



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

Preparation for the European Council meeting (22 May 2013) - Key debate

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Tuesday 21 May 2013

Now is the time for less austerity and more growth, jobs and social justice in Europe. We need to relaunch the European project. A Europe with 26.5 million unemployed people is not a Europe that we can accept. With youth unemployment at 23.6% in the EU and 7.5 million young Europeans without a job, young people are hit hardest by this crisis. We must ensure that EU countries fully implement the youth guarantee which the S&D Group has fought so hard for. €1 trillion is lost to tax authorities due to tax evasion and avoidance every year. We demand that a strong position is taken against both tax evasion and avoidance. These additional funds should instead contribute to EU governments investing at least 6% of their GDP in education and 3% in research and development.



Mojca Kleva Kekus

Fight against tax fraud, tax evasion and tax havens / rapporteur

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Tuesday 21 May 2013

An estimated €1 trillion in public money is lost to tax fraud and tax avoidance each year in the EU. In this current time of crisis, this is a scandalous loss for national budgets. We urgently need co-ordinated action at national, European and international level. Member states should commit to a headline target of halving the tax gap by 2020. Such an ambitious, yet realistic, target would enable them to gradually achieve new tax revenues without raising tax rates. In the report we list over 30 concrete actions to be taken in the fight against tax fraud, tax avoidance, aggressive tax planning and tax havens. Such actions include: a definition of tax havens with a specific list of sanctions for those who are put on a European blacklist; revocation of banking licences for financial institutions who assist their clientele in tax fraud; introduction of country-by-country reporting for multinationals in all sectors; and the creation of public government registers for the beneficial ownership of companies and trusts.



Richard Howitt

Progress Report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia / rapporteur

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Wednesday 22 May 2013

For the fourth year in a row the Commission has proposed that negotiations should open with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, but there has still been no progress. In his report, European Parliament rapporteur Richard Howitt stresses the need to start negotiations "without delay". After recent political crises in the country and urgent negotiations held in Skopje, he argues that the country can't stand still and describes the opening of talks as a potential "game changer". Howitt warns that negotiations must move forward on the country's accession or else risk a perilous backslide, in a country where ethnic tensions remain close to the surface. With a progress update scheduled in the European Council in June and Croatia joining in July, the pressure is mounting in Skopje, Brussels and other European capitals.



Emine Bozkurt

2012 progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina / shadow rapporteur

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Wednesday 22 May 2013

The S&D Group reiterates its strong support for EU integration for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). BiH citizens from all ethnic groups share the desire to join the EU, with 80% in favour. That's why the S&D Group calls on BiH to solve a number of urgent issues. The political elite's inability to reach agreements because of different ethnic interests has led to the neglect of citizens' basic civil rights. Election results that are judged to be free and fair by the Central Election Commission of BiH should be undisputed. To secure basic civil rights, BiH needs to implement the European Court of Human Rights Sejdić-Finci ruling as a matter of urgency. Several of the deadlines set by the Commission to comply with the judgement have already been missed, including a deadline for the end of March. This failure to comply has endangered the accession process as a whole. In addition, the failure to comply with another constitutional ruling has also meant new ID numbers cannot be issued so newborn babies are not getting registered. The state authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to comply with the court's ruling regarding citizens' ID numbers to ensure access to basic documents.



Vital Moreira

EU trade and investment agreement negotiations with the US / shadow rapporteur

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This resolution supports the start of negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the US, sending a strong message before the Council's approval of the negotiating mandate. The text highlights the most important areas in which the EU has significant interests, while being cautious on sensitive areas where EU fundamental values and cultural diversity should not be undermined. The European Parliament will be closely involved at all stages of the TTIP and will work to ensure a successful outcome for EU's businesses, workers and citizens.



David
Martin

Bilateral investment treaties and EU law / shadow rapporteur

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Investment policy is now an exclusive competence of the EU. The Commission is negotiating investment agreements with third countries which will include investor-state dispute settlement clauses (ISDS). This enables foreign investors to sue the EU or a member state for action which it deems to have broken the terms of the agreement. The S&D Group opposes ISDS in agreements with countries which have highly developed legal systems. However, this legislation also addresses the internal financial management of arbitration cases: who defends a case and who pays – the Commission or the member state? We recognise that coherent, EU-wide rules are essential if we are to deal with this issue. We have taken a community line, recognising that the Commission must be fully involved, even in cases where the member state defends a case. We also supported increased transparency and our amendments were adopted. The debate will be held jointly with an oral question on wider issues of coherent investment policy in the EU.



Véronique
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Asset recovery to Arab Spring countries in transition

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The Parliament's resolution should underline the fact that the return of misappropriated assets stolen by former dictators and their regimes goes beyond its economic significance. The return of such assets is a moral imperative and a highly political issue due to its symbolism as a matter of restoring justice and accountability, in the spirit of democracy and the rule of law. This issue represents an essential part of the Union's support for democratic transition and economic recovery in the countries concerned and can strengthen mutual confidence between both sides in the spirit of partnership with societies, a cornerstone of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy. Therefore, the resolution should call for the establishment - without delay - of an EU mechanism composed of a team of investigators, prosecutors, lawyers and other experts from member states, other European countries and the United States, with the aim of providing legal and technical advice and assistance to Arab Spring countries in the process of asset recovery. And moreover, request that this mechanism be duly financed by the relevant financial instrument within the field of the Union's external relations.



Sylvie
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Voluntary permanent EU relocation scheme / shadow rapporteur

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Solidarity must be at the core of EU asylum policy. Despite the fact that common rules are to a large extent already in place, solidarity between EU member states remains far too weak. Today, one possible route to solidarity lies in sharing the burden by transferring people receiving international protection between member states. To date, experience of intra-EU relocation has been limited to Malta. It is therefore crucial that the Commission presents a proposal for a voluntary permanent relocation scheme in order to further develop and encourage such initiatives. However, solidarity and responsibility go hand in hand. While relocation should be promoted to alleviate the pressure on the asylum system of certain member states and to share responsibilities more fairly, member states must ensure their systems are able to meet the standards set in international and European law.



Antigoni
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Mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters / shadow rapporteurs

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The aim of the regulation on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters is to establish an efficient system to ensure national measures to protect victims of violence can be applied throughout the EU. It is crucial that any victim of gender violence, stalking or abduction who has been granted protection in a particular EU member state, should be able to simply complete a standard multilingual certificate to have his/her right to protection fully enforced throughout the EU. The co-ordination of the European Protection Order Directive on civil matters with the European Protection Order Directive on criminal cases will ensure that victims of violence will benefit from the best possible protection throughout EU.



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