



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

Council and Commission statements - Preparations for the European Council meeting 24-25/10/2013)

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Wednesday 23 October 2013

The heads of state and government at the European Council must acknowledge their responsibilities and find a compromise for a truly European immigration policy. Following the latest tragedies and with so many refugees fleeing towards Europe, we have to show solidarity and facilitate legal immigration to Europe.

Migratory flows in the Mediterranean, with particular attention to the tragic events of Lampedusa

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The recent tragedies off Lampedusa and Malta are unfortunately nothing new. According to the International Organisation for Migration, at least 20,000 people have died at sea since 1993. The latest events must be a turning point for Europe to prevent further tragedies and adopt a co-ordinated approach based on solidarity and responsibility. Specifically, this must be in the form of: 1) full compliance with international sea-rescue obligations and swift agreement on new interception rules for Frontex-co-ordinated operations; 2) promotion of existing and new legal channels for migration; 3) effective access to asylum procedures; 4) increased co-operation with third countries under clear and pre-defined terms which respect their fundamental rights obligations; 5) reinforced solidarity within the EU to reduce the pressure on the member states most affected. Short-term solutions are necessary in times of crisis, but until the EU and the member states adopt a comprehensive approach to interlinked migration issues, a growing number of people will resort to smugglers or criminal networks and risk their lives on increasingly dangerous routes. It's about time that everyone shoulders their responsibilities and seeks a comprehensive EU migration policy, to avoid future tragedies such as those we have witnessed in the last few weeks.



Sylvie Guillaume

Medical devices

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The Commission proposes improvements to the current law on medical devices to address the existing shortcomings: stronger supervision of notified bodies to ensure conformity of assessment; stricter controls on manufacturers through un-announced inspections; better public information through an extended database on medical devices; and the introduction of a unique identifier to improve traceability and recalls in case of safety concerns. While the rapporteur acknowledges the Commission's efforts, too much emphasis is put on placing medical devices on the market as quickly as possible – to the detriment of patient safety. Dagmar Roth-Behrendt's report aims at strengthening the patient safety aspects of the legislation, including creating a centralised pre-marketing authorisation procedure for high-risk devices involving a public health agency at EU level (EMA); reinforced qualification requirements for the staff of notified bodies and availability of in-house expertise; and stricter provisions on multiple-use devices, including EU-wide standards for reprocessing.



Dagmar Roth Behrendt

The annual report from the Council to the European Parliament on the common foreign and security policy

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The annual report takes stock of EU external action in different thematic and geographic areas, and outlines the Parliament's position on key foreign policy issues facing the EU. The S&D Group has consistently supported a comprehensive approach to EU foreign policy for the benefit of all EU citizens, anchored in core European values and in constructive co-operation with our strategic partners. Given the uncertain and changing international landscape, the EU needs a foreign policy that is both internally cohesive and strategically coherent. Only by making full use of the institutional tools made available by the Lisbon Treaty – above all the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the post of high representative for foreign affairs and security policy – to fulfil its responsibilities and role as a global actor effectively.



Libor Roucek

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

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The current political and economic context threatens the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Europeans. The financial crisis has led to a tendency among EU countries to reduce the quality and availability of these services. Additionally, very conservative positions regarding sexual and reproductive rights have increased across Europe. Given these attacks, it is more critical than ever that the European Parliament stands up for sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and provides a useful summary of the current state of play on these issues at a European level. It is crucial that we keep the progressive text as adopted by the women's rights and gender equality committee, which contains all the elements needed to enhance women's reproductive rights and to reverse the restrictive trends observed in some countries.



Edite Estrela



Elisa Ferreira

European Semester for economic policy

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This report is the European Parliament's assessment of the second stage of the 2013 semester cycle on economic co-ordination: the country-specific recommendations (CSR) from the Commission and the Council for 2013. It stresses that there is a need to improve economic co-ordination within the semester cycle; that slowing down fiscal consolidation has yielded good results; and that all member states (not only those with a deficit, but also those with a surplus) have a role to play in correcting the imbalances within the eurozone. The report now stresses the asymmetric impact of common policies and asks for the prudent interpretation of the recent 'slow recovery' in order to avoid past mistakes. It demands a better focus on the EU 2020 strategy and social inclusion in the country-specific recommendations and demands greater investment in job creation.



Corina Cretu

Local authorities and civil society: Europe's engagement in support of sustainable development

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Addressing the issue of better EU co-operation with local authorities and civil society, this report looks at the effectiveness of partnerships between all players involved in developing decent work agendas, supporting sustainable and inclusive growth through state budgets, and promoting accountability. We have also strongly encouraged the active involvement of marginalised groups and women's organisations in dialogue on preparing policy and putting it into action. These are important factors in achieving the eradication of poverty and the other seven Millennium Development Goals. We are very concerned about the Commission's proposal to limit financial support in service delivery just to civil society organisations working in the least developed countries and fragile states. We therefore underline the need to define and enforce the role of civil society organisations and local authorities in situations of crisis and fragility, using a human-rights based and gender-sensitive approach.



Bernd Lange

EU trade policy towards countries of the Eastern Partnership ahead of the Vilnius Summit

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The upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius on 28-29 November could be the starting point for a new trade arrangement between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Partnership: Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Several association agreements will be initialled, including deep and comprehensive trade agreements (DCFTA), with Georgia and Moldova, and Ukraine is expected to sign an association agreement, including a deep and comprehensive trade agreement. The signature will depend on whether Ukraine can demonstrate determined and tangible progress on the benchmarks set out by the December 2012 Council conclusions, which address the need for reform of the justice system, among other issues. The agreement would be a positive signal for increased economic and trade relations between the EU and Ukraine, but also for increased co-operation on good governance.



Katarina Nevedalova

Rethinking education

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This own-initiative report responds to the Commission's communication 'Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes'. The Commission proposes actions at national and EU level to modernise education and training systems to support growth and jobs. These include delivering the right skills for employment and business creation, increasing the efficiency and inclusivity of education and training institutions, and new approaches to funding and collaboration with stakeholders. Education is a key solution to the crisis and the alarming levels of unemployment across the EU. The current education model is outdated and does not match a society that has changed rapidly in recent decades, so it is crucial to truly rethink the current models. However the role of education must be much broader than just fulfilling economic targets and addressing the needs of the current labour market. Education is about the preparation of individuals for life as active citizens in increasingly complex societies.



Inés Ayala Sender

Connecting Europe Facility

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The Connecting Europe Facility aims to promote investment in transport, energy and telecommunications for the period 2014-2020, using grants and financial instruments from the EU budget to promote selected projects of European interest. The initial €50 billion budget in the Commission proposal was reduced to €29 billion by the February 2013 European Council (€23 for transport, €5 for energy and €1 for telecoms) including the €10 billion ring-fenced from the Cohesion Fund for transport projects in the cohesion countries. We need smart investment in Europe's infrastructure for a more cohesive EU and to promote sustainable jobs and growth.

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