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PARLIAMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE S&D GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT • December 2013

CONTENT

- European Council not to Destroy the Foundations of Europe
- Condemnation of Shameful Populist Campaign Against Women's Rights
- Full Support & Solidarity with Peaceful Protesters in Ukraine
- Erasmus+
- In Short :

S&D GROUP PRESIDENT WARNS EUROPEAN COUNCIL NOT TO DESTROY THE FOUNDATIONS OF EUROPE

The plenary session of the European Parliament meeting in Strasbourg held its key debate on next week's European Council, which is set to discuss common European security and defence policy as well as economic and social policy. Speaking in the debate, Hannes Swoboda, president of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, said:

"The neo-liberal budget straitjacket continues to cripple Europe's economy and with it social progress: the foundations of Europe. Year after year, Europe's economy is wasting away – while the US is clocking up over 3% growth – with no strategy on how to create growth or employment. In addition to the deep black hole where we would like to see the European Council's vision on how to get Europe back on track – and not in decades but in months and years – we are now seeing new nationalisms and divisions stirred up among European workers and European citizens. Instead of playing poor people of different countries off against one another, their goal should be to find real solutions to poverty and social inequalities.

"The first priority has to be to get Europeans – and especially young Europeans – back to work. The European Youth Guarantee is the first step in this game. I urge the Commission to use all available funds – including for instance the €1.7bn Libor and Euribor fines from the big banks – to help people back to work." On the issue of common security and defence policy, Hannes Swoboda added:

"With international attention shifting to emerging powers in Asia and Latin America, Europe must work harder and better, so as not to become the old forgotten continent. Only unity on

issues of global relevance will ensure that the EU maintains its role as a key player in the international arena. Stronger co-operation in the defence sector will reinforce our international role and can simultaneously create jobs and innovation in industrial development and research." Please [click here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2jDUWvz0i0#t=11) to watch the video.

S&D EURO MPs CONDEMN SHAMEFUL POPULIST CAMPAIGN AGAINST WOMEN'S RIGHTS

S&D Group lawmakers condemned the manipulative and obstructive campaign from right-wing groups against a resolution supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, in Europe and beyond. The European Parliament failed in Strasbourg to adopt a text drafted by S&D Member Edite Estrela losing a valuable opportunity to support the rights of women and girls. S&D Group leader Hannes Swoboda told the media:

"I am appalled by the misleading and demagogical campaign conducted by the conservatives and the far right, inside and outside this Parliament. On several occasions, this assembly has recognised the right for everyone to make their own informed and responsible choices on their sexual and reproductive life, including the right to abortion. By opposing the resolution, the conservatives are throwing away many years of progress on women's rights." S&D MEP and author of the text Edite Estrela added:

"The conservatives have showed their real faces. By joining forces with the far right, they have opened a new front against the EU's founding principles of human dignity, freedom, equality and non-discrimination. The S&D Group will keep fighting for the right for everyone to have access to affordable healthcare services. Access to contraception, sex education, healthcare services and voluntary family planning helps women to decide the number of children they want, reduces teenage pregnancies and allows women and girls to get an education. This is crucial at a time where many women increasingly face obstacles preventing access to abortion services."

FULL SUPPORT & SOLIDARITY WITH PEACEFUL PROTESTERS IN UKRAINE

The Parliament expressed deep concerns about the escalation of violence in Ukraine and called on the authorities to promote peaceful dialogue rather than violence. MEPs voted on a resolution on the outcome of the Vilnius Summit and the future of the Eastern Partnership, where the position of Ukraine is now in doubt. Commenting on the situation, S&D Group president Hannes Swoboda said to the press:

"The offer of signing an association agreement with the EU remains open – but for this we need a reliable partner. So far, President Yanukovich has not been a reliable partner. We want to express our full support and solidarity with the peaceful protesters in Kiev's Maidan Square. The crowds that are demanding the rule of law and closer ties with Europe are clearly expressing the will of the Ukrainian people. We condemn in the strongest terms the violence used against peaceful protesters. Reports that armed security forces have randomly seized the property and

data of political parties are another worrying indication that the Ukrainian government may not be serious about trying to find a solution but just buying time until the next incidents."

Please [click here](#) to watch the debate. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/video?debate=1386684265201&streamingLanguage=en>

ERASMUS+

With a simple signature, the revamped version of Europe's most popular student programme was signed into law on 11 December by EP President Martin Schulz. Erasmus+ boasts a budget of more than €14 billion for 2014-2020, nearly twice as much as its current funding, giving more than four million young Europeans the chance to study or train abroad. The new programme will kick off on 1 January 2014. Erasmus+ supports 13-30 year old students, trainees, apprentices, volunteers, teaching staff or trainers to seek education, training or even organised sporting activities in other EU countries. The leaders of youth clubs and voluntary workers will now also be eligible for Erasmus+ funding. Erasmus+ introduces the postgraduate European Student loan guarantee facility, which will provide partial guarantees for postgraduate student loans. The programme brings together existing education and training programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, maintaining their names as they are already well known. It also includes the Youth in Action programme and for the first time covers sport.

IN SHORT

Conservatives water down Sharing data for Fight Tax Evasion - S&D lawmakers slammed the conservatives for watering down an EU law to extend the automatic exchange of information between EU tax administrations with the aim to intensify the fight against tax evasion. According to the proposal, dividends, capital gains and all forms of financial income and account balances would be added to the list of information to be exchanged within the EU as of 1 January 2014. But the conservatives passed an amendment leaving member states the discretionary power to decide on the new categories of information subject to the obligation of automatic exchange of information. S&D Euro MP George Cutaş, who drafted the European Parliament resolution, said after the vote:

"We are glad that the most problematic amendment from the European People's Party (EPP) did not pass at plenary vote. The exchange of information between tax authorities of member states remains mandatory and will not be subject to the conditionality of having the information available, which would have made the directive redundant. However, the S&D Group decided to abstain at the final vote, as the amendment asking for automatic exchange of information to be subject to interpretation of national law did pass at the Strasbourg vote. This is undermining the development of a European definition of automatic exchange of information. If the EU wants to be serious about tax evasion, there can be no exception to the automatic exchange of information.

Edward Snowden to participate in European Parliament's Inquiry - Edward Snowden, the former NSA analyst, will be formally invited to participate in the Inquiry into the mass

surveillance following the PRISM revelation in July. Edward Snowden will answer MEPs questions by a pre-recorded message as he is unable to do a live video conference which could reveal his location in Russia. Claude Moraes MEP, rapporteur for the Parliament's Inquiry on the mass surveillance of EU citizens and S&D spokesperson on civil liberties, justice and home affairs, said to the media: "As the lead MEP of the Parliament's Inquiry into mass surveillance, I am delighted to see that Edward Snowden will be invited to make a statement to the EP where he will be answering our questions. These questions will be rigorous and fair and will touch on many of the issues that most citizens would want to ask of the person who has been the source of the unprecedented historic set of allegations which have changed the landscape in relation to privacy, security, data protection and some aspects of the relationship between the EU and the US. "

Green Light for Sustainable Fisheries Reform - The House meeting in Strasbourg overwhelmingly supported a new reform of the fisheries sector masterminded by S&D rapporteur Ulrike Rodust. The cornerstone of the new reform is the introduction of strict rules to prevent overfishing thus allowing Europe's fish stocks to regenerate. By 2015, fisheries ministers must set sustainable quotas to ensure that by 2020 the maximum fishing catch allowed will not damage fish stocks. Following the vote, Ulrike Rodust MEP, who is also S&D spokesperson on fisheries, said: "With this vote we made sure that European fisheries will, finally, be managed in a sustainable way. This will create a better future both for fishermen all over Europe while protecting the environmental state of our oceans. Overfishing and the wasteful practice of discarding edible fish will be phased out quickly while providing feasible solutions to help fishermen adapt to the new realities. We also made sure that in the future, the EU will have to act responsibly when fishing in third country waters, especially in the developing world. Please [find here](#) a video statement by the S&D MEPs on the new fisheries reform. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7MCINKBz20&feature=youtu.be>

S&D Group Push to Save the EU Carbon Market System - The plenary of the House backed a proposal to stabilise the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) by delaying the auctioning of surplus allowances. The chairman of the Parliamentary Environment Committee, S&D MEP Matthias Groote, negotiated a proposal which was passed by the Parliament last July. EU governments subsequently endorsed the Parliament's proposal in the Council without any changes and the Parliament held its final vote in Strasbourg. S&D MEP Matthias Groote said to the media:

"The Parliament lived up to a very important responsibility today. This is the first time that the Council of Ministers has backed a position from the Parliament without a change. It is important to react fast to the current troubles of the ETS in order to stabilise the system and to bring certainty for investors in clean and innovative technologies. The EU is a leading global player in fighting climate change and switching to smart economic growth. The vote today is an important signal that we intend to live up to this responsibility and to keep leading. The world is looking at Europe. In fact, many countries are considering adopting a carbon market scheme. We can lead by example here, and show the outside world that the system works, even if we still need to correct some shortcomings that we found along the way."

Human Rights to be observed with Foreign Partners - MEPs appeal to the EU to ensure that human rights and democracy are observed in all aspects of its relations with its partners in a resolution on human rights in the world in 2012, adopted in Strasbourg. They also call on the Foreign Affairs Council to hold a public annual debate on human rights. Please [click here](#) to read the legislative text. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0575+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Financing Development Co-operation - The S&D Group welcomed the adoption in the plenary of a regulation on the development co-operation instrument for 2014-2020. This measure will finance EU development co-operation, especially the fight against poverty and tools to improve food security. Despite the fact that the Parliament could not obtain all its demands for strategic decisions to be made at a national level for each priority sector, the final compromise reflects the European Parliament's priorities to a large extent and also increases its scrutiny role.

Please [click here](#) to read the legislative text. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0571+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Commemoration of Willy Brandt - With an event organised in Strasbourg within the context of its [Relaunching Europe](#) (<http://www.relaunchingeurope.eu/>) initiative, the S&D Group commemorated Willy Brandt, the former German Chancellor, former SPD Party Leader, former MEP and former President of Socialist International. Willy Brandt would have turned 100 this year. Speakers at the event were among others Hannes Swoboda, S&D Group President, and Martin Schulz, EP President, as well former European Parliament presidents, Enrique Barón Crespo and Klaus Hänsch. Please [click here](#) to watch the event. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmAg-AAPVxU&feature=c4-overview&list=UUcrZex5NAJkZJ5DRGtK02vw>

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