



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

PRESS CONFERENCE with Hannes Swoboda
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Hannes Swoboda

State of the Union

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Wednesday 11 September 2013

After three years of crisis there is now a glimpse of hope for Europe's economy and employment situation, following slight improvements in recent months. But the path to recovery does not end here. We must redouble our efforts to create sustainable growth and jobs for all of Europe. Real jobs with fair conditions will be the basis of a European recovery – and the only way to halt the growing rift between rich and poor, and between countries in the EU.



Véronique De Keyser

Statement by the VPC/HR - Situation in Syria, Situation in Egypt

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Syria The recent chemical attack, which is a crime that cannot be justified under any circumstances, and the fact that the number of refugees is now over two million, including more than a million children, have opened a new chapter in the crisis in Syria. The number of refugees can only increase if there is a military intervention. Putting an end to the violence and ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches those in need of basic goods and services – in Syria and its neighbours – must be the immediate priority for the EU and the international community. Special attention should be paid to the Palestinians in Syria, who are trapped in the violence with the borders of Jordan and Lebanon closed to them. A lasting solution to this crisis can only be achieved through a political process.

Egypt The S&D Group is concerned about current political developments in Egypt after the military coup of 3 July. Egypt is a key neighbour and partner to the EU in the Southern Mediterranean. Therefore, we should help this country avoid past mistakes such as sliding back into military dictatorship, or banning and prosecuting certain political forces or actors, which can only lead to increased radicalism. In its relations with and financial assistance to Egypt, the EU should take into consideration both the serious economic challenges Egypt is facing and the principle of conditionality ("more for more"), which is a cornerstone of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.



Evelyn Regner

Tackling youth unemployment: possible ways out / Shadow rapporteur

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The very high level of youth unemployment across the Europe is undoubtedly one of the major challenges for the European Union today. This report sends a strong message to the Council, the Commission and the member states, that all actors have to take responsibility for the fight against youth unemployment. This also includes educational institutions, businesses and social partners at both national and regional levels, as well as other stakeholders, especially youth organisations. Jobs, apprenticeships and internships for young people must fulfil certain quality standards and also have to be paid properly. This report also makes clear that austerity is not the right way, not least because it has led to a sharp rise in youth unemployment. We need significant investment to boost growth and domestic demand in order to reverse this trend.



Elisa Ferreira

State of play in the negotiations on the European Banking Union / Shadow rapporteur

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The adoption of the Single Supervisory Mechanism is the first step towards a fully-fledged banking union which will contribute decisively to breaking the vicious circle between private and sovereign debt and ensure that the banking sector takes more responsibility for the impact of its failures on the real economy. It is now crucial to conclude the on-going legislative work on resolution of failing banks – costs created by banking failures must be supported by the industry through robust funds financed by the banking industry – and the deposit guarantee scheme as soon as is possible. This work will help achieve a comprehensive and efficient framework to provide stability and protect taxpayers and depositors in the EU. It is a pre-condition to get out of the crisis.



Kriton Arsenis

Fuel Quality Directive and Renewable Energy Directive / Shadow rapporteur

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Biofuel production from food crops contributes to food price volatility and demand for biofuels in the EU therefore restricts some people's access to food. It is fundamental that people living in poverty do not suffer from food scarcity as a result of prioritising biofuel production. According to both the OECD and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), agricultural commodity prices are likely to increase. Prices in the five years from 2015 to 2019 are expected to be 27% higher for wheat, 48% higher for maize and 36% higher for oilseed, compared to levels in the 1998 to 2002 period. EU targets could push food, oil and grain prices up 15% by 2017 (OECD). The impact of biofuel production through indirect land-use change (ILUC) must be taken into account and currently this is not always the case. This is why we need to put limits on both the Renewable Energy Directive and the Fuel Quality Directive, meaning a 5.5% cap for both directives. We should put an end to using taxpayers money to incentivise policies that result in more greenhouse gas emissions.



Christel Schaldemose

Online gambling in the internal market / Shadow rapporteur

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Online gambling is a special type of economic activity, which is why the normal rules of the internal market should not apply to it. We need to protect consumers and citizens against the serious risks of gambling addiction. In light of different historical and cultural approaches to the gaming sector, this protection is currently best achieved by keeping its regulation as a national competence. There are 28 different ways of regulating online gambling. The S&D Group strongly supports much more effective co-operation and co-ordination of the sector between member states, but we also believe that the time is not right for a pan-European gambling market. If this were to take place, vulnerable consumers will pay the price.



Mojca Kleva Kekus

Implementation and impact of the energy-efficiency measures under the cohesion policy / Rapporteur

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The benefits of energy efficiency have long been recognised, which is why it has a role at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy. Nonetheless, the EU is facing a severe challenge when attempting to meet its objective of reducing overall energy consumption (20% by 2020). The report focuses on the contribution of cohesion policy towards this objective and analyses the implementation and impact of the energy efficiency measures which fall under it. Experiences from the current programming period highlight particularly the importance of how it is put into practice. The report focuses on the building sector, which uses the largest share of total energy consumption in the EU (40%). By analysing the effect of the upcoming legislative changes in cohesion policy (2014-2020), the report calls for a strengthening of the role and legal clarity around the use of financial instruments dedicated to energy efficiency projects, improving the quality and dissemination of practical information on energy-efficiency issues and clarifying assessment criteria used to make investment decisions in this area.



Antolin Sanchez Presedo

Credit agreements for residential property / Rapporteur

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This directive is the first piece of European legislation regarding mortgages and the first bill on financial reform focused on a retail banking product. Mortgages are the most important financial commitment which most European families will ever make: the mortgage market represents more than the 52% of the EU's GDP. The agreement reached with the Council will contribute to reactivating the economy of many member states while avoiding the irresponsible mortgage lending and borrowing which was a major cause of the current financial crisis. This directive sets out the path and principles for a profound reform of the European mortgage market and is to be implemented by member states over the next two years. The Council's refusal to respond to the European Banking Authority and provide information regarding implementation of the directive is incomprehensible and just delay its entry into force.



Pervenche Berès

European strategy on health and safety at work (oral question)

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The European strategy on health and safety at work expired at the end of 2012. As early as 2011, the Parliament called on the Commission to present its successor, recognising the added value of the strategy in fostering high-quality and safe working environments, which is even more pressing amidst the ongoing economic crisis. The Commission decided to launch a public consultation in 2013 on the direction of future EU policy initiatives in the area of occupational safety and health. But at this stage it is not clear whether the Commission is developing a new strategy, so the S&D Group will be asking for clarification as to when it will be presented.



Justas Paleckis

EU policy towards Belarus / Rapporteur

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The situation in Belarus will change only if society changes and this will only happen if there is more contact between EU citizens and Belarus citizens. Therefore opening "all the doors and even windows" for direct contact between people could be the best incentive for democratic change in this country. However, the unconditional and immediate release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners is an absolute prerequisite for re-establishing good relations.



Ivan Cătălin-Sorin

More efficient and cost-effective interpretation in the European Parliament / Shadow rapporteur

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Multilingualism and interpretation are essential if Parliament is to be transparent and if its legislators are to work effectively on highly technical legislative information in their own language and that of the people in their member state. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness are extremely important but these aspects must not erode the availability of live and accessible information in the language of listeners/viewers across the EU. This is why the S&D Group tabled an alternative resolution that aims to find the right balance between cost-effectiveness and the defence of true multilingualism within EU culture.

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