



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
Tuesday 19 May at 10.10 LOW N-1/201

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**Gianni
Pittella**

European Agenda on Migration

+ 33 3 88 17 51 59 gianni.pittella@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 20 May 2015

Europe is waking up. After a shameful delay, the EU Commission has finally taken a step forward on the way to creating a common European policy on migration, based on a mix of urgent short-term actions and a long-term plan to tackle the roots of the problems in Africa and Libya. Mr Juncker has shown his courage by triggering the emergency mechanism under art. 78.3 of the Treaty, and in so doing he has kept national governments in check by obliging them to go beyond national selfishness and to step-up to their responsibilities. Either solidarity is compulsory, or it's merely charity! That is why we welcome the proposal to set binding quotas for the distribution of asylum seekers, as well as this we are satisfied with the proposal for a binding mechanism concerning the relocation programmes. This must become permanent. This means that the Dublin regulation has essentially been surpassed by events and now this anachronistic and ineffective regulation must be revised. **#EUWakeUp**



**Maria
Arena**

Union system for self-certification of importers of certain minerals and metals originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas

+ 33 3 88 17 56 90 maria.arena@europarl.europa.eu

Tuesday 19 May 2015

Following the S&D fact-finding mission to DRC, the S&D group has continued to be at the forefront of the fight to ensure strong EU mandatory legislation on conflict minerals. We must stay true to what we stand for: Solidarity & Development. We ask that all the Groups join us if they are serious about the Sakharov Prize that was unanimously delivered last year: We cannot on the one hand give a prize for the defence of human rights to the great advocate and doctor that is Denis Mukwege, and on the other hand refuse to adopt legislation that would contribute to ending these human rights abuses. This EPP driven proposal would only regulate smelters and refiners (the first step in the supply chain) and not producers and manufacturers further down the line. As there are hardly any smelters and refiners in the EU, "conflict minerals" could continue to be sold to suppliers and manufacturers in the EU by smelters primarily based in China. Contrary to what the right wing groups announced after the vote, the INTA proposal will have no meaningful effect on this horrific trade if those suppliers further down the supply chain do not ask questions about where the minerals are coming from. This will also have a negative effect on EU smelters and refiners who will be competing against unregulated competition elsewhere. S&D group proposed that the entire supply chain should be covered and follow internationally agreed 'due diligence' - from the smelters to the end users. Every citizen should be sure that what they buy is not financing conflicts and human rights abuses, and we should use this opportunity to bring about meaningful change on the ground in this regard. Due diligence obligations are internationally defined as obligations appropriately tailored to enterprises' individual circumstances, it's size, leverage, and position in its supply chain. **#ConflictMinerals**



**Jörg
Leichtfried**

Decision adopted on the Digital Single Market

+ 33 3 88 17 54 36 joerg.leichtfried@europarl.europa.eu

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The S&D Group welcomes the Commission's effort to develop a fully integrated strategy that covers infrastructure, content and users, but wants to ensure that digitization is a tool that is developed in full respect of our fundamental values such as freedom, justice and solidarity. Our vision is to create a digital environment where technologies benefit us all, where citizens and consumers are adequately protected and businesses can operate fairly across borders. We need to ensure that new technologies will help develop sustainable, quality jobs and we call on the Commission to assess the qualitative and quantitative effects of the digital economy on employment, and to take steps to shape it in a way that is beneficial for workers. We also need to guarantee affordable internet access for all Europeans and need to invest heavily in digital infrastructure. And we need to reform European copyright laws at EU level to strengthen creators' rights, and promote investment in the cultural sectors, including a fair EU level solution to geo-blocking.



**Peter
Simon**

Prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing

+ 33 3 88 17 55 58 peter.simon@europarl.europa.eu

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According to estimations by the United Nations laundered money amounts to around 2-3% of global GDP per year. In order to tackle this global challenge, the EP will take an important step by voting on an updated framework for the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, which consists of the 4th Anti-Money Laundering Directive and the Transfer of Funds Regulation. This legislation obliges member states to create central public registers providing detailed information on beneficial owners of all corporate structures such as companies, trusts, foundations and holdings. The Socialists and Democrats have insisted on the establishment of these registers as a crucial step to improve transparency, by granting full access to law enforcement authorities, lawyers, banks and other obliged entities. Moreover, any person being able to demonstrate a 'legitimate interest' such as journalists or researchers will be granted access as well. Besides this, the legislation contains provisions on the information accompanying money transfers and on creating a black list of third countries with grave deficiencies regarding money laundering.



**Marita
Ulvskog**

Youth Employment Initiative

+ 33 3 88 17 54 43 marita.ulvskog@europarl.europa.eu

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Youth unemployment in Europe has been, for several years now, too high. However, and in spite of this, EU support for regions where unemployment is particularly high isn't used sufficiently by the member states. One reason is that several member states haven't been able to provide the funding required in advance to launch projects offering young people work experience or training. We now wish to correct this issue, and release 1 billion euro for this purpose. This money needs to reach those young people who need it quickly. No young person should ever have to begin his or her career as long-term unemployed. That is why we have put forward these questions and this debate, in order to ensure that both the Commission and the member states take action and start implementing these vital resources as soon as possible.



**Knut
Fleckenstein**

Eastern Partnership Summit (21-22 May)

+ 33 3 88 17 55 48 knut.fleckenstein@europarl.europa.eu

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The members of the European Parliament will have the opportunity to debate and evaluate the progress achieved in the relations of the EU with the six eastern partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and to outline the Parliament's expectations from the Eastern Partnership Summit (Riga, 21-22 May). The S&D group is a staunch supporter of an Eastern Partnership based on our shared values and on common interests. We expect full implementation of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs concluded with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and we encourage innovative ways of cooperation with the other countries that are not ready to take this step. We support the visa liberalisation process and strengthened people to people contacts. We stress our conviction that the closer relations with the EU should not be seen as an impediment to good relations of the eastern partners with any of their neighbours.



**Richard
Howitt**

Situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

+ 33 3 88 17 54 77 richard.howitt@europarl.europa.eu

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The S&D Group reflects deep concerns about legal threats against the leader of our sister party, the continuing failure to act on allegations arising from leaks exposing mass surveillance in the country and heightened inter-ethnic tensions. The Group is committed to cross-party mediation on the current crisis but insists that the government's decision to change the minister of interior and head of secret service must be part of a comprehensive response which can restore confidence and allows for the resumption of political dialogue. S&Ds call on all sides to avoid any further escalation in the interest of the country and to avoid the destabilisation of the whole Western Balkan region. We also call for an impartial investigation into the events in Kumanovo. Current events must not allow a return to inter-ethnic violence in a country we see as our partner, now and in the future.



**Kati
Piri**

2014 Progress Report on Turkey

+ 33 3 88 17 51 38 kati.piri@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 20 May 2015

Turkey is a key, strategic partner for the EU. It is in the interest of both to have a close and more effective cooperation. The S&D Group supports the accession negotiations with Turkey, but is worried about certain developments in key areas that are at the core of that process. There are concerns about the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and adequate checks and balances. We strongly support efforts to achieve a sustainable and democratic, rights-based conclusion to the peace process with the Kurdish community, and praise Turkey for the great humanitarian assistance it's providing to the 2 million refugees it's hosting. Despite setbacks in certain areas, things will not improve by shutting the door to Turkey. More engagement, not less, is needed to address these setbacks. The progress report clearly calls for more intensive dialogue and cooperation in the fields of security and foreign affairs, fundamental rights, and in upgrading the customs union.



**Inès
Ayala Sender**

Tobacco agreements

+ 33 3 88 17 55 08 ines.ayalasender@europarl.europa.eu

Thursday 21 May 2015

Four cooperation agreements are currently in force between the member states, the EU and Philip Morris International (PMI), Japan Tobacco International (JTI), Imperial Tobacco Limited (ITL) and British American Tobacco (BAT). These agreements can be considered as a kind of "out of court settlement" with the main tobacco companies, to tackle illicit trade in contraband and counterfeit cigarettes and to make annual payments to the EU and member states. With additional payments imposed in cases where significant quantities of their own products were confiscated by customs of the EU member states. The Commission negotiates these agreements and OLAF, which has been responsible for the practical implementation, is responsible for the liaison work with the companies and the customs authorities resulting from these agreements. The agreement with PMI is due to expire in July 2016 and requires the parties to meet soon with a view to explore whether the cooperation agreement should be prolonged.



**Pedro
Silva Pereira**

Financing for development

+ 33 3 88 17 57 07 pedro.silvapereira@europarl.europa.eu

Monday 18 May 2015

The Financing for Development report will be the Parliament's input for the EU's position at the Addis Ababa Conference in July. The post-2015 development agenda will mean nothing if not properly financed. The aim of this report is to send a strong signal ahead of the Council conclusions, by calling on the EU and its member states to lead by example. The EU needs, first and foremost, to recommit without delay to the international aid target of 0.7%, while presenting a credible timetable to reach this goal by 2020. The report promotes a cohesive and holistic approach to development finance, with concrete commitments in critical areas (domestic resource mobilisation, international tax cooperation and a socially conscious private sector) as well as a strong follow-up process in the Addis Ababa conference.

MEDIA CONTACT

Head of Press & Communication Unit - **Utta Tuttlies** + 32 473 85 34 07

Paolo Alberti
+ 32 476 955 144

Solange Hélin-Villes
+ 32 476 510 172

Jan Bernas
President spokesperson
+ 32 471 64 87 77

Dimitris Komodromos
+ 32 474 622 884

Victoria Martin De La Torre
+ 32 473 234 173

S&D

www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu