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

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S&D GROUP BACKS ENQUIRY INTO US SPYING PROGRAMME ON EUROPEAN ALLIES

The European Parliament in Strasbourg strongly reacted to the US spying scandal, calling on Washington "to provide the EU, without undue delay, with full information on PRISM and other such programmes involving data collection". Moreover, the MEPs also decided to start their own in-depth enquiry into the data scandal. The European Parliament committee on civil liberties, justice and home affairs will hold an extraordinary meeting to launch this enquiry next Wednesday in Brussels. Hannes Swoboda, S&D Group leader said:

"The US' activities spying on the EU institutions and countries have undermined our mutual trust, and it is now up to Washington to take quick action to fix it."

With regard to some EU countries' decision to close their airspace to the plane of Bolivian president Morales, on grounds of suspicion that whistleblower Edward Snowden would be on the plane, Hannes Swoboda added:

"The confidential information leaked by Snowden shows that the US is spying on European member states and EU institutions. Instead of following instructions from the US, European governments should be pushing for full clarification and credible assurances that these spying activities have been definitively ended." Dimitrios Droutsas, the EU Parliament's rapporteur on the new EU legislation on Data Protection, said:

"The latest revelations about the US are a 'wake-up call' for European citizens and everyone dealing with data protection in the EU. We are currently working on reforming data protection rules in the EU. We must insist on maintaining the high level of data protection achieved in Europe and even strive to raise this level, both in the private and in the public sector. It is about the daily life of the European citizen, it is about effectively protecting the citizen's fundamental rights. We cannot tolerate to see any similar incident happening again." S&D Group vice-

president Sylvie Guillaume expressed her regret at the rejection of an amendment to postpone negotiations on the EU-US free trade agreement:

"This agreement needs trust, transparency and clarity between the partners involved in order to succeed. Given the current situation, it is obvious that it is no longer the case. It is now up to the Commission and the Council to take up their responsibilities in this affair, where the right to privacy of our citizens is at stake". [Click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sd-group-backs-eu-parliaments-own-enquiry-datagate)
<http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sd-group-backs-eu-parliaments-own-enquiry-datagate> for the resolution in full

MFF: "NOTHING IS AGREED UNLESS EVERYTHING IS AGREED" WARN S&D EURO MPs

S&D Euro MPs backed in Strasbourg a resolution welcoming the deal struck by the presidents of the Parliament, the Commission and the Irish presidency on the budget for 2014-2020. S&D Group leader Hannes Swoboda pointed out that: "The vote is not yet a green light from our Group or the European Parliament on the EU budget for 2014-2020. Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. We have set out clear conditions which need to be fulfilled before the European Parliament can give its formal consent later this year. We expect the Council to stick to its commitments. In particular, the Council must agree the extra the €7.3 billion straight away and adopt extra funds in the early autumn to avoid a structural deficit in 2013. The Socialists and Democrats are proud to have pushed forward an action plan to combat youth unemployment in Europe. It will now be funded. The resources are limited compared to the needs but it is a start. If we had been more ambitious, we would have faced fierce opposition from some governments accusing us of over-stepping on national policies. There was no way we could have got support for a unanimous vote from all EU heads of state and government. This is the reality the European Parliament has to live with." [Click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/mff-nothing-agreed-unless-everything-agreed-warn-sd-euro-mps)
<http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/mff-nothing-agreed-unless-everything-agreed-warn-sd-euro-mps> for the resolution in full.

ORBÁN MUST ABIDE BY EU RULES

Since Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán took office in 2010, his government has rashly forced through a number of constitutional reforms in clear breach of EU fundamental values and the rule of law.

In a resolution, adopted by 370 votes to 249, with 82 abstentions, Parliament stresses that the EU is founded on key values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, as enshrined in Article 2 of the EU Treaty. The Hungarian authorities must remedy any breaches of key EU values swiftly. If they fail to do so Parliament's leaders should consider asking the Council of the EU to determine, under EU Treaty Article 7.1, whether there is a clear risk of a serious breach, MEPs say in the resolution. They also want a high-level group to monitor compliance with the EU's values in all member states. S&D Group leader Hannes Swoboda said to the media in Strasbourg:

"The Orbán government has set out on a deeply worrying path. The adoption of this report is a clear sign from the European Parliament to the Hungarian government: the fundamental values of the European Union are not negotiable. The rule of law, respect for the opposition, minorities and the independence of the judiciary are the inalienable foundations of the EU. Orbán's government has not only neglected but trampled over these values. Hungary is an important member of the EU, therefore I urge the Hungarian government – for the benefit of the Hungarian people – to swiftly implement the recommendations of the EP report. We need Hungary fully back in Europe."

The Parliament also called on Orbán's government "to fully apply the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission" and on the European Commission and Council to set up a mechanism to closely monitor the progress made. Furthermore, the MEPs instructed the Commission "not to conclude any negotiations in any policy fields until full compliance with the EU Treaty has been ensured" and to be ready to take action against Hungary if its government still fails to comply with these requests. [Click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/orb%C3%A1n-must-stop-abusing-hungarians-freedoms-says-sd-group) <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/orb%C3%A1n-must-stop-abusing-hungarians-freedoms-says-sd-group> for the resolution in full.

S&D EURO MPs SECURE FINAL VOTE ON THE FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Socialists and the Democrats won a big victory after securing a wide majority - 522 in favour, 141 against - in the European parliament for the introduction of a financial transaction tax in 11 EU member states*.

The Parliament is calling for a 0.1% tax on stocks and bond trades and a 0.01% on derivatives from January 2014. Socialist negotiator for the Parliament Anni Podimata told the media in Strasbourg: "Today is a good day for the European citizens; contrary to many predictions, the "Tobin tax" is now on track. For 3.5 years, the European Parliament has kept a consistent and coherent stance on the FTT. It is an attitude that shows in practice that above all we consider the common European interest and the interest of European citizens who bear the huge economic and social costs of the crisis.

"I hope the same consistent and coherent attitude will also be kept by the 11 Member States committed to move forward with the implementation of the FTT. We recommend to protect and safeguard the general scope of the tax to cover all financial products, all financial institutions and all markets, organized or not. The wide scope of the tax - which covers all short of products, such as stocks, bonds and derivatives on regulated exchanges and OTC - coupled with low tax rates is the key element for the successful implementation of the tax; thus to avoid creating incentives for substitution, unequal treatment between markets, products and institutions and to reduce drastically the risk of tax avoidance". [Click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sd-meps-secure-final-vote-tobin-tax-european-parliament) <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sd-meps-secure-final-vote-tobin-tax-european-parliament> for the resolution in full.

**The member states proceeding with the financial transaction tax through an enhanced co-operation are: Germany, France, Italy, Estonia, Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Belgium, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia.*

IN SHORT

Saving the EU's Emission's Trading System - The Parliament gave the green light to the European Commission to delay the issuing of CO2 emissions allowances, the so-called "backloading", as an exceptional measure to readjust the Emissions Trading System (ETS). The compromise passed gives the Commission less room for manoeuvre than an earlier proposal rejected by the Parliament in April. The Commission can only withhold the auctioning of 900 million allowances for a maximum of one year, after which it should bring them back to the market. The S&D Group support the deal because it will temporarily correct the imbalances in the market caused by the surplus of allowances and the dramatic drop in the price of permits.

Reform of the EU Banking Sector - S&D Euro MPs backed calls for a fundamental shake up of the structure of the EU banking sector. The resolution drafted by Vice Chair of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, S&D Group Euro MP Arlene McCarthy was approved by a large majority of 528 in favour 87 against. Arlene McCarthy said: "The vote is a clear signal in favour of real reform to the structure of EU banks. We are calling for banking services that are essential to the real economy to be separated from the excessively risky activities of traders and investment bankers. Depositors and consumers should no longer pay for the excessive risks taken by banks with their money. The taxpayer cannot continue to be the lender of last resort. We need reform to deliver a safe, stable, effective and efficient banking system that operates in a competitive market economy and serves the needs of the real economy and of customers and consumers. The vote is a green light to the Commission to bring out a strong legislative proposal for banking reform in October."

Egypt - Immediate return to civilian rule is crucial -Following the military takeover in Egypt, Constitutional Court chief Adly Mansour has been sworn in as interim president but the situation in the country remains fragile. Hannes Swoboda, S&D Group President, warned against military rule:

"Military intervention can never be the solution. While we recognise the support for the military action from some of the Egyptian people, only democratic procedures can guarantee the sound development of the country. It is of crucial importance that Egypt returns to civilian rule without delay, based on the outcome of free and fair elections. The new government will have to be more inclusive, broadening its scope to represent all of civil society."

EP Welcomes Croatia in the Union - The ceremony on 1 July was a way for the EP to welcome Croatia into the European family. As a band played Croatia's national anthem followed by Europe's Ode to Joy, the new Croatian MEPs were greeted by EP president Martin Schulz before taking their place in the plenary chamber. As part of Croatia's accession, the country is entitled to being represented by 12 MEPs in the European Parliament, increasing the total number of members to 766. This will be reduced to 751 after next year's European elections. Five of the new MEPs are from the EPP group, another five from the S&D group, one from the ECR group as well as one from the GUE/NGL group. Half of the new members are women.

Latvia should join the euro on 1 January 2014 - recommends the Parliament in a resolution voted in Strasbourg. This vote is in line with a European Commission recommendation and political backing from EU heads of state and governments at the latest EU Council summit.

Green Light to OLAF Reform - S&D Euro MPs backed new rules aimed at improving the work of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The vote in the Parliament brings to an end several years of intense negotiations between the European Parliament, member states and the Commission. The last-minute attempt by the conservative rapporteur to amend the compromise failed.

Road Safety - The European Parliament wants EU-wide minimum standards for vehicle checks and registration, as it made clear in a plenary vote on three reports on roadworthiness for motor vehicles. The Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament welcomed less bureaucracy, more co-ordination between member states and more roadside checks.

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Printable version attached.