



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

The situation in Ukraine

+ 33 3 88 17 57 16 hannes.swoboda@europarl.europa.eu

Wednesday 26 February 2014

The escalating levels of violence in Ukraine over the past few days have to be answered from the EU with determined sanctions, including visa-bans and asset freezes. These sanctions have to be targeted directly at the perpetrators of the violence, not as a symbolic gesture from the EU but as a direct response to the actions of the interior ministry, police and security forces. We continue to support a roadmap to free and fair elections in Ukraine, to ensure the full independence and the integrity of the country.



Sergio Cofferati

Single market governance within the European Semester 2014 / Rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 55 13 sergio.cofferati@europarl.europa.eu

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The report focuses on the 'Single market for growth and jobs' report accompanying the Annual Growth Survey, which deals with the state of the integration of the single market and addresses country-specific situations. It stresses the need to improve the governance of the single market by establishing, as a pillar of the EU semester, an annual single market governance cycle that includes: an internal market scoreboard; an annual report on the integration of the single market (as part of the Annual Growth Survey); European Council guidance to member states; national action plans aimed at implementing the single market guidelines; and dedicated country-specific recommendations. This single market pillar should cover a clear set of priorities related to the real economy and key growth areas – the services, energy and transport sectors and the digital single market – and to the measures included in the Single Market Acts I and II.



Anni Podimata

European Semester for economic policy co-ordination: Annual Growth Survey 2014 / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 52 02 anni.podimata@europarl.europa.eu

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The key priorities for the S&D Group from the Annual Growth Survey 2014 report were democratic economic governance and an economic strategy based on growth and employment. The report sends a clear message that economic recovery is still fragile and a change in the EU's economic strategy is needed to achieve not only fiscal consolidation but also sustainable growth and employment. It also reflects our position that the EU needs policies and reforms to promote competitiveness and convergence, along with more democratic accountability and legitimacy in policy-making, without divergence from community law.



Alejandro Cercas

Implementation of the Youth Guarantee / Rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 54 55 alejandrocercas@europarl.europa.eu

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Youth unemployment is a terrible scourge for Europe, especially in the countries of southern Europe where half of the younger generation have lost hope of finding a job that will allow them to gain their independence and set themselves up in life. The Youth Guarantee needs to add real value to the programmes that already exist because the current situation is unsustainable and young people are demanding tangible results. The S&D Group will follow the implementation of the Youth Guarantee very carefully and monitor the usefulness and efficiency of the programmes to make sure the Commission lives up to expectations.



Linda McAvan

Manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products / Rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 54 38 linda.mcavan@europarl.europa.eu

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Following the plenary vote on the Commission proposal as amended in October 2013, the rapporteur sought a mandate to start negotiations with the Council. This request was approved by a vast majority and the report was referred back to the environment committee. A series of informal trilogues were held with a view to agreeing a compromise text. Negotiations were concluded successfully and the outcome is close to Parliament's position voted in October. If Parliament adopts the compromise, this dossier can be concluded in first reading. The main aim of the directive is to deter young people from taking up smoking. Misleading flavours and packages have been banned and rules on E-cigarettes have been established. EU member states have the freedom to go further on packaging if they choose to.



Ana Gomes

Statement by the VPC/HR - situation in Iraq / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 58 24 anamaria.gomes@europarl.europa.eu

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The situation in Iraq is deteriorating daily. The violence has reached unacceptable levels with the Syrian war exacerbating sectarian and inter-religious tensions. The EU must continue working with the Iraqi government to engage in national reconciliation dialogue, to ensure that the rule of law is applied and that basic services are provided in order to prevent Iraq becoming a failed state.



**Inès Ayala
Sender**

Railway package: safety and interoperability / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 55 08 ines.ayalasender@europarl.europa.eu

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As part of the 4th railway package, the new interoperability directive will reduce the production costs for rail rolling stock and establish a one-stop shop for market authorisations with the aim of reducing the existing 26 national procedures to one single passport. With this proposal we will cut red tape whilst lowering the costs for manufacturers in order to boost railways in Europe and make them more affordable. We also need to maintain the good safety record of railways in the EU, while at the same time reducing the 11,000 existing national rules that block the growth of a true single railway area. Our group has managed to ensure harmonisation will not come at the expense of workers' rights and safety levels. We want a single railway area, but not at any cost – it needs to be safe above all.



**Boguslaw
Liberadzki**

Opening of the market for domestic passenger services - PSO regulation / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 54 23 boguslaw.liberadzki@europarl.europa.eu

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This report – part of the 4th Railway Package – deals with the opening up of the market for domestic rail-passenger services. In contrast to the Commission's proposal, the direct award of public service obligation (PSO) by rail could be maintained. The option of a modest market-opening scenario based on the volume of the market has been introduced for EU countries who decide to tender domestic railway services. Small member states would only need to have two different public service contracts, but larger ones would need up to four. In the case of changes between railway operators, the S&D Group managed to include clauses to protect the social standards of employees so that social protection and efficient competition can co-exist. Other issues covered by this revision of the 2007 PSO legislation are clear internal and external reciprocity, a stronger system for in-house awards, new obligations for the relevant authorities such as transport plans and non-discriminatory access to rolling stock for all railway operators.



**Emer
Costello**

Fund for European aid to the most deprived / Rapporteur

+ 33 3 88 17 56 81 emer.costello@europarl.europa.eu

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The S&D Group took the lead regarding the establishment of the new Fund for European aid to the most deprived (FEAD), a new tool to alleviate the most severe forms of poverty, namely food and material deprivation in all EU countries. The S&D Group ensured that the Fund's budget was increased and can only be used to support the most deprived. Furthermore key stakeholders such as food banks, charities and civil society must be consulted and involved in the design, operation and monitoring of national schemes which implement the programme. FEAD is a sign of European solidarity with those hit hardest by the crisis, even though the increased budget is still far from being enough. In 2010 nearly one quarter of Europeans (120 million people) were at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The budget is reserved for the aid to the most deprived and should not be used for other cohesion fund activities. FEAD is only a complement to national policies; the responsibility and obligation to combat and eliminate poverty remains with member states.



Zita Gurmai

Deployment of the inter-operable EU-wide eCall / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 58 19 zita.gurmai@europarl.europa.eu

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The eCall scheme is an EU-wide inter-operable emergency call system, with a device embedded in the vehicle which can connect to the 112 emergency number. This device will automatically alert the rescue services to road crashes through the public 112 emergency call system and it could save lives and reduce injuries by speeding up the arrival of the emergency services. To complete the implementation of the eCall strategy, it is crucial that EU countries upgrade their Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) infrastructure to allow eCalls to be properly handled.



**Corina
Crețu**

Establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps - EU aid volunteers / Shadow

+ 33 3 88 17 58 44 corina.cretu@europarl.europa.eu

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The European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps will make a great contribution to the EU's capacity to respond to humanitarian crises and to help weakened or vulnerable communities in the world. The initiative is guided by the EU's values of humanitarian assistance and solidarity, and the volunteers will be able to respond effectively to crises and natural disasters. Thanks to the Parliament's amendments, the programme can provide genuine added value to the EU's humanitarian work, in the face of more frequent humanitarian crises and continuous financial constraints. In addition, we are confident that the deployment of volunteers according to the needs identified on the ground will greatly contribute to the efficient functioning of the operations.

MEDIA CONTACT

Head of Press & Communication Unit - Utta Tuttlies + 32 473 85 34 07



www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

Paolo Alberti
+ 32 476 955 144

Dimitris Komodromos
+ 32 474 622 884

Solange Hélin-Villes
+ 32 476 510 172

Victoria Martin De La Torre
+ 32 473 234 173

Céline Bayer
President spokesperson
+ 32 473 858 211