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

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S&D EURO MPs GIVE GREEN LIGHT TO EU BUDGET 2014-2020, BUT WITH LITTLE ENTHUSIASM

S&D Euro MEPs approved the EU budget for 2014-2020, following many years of intense discussions. S&D Group president Hannes Swoboda told the media in Strasbourg:

"We are not very excited but our rapporteur, Ivailo Kalfin, did a very good job in improving the original compromise agreed by EU governments. It is the best compromise we could get in these times of fiscal tightening across Europe. We managed to limit the damage of their cuts. The European Parliament which will be elected next year will have the chance in 2016 to reopen the discussions to adapt to the post-crisis needs of Europe. In addition, setting up a high-level group to look at EU financing through 'own resources' paves the way for future reform of the EU budget which today depends too much on national contributions. We welcome the Council's commitment to hold the inaugural meeting of this group on 18-19 December. S&D MEP and European Parliament negotiator Ivailo Kalfin added:

"We have introduced a new so-called flexibility mechanism to maximise the use of the funds available and to help compensate for the reduction in the budget. The 'frontloading' of funding will ensure that important expenditures related to youth unemployment (€6 billion) and to support small and medium-sized businesses, youth mobility and research and development can be brought forward to the first two years of the budget.

"The S&D Group have also succeeded in defending the fund for the most deprived people in the EU. There is a clear social-democratic influence in many of the 65 legal regulations defining the different policies of the EU." The EU budget amounts to €960 billion for the next seven years. Please [click here](#) and open the Texts (Part I) to read the adopted text in full.

EUROPE'S GOT TALENT: S&D VOTE FOR MORE WOMEN IN TOP JOBS

S&D Euro MPs backed in Strasbourg a proposal to boost gender equality in top jobs – calling for a target of 40% of women in the top management of companies listed on the stock exchange by 2020. Today, only 17.6% of non-executive directors are women and just 2.4% of chief executives. S&D Group MEP and European Parliament negotiator Evelyn Regner said:

"This EU law is a step forward to ensure equal opportunities between men and women for top jobs. Too many skilled, highly qualified and talented women are currently excluded from company boards simply because they are women. A better gender balance on company boards is good for business and sound management – and good for men and women.

"There will be more transparency in recruitment procedures to make sure they are based on merit. We need to end the system of so-called 'old boys networks'. There will be sanctions for companies that fail to ensure that equally qualified women are better represented on boards. The European Parliament has played its part and now the ball is in the Council's court. It is high time the law was used to ensure that all talents are used on the labour market." Please [click here](#) and open the Texts (Part III) to read the adopted text in full.

S&D GROUP BACKS GREENER, FAIRER AND MORE TRANSPARENT FARM REFORM

The S&D Group meeting in Strasbourg backed a reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) introducing new and more transparent criteria to distribute subsidies among EU countries and farmers. Following a plenary vote, the CAP will allocate €408 billion between 2014 and 2020, almost 38% of the entire EU budget (compared to 70% 30 years ago).

The names of all beneficiaries of farm subsidies will be published and they will now have to be active farmers: unproductive sites such as land belonging to airports or golf courses will be excluded. It will no longer be possible to receive EU funds from different sources for the same activity and the system of payments will prioritise small farmers over big enterprises. EU subsidies will be blocked if farmers do not comply with EU laws on environmental protection and animal welfare. Moreover, at least 30% of the EU rural development budget and 30% of farm subsidies will be earmarked for organic farming, agro-environmental measures, and other measures related to climate adaptation. Please [click here](#) and open the Texts (Part V) to read the adopted text in full.

MALALA YOUSAFZAI RECEIVES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S PRESTIGIOUS SAKHAROV PRIZE

Pakistani teenager Malala Yousafzai made a passionate plea for more education as she accepted the 2013 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in Strasbourg. Ms Yousafzai, who was honoured for her fight to promote education for girls despite the threat of Taliban violence, said: "There is poverty, lack of freedom, fear and terrorism, but there is hope, because we are all here together united to help these children, to speak for them, to take action."

In her speech she said a country's strength should not be measured by its army, but by the number of educated people. She also called for more help for children out of education: "These

children do not want an Iphone, an X-box, a Playstation or chocolates. They just want a book and a pen." The ceremony coincided with the 25th anniversary of the award, given out by the European Parliament each year to honour exceptional people who fight against intolerance and oppression. As part of the celebration, 22 former laureates attended the event. Please [click here](#) to watch her passionate speech in plenary.

IN SHORT

New EU Cohesion Policy - Key rules and regulations for implementing EU cohesion policy in 2014-2020 were endorsed by Parliament in Strasbourg. In a compromise deal struck with the Council after more than a year of tough negotiations, Members secured substantial funding for EU regions to invest in their development projects, on terms fairer to them. Even though, the S&D Group was totally against the highly controversial macro-conditionality, it was the best possible deal that could be struck. There was also dissatisfaction regarding the level of funding for the European Social Fund. The compromise also pruned back the bureaucracy needed to apply for this funding, which is sorely needed in this time of economic crisis.

Erasmus+ - The S&D Group backed the adoption of a new multi-annual programme: Erasmus+. The new umbrella programme covers separate activities on education and training, youth and sport and brings together the former life-long learning programme, Youth in Action and five international co-operation programmes. The aim is to improve efficiency and accessibility, simplify application rules and procedures, and avoid fragmentation and duplication. S&D MEP and European Parliament shadow rapporteur Katarína Neveďalová said:

"With the vote today, we have given millions of students, young people, teachers and other staff the chance to benefit from wider travel opportunities, nationally and internationally. Despite plenty of rumours spreading misleading information about students getting into debt, the European Parliament supported the Student Loan Guarantee Facility. The facility will never be a substitute for grants available at local, national or European level. We managed to set relevant guarantees and safeguards for students, including a reduced interest rate, a possible 'payment holiday' period of up to 24 months and an option for interest deferral.

"The S&D Group also fought for administrative support for non-governmental organisations in the education sector and youth work, which can be seen as one of the S&D Group's most significant achievements." Please [click here](#) and open the Texts (Part I) to read the adopted text in full.

Green Light to Galileo Satellite Navigation System - Plans to start up the EU's first global satellite navigation system built under civilian control, entirely independent of other navigation systems and yet interoperable with them, were approved by Members. Both parts of this global system - Galileo and EGNOS - will offer citizens a European alternative to America's GPS or Russia's Glonass signals for many applications in their daily lives.

MEPs Back Infrastructure Funds - Members endorsed a deal with member states on the EU's new Connecting Europe Facility, which aims to speed up funding to complete key trans-European transport, energy and telecoms links, in a vote in Strasbourg. In a separate vote they

also approved guidelines for developing the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). Please [click here](#) and open the Texts adopted (Part II) to read the adopted text in full.

On Ukraine - The Ukrainian parliament rejected for the second time a proposal that would have allowed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to seek medical treatment abroad. The case of Ms Tymoshenko, currently in jail, has been cited as an obstacle to the planned signing of an association agreement between Ukraine and the EU. Hannes Swoboda, president of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, said to the media in Strasbourg:

"At this time, one week before the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, the future of EU-Ukraine relations remains very unclear. The individual case of Yulia Tymoshenko should not be allowed to jeopardise the far-reaching negotiations and potential improvements for the people of Ukraine. But today's parliamentary decision raises profound doubts about how serious the Ukraine's commitment to the EU really is. We deplore the pressure and blackmailing tactics that Russia has used against Ukraine, and other countries. It is equally deplorable that Ukraine seems to have given in to this pressure and appears to have chosen to diverge from its European path."

Boosting the Creative Europe Programme -The S&D Group in the European Parliament strongly welcomed the adoption of the Creative Europe programme 2014-2020. The Parliament voted to back the resolution on the new long-term EU programme which aims to support the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors. The Parliament's lead negotiator on the issue, S&D MEP Silvia Costa, said:

"Creative Europe will support projects in the culture, creativity and audiovisual sectors with an added value for Europe – whether those activities are market or non-market oriented – especially supporting the development of networks and reinforcing the competitiveness of European cultural, creative and audiovisual industries. "Thanks to the Parliament's efforts, the cuts demanded by the European Council were reduced and we successfully defended a 9% increase in funding for these sectors compared to the EU budget for 2007-2013. Please [click here](#) and open the Texts (Part II) to read the adopted text in full.

Successful local elections bring both Serbia and Kosovo closer to the EU - The S&D Group welcomes the orderly conduct of rerun local elections in the three districts of Kosovska Mitrovica on Sunday as a major step forward in the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Libor Rouček, S&D vice-president for enlargement and neighbourhood policies, said:

"The successful conduct of Sunday's elections is a milestone in the normalisation process. It adds further momentum to the implementation of the April agreement and brings both Serbia and Kosovo closer to the EU. It also marks a historic moment for communities in northern Kosovo, who will now have a legitimately elected local council to represent their interests."

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