

SEP II PLENARY 2011

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ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: "AUSTERITY ALONE WON'T RESOLVE THE EUROZONE CRISIS", WARN S&D GROUP LAWMAKERS

In the face of S&D opposition, the Parliament adopted new rules, backed by Member States, to make it easier impose austerity policies by levying fines on governments with high budget deficits or debt. After the vote the S&D Group's vice-president Stephen Hughes and its economic and monetary affairs spokesman Udo Bullmann said in a joint statement:

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"The European Parliament has approved a eurozone reform that will have drastic consequences for Europe and its citizens. Our group rejected most of the proposals negotiated by the conservatives and liberals who form a majority in both the Council and the European Parliament. We rejected the deal because we believe there is a better way out of the crisis. The reform is an austerity pack based on cuts and sanctions that leaves no room for manoeuvre for smart spending and targeted investment.

"This will make things worse for the European economy and its citizens. Austerity alone will not resolve the eurozone crisis. Recent data from international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund confirm that Europe is on the brink of a deep recession and that austerity measures already implemented in many EU countries have a negative impact on prospects for jobs and growth.

"Without strong growth, member states won't be able to respect their six-pack commitments to cut debt and public deficits. We propose an alternative strategy that combines sound public finances with social fairness and policies for investment and jobs. It is based on consolidation, also through a growth and jobs pact, stronger and more democratic decision-making arrangements, a strong system of eurobonds, a financial

transaction tax and a real European budget financed through own resources." [Click on 28.09.2011 for the adopted text](#)

S&D CALLS FOR A FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX FINALLY HEARD!

The S&D Group won a historic victory in Strasbourg when the Commission, after resisting for years the S&D campaign for the introduction of a financial transaction tax, used President Barroso's State of the Union speech to announce proposals for an FTT. S&D spokesman for economic and monetary affairs, Udo Bullmann and Anni Podimata, author of the European Parliament's report on this issue:

"The introduction of a financial transaction tax has been a long standing demand of our group. We have never given up the battle despite the Commission's clear reluctance until now to act. We welcome its decision to respond to our call and present a legislative proposal. It is time that the speculators who caused the crisis bear their share of the burden. We are pleased that the tax will specifically target the most speculative financial products including transactions carried out off-exchange.

"The news that they will speed up the introduction of the tax so that it takes effect in 2014 instead of 2018 is particularly welcomed. By its action, the EU is giving much needed leadership to the rest of the world on this question. We are confident that concerns about the tax impact on competitiveness will prove to be unfounded. We urge the European Commission to stand firm and ensure full implementation of a financial transaction tax on which our full support is guaranteed." The MEPs will remain vigilant on application as well as level of the proposed financial transaction tax.

STATE OF THE UNION DEBATE: CALLS FOR EU UNITY TO MEET CHALLENGES

We must not allow the achievement of a united Europe to be called into question, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso warned in his State of the Union address to Members, pointing out that "Greece will remain a member of the euro area," Mr Barroso said. In debate, S&D leader Martin Schulz set out a combative approach to the crisis and called for resolute action at EU level to safeguard the prosperity of future generations. Mr Schulz also condemned EU governments for "shuttle diplomacy between EU capitals" and demanded that the EU "act as a community" and meet economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges together." There is nothing wrong with European integration," he said. "There is no crisis of ideals. We have a crisis of leadership."

Criticising the side-lining of EU institutions as governments revert to diplomacy between capitals, Mr Schulz said: "Given the contemporary 21st century challenges we face, it is not appropriate to use 19th century Vienna Congress methods to solve our problems." He added: "Europe is suffering. This shuttle diplomacy between capitals is being bullied by the markets."

Mr Schulz welcomed Commission President José Manuel Barroso's spirited defence of the Union and its values. In a concluding flourish, Mr Schulz rounded on "those who wave flags, who preach national slogans", declaring: "These are the people who are sowing fear among future generations." That is why the pro-European groups in this House are called upon to act together."

S&D GROUP SUPPORTS PALESTINIAN UN APPLICATION AND EP CALLS PALESTINE'S BID FOR STATEHOOD "LEGITIMATE"

Parliament called Palestine's bid for statehood "legitimate" in a resolution passed in Strasbourg this week, and said that a solution should be found within a year. The S&D Group had earlier expressed their support for the application submitted by President Mahmoud Abbas to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on 23 September 2011. The S&D Group called on EU Member States to be united in supporting the legitimate demand of the Palestinian people to be represented as a state at the United Nations.

Véronique De Keyser, vice-president of the S&D Group said to the media: "The Group supports the legitimate demand of president Abbas at the UN and reiterates its strong support for the two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states and with the state of Israel and an independent, democratic and viable state of Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security. The right of the Palestinians to self-determination and to have their own state is unquestionable as it is the right of Israel to exist within secure borders. The decision by the Israeli government to advance settlement expansion in Gilo, East Jerusalem, is unacceptable and raises serious doubts about Israel's stated commitment to resume peace talks. All steps that may undermine the prospects of a negotiated agreement must be avoided and no changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties can be accepted. We stress again that peaceful and non-violent means are the only way to achieve a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict". [Click on 29.09.2011 for the adopted text](#)

S&D GROUP CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO UNBLOCK "FOOD FOR FREE" MONEY

European Socialists and Democrats meeting in Strasbourg called on the EU Heads of State and Government to unblock the money in stock for the 'Food for Free' programme, an EU scheme providing food to 18 million of Europe's most deprived people. Due to the opposition by 6 European countries, the programme was deadlocked last week in a meeting of the EU agriculture ministers.

IN SHORT

Parliament Approves Duty-Free Access to Palestinian Products - Farm and fishery produce from Palestine will enjoy duty free access to the European market following the EP's vote for a new trade agreement with the Palestinian Authority. S&D Euro lawmaker Maria Eleni Koppa, author of the parliamentary resolution, said: "It is an economic opportunity for the region which may bring prosperity and growth. Easier access to our market will help to cut poverty. We hope it will bring hope for the future and more political stability to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip". MEPs believe that opening EU markets directly to Palestinian products, which have up to now been under the direct control of the Israeli customs authorities, will help the Palestinian people expand their economy. Now that it has the House's approval, the agreement can enter into force early next year. [Click on 27.09.2011 for the adopted text](#)

EP Curbs Software to Repressive Regimes - EP revised EU rules on exports of products that can be used for both civilian and military purposes, such as chemicals, telecoms devices or software, in a vote in Strasbourg. In the legislative resolution adopted with 567 votes in favour, 89 against, and 12 abstentions, MEPs prohibit the granting of general EU authorisations for exports to certain countries (such as China, India, Russia and Turkey) of telecommunication technologies that can be used "in connection with a violation of human rights, democratic principles or freedom of speech (...) by using interception technologies and digital data transfer devices for monitoring mobile phones and text messages and targeted surveillance of internet use". To date, exports of these products have not been subject to any EU authorisation system, and it has been up to

individual Member States to decide on unilateral export controls. S&D Group MEP Jörg Leichtfried, author of a parliamentary report said to the media in Strasbourg: "For the first time there will be controls on software exports and this is a major step. We know that some software programs produced in Europe were used to detect and deter freedom activists in Syria, Libya and Egypt when they were trying to get organized. We could have gone further in protection of human rights but the conservative majority in the Parliament blocked ambitious proposals such as a prior authorisation system. The EU should not contribute to repression or human rights violations anywhere in the world." [Click on the 27.09.2011 for the adopted text](#)

EP calls to Boost Job-Creating Projects - EU and national procedures must be simplified to enable poorer regions in particular to access and invest higher rates of EU funding for regional development and building competitiveness, say MEPs in a resolution passed in Strasbourg. Absolute priority should go to job-creating projects, they add. [Click on the 27.09.2011 for the text in full](#)

Parliament Backs Gay Pride Parades & LGBT Rights - The Parliament called in Strasbourg for an end to the discrimination and violence suffered by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on a daily basis both in the EU and outside it. In a resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority (442 votes to 104, with 40 abstentions) European lawmakers demand that the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people be upheld fully within the EU and defended systematically in its external relations. S&D Group Member Michael Cashman, who steered this resolution through the House, securing a large consensus, said to the media: "I am proud that all political groups came together to condemn discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and stated clearly that we must do more to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people here in the EU. The time has clearly come to consider sexual orientation and gender identity as legitimate grounds of protection when it comes to human rights." [Click on the 28.09.2011 for the adopted text](#)

More Funds for managing migration and refugee flows - An extra €43.9 million to manage migration and refugee flows started by events in the southern Mediterranean was approved by European lawmakers, in an "amending budget".

Global Green Targets - The UN's Rio de Janeiro summit on sustainable development should set "accountable targets", including global goals on renewable energy and energy efficiency, according to a resolution approved by the House. Parliament's set of recommendations for next year's event - due to take place 20 years after the first Earth Summit in 1992 - was approved with 449 votes in favour, 103 against and 45 abstentions. [Click on the 29.09.2011 for the adopted resolution](#)

The Parliament will not seek a court decision on the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement - A bid to have the new protocol to the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement referred to the European Court of Justice, was rejected in the plenary vote with 221 votes in favour, 302 votes against and 30 abstentions).

S&D Lawmaker to Steer CAP Reform - Luis Capoulas Santos MEP, was appointed European rapporteur on the post-2013 reform of EU rural policy and subsidies for farmers. A former Portuguese minister for agriculture, Capoulas Santos will lead the Parliament's negotiating team in upcoming talks on the post-2013 reform of the EU farm policy. This is one of the EU's most divisive issues, accounting for almost half of Union's budget.

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