

SEPTEMBER PLENARY 2011

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UNITED ACTION FOR THE EURO

The debate over the problems of the Eurozone saw heavy criticism from all the major political groups of the failure of Europe's centre-right leadership to produce the unified response needed to stabilise the situation. While a strong EP majority called for stronger European economic governance, the S&D Group went further, denouncing also the misguided and malignant policies of austerity being pursued by the centre-right, which are killing growth and transferring to ordinary people the costs of the crisis. During the debate, S&D leader Martin Schulz criticised poor management of the euro crisis and called for "a committed common set of actions with common institutions" to restore growth and investment and resolve the current crisis. Warning that "social cohesion in Europe is under heavy pressure", Mr Schulz called for safeguards for people facing cuts in salaries and pensions. He attacked bankers whose bonuses have returned to 2008 levels. Mr Schulz said: "We are in a deep crisis. This crisis threatens European unity. It is not just a question of the weakness of the euro but the weakness of those who ought to be managing the crisis."

He continued: "Either everyone is for himself or we are all together for the sake of our common currency. The middle way -- half yes, half no, let's see, let's do something else - - that's what's ruining the euro. Therefore we need a committed common set of actions with common institutions." Mr Schulz added: "We are in favour of the golden rule. We are in favour of budget discipline. There is no alternative to that. But it must be just, at a time when people are having their salaries cut, pensions are cut and VAT is going up."

An appeal by the US, Japan and China, for more EU unity and budget discipline was, he said, "an expression of fear and anxiety that a collapse of the eurozone would drag the world economy into the abyss." He concluded: "I am absolutely convinced that if we act together, we will be able to stabilise the euro. Europe is strong enough if the pro-Europeans stand together. Then we will have a great chance of coming out of this crisis stronger."

Finally, the rapporteurs on the Economic governance legislative package the so-called "Six pack" met informally on Wednesday evening in Strasbourg with representatives of the Polish Presidency, in the presence of representatives of the Commission. At this meeting, detailed wording was tabled on the few outstanding differences between the Council and the centre-right majority in the Parliament. The S&D Group continue to have strong

objections to parts of the package, which risks making insufficient for growth and investment. This will now form a proposal for approval to be put to members of the Council and of the EP. The vote in the plenary is scheduled in principle for the September II Session.

THE PARLIAMENT ON THE MASSACRES IN NORWAY

The European Parliament held a minute's silence in Strasbourg for the 77 victims of Norway terrorist and killer Anders Behring Breivik. Hundreds of deputies hung their heads after parliament president Jerzy Buzek said the July bombing and gun rampage in Oslo and on Utoeya island was an "act of cowardice, xenophobia and hatred deserving the strongest condemnation." The speaker of the House said that "Terrorism will never change Europe's system of values. We shall cherish and safeguard it, because it is part of our European heritage", he concluded. The leaders of the main political groups across the House also conveyed their deepest condolences to the Norwegians.

SYRIA'S ASSAD MUST RELINQUISH POWER & LIBYA'S RESOURCES MUST BENEFIT ALL LIBYANS

Members called for a halt to the use of force against peaceful protesters in Syria, and said President Bashar al Assad should step down immediately, in a resolution passed this week in Strasbourg. In a separate resolution, also passed in Strasbourg, Parliament called on Libya's National Transitional Council to manage its national resources for the benefit of all Libyans.

The S&D Group strongly condemned the Syrian authorities for the deliberate violent repression against peaceful demonstrators, human rights activists and the Syrian people. S&D vice-president Véronique De Keyser and S&D coordinator on human rights Richard Howitt told the media:

"We call once again for an immediate end to violent crackdowns against peaceful demonstrators and harassment of their families. We ask for the unconditional release of all detained protesters, political prisoners, human rights defenders and journalists. We strongly support the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people and we support the Council's decision of 18 July 2011 which states that the Syrian regime is calling its legitimacy into question by choosing a path of repression instead of fulfilling its own promises on broad reforms. It is time for President Bashar al-Assad to relinquish power." [Resolutions in full - click on 15 September](#)

MARTIN SCHULZ: OFFICIAL CANDIDATE TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The S&D Group in the Parliament unanimously backed Martin Schulz as its candidate for the Presidency of the European Parliament. Following his nomination, Martin Schulz promised that if elected he will collaborate closely with the leaders of the different political groups and heads of delegation to strengthen the role of the Parliament and its powers of scrutiny over the European Council.

IN SHORT

ILO' Somavia calls for Productive Investment - Productive investment in the economy must be at the heart of policy making, and the economic crisis must not be made a pretext for undermining basic labour rights, said International Labour Organisation Director-General Juan Somavia at special meeting with MEPs on the social dimension of globalisation. Mr Somavia also called for closer ILO-EU co-operation in times of crisis, and for global economic governance to make globalization fairer.

"Within the EU, you are facing major employment and social challenges such as working poverty, precarious work, low pay, social exclusion long term unemployment", said Mr Somavia. MEPs focused on the need to create wealth, respect for international labour standards and the implementation of ILO conventions.

EP Calls for Better Support for Women Entrepreneurs - Women setting up and running small and medium-sized enterprises need better financial and educational support, says a resolution adopted . Parliament also calls on Member States to help women over 50 to stay in or return to the labour market. Only one in ten women in the EU is an entrepreneur, as opposed to one in four men. Parliament therefore calls on the Commission, Member States and regional and local authorities to do more to publicise and improve take-up of funding opportunities for female entrepreneurs such as special grants, venture capital, social security provisions and interest rate rebates. [Resolution in full - click on 13 September](#)

Traders will be obliged to disclose deals in Energy Markets - New rules to prevent abuses in wholesale energy trading, and thus protect end consumers, were adopted by the EP in Strasbourg. Wholesale trading will now be monitored independently across the EU, to enable Member States to prevent and punish anti-competitive behaviour. The EU Regulation on energy market integrity and transparency - approved with 616 votes in favour, 26 against and 24 abstentions - will govern all wholesale energy trading in the EU, covering contracts and derivatives for the supply and transportation of natural gas and electricity. New rules will ban the use of insider information and market manipulation practices, while national penalties for breaches will have to reflect the damage done to consumers. [Resolution in full - click on 14 September](#)

A New Role for Frontex in Protecting Migrant's Rights - European countries will have to provide greater operational support to Frontex, the EU's external borders agency, and meet higher standards in protecting migrants' rights. The new regulation comes after a long negotiation between Member States and MEP. Notably, governments will have to contribute to Frontex's operational missions - including rescuing migrants at sea - by providing a pool of border guards and necessary equipment. Above all, they will have to uphold fundamental rights as set out in the EU Charter and other international conventions, enforce the principle of *non-refoulement* and provide special protection to children and victims of human trafficking. [Resolution in full - click on 13 September](#)

European Lawmakers Demand Stricter Rules on Greenhouse Gases - The EU should speed up efforts to reduce emissions of fluorinated gases, such as those used in fridges, says a resolution approved by Parliament. While climate policy often focuses on carbon dioxide, Members say tougher measures against other greenhouse emissions could be relatively cheap and deliver quick results. "The F-Gas regulation has fallen far short of expectations", says the resolution, which was approved with 578 votes in favour, 51 against and 22 abstentions. [Resolution in full - click on 14 September](#)

Fight Against Corruption - In a resolution passed in Strasbourg, European lawmakers called for EU-wide sanctions against corruption, and urged Member States to make a clear political commitment to enforcing rules to curb it. Corruption costs the EU economy €120 billion per year, almost as much as the EU's annual budget. The economic crisis in many EU countries makes anti-corruption measures all the more urgent, it adds. [Resolution in full - click on 15 September](#)

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