

JUNE PLENARY 2010

CONTENT

- *Mind Shift on Economic Governance & Firm Targets for EU2020 Needed*
- *Euro MPs Throw Out Threat to Road Safety*
- *Resolution on Israeli Attack on Gaza Aid Flotilla*
- *In Short*

MIND SHIFT ON ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND FIRM TARGETS FOR EU2020 NEEDED

A new form of economic governance for the EU is needed so that Europe is better prepared for future crises and to ensure the success of EU2020, the EU's growth and jobs strategy, said lawmakers meeting in Strasbourg. MEPs also called for more concrete targets to be inserted into the EU2020 strategy, including a 3% GDP target for R&D spending, binding goals for greenhouse gas emissions and a 50% reduction in EU poverty. These recommendations were set out in two resolutions adopted by the Parliament following debates with the Commission and Council. The resolution on economic governance was adopted by 507 votes to 91 with 29 abstentions, while the resolution on the EU2020 strategy was adopted by 562 votes to 57 with 24 abstentions. On spending, Members raised the alarm that the "flagship" programmes of the EU2020 strategy do not have sufficient funding from the draft 2011 budget and suggested options for remedying this. On economic governance, progressive Euro MPs also called on EU heads of state and government to agree a common position on a financial transaction tax. The Members argue that a tax rate of just 0.05 per cent would produce revenues of up to €250 billion in Europe, helping to avoid painful spending cuts and creating millions of jobs if invested in the economy. A proposal for such a tax was already endorsed by the House in March. [Click here to read the resolutions](#)

EURO MPs THROW OUT THREAT TO ROAD SAFETY

Self-employed bus and lorry drivers must be brought under the same rules on working hours as drivers who work for companies, decided the Parliament in Strasbourg. A majority of Members voted to reject the Commission's proposal that self-employed drivers continue to be exempted from the 2002 Working Time Directive. With 368 votes in favour, 301 against and 8 abstentions, Parliament's plenary confirmed the Employment Committee's earlier vote against any further exemption. During the debate the Commission told the House it "would study the different options, including withdrawal of the proposal"

Progressive Euro MPs had earlier warned that exemption would threaten road safety by allowing exhausted drivers to spend up to 86 hours a week on the road. "We are delighted that the Parliament has stopped this proposal in its tracks. Lives would have been at risk if it had gone ahead. 'I was astonished by the dogmatic stance of the Commission and its allies in trying to push this exemption through. This is not a question of freedom of operation for small businesses: it is about having sensible rules for safety and ensuring that EU roads are the safest in the world.'" said Stephen Hughes, vice-president of Socialists and Democrats.

RESOLUTION ON ISRAELI ATTACK ON GAZA AID FLOTILLA

In a resolution drafted jointly by political groups and adopted with 470 votes in favour, 56 against and 56 abstentions, the Parliament demands an international and impartial inquiry into Israel's attack on a humanitarian flotilla, the opening of all crossing points to and from Gaza and an immediate end to the blockade. European lawmakers also request that the EU-Israel Association Council and the EU-Palestinian Authority Joint Committee should be convened to discuss the current Middle East crisis. To address Israel's security concerns, MEPs propose international monitoring of the crossings, including the re-activation of the EU Border Assistance Mission. Parliament calls on Hamas to stop all attacks against Israel immediately and also to free Gilad Shalit, the Israeli sergeant kidnapped by Hamas in 2006.

IN SHORT

Upfront and Honest Food Labels - The Parliament voted for Guideline Daily Amounts labels giving shoppers details of salt, fat, sugar and calories in each product as a proportion of the recommended daily amount. European lawmakers also voted for details of protein, fibres and trans fats to be included elsewhere on the packaging. To ensure the labels are legible, Members want a wide range of factors to be taken into account. Despite opposition from some right-wing Euro MPs and fierce lobbying, progressive Euro MPs led by Socialists and Democrats secured the first-reading vote. [Click here to read the resolution](#)

Estonia next Euro-Member - Estonia's bid to join the Euro was backed by the House with 589 votes in favour, 40 against and 52 abstentions. "It is very significant that such a small country knocks at the Eurozone's door at the time of the worst financial, economic and social crisis. It says a lot about the prospective member. It also says a lot about the Eurozone itself", said the S&D Group rapporteur Edward Scicluna, in the debate preceding the vote.

New SWIFT Proposal Criticised: A new US-EU agreement on transfer of bank data for counter-terrorism purposes revealed by the Commission has been strongly criticised. Martin Schulz, leader of the S&D Group, said: "We regret that the Commission seems to have already closed the negotiations on a draft agreement which is far from being approvable. Over the last weeks we have constantly expressed our position to Commissioner Malmström. She bears the responsibility for not having taken into adequate consideration the Parliament's serious concerns on the need of ensuring EU citizens' privacy and safeguards. This draft agreement would grant the EU authorities with less control powers than those so far enjoyed by a private company, i.e. SWIFT. Besides, we would have expected the draft text to clearly include a revision clause of the agreement as soon as the ongoing negotiations of the US-EU framework agreement are over and it enters into force. We will now work in close cooperation with the Council of the EU to improve this draft agreement".

Scrutinising Council's Budget Parliament adopted a number of recommendations relating to the management by the Council of Ministers of its budget. In the resolution, MEPs repeat their demands for more information from the Council and welcome the promise from the Spanish Presidency to review the 40 year old "gentlemen's agreement". Since the Council has become more and more "operational" in its work, particularly in the fields of foreign affairs, security and defence policy, and justice and home affairs, its expenditure ought to be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other EU institutions, Members say.

Interpretation Rights During Criminal Proceedings New rules guaranteeing that citizens facing criminal trials in another Member State can have the proceedings translated into their own language were approved by the Parliament. Under the rules, a suspect arrested in one country would have the right to interpretation during police questioning, court hearings and communications with his lawyer. All essential documents would also have to be translated.