

MAR PLENARY 2011

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**PROGRESSIVE MEPS WIN CRUCIAL VOTE FOR ROBIN HOOD TAX**

MEPs called on the EU to introduce a Europe-wide financial transaction tax, as a first step towards a global FTT. The tax would produce substantial revenues, helping to safeguard public services from harsh cutbacks in public spending and would improve financial stability by discouraging ultra-short-term speculation. The call came in a resolution drafted by Socialist Anni Podimata which Members in Strasbourg backed by a cross-party majority of 529 to 127 with 18 abstentions. The introduction of an FTT is part of a package of measures on innovative financing. Support for the tax has been gathering momentum in Brussels after initially being rejected as unworkable by the International Monetary Fund unless it secured global agreement.

Martin Schulz who heads the Parliament's S&D Group, said he urged EU heads of state and government to address the issue at the Eurozone summit in Brussels. In letters to Chancellors Angela Merkel of Germany and Werner Faymann of Austria, as well as Eurogroup President Jean-Claude Juncker, Mr Schulz writes: "The European Parliament gave a landslide majority to back the implementation of a transaction financial tax at European level. This echoes the appeal for such a tax, made recently by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. The time has come to move from words to action."

It is estimated that a 0.05% tax would generate €200 billion a year in the EU alone and over three times that if it was introduced at a global level. The resolution also calls for the launch of Eurobonds as a tool for common management of EU member states' public debt. Please click here to read the [resolution](#):

**RESOLUTION ON LIBYA**

European lawmakers calls on High Representative Ashton to "establish relations with the Interim Transitional National Council and to start the process of making them official, so as to encourage transition towards democracy, ensuring the involvement of a wide spectrum of representatives of the Libyan society." A resolution adopted in Strasbourg, by all political groups, also calls on Member States to "stand ready" for a UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya, to prevent the Gaddafi regime targeting the population, and to help

repatriate or resettle migrants fleeing the growing violence. MEP Ana Gomes, who coordinated the S&D position, said to the media in Strasbourg:

"In view of Gaddafi's savage retaliation against his people, the EU must exercise the Responsibility to Protect, by helping to enforce a no fly zone, as envisaged by the Arab League, OIC and African Union, or other measures decided by the Security Council. With all means available, including CSDP assets namely to enforce the arms embargo." The resolution was adopted by 584 in favour, 18 against, 18 abstentions. Click here to read the [resolution](#):

## **HUNGARIAN MEDIA LAW: ANNOUNCED CHANGES ARE INSUFFICIENT, SAYS EP**

The Hungarian media law should be suspended as a matter of urgency and further reviewed to fully ensure media pluralism and independence, said EU lawmakers in a resolution adopted after a crunch vote in Strasbourg. The text also "calls on the Hungarian authorities to restore the independence of media governance and halt state interference with freedom of expression and 'balanced coverage', and believes that over-regulation of the media is counterproductive, jeopardising effective pluralism in the public sphere". Highlighting threats to freedom of the Press and media pluralism in several EU countries, the resolution, tabled jointly by the Socialists & Democrats with three smaller Groups, also urges the Commission to propose legislation this year on media freedom, pluralism and independent governance. Hannes Swoboda, deputy leader of the S&D Group and one of the promoters of the adopted resolution, said:

"We are committed to fighting for the highest standards of press freedom in Europe. We are shocked to see the Commission as guardians of the treaty wriggling desperately to justify the actions of Mr Barroso's political allies in the Hungarian government. The Commission should keep monitoring the revision of this law and carefully scrutinise its compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

"Political interference of the kind provided for in the Hungarian media law is unacceptable. If the Commission will not defend the rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, we will take on the battle." Mr Swoboda went on recalling that the adopted resolution explicitly points to other EU countries like Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Estonia, where media freedom and pluralism are also matters of serious concern. Click here to read the [resolution](#):

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS 100 YEARS ON: THE FIGHT CONTINUES**

The Parliament marked the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day by backing two resolutions focusing on gender equality and poverty. In a ceremony to mark the anniversary, the EP's President Jerzy Buzek said there were too few women in the Chamber. He said 35 % was not enough, "even though this is slightly more than in national parliaments".

The need to narrow the gender pay gap, to get more women in decision-making positions and to raise the women's employment rate were among key points in the first resolution accompanying the report on gender equality in the EU. If women's employment, part-time employment and productivity rates were similar to men's, GDP would increase by 30%, the resolution said. A second resolution noted that nearly 85 million people in the EU were living below the poverty line in 2008. Macroeconomic, social and labour market policies should be reformed to guarantee a minimum income as well as economic and social justice for women, the second resolution said. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to read the two resolutions.

## IN SHORT

**A More Ambitious Industrial Policy** The EP called in Strasbourg on the Commission to be more ambitious in its industrial policy strategy, with an integrated approach that will secure competitiveness and sustainable growth for the EU economy. The report calls for better coordination between the EU and its Member States as well as for a partnership with workers and trades unions. The report notes that Europe's major competitors like the US, Japan and China are pursuing a strong and active industrial policy supported by broad investment in leading edge products and services. The report points out that the Union needs long-term strategies to anticipate and address change, to include workers in decision-making and rethink its education policy to fit the job market better.

**Binding EU standards for Roma** - Europe's 10-12 million Roma should benefit from binding minimum standards at EU level to improve their access to employment, education, housing and healthcare, says the House in a resolution. The resolution also calls for better protection of fundamental rights and use of EU funding. Roma people are struggling against "an intolerable degree of exclusion" as well as human rights violations, severe stigmatisation and discrimination in public and private life, says the resolution, which was adopted by 576 votes to 32 with 60 abstentions.

**Turkey's & Montenegro's Enlargement Progress** - In two resolutions adopted by the Plenary on the progress of Turkey and Montenegro in their EU membership negotiations, Parliament express concern at the "slow progress" on human rights and key reforms in Turkey in 2010, while welcoming Montenegro's official candidate status despite concerns over corruption.

**Slam over Illegal Detentions in Iran** -The S&D Group voiced in Strasbourg grave concern over the Iranian security forces' illegal detention of Iranian opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and their wives Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karroubi. The Group called for their immediate and unconditional release and condemned the Iranian authorities' attitude to the opposition exercising its legitimate right to protest.

**Crack Down on Sovereign Debt Speculation** - A ban on certain trades in sovereign bonds, and requirement that traders settle their uncovered positions by the end of each trading day, were two key outcomes of Monday's Economic Affairs Committee vote on a draft EU regulation on short selling and credit default swaps. Members also inserted a requirement that short sale transactions be reported less often, but beefed up the rules to ensure that fines are dissuasive. MEPs primarily involved with steering the regulation through Parliament will now sit down with Member States to thrash out a deal which can be then be tabled for a plenary vote in the coming months. The regulation is expected to be in force by 2012

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