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**PARLIAMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE S&D GROUP IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT** • September 2013

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### **SWOBODA ON STATE OF THE UNION: "CONFIDENCE OF INVESTORS UP, CONFIDENCE OF CITIZENS STILL DOWN"**

In his annual state of the union (<http://europartv.europa.eu/en/player.aspx?pid=0585298b-3cc3-4f54-936c-a2360144fde9>) address, Jose Manuel Barroso said there was "no way back to business as usual". "The recovery is within sight," he said, but warned it was fragile and that political leaders must "keep up our efforts".

However, Hannes Swoboda, President of the S&D Group, challenged Mr Barroso's optimism, saying that "the glass is still half empty". He stressed that "austerity measures are still increasing the rift between rich and poor, North and South ... more public and private investments are lacking". He also called for unity in the run-up to next year's European elections, to build "a closer Europe, a common Europe, one strong enough to defend itself worldwide". During the plenary debate Hannes Swoboda, he warned:

"With unemployment stabilising and statistics showing minor economic growth, there are some signs of recovery in the EU. But it is an incredibly feeble recovery. This recovery is a numerical one and the struggling people in Europe have not yet seen improvements. Too many people have no jobs or opportunities, cuts to public services weigh hard on them and the health and long-term economic effects will continue to haunt Europe's crisis generation. So the confidence of investors may be returning, but the confidence of our citizens is still at rock bottom.

"The most important lesson for the European Commission – and member states – is that the slight move away from austerity resulted in a slight economic upturn. The hint of recovery we see must now be amplified by further balanced policies for a real and sustainable European recovery. The worst thing to do would be to return to harsh austerity measures and undo the relative stability we have achieved."

## **A TRUE BANKING UNION IS VITAL TO PROTECT TAXPAYERS AND DEPOSITORS**

The European Parliament in Strasbourg gave its formal green light to transfer the power to supervise the eurozone's banks to the European Central Bank (ECB). S&D Euro Members urged European governments to translate these decisions into reality without delay and to move forward towards a true banking union. Following today's, S&D Group spokeswoman for economic and monetary affairs Elisa Ferreira told the media in Strasbourg:

"Placing European banks under the supervision of the European Central Bank is a major step towards true transparency in the banking world. Although this is a big change, this is only one step on the path to full responsibility for bankers: we have to make sure that if they are tempted to indulge in wild speculation again, they will not be bailed out by taxpayers' money.

"Bankers will have to show that they have sufficient resources, valuable assets and clear balance sheets. In short, bankers must demonstrate that they have the financial muscle to cover the risks they take. But it is far from enough. More steps are needed in order to provide stability and protect taxpayers and depositors."

Please [click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/true-banking-union-vital-protect-taxpayers-and-depositors) (<http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/true-banking-union-vital-protect-taxpayers-and-depositors>) to read the full article.

## **THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEBATES SYRIA**

In a debate with the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, Cathy Ashton, in the European Parliament plenary session, the S&D Group called for increased EU commitment to a peaceful solution in Syria. Speaking during the debate, Hannes Swoboda, president of Socialists and Democrats Group, said:

"We know for a fact that chemical weapons were used in Syria and all the evidence points to Bashar al-Assad's government as the perpetrator of this attack. The international community, and the EU as a key player, have to prevent any further use of chemical weapons. This is our right, but also our obligation. To this end, Syria must place all of its chemical weapons under international surveillance for destruction and sign and ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention – without delay."

"In any case, Assad should be aware that the threat of military action remains on the table. The EU's commitment must go still further: we must continue to support efforts towards the Geneva II Middle East peace conference, as well as ensuring aid reaches the two million refugees displaced by the conflict and redoubling our humanitarian efforts in the country and region."

Please [click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/swoboda-syria-give-peace-chance-%E2%80%93-threat-military-action-remains-table) (<http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/swoboda-syria-give-peace-chance-%E2%80%93-threat-military-action-remains-table>) to read the full article.

## **THE SOCIALISTS AND DEMOCRATS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PAYED HOMAGE TO SALVADOR ALLENDE**

On the 40th anniversary of the coup-d'etat that deposed democratically-elected Salvador Allende from office in Chile and introduced a military dictatorship, the Socialists and Democrats payed homage to Allende, who died on September 11, 1973 during the bombing of La Moneda. The president of the S&D Group, Hannes Swoboda, said:

"For many of us it was a horrible moment when we saw that the hope of Chile, of a man with a vision for a more equitable and just society in Chile and in Latin America met a brutal end in the military intervention, promoted by the US government. Many hopes faded, many people disappeared and others were tortured. Others left the country fearing for their lives. Many came to Europe to escape the brutal dictatorship. It was an important moment in European history when we gave this people the chance to live with us and fight with us for freedom and democracy.

S&D spokesperson for the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (Eurolat), MEP Luis Yáñez-Barnuevo, said:

"Allende was above all a democrat, who fought for freedom and social justice. As we remember him it is difficult not to think of the horror of Pinochet's military dictatorship. It spread terror and left so many victims that are alive in our memory, such as the generals who were loyal to democracy and refused to take part in the coup, René Schneider and Carlos Prats, and the singer Víctor Jara. We will never forget them."

Please [click here](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/socialists-and-democrats-eu-parliament-pay-homage-salvador-allende) (<http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/socialists-and-democrats-eu-parliament-pay-homage-salvador-allende>) to read the full article.

## IN SHORT

**Better regulation for home buyers** - European citizens will be better informed and protected when they get a mortgage to buy a property according to a new law that was voted in the Parliament with the support of all S&D Euro MPs. S&D Group MEP Antolín Sánchez Presedo who led the Parliament's negotiations told the media:

"The subprime crisis in the US and the housing bubbles in some EU member states have caused tragedies. People were unable to pay back their loans due to the swings in the housing market and lost their homes. We want to make sure that our citizens are better protected in the future, especially if they are not able to repay a mortgage. This new piece of legislation puts the EU mortgage market in the vanguard. We want a more transparent, safer and more competitive mortgage market with a high level of protection for consumers and a high level of financial inclusion."

**New market abuse regulation will close so-called Libor loophole** - MEPs have voted in the in Strasbourg to back proposals that will fight market abuse and restore confidence in EU's financial markets. The new rules include stronger powers for regulators, stronger sanctions - including a permanent ban on perpetrators, a move towards a cross-border surveillance system and greater protection for whistleblowers. Vice President of the EP's Monetary Affairs Committee and the lead negotiator on the market abuse law, S&D Group Member, Arlene McCarthy described 2012's rate-rigging Libor scandal as "market manipulation of the worst kind".

The Libor scandal was uncovered in July 2012, where it became apparent that banks and traders had rigged rates, affecting hundreds of trillions of euros of derivatives and loans, including mortgages, across the world. McCarthy said, "We are seeing more alleged and potential manipulation of benchmarks in energy markets such as oil and gas and foreign exchange markets. These new rules will close the Libor loophole and ensure all such benchmarks and indices are covered in the law."

**Youth unemployment: ensure good quality traineeships** "Youth guarantee" schemes alone will not suffice to reduce youth unemployment, MEPs warn. They call for further measures to make it easier for young people to move to jobs or training, and EU support and quality standards for traineeships and apprenticeships, in two separate resolutions voted by the Parliament. Youth guarantee schemes, which aim to ensure that young people under 25 years old are offered a job, training, or a traineeship within four months of their becoming unemployed, should be extended to include graduates under 30 years old. MEPs urged EU member states to remove all barriers to cross-border traineeships for young EU citizens. The EU should do more to support initiatives that multiply good-quality apprenticeship contracts and improve the mobility and employability of young people. In addition, MEPs say the EU should introduce quality standards for pay, working conditions and health and safety.

**S&D Group backs stricter guarantees for people under arrest** New EU legislation backed by the S&D Group will guarantee the right to access to a lawyer for anyone held by the police under arrest or as a suspect. This right and provisions on what a lawyer is entitled to do will be applied uniformly across the 28 EU countries. According to a new directive passed by the EP in Strasbourg, any person anywhere in the EU people will have the right of access to a lawyer as soon as possible after the moment they are questioned by the police or deprived of their liberty.

**Biofuels should not come at the expense of food or greenhouse emissions** - The Socialists and Democrats today backed a proposal to stop incentivising biofuels based on food crops in order to prevent the distortion of world food prices\*. The Fuel Quality and Renewable Energy Directives voted on today in Strasbourg will also identify and phase out biofuels which produce high emissions that add to the greenhouse effect.

**Members Demands Tougher Rules to Save the European eel stock** Fresh legislation is urgently needed to save the European eel stock, which scientists report has declined by at least 95% in the past thirty years, says Parliament in a resolution voted in Strasbourg. MEPs urge the European Commission to table a draft law by March 2014, including sanctions against EU member states that are slow to provide the data needed to assess the stock.