



Plenary Update

Socialists and Democrats Group
in the European Parliament

Strasbourg | November 2017 Plenary Session

PRESS
CONFERENCE
with Gianni Pittella
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Our Priorities

► *Tues 14* Rule of law in Malta

gianni.pittella@europarl.europa.eu

+ 33 3 88 17 51 59

The S&D Group strongly condemns the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and calls on the Maltese Government to deploy all resources to bring her murderers to justice.

The Group acknowledges the efforts by the Maltese Government to carry out independent investigations into the murder, which include the collaboration of Europol and other third country forces including the FBI and Dutch forensic experts.

The Group reiterates the need for a regular process of dialogue involving all Member States in order to safeguard the EU's fundamental values of democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law

As Socialists and Democrats, we stand firmly in support of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We must do all we can to protect whistle-blowers and journalists working to shine a light on wrongdoing.



PITTELLA
Gianni

► *Wed 15* Winter plan for Asylum Seekers

birgit.sippel@europarl.europa.eu

+ 33 3 88 17 55 59

The S&D Group is calling for the Council and Commission to work urgently with the Greek authorities to prevent a humanitarian crisis occurring this winter in refugee camps on the Greek islands.

Thousands of people seeking asylum on the Greek islands still do not have adequate protection for the coming cold months. Many are still sleeping in light tents designed for summer weather, without sleeping bags, on thin mats or even the floor. EU governments need to immediately stop sending back refugees to Greece under the Dublin mechanism, which is creating further strain on the Greek asylum system. If we do not act and refugees die from the cold, as they did last year, then their blood will be on our hands.

Alongside these immediate measures to prevent further loss of life, all Member States must fulfil their obligations to relocate refugees from Greece. A legal decision has been taken by the EU and this must be fully respected. Relocation is the only way of taking these people out of limbo and allowing them to get on with rebuilding their lives.



SIPPEL,
Birgit

► *Wed 15* The situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland

josef.weidenholzer@europarl.europa.eu

+ 33 3 88 17 54 73

Since 2015, a series of proposals have been put forward by the Polish authorities that threaten the rule of law in the country. In particular changes to the judicial system threaten the independence of the judiciary. The S&D Group fully supports the recommendations put forward by the Commission in July this year to resolve the situation. We regret that the Polish government has failed to respond to these and support the Commission's decision to launch infringement procedures. We call on the Polish government to address the Commission's recommendations immediately. If they fail to do so then the Commission and Council must take action, we cannot allow disregard for the EU treaties to continue unchecked.



WEIDENHOLZER
Josef

► *Tues 14* Cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws

olga.sehnalova@europarl.europa.eu

+ 33 3 88 17 54 17

There is still a considerable potential in the Single Market to strengthen the cooperation of all those involved in the field of consumer protection. This will help to ensure compliance with the rules as well as to deal with cross-border cases of breaches of EU law. The reform of CPC regulation aims to eliminate loopholes as it strengthens national authorities' powers to investigate infringements and enforce consumer rights. It improves the effectiveness of the procedures to better address the challenges in the online and offline world. Revised rules also build a structured dialogue between public enforcers and other stakeholders, notably consumer associations, as these entities know markets well and very often become aware of infringements much earlier than the competent authorities.



SEHNALOVÁ
Olga

► *Tues 14* Protection against dumped and subsidised imports from countries not members of the EU

emmanuel.maurel@europarl.europa.eu

+ 33 3 88 17 57 47

Two years ago, the Commission – under Chinese pressure – seriously contemplated the possibility of granting Market economy status (MES) to China. That would have left entire sectors of our industries defenceless, which would have led to massive job losses. The Socialists and Democrats – because we believe in Europe's reindustrialisation - were the first to lead the fight against this dangerous prospect. Finally, the European Parliament managed to fully reverse the Commission's "middle-ground" proposal. In particular, we made sure that EU industries would have no burden of proving the existence of distortions in China; and for the first time, social and environmental criteria (such as wage levels) will be examined when determining the existence of dumping. But this is only a first step: now, our trade defence instruments urgently need to be



MAUREL
Emmanuel

strengthened, despite Member States' reluctance.

► **Tues 14** The EU-Africa Strategy: a boost for development

norbert.neuser@europarl.europa.eu
+ 33 3 88 17 58 92

This report comes at a time when a sound and fair political and economic partnership between Europe and Africa is increasingly gaining attention. The report will be an important basis for the negotiations of the strategy between our continents in 2018. The S&D Group ensured, among other things, that development aid must not be made dependent on cooperation in migration matters, that in order to strengthen food security people must not be denied access to their natural resources and that Europe will support sexual and reproductive health and rights.



NEUSER
Norbert

► **Tues 14** Council and Commission statements - Paradise papers

jeppe.kofod@europarl.europa.eu
+ 33 3 88 17 54 63

The S&D Group is calling for the establishment of a temporary special committee in the European Parliament to address and draw conclusions from the new leaks known as the Paradise Papers. They are also proposing to set up a permanent structure in the European Parliament to monitor the implementation of regulations and follow up on previous recommendations in tax policy after the European elections in 2019.



KOFOD
Jeppe

The latest revelations on how big businesses and the global elite hide their money on offshore islands to avoid paying tax are shocking. Although the revelations are not a complete surprise, it highlights again just how big the scale of tax dodging is. We have no doubt that many new revelations will come out in the coming days and weeks.

Apart from international tax reforms, we want to follow this up by calling for an EU tax policy coherence centre (TPCCC) under the Commission, to co-ordinate and strengthen the collaboration between national tax authorities.

We are calling on the Council and the Commission to initiate a global summit on tax fraud and tax avoidance, to be held in Europe as soon as possible.

► **Tues 14** Eastern Partnership: November 2017 Summit

knut.fleckenstein@europarl.europa.eu
+ 33 3 88 17 55 48

In the recent years the European Union has concluded numerous agreements of different kinds with our Eastern Partnership countries. Most extensively, an Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement was concluded with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. But the EU also concluded negotiations with Armenia on a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement earlier this year, which is expected to be signed at the November Summit. Additionally, negotiations on a new Comprehensive Agreement with Azerbaijan were launched. Regardless of the intensity of each cooperation, every Eastern partner is of same value to the EU.



FLECKENSTEIN
Knut

However, just by signing an agreement nothing will change. Therefore, the upcoming Summit should focus on the effective implementation of the existing agreements. Instead of talking about new membership prospects, we should empathize the need of reforms in the eastern countries which should strengthen the civil society and promote European fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Summit has to set goals that ensure tangible results for citizens. Any further EU-cooperation should be attached to strict conditionality.

► **Wed 15** Combating Inequalities as a Lever to Boost Job Creation and Growth

javi.lopez@ep.europa.eu
+ 33 3 88 17 56 25

The report deals with one of the main global risks of our time and one of our political priorities. Growing inequalities are causing people to struggle with decreasing living standards, declining buying power, the rise of precarious work and rising hardship created by austerity policies.

The report signals that a change in political direction is needed at European level and establishes political recommendations to reduce inequalities by developing political actions and encouraging coordination in several areas. These include fundamental rights, working conditions, living wages, collective bargaining, unionization, social protection standards, income distribution, poverty and child poverty, social exclusion, youth, gender equality and non-discrimination, fair taxation systems.



**LÓPEZ
FERNÁNDEZ**
Javier

It is crucial that the European Parliament has a strong voice and a high profile in helping to build a more social Europe.