



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

The situation in Ukraine

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Wednesday 12 March 2014

The European Union must stand firm on Ukraine's right to sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Crimea. To safeguard the independence and sovereignty of countries in the region, all political players must engage in dialogue, not sabre-rattling. Unconstitutional regional parliament votes or referenda are neither legitimate nor democratic. We welcome the interim government's commitment to prepare a law – in co-operation with independent European experts – to ensure all Ukraine's minorities are recognised and protected. The Euromaidan protests have offered the chance for a new Ukraine – one that must be built on unity, not further ethnic and linguistic division.



Liem Hoang Ngoc

Role and operations of the Troika with regard to the euro area programme countries / Rapporteur

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The Troika has applied extremely controversial policies in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus as conditions for financial support from the EU and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Despite the lack of a democratic mandate they have continued to operate, with huge economic and social impacts. The European Parliament inquiry report is the first attempt to provide answers on the role and operations of the Troika in a transparent, open and democratic way. It strongly criticises both their policy recommendations and their methods, based on evidence gathered on the ground and in hearings in the Parliament. It calls for their policies to be revised and aligned with the EU's growth and employment objectives, and for a phasing out of the Troika to pave the way for a fully accountable European Monetary Fund, with full scrutiny from the European Parliament.



Ole Christensen

Freedom of movement for workers / Shadow Rapporteur

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This proposal sets out a fair and balanced basis for the mobility of workers, the enforcement of workers' rights and ultimately the equal treatment of all workers. It will not create further rights, but it will establish fairer, more transparent conditions for those European citizens who decide to move to another country to work. The S&D Group succeeded in highlighting the role of trade unions and employers in their fight to secure equal wages and conditions for mobile workers. It is important that workers can decide to work abroad with the knowledge that they will be met with a helping hand at the other end if need be and have their rights safeguarded wherever they decide to work.



Sylvie Guillaume

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 / Rapporteur

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The new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which runs for seven years from 2014, will help the EU achieve its strategic objectives in supporting the Common European Asylum System and facilitating legal migration to the EU. The fund has simplified and improved operating rules, and represents an increase of almost 50% on the budgets available through the previous funds for refugees, integration and return. The S&D Group successfully negotiated to include key issues: 1) EU countries must distribute resources fairly and transparently between different activities; 2) each country must fully involve civil society and international organisations in preparing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the fund; 3) a greater focus on the quality of projects funded for a results-based approach; 4) better co-ordination between the relevant players at EU level so that all actions are entirely consistent with the EU's external and development policies.



Dimitrios Droutsas

Personal data protection / Rapporteur

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The European Parliament should not abandon the 'package approach' and should certainly not 'kill' the Data Protection Directive, as this would allow some governments to have their wish and avoid such legislative measures. It is high time everyone took their share of responsibility towards European citizens, who expect the obvious from us: the best possible protection of their personal data and their fundamental rights.



Emine Bozkurt

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

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Most criminal networks use obscure company constructions to avoid detection by the authorities. Moreover, these networks operate on an increasingly international level, further complicating the issue of identifying the owners. In order to uncover and prosecute criminal activity it is essential to have transparent company ownership. This report on the fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive requires information on the beneficial ownership of companies to be easily accessible in open public registers – a red line for our Group in committee negotiations. There is an ongoing discussion as to whether certain forms of low-risk gambling should be exempt from the scope of the directive. However, as a leading voice in the European Parliament on the fight against fraud in sports, I have seen how sports betting can be used in combination with match-fixing, often for the purposes of money laundering. As it is not harmonised across the EU, sports betting is vulnerable to criminal involvement. Therefore it is important to cover all forms of gambling without exemptions.



Tanja Fajon

Internal Security Fund: instrument for financial support for police co-operation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management 2014-2020 / Shadow Rapporteur

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This agreement establishes one of two funds in the field of home affairs and relates to police co-operation, crime prevention and crisis management. In the negotiations, we managed to secure several safeguards: greater financial transparency to avoid fraud; the removal of any references to controversial EU passenger name records; and maximum spending limits for member states in relation to third countries and maintenance of existing IT systems. The S&D Group regrets that the Council was unwilling to allocate more of the €1 billion budget to EU co-operation through the fund, insisting on reserving the larger share for national programmes. The vote is scheduled alongside the horizontal regulation and the other instruments of the package, which our Group has supported and we have now managed to successfully secure.



Birgit Sippel

European Public Prosecutor's Office / Shadow Rapporteur

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Every euro of the EU's budget must be used to improve citizens' lives – especially in times of financial crisis. Crimes against the financial interests of the EU, such as fraudulent use of EU funds, run counter to this principle. This interim report represents the Parliament's view on the Commission proposal to establish a European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). As it is a consent procedure, the Parliament can only accept or reject the Council's text. The report gives a cautious welcome to the proposal, if all EU countries participate, while highlighting some of the serious difficulties. The S&D Group succeeded in including an annex detailing specific amendments to the Commission proposal. A future public prosecutor must respect the fundamental rights obligations of the EU at all times. Furthermore, as procedural rights in criminal proceedings at EU level are still not harmonised, the EPPO's scope should remain restricted to crimes against the financial interests of the EU, as proposed by the Commission.



Ivailo Kalfin

EU guarantee to EIB against losses under financing operations supporting investment projects outside the Union / Rapporteur

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The European Investment Bank (EIB) lends outside the EU either at its own risk or on the basis of a mandate where the political risk is guaranteed by the EU. These operations account for about 10% of the bank's portfolio. The European Parliament's decision will allow the external lending mandate to be extended until 2020 and up to €30 billion. This will give the EIB the possibility of maintaining its operations at least at the current levels. The regional ceilings give priority to the southern and eastern neighbours and to the pre-accession countries. The EIB will have to observe the EU principles of transparency, stimulating job creation, sustainable development and environmentally friendly technologies. The external mandate will be reviewed in 2016.



Karin Kadenbach

Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the production and making available on the market of plant reproductive material (plant reproductive material law) / Shadow Rapporteur

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The regulation is too technical and too complex for the current limited timetable. The 'one size fits all' approach does not cover the broad variety of existing plant reproductive material or the needs of operators, consumers and the relevant authorities. The complexity of the rules would be a real barrier for smaller companies, who would suddenly need to follow new bureaucratic rules. The regulation also discriminates against non-industrial seeds, endangering agricultural biodiversity. The large number of delegated acts makes it very difficult for MEPs to assess the practical significance and implications of the proposed legislation. Major concerns include the decision to replace 12 existing directives with a single regulation and the failure to meet a number of objectives such as simplification, innovation and addressing issues relating to plant genetic resource.



Raimon Obiols

2013 progress report on Turkey / Shadow Rapporteur

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This year's progress report has been the most challenging one to work on so far as the situation in Turkey has worsened in the last 12 months. The S&D Group has argued for amendments trying to strengthen a positive message to the country, especially to civil society, but we have also tabled strong amendments criticising problematic issues. This has included the situation of the judiciary, the ongoing detention of journalists and the need for more reform – especially constitutional reform – but also on the separation of powers and on creating greater accountability and transparency in the administration. In this year's report, our goal as a group should be to give a clear and constructive message to the country and civil society, while taking into account the critical situation and the multiple reforms that are still needed.

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