, these countries and neighbouring countries lack the capacity and the resources to provide the basic humanitarian assistance needed. We believe the humanitarian situation should be seen in the overall context of the fight against Daesh and our responsibility today remains to increase the funding and to improve the situation and capacity of the humanitarian missions already in place.



**Maria
Arena**

Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation

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On the eve of International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, it is now time to act against these awful practices, which take place in many countries around the world, as well as in Europe. We are calling on the Commission and EU member states to take effective and practical measures to end female genital mutilation (FGM). First of all, asylum seekers at risk from FGM in their country need to be granted protection in the EU. There is also an urgent need to collect accurate data, enact legislation prohibiting FGM and promote preventative action. The EU should take the lead on ending FGM. It is now time to act!



Birgit Sippel

On the Commission and Council statements on Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office

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The S&D Group has always pushed for a strong European asylum policy, safeguarding the fundamental rights of migrants and ensuring the dignity and safety of vulnerable people is protected. The creation of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was one of the major achievements of the Socialists and Democrats in this field. The agency strongly contributes to an effective, coherent and practical implementation of the European Union's policies on asylum and the protection of the rights of migrants. Furthermore we support the strengthening of the humanitarian dimension of Frontex. Frontex should not only have a clear mandate for search and rescue operations, but should also have a strong role in terms of international humanitarian law, particularly the Geneva Convention.



Kashetu Kyenge

Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo can only be achieved through a non-violent, transparent and inclusive process; through free and fair presidential elections in line with the constitution; and through the participation of all democratic forces. We continue to be concerned about the political tensions, the arrests and intimidation of political opponents and civil society representatives, as well as the restrictions on fundamental freedoms in the country. We also continue to encourage the Congolese authorities and security forces to fully co-operate with MONUC (the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Congo) in the fight against all armed groups.



Inès Ayala Sender

Cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences

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The cross-border traffic information exchange rules will continue to allow member states access to each other's national vehicle registration data in order to track people who commit certain safety-related offences. The European Court of Justice annulled the previous directive because of an incorrect legal basis (police co-operation) and the legislators have agreed on a new text within the one year deadline set by the court. The directive has already proved to be a very effective first step in countering impunity on EU roads. It will serve as a deterrent for foreign drivers who will now be aware that it is possible for them to be notified of any offence they commit whilst abroad. No one is ever thrilled to receive a letter telling them they have been caught committing a traffic offence, but citizens welcome the fact that everyone in the EU will be treated equally, no matter where their vehicle is registered.



Marita Ulvskog

Promotion of employee financial participation

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The European Parliament has previously called on the Commission to assess and raise awareness of initiatives aimed at reducing the barriers to cross-border employee financial participation (EFP) schemes. We must not forget however, no matter how good these schemes may be, that there are risks for the employees involved. We need to ensure that they are not used as a substitute for decent wages, and we need to protect the workers' investments in the company in case of insolvency. Otherwise workers risk losing both their jobs and their savings at the same time.

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