

JANUARY PLENARY 2012

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SOCIAL DEMOCRAT ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In Strasbourg, the House elected the former Social Democrat Group Leader Martin Schulz as the new President of the European Parliament. Schulz was elected in the first ballot with a large majority and his mandate will run over the next two and a half years. Schulz succeeds Jerzy Buzek from the European People's Party.

Commenting on his new role, Martin Schulz said to MEPs: "I will be and want to be the President for all Members and to defend your rights. More Europe with less Parliament – I want to start a fight against this concept. And I hope you will join me.

"We want to listen more to the people. And this is the place where the interests of the people are represented. Here representatives of the European people are sitting. This is why I say: 'Citizens, who you have given us your confidence in a direct vote, you can expect us to fight for your cause'. I know this and am proud that all Members in this House consider themselves as advocates for the people". A **version for broadcast** is available on our broadcasting platform: <http://www.sdbroadcasting.com>

HANNES SWOBODA ELECTED AS NEW LEADER OF THE S&D GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – A STRONG S&D TEAM TO HELP EUROPEAN CITIZENS THROUGH THE CRISIS

The Progressive Alliance of the Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament elected a new Group Leader in Strasbourg, the Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda. The S&D Group – the second biggest group in the European Parliament with 190 members – elected Swoboda in a secret vote. For the first time there were three candidates for this position.

The mandate of the new Group Leader will cover the next two and a half years until the 2014 European elections. Swoboda will succeed former leader Martin Schulz. Commenting on the outcome of the vote, the new S&D Group Leader Hannes Swoboda said to the media:

"I am very happy to have been elected as new Group Leader of the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament and I would like to thank my fellow S&D members for placing their trust in me to take on this role. In challenging times we need to show the European people that we have solutions for their problems."

"The response to the crisis cannot be based on austerity measures alone. Any action to ensure fiscal discipline must be combined with measures to promote solidarity and growth. We as Socialists and Democrats will take all possible action to counter the neo-liberal approach currently dominating the European debate. Citizens' interests and future prosperity must be at the centre of our actions".

S&D WINS TOP POSTS AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND APPOINTS NEW GROUP'S BUREAU

Following the election of former S&D Leader Martin Schulz as President of the European Parliament, Euro MPs also elected S&Ds Gianni Pittella, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez and Anni Podimata respectively as 1st, 2nd and 3rd European Parliament Vice-Presidents.

Moreover, S&D Members Boguslaw Liberadzki and Lidia Geringer de Oedenberg have been appointed as EP quaestors, in charge of the administrative and financial running of the House.

Socialists and Democrats also elected in Strasbourg nine new Group Vice-Presidents who will join new Group leader Hannes Swoboda in the S&D Bureau, the group's bureau: Stephen Hughes, Véronique De Keyser, Bernhard Rapkay, Libor Rouček, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Sylvie Guillaume, Rovana Plumb, Patrizia Toia and Marita Ulvskog.

IN SHORT

ORBÁN FACES POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS IN HEATED DEBATE ON HUNGARY - EPP URGED TO HOLD ORBÁN TO ACCOUNT - Passions ran high in the European Parliament in Strasbourg as the majority of the political group leaders raised concerns not only over specific legal and constitutional provisions in Hungary, but also what they saw as a wider undermining of democratic values in that country. The plenary debate came one day after the Commission started infringement procedures against Hungary on three specific laws: independence of the national central bank, independence of the judiciary and the independence of the data protection supervisory authority. Commission President José Manuel Barroso said further action will depend on the response of the Hungarian institutions to the formal notices, adding, "I ask for the respect of democracy in Hungary in the best interest of Hungarians". Replying to the statements made by the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the new socialist leader Hannes Swoboda said that essential issues, like the independence of judiciary - a breach of European values of democracy - are at stake. "You want to exercise power, stay in power. That is the spirit behind the changes and by your measures you are undermining freedoms you fought so hard for in Hungary. We welcome the recent infringement procedures launched by the EU Commission. Yet, in the European Parliament it is our role not only to look at legislative details, but also to analyse the underlying philosophy of the government's actions. The spirit of Orbán's government is wrong, that is what we are criticising. I stand for the Europe of Vaclav Havel, based on the principles of freedom and democracy. Not for Orbán's Hungary, which is becoming increasingly authoritarian!" [Video of the debate - click on 18.01.2012](#)

ALARM BELLS FOR TALKS ON CLOSER ECONOMIC UNION DEAL - In a resolution adopted in Strasbourg with 521 votes in favour, 124 against and 50 abstentions, the Parliament sounded the alarm about possible pitfalls for the intergovernmental agreement currently being negotiated on closer economic union. Its resolution voices overwhelming doubts as to the need for any such agreement outside the EU system. It also stresses that democratic accountability must be improved, and says the deal should aim to boost growth, not just enforce austerity. The resolution raises doubts as to the necessity of any such intergovernmental agreement, given that its key aims could be better and more effectively achieved through the normal EU system. Moreover, the resolution argues that it is only through the tried and tested normal EU

system that a true economic and fiscal union can be achieved. Finally, pointing to the potential dangers that the new agreement, in its current form, could create, the parliamentary resolution warns against permanently embedding a "two-speed Europe". [Resolution in full - click on 18.01.2012](#)

DANISH SOCIAL-DEMOCRAT PM CALLS FOR ACTIVE, FAIR AND DEMOCRATIC EU -

The Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt addressed the Chamber on the priorities of the Danish government during the EU Presidency that runs from 1 January 2012 to 31 June 2012. Speaking to MEPs in Strasbourg, Ms Thorning-Schmidt said that EU must have a greater focus on solidarity, participation and inclusion in future. Justice, care and opportunities were key components to regain the confidence of the European people in the future. On the current economic crisis, the Prime Minister stressed that the European social model needed to be the way ahead and that pure austerity measures were not sufficient. "The path out of this crisis goes through more Europe, not less", she stressed. Responding to PM Thorning-Schmidt, new S&D Group Leader Hannes Swoboda said: "I agree with my Social Democrat colleague Helle Thorning-Schmidt that we need to actively engage in a new debate about Europe. However, many of the players currently determining the fate of Europe, such as financial market operators or rating agencies are not present here. The only way to be ahead of the discussion is through a common EU response and the 'Community method'." [Video of the debate - click on 18.01.2012](#)

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