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PARLIAMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE S&D GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT • March 2014

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TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE TROIKAS

The European Parliament approved two reports which paint a damning picture of the role of the Troikas (the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund) in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus – the four EU countries under financial assistance. These reports are the result of an in-depth investigation led by two S&D Euro MPs: Liêm Hoang Ngoc from the economic and monetary affairs committee and Alejandro Cercas from the employment and social affairs committee.

The reports set out proposals including phasing out the Troikas and replacing them with a proper EU institution – a European Monetary Fund. Crucially, they also set out details for a recovery programme to repair the social damage that has been caused by the Troikas' ill-judged austerity measures. S&D Group leader Hannes Swoboda said after the vote:

"The Socialists and the Democrats were the first to question the destructive policies of the Troikas by setting up their own 'alternative Troika' when it became clear the Troikas were worsening the effects of the crisis. Today, the Parliament is sending a clear message that it will no longer accept this Europe of the Troikas. The Troikas have shown that Europe fails when it disregards the EU institutions and the community-method."

Click here to read the adopted text:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140313&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

S&D GROUP WINS MILESTONE REFORM ON DATA PROTECTION!

The S&D Group has thrown its weight behind a groundbreaking vote to introduce new EU rules for data protection. This will include the obligation to obtain the consent of the people involved before their data can be processed, as well as stricter rules for data exchange processes with non-EU countries. According to the draft reform adopted in Strasbourg, companies violating the new rules could face penalties up to 5% of their global sales. To enter into force and replace the outdated 1995 legislation, the new rules will now need to be backed by EU governments, some of which have so far been stalling on the reform. Dimitrios Droutsas MEP, the Parliament's rapporteur on the Data Protection Directive, said to the media:

"This is a historic vote for the European Parliament. After two years of diligent work, we can today show European citizens, and in fact the whole world, that we mean business when we stand up as protectors of their fundamental rights. We have voted in favour of a comprehensive, groundbreaking overhaul of the way we protect personal data in Europe. EU member states should pick up the task from where we left off and finish the job, which regrettably they have failed to do so far."

S&D Vice-President Sylvie Guillaume said: "We should have greater protection when personal data is processed and both the directive and the regulation go in the right direction on this issue. We have, I believe, reached a balanced text ready to face the challenges of the digital world and we've tried to address the main concerns, despite intense lobbying. I now call on all member states not to postpone the adoption of these texts and to implement them as quickly as possible, for the benefit of our citizens."

Click here to read the adopted text:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140312&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

PARLIAMENT CALLS ON RUSSIA TO WITHDRAW MILITARY FORCES FROM UKRAINE

Russia must immediately withdraw all its military forces from Ukrainian territory, say MEPs in a resolution passed in Strasbourg. They condemn its "act of aggression in invading Crimea" as a breach of international law, declare Crimea's plans to hold a referendum on its accession to Russia to be illegal and warn that Russia's actions pose a threat to the security of the EU.

The resolution firmly condemns Russia's "act of aggression in invading Crimea" and calls for the immediate withdrawal of all military forces "present illegally on Ukrainian territory". Russia was in "clear breach" of international law, as set out in the UN Charter, the OSCE Helsinki Act, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and other conventions, and was "posing a threat to the security of the EU", it says.

Click here to read the adopted text:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=20140313&secondRef=TOC&language=en>

THE EU MUST PUT DATA TRANSFER AGREEMENTS WITH THE US ON HOLD SAY MEPS

The European Parliament adopted a final report following a six-month inquiry led by S&D MEP Claude Moraes on Edward Snowden's revelations of mass surveillance by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and the intelligence agencies of certain EU countries. The report on the NSA spying scandal condemns the mass surveillance programmes used by the US and EU member states, and it urges the EU to suspend and reform some existing transatlantic agreements with Washington. These include a bank data transfer deal (known as the TFTP or Swift agreement) and the 'Safe Harbour' agreement on data privacy which allows US companies to transfer EU citizens' data to the US securely. Moreover, it calls on the Commission to exclude data protection from free trade talks and to conclude negotiations with the US to introduce judicial redress for EU citizens facing privacy violations. Claude Moraes MEP, S&D spokesperson on civil liberties, justice and home affairs, who led the Parliament's inquiry and authored the report on the electronic mass surveillance of EU citizens, said:

"The Edward Snowden allegations came at a critical time when the EU had already decided to completely overhaul its own outdated data protection, internet and privacy laws. It sparked an intense period of activity which has resulted in a set of rules to give EU citizens back control of their personal data including the 'right to erasure', allowing people to have their details removed on request. The inquiry into the electronic mass surveillance of EU citizens has been the most comprehensive inquiry to date with testimony from all key actors including from the source of all these revelations, Edward Snowden. A host of detailed recommendations form a digital bill of rights, including increased international protections for journalists and whistleblowers, proposals to strengthen cloud computing in the EU (but not to fence us off), and proposals on IT security and encryption standards."

Click here to read the adopted text:

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IN SHORT

EU consumers will be better protected when buying package holidays - European lawmakers with the support of S&D Group Members, gave the green light to the Directive on package holiday and assisted travel arrangements. This text updates existing consumer protection rules on package holidays which date back to 1990. Tourism plays a central role in Europe's economy accounting for 10% of EU GDP involving some 1.8 million businesses, mostly SME's and employing 5.2% of the total workforce.

Nanofood labelling - The Parliament opposed the Commission's proposed definition of "engineered nanomaterials" – tiny particles added to foods – in a vote in Strasbourg. MEPs say this definition would exempt foods containing additives which might be nanomaterials that are already on the market from being labelled.

No more borders in the European Sky, say S&Ds - The House adopted a report to implement the Single European Sky (SES), a project that the S&D Group have strongly supported since it

was first launched in 2000. As member states have failed to stay on target with the implementation of SES, the proposed measures aim to effectively defragment the EU's air traffic management (ATM) system aimed at achieving delay-free, environmentally friendly and affordable air travel. S&D spokesperson on transport, MEP Saïd El Khadraoui, said:

"Over 2 million commercial flights fly every trimester over the EU sky and the airspace is reaching its maximum capacity, so we need to organise it in a more efficient way both for financial, environmental and safety reasons. The Parliament has improved on the Commission proposal. We, Socialists and Democrats have vetoed initial plans to oblige member states to separate and liberalise support services such as meteorology or surveillance services from the core services. The social and organisational cost would be unpredictable and the benefits for aviation questionable."

Criminalising homosexuality undermines Cotonou agreement -The S&D Group firmly condemn the adoption of the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act in Nigeria and the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda and ask that appropriate EU measures are taken. The S&D Group considers that adopting these laws constitutes a grave threat to the universal rights to life, to freedom of expression, of association and assembly, and to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

S&Ds push to gradually replace harmful air conditioning and refrigeration with eco-friendly options - The House backed a new regulation to start phasing out fluorinated 'greenhouse gases' (known as F-gases), despite pressure from big multinationals. The S&D Group supported the new legislation because it will reduce environmental damage and will encourage the use of alternative eco-friendly equipment, much of which has been developed through research and innovation from European companies. F-gases are currently used in air-conditioning systems, fridges, insulation foams, electrical equipment, aerosol sprays (as solvents) and in fire-protection systems. They are up to 23,000 times more damaging than CO₂ and can remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years.

S&Ds secure 50% increase in EU funding to integrate migrants and refugees -The new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which will run from 2014 for a seven-year period, will have a total budget of €3,137 million, compared to the €2,115 million available under the three previous funds together. At the insistence of the S&D Group, EU countries will also have to ensure resources are distributed fairly between the different fields of activities involved and they must therefore use at least 20% of the allocations they receive from the fund for asylum and at least 20% for integration.

Progress Report on Turkey - The S&D group in Parliament welcome the positive outcome of a vote on the Commission's progress report on Turkey. European Socialists and Democrats consider that Turkey, as a candidate country for accession with rights and obligations, must finally be judged on its own merits.

Anti-money Laundry Rules - The ultimate owners of companies and trusts would have to be listed in public registers in EU countries, under draft anti-money laundering rules voted by Parliament. The draft law would also require banks, auditors, lawyers, real estate agents and

casinos, among others, to be more vigilant about suspicious transactions made by their clients. The aim is to make dodgy deals harder to hide and fight tax evasion.

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