



PARLIAMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

September Plenary Session

MAKING THE HEADLINES

Barroso re-elected President of the European Commission

This plenary session was marked by the election of the President of the European Commission. The Parliament needed to approve or reject the nomination of President-designate José Manuel Barroso by a majority of votes cast. He obtained 382 votes in favour, with 219 votes against and 117 abstentions. The Group decided to abstain, stressing that we expect our demands for more Social Europe to materialize. We need a clear sign towards more Progress and more independence from governments already by the composition of the new Commission.

As Group Leader Martin Schulz made clear in his speech in plenary on Tuesday, the debate was not only on a 'Yes' or 'No' to Barroso, not only on a majority or not for Barroso, but also and mainly on the direction for Europe.

Therefore, we have again put forward our clear demands to Barroso in the debate in plenary, reiterating our key priorities expressed last week when he attended our Group meeting.

Socialists & Democrats insist that the key goal of the new Commission should be 'Equal Pay and Equal Rights for work of equal value for men and women in every workplace in Europe'. The Viking, Laval and Rüffert cases have shown the necessity of revising the Posted Workers Directive. The single market and the financial market regulation must prevent pay dumping and an ambitious regulation and supervision of financial markets, covering all actors and institutions is urgent.

We expect proposals for coordinated actions to fight unemployment and help people out of the crisis. It is worrying, as stressed by Stephen Hughes, Group Vice-President responsible for Economic and Social Model, that Barroso's Guidelines 'do not address the seriousness of the severe unemployment and social crisis that we are facing'.

We demand a far-reaching interinstitutional agreement on Social Impact Assessments - the first one should be immediately used to assess the social impact of the opt-out from the Working Time Directive - and a framework directive for quality public services.

Inaugural Speech of the President of the European Parliament

Jerzy Buzek, elected last July President of the European Parliament, made his inaugural Speech this Tuesday. He considered his election as a 'symbol' for a united and common Europe and presented his priorities for his two and a half year mandate.

President Buzek stressed the need to remain an open community, to encourage European integration and Solidarity. There will be 'no modern strong Europe without Solidarity' and 'no true Community and Solidarity when the most vulnerable are left on the sidelines', he said.

S&D Group Leader Schulz congratulated President Buzek for his Pro-European speech. 'For the first time we see the pro-European consensus is at risk in this house' he said.

CITIZENS FIRST

Milk Prices

Milk is now being sold below production costs and prices paid to producers are still falling. The economic crisis led to lower milk consumption and to the stagnation of the market.

Paolo De Castro, our President of the Agricultural Committee, demanded in plenary new and efficient measures to fight the crisis and help the dairy sector. He asked for solidarity and assured the Commission that we would support lasting solutions to the European crisis in this sector.

The Parliament approved draft legislation to extend aid for buying up butter and skimmed milk powder until at least February 2010. In an additional resolution the Parliament called for the creation of an EU Dairy Fund of EUR 600 million to aid producer organisations and cooperatives and to support farm investment, modernisation, diversification, area-based measures, marketing activities, small producers and young farmers. Luís Manuel Capoulas Santos, Spokesperson on Agriculture, regrets that it was not possible to include the temporary suspension of quotas or the temporary aid for reduction of production in the resolution adopted, but he considers that this text is a good contribution to get out of the crisis and expects the Commission to follow Parliament's proposals. Stephane Le Foll, Vice-President of the Group stressed the need of public regulation in order to maintain milk production in Europe, ensure a highly developed dairy industry and, at the same time, preserve sustainable prices for consumers.

Click here to read the resolution: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2009-0020+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Data Protection

Following pressure from the Parliament, the Council has agreed to renegotiate a deal with the US on the transfer of banking data next year.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament would have a final say on such agreements and MEPs question the legal basis chosen by the Council, which does not involve the Parliament. 'The choice of a third-pillar legal base, coupled with its interim character, leaves Parliament – and, therefore, EU citizens – completely out of the legislative process. The Socialist and Democrat Group is clear that this interim agreement should apply only for 12 months and that a new agreement should be negotiated with Parliament as co-legislator so that we in this House can ensure that delicate balance of protecting the fundamental rights of European citizens in the important and critical fight against terrorism', said Claude Moraes, S&D coordinator for Civil Liberties.

Read the resolution in Full: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2009-0016+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

IN SHORT

G20 in Pittsburgh

In a debate on Wednesday, the Parliament called for a financial system regulation, restraint on bankers' bonuses and measures to reward long term rather than short term profits.

Udo Bullmann, S&D coordinator for Economic Affairs said it 'could no longer be business as usual'. His main message to those going to Pittsburgh is 'Be courageous!'

We need a regulation on bankers' bonuses, but also on *offshores* and on markets in order to promote employment and the development of long term investment by enterprises.

Pervenche Berès, S&D Chair of the Social committee has asked for a 'Global Pact for Employment'.

Forest Fires this summer

At the initiative of our Group, the Parliament showed solidarity to the victims of this summer's devastating forest fires, especially in Greece, and called again for more and effective measures to prevent Europe from burning.

Read the resolution:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+20090916+ITEMS+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Energy Security

Energy security is crucial for the economic and social future of Europe. Our Group is in favour of diversifying energy resources and increasing alternative energy sources. Read the resolution. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2009-0021+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

Visas Balkan Countries

According to the Commission's proposal to change existing visa regulations with the Western Balkans, citizens from the following 3 countries would no longer require a visa for short term visits to Schengen countries, if they are holder of a biometric passport from either Serbia, Montenegro or the Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia. Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania would still require visa to enter the Schengen area.

The Parliament discussed this proposal, as MEPs from all political groups are concerned that this could contribute to divisions and inequalities within the Western Balkans.

EU Baltic Sea Strategy

The strategy will be one of the items on the MEPs' and the Swedish Presidency's autumn agenda. The Swedish Presidency's objective is to get the strategy adopted during its October summit. Implementation could then begin in 2010. Konstanze Krehl, S&D Coordinator for Regional Policy asked in the debate for more information on how this strategy will be financed.

MEPs appointed to the different **interparliamentary delegations**. Interparliamentary delegations play an important role in establishing a network of contacts and a forum for dialogue with parliamentarians in partner countries outside the EU. There are currently 40 interparliamentary delegations, including Joint Parliamentary Committees and Multilateral Assemblies.

Algirdas Semeta, Pawel Sameck and Karel De Gucht approved by the European Parliament as Members of the European Commission. During the auditions in Parliament Hannes Swoboda, Vice-President of the Group, has made it clear that if nominated as Commissioners for the new Commission, they would need to be re-auditioned by the Parliament.

APPROACHING

21 September - Launch of a campaign called 'Regulate Global Finance Now' by a coalition of progressive forces

2 October - Referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland

2 October - EU intergovernmental conference on Croatia's EU accession

7 October - Mini-plenary of the EP in Brussels

Group Delegations to Moscow and the United States

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