



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
Tuesday 11 June at 10.10 LOW N-1/201

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Hannes Swoboda

Preparations for the European Council meeting (27-28/June 2013)

+ 33 3 88 17 5716 hannes.swoboda@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 12 June 2013

The crisis has had many difficult repercussions for Europe's people but the current youth unemployment rates across many countries are the most dangerous consequence of the crisis. The lack of appropriate training, experience, pension and tax contributions will result in long-term problems for the people who have been unemployed, as well as for the labour markets. We demand that the European Council implements a strong European Youth Guarantee without delay. The funding already agreed should be concentrated in 2014 and 2015, with a commitment to look for further resources through flexibility or preferably a review of the multiannual financial framework in 2015.



Sylvie Guillaume

Application for international protection lodged in a member state by a third-country national or a stateless person – recast / shadow rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 54 33 sylvie.guillaume@europarl.europa.eu

Tuesday 11 June 2013

During the first phase of the Common European Asylum System, the 2005 Asylum Procedures Directive was a catalogue of the worst national practices, setting low standards of protection and leaving member states considerable room for manoeuvre. However, compared to this first phase, the revised directive provides significant improvements, especially on the quality of asylum procedures; asylum seekers' rights; the efficiency of the overall decision-making process; and the harmonisation of procedures within the EU. Many more improvements would have been desirable, but when taking into account the forceful opposition from the European Council, we welcome the successful balancing act achieved by the Parliament. This achievement will increase the efficiency of the system and produce fairer and better quality asylum decisions. However, the success or failure of the system rests upon the application of the directive.



Richard Howitt

Situation in Turkey

+ 33 3 88 17 54 77 richard.howitt@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 12 June 2013

The European Parliament needs to show the protesters their voices are being heard here – if not in their own country. The European Parliament should call on the European Union to join the United States in saying the protests represent a legitimate democratic expression and respond to the protesters by calling for legal accountability for those responsible for the violent suppression. The European Union must not turn a blind eye to protests on this scale and to police violence in a country which is a candidate to join the EU. If Turkey is to continue its journey towards EU accession, the Turkish government must learn to include both the opposition and civil society in important projects to forge national unity. Unfortunately, the current behaviour of Mr Erdogan shows that neither he nor the AKP under his leadership are willing to continue the necessary democratisation.



Evelyne Gebhardt

Appointment of a member of the European Commission - Mr Neven Mimica

+ 33 3 88 17 54 66 evelyne.gebhardt@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 12 June 2013

Mr Mimica's priorities will be guided by consumers' interests and the wider political and economic context, with a special focus on those consumers who are negatively affected by the economic crisis. He will strive to demonstrate that European consumer policy matters on the ground as it can help citizens to get better value for their money and even cut costs. We are very pleased that President Barroso has changed his position and decided to appoint a Commissioner dedicated to consumer protection. This was one of the S&D Group's key demands when the Commission took up its duties in 2009. To date, Mr Mimica has shown himself to be a politician who is committed to the interests of citizens and seems like someone who will not be distracted by political manoeuvring. This is crucial, as he will have to work closely with at least 11 colleagues in the European Commission. We welcome Mr Mimica's commitment to co-operating with them to increase the efficiency, coherence and visibility of consumer policy.



Emer Costello

Fund for European aid to the most deprived 2014-2020 / rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 56 81 emer.costello@europarl.europa.eu

Tuesday 11 June 2013

Across the EU there are 120 million people – including 25 million children – at risk of poverty and social exclusion, 40 million suffering extreme material deprivation and 4 million people homeless. The Fund for European aid to the most deprived (FEAD) is an important tool to alleviate the most severe forms of poverty – particularly food and material deprivation, which can be witnessed in all member states – and will help bring in vulnerable people from the margins of society. In short it is about European solidarity with those hit hardest by the crisis. It is important that we retain the position we voted in the employment committee on 21 May: to increase the budget from €2.5 billion to €3.5 billion and to ensure the funding is ring-fenced for the most deprived and not allowed to be used for other activities. In the end however, it should be noted that it will be up to national governments to decide if they want to make use of their FEAD allocation. Member states remain responsible for combating and eliminating poverty but the FEAD can complement national policies.



**Pervenche
Berès**

Towards social investment for growth and cohesion / rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 57 77

pervenche.beres@europarl.europa.eu

Monday 10 June 2013

This resolution aims to react to the 'social investment package' presented by the Commission on 20 February and to send a strong signal from the European Parliament that the EMU must have a clear social dimension. While promoting the content of the 'social pact' adopted in the Thyssen report, the S&D Group insists on several key points, particularly the call for a scoreboard of social investment indicators. We also stress that the multiannual financial framework (MFF) must include resources which can stimulate social investment, including a minimum 25% of cohesion policy funding to be earmarked for the European Social Fund and the frontloading of the €6 billion allocated to the Youth Employment Initiative.



**Roberto
Gualtieri**

2013 review of the organisation and the functioning of the EEAS / rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 55

roberto.gualtieri@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 12 June 2013

The report by Brok and Gualtieri is the European Parliament's input to the 2013 European External Action Service (EEAS) review report, currently being prepared by high representative for foreign affairs Cathy Ashton and due to be published in July. In the three years since it was established, the EU's new diplomatic service has been mainly learning through action. It has had to respond to the Arab Spring and various other crises, in the face of a financial crisis which has imposed severe pressure on member states' governments and tested the limits of European solidarity. Yet the EEAS has been taking a more proactive approach to foreign policy making and has had some successes, such as brokering an historic deal between Belgrade and Pristina. Nevertheless, the EEAS could still do much better. Stronger political leadership from the top, simpler structures and improved co-ordination are needed. Political accountability to the European Parliament should be developed further: the new heads of delegations across the world should attend confirmation hearings before the relevant parliamentary committees before they take up their duties; key European Parliament office holders should receive full political reporting from delegations; and systematic exchanges with the relevant committees need to be put in place ahead of each foreign affairs council.



**Anna
Hedh**

Customs enforcement of intellectual property rights / shadow rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 55 27

anna.hedh@europarl.europa.eu

Monday 10 May 2013

An update of the current regulation combating the trade in goods infringing intellectual property rights is welcome. This regulation will better protect consumers, rights-holders and the internal market, particularly from goods which are potentially dangerous to human health. The S&D Group's key amendments were adopted during the early second reading agreement. Goods in transit are not mentioned in the regulation, except for medicines in transit where customs officials have to take into account whether diversion to the EU market is likely. In this regard, we are pleased that the regulation emphasises that the legitimate trade in generic medicines must be protected when in transit, and that an analysis of the impact on generic medicines – in the EU and globally – will be carried out in 2016. We also welcome the fact that personal luggage and parallel trade is now out of the scope of the regulation and that the 'small consignment procedure' is only to be used for pirated and counterfeit goods.



**Ole
Christensen**

Establishing a long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks shadow rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 54 64

ole.christensen@europarl.europa.eu

Tuesday 11 June 2013

With the automatic reductions in the total allowable catch (TAC) and fishing effort limits (the number of boats and hours spent at sea), the multiannual plan for cod has failed. The S&D Group's position is to allow more flexibility in order to reflect the scientific advice on a case-by-case basis, achieve the gradual elimination of discards and to introduce fishing gear that can catch fish more selectively. From an inter-institutional point of view, this file could unblock the multiannual fisheries management plans which have been deadlocked in the Council since 2009. In December 2012, the Council split up the Commission's proposal for a cod plan, therefore undermining the institutional prerogatives of the European Parliament to participate in the ordinary legislative procedure. The Parliament supports the Commission in the European Court of Justice action against the Council.

MEDIA CONTACT

Head of Press & Communication Unit **Utta Tuttlies** + 32 473 85 34 07



www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

Paolo Alberti
+ 32 476 955 144

Dimitris Komodromos
+ 32 474 622 884

Céline Bayer
+ 32 473 858 211

Victoria Martin De La Torre
+ 32 473 234 173

Solange Hélin-Villes
+ 32 476 510 172



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