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S&D GROUP PRESIDENT ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND POVERTY MIGRATION

Speaking in a European Parliament debate on freedom of movement, Hannes Swoboda, president of the Socialists and Democrats Group launched an appeal to focus on reality.

"Conservatives and the far-right have started a distraction debate that spreads fear, hatred and misinformation. In reality, less than 3% of citizens in Europe are migrants from another European country. EU migrants are more likely to have a job than someone living in their own country. And on average, they also contribute more to social welfare systems. The real problem in labour migration is that some national governments do nothing to stop exploitation, unacceptably low wages and illegal labour. Wage and labour policies are national competences – national governments should do their work to create fair policies instead of creating fear and paranoia. The so-called 'poverty migration' is a problem because poverty is a problem – not migration. There are enough real problems in Europe; we do not need to invent new ones.

In Plenary, the Parliament adopted a resolution strongly rejecting recent populist demands to restrict freedom of movement within the EU. In particular, Members voted to "reject entirely any proposal to cap the number of EU migrants" as these would restrict EU citizens' fundamental rights. In addition, any obstacle to workers' mobility would damage the EU's economic interests and competitiveness.

More information on freedom of movement in the EU and on the position of the S&D Group on this issue can be found at:

http://socialistsanddemocrats.eu/sites/default/files/140115_freemovement.pdf

Click here to read adopted plenary resolution:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140116&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

NEW RULES ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT & CONCESSIONS WILL HELP FIGHT SOCIAL DUMPING AND UNFAIR COMPETITION

After two years of intense discussions, the Parliament meeting in Strasbourg gave its final green light to new rules affecting procurement and concessions contracts between public authorities and businesses. In a separate vote on the external dimension of public procurement, European lawmakers urged the Commission to defend these rules when it negotiates trade and investment agreement with non-EU countries. S&D Members welcomed the outcome of the votes which will allow fairer competition and avoid social dumping. The introduction of a mandatory social clause guaranteeing the respect for labour law and collective agreements in the workplace is an important improvement to the European rules on public procurement. The revised directive on public procurement will allow public authorities to make sustainable choices. The Parliament's lead negotiator, S&D Group Member Marc Tarabella said to the media:

"These new rules are a step forward in the fight against social dumping and will offer a high-quality service for citizens. Public authorities will be able to insist that social criteria are respected, including collective bargaining for tenders. This will help to eradicate abuses on construction sites where social dumping has become routine. For the first time, mandatory rules on transparency will be introduced in the subcontracting chain. We need to identify clear responsibilities when several subcontractors are involved in the same project. Contracting authorities will be able to award procurement contracts on the basis of the 'most economically advantageous tender' and no longer on the lowest price offer. Public procurement procedures will be more transparent and effective in order to ensure sound and efficient public expenditure."

SWOBODA ON THE GREEK PRESIDENCY: "TEACH EUROPE THE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED"

The European Parliament welcomed Greek prime minister Antonis Samaras for the beginning of the Hellenic Presidency. Speaking in the debate, Hannes Swoboda, president of the S&D Group told the press:

"The climate of prejudice and suspicion against Greece is revolting. We are convinced that Greece can deliver a successful, meaningful presidency and teach Europe the lessons it has learned from the crisis: the need for social equality, solidarity and fairness that Greece itself has been denied by the Troika. For real European progress we need real European solutions. The community method is the only way forward that will not increase inequalities and injustice. Inter-governmental or bilateral contracts erode the foundations of Europe. Greece will have to deliver significant progress on a number of files, notably the banking union and data protection for European citizens. Regarding the banking union, we remain resolute in our demand for a constructive solution. No deal is better than a bad deal; and certainly better than the current inter-governmental agreement. The Troika has deeply scarred Greece and its people – this presidency will be an opportunity to look closely at the complete lack of democratic legitimacy in the Troika system. The Troikas have to be phased out and the European Commission must take full responsibility for assistance programmes."

Click here to watch an extract of the Plenary debate:

<http://www.socialistgroup.eu/channel/hannes-swoboda-greek-presidency-council-european-union>

TURNING THE CLOCK BACK ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IS UNACCEPTABLE

S&D Group lawmakers stood up for women's rights in Spain and against the Spanish government's plan to abolish the right to abortion. In a debate demanded by the S&D Group during the Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg, S&D Members stressed that "turning back the clock on women's rights is unacceptable". S&D Member Iratxe García said:

"Europe can't stay passive faced with a decision that will undo many years of the fight for women's dignity and rights. The government's plans will compel Spanish women to become mothers even if they don't wish to be. The law is creating discrimination. Women who can afford it will be able to go abroad to abort whereas the poorest women will end up risking backstreet abortions. As a result, the next generation of women will have less rights than our mothers." S&D Euro MP Edite Estrela, the author of a draft resolution on sexual and reproductive rights, stressed:

"What is happening in Spain with the abortion law is affecting all women. Sexual and reproductive health is not a question of culture. It is a fundamental right – freedom, dignity and respect for women. " S&D spokeswoman on women's rights Britta Thomsen added:

"Gender equality, freedom and dignity are among the basic values of the EU. Such values include the right to sexual and reproductive health. We hear that the Spanish government is taking a huge step back and taking the legislation back 15 years. The result will be that women who need an abortion will go abroad and those who stay at home will risk their lives by having illegal abortions. We know how many women died in the 50s and 60s when they had to choose illegal ways to end pregnancies."

Watch the plenary debate here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/video?debate=1389863873464>

IN SHORT

S&D Group Secures a deal on new rules on trading - A deal has been struck last night between the 28 EU member states and the Parliament on the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive and Regulation (MIFID II) which will introduce fundamental reform of EU financial markets. Commenting on new rules to tackle commodity speculation, Vice Chair of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee and one of the lead negotiators for the EP, S&D Group Member Arlene McCarthy said:

"For the first time the EU will regulate commodities to tackle food speculation. High and volatile food prices have a devastating impact on poor and food dependent countries. We have fought hard, working closely with NGOs and campaigners, to ensure the establishment of an effective system of limits on the positions taken by financial players to curb speculation and help decrease price volatility and inflation of staple foods and other commodities. We have achieved this despite UK Government and Conservative Members attempts to weaken and strip the position limits rules of any effectiveness."

There must be a rational debate in citizenship controversy - A recent draft bill in Malta proposing granting citizenship to people who make significant investments, among other

criteria, has led to a heated debate on the issue across the EU. Hannes Swoboda, president of the S&D Group in the Parliament, commented on the debate:

"Granting citizenship in any European country also means granting European citizenship, so, this is therefore not a national issue which just concerns Malta, but a European issue. Because it is a European question, we need a co-ordinated European approach to citizenship rules. The recent Maltese case is merely an opportunity to discuss the topic and highlight the need for a European framework. Similar practices are in place in other countries and this artificial overreaction is unhelpful. The S&D Group agrees in principle with the main points of the tabled common resolution. We will however demand the deletion of individual references to Malta because several countries are concerned and we deem it unfair to single out individual countries on an issue that concerns us all. If the EPP were serious, they would aim to discuss the issue seriously instead of creating a furore."

Click here to read adopted text:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140116&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

Self-employment should not be used as a means to bypass social security laws - Working for yourself rather than for a company can have benefits such as flexibility and more control, but it can also mean having fewer social rights than employees. The Parliament adopted a resolution calling for adequate social protection for the growing number of self-employed workers, who now represent more than 15% of total employment in the EU.

Click here to read the adopted text:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140114&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

Smart Tachograph - Truck drivers in Europe will enjoy improved road safety and better working conditions following the adoption of new legislation on the use of tachographs by the European Parliament. Tachographs are used in road transport to monitor compliance with the rules on driving time and rest periods, in order to ensure road safety, decent working conditions for drivers and fair competition between transport companies.

MEPs call for tougher penalties for wildlife crime- Tougher penalties, mandatory destruction of illegal ivory and better training of police and prosecutors are needed to combat trophy hunting and the organised criminal killing of rhinos, elephants and other wildlife for profit, say MEPs in a resolution voted in Strasbourg.

Parliament clarifies labelling rules for honey - Parliament endorsed draft rules defining pollen as a natural constituent of honey, rather than an ingredient. This means that GM pollen has to be labelled if it makes up more than 0.9% of the honey.

'Relaunching Europe' comes to Thessaloniki! New ideas to get out of the crisis- the pan-European initiative Relaunching Europe: <http://www.relaunchingeurope.eu/> from the Socialists and Democrats in the Parliament will come to Greece on 23 January. We will host an event with an in-depth debate on seeking new ideas on how to get out of the crisis. Young entrepreneurs, professionals, politicians, academics, representatives from citizens' initiatives and journalists will take part in a real debate that will offer food for thought and inspiration for action and

political initiatives. Please register at www.relaunchingeurope.eu/thessaloniki-en. The event will also be broadcast live on the Relaunching Europe website. You will be able to participate live and send comments and questions via Twitter (#RelaunchEU) and Facebook.

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Printable version attached.