



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

Council and Commission statements - Rise of right-wing extremism in Europe

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Rising neo-Nazi extremism and violence in Greece - which recently led to the murder of Pavlos Fyssas by members of the extreme-right Golden Dawn party - is a grave concern. We need to monitor violent political extremism more closely and to develop stronger EU tools to protect democracy and the rule of law in member states. The rise of right-wing extremism has been exacerbated by the impact of the austerity measures imposed to tackle the economic crisis. It thrives on fear and distress, uses the EU and migrants as scapegoats, and poses a threat to European democracy and cohesion. We are committed to countering their challenge to democratic principles and to fighting every threat to fundamental rights and freedoms. We have led the way in ensuring that the European Parliament voices clear opposition to extremism and hate crimes. Neo-Nazi extremism and violence - in Greece and across Europe - can only be fought by uniting democratic forces.



Linda McAvan

Manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products

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After a bumpy start, we hope that the vote on the Tobacco Products Directive will go ahead as agreed and that a majority will support the measures in the environment committee's report - including large graphic warnings on packs and a ban on 'gateway' products like slim and menthol cigarettes which target young people. Most importantly of all, we hope that MEPs will back a mandate to start negotiations with the Council in order to be able to finalise the law before the elections. This time last year, the leaders of every political group called on Barroso to bring the Tobacco Directive forward as soon as possible. Since then, 28 national governments have reached agreement and everyone is waiting for the Parliament.



Sylvie Guillaume

EU and member state measures to tackle the flow of refugees as a result of the conflict in Syria

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At the beginning of September 2013, the number of Syrians forced to seek shelter abroad passed the 2 million mark, with unbearable humanitarian consequences. More than 97% of Syria's refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries, placing a considerable strain on their infrastructures, economies and societies. The EU must continue to provide assistance and funding for host countries in the region and take a comprehensive approach for more coherent, generous and effective protection responses within EU borders, including consistent, fair and efficient asylum procedures. International solidarity must include sharing the responsibility in receiving refugees. The more member states provide a safe entry into the EU, the less Syrian refugees will fall prey to human traffickers and put their lives at risk by taking increasingly dangerous routes. Should the situation in Syria deteriorate drastically, the European Union should also consider the possibility of applying the Temporary Protection Directive, which allows for humanitarian emergency evacuation programmes.



Bernadette Vergnaud

Recognition of professional qualifications and administrative co-operation through the internal market information system

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This report deals with the revision of Directive 2005/36/EC and aims at simplifying and clarifying the recognition of professional qualifications throughout Europe. It includes the introduction of a European professional card, the establishment of common training frameworks and mandatory continuous professional development schemes for certain professions (including healthcare), updated training requirements and the recognition of traineeships in the framework of written agreements. The security of citizens, patients and professionals is at stake during this plenary and the modernisation of this directive is an important step towards creating a real single market at the service of citizens, a major issue for the European Socialists and Democrats.



Libor Roucek

Rule of law and human rights in Russia, especially with respect to xenophobia and homophobia

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We are concerned about the Russian Duma's approval of a federal law making the promotion of 'non-traditional sexual relations among children and minors' an administrative offence. We believe that this law could stigmatise particular groups and lead to discriminatory practices, and it therefore goes against the European Convention on Human Rights. The possible impact of the law on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) organisations in Russia is very worrying, particularly as civil society has been under pressure in the country in recent years. The S&D Group calls on Russia to uphold its national and international commitments to non-discrimination, freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly to ensure all individuals can enjoy these rights.



Antigoni Papadopoulou

Gendercide: the missing women? / Rapporteur

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'Gendercide' refers to the systematic and deliberate mass killing of people belonging to a particular sex and this is the first time the European Parliament has addressed this sensitive issue. It is both a crime and a severe violation of human rights, and is a growing but under-reported problem in various countries. Recent estimates of the gender ratio between men and women in the world's population show a distortion in the ratio equal to approximately 200 million 'missing' women. These 'missing' women have been the victims either of sex selection during pregnancy - through prenatal sex detection and abortion - or following birth through infanticide or child neglect. The report specifically explores the causes, current trends and consequences, stressing the need to address and end all gender-biased sex-selective practices. Preventing them will require major and sustained commitment from the Commission, the governments of countries where this phenomenon is prevalent, civil society, international agencies and other stakeholders.



Evelyn Regner

Improving private international law: jurisdiction rules applicable to employment

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The Brussels I regulation is of the utmost importance for citizens in providing clear rules on which jurisdictions apply in employment law. However, the scope of the recast procedure did not cover certain aspects of these rules and improvements are needed to address specific issues for workers and to close loopholes exploited by companies. We need to avoid 'forum shopping' allowing companies to choose courts in member states with less trade union protection. The Brussels I regulation should be aligned with the Rome II regulation, laying down the general principle that the country where the industrial action was taken should have jurisdiction. To protect the weaker party, the court with the closest connection to the case should have jurisdiction.



Evgeni Kirilov

Effects of budgetary constraints for regional and local authorities regarding the EU's structural funds expenditure in the member states

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The financial crisis has severely limited the public finances of EU countries with consequences for budgets at the sub-national (regional and local) levels. Local authorities are increasingly faced with problems in securing productive investments as well as services for their citizens. The sharp decrease in revenues, as central governments cut funding and ask regional and local governments to contribute to austerity cuts, comes at the same time as an increase in demand for social services. The S&D Group is concerned that EU regions could be hit doubly hard by the financial crisis - first in their countries and then by budgetary constraints at EU level. In order to secure opportunities for future growth we support all possibilities for flexibility in the co-financing of programmes and policies.



Antolin Sanchez Presedo

EU-Mauritania fishing opportunities and financial contribution protocol

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After the fisheries committee refused the protocol with Mauritania in May 2013 our political pressure and the Commission's efforts have led to the improvement of the technical and economical conditions on most issues except cephalopods (squid and octopus). EU fishermen are banned from catching cephalopods in Mauritanian waters for the first time since 1987, a point of special interest for the Galician/Spanish fleet and the port of Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. Future agreements must rebalance the situation and take into account the level of activity. This fisheries protocol is very significant in terms of volume and financial contributions and the Commission must ensure the rules are respected, especially as there are indications that fleets from non-EU states are getting more advantageous conditions.



Ana Gomes

Corruption in the public and private sectors: the impact on human rights in third countries

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The European Union is founded on democratic values and human rights. According to the Treaties, our foreign policy should mirror those values but for far too long we have ignored the fact that corruption, both inside and outside the European Union, has hampered our ability to make a positive impact and foster democratic reforms in third countries. In this report we propose a set of measures to be taken by the EU and national governments, internally and globally, to effectively fight corruption in the world. It also includes proposals to prevent, detect and punish any European company or organisation which is complicit in corruption or human rights abuses in non-EU countries. The S&D Group will keep pushing to put transparency and integrity at the top of the EU agenda.

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