

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

European United Left/Nordic Green Left Group in the
European Parliament

2012-2014

European United Left • Nordic Green Left



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

GUE/NGL

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Introduction

The second part of the European Parliament's 7th term of office (2012-2014) saw the continuation of the disastrous economic and social crisis that rocked the European Union to its foundations and affected the livelihoods of millions of EU citizens, as well as a series of unsuccessful attempts to solve this crisis. The Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)¹ continued to reiterate its message that the answer to this crisis was not the imposition of even greater austerity but more policies that put the interests of ordinary people above those of bankers, shareholders and the financial elite.

Among the measures devised by the EU institutions to counter the crisis was the creation of yet another Treaty, the so-called Fiscal Compact, to ensure greater stability, coordination and governance in economic and monetary union; the European Semester, a mechanism whereby member states are asked at six-monthly intervals to align their budgetary and economic policies with the objectives and rules agreed at EU level; structural reform of the EU banking sector as well as steps towards the creation of a Banking Union. At each stage along their way through Parliament, GUE/NGL MEPs took a critical stand on the different proposals.

The crisis in democracy sparked by the economic and social crisis also continued during the latter part of the 7th term of office as the Troika - unelected technocrats from European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank - implemented harsh austerity measures on those countries worst affected by the crisis, notably Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus. In response, the group continued to call for different options for Europe which would guarantee social well-being, employment, and democracy.

Skyrocketing unemployment, particularly among young Europeans, ever-increasing levels of poverty and homelessness and growing social inequalities marked the second part of the term. The group was unrelenting in its calls for social justice. It continued to call for decent work and decent wages and to object to policies that increase precariousness or attempt to place workers from different member states in competition with each other in terms of pay and working conditions.

Amidst growing tensions and conflict in many areas of the world - the Middle East, Africa and in Europe's eastern neighbourhood - the group continued to advocate an EU foreign and security policy based on a peaceful approach. It repeatedly voiced its opposition to the establishment of an EU military-industrial complex and called on several occasions for a ban on arms trading, particularly to areas in conflict.

Gender equality and women's rights continued to be an important aspect of the group's work. The last year of the legislature saw retrograde developments at both EU and national levels with an important report on sexual and reproductive rights being postponed and subsequently being voted down in Parliament and the Spanish government revoking legislation on women's sexual and reproductive rights, including severe limitations on the right to abortion.

Another Europe is possible. For this, radical changes in current policies are needed. The GUE/NGL group has worked and will continue to work to ensure that EU policies inspire hope and confidence in the future rather than sidelining citizens interests.

This activity report complements the mid-term activity report published in 2011 and contains the actions and reactions of our group and its MEPs to the many and diverse political, social, and economic events and challenges that were thrown up during the course of the European Parliament's 7th term of office from 2009-2014. We hope you will find it both useful and informative.

¹ THE GUE/NGL GROUP 2012-2014

From 34 members in December 2011, membership of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Group in the European Parliament rose to 35 with the accession of Croatia on 1 July 2013 and the arrival of a new Croatian MEP in the group.

The Economic & Financial Crisis

Austerity continued to be the EU's sole solution to the economic and financial crisis that rocked the Union and the GUE/NGL group continued hammering its message that it was not more austerity that was needed but policies that put the interests of people above those of bankers, shareholders and financial institutions.

EP PRESIDENT ELECTION

When Socialist MEP Martin Schulz was elected president of the EP for the second part of the 2009-2014 term of office, in January 2012, GUE/NGL MEP Kartika Liotard called on him to give a voice to the millions of people affected by the crisis.

"You have been elected at a very tough and difficult time, at a time of crisis. I believe that the European Parliament has a very big role to play in this economic and social crisis. We are, in fact, the only institution



directly elected by citizens. At present, citizens are afraid of losing their jobs and pensions, they are concerned about the affordability of health care, about their provision for retirement, but also about the future of their children. My hope is that those citizens are the very people you are planning to give a voice to."

KARTIKA LIOTARD

FISCAL COMPACT

The new Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union - the so-called Fiscal Compact - was finalised by all EU member states except the UK and the Czech Republic in January 2012.

"The liberalisation of the financial markets has led to developments on the markets that have not yet been brought under control. Only radical measures to prevent speculation on the markets will be able to put a definitive stop to the crisis. Instead of this, with the adoption of the Fiscal Compact Treaty we are seeing a further increase in the one-sided focus on austerity policy and the destruction of social cohesion. My group is strongly opposed to this radical approach of debt reduction and cuts to public budgets."



LOTHAR BISKY

ECONOMIC CRISIS, GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

Responding to Mario Monti, the then Italian Prime Minister, about economic discipline, the group retorted that discipline is always for the people, not for the bankers.



"Austerity is proving to be a deadly poison. It allows neither a rebalancing of public accounts nor economic recovery, because it sacrifices workers, social protection, jobs and people's welfare. My group puts forward several proposals for growth and jobs: the introduction

of an EU minimum wage and a minimum income; the defence of public social security through the development of a training-related social security system in Europe; an end to social and fiscal dumping; taxation on capital at the same rate as on employment; a genuine tax on financial transactions; a programme of major projects and a new industrial and agricultural policy; the development of research, innovation and education; the creation of a European fund for human, social and ecological development."

PATRICK LE HYARIC

EUROPEAN SEMESTER

In a key debate on the European Semester in February 2014, the group questioned the logic behind this policy mechanism in which the Commission analyses the fiscal and structural reform policies of every member state, provides recommendations, and monitors their implementation.

"EU crisis management is hitting the poor and the vulnerable hardest. Economic governance coordination must guarantee people's fundamental rights in crisis management policies, ensure Parliament's voice is heard and aim for a real reduction of macroeconomic imbalances."



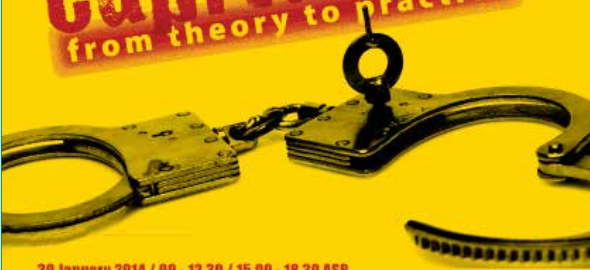
GABI ZIMMER



GUE/NGL invites you to:

Beyond Capitalism

from theory to practice



30 January 2014 / 09 - 12.30 / 15.00 - 18.30 ASP


The conference is chaired by MEP Miroslav Ransdorf and MEP Alfréd Rubik
Opening by Gabi Zimmer, President GUE/NGL

Honourable speakers include:

Ladislav Hoheš (Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University, Bratislava)
Can the anticapitalistic alternative be the "European dream"?

Marek Hrubec (Centre of Global Studies, Prague)
Sense of economic democracy:
On the way to a post-capitalistic society

Peter Dinuš (Institute of Political Science at the Slovak Academy of Science)
Problems in overcoming capitalism



TAX FRAUD, TAX EVASION AND TAX HAVENS

The group stressed that rules should be tightened on multinational companies which have administrative offices in one member state and activities in another, purely for tax purposes.

"Through secret agreements with tax and customs administrations, these companies pay as little tax as possible. It is shocking to see that such



multinationals are evading tax while everywhere in Europe people have to tighten their belts as a result of the austerity fury. This means that the heaviest shoulders are carrying the lightest burdens. This problem cannot be resolved nationally; the European Union has to take action. In addition, we need to move towards a European minimum rate for corporation tax."

DENNIS DE JONG

A report adopted in the Committee for the Economic and Monetary Affairs on tax fraud, tax evasion and tax havens in May 2013 was welcomed as a leap forward and a clear signal to the European Summit meeting the next day.

"Only clear rules and their clear and obvious application can help to counter tax fraud and tax evasion. Anyone in Europe who is evading taxes should

expect to be harshly punished. Similar treatment should be meted out to anyone in Europe who is aiding and abetting tax evasion and aggressive tax planning. States which deny transparency and distribution of tax-related information must in future consider that they will end up on the black list of tax havens, as well as those states which levy no, or merely nominal taxes, which then also grant tax breaks, if no real economic activities or



corresponding presence can be demonstrated. The European Union and its member states should act as a role model. The report demands appropriate behaviour, especially from those member states constantly in the limelight."

JÜRGEN KLUTE

THE BANKING SECTOR

ACCESS TO BASIC BANKING SERVICES

A report on access to basic banking services by GUE/NGL MEP Jürgen Klute made clear and detailed proposals about what the Commission's legislative initiative could and should look like.

"We are of the opinion that the EU must make it possible for the 30 million citizens who have not yet a bank account of their own to become part of the normal financial system. Without a bank account, things which we take for granted soon become insoluble problems. Renting a flat, signing a contract with an electricity supplier or joining the modern world of work is almost impossible in most countries unless you have a bank account. We believe that this initiative should not be allowed to fail simply because the banks are aiming to maximise their profits. We will only have a functioning social market economy and a modern internal market when the banks genuinely take on this responsibility. A basic account should be provided free of charge or at least at a reasonable charge. Access is another important point. We must keep the bureaucratic obstacles to a



minimum for consumers who rely on a basic account. Financial exclusion goes hand in hand with social exclusion."

JÜRGEN KLUTE

When the Parliament gave the green light to this report calling for an end to the vicious cycle of social exclusion resulting from not having access to a bank account, the group welcomed this important move.

“The adoption of this report sends out a strong message that banking regulation can be used in such a way so as to help the most socially vulnerable citizens. The central element of my report is that access to payment accounts should be a legal requirement. The report also calls for greater banking transparency, more flexibility when it comes to switching banks, automated re-routing systems and account number portability.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

BANKING UNION

The group raised, amongst others, the issue of democratic legitimacy and democratic control on the Commission’s proposal for banking union and banking supervision.



“The EU controls monetary policy instruments, EU monetary policy and, if this proposal goes through, banking supervision also becomes the EU’s responsibility. However, if everything goes wrong, if the banks fail, the responsibility for paying for this failure falls to member

states’ taxpayers and it remains a national responsibility. This is not a minor problem; it is a fundamental problem that is not resolved.”

MARISA MATIAS

Nearly one year later in June 2013, the group was critical of the Council and Commission’s slowness in adopting this key legislation.

“People are wondering what we’ve been doing for the last five years to solve the crisis. When we say the Parliament has passed dozens of files, that haven’t yet been adopted by the Council, they understand even less. Perhaps the delays we are talking about are due to the lack of transparency of Council’s work. If there was more transparency, we could see what the causes of the delays are and citizens would understand. If solutions can be found, we could get these files done and dusted before the end of this legislature.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

In a subsequent debate (09/2013) the group recognised that there was a need for a Banking Union, but was critical of the way it had been put together.

“The limits of this proposal mean we will be left with the patchwork system we had before, which might end up generating more problems than it solves. The ball is in the Council’s court to put in place the necessary framework for full banking supervision. A dedicated and democratically-controlled body should be responsible with this Parliament recognised as the relevant body for controlling the European Central Bank’s supervisory branch”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

SINGLE RESOLUTION MECHANISM (SRM) AND SINGLE RESOLUTION FUND (SRF)

The group reiterated its opposition to the socialisation of debt in a debate on negotiations with member states to create a single EU bank resolution authority - the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM), and a fund - the Single Resolution Fund (SRF).

“We don’t accept that the Council has the final decision on this as we know how it will go - the strong member states will make their own decisions with their own countries’ private banks’ interests in mind, and this could mean the socialisation of banks’ debts and lead to even stronger imbalances between member states. The Parliament must have a say on all important decisions on the Banking Union. The SRM and the SRF are the last elements of the Banking Union and if established would involve uniform rules and procedures for the restructuring of banks in the event of an economic crisis. A fundamental point is that resolution mechanisms would not be necessary at all if banks got back to their basic business and were not allowed to get ‘too big to fail.’”

GABI ZIMMER

STRUCTURAL REFORM OF THE EU BANKING



SECTOR

The group criticised Commissioner Barnier’s proposals on structural reform of the EU banking sector during a debate in January 2014.

“Barnier’s proposal does not even address the ‘too big to fail’ issue. Under this proposal huge banks wouldn’t have to be split up into smaller parts, they would simply have to stop a very small proportion of their proprietary trading or transfer it to another entity in the same group. Our position is that no bank should be so large that they can extort money from the state when it runs into trouble. The Commissioner’s definition of proprietary trading is extremely narrow, and even market making is going to be excluded from this definition. This means that it would be business as usual for most European banks.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE





MARKETS IN FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

GUE/NGL MEP Jürgen Klute praised the role and significant contributions by NGOs in the work carried out in Parliament on this dossier, especially in the area of food speculation.

“This process opened up the issue of financial market regulation a little to citizens. It does Parliament good to let such an important issue get out into the open. We have taken an important and good step in the area of food speculation. However, there may still be a few loopholes. I think that what we have done on high-frequency trading is very deserving of support and I believe, the majority of my group can wholeheartedly support it. This is also not a matter of course, but on that point we have succeeded in creating something good and practical.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

FUTURE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY POLICY

Responding to the Council and Commission’s presentation of a Blueprint for a deep and genuine EMU in December 2012, the group asked EU leaders to stop the paper shuffling and pen pushing and get on with the job of improving human lives.

“Your proposals are not appropriate to achieve this objective and to re-establish social peace. There is no regard for social, environmental or democratic issues. They will lower democratic standards and make the social crisis even worse. Your analysis of the debt crisis is wrong because it continues to make countries responsible for their deficits. The extent of the crisis has been consistently misdiagnosed and the memoranda are based on incorrect forecasts. On the basis of these forecasts and analyses, the EU cannot work. It simply means that austerity policies will continue unchallenged.”

GABI ZIMMER

SINGLE EUROPEAN PAYMENTS AREA

The Parliament debated eurozone transfers and payments at a time when the crisis was getting worse, the recession getting deeper, and austerity impacting entire sections of Europe’s peoples and economy.



“It is somewhat ironic of us to say that we must resolve this problem at a time when European citizens and the nations of Europe possibly have no euros in their pockets. Those demanding that we move ahead with a Single Euro Payments Area are the markets, the financial systems and multinational companies, which stand to benefit directly. We must protect consumer rights in this environment because the change to this system will be very costly and it should not be the citizens who pay the price, in keeping with the banks’ standard practice of passing such costs on to their customers. Systematic efforts should be made to inform and advise citizens and, most importantly, because the change will also apply to e-money, we need measures to prevent fraud at the consumer’s expense.”

NIKOLAOS CHOUNTIS

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

The group threw its weight behind the Matias report on the activities of the ECB in 2011, the result of a long process of conciliation of positions. The group reiterated its view that the role of Parliament is fundamental for the definition of European policy.

“As citizens’ representatives, we must echo the concerns of the people. Ignoring them would mean adding a crisis of democratic legitimacy to the economic crisis. In view of widening economic recession and unemployment in the



Fighting for a European Central Bank at the service of society



GUE/NGL EUROPEAN UNITED LEFT/NORDIC GREEN LEFT
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Eurozone, with debts worsening instead of being resolved, Parliament must maintain a clear position on the course being followed by the ECB. The issues being debated here are decisive: the limits of the ECB's mandate and democratic control. Today, transparency defines an important part of the European political regime. A regime in which a single power exercises an unlimited, self-defined mandate without democratic control, with no obligation of transparency, has a name: dictatorship. If Parliament becomes irrelevant, it would mean allowing a dictatorship of the ECB. This report is constructive, it proposes alternatives for us to get out of the crisis, it contains praise and successful fixes, but it also criticises the ECB, because the choice we must make is simple: we want an ECB that benefits the economy and society, not financial speculation."

MARISA MATIAS

EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

Welcoming the fact that the EIB was focusing more on growth and jobs, the group nonetheless stressed that massive investment was required for jobs, particularly for young people.

"We cannot sit idly by while youth unemployment in Spain, for instance, hits an incredible 57.7%. Despite its good intentions, it is a shame that the EIB seems unable to invest all possible resources in the most vulnerable countries. However, we cannot solve our problems through the EIB alone. We must break away from current economic policy. On the question of which projects to invest in when talking about climate and



energy, these should be in line with the climate and energy policies we have adopted, where we should increase our focus on sustainable energy, climate protection and the inclusion of local communities and less on coal and nuclear power."

RINA RONJA KARI



SHORT SELLING AND CREDIT DEFAULTS

The group welcomed the fact that the Commission had finally taken the initiative and realised that regulation on speculation and credit default swaps was necessary.

“Speculation was a major factor in triggering the crisis, while credit default swaps (CDSs) and short selling have been major factors in heightening the crisis. These instruments have degenerated into purely speculative instruments. Some people in the financial sector seem to have incorrectly regarded or misused these instruments as a personal licence to print money. As a result, entire economies have suffered, along with nation states and, above all, the people of the countries concerned. What is needed is a de facto ban on naked short selling and the prevention of speculation in the future. We also need strict regulation and, above all, a strong supervisory authority in Europe.”



THOMAS HÄNDEL

INSIDER DEALING

Since the start of the crisis, hundreds of billions of taxpayers' money has gone to bail out banks that took huge risks in their pursuit of profit. In addition, insider dealing - when people use information that is not publicly available and then trade for their own profit - has been rife. The GUE/NGL wants financial markets brought under control with much stricter regulations, bans on certain products and practices, and sanctions against anyone caught abusing the system.

“The immorality, opacity and rampant abuse of some actors in the financial sector must be exposed and decisively punished. Every day in all member states, news of individuals and institutions abusing the system and getting off scot free hit the headlines. Insider trading is difficult to prove but there have been no attempts to do so. What we see is impunity. What's needed is concrete action and firm sanctions. We need a financial market that serves society and people, not the disgrace we've seen in the past five years.”

When Parliament gave its green light to new rules on sanctions for financial misconduct such as market manipulation and insider dealing, the group considered that the draft legislation did not go far enough.

“Tougher and harmonised sanctions at the EU level are to be welcomed. However, sanctions and the fear of jail time alone are not enough to tackle the fundamental problems with financial markets. Fraudulent practices committed by natural persons should also come with

serious consequences for the institution that has been involved in such activities e.g. winding-up of the legal person or the closure of its business activity. Furthermore these new rules don't question in any way the overarching logic of improving the efficiency of financial markets by sanctioning certain behaviour.”

MARISA MATIAS

FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX

Following the adoption of a Financial Transaction Tax proposal in plenary, the group welcomed the vote result particularly as a proposed exemption on pension funds was not carried in the final proposal.

“Finally after five years of crisis we had the opportunity to vote in favour of a financial transaction tax. We have to safeguard pensions, and including the speculative pension funds is a way of not allowing speculators to play with them. Speculators continue as if they are untouchable which adds insult to injury for Europe's citizens. Fighting against an exemption for pension funds was crucial and I am glad that it did not make it into the final proposal. Although this proposal is not perfect, notably when it comes to the lower rates for derivative products and pension funds, it is still a step in the right direction. For the first time in five years financial markets have been affected. Meanwhile, workers and retired people are continuing to pay for the financial markets' crisis.”

MARISA MATIAS

GUE/NGL MEPs told the Commission about the need for the quick adoption of the proposed FTT six months after the proposal was adopted in the EP in February 2014.

“This should not be a recurring debate that we pretend to pay lip-service to. The FTT has been on the cards for a number of years now but no EU consensus has been reached. The 11 member states who decided to take it forward have been debating the issue for the past year. Time is moving on, and if this project is simply emptied of all its substance it would mean our governments are not acting in a very positive way. This tax is not a burden but a contribution from the finance sector to the common good. The original proposal made by the Commission is a step in the right direction. It would allow us to regain 36 billion euros that would help us defend jobs, develop public services for the common good, and fight poverty and climate change. Taxing speculation on a broader basis is a way of making sure that fiscal competition is also brought down because it is causing our economies a lot of harm.”



PATRICK LE HYARIC

CYPRUS

When Cyprus ran into economic difficulties and was subjected to drastic Troika measures, including a 'hair-cut' on Cypriot deposits, the group condemned the lack of solidarity shown to one of the smallest EU member states.



"When Cyprus was going through difficult times, there was no solidarity. Solidarity was shown to large countries such as Italy, France, and Spain but there was not the same solidarity for small countries. As for the European Central Bank and its supervision - where was that supervision when the Popular Bank of Cyprus was expanding into Greece? At

the end of 2011, Cyprus had a debt to GDP ratio below the eurozone average - 77% - the Cyprus economy was following the right course. A bunch of bankers together with a lack of ECB supervision created our problems."

TAKIS HADJIGEORGIOU

"Cyprus's banking sector has been reduced by 50%. What would happen if EU decisions lead to the automotive industry in Germany seeing a 50% reduction in sales? What would happen in France if agricultural production was reduced by 50%? Or if Dutch exports declined by 50%?

Unfortunately for Cyprus, the EuroGroup has destroyed one of the main areas of wage and job creation of the Cyprus economy. How viable is such debt if a country cannot grow? If we do not reverse this disastrous decision, the consequences will not only affect the young, the unemployed and small businesses in Cyprus, they will also affect all countries on the periphery of the EU."

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDES

GREECE

GREEK TV & RADIO SHUTDOWN

GUE/NGL was critical of the Greek government's decision to close the country's state television and radio channels.

"GUE/NGL denounces in the strongest possible terms the sudden decision by the Greek government to close the country's three public television channels. This closure, on the orders of the Troika, without any prior notice, without consulting the unions, or without debate in Parliament, is yet another symbol of the anti-democratic and authoritarian ways of the



European institutions and the Greek government. It is a new attack on employment. Above all it is an unqualified attack against freedom of information and creativity in Greece. Some people believe that through this it will be possible to reduce or eliminate any criticism or protest against the iron fist of austerity policy being applied to the Greek people. The GUE/NGL expresses its solidarity and support with journalists and employees of Greek public television. They want the European authorities, including the Commission, a member of the Troika, to intervene immediately so that Greek public television continues to broadcast. This is about pluralism and democracy in Europe."

GUE/NGL MEPs

Following the closure of Greek public television in June 2013, the group reiterated its condemnation of this



undemocratic move by the Greek government.

"For the 23rd day the national broadcaster

is closed. We hear the Commission saying that they are not responsible as it was a decision from the Greek government as part of their efforts to modernise the economy. And the Greek government says that it acted in such a barbaric way because it is obliged to cut around 4000 jobs by the end of the year. And these orders come from the Troika which means that the Commission is indeed accountable. And can we call a black screen and thousands of people losing their jobs modernisation? It is the private television industry and those who want to make private use of public property that gain from this; culture, history, and freedom of the press lose out."

NIKOS CHOUNTIS

"For three weeks now the people who worked for the Greek national broadcasting company are continuing a tough but just struggle. I'd like to denounce the majority in the European Parliament who has



rejected our request to vote on a Resolution condemning the actions of the Greek government. What the government is trying to set up is a miserable broadcasting company owned by multinationals which will broadcast rubbish."

CHARALAMPOS ANGOURAKIS

PORTUGAL

GUE/NGL expressed its solidarity with the General Strike held on 27 June 2013, which sought the political strengthening of efforts to fight against austerity, denouncing the Troika Memorandum and its extremely negative social and economic consequences.

“The GUE/NGL group expresses its support and solidarity with the struggle of the workers and the Portuguese people and with the general strike called for 27 June by CGTP-IN and highlights the importance of a broad participation in this important struggle for change in Portugal and welcomes all those who have already taken the decision to participate in it. Two years after the Troika’s intervention in Portugal,



unemployment and impoverishment have increased, labour relations have crumbled, pensions have been slashed, teachers have been made redundant en masse, civil servants have been under attack, and the destruction of both the public school system and health service has been intensified. This is the result of the unconstitutional austerity policies that have been implemented by the Portuguese Government, in the name of a debt that continues to soar. Participation in the General Strike that gathers Portuguese Trade Unions on the 27 June is an act of citizenship, defending an inalienable right that is a necessary act of dignity. GUE/NGL sends its solidarity to the General Strike, which seeks the political strengthening of the efforts to fight back against austerity and its representatives, denouncing the Troika Memorandum and its extremely negative social and economic impacts.”

GUE/NGL GROUP STATEMENT

IRELAND

Addressing the Taoiseach at the beginning of the Irish Presidency in January 2013, the group said that the Presidency slogan of ‘stability, jobs and growth’ was incongruous because there is no stability, no jobs, no real economic growth in Ireland or in Europe and the coordination of deep austerity across Europe will make the situation worse not better.

“Working people right across Europe are being crucified in order to protect the bondholders. In Ireland, figures from Eurostat indicate that we are paying an



incredible 42% of the total cost of the European banking crisis. But the government is reduced to begging for what are, relatively speaking, crumbs from the table of the European Central Bank on the promissory note. Delivering stability, jobs and growth requires breaking with austerity and the

dictatorship of the markets and, instead of funnelling these billions to the rich bondholders, investing increasing jobs and improving our society for the majority.”

PAUL MURPHY

When Ireland exited the Troika bail-out programme, the group said that the programme’s legacy was far from successful.

“When you are told how successful the Irish programme has been, do not believe it. Mass unemployment and immigration, increased poverty and the devastation of communities and public services are the legacy of the Troika, all facilitated by a government which enthusiastically embraces the cuts proposed by the Commission and willingly continues the failed policy of austerity.”



MARTINA ANDERSON

WORKSHOP:
Firenze 10+10
Alter Summit
RESISTANCE TO AUSTERITY

Gabriele Zimmer	President of GUE-NGL, Die Linke
Inés Christina Zuber	GUE/NGL MEP, Partido Comunista Português
Soren Bo Sondergaard	GUE/NGL MEP, FOLKEBEVÆGELSEN MOD EU
Pierre Laurent	Chair of European Left Party / National Secretary of PCF
Asbjørn Wahl	Director of The Campaign for The Welfare State in Norway
Tommaso Fattori	Organising Committee of Firenze 10+10
Jason Nardi	Organising Committee of Firenze 10+10
Alessandra Mecoizzi	Organising Committee of Firenze 10+10
Kenneth Haar	Researcher at Corporate Europe Observatory & Organising Committee of the Alter Summit

17th of October 14.30-18.00
ASP 1G2 European Parliament Brussels

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Budget & Budgetary Control

Every year, the European Institutions - Commission, Parliament and Council - go through a procedure of proposing, amending and adopting the annual budget for the following year. But in 2013, there was the additional Multiannual Financial Framework, which lays down the EU's spending plans for a seven-year period, this time from 2014-2020.

2013 BUDGET

The group expressed its disaccord with the Parliament's position on the 2013 budget before it was voted in plenary.

"The governments that announced their commitment to employment and growth at the June Summit are the same governments that have imposed unprecedented austerity on Europeans, and that have increased the number of unemployed. They also wish to make work permanently insecure and seek to withdraw all acquired rights. Over the past four years, all they have been able to do is cut, and 2013 will be no different. It is true that Parliament is trying to reverse some of the more swingeing government cuts. Unfortunately, these proposals are not enough to change the nature of the EU budget and to counter divisive and recessionary austerity policies when solidarity-based policies are needed. One thing we cannot accept is the fact that the only institution with direct democratic legitimacy, that is, Parliament, is excluded from negotiations with the governments."



ALDA SOUSA

MANDATE FOR TRILOGUE

The group expressed its disagreement to giving a mandate to the Parliament to negotiate the 2013 budget with the Commission and Council.



"We will vote against this mandate. We have many serious disagreements with the majority in Parliament. For example, we will not support direct transfers to multinational drug companies or appropriations for a 'Fortress Europe'. Instead, we will fight, tabling amendments to the budget so that it constitutes an effective response to the crisis. This is not the time for half-measures or vague decisions made by Europe's leaders. It is time to change Europe, which, up until now, has been held hostage to the markets and banks. More than ever, this is the time to respond to the specific problems of real people, prioritising job creation, health, education and social security."

ALDA SOUSA

AMENDING BUDGET (CROATIA)

Shortly after Croatia's accession to the EU on 1 July 2013, the group welcomed its new Croatian MEP Nikola Vuljanić and stressed that the most important thing was to speed up Croatia's integration, by ensuring that people can benefit from all EU programmes, to alleviate the situation of thousands of unemployed, in particular young people.

"We welcome the approval of this amending EU 2013 budget. In Croatia the economy is on the edge: 22% of Croatian people are unemployed and among young people this figure is 50%. These people have been waiting for good news from Europe and if this budget is voted through we can finally send them some. There has been disappointment that Croatia is the first acceding member state to join the European Union not to receive the appropriate funds. Croatians had high expectations of EU membership, and I hope they won't be let down and that Croatia will be on an equal footing with the other member states."



NIKOLA VULJANIĆ



2014 BUDGET

GUIDELINES FOR THE 2014 BUDGET

Discussing the budget guidelines for 2014 was like talking about decorating a house that had not yet received a building permit because nobody understood the plans.

“The budget foreseen for 2014 will not only be based on the same obsolete structure, but will also be the fruit of a multiannual framework of which the political priorities involve eternal austerity. Cutting cohesion policies, support for those most needy, social support, and globalisation adjustment funding, among others, means increasing differences within Europe and responding to austerity with more austerity. Rather than prior approval of national budgets and monitoring of deficit control processes, what we need are solidarity measures and a budget that allows the generation of investment and employment and reverses the obscene poverty created by European integration.”

ALDA SOUSA

EU BUDGET VOTE 2014

After the approval of the EU budget for 2014 at the November 2013 session, the group stated that this was more than a missed opportunity; it was a tragedy for Europeans.

“This agreement is a miserable outcome. Rather than opting for a more supportive and redistributive budget, as would be expected in a time of recession, the European Commission, the member state governments and the majority of the European Parliament chose to juggle with cash transfers: funds for youth employment to be taken from the European Social Fund, the relief fund for the poorest from the cohesion funds, the response to the tragedy of Lampedusa is increased funding for FRONTEX rather than changes to immigration policy. It is not with this budget that the European Union will be able to create employment, reduce poverty and reverse austerity.”

ALDA SOUSA



MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

OWN RESOURCES

From the beginning of negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MMF), the mechanism that sets the EU's budget for seven-year periods, the group opposed any cuts.

“From my group's perspective, austerity policies in recent years have obviously failed and countries which have run such policies and are under pressure to make savings have seen a loss of growth and tax revenue but also an increase in poverty and unemployment. Cuts to the MFF would mean the continuation and entrenchment of these policies for the next seven years, as a substantial proportion of the EU budget goes back to the member states where it is used to support economic development, research and education. For that reason, we cannot and will not vote for such cuts to the MFF. We must expand the budget and develop it further, and thus ensure that growth can help us overcome this crisis. We would welcome more commitment from Parliament to moving forward on the question of own resources and implementation of the Financial Transaction Tax, as this is an important issue for this House.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

Ahead of a special EU summit in December 2012 on the MFF, the group reminded member state governments of their responsibility for the future survival of Europe and a budget for this future.

“How can the EU continue to combat social exclusion and poverty if there are going to be cuts to funding for the poorest of the poor? Surely you cannot remain indifferent to the impact of the crisis that is resulting in more and more people falling into poverty and finding it difficult to keep their heads above water?”

GABI ZIMMER

After a deal was reached on the MFF in June 2013 between the Parliament and Council, without prior consultation of all political groups in the Parliament, the group accused Martin Schulz of neglecting Parliament's democratic principles.

“If Mr. Schulz condemns backroom deals in the Council, he should not repeat the same mistake in his own house by only consulting the two biggest parliamentary groups. It's a scandal that some political group leaders only learned about the deal through the media. This agreement needs a qualified majority in the Parliament so Mr. Schulz would be well advised to respect the wishes of all MEPs and not just those from the EPP and S&D groups. Despite the

difficult economic crisis hitting most European countries, mere cosmetic increases in funds to fight youth unemployment and to help the most deprived are on offer. This will not satisfy citizens who expect much better from the Union. For the first time, we will have a reduced budget. We have neither the means nor the structure to face the challenges of the coming years. Many issues are only partly dealt with and postponed for the future. We regret that the S&D and the EPP have already agreed to this bad deal. We strongly oppose this blackmailing of the European Parliament!”

GUE/NGL GROUP STATEMENT



Following a European Summit agreement on the MFF in June 2013, the group repeated that it constituted a “bad deal” for people across Europe.

“We want a Europe that offers young people a future but Council and Commission are not delivering. What is the point of frontloading €6 billion for youth unemployment? Where is this money coming from and where is the €8 billion coming from for the whole seven years? What is the point of so-called flexibility when you are just moving deficits from one year to the next? Schulz’s social democrats should not help the EPP to get their majority for this shady deal for Europe. Negotiating the EU budget shouldn’t be about tinkering at the edges with an eye on the German elections or the European elections. There are citizens who depend on programmes and projects and they are going to lose out. And it is not only people who are losing out: democracy is also losing out as the European Parliament continues to be sidelined in this so-called budget compromise.”

GABI ZIMMER

GUE/NGL expressed its disappointment after a flawed resolution on the European Parliament’s MFF position was voted through in plenary in July 2013.

“By voting in favour of this resolution, the European Parliament has agreed to the demands of the governments. It’s a pity! After months of negotiations none of the red lines defined by the European Parliament



have been delivered: in times of crisis the EU budget for the next seven years will be reduced by 9% to €908 billion so that most of the essential social programmes will be victims of huge cuts and flexibility is only partly granted.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE

“The €6 billion for the youth guarantee is not entirely new money as half of it will be taken from the European Social Fund. It is an insult as it can not in any way reverse unemployment in Europe. As for aid to the most deprived, the amount remains a drop in the ocean for tackling the growing social crisis in Europe. This Parliament should be ashamed. The level of funding being proposed for research and innovation is inadmissibly low and the amount proposed for cohesion policies is far below what is required if the objective is to create growth and jobs.”

ALDA SOUSA

2014 BUDGET & MFF

The European Council’s approach to the EU amending budgets for 2013 and 2014 as well as the MFF 2014-2020 was once again strongly condemned by the group.

“We will not be blackmailed by the member state governments! The EU member states obviously don’t want to fulfill their payment obligations. First the governments in the Council tried carry over delay, and denial tactics, and now they want to shift the responsibility for these delays on to the European Parliament. The European Parliament can only discuss



and adopt supplementary budgets that have been previously submitted by the Council. The GUE/NGL will only agree to a supplementary budget to compensate for the missing € 2.7 billion from the Customs Union if the EU member states guarantee the promised additional payment of €3.9 billion which is supposed to reduce the 2013 deficit.”

GABI ZIMMER

MFF OUTCOME & VOTE

After two years of negotiations, the group was unanimous in its condemnation of both the vote procedure decreed by EP President Martin Schulz and the final result of the negotiations.

“Martin Schulz’s change to the order of votes means we will not get a chance to vote on the amendments put forward by political groups and parliamentary committees on the draft MFF text. This is simply undemocratic and I think we will cause trust in parliament to suffer. Such important votes must be conducted in total transparency, especially the report on common provisions on European funds. In this text there are three fundamental provisions that affect the future financing of the European integration process: macro-economic conditionality (making cohesion policy funding dependent on a country’s compliance with economic governance), the minimum share of the European Social Fund in the Cohesion budget, and the performance reserve. On these specific issues we on the Left will not be able to register our concerns and for these reasons we will vote against the whole package.”

GABI ZIMMER

BUDGET CONTROL

As well as the annual budgeting exercise, the EP signs off the accounts of the EU institutions and agencies each year.

2010 BUDGET DISCHARGE

Every year, Parliament comes up against the Council’s refusal to answer its questions. 2010 was no exception.

“The European Union has an annual turnover of billions of euro, affected by the Commission, the Council, Parliament and a whole host of institutions and agencies. These several billion euros have not just fallen from the sky. They come from hard-working taxpayers in the 27 member states. What is more, these are taxpayers who have experienced cuts and reductions in recent years. The European Parliament does this job as national parliaments cannot scrutinise the whole of the EU. It is however more correct to say that Parliament does this where most EU institutions are concerned. Parliament does not do this where the Council is concerned, simply because the Council refuses to answer the questions we ask about its accounts. Therefore, I hope that the Council will see sense and answer the questions that we have put to it. There is rarely complete agreement in a parliament, but in the Committee on Budgetary Control’s recommendation for this meeting, there was absolute unanimity on postponing the decision concerning the Council’s accounts to the autumn. We have thereby shown our good will, as it will give the Council and the Danish Presidency yet another opportunity to tackle this secrecy and instead accept budgetary control by Parliament, which applies to all other EU institutions.”

SØREN BO SØNDERGAARD



Employment and Social policy

Increasing poverty, skyrocketing unemployment and greater social and economic inequalities marked the second part of the 2009-2014 term of office. The group was unrelenting in its calls for social justice for all, decent wages, decent work and working conditions, and equal access to social protection and welfare provisions.

POVERTY

FOOD AID



With the threat of the EU food aid programme not being renewed in February 2012, the group called for its urgent continuation.

“After much wrangling, Council agreed that the food aid programme for those most in need will continue in 2012 and 2013. Urgently needed food can now get to the poorest of the poor. Six governments, including Germany, had blocked renewal of the programme. It is a shameful fact that 18 million people depend on food donations in the EU today. This extension must go ahead without any further delay.”

GABI ZIMMER

FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD)

With funding for this vital programme continuing to be in jeopardy, the group supported a report calling for its continuation with adequate financial resources.

“The EU came very close to winning the Nobel Prize for shamelessness when the food aid programme came under threat. It was the Heads of State that deserved such an accolade when they proposed to devastate an instrument that seeks to ease the worst forms of poverty. MEPs should be proud of their fight to keep the programme going. We need to send a clear, powerful and unambiguous signal to the Council that €3.5 billion is a necessary minimum for the Fund for European aid to the most deprived (FEAD) that is intended to replace the current EU food aid programme.”

YOUNOUS OMARJEE



“We should also ensure that it is a simple fund, with less red tape. Without mandatory involvement of member states, one cannot talk about EU solidarity. There is an additional need to guarantee transitional arrangements between the old and new programmes and the use of surplus food stocks, such as fruit and vegetables. Fundamentally, we need to put a stop to the rise of poverty in Europe.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC

The programme was finally voted by MEPs in February 2014. The group, which had been at the forefront of efforts to secure and improve the scheme, applauded the definitive wind-up of moves to abolish the food aid system.

“This €3.5 billion fund is intended to replace the current EU food aid programme, which has been running since 1987. While this is not enough and we had sought further financing, this money will still contribute to helping the most at risk and easing the worst

forms of poverty. Today’s vote is a positive outcome but the campaign must continue to ensure that Europe doesn’t neglect its duties to combat poverty. EU leaders’ response to the crisis has hit the most vulnerable hardest in recent years so we must remain focused on opposing the politics of austerity which have been a social and economic disaster.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC





HOMELESSNESS

A spell of cold weather at the beginning of 2012 highlighted the plight of homeless people across the EU. The group called for a task force to be set up, uniform statistics and indicators to be drawn up on the extent of this problem.

“The spell of cold weather is bringing to light the deplorable failures in the way human rights are safeguarded in Europe and within the European Union. The policies of the member states and of the European Union have failed across the board where this issue is concerned. Most of the people who freeze to death or are taken to hospital severely ill from the cold are homeless people; people who, for one reason or another, are living on the streets. They are freezing to death in the open air, under bridges, in parks, in side streets, but increasingly also in unheated homes. With the huge increases in energy costs they may have been unable to pay their energy bills, or their heating may be antiquated or may have failed completely. All member states have an obligation to implement urgent immediate measures to save people who have no protection from the cold. Local and regional authorities need to be supported in their efforts to provide the necessary assistance.”

GABI ZIMMER

EC STRATEGY FOR HOMELESSNESS

GUE/NGL MEPs said that the official numbers of homeless in Europe today do not reflect the reality during a debate on the Commission’s proposed strategy to combat the phenomenon.

“People who really live in the streets are not counted; people evicted from their homes because they’re unable to pay their mortgage loans are not counted; people managing to support themselves thanks to the solidarity of family and friends are not counted. And although these phenomena are different to other forms of homelessness, they still need to be



taken into account. Countries should be obliged to respect the human rights charter and to take into account peoples’ fundamental rights in the field of homelessness. If we don’t talk about deteriorating social conditions with salaries, pensions and social support being cut and all these other associated factors, it’s laughable to be talking about a proper structure for homelessness.”

INÊS ZUBER

YOUTH

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE

With youth unemployment rising throughout the EU, the group called for a different policy that allows young people access to the labour market.

“What should worry us and make us panic is not simply the sheer numbers of unemployed young people in Europe, but the way this is developing. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of unemployed young people rose by 26.5%, according to the International Labour Organisation. It is this development that necessitates urgent measures, for we are not only cutting off an entire generation from the labour market – we are cutting off an entire generation from a future worth living. What we need are offensive measures: namely, the phasing out of austerity that is stifling Europe’s economy, a targeted growth policy, a strengthening of domestic purchasing power, and public investments in education, research and alternative energies. Youth unemployment cannot be reconciled with the nonsense



about wanting to increase the retirement age to 70. We need a different policy here that allows young people access to the labour market.”

THOMAS HÄNDEL

YOUTH GUARANTEE AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The European Union must stop being synonymous with a factory producing millions of young people who are unemployed, homeless, without training or a future and the Youth guarantee scheme should be supported and implemented immediately.

“The scheme should not be used as a kind of social cure for unemployment, but as a tool of European cooperation to provide a future for young people. Sacrificing younger generations today will amplify

Europe's decline in the future. The future European youth guarantee should be accompanied by new rights, especially rights to education and lifelong learning and second-chance schools as well as the right to organise, the right to European and universal social protection, the right to a European minimum wage equivalent to a European median salary, the right to social security, training or business traineeships. A European guarantee for young people should be created and financed by a fund dedicated to the future of young Europeans, not by a redeployment of existing funds."

PATRICK LE HYARIC

In February 2014, GUE/NGL MEPs called for sincere effort and measures from EU leaders to tackle youth unemployment in a debate on the €6bn Youth Guarantee Scheme. The group had tabled an amendment for a Youth Guarantee Scheme of €21 billion in line with International Labour Organisation recommendations but it was rejected by a majority of MEPs.

"We have to recognise that the scourge of youth unemployment is the result of your austerity measures. There is a blatant lack of training opportunities and the European Central Bank should allow access to credit for businesses, local authorities and public services, to



support and incentivise training. The youth guarantee as it stands is a propaganda bandage on the scourge of youth unemployment."

PATRICK LE HYARIC

The real way to combat record youth unemployment is for Europe to break with austerity, the GUE/NGL stressed during a debate on the EU youth strategy and youth joblessness.

"The International Labour Organisation states that for the European Youth Guarantee to be effective it needs €21 billion. Therefore, the current allocation of €8 billion is clearly not enough. If we want sustainable jobs for young people then the Youth Guarantee needs to be adequately funded, needs to tackle youth unemployment and needs to be part of a broader economic strategy of investment in jobs and growth."

MARTINA ANDERSON

"The reason why EU unemployment went up so much after the crisis is that the crisis is a systemic crisis, a capitalist crisis. This system allows massive transfers of wealth from workers to

banks. There's no point in trying to promote employment if you are pushing policies that destroy it. Young people have a right to decent work."

INÈS ZUBER

"One in four young people is unemployed but nobody is doing anything. The central problem here is not a skills mismatch, which is an argument that puts the blame on young people for their own unemployment. It might be obvious but the problem is that there are no jobs, and the answer is to break with austerity and to invest in education, training and jobs"

PAUL MURPHY

"Economic policy is destroying jobs. Austerity programmes are undermining particularly the public service areas of education and training, and youth joblessness stands at over 50% in some parts of the EU. The Commission must come up with specific programmes and strategies for tackling youth unemployment in regions where the rate is extremely high such as ultra-peripheral regions."

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

"You talk of a Youth Guarantee, but where is the money? We don't want an army of cheap labour. We need sustainable jobs for young people that are socially and legally guaranteed through a minimum wage and education and training."

GABI ZIMMER

DISABILITY RIGHTS

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Pledging the full support of the GUE/NGL at the 3rd European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities, the group pointed out that the complete implementation of the UN disability rights convention still requires concrete measures with an emphasis on human rights, integration, and the active involvement of people with disabilities in shaping decisions.

“I look forward to strong legislation that incorporates provisions for the accessible design of public spaces and a rethink of education policy to highlight integration into mainstream schools. Those living in poverty are often doubly discriminated against so account must be taken of those suffering the worst effects of austerity to ensure they are not denied access to public services and have self-determination over their lives. In relation to this, we must also ensure that we think beyond EU borders to people with disabilities in developing countries and the gender aspect, particularly when it comes to labour market discrimination and violence against women and girls with disabilities.”

GABI ZIMMER



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

On the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2013, GUE/NGL President Gabi Zimmer called on the European institutions and member state governments to take swift action to implement the UN Disability Rights Convention.

“Persons with disabilities are disproportionately likely to live in poverty and face social exclusion, and this situation has only been worsened as a result of austerity measures. The European Parliament must bring pressure to bear on EU leaders to put in place concrete measures to implement the UN Disability Rights Convention. This includes an ambitious legislative proposal for a European Accessibility Act, ensuring the opportunity for equal participation in the European elections, and actively involving persons with disabilities in decision-making processes on policies that concern them. Protecting the most vulnerable in our societies from the crisis such as persons with disabilities should be a top priority.”

GABI ZIMMER

HEARING

DEFEND THE RIGHT OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

How the EU's austerity policy is undermining the lives of people with disabilities

THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2012
15.00 - 18.30 • EP Brussels • Room ASP1G2

Grupos Políticos Europeos • Grupos Políticos Europeos
GUE/NGL
www.guengl.eu

LABOUR RIGHTS

EQUAL PAY FOR MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS FOR EQUAL WORK OR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Despite the introduction of legislation, and national, EU and international guidelines, the problem of wage discrimination is getting worse. Women receive 16.4% less than men in the EU, and the wage gap is increasing. The group agreed with the main thrust of a report (Bauer) seeking to tackle the issue.

“One of the aspects of this report that we value highest is the fact that it advocates sanctions for employers that do not comply with the principle of equal pay. Only by applying sanctions that are more expensive for the employers than getting rid of wage discrimination can they be deterred from this illegal practice. Austerity policies will not help to realise the right to equal pay, as they destroy jobs and reduce wages, thereby putting enormous pressure on workers to accept low wages; rather, they will merely side line, trivialise and destroy equal pay altogether.”

INÉS ZUBER



HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE EXPOSURE OF WORKERS TO THE RISKS ARISING FROM PHYSICAL AGENTS (ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS)

The group considered that a new directive, agreed by the European Parliament, the Commission and Council rendered the 2004 Directive presently in force even worse.

“After two extensions to its application, those employed in the medical sector that uses magnetic tomography equipment are excluded from all protection, as is all civilian and military staff employed by the armed forces. Protection of the health and lives of the working classes for the European Union and the bourgeois governing classes of the member states represents a cost for capital, does not have even the slightest value when compared with “competitiveness”, maximisation of profits for the businesses, which is achieved with the blood and the lives of the working classes. The non-binding guideline is never going to represent a solution.”



GEORGIOS TOUSSAS

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

On the issue of accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour, the group said that promoting society's interests would require respect of social and health and safety rights, both in Europe and in third countries.



“I agree with the opinion that the fundamental reasons for the current crisis arose from mistakes related to less transparency and responsibility and to prioritising short-term financial and private interests. In this context, corporate social responsibility, environmental protection and human rights recognition, including financial

security, are of fundamental importance. The European social model must be based on effective prevention of tax evasion, guaranteed fair balance for investor protection and compliance with social and health standards. Not long ago we were discussing the resolution on fires in textile factories in Bangladesh. This proposal also highlights the compliance with health and safety measures and social rights in the third countries where the European Union businesses are engaged.”

JÍŘÍ MAŠTÁLKA

POSTED WORKERS DIRECTIVE

When a majority of MEPs in the European Parliament's Employment Committee showed their disdain for workers' rights by granting a mandate for negotiations to begin, the GUE/NGL was critical.

“In Europe there is a top-tier of workers who are well paid in line with the principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’, and then there is a kind of subclass of slaves and labourers who are forced, for scandalously low wages, to move to another EU member state, only to be betrayed again by another minimum wage system that does not render them better off. The report from EPP rapporteur Danuta Jazłowiecka is more concerned with protecting the companies that send workers abroad than the workers themselves. Workers must receive wages they are entitled to by law and collective bargaining. We require clear criteria for companies and posted workers.”

THOMAS HÄNDEL

When negotiations between the European Council, Commission and Parliament on the enforcement of the posted workers directive concluded without any result and a preliminary ‘deal’ was announced, the group said that the pressure to present a result before the European elections had been to the detriment of the file.

“The current status of negotiations provides at most marginal improvements for the people concerned and defines the status quo for another five years. It means that the strong position of Parliament's Employment Committee could be considerably weakened. For example, the general contractor liability, which would prevent dumping by sub-contractors, would not be included. The original posted workers directive should be urgently improved and the principle of ‘equal pay for equal work’ should be enforced. With this deal there won't be any change for a long time. The goal of the directive which is the prevention of abuse and evasion would be left unachieved.”

THOMAS HÄNDEL



TRANSNATIONAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

With the increase in the trans-nationalisation of the management of groups of companies, the group agreed that an optional legal framework was required for transnational collective bargaining.

“There has been a tremendous increase in the trans-nationalisation of the management of groups of companies in the past few years, which are now part and parcel of our valued social dialogue. This is why some legal certainty is needed for the future. We have to be sure that these kinds of agreements cannot be impinged on at national level, particularly in terms of working hours and wages and the EPP, ALDE and ECR political groups should not to take this paragraph out of this report. If you do, we are impinging on being able to negotiate properly.”

THOMAS HÄNDEL

DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS

A conference aiming to increase pressure on EU governments to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on domestic workers' rights was organised in November 2013 by the group.

“There are 2.6 million domestic workers in the EU, of whom 89% are women and half are migrants. Domestic work is one of the most unprotected and invisible forms of work which means it is often very difficult for domestic workers to defend their labour and social rights through membership of a union. We must stand up for them and let their voices be heard.”

GABI ZIMMER

A GUE/NGL INITIATIVE



DOMESTIC WORKERS' RIGHTS TWO YEARS AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE ILO CONVENTION

14/11/2013, 9:00-17:30, ROOM ASP 1G2, EP BXL



Some weeks later, the European Parliament gave its green light to a report by GUE/NGL MEP Inês Zuber that calls on member states to ratify the ILO Convention on domestic workers' rights.

“Ratification of this Convention would be a vital step forward in protecting workers in this sector who are often from the most vulnerable groups, such as women and migrants. The rights of domestic workers in Europe are something we don't talk about much as these workers suffer from a lack of visibility. The Convention clearly calls for domestic workers to have the same rights as any other employee with access to social security. Working time must be clearly defined and workers must be covered by a clear written contract that protects them, and labour inspections must be allowed to take place. We also know that quite often domestic workers are at greater risk of sexual abuse or domestic violence in the workplace so they must be protected in this respect too.”

INÊS ZUBER

CROATIAN ANTI-LABOUR LAWS

GUE/NGL MEPs showed their condemnation of proposed new anti-labour laws in Croatia by holding a protest in front of the European Parliament hemicycle in December in Strasbourg.

“The Croatian government has proposed new labour laws which would require all workers to work to the age of 67. Employers would also be able to swiftly end contracts and a 56 hour work week would be imposed. The law would also mean that pregnant women could be fired while on leave, all workers could be fired without severance pay or with their severance grant significantly reduced from 18 to 8 months, and that employers can class 25% of all jobs as temporary jobs, meaning they can avoid paying out health and social insurance. In addition, trade union rights would be jeopardised under these proposals.”

NIKOLA VULJANIĆ



“We must stand up for workers across the entire EU and condemn attacks on hard-earned gains for labour rights wherever and whenever they occur. These outdated proposals are only fit for the dark ages, and will not benefit in any way the majority of people living in modern Croatia.”

GABI ZIMMER

PORTUGUESE SHIPYARD CLOSURE

GUE/NGL MEPs expressed their indignation with the Portuguese government's plans to privatise a strategic public shipyard, which would see over 600 workers lose their jobs, when shipyard workers visited the group in January 2014.

"You have the group's full solidarity. You are specifically being targeted by the government because of your commitment to workers' unity. You have been courageous in your struggle and you must remain united against this ultra-neoliberal government that wants to shutdown shipbuilding in Portugal."



JOÃO FERREIRA

"The Portuguese government is doing this on purpose. They plan to sell off the company for €7 million, but if workers are made redundant the cost to the state will be much more in terms of welfare payments. So this would be a loss for the government, it won't do anything to balance the budget. We also have to consider the effects on other workers who rely on the company for employment in an indirect way such as those who work for subcontractors."



MARISA MATIAS

THIRD-COUNTRY SEASONAL WORKERS

GUE/NGL MEPs spoke out in plenary on the conditions faced by third-country nationals who come to the EU for seasonal work.

"We have to ask ourselves about the conditions in which seasonal workers live and work in our countries, where they are often the victims of terrible exploitation and experience horrific living conditions. We have to protect their dignity. We really need to stop this treatment and bring seasonal workers out of the legal grey zone. When



it comes to this directive there is much to welcome: decent accommodation; equal pay for equal work; collective agreements; legal protection; and tangible penalties for employers who fall foul of the legislation. But it does fall short in terms of third-country nationals already in the EU and family reunification. Now the ball is in the member states' court."



CONNIE ERNST

"The aim of this legislation is to stop the abuses in countries like Italy and Greece. And there has been a long negotiation process because the member states have been divided. But unfortunately migrants will remain vulnerable. It is a very utilitarian approach to migrants. I don't share this vision. It is only migrants with an employment contract who will enjoy certain rights. As soon as their contract expires they will be back in the grey zone. This is a very minimalist text."



MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT



**A EUROPE IN CRISIS
A EUROPE WITHOUT JOBS**

**Thursday 10 April • 15.00 - 18.30
EP BXL • room ASP 1G2**

Interpretation: FR, DE, NL, IT, EN, DA, EL, ES, PT, SV, CS, HR



Environment, Public Health & Consumer Protection

GUE/NGL MEPs attended several inconclusive and unsatisfactory international climate conferences held during the period 2012-2014. But they also fought battles in Brussels and Strasbourg on a number of ecological, public health and consumer issues.

CLIMATE

DURBAN CLIMATE CONFERENCE



**COP17/CMP7
UNITED NATIONS
CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2011
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

After the Durban climate change conference in late 2011, the group expressed its conviction that the result was a weakened Kyoto Protocol.

“Regrettably, only one thing seems to contain an even greater increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth’s atmosphere: the deepening crisis of capitalism, the recession and the consequent decline in economic activity. It is in this context that it would be even more important to change profoundly the approach we have been taking to the problem of climate change. Specifically, we need to call into question the so-called flexibility instruments and carbon trading.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

UN CLIMATE SUMMIT IN DOHA

After the summit’s unsatisfactory outcome, the group said the EU had discredited itself through its efforts to spare European industry ambitious climate protection targets.

“The message Doha sends out to the world is: continue with business as usual! The extension of the Kyoto Protocol, the minimum goal for Doha, doesn’t change anything. The Kyoto Protocol addresses only 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions and is riddled with

loopholes. The EU more or less ignored the demands from developing countries to push for a detailed roadmap for a much-needed global climate treaty by 2015 and for the medium and long-term financing for mitigation and adaptation. Instead, some countries pledged to provide about € 7 billion over the next two years. Given the pace of

ice cap melting, this is just a drop in the ocean. Millions of people are threatened by the loss of drinking water, flooding, or even the disappearance of their countries.”

SABINE WILS

RIO+20 SUMMIT



**RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development**

After the disappointing outcome of yet another climate summit in Rio, the GUE/NGL called for the EU to stick

to its ambitious plans before the summit and not descend to the level of Rio.

“The purpose of the Rio Summit was to make specific agreements and guidelines on sustainable and social

development and poverty reduction. Despite the high cost and the fuss, the summit has clearly not worked. Prior to the summit, Parliament emphasised the necessary measures to increase the use of renewable energies and improve energy efficiency worldwide, highlighting that this did not mean nuclear

power, because that is not a sustainable source. I hope that, in the EU policy, we will simply stick to the ambitious plans we had before and not descend to the level of Rio.”



KARTIKA LIOTARD

UN CLIMATE CONFERENCE WARSAW

Representing GUE/NGL in Warsaw, MEP Sabine Wils described the negotiations as a “huge setback for climate justice”.

“Big corporations infiltrated COP19 and pushed for false solutions to climate change such as carbon markets, coal and CCS, shale gas, agrofuels, and nuclear. This came at the expense of climate justice. Loss and Damage should be at the top of the agenda and real climate action is more vital than ever.”

SABINE WILS

2030 FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICIES

GUE/NGL MEPs called for the European Parliament to adopt three binding targets: a greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target of at least 60%, a nationally binding renewables target of 45% and a 40% energy savings target, as well as ambitious binding targets by each member state.

“The European Union is bowing out on its responsibility to tackle climate change. A GHG reduction target of just 40% by 2030 endorses ‘business as usual’ and means the climate action that is essential to preventing climate catastrophe will be set back by a decade! Allowing the use of offsets delays the decarbonisation of the

European economy even further and should be forbidden, as should subsidies to fossil fuels and nuclear energy. We need a social-ecological transition in the European energy system with a clear shift towards renewables. The discussion on future EU climate and energy targets is dominated by the profit-interests of big corporations. The fossil fuel industry is pushing for false solutions to climate change like agrofuels, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and hydraulic fracking to extract shale gas. Three binding targets on GHG-reduction, renewable energy and energy savings would be in the interests of European citizens and the environment.”

SABINE WILS

“Just four months after the IPCC published a report showing that 95% of scientific research points to human activity as the cause of climate change, the European Commission has unfortunately published watered-down 2030 climate and energy targets which are simply not fit for purpose and do nothing to help improve international negotiations. To send a strong message to the Commission and the Council it is essential that the European Parliament endorses the Environment and Industry committees’ recommendations to make the three targets legally binding. These targets must be ambitious and legally binding if we are to avoid unprecedented global warming whilst ensuring sustainable growth. Nuclear, CCS, shale gas, and continuing with fossil fuel exploitation are all false solutions: necessary and continued investment in green renewable technology must be assured by a binding target.”

MARTINA ANDERSON



GUE/NGL AT THE WARSAW CLIMATE SUMMIT

The Challenge:
Urgent Delivery of a Binding Agreement



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COMPETITIVE LOW-CARBON ECONOMY BY 2050

Stressing the importance of achieving a competitive low-carbon economy by 2050, the group was critical of the EU’s lack of ambition in the field.

“The vote on the Roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 is of central importance. The lack of ambition in relation to European climate protection policy threatens the sustainable development of Europe’s economy. Dirty technologies, such as nuclear power and carbon capture and storage, are impeding a change in energy policy. The EU emissions trading system has failed as an instrument for climate protection and is undermining European climate protection policy. It shows that market-based instruments are not the way to combat climate change. Long-term climate protection means identifying binding targets for renewable energies and for the reduction of greenhouse gases. Ambitious climate protection with a long-term goal of 95% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050 in comparison with 1990 levels will promote innovation and create new jobs in the area of renewable technologies.”

SABINE WILS



TIMING OF AUCTIONS OF GREENHOUSE GAS ALLOWANCES

The group added its voice to the many hundreds of environmental organisations all over the world calling for an end to the carbon market, arguing that alternative solutions exist and can be implemented now.

“Not only does the carbon market fail to drive reduction of greenhouse gases, it is also in itself an obstacle to reductions and decreased dependence on fossil fuels. It has resulted in staggering profits for the major polluters, who acquire credits with more than dubious and perverse investments in developing countries, with re-sale of the licences granted to them free of charge. It is a system that has proved to be open to faults and fraud, such as carousel fraud in several countries, costing billions of Euros to the public purse. Taxpayers bear the cost of the system, while profits go to the polluters. The alternative to the illusions of the market lies in a regulatory, legislated approach, effective from the perspective of environmental aims, and socially just.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

CARBON CAPTURE & STORAGE

When the European Parliament adopted a report on the capture and storage of CO₂ in January 2014, GUE/NGL MEPs said the vote sent a negative signal on the urgent need for ecological energy conversion.

“The text adopted on carbon capture and storage does not bode well for a socio-ecological energy policy in the EU. The report states that if CO₂ emissions are to be reduced by 2050, the use of CCS technology is indispensable. However, CCS stands in the way of a much-needed energy revolution. The high level of electricity generation from coal for example, could persist under a CCS policy regime. Coal companies can thus look forward to further profits from their power plants, while the public bears the incalculable environmental damage.”

SABINE WILS

Public Seminar,
Informal Working Group on Ecological Footprints

Gender + E3 Equality - Ecology - Economy

Hosted by
GUSTAFSSON Mikael, GUE/NGL
KIIL-NIELSEN Nicole, The Greens, EFA
PIETIKÄINEN Sirpa, EPP
ROMEVA i RUEDA Raül, The Greens, EFA
16.00-18.00 Tuesday 7 May 2013
European Parliament, Brussels, PHS P1C051

EPP GUE/NGL The Green & European Free Alliance

EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGETS

GUE/NGL MEPs slammed the European Commission's January 2014 emissions reduction targets outlined in a policy paper as “devastating for the planet”.

“Quite simply the Commission has put the interests of large energy companies above the interests of the environment and the most vulnerable populations whose livelihoods are already under threat as a result of climate change. The Commission white paper aims to lock Europe into an unsustainable energy system that is bad for people and the environment, while guaranteeing large benefits to the coal, gas, nuclear power and bioenergy industries. It seems as if the Commission wants to prevent making the necessary long term changes.”

SABINE WILS

ENVIRONMENT

WORLD WATER FORUM

The group reiterated its position that water is a public resource and not a business on the occasion of the Sixth World Water Forum held in Marseille in March 2012.

“In Portugal, with public funds and EU money, we have managed to ensure that we have 98% coverage of water supply and 90% coverage of sanitation today. This investment was made by Portuguese and EU taxpayers, yet now water is being privatised in Portugal. This is a clear example of what we are doing wrong in the area of water. We are treating water as a commodity when water is a public resource, not a business. Water is a scarce resource, not an asset subject to competition. Water should be for everybody, not merely for those who can pay. Water and water resources should be preserved, not disrupted or contaminated. Water is a right, a basic human right.”

MARISA MATIAS

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Although the group agreed that this report on a proposed directive on waste management was useful and would be helpful, a number of outstanding issues needed to be addressed.

“Both the report and the number and content of the petitions received by the Commission from citizens and operators prove two things: first, the problem of waste is an urgent and burning issue and, second, despite the differences that obviously exist, member states are not

Privatisation of Public Goods

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A GUE/NGL INITIATIVE
Thomas Händel • Marie-Christine Vergiat • Martina Anderson

26 June 2013
15.00-18.30
European Parliament
Room ASP A1G2

performing satisfactorily in terms of waste management, thereby creating public health and environmental problems. Although landfill is the last resort under EU legislation, there are countries which are lagging behind in recycling and prevention and are therefore under pressure to extend existing landfills or create new ones, in breach of Community legislation and common sense, thereby causing serious problems in local communities. The Commission also needs to intervene in cases where there are obvious errors in waste management plans and environmental impact studies.”

NIKOLAOS CHOUNTIS



DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

Industrial accidents with dangerous substances are a reality of our times. But this cannot be used as an excuse not to inform the public and enable people to participate in decision making. The group welcomed a legislative proposal but said that companies responsible for toxic incidents must be held responsible.

“Information for the public and their participation in decision making is not just a right, it is a necessity: only an informed population can limit the dangers and only a population that decides to do so can protect itself from abuses. Prevention and limitation of the consequences are the first priorities. There is also a need for companies responsible for accidents due to dangerous substances to be held financially and criminally responsible, and for even more transparency.”

ALDA SOUSA

CONSUMER PROTECTION

The group considered that the report on the 2014-2020 consumer programme will not substantially strengthen consumer rights in the single market and retains too many shortcomings.

“The stress is on the importance of more competition, and more growth with no consideration for consumers. The original draft report contained positive measures on consumer rights, particularly regarding best

practice, transparency in online trading, and vulnerable consumers. Unfortunately the result of the negotiations is far from satisfactory as it fails to acknowledge the role of the economic crisis in the current situation and does not include any proposals to change this. The text makes no reference to the current situation in the internal market, which is responsible to some extent for the economic crisis we face. Moreover, it includes recommendations for addressing the situation via market liberalisation and even more competition and ignores the fact that these policies have led to increased prices, lower quality and fewer social services. We cannot ignore the need to protect consumers from the effects of competitiveness.”



KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDES

HEALTH & FOOD

EUROPEAN DIABETES EPIDEMIC

With diabetes affecting over 30 million people in Europe, the illness has reached epidemic proportions. The GUE/ NGL group supported the Parliamentary resolution in March 2012 and called for a European strategy to combat it.

“There are around 325 000 deaths per year associated with diabetes because we know that diabetes is the principal cause of heart attacks, blindness, amputations and failures of vital organs. In the face of these figures, we have two choices: the first is to say that it is not that serious; that we can get on alright with this and that each government should look out for itself. The second is to say that the lack of a European strategy in this area is part of the problem. We have much to do in this regard. We also have much to do on early diagnosis, coordination and on investment in research. That is why this resolution represents a first step in working together to this end.”

MARISA MATIAS



PHARMACOVIGILANCE

A legislative report on drug safety was welcomed by the group because due to amendments it would lead to safer medicines, better protection for patients and greater coordination and cooperation.

“These amendments were necessary in order to prevent a repetition of scandals such as the one surrounding the Mediator drug. However, even perfect legislation will be worthless if not properly implemented, and if compliance is not properly enforced. The economic crisis and related cuts are also affecting the health sector, including the budgets of national and European medicines agencies. It is therefore important to ensure that the competent bodies at both national and European levels receive adequate support and trained staff to fulfil all of the important tasks that we have given them under this new legislation.”

JIRÍ MAŠTÁLKA

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGEING

Discussing the report on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, the group said the current economic crisis should in no way affect human needs and dignity.

“Active and healthy aging means ensuring solidarity between generations. It means that the current economic crisis should in no way affect human needs and dignity. Overall health can be improved by ending inequality with respect to health which is caused by differences in socio-economic positions. It is also important that geriatric care remains intact in times of austerity. People who are dependent on care must be able to count on it unconditionally. And if cuts are really necessary we should make public health a real priority. People will stay healthy longer and that is when real savings are made. More attention to preventive health is also of great importance here. Pensions are a national matter, but under pressure from the Commission there are increasingly more cuts in pensions. Everyone should be able to live decently in old age but unfortunately there is still much poverty among the elderly, especially among older women and that’s bad for health.”

KARTIKA LIOTARD

THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON ACCESS TO CARE FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

During a debate on the impact of the crisis on access to care for vulnerable groups, the GUE/NGL called for the reasons behind increasing precariousness in Europe not to be forgotten.

“We cannot adopt laws that hurt people and then adopt resolutions taking note of the harm these laws are causing. It is austerity policies that are endangering access to care, particularly for our most vulnerable citizens. I am delighted about the consensus



building around this report but we need to push that consensus further. We need to call for an end to the dismantling of social rights. Austerity goes against our very humanity. We should not have approved a reduction to the EU budget.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC

“It was Aristotle who said that you can judge a society by the way it treats its most vulnerable people; well I wonder what kind of judgement he would pass today if he could see how austerity policies are driving the poorest into increasing hardship in order to protect the bondholders and bankers. Some in this chamber will cry crocodile tears about how unfair this is but then they will vote through austerity policies anyway; austerity is not unavoidable, it is a political choice that puts the interest of some above the interests of others.”

PAUL MURPHY

“We must not forget why many people in the EU don’t have enough money to go to the doctor. It is naive of the Commission to call for recommendations to protect these vulnerable groups when it was the Commission that condemned these people in the first place. Vulnerable is not a strong enough word to describe the situation. Elderly people are being left at home and their pensions are under threat, and we must not forget other groups as well such as those who don’t have permanent work contracts.”

KARTIKA LIOTARD

“Everybody has the right to healthcare regardless of their economic and social situation and the responsibility to ensure that that right is universally enjoyed is a public sector responsibility. Austerity measures are leading to women’s access to healthcare being greatly diminished. We must fight against the inequality between men and women in access to healthcare and ensure reproductive health and rights and make sure that women who are victims of violence are protected.”

INÈS ZUBER

PRICES OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS FOR HUMAN USE

The group proposed a set of amendments in order to return power to the member states and prevent penalties that would affect public health services, already weakened in times of austerity and minimum budgets, and also to guarantee the interests of the people.

“Every month, citizens spend a substantial portion of their salaries or pensions on medicines, and they question the price they pay, above all in times of austerity. It is therefore very important that the process and rules for price setting are clear and transparent. We all want to know what we are paying for and why. But we see today a proposal that, –despite improvements in the report–, is at odds with the interest of European citizens, which instead of protecting them, as would be hoped for, actually impedes member states from re-evaluating the safety, efficiency, and quality of medicines. Furthermore, by setting deadlines for each member state to decide on the price and reimbursement system for each drug, this directive ends up being a proposal for a dictatorship by the pharmaceutical industry, because, if a country fails to meet a deadline, it will have to pay the industry, up to the point that it will be possible for the manufacturer to unilaterally

impose its price on the Member states if deadlines are not met.”

ALDA SOUSA

HORSEMEAT SCANDAL

The group said that despite the Commission’s assertion that regardless of the legislation in place, there will always be criminals seeking to cheat the system in the pursuit of cheap profit it should not mean that, as regulators, we should allow it to continue.

“We have, as you have said, a responsibility to make any criminal activity – especially in the food supply chain – as difficult as possible. Although the EU can claim to have one of the most developed traceability systems in the world, it is clearly not 100% fit for purpose in the processing sector. We need to take full account of the specific characteristics of the member states, thereby allowing beef from regions in the North of Ireland to be identified as Irish if producers so wish, or Scottish beef to retain its Scottish labelling, which would aid traceability in general and prevent scandals such as this from occurring again.”

MARTINA ANDERSON

TOBACCO LAWS

Reacting to the result in an Environment and Health Committee vote on tobacco legislation, the group warned that it was essential that we remain vigilant for the vote in the September 2013 full plenary.

“Although it would have been fantastic to see standardised packaging adopted in the Environment Committee, it is a great result that the 75% coverage of the tobacco product packaging with combined health warnings has been maintained by the Committee. The tobacco industry has lobbied intensively to lower it so this is fantastic news for those of us who put the health of our young people



before the profits of this industry. MEPs also voted in favour of medical regulation for e-cigarettes, a ban on slim cigarettes and a ban on menthol cigarettes.”

MARTINA ANDERSON

Following a successful outcome in plenary, which saw the rapporteur being given a mandate to begin negotiations with the Council for an effective directive, the group welcomed the vote in favour of citizens’ health and against the interests of the tobacco giants.

“The Parliament voted for 65% of cigarette packet surface to be covered with combined pictorial health warnings and for e-cigarettes not to be considered as medicines but to be nevertheless subject to authorisations. Member states will be free to authorise where sales take place. The aims of the tobacco industry can never be reconciled with those of public health and the measures proposed by this Directive can reduce the number of people who smoke in the EU by 2.4 million. We must stop the tobacco industry from using attractive gimmicks to lure young people to their deadly product.”

MARTINA ANDERSON



GUE/NGL welcomed Parliament’s adoption of the revised Tobacco Products Directive after the final plenary vote which saw the tobacco industry lead an intense lobbying campaign in attempt to derail it.

“I’m delighted that the Parliament has given its seal of approval to this crucially important Directive. While there remain parts of the final text that could have been better in terms of putting public health before industry profit, overall the text is a hugely positive step in the right direction. Tobacco contains over 4000 chemicals, and we know that 250 of these chemicals are harmful to humans. Global tobacco companies make astronomical profits: in 2010 alone the US tobacco industry made 664 billion dollars of profit, a sum greater than the GDP of 18 nations. At the same time 700,000 people die every year in the EU from tobacco-related deaths. This Directive will prevent young people from taking up smoking as characterising flavours which are clearly designed to increase the palatability of cigarettes to

young taste buds will be banned, as will lipstick and perfume packs that are designed to appeal to young girls. 65% pictorial image warnings will now be obligatory on the front and back of cigarette packs and pouches, and additives that give the impression of health benefits, such as vitamins and caffeine, will also be banned.”

MARTINA ANDERSON

AIDS

On World Aids Day each year, GUE/NGL MEPs reiterate the importance of keeping up the global fight against HIV.

“Every year on 1 December people around the world come together to reiterate their commitment to the fight against HIV, to show solidarity with those for whom HIV is a daily reality, and to remember those who are sadly no longer with us. This year (2013), the focus is on HIV testing. Data from 2012 shows that in EU/EEA countries 49% of people that tested positive for HIV were diagnosed late in the course of their infection. These people need antiretroviral therapy (ART) right away because their immune system is already starting to fail. By providing ART earlier people with HIV have a better chance of living longer and healthier lives, and



the risk of transmitting HIV to others is significantly reduced. GUE/NGL believes that EU governments should prioritise the fight against HIV and AIDs as cornerstones of their public health policies.”

KARTIKA LIOTARD

Foreign Policy & Peace

EU foreign and security policy must be based on the construction of a peaceful world and the GUE/NGL-continued to reiterate its belief in a peaceful approach to conflict resolution in the Middle East and throughout the world during the second half of this legislature.

COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY AND COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

The 2011 annual report from the Council to the Parliament on common foreign and security policy sparked criticism from the GUE/NGL group.

“The GUE/NGL group does not agree with the current direction being taken in the area of security and defence policy, because we believe that the time has come to begin a transition towards a model that brings about the demilitarisation of security in order to respond to what is creating insecurity in the world today: hunger: 70,000 people die of hunger every day, while USD 4 billion a day is spent on armaments. The way forward is to initiate a different, demilitarised process, to establish – through a redesigned United Nations – a true democratic world government, to meet the goal of achieving peace.”

WILLY MEYER



Ahead of the December 2013 European Council which focused on EU defence policy, GUE/NGL MEPs called on the member states to stop putting defence lobbyists' needs above the needs of citizens.

“While the summit could have been used to proclaim a vision of the EU that makes a contribution to disarmament the world over, member states are instead meeting to talk about armaments. This is the antithesis of what we should be doing: we should be holding a summit for peace, not for arms lobbyists. We have an EU ravaged by economic crisis and recession yet we talk about investing the little money we have in armaments. The money from the European budget could surely be better invested elsewhere.”

GABI ZIMMER

“This report is intended as a contribution to the next European Council, a de facto ‘Defence Council’. It



recommends the pooling and integration of European military capabilities at the expense of national sovereignty and in favour of “European military capabilities” defending a

dubious “European interest” on the international scene. This report calls once again to support the planned Smart Defense project concocted by NATO, based on an assertion that the EU and NATO have the same interests. However, we require a strict separation between the EU and NATO.”

JEAN-LUC MÉLENCHON

2013 REVIEW OF THE ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE EEAS

The group highlighted its misgivings about the creation of the European External Action Service, due to its structure, its mandate and because it cannot be controlled directly by the European Parliament.



**AGAINST
WAR & INTERVENTION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

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“Generally, foreign policy of any member country is subject to the control of national parliaments: this is not so here. And we have a very serious problem because the foreign policy services of member countries and those of the European Union itself overlap. It is a structure in which the European Parliament should play a much more relevant role. In addition, we are far from having cohesive and unified foreign and security policies and - this is a reality - it is therefore very difficult to have an external service that is the support for a foreign policy and a common security policy that should be based on disarmament, demilitarisation and cooperation in the political settlement of conflicts.”

WILLY MEYER

UN ARMS TRADE TREATY

With the international arms trade growing in recent years, and the countries of the European Union having, at 34%, the leading share of the trade, the group called for a complete ban on arms trading, especially in relation to conflict regions.



“The current negotiations at UN level on an Arms Trade Treaty represent a step in the right direction. We continue to hope that the treaty will not later turn out to be a paper tiger as toothless as previous agreements. For that reason, following a successful conclusion of the Treaty, implementation needs to remain on the political agenda consistently.”

SABINE LÖSING

GUE/NGL MEPs welcomed the result of a vote in Parliament’s International Trade committee which saw MEPs give their consent to the UN Arms Trade Treaty, the first-ever international Treaty regulating the export, import, and transfer of conventional arms ranging from battle tanks to ammunitions. MEPs voted unanimously in favour of authorising member states to ratify the Treaty, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2013.

“In voting through this report the International Trade Committee has recommended the EP to give consent to the Treaty, as well as its position on member state ratification and implementation. This is overall a positive result as the Treaty must not only be signed up to but adhered to.”

HELMUT SCHOLZ



NELSON MANDELA

The group paid homage to Nelson Mandela, former South African President and political activist when he passed away in December 2013.

“Nelson Mandela was, and will continue to be, a symbol and an inspiration to everybody throughout the world that he moved through his extraordinary actions. Our thoughts and solidarity go to his family, friends and comrades. His courage, his struggle for justice, democracy and human rights is and remains an example for entire generations not only in South Africa but throughout the world. As a leader, as a politician, as an activist, his commitment to freedom, democracy and equality during the apartheid regime will never be forgotten. Despite years spent in prison, he never lost his hope for a better world, one in which all men and all women can recognise themselves today and in the future. Nelson Mandela remains a role model for all of us.”

GABI ZIMMER

AFGHANISTAN

The group was vociferous in its criticism of the lack of information and data provided by EU foreign and security Chief Catherine Ashton on Afghanistan.

“Above and beyond NATO’s image campaigns, what is clearly true is that with regard to 2015, we do not know where the peace process will be, in other words, whether the Taliban will have more or less control of Afghanistan by then, if there will be more or less peace, or if there will be more or less corruption. We do not know anything about the plan to provide an alternative for all the opium drug crops. Neither do we know what the withdrawal plan is. We therefore have a scenario in which, above and beyond propaganda, the only concern and the only data that we are being given is that the armed police force is 53% larger than planned.”

WILLY MEYER

BURMA

After the liberation from house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, and her participation in the process of shaping her country, the group warned that the country still has a long way to go.

“The spotlight on Aung San Suu Kyi must not blind us to the fate of other political prisoners, to the on-going military action against parts of the population, to the misery of the refugees and to the wealth of a small elite in a desperately poor country. My group supports the call from Aung San Suu Kyi to suspend EU sanctions, but not to lift them permanently. This would give her country the opportunity to overcome poverty and encourage the military to continue along the road to democracy.”

HELMUT SCHOLZ

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

GUE/NGL MEPs urged EU foreign ministers not to send EU troops to the Central African Republic in January 2014.

“Deploying EU forces to the Central African Republic will do nothing to stabilise the situation in the country. Our group rejects all forms of intervention and we call for a political solution to the conflict.”

WILLY MEYER

“Time and time again we see the same pattern of western military intervention. Military action is carried out in the name of humanitarian intervention but in fact it is part of a global strategy to secure and control mineral wealth in the region. We should be focusing on tackling the soaring levels of poverty and inequality in the country.”

SABINE LÖSING

FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)

Debating a report on FYROM, the group had three essential points to make:

“First: the report continues to see the issue of the name as a bilateral problem. The problem is an international one and is in the process of being resolved in the UN context. As a result, the FYROM government should avoid practices which aggravate the problem and must make its own contribution to dealing with it as something which constitutes a sine qua non for the accession process, since it serves the principle of good neighbourliness. Second: the report does not apply the required punctiliousness to the recording of political events and the political state of affairs and, specifically, the events of December 2012. Political forces in FYROM must take significant steps in the direction of democracy and the smooth operation of the state. Third: the report does not refer either to the causes of the great economic and social problems – large scale unemployment, especially among the young and among women – nor does it analyse the problem when those policies which have led to these results are obligatory due to the neo-liberal directions being taken by the European Union, a fact which can only exacerbate the problems.”

NIKOLAOS CHOUNTIS



GEORGIA

The GUE/NGL explained its rejection of a resolution on forthcoming elections in Georgia by stressing that cooperation and partnership with south Caucasian countries should be on an equal footing.



“Geographically speaking, the south Caucasus forms part of Europe. Judging by the motions for resolutions so far discussed in the European Parliament,

including the one being discussed right now, most of my colleagues clearly do not understand that this involves relationships that are different from those in Western Europe. It is time to stop self-righteousness and double standards, and to promote normal bilateral relations with the new Georgian Government. It is time to get rid of colonial nostalgia and to begin to regard neighbours of the European Union as proper partners.”

JAROMÍR KOHLÍČEK



IRAN

The group told Baroness Ashton that the EU’s most recent sanctions were sabre rattling measures and that attempting to get Iran to compromise by exerting more pressure was politically naive and also irresponsible.

“Our group does not want any nuclear programmes, including in Iran. We strongly condemn the Iranian regime on account of its horrendous human rights violations, oppression of religious minorities and persecution of human rights activists. Stopping Iranian oil as a result of the de facto trade ban with Iran’s Central Bank will ultimately hit ordinary citizens. It will

also help the Iranian regime’s election campaign ahead of the elections in March this year (2012) and will increase the risk of war throughout the region. There is as yet no genuine proof that Iran has a current nuclear weapons programme. There are indications up to 2003, but the International Atomic Energy Agency has provided no evidence for the period thereafter in its report. It has assumptions and the claims of the secret services.”

CORNELIA ERNST

KAZAKHSTAN

When 50,000 voters in the city of Zhanaozen in Kazakhstan were to be barred from voting in the January 2012 parliamentary election, GUE/NGL called for its postponement and for international observers to take up the issue with the authorities.

“Zhanaozen is at the heart of the area where thousands of oil workers have been on strike for over 6 months. Up to 70 strikers and supporters were killed by state forces on 16 December 2011 in a brutal crackdown. Now, with the extension of the state of emergency, the government will exclude the electors in this city, many of whom have personally experienced the violent anti-worker attitude of the Nazarbayev government. This adds insult to the injury of elections that have already excluded any genuine opposition parties.”

PAUL MURPHY

TWO YEARS AFTER THE ZHANAOKEN KILLINGS

Where Now For Human & Workers' Rights In Kazakhstan



16 December 2013
European Parliament BXL
15.00- 18.30
room PHS 01C 051

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KOSOVO

The GUE/NGL was critical of EU policy in Kosovo during a debate on the enlargement report for the country.

“This motion for a resolution promotes the EU’s imperialist policy and the ambitions of the monopolies in the Western Balkans. This is a time of serious capitalist crisis and acute imperialist competition for markets and spheres of influence. The resolution supports the imposition of capitalist restructurings, the plundering of natural wealth in Kosovo, escalating unemployment and poverty. We are against the presence of foreign troops in the Balkans; we are in favour of a Europe of peace and friendship between nations”.

CHARALAMPOS ANGOURAKIS

MALI

Before the war broke out in Mali, the group warned of the tenuous humanitarian and health situation in strife-ridden country.

“Since the beginning of January, civilians and, in particular, women, have been the victims of the worst acts of violence. Now more than ever, the European Union must not abandon them. However, an assessment must be made of how previously transferred funds have been used, as these are clearly not getting to the civilians. It must offer support so that an independent investigating committee can shed light on all the atrocities that have been committed. Everything must be done to strive for, without interfering, a political solution that includes all parties, including civil society representatives.”

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT

Once the war had ended, the group criticised the fact that the military intervention initiated for the conflict situation in Mali had not provided a solution, but had led to a hardening of uncertainty and oppression in the region.

“In addition to the national context for the crisis, there are a host of international factors that caused the outbreak of the conflict. The causes of the crisis must be resolved and in this case, the international framework conditions of the IMF and the World Bank changed. On top of this, land grabbing must be ended, uranium extraction forbidden and much more besides. And finally, the role of many secret services in organised criminal activity and in encouraging Salafi Groups must be questioned. A policy that is apparently acting in the name of humanity has no legitimacy if it is actually being used to promote uranium extraction and hence malformations in children, lung cancer and fatal poisoning of the environment. Mali is a rich country. But the people remain poor and must continue to suffer in order that others may enjoy their riches.”

SABINE LÖSING

PALESTINE & ISRAEL

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Israel continued its policy of expanding settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, a policy that GUE/NGL has continuously condemned.

“Israel is still destroying on the ground in Palestine any chance of the two-state solution to which the international community is committed. The recent decision to erect 800 new units for settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories is the last in a series of such acts. We condemn the persecution of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, which is designed to change the demographic make-up of that town. We condemn the demolition of houses, the continuing long-term imprisonment of Palestinians and the continual human rights violations. We call on the European Union to recognise an independent Palestinian state that will secure a peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis and contribute to the stability of the entire region.”

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDIS

EU-ISRAEL AGREEMENTS

During a debate on the EU-Israel agreement on conformity assessment and acceptance of industrial products, GUE/NGL pointed out that the EU must not improve trade relations with Israel while there is daily proof that it is guilty of human rights violations.

“Any such improvement both infringes the agreement and neutralises the only specific instrument at our

hearing

**freedom
for Palestinian political
prisoners**

Issa Qaraqe	Minister of Detainees & Ex-Detainees
Saleh Nazzal	Sub-Commission on Human Rights with the EU
Fadwa Barghouti	wife of Marwan Barghouti
Issa Shawqi	Director of the Ensan Center for Democracy & Human Rights
Ahmed Alissa	BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency & Refugee Rights

European Parliament • Strasbourg • room S2.1
15:00 - 18:00
Wednesday 16 November

EUROPEAN UNITED LEFT • NORDIC GREEN LEFT
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
GUE/NGL



disposal for putting pressure on Israel to honour its obligations in terms of human rights and humanitarian law, both inside Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territories. We are therefore against giving our consent to this agreement.”

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLLIDES

GAZA

Calling for the force of politics to replace the violence of the politics of force, the group called on the EP to adopt a clear and strong resolution to support a ceasefire and encourage a lasting peace and a two-state solution.

“In this matter, there are the people of Gaza who are being blockaded, and the other side that is dominating them. The truth is that by calling Hamas the enemy and the representative, we have undermined the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which decided 20 years ago to abandon their armed struggle and participate in a process of dialogue. The international community and the European Union have undermined, and even humiliated, the Palestinian Authority and allowed Israel to act with complete impunity. Not a single political initiative has ever been taken to ensure respect for international law. That is what fuels the radical fundamentalist groups, which justify this unacceptable policy of blockade, of colonisation and of war.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC

The group expressed its dismay at the Israeli refusal to allow a Parliament working group entry into Gaza during from 27th to 30th October 2013.

“This visit had the full support of Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament and despite his intervention, the Israeli authorities decided to block elected members of an official EU delegation from paying a humanitarian visit to this ravaged and impoverished region. The official reason given for refusal of access to Gaza was - ‘in line with the policy according to which Israel does not facilitate visits to the Gaza Strip which will strengthen Hamas, a terror organization designated as such also by the European Union.’ This explanation is deplorable and without

foundation. Our visit was due to take place under the auspices of UNRWA, and clearly focused on vital public services such as schools, health centres and food distribution centres. Furthermore, we had arranged to visit EU-funded job programmes and hold meetings on education with students from the Christian community. Given the worrying current developments in the region, the programme had a purely social, economic and humanitarian focus.”

MARTINA ANDERSON

SERBIA

Commenting on the 2012 enlargement report for Serbia, the group highlighted the importance of the Serbian economy for the Balkan region.

“By helping Serbia become integrated into the family of European nations, we will actually be assisting European stability. Serbia is the central economy of the Balkans, and the integration of Serbia will stabilise the Balkans as a region. Serbia has begun a courageous fight against organised crime, as well as a very ambitious reform of the judiciary. It has, in a short space of time, removed 1 600 judges who had links to organised crime. In my opinion, we should support this effort.”



MILOSLAV RANSDORF

SOUTH AFRICA

The group condemned the massacre of striking miners in South Africa in September 2012.

“Workers were engaged in a justified strike for higher wages and for better working conditions. They were mown down by the police, some of them shot in the back while running away, with the police acting as private security guards for the mines. The evidence suggests that this massacre was premeditated. The attempt to charge the miners’ colleagues with their murder, which has thankfully been dropped, indicates how far to the right the government of the African National Congress has been driven under Jacob Zuma. Next week will see the EU-South Africa Summit in Brussels, attended by President Zuma. I will be joining a solidarity action to show the support of the left and the workers’ movement in Europe with the South African miners.”

PAUL MURPHY

SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

The group voiced its opposition to the splitting up of Sudan and South Sudan as well as its concern for the conflict in the latter.

“Yet another war over oil’ could be the heading for an intervention on the current conflict in Sudan. Once again, the civilian populations of both countries are enduring indescribable suffering. All violent attacks and assaults are to be condemned, and we must call for a peaceful solution to the conflict. However, that does not absolve us from talking about the causes, or from looking back critically at whether the EU’s clear commitment to the splitting off of South Sudan was responsible given the current circumstances. There will be no quick solution; that much is certain. It is also certain, however, that the problems cannot be resolved by means of armed conflict. Right now, it is essential that we maintain the arms embargo in order to prevent further escalations.”

SABINE LÖSING

SYRIA

Since the beginning of the unrest in Syria in 2011, GUE/NGL MEPs have called for a negotiated settlement instead of foreign military intervention as well as a ban on arms supplies to the region.

• APRIL 2012

Support to Syria should not include supplying arms to the country but the introduction of dialogue and negotiations for a nuclear and weapons free Middle East.

“We need to support the view that no arms should be exported to Syria, regardless of by what method or what route, and we also need to support the Annan plan without accepting any infringements in respect of Syria. No more people should die in Syria. Instead of an escalation, we need a human rights dialogue and serious negotiations for a nuclear weapon-free Middle East and peaceful coexistence throughout the region. That is what the EU should be doing instead of making the current situation worse.”

TAKIS HADJIGEORGIOU

• SEPTEMBER 2012

After months of bloodshed in Syria, GUE/NGL condemned war and warned that EU military intervention would only lead to more chaos in the region.



“These four walls have already witnessed heated debates in favour of war, in favour of military intervention, allegedly as a means of resolving conflicts. In no way whatsoever do I share people’s need to turn Syria into another Iraq or Afghanistan, where insecurity has increased, where death and destruction have been caused. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, al-Qaeda was not responsible, and yet intervention took place. In Syria, we have to condemn Mr Assad’s crimes and repression, but also those of the opposition, as well as the opposition’s terrorist acts, jihad and links with al-Qaeda. The only possible solution is peace. We should not push for a foreign military intervention that will lead to chaos in the region – nothing but chaos.”

WILLY MEYER

• AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2013

With the threat of US, French & UK military intervention looming because of the Syrian regime’s alleged use of chemical weapons on civilian populations, the group set out its strong opposition to military action.

“A military retaliatory act against Syria won’t protect anyone; on the contrary it will only cost more innocent lives. The GUE/NGL Group strongly condemns the use of chemicals against the civilian population and considers it a crime against humanity. But the only way to avoid further harm is through a political solution, not foreign military intervention. Military action against Assad will only serve to exacerbate the violence and spark further conflicts in the region.”

GABI ZIMMER

• OCTOBER 2013

Speaking about how the EU should tackle the flow of Syrian refugees, the group warned that if there is no change in EU asylum policy, EU interior ministers would be complicit in the deaths of refugees.

“If we don’t do something to deal with this humanitarian catastrophe we are burying our heads in the sand. More solidarity is necessary now. We must do something tangible and we need to change how asylum policy is structured. Member states also need to avail of the legal instruments that already exist. If you look at how many of these so-called ‘illegal immigrants’ per million EU habitants are being taken in the numbers are really minuscule. All this talk about solidarity is meaningless if we don’t open our eyes and offer assistance, in Syria and elsewhere.”

GABI ZIMMER



TUNISIA

Following the murder of Mohamed Brahmi, a Member of the Tunisian Constituent Assembly, the GUE/NGL group expressed its deep indignation and sadness.

“The group recognises Mohamed Brahmi’s fight for social justice in Tunisia and across the Arab world and expresses its solidarity with his family and friends and reiterates its support of the Popular Front and the People’s Movement and all those fighting for democracy and social justice in Tunisia. It is the enemies of democracy in Tunisia and in the Arab world who have assassinated Chokri Benlaid and Mohamed Brahmi. The first responsibility of the Tunisian government is to ensure the safety of all Tunisians, especially those fighting for democratic freedoms and justice. The GUE/NGL calls for their killers to be brought to justice. Instead of pushing for a free trade agreement, the EU should stand up for Tunisian democracy”.

GUE/NGL GROUP STATEMENT

TURKEY

• MARCH 2012

The enlargement report for Turkey sparked a discussion about the plight of Turkish Cypriots as well as that of the Kurds.

“We have to go beyond wishful thinking when it comes to the problems of the Kurdish population in Turkey, of whom there are 10 million. Why does Turkey not give the rights demanded for the Turkish Cypriots to the Turks also? Why does it not apply them to its own people? We weep tears over abuse of the human rights of Turkish Cypriots – and rightly so – but they are due to the fact that Turkey is not prepared to demonstrate that will. Turkey’s refusal to have contacts with the Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus in a few months’ time is not only an insult to Cyprus; it is an insult to us too, to our institutions, to the European Union itself and its modus operandi. We are in favour of the accession of Turkey; we demonstrated as much with our vote in favour of the opening of negotiations on the accession of Turkey. It was a very critical moment and Cyprus gave the go-ahead. However, Turkey needs to honour its undertakings, like every other country.”

TAKIS HADJIGEORGIOU



• FEBRUARY 2013

The group welcomed the start-up of dialogue with Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK by the Turkish authorities and said it was an important first step to a political and peaceful solution.

“The discussions between the Turkish Government and Öcalan are an important step, but this is only a first step on the way to a political and peaceful solution. The road to peace and reconciliation is still a long way off. It can only be trodden if trust can be built up. Peace negotiations are not power games. Peace negotiations can only be won or lost by the participants. The Turkish Government has taken the initiative. In this way, it has responded to the demands that parts of the Kurdish movement have been making for years. Negotiations need reliability. Attendance at the discussions must not develop into a lottery. Consequently, the way ahead must be for the parties to the conflict to agree how negotiations should proceed and reach an understanding on who must participate in them. I believe I am speaking on behalf of all our colleagues present if I call on both parties to the conflict not to allow themselves to be diverted from the negotiation path pursued.”

JÜRGEN KLUTE



• JUNE 2013

When Turkish protestors were violently repressed by the Turkish authorities during the Taksim Square protests in June 2013, the group called on the country’s government for greater respect for democracy and public opinion.

10th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
"THE EUROPEAN UNION, TURKEY AND THE KURDS"



Turkey, the Kurds and the Imrali Peace Process:
An Historic Opportunity

4th & 5th of December 2013
Room ASP 1G2
European Parliament Brussels



"Democracy means listening carefully to the people who may not agree with us. It is more than obvious that the Turkish government has no idea of what respect for different opinions means. We fully support the demonstrators and we call upon the Turkish government and the police forces to refrain from any further acts of violence and suppression. There can be no democracy in Turkey without giving the Turks and Kurds their fundamental freedoms. There can be no democracy in Turkey without restoring the fundamental rights of the Cypriots, both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots alike."

TAKIS HADJIGEORGIOU

• NOVEMBER 2013

The group welcomed a new round of EU-Turkey accession talks in November 2013.

"After three years of stagnation, the re-opening of EU accession negotiations with Turkey is good news. EU citizens of Turkish and Kurdish origin have been waiting a long time to see Turkey as an integral part of the European Union. While friendly relations with EU governments are positive for Turkey, they are no substitute for fully-fledged and sustainable political integration to the European Union. To meet European regional policy standards Turkey will have to make ambitious economic convergence efforts. Although Turkey has made impressive economic progress over the last few years it is important that no province is excluded from this progress. While the re-opening of accession

talks on regional policy is a step forward, the further development of the accession process can only be quick and fruitful if the country progresses on democratisation, safeguarding freedom of the press and a successful conclusion of the Imrali process."

JÜRGEN KLUTE

• DECEMBER 2013



At the 10th international conference on 'The EU, Turkey and the Kurds' in December 2013, GUE/NGL MEPs expressed the group's hopes for the recently launched peace process and urged the Turkish government to come up with concrete proposals for the extension and development of the Turkish constitutional reform package.

"This conference is a positive setting for discourse between all sides with the aim of bringing about lasting peace. Of course, pressure must be maintained so that both sides live up to their commitments. We need meaningful constitutional reform including changes to the electoral system. Another key issue will be language rights and the right to Kurdish education. EU institutions must be more active in making sure the peace process can be brought to a successful conclusion."

GABI ZIMMER




**9th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
"THE EUROPEAN UNION, TURKEY AND THE KURDS"**



**THE KURDISH QUESTION IN TURKEY:
TIME TO RENEW THE DIALOGUE
AND RESUME DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS**

**5-6/12/2012 Room ASP 1 G2
European Parliament BXL**



2013 has been a year of historical change for Kurds. In the past, their identity and existence has been denied and international institutions have not shown particular interest in the oppression of Kurds in Turkey and the Middle East. It is important that the Turkish government meets the commitments it has made. Kurds don't want empty promises or superficial show events; they want to see political prisoners freed and a democratic constitution. There is no reason for Prime Minister Erdogan to wait for another round of elections before starting real democratic reform."

JÜRGEN KLUTE



"This problem doesn't only have consequences for Turkey and the Kurdish people. This affects the whole region so the international community must become more involved in monitoring the progress of the peace process. Our support to the peace process is critical right now as is keeping up the pressure on the Turkish side to fulfill its commitments with concrete steps towards real democratic reform."

SØREN SØNDERGAARD

• JANUARY 2014

When Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the Parliament in January 2014, he faced tough questioning from GUE/NGL group President Gabi Zimmer.

"A lot of disturbing signs came out of Turkey in 2013 so we need assurances from Erdogan that there will be a change in tack from his government. Since last summer's mass protests against plans to build over Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey has seen a heavy-handed crackdown on protestors. Turkey also imprisoned 27 journalists in 2013, that's more than both China and Iran. This, and the on-going pressure on the judiciary in the country, is serious cause for concern that I will broach this afternoon with the Prime Minister. On Cyprus, the GUE/NGL position is in favour of a solution based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation according to United Nations resolutions. Turkey is clearly in violation of the principles of international law, the UN Charter, and the rights of the Cypriot people. A possible return of Famagusta to its inhabitants would be a decisive step towards a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem."

GABI ZIMMER

UKRAINE

When unrest broke out in Ukraine in December 2013, GUE/NGL MEPs called for an end to the "social conflict" facing the country.

"Ukraine is going through a social conflict which has the dangerous potential to destabilise the situation. This conflict is homemade at its core and is about overcoming the current economic difficulties and improving the social perspective for the country. There is only one way out for all the citizens of Ukraine, from Lviv and Odessa to Donetsk and Sevastopol, and of course in Kiev, and this is to allow them the opportunity to decide about their future. The EU has to do everything it can to ensure that this is made a reality."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

After months of street violence, some 100 deaths and a change in power, the group pointed to the social and economic circumstances in the country and called on the support of EU leaders.

"The change in power in Kiev seems to have gone ahead as planned but the social conflict which has torn the country apart for years is far from being solved. Ukraine needs constitutional reform, free and fair elections, and a renewal of the whole democratic system that includes



all political forces. The economy still hasn't recovered from the last shock therapy with unemployment at about 10% and the minimum wage at fewer than 2 euros an hour. EU leaders should deliver normality and hope for ordinary people in Ukraine and to be clear and transparent about what the European prospects are for Ukraine. We also must ensure that any money provided doesn't flow into the hands of oligarchs as it has done up to now."

HELMUT SCHOLZ



Civil Liberties, Fundamental and Human Rights

One of the fields in which EU citizens' fundamental rights were infringed during the latter part of this term of office was in the sphere of data protection. GUE/NGL upheld its position that democracy should ensure that people's civil and human rights should never be infringed.

DATA PROTECTION

DATA PROTECTION RULES

The group welcomed the adoption by the Parliament's civil liberties committee of EU rules on data protection to safeguard EU citizens' fundamental rights.

"This vote paves the way to ensuring a high level of protection for EU citizens. The revelations by Edward Snowden have had a major impact on the discussions on data protection and boosted calls for more rigorous data protection standards. Therefore MEPs have done their duty in listening to those calls today. The GUE/NGL group pushed hard during these negotiations to strengthen the data subject's rights in cases of profiling, to boost transparency, to restrict access of certain data, to tighten the rules on data transfer to third countries, and for the 'right to erasure'."

CORNELIA ERNST

During the plenary debate on Parliament's proposals in March 2014, the group said that after almost three years of negotiation, this was not about technicalities or new bureaucracies, but the design and provision of a fundamental right for all people living in the EU.



"This fundamental right includes protection of the right to an undisturbed private life, to privacy. These are rights that are at the heart of what it means to be a citizen. We have created a data protection package that fulfills key goals in terms of principles, a compromise which seeks to meet the demands of 21st century communications over the coming decades. Now the ball is in the Council's court, where we've already seen lofty promises for better data protection without any action."

CORNELIA ERNST

US INTERNET SURVEILLANCE (NSA PRISM PROGRAMME)

Revelations in the press that the US had a wide-scale espionage programme spying on EU citizens and a subsequent revelation that EU institutions and diplomats had also been bugged was condemned in the strongest terms by GUE/NGL.

"Thanks to Edward Snowden, we know that the NSA has direct access to the server of at least nine internet companies. Not to mention the fact that these internet giants have responses ranging from 'we did not know' to 'we consider all requests carefully'. Most worrying for us Europeans was President Obama's reply when he said monitoring the internet does not apply to citizens of the United States or to persons living on its territory. This is exactly what we have been saying for months: EU citizens do not have the same rights as those of the United States. We rejected SWIFT initially. We rejected ACTA because we want European citizens have the right to data protection. This has gone on too long. Enough hypocrisy. We have too much evidence of the facts. We must require the United States data protection of European citizens."

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT

Allegations that US agents had not only been spying on European citizens but also on EU institutions, embassies, permanent representations and diplomats were met with strong criticism from GUE/NGL MEPs.

"In light of this recent scandal, EU-US trade negotiations should be immediately suspended pending clarification of the situation, Edward Snowden must be protected and the EU should grant him asylum. The group calls for the setting up of an EU-level control and inquiry committee which deals with the cooperation of member states' intelligence agencies and the use of EU citizens' personal data."

GUE/NGL GROUP

The group later reiterated its indignation at the scale of espionage by the US and UK secret services of millions of citizens across the world.

"Millions of citizens have been under surveillance around the clock. These practices are nothing to do with fighting terrorism. It is organised crime at the behest of governments and is a breach of fundamental rights. This affair has generated huge levels of mistrust between countries. The European Parliament must launch an enquiry and we call on member states to set up similar enquiries in their own parliaments. The US must face the consequences of its actions. Enough of this espionage, we need to review anti-terror laws."

CORNELIA ERNST



During a debate on the outcome of Parliament's own inquiry into the mass surveillance by US spy agency the NSA and the resulting impact on EU citizens' fundamental rights, the group said that the results highlighted a grave crisis of democracy.

“The real value of this report is that it defines mass surveillance as breaking with the fundamental values of the EU and it calls for an immediate end to this spying. Fundamental rights are a cornerstone of our society and a basic democratic principle. We have the utmost respect for Edward Snowden and the other whistle-blowers who are being chased around the globe and treated as traitors, with the country they grew up in lost to them. In a democratic society, people should be able to speak the truth and demand change without having to risk life and limb. We call for Edward Snowden to be granted asylum.”

CORNELIA ERNST

SWIFT

In September 2013, the group considered that the EU-US agreement which regulates US access to data from the SWIFT database (that deals with nearly all European bank transfers) must be terminated following revelations that the US National Security Agency had been secretly tapping into EU citizens' personal financial data.



“It is imperative to terminate this agreement now. Its purpose is precisely to provide the US with access to that data and we have consistently opposed it as it does not provide for sufficient guarantees for European citizens' fundamental rights. Our concerns have been shown to be justified as we hear that the US is violating this weak arrangement in order to spy on everybody around the globe without any restrictions. Edward Snowden's revelations have shown that our fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech are not guaranteed anymore, nor are they defended by European governments. We must put an end to this lawlessness that is tolerated by governments. As long as intelligence agencies can break laws as they please, there is no possibility to control or scrutinise them. They are a state within the state. We need to reclaim these foundations of our democracies.”

CORNELIA ERNST

Welcoming a vote in October 2013 to suspend the EU-US agreement which regulates US access to data from the SWIFT database, the group said the result was a positive first step. The GUE/NGL had been opposed to the weak SWIFT agreement since its inception as it never provided sufficient guarantees for European citizens' fundamental rights.

“Today we send a message for the suspension of the EU-US TFTP agreement in a resolution that includes the GUE/NGL position and reflects what we've been saying from day one. Even before Edward Snowden's revelations about US spying, this agreement had shown that our right to privacy is not fully respected but traded away in the name of the US so-called fight against terrorism. Now it is evident that this agreement allows for bulk data transfers in a totally non-transparent manner for reasons going way beyond what was agreed anyway and that's why it should be immediately terminated.”

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDES

“It is high time MEPs responded to the scandal confirmed by Edward Snowden’s revelations. This agreement, which deals with details of nearly all European bank transfers, was then shown to be nothing but a Potemkin village to hide the NSA’s total disdain for the privacy of EU citizens. What we want is, of course, termination of the pact, but suspension is a useful first step in that direction.”

CORNELIA ERNST

ASYLUM & MIGRATION

ENHANCED INTRA-EU SOLIDARITY IN THE FIELD OF ASYLUM

With negotiations on a common European asylum system taking place for several years, GUE/NGL expressed its hopes that 2012 would mark their completion.

“However, the signs are that the common European asylum system will not meet our initial expectations. Nonetheless, we hope that at least some positive steps will be made and that others – albeit fragmented – steps will follow. We have managed in this report to express the abstract concept of solidarity in specific terms, by stressing the importance of a fair distribution of responsibility between the various member states. Now we are waiting for the Commission to forward the relevant legislative proposals to us, so that we can continue the job we undertook back in 1999.”

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDIS

LAMPEDUSA TRAGEDY

The GUE/NGL group expressed its horror and shame upon hearing the news of the tragedy a few kilometres off the shore of Lampedusa when a boat full of refugees sank with the loss of over 300 lives. The group called on the Commission to make concrete proposals to ensure safe and legal EU entry for migrants during a debate on EU migratory policies in the Mediterranean Sea in Strasbourg the following week.



“We can’t keep turning a blind eye to these tragedies that continue to happen on our doorstep. We call on European leaders to take responsibility and develop a fair and human asylum policy as well as take concrete action on real sea-rescue plans that will help save the lives of migrants at sea.”

GABI ZIMMER

GREEK TRAGEDY

During the first two weeks of the Greek Presidency in January 2014, 12 refugees lost their lives in the North Aegean Sea when their vessel capsized near a Greek

island while being towed by the Greek Coast Guard at high speed towards the Turkish coast. The group ensured that the matter would be on the following week’s Strasbourg plenary session agenda by tabling an oral question.

“We are demanding answers from the Greek authorities about what action they are taking to establish procedures that prevent the use of practices that violate European law, undermine human rights and endanger lives. Our group wants to know whether the Greek authorities have effectively investigated these allegations and recorded the incidents or if they plan to do so. We also want to know what measures have been taken by Greece in order to ensure that migrants who claim to be in need of protection have immediate and effective access to relevant administrative support, lawyers, NGOs and the UNHCR, as well as to adequate asylum procedures and reception conditions in light of the infringement procedure and the Action Plan launched by the Commission”.

GUE/NGL GROUP

HUMAN RIGHTS

ALLEGED CIA TRANSPORTATION AND ILLEGAL DETENTION OF PRISONERS IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The secret operations carried out by the CIA in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks involved approximately 60 countries around the world, including at least 10 EU member states. The group reiterated its position that human rights violations are always intolerable, particularly when they are committed by EU member states.

“Abduction, detention without trial, disappearance and torture kept pace with the transportation of alleged suspects, in particular, to Guantánamo, still to be closed. Human rights violations reached an all-time high. The member states concerned did, and some are still doing, their utmost to prevent the sad truth from getting out. No state, whether it is the United States of America, or an EU member state, can shirk its responsibilities, including when it is combating terrorism. Let us move forward. The Union must start by cleaning up its own backyard.”

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT



One year later, there was still little progress, most of the recommendations had not been followed up and the legal enquiries had not made much headway. In a new resolution voted in plenary, the group called for those involved to take their responsibilities.

“Today we’re satisfied that this Resolution has been adopted as it calls for everyone to finally stand up and take responsibility and for the victims to finally get the redress they deserve. This vote has finally been obtained with a large majority despite attempts by the EPP, supported by the rest of the right-wing in the EP, to change its nature. Human rights violations are never acceptable, particularly when it is states that carry them out. The fight against terrorism should never justify violations of human rights. We need justice to make certain that they don’t occur again. Ten years on it is high time.”

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT

FREE MOVEMENT

TEMPORARY REINTRODUCTION OF BORDER CONTROL AT INTERNAL BORDERS

Schengen must not become a mere political pledge by governments and the group said that it would not compromise on it.

“The abolition of internal borders and the removal of frontier checks are amongst the highest values of the EU. They are the Union’s common heritage and must not simply be left to the vagaries of governments. They are related to a fundamental right within the EU, namely freedom of movement. If there are now serious shortcomings - and we should state this clearly yet again - if the so-called new emergency clause in the implementation of the Schengen agreement becomes effective, because member states are also obviously including migration flows in the deficits, if this rule is therefore now being invoked, then this means that migrants will very probably be the reason for reintroducing border checks. To this extent, migrants are becoming scapegoats for European policy. And we find this unacceptable.”

CORNELIA ERNST

SWISS REFERENDUM

Following the Swiss referendum result that saw voters favour a tightening of immigration controls from the EU, the group defended the rights of migrant workers.

“This is discrimination against workers and is being used to reduce their rights. We must respect collective agreements. Workers, domestic or foreign, can’t be made to bear the brunt of the crisis. Free movement of capital is being prioritised while free movement of people is side-lined, and this only fuels racism and xenophobia. We must change tack in the way we deal with migration and fight the greed of employers.”

KYRIACOS TRIANTAPHYLIDIS

STRENGTHENING THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND HATE CRIME

Warning the House that violence based on the rejection of people who are different or are considered as such remains a daily reality in the European Union, the group called on the Commission to take action.

“Migrants and Roma are the main victims, but they are not alone. Anti-Semitism is still rampant as well as Islamophobia. Many other groups are affected, such as homosexuals, the disabled and not forgetting women, who constitute the majority of the population. It’s difficult to know the exact figures as statistics are heterogeneous from one country to another. We all know and all that at a time of social and political crisis, some play on the fears, including at the highest political level in some member states. We expect the Commission to respond, to act in particular by

offering to sign the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to make every effort to ensure that the directive on Equality is adopted and implemented. The Council's attitude is unacceptable in this area. Prevention and education should be the priority of any policy. Children do not know hate, it is adults who pave this sad way."

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT

ROADMAP AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA



In February 2014, GUE/NGL MEPs hailed Parliament's adoption of a report that condemns homophobia in Europe.

"According to the likes of Marine Le Pen this report is about the introduction of EU-wide gay marriage. This is simply nonsense. It is about preventing discrimination of

same-sex couples. Parliament's adoption of this report is a positive step as it will put pressure on the Commission to finally produce a roadmap against homophobia before the end of the current mandate."

DENNIS DE JONG

"This is a courageous and timely report. Human rights are not special rights; they are basic and cover all aspects of our lives. We must stop discrimination. This is a very good report because it says everybody should be equal regardless of their lifestyle. People should be able to live how they like. This is not something that should have a question mark over it."

CORNELIA ERNST

"Like other MEPs, I have been inundated with emails claiming that this report represents an attack on the freedom of speech - because it condemns homophobia. But this is ironic given that we have real attacks on the freedom of speech when the voices of those who call out homophobia are silenced. We cannot allow homophobes to go unchallenged when they hide behind rhetoric and spin."

PAUL MURPHY

SAME SEX MARRIAGES IN CROATIA

Expressing disappointment with the result of a referendum in Croatia on same-sex marriages, the group regretted a dangerous move that would enshrine discrimination in a constitution.

"After war, nothing has divided Croatia like this referendum. The campaign has been very aggressive and manipulative on both sides and was concentrated on the moral side of the issue. I am disappointed with the results of the referendum because I deeply believe that discrimination should not be enshrined in a

constitution. Human rights are not a matter to be decided upon in such a way. They should be improved, not reduced. It is too dangerous a move, and the only sensible question is - what is next? Or, put better - who is next?"

NIKOLA VULJANIĆ

RISE OF FASCISM

The group strongly denounced the rise of fascism and right-wing extremism in Europe in a plenary debate on how to tackle Europe's increasing swing to the right.

"In Greece the rise of right wing extremism and Golden Dawn is directly attributable to the past three years that Greece has been subjected to the memorandum. There is an enormous amount of suffering and hopelessness in Greece, ordinary people are paying for this crisis in cuts to their pensions and the closing of their schools and hospitals. There is no real democracy in Greece; it is being violated every day by politicians only interested in paying back loans. But there is an on-going fight against both the memorandum and fascism in Greece and in Europe. In the GUE/NGL we believe that tackling this problem has to be done ideologically."

NIKOLAOS CHOUNTIS

"Golden Dawn is a criminal Nazi organisation which has carried out race hate murders and has tortured working people and immigrants. The criminal gang Golden Dawn shows how dangerous it is to equate fascism with communism. This theory



exonerates fascism itself and feeds on it. Fascism is the offshoot of the exploitation that is inherent in the capitalist system. Fascist groups are gaining ground all across Europe and we must deal with them.”

GEORGIOS TOUSSAS

ROMA

SWEDISH ROMA DATABASE

The GUE/NGL group condemned Swedish police for collecting information on thousands of Roma and called on the Commission to make a statement on the matter at Parliament's next (October 1, 2013) plenary session.

“Collecting data on people, many of whom have never committed any crimes, and many as young as two years old, is a clear breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. We cannot tolerate the existence of a



register based solely on ethnic background and I want to see this matter put on the agenda for the next plenary session. We can't stand by and let discrimination like this go unchecked.”

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

In the light of numerous examples of Roma discrimination across Europe, the group called on member states to take decisive action to combat discrimination.

“In the Czech Republic citizens were demonstrating against Roma with Hitler salutes, in France the Interior minister said that the Roma should be expelled. In Hungary their water was cut off, this was also the case in Turin. In the Netherlands Roma were housed in containers to get them out of Amsterdam. These are just some examples from research that was carried out on Roma discrimination over three months in 2011. It's 'five to twelve' on this issue: we need to stop talking and start taking action. We could have infringement procedures against these member states. We must take decisive action against racism.”

CORNELIA ERNST



AFGHAN REFUGEES IN BRUSSELS

GUE/NGL MEPs visited Afghan refugees at the Béguinage church in the Sainte-Catherine area of Brussels. The group of approximately 200 refugees had been residing in the church for two months and were campaigning for their right to remain in Belgium.

“You have our solidarity and support and we will do our utmost to bring this to the attention of as many MEPs as possible in the European Parliament. There is no such thing as justice if we don't show solidarity with people outside the EU.”

GABI ZIMMER

“No person is illegal! Our group fights for equal rights for all. Afghanistan is not a safe country and it is unacceptable to deport refugees there. Europe was built on solidarity so we need to start showing it.”

ALDA SOUSA



On their return to Parliament, 28 MEPs from across different political groups sent a letter expressing their concern about the refugees' situation to the Belgian authorities. In response, Prime Minister Di Rupo replied stating that he would look into revising Belgium's evaluation of how dangerous Afghanistan is. MEPs made a follow-up visit to the Afghan refugees with the aim of moving forward the campaign to help them remain in Belgium

“This step in the right direction has to be attributed to the courageous struggle of the Afghans themselves. We hope that the Belgian Government has abandoned the policy of repatriating Afghans on the basis that they can find safe refuge in some parts of Afghanistan.”

GABI ZIMMER

Gender Equality

Equality between women and men at all social and economic levels, achieving the implementation of women's sexual and reproductive rights and the on-going battle to introduce EU-wide legislation to combat violence against women were only some of the priorities on the group's gender equality agenda during the second half of the 2009-2014 term of office.

RIGHTS, SUPPORT, AND PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF CRIME

Supporting a report on the rights of victims of crime, the GUE/NGL appreciated particularly that it contained a strong gender perspective.

"With regard to the proposal itself, I am pleased that it now contains a strong gender perspective. Examples of this include the fact that victims of crime who suffer gender-based violence are highlighted, the need for safe accommodation is established, and the right to legal information is clarified. The directive is therefore a step in the right direction when it comes to combating men's violence against women. However, the Parliament still believes that the Commission should present a proposal for an EU strategy for preventing violence against women. Only within the framework of such a coherent strategy will it be possible to take measures at EU level, effectively and forcefully, to combat all forms of violence against women in Europe"

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

ELIMINATION AND PREVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

With one in three women in the world affected during the course of her life by abuse or rape, or over one billion women, the group called for more action by the European Commission.

"Last week the European Parliament expressed support for the victims by dancing on behalf of the One Billion Rising Campaign with a large group of MEPs. On



14 February 2013 an estimated one billion people will be dancing against violence against women. I ask the Commission to do something about this, particularly, by putting in place a European strategy for the prevention of violence against women with a specific accompanying budget, the promotion of the Convention on the elimination of violence against women and a clear position on violence against women at the UN Summit on the status of women."

KARTIKA LIOTARD



COMBATTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The group welcomed the adoption of a report calling for legislation to combat violence against women and girls.

"This report paves the way for an EU legal instrument against violence against women and girls. I hope now that it will inspire the Commission to finally address this basic human rights issue in a more coherent way with a legislative proposal. It asks the Commission to adopt the



first steps towards establishing a framework for combatting violence against women and girls by the end of 2014 and to identify violence against women and girls, and other forms of gender-based violence, as a crime. We must also ensure support to women's NGOs and civil society groups working to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls."

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

In a European Parliament plenary debate to mark the 10th International Day of Zero Tolerance of female genital mutilation (FGM) in February 2014, GUE/NGL MEPs spoke out against the barbaric procedure.

"FGM is one of the worst forms of violence against women which gives rise to long- and short-term health problems, and has a devastating effect on the sexual and reproductive health of hundreds of thousands of women around the world. The European Commission must take specific action at the European level to put an end to all forms of violence against women and girls, including FGM. A wide-ranging directive would be an important step forward. We must define specific political commitments for the eradication of FGM, as part of a global focus on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women. If we are to move in the direction of social progress we cannot allow the numbers of women being affected by FGM to keep rising."

INÊS ZUBER

WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Reacting to an historic report which saw Parliament examining climate issues from a gender perspective for the first time, the group emphasised the important role that women play.

"Men make a greater contribution to climate change than women, but it is women who are hardest hit. Men's lifestyles quite simply leave a larger environmental footprint. Thus, women's consumption is more sustainable, but women also seem to be more willing than men to take action to protect the environment. I therefore support the report's proposal concerning targeted measures such as the introduction of quotas in order to increase the representation of women at all levels in the decision-making processes. The EU and its member states must set a good example and improve considerably in this area. This, in turn, leads to increased democracy and promotion of human rights."

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

WOMEN IN POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

Giving its full backing to the Pietikäinen report on women in political decision making, the group said it was a democratic imperative to achieve greater parity in decision making.

"The EU and its member states must work much, much harder to ensure that more women are treated equally in our representative democracy. We need to put an end to the current quota of men. Despite the fact that women make up 50% of the population, they are not at all democratically represented in political assemblies. In the European Parliament, they constitute just over a third. In the national parliaments the situation is even worse. On average, women do not even make up 25%. This is embarrassingly low. We cannot just continue to simply talk about changes. What we need now is action. In many cases, there will be a need for legislative measures in order to get to grips with this. In the name of democracy, we must achieve a system whereby women's and men's experience can be utilised in a much clearer way and reflected in our parliamentary assemblies."

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

GENDER PAY GAP

When a majority of MEPs gave their thumbs up to intensifying efforts to reduce pay discrimination, GUE/NGL MEPs highlighted the urgent need for better legislation in this area.

"Pay discrimination is something we definitely need to do more on. The member states must have appropriate legislation, as well as the means to enforce it. As things stand today, employers continue to find ways to get round the law. By 'feminising' particular sectors of industry they are paying lower wages,



Working women precariousness & unemployment LIFE TESTIMONIES

THE EUROPEAN UNITED LEFT/NORDIC GREEN LEFT (GUE/NGL) IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT HIGHLIGHTS THE WAYS IN WHICH THE CRISIS AND AUSTERITY MEASURES ARE AFFECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Testimonies of women from across Europe
The Trade Unions: working to end women's precariousness
What we really need? Hear proposals from women's organisations

Friday 4 June 2013
9.00 - 12.30
European Parliament - ASP 1G2

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although the tasks undertaken by these women are equivalent to those carried out by men. Troika measures run very much counter to the principle of wage equality, as they want to promote more flexible working conditions and contracts. They want people to have individual contracts, meaning women are left with no protection.”

INÈS ZUBER

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS

The GUE/NGL strongly condemned the behaviour of reactionary right-wing groups in Parliament and anti-abortion campaigners who successfully managed to postpone a crucial vote on sexual and reproductive health and rights when 351 MEPs voted to push back the vote against 319 who voted to keep the item on the agenda.

“Today’s behaviour was scandalous. We had a very balanced report which was enriched with amendments coming from all political groups. I was ashamed to sit in plenary today and witness such backward behaviour.”

GABI ZIMMER

“This is a dark day for those who believe that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to achieving gender equality in the EU and beyond. Those who are so against the necessary and progressive measures put forward in this report are living in the dark ages. They have shown that intolerance and shouting at others are their preferred methods. It is imperative that we defend a woman’s right to a safe and legal abortion and the right to comprehensive, non-discriminatory sexuality education for all, and we stand up for the rights of LGBTI persons.”

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

When the report came to the vote in plenary, there was little respect shown for women’s rights as reactionary right-wing MEPs - supported by the anti-abortion campaigners - jeered and rejected the Estrela report on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), instead voting in favour of an alternative resolution drafted by the right-wing EPP and ECR groups.

“I remain ashamed and stunned that so many people still can’t see how important sexual and reproductive

health and rights are to achieving gender equality in the EU and beyond. Following the despicable behaviour in the October vote, it is no surprise that we were treated to more of the same shouting and heckling in the chamber today. We will continue to defend a woman’s right to safe and legal abortion and access to contraception. We won’t back down on calling for comprehensive, non-discriminatory sexuality education for all as well as for urgent protection of the rights of LGBTI persons in Europe. The Estrela report contained all these objectives and it is a scandal that right-wing forces have succeeded in throwing it out.”

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

“The European Parliament has failed to send a signal in defence of women’s rights as human rights. Women and girls have a right to independently decide when and how many children they want to have.

Comprehensive sex education contributes to the prevention of unwanted pregnancies and HIV prevention and urgent action is needed in the fight against discriminatory stereotypes and the discrimination of homosexual, trans and intersex people. Today was about more than just the fine-tuning of an own-initiative report. It was about what type of EU we want to have and on what basis we design policy. The rejection of the report is a shocking rejection of cooperation, the defence of individual human rights, anti-discrimination and solidarity within the EU.”

GABI ZIMMER

ABORTION LAW IN SPAIN

Following the Spanish government’s proposal to revoke the current law on sexual and reproductive health and abortion, GUE/NGL MEPs launched a petition to support Spanish women in their fight for the right to make their own choices about their health.

“We are facing an unprecedented attack on women’s rights. The Partido Popular is obviously legislating under pressure from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church seeking to end the right to abortion in Spain, only allowing legal abortion in cases of rape or serious risk to women’s lives, and condemning them to a medical and administrative nightmare. Working,



unemployed or poor Spanish women will have to resort to life-threatening illegal abortions and abortion will only be possible for those with sufficient resources to travel to other countries.”

WILLY MEYER

“With this draft law, women’s rights are being violated. Women must have a say over their own bodies. Our message to the Spanish authorities is that they are going in the wrong direction.”

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

“This is a huge step backwards in terms of economic and social rights as well as women’s rights and risks having a knock-on effect on other countries. It is the most disadvantaged women who will suffer most from this situation.”

INÈS ZUBER

“This new draft law is taking Spain back 30 years. Banning abortion never leads to a reduction in the number of abortions being carried out, rather it forces women to resort to backroom abortions with risks for their health and their lives. From a human rights point of view, when a right is given, it’s never an obligation it’s a freedom granted to women to dispose of their bodies according to their own personal choices.”

MARIE-CHRISTINE VERGIAT

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT WOMEN’S RIGHTS

The group welcomed the plenary adoption of a report on the protection of undocumented women’s rights, despite the final text’s shortcomings.

“While I am pleased that this report was adopted, in many ways the committee report had a stronger position on the protection of undocumented women migrants’ fundamental rights. It is very clear that the European Parliament’s right-wing forces worked hard to weaken the report by taking out a call for member state ratification of the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, as well as references to the need to increase legal, humanitarian and social assistance for undocumented women migrants. But despite the report being watered-down, in general I’m quite satisfied with the outcome and especially happy that the European Parliament has recognised the need to protect all migrant women, both documented and undocumented, who have been victims of abuse or gender-based violence, including those exploited in the prostitution industry. The report also calls on member states not to require schools and healthcare practitioners to report undocumented migrants.”

MIKAEL GUSTAFSSON

Development

The group believes that the EU must play an active role to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty, to fight for sustainable development, access to education and healthcare in the developing world.

FUTURE OF EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY - 2015 - EUROPEAN YEAR FOR DEVELOPMENT

Emphasising that the development situation of the African continent is one of the most acute, the group insisted that development aid must not be considered as charity but a true investment in the future.

“In less than 40 years, the population of Africa will almost double. Shall we be able to make this dynamic a factor for progress and human development or, as a result of our inability to eradicate poverty, will it become an unbelievably powerful force that destabilises the world at every level? Development aid is not just a policy of charity. True development policy must also be an investment in the future, underpinning great aspirations for Africa itself, aspirations for our continent too. The future growth of the European Union depends on this and world peace depends on it too.”

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

EU-ACP

GUE/NGL MEPs’ attempts to safeguard the voice of ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) states in trade talks with the EU were thwarted in a vote at the June 2013 ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels.

“Although the motion for a resolution on the next steps towards Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and ACP countries was adopted by large majority, it does not represent the real majority in the Assembly. Through the abusive use of the separate chambers mechanism by the EPP and ALDE, the majority rejection of ACP countries against EPA negotiations had no voice.”

GABI ZIMMER

“The European side played against ACP countries, that are among the poorest in the world, by rejecting a



GUE/NGL amendment that sought to give due attention in the Resolution to an ACP Heads of State and Government declaration that called for putting the consolidation of

regional integration processes before trade liberalisation commitments in the EPA process.”

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

International Trade

The group continued to oppose all international trade agreements that are shaped by the interests of big business and reiterated its calls for a fair trade policy that will not cause social and ecological damage worldwide but that would better serve the needs of developing countries.

SCHEME OF GENERALISED TARIFF PREFERENCES

A compromise between the Commission and rapporteur Fjellner, asking for Parliament's consent for a reform that would abolish the European Union's trade preferences for a number of poor countries, was opposed by the group.

"The elimination of poverty is a coherent goal of the European Union's foreign policy. Your reform will destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs in countries like Ecuador, thus tipping women, predominantly, back into poverty. Countries such as Ecuador are to be forced to conclude a direct free trade agreement with the European Union. I strongly urge you to support amendments which will help ensure that the European Union does not withdraw from the global fight against poverty."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

TRADE AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

After the historic revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, which gave tens of millions of people around the world the hope and confidence that they can shape history and overthrow the most brutal dictatorships, the group called for cancellation of debt and to ensure the trade system with these countries will

benefit them and their inhabitants and not destroy jobs and whole sectors of the economy.

"The EU and its member states failed the people in North Africa and the Middle East through their political support and their economic ties with these brutal dictatorships. They will fail them again if they push ahead with the free trade agenda and the establishment of true market economies. There needs to be an end to gambling and speculation on food prices, maximum prices on food and other basic goods, and guarantees of a decent return for farmers, in order to guarantee food sovereignty and food security for the countries of the southern Mediterranean. The debts inherited from the dictatorships are odious: they should all be cancelled immediately to give a breathing space so that economies can develop. In addition, the natural resources and major sources of economic wealth in these countries should be taken out of the hands of the multinational corporations and the rich, and taken into democratic public ownership for use as resources to invest in the economy, health care and education, in order to create a society worthy of the heroism shown by those who participated in the revolutions."

PAUL MURPHY

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS IN BANGLADESH

After a series of catastrophes in the textile industry in Bangladesh and elsewhere, the group expressed its collective shock and condolences and called for the organisation and conditions in which European manufacturers produce and trade their goods to be regulated by law.

"We in Europe share joint responsibility for these deaths. Through our behaviour as consumers, through the



actions of our industrial groupings, which exercise such enormous cost pressure in their trading negotiations in which the production conditions of the imported goods are almost irrelevant. The majority in this House has never wanted to accept compliance with human rights and employee rights and with environmental protection criteria as a legally set precondition for importing goods. I call on the Commission to come up with the relevant legislation. Let's not allow unscrupulous contractors to continue getting away with it."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

EU TRADE AND INVESTMENT AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE US

GUE/NGL expressed its firm resistance to EU-US trade and investment agreement negotiations.

"You require a mandate for negotiations with the USA which does not de facto set any boundaries. The negotiations will take place here at a time when the worst effects of the crisis in the EU are being felt by tens of millions of people. In this way, you are inevitably fuelling mistrust and encouraging questions on how you will steer clear at the negotiating table of areas that are sensitive for Europe. You are aware of the concerns of the population at large: genetic engineering in agriculture, threats to cultural diversity, data protection sell-out, reduced protection for consumers and employees, ecological production criteria and energy costs, a new ACTA, wages policy and rate settlements et al. Yes - this is also about standards and regulatory

structures. If the European Council, Commission and the majority of Parliament today ignore these concerns and fail to grant a correspondingly strong mandate, they are simply showing they have learned nothing from ACTA. On behalf of my group, I am notifying you of its firm resistance."



HELMUT SCHOLZ

Following Trade Commissioner De Gucht's suspension of the EU-US trade talks to study the possible inclusion of an investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provision within the deal, the group reiterated its opposition to the investment provisions of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the agreement as a whole.

"I welcome the Commission's decision to put the brakes on the TTIP. This would never have happened without effective campaigning from civil society groups. We need answers to questions on companies' right of action against governments. In recent years this process has seen specialised law firms make huge profits at the expense of judicial systems. On the Left we fear that if these investment provisions were in place governments may be intimidated by high claims for damages from companies and as a result would be reluctant to implement the necessary legislation for protecting both the environment and workers. We just need to turn to Canada to see how this has happened in practice with the fracking legislation there. We cannot let corporations bypass judicial proceedings."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

CANADA-EU TRADE AGREEMENT

MEPs from the GUE/NGL group called for the immediate release of the text of the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) when it was concluded in October 2013.

"I reject the inclusion of an investor-to-state dispute settlement into CETA. The recent cases of corporate arbitration panel lawsuits in Canada should be a wake-up call for the EU. Our court systems should not be bypassed. Trade agreements have to be

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mutually beneficial for the people affected by them on both sides of the deal; this means firmly enshrining investors' obligations into the agreement, particularly when it comes to respect for provisions concerning trade unions and workers' rights, transparency and environmental protection."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

"Like all free trade negotiations conducted by the European Commission, CETA negotiations have been held in secret and have been driven by Canadian and European multinationals and agribusiness that want market access and access to vital public services so they can profit at the expense of working class people. What we see here is a charter for further liberalisation which will undermine the standards and quality of our services and utilities. We can't give corporations the right to sue governments when social or environmental



policies cut across their profiteering. I am sure there will be significant civil society opposition in Europe if the agreement gives private Canadian investors the right to file a legal action against public policies in Europe."

PAUL MURPHY

ALTERNATIVE TRADE MANDATE

GUE/NGL MEPs threw their support behind a civil society campaign for an alternative trade mandate at a demonstration outside the European Parliament in November 2013. This proposal was drafted by more than 50 civil society organisations. It emphasises the need for democratic control of trade relations and agreement negotiations. It calls for a complete reorientation in order to prioritise human rights, women's rights, labour rights, indigenous rights, and the protection of our environment over corporate and private interests.

"The GUE/NGL will ensure the demands of civil society are carried into debates in the European Parliament. You have found an ally."

HELMUT SCHOLZ

"They have the money, the lobbyists and a lot of power. But we can have people on our side. We can use the Alternative Trade Mandate in our campaigning against the 'Few Trade' agenda of the Commission to show there's an alternative, a vision of trade based on people's needs and the environment instead of big business interests."



PAUL MURPHY

"I demand an end to the back-room politics around the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the US. And I want hearings in the European Parliament and the national parliaments."

DENNIS DE JONG



Regional Development

The group called for increased investment in regional development for Europe's regions which should be based more on solidarity and less on competition between them and without imposing macroeconomic conditions.

REPROGRAMMING OF THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS TO COMBAT YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND HELP SMES

The group condemned the fact that the Commission decided how to redeploy structural funds with the member states, presenting the Parliament with a fait accompli. The group reiterated its call for new resources to be used, i.e. drawn from a financial transactions tax. We are told that EUR 82 billion of funds have not been used and will not be used by 2013.

"How can you be sure in 2012 that these funds will not be spent before the end of the programming period? What I want to say is that none of the regions which initially benefited from these funds should be penalised by this redeployment. In order to alleviate the effects of the crisis it would have been much wiser to use new resources to finance real growth policies and real youth employment policies. Within these new resources I am thinking of the financial transactions tax, which we have been calling for a long time and which is yet to be finalised."

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

The group considers that actions for the Danube macro-region do nothing to meet people's needs, such as employment with rights, education, housing, culture, flood protection works and projects to harness the water resources and calls for a new approach.

"The vision for the macro-region is not concerned with industrial and rural development based on these criteria, but with the deepening of the capitalist single market and capitalist restructurings which have led people into unemployment, mass poverty and bankruptcy. The redirection and exploitation of cohesion policy funds will mainly benefit the profitability of EU undertakings which are active on the international markets; it will intensify the destruction of workers' rights and favour unequal development."

CHARALAMPOS ANGOURAKIS

COHESION POLICY

The group condemned and voted against the Regional Development committee's approval of plans for regional policy that was to see cohesion funds based less on solidarity between regions and increasingly on promoting competitiveness between them. The outcome of a committee vote, on a new Regulation for the period 2014-2020, was proof that cohesion policy was only set to fall more in line with the Commission's austerity policies and further liberalisation of social and industrial policies.

"By voting against the file we wanted to reaffirm that Parliament's original position, before negotiations with the Council got underway, was that cohesion policy should continue to be based on solidarity. The only progress made in this vein, particularly for the outermost regions, was in specific annexes to the general Regulation (ERDF, Cohesion Funds, Territorial co-operation etc.) and we voted in favour of these advances. By voting against the Regulation as a whole, the group refused to rubber stamp this new regional policy ideology. We can't accept this new relationship that has been established between cohesion policy, the Stability and Growth Pact, the EU 2020 Strategy and economic governance. It is shameful that for the first time in the history of the European Union, budgets dedicated to cohesion among its different regions have been slashed. We will continue to be the voice of the regions and citizens by condemning these cuts to funding as well as the ultra-liberal instruments the Council and the Commission want to implement."

YOUNOUS OMARJEE, CORNELIA ERNST & MARTINA ANDERSON



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6 mars 2013 15.00 - 18.30
7 mars 2013 09.00 - 12.30
PE BXL salle ASP 1G2

OUTERMOST REGIONS

Welcoming the adoption of the report on optimising the potential of outermost regions by French GUE/NGL MEP Younous Omarjee, the group called for a real change in policy.

“This text aims to go beyond current EU and member state views on the outermost regions and I call for genuine change in European politics in 2014, to bolster these assets and the opportunity represented by these regions of the EU. These regions must feature more prominently in all EU policies and programmes, such as research, energy, culture, education, SMEs, transport, telecommunications and the environment. It is time for Europe to make the overseas territories a component of all its policies and its intrinsic development prospects. We must break the isolation of the outermost regions and help them overcome their structural problems through better integration into European strategies.”

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

Agriculture & Fisheries

The group maintained its call for fair and sustainable agriculture and fisheries policies that would protect the environment and the livelihoods of small and medium sized agriculture and fisheries communities.

AGRICULTURE



EUROPEAN MILK PRODUCERS

After EU-wide demonstrations by milk producers and the threat of ending quotas, the group reiterated its support for milk farmers

“We are very surprised that the Commission can say that things are improving for milk producers. Admittedly, milk prices have increased a little, but production costs have increased significantly more than producer prices. Putting an end to quotas will plunge our farmers into competition where small and medium-sized farms will not survive and production will become even more concentrated. We must return to mechanisms for regulating production and setting base prices which cover the real costs of production. We must put a stop to the double price we are currently paying for putting producers in a global economic war. We should not leave the milk market, which is a public good for humanity, in the hands of the market alone.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC

FARM INPUT SUPPLY CHAIN - IMBALANCES IN THE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

In a world in which agricultural output is being used both for food and energy production, the group urged the Commission to develop a mechanism to prevent financial speculation on the food market.

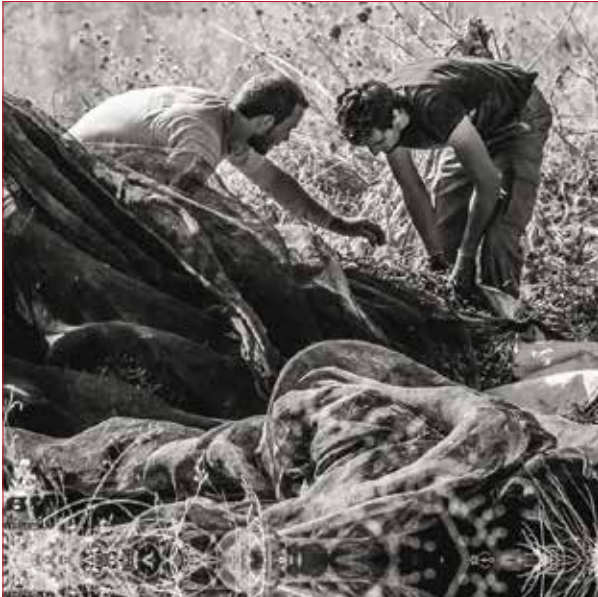
“A situation has arisen throughout the world where agricultural products are now used both in food and in energy production. Grain is used for bioethanol, rape for biodiesel, maize for biogas, and so on. As a result, financial resources that used to circulate on the fossil fuel market are now also flowing into the food production sector and are causing excessive price fluctuations. In my view, the European Commission should, as a matter of urgency, pay more attention to these issues, and should, as swiftly as possible, develop a mechanism to prevent financial speculation on the food market based on this factor.”

ALFREDS RUBIKS

DIRECT PAYMENTS TO FARMERS

As direct payments are an important financial mechanism for ensuring equal opportunities to all, solidarity and development, the group expressed its belief that proper determination of direct payments is not only necessary for a common, honest and fair market, but also very important in the social sphere.





TOWARDS A SOCIAL CAP

Defending The Rights Of Rural Workers

28 January 2014
 9.00 - 12.30 • EP Brussels
 room ASP 1G02

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“We believe that direct payments should be no smaller than 80% of the European Union average. Then we will be able to talk about fairness. Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian farmers receive direct payments. The amounts they are receiving are discriminatory. Such injustice must be rectified. This situation has already led to, for example, Latvian farmers leaving the country and land being cheaply purchased by the rich people of other countries. As a result, more and more villages are losing this status, as there are no more people living in them, and agricultural land is becoming overgrown.”

ALFREDS RUBIKS

CAP REFORM

The group was critical of the latest reform in the Common Agricultural policy (CAP) saying it did not respond to the key challenges. It also expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed financial reductions.

“This reform doesn’t make it possible to respond to the key challenges - to improve the quality of life for small and medium farmers suffering so much. It’s the law



of the jungle of the world market that will continue to dictate prices with only a minimal safety net for farmers. We need to start a process of transition to environmentally-friendly and climate-friendly agriculture with sustainable management of resources. We need new incentives for farmers who are working for all of society. This reform is a missed opportunity to promote a farmer-friendly form of agriculture to provide better food quality and security as well as food sovereignty.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC

“My political group is dissatisfied with financial reductions for the Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020 and with the fact that the Commission ignores previously achieved agreements on variety of issues. We think the Commission proposal to freeze the finances for 2014-2020 at 2013 levels will prove insufficient to fund existing priorities for the Common Agricultural Policy. My political group will vote against the cuts for CAP, as we want quality food for all in the EU. We need to find money for that.”

ALFREDS RUBIKS.

“This path of liberalization and deregulation is far removed from that which should be the first objective of agricultural policy: to ensure sustainably, in every country, food security and sovereignty. We seek an alternative path, arguing for an end of the scandalous inequalities in direct payments between countries and producers by 2020 - inequalities that persist with this reform. We defend a market regulation capable of ensuring fair prices for production and advocate regulatory instruments of production, adjusted to the needs of each country. Nothing ends here. We will continue, alongside thousands of farmers and their organisations, the indispensable struggle for a radical CAP reform.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

FISHERIES

EUROPEAN FISHERIES FUND

As the economic and financial crisis expressed itself differently in the various member states, this was seen to be the cause of existing divergences and imbalances and to reflect the inequalities existing between the member states. One of these was the capacity for accessing and using EU funds.

“Countries with weaker economies, which need more EU funding, are often also those with the greatest difficulties in accessing these funds. For years, this resulted, in large measure, from the restrictions on public investment, imposed under the pretext of the Stability and Growth Pact, which made it hard to mobilise the required national effort. These restrictions are currently being greatly exacerbated by the IMF and

EU programmes under way in countries like Portugal, Greece and Ireland. This proposal, then, has long been needed and has come regrettably late. For this reason, it is clear that the need to adopt it is urgent and we believe it is important to adopt it at first reading. However, despite this, let us not forget the limitations that this proposal also clearly demonstrates.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

FISHERIES REFORM

MEPs rubberstamped the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in December 2013, which lacked ambition and saw little departure from the current policy’s failings.

“It is quite clear that over the last three decades the CFP has been a failure, centralised management has been far removed from the reality of the profound diversity of the fisheries sector in Europe, resulting in dreadful social, economic and environmental outcomes. Throughout the whole process of discussions on the reform, we have witnessed the constraints of the current CFP framework which does not allow resources to be managed at grassroots level. We should be managing at the grassroots level, as this is best for sustainability. One of the pillars of this reform is also linked to the MFE, which remains deadlocked in an inter-institutional conflict that is yet to be solved. The result of this vote proves the old adage that something must change for everything to remain the same.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

HEARING
MEP ALFREDS RUBIKS MEP JOAO FERREIRA MEP GEORGIOS TOUSSAS

THE FUTURE OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

**26 JUNE 2012, 9:00/12:30, ROOM ASP 1G2
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS**

GUE/NGL

Industry & Energy

With Europe’s industrial, telecommunications and energy sectors increasingly hit by globalisation and competition, the group called for genuine policies that meet the needs of citizens and territories, rather than those of the markets.

RESTRUCTURING IN THE EUROPEAN CAR INDUSTRY

The group told the Commission that if European institutions actually want to promote solidarity and jobs for everyone, they should invent a real industrial and social shield to protect the car industry, jobs, research and worker training.

“A lot of noise is being made about a so-called growth pact, so why do we not mobilise the Structural Funds and the European Investment Bank to protect each site, each job at PSA in Aulnay and Rennes, and Ford and General Motors too, for that matter? The automotive sector needs new impetus for the vehicles of tomorrow, which should be clean, safer and more energy efficient, and new research and new factories are needed for this. Europe’s trade policy should be completely revised. Moratoria should be decided on all redundancy and company closure plans, and any company that has benefited from European or national public funds and makes redundancies or relocates, should return this money.”

PATRICK LE HYARIC



EU STEEL INDUSTRY

Subjugated by finance and large international groups, the group warned that the iron and steel industry is on the verge of an enormous crisis that will destroy much production capacity, witness the disappearance of know-how and destroy the lives of thousands of employees.

“This issue takes us to the heart of the main European contradiction: whether to serve people and their requirements and build the future, or to care only about financial profitability, dividends, free and fair

competition, which destroys everything as it is based only on dumping competition. The iron and steel sector is an industry at the very foundation of Europe; a sector that has enabled a very large number of industries to develop; that seeks progress; that has enabled people to acquire exceptional know-how in vehicles, rail, building, packaging and agri-food; that directly and indirectly provides millions of jobs, and indispensable wealth for our regions and our populations; a sector that has made Europe great but is in great danger.

The independence of Europe and the future of European industry are at stake.

What does the Commission intend doing? Will it decide to act for Europe and finally assume its responsibilities and legislate to protect the iron and steel and industry, a major European cause for 2013?"

JACKY HÉNIN

ROAMING ON PUBLIC MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS WITHIN THE UNION

Welcoming a proposal aiming to improve roaming on public mobile networks within the Union, the group warned against too much deregulation.

"I would like to make some comments on the submitted proposal. First, it is about the development and integration of our single European market. It applies to 380 million customers. This, in itself, represents progress. Customers get the possibility to make a free choice, and their protection is also beefed up. The third thing, which is extremely important in my opinion, is that small and medium-sized enterprises get a chance to access foreign networks, thereby strengthening competition. This will then be reflected

in lower prices. To those who say that this hinders market-based solutions, I would also like to point out the well-known fact that market liberalism is actually a form of

protectionism favouring the privileged."

MILOSLAV RANSDORF



TRANS-EUROPEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

Telecommunications networks and services are increasingly internet-based, with broadband networks and digital services closely interrelated. However, the group considered that fast internet access and digital services should



be available not only for businesses but for the general public, and particularly those with special needs.

"To provide support to citizens, it is absolutely necessary for them to have access to broadband and digital services. Broadband is an instrument that can help eradicate discrimination overall, but particularly for individuals with special needs. As far as creating jobs, these services could play an important role. So we must focus on promoting very fast and accessible broadband networks and digital services for all."

VĚRA FLASAROVÁ

GLOBAL MONITORING FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY (GMES)

Arguing that the sum needed for the GMES system to operate is remarkably small compared to the vast amounts used to fix Europe's bottomless pits of debt, the group called for funding for programmes that improve citizens' lives.

"Europe does not, unfortunately, have many projects in which it is unrivalled at a global level. GMES is a unique example of such a project. It is therefore odd that we do not have the funds in the EU's financial framework after 2013 for a project that we claim is one of the basic components of the Europe 2020 strategy. We must show that we are capable of programmes that better the lives of EU inhabitants, as well as the excellence we long for."

VLADIMÍR REMEK



RECOVERY OF EUROPEAN INDUSTRY IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT DIFFICULTIES

The group called for a genuine industrial policy that meets the needs of citizens and territories, rather than those of the markets.

“We take note of the change in the Commission’s approach but expect concrete commitments because too often the Commission’s good intentions end where the interests of capital begin. A policy of preservation and development of industrial employment must be put in place if the Union. Contrary to what we are told, it is not labour costs that are responsible for Europe’s industrial disaster but the costs of finance and austerity policies. Financial markets do not finance industry, they bleed it: dividends, stock options and financial expenses. Austerity policies reduce consumption, resulting in



layoffs and reduced wages. The result is that the level of investment in European industry is ridiculously low and opportunities limited, as in the automotive industry, where sales fell by 15%. If we really want to start rebuilding European industry we must finally recognize that business serves, above all, to produce goods and services useful to our people and not to fatten shareholders.”

JACKY HÉNIN

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN THE EUROPEAN INTERNAL ENERGY MARKET

During the debate on renewable energies, the group pointed out that there was still a range of unsolved problems.

“Renewable sources of energy have two meanings. They help to achieve energy security in Europe together with nuclear energy. Second, because they have a higher cost per unit of produced energy they help create pressure

to reduce energy intensity and to implement energy efficient technologies. It would be a mistake to try and achieve some sort of single-source energy, such as for example the ambitious plan in Scotland to cover the use, or rather the electric energy demand, 100% with wind turbines. I think that there is a range of unsolved problems here, such as the lack of infrastructure for the renewable sources or the problem of merging or combining small and large systems.”

MILOSLAV RANSDORF EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

Reacting to a European Parliament vote on new EU legislation on transparency for payments to governments by multinational companies in extractive industries, the group welcomed the result but said more ambitious measures would be needed in the future.

“Today’s vote obliges oil, gas, mining and logging companies to make known all payments over €100,000 to governments. This is a positive step but we regret that the scope was not widened to include other sectors. We’ll be pushing governments to deliver rapidly on their commitment on this. NGOs should also have access to these details in order to be able to hold governments to account.”

JÍŘÍ MAŠTÁLKA

“This is an encouraging development but it’s just a beginning - ecological and employment criteria must be included. We also want to see country-by-country and project-by-project reporting of taxes and other financial data by companies in all sectors, especially with a view to tackling the widespread tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance that costs governments billions of euros each year.”

HELMUT SCHOLZ



Transport

The group constantly called on MEP colleagues, the Commission and Council to focus on passenger needs and passenger safety during debates on changes to rules in the rail and air transport sectors.

SINGLE EUROPEAN RAILWAY AREA

The group voiced its opposition to the recast version of the first railway package, saying that all groups except the GUE/NGL appear to believe that more competition in the railway sector could be beneficial to citizens.

“This policy of liberalisation will have a negative impact not only on those working in the railway industry, but also on passenger safety. The railway sector should not lose its economic, social and environmental role for the future, and therefore must not be broken up into individual free-market radical, profit-focused parts. My group is on the side of the trade unions and clearly in favour of the idea of retaining integrated railway companies, which have crucial experience and skills, in public hands. These companies not only provide social security for their employees, but also offer a guarantee of increased volumes of rail traffic in future.”

SABINE WILS

One year later and following a vote in Parliament’s Transport Committee that saw a majority of MEPs rubber-stamp plans to further liberalise Europe’s railways, GUE/NGL MEPs condemned the result as a step in the wrong direction for workers, passengers, and democracy.

“The EU remains fixated on the logic of liberalisation. By opening up the market for passenger rail transport services we are denying local authorities the right to decide how they want to organise their public transport



services. The EU is indeed ‘for sale’ if we keep entrenching the neoliberal dogma of carving up public infrastructure for private profit.”

SABINE WILS

“The first three railway packages have only led to price hikes for passengers and a severe deterioration in labour

conditions for rail workers. Yet despite these failings we are now looking to repeat the same mistakes again with a new package, the design of which continues to serve the interests of rail companies.”

JACKY HÉNIN

GUE/NGL expressed its regret following Parliament’s adoption of the Fourth Railway Package, a pack of legislative files that pave the way for more privatisation to the detriment of both workers and passengers.

“The main parts of the package are highly political and call for further liberalisation of Europe’s railways, paving the way for more privatisation at the expense of workers’ rights and the interests of passengers in terms of cost, safety and accessibility. However, the vote result did see some gains made in terms of unbundling, meaning integrated railway companies will be protected to a certain extent, and some parts of the package are less problematic as they deal with technical issues such as harmonisation of rail gauge sizes. Luckily the right to strike was protected; this right is the only tool workers have to create a level playing field with their employers, and they don’t take the decision to use it lightly. However, our group’s initiative on safeguarding good working and social standards was denounced. The GUE/NGL will continue fighting with the trade unions for democratically controlled public European railways that serve the people and the workers – not the investors.”

SABINE WILS

HEARING

4th
RAILWAY
PACKAGE

**PUBLIC SERVICE OBLIGATIONS AND SAFETY:
CITIZEN RIGHTS OR BUSINESS?**

11/04/2013, 9:30 -13:00, ROOM ASP 1G2, EP BXL

GUE/NGL
Group of the European Union

GROUND HANDLING SERVICES AT AIRPORTS

Although a European Commission proposal for further liberalisation of ground handling services at airports was rejected by the EP, the group said MEPs were not brave and consistent enough to definitively close the procedure.

“This is a crucial victory for the campaign against this proposal and an unambiguous warning to the Commission which refused to withdraw its proposal that will come back to Parliament next year. Our campaign must continue. Yesterday, we met with some of the three thousand workers from across Europe who came to Strasbourg to protest against the plans. They have shown that strong campaigning and pressure can produce results. We must continue the struggle to ensure that any attempt to roll-back on workers’ rights will meet solid opposition.”

SABINE WILS AND THOMAS HÄNDEL

AIRCRAFT FLIGHT TIMES

The group denounced a vote which saw MEPs backing Commission plans on new requirements and procedures on cabin crew working time but was consoled by the fact that one third of MEPs backed a GUE/NGL Resolution calling to reject the Commission blueprint.

“This is a disastrous missed opportunity. The European Parliament could have sent a clear signal to the Commission that its proposals don’t take into consideration the safety of passengers and pilots alike. Instead, MEPs have backed both the interests of profit making airlines and approved a false Commission procedure. We object to such procedures being used.”

JAROMÍR KOHLÍČEK

“A tired pilot is a dangerous pilot. Tired cabin crew will not be able to respond properly in an emergency. Passenger safety must take precedence over the profits of the airlines!”

SABINE WILS

“We are used to seeing the Commission and the majority in this Parliament defend specific vested interests. In opposing this proposal I am quite sure we have the support of workers across the European Union.”

JOÃO FERREIRA

“The majority in this Parliament want to impose 11 hour shifts on workers - the same majority in Parliament that start banging on their desks in protest when they have to vote for more than two hours.”

JACKY HÉNIN



PIRATES OF THE SKY

THE CORNERS CUT BY LOW COST AIRLINES

10 April 2014 • room A1G2, EP BXL • 10.00-13.00

Francois Ballestero, European Transport Workers' Federation
Professor Peter Turnbull, Cardiff University
Dr Geraint Harvey, Birmingham University

GUE/NGL
www.gueingl.eu

AIR PASSENGER RIGHTS

GUE/NGL MEPs emphasised the need to prioritise the travelling public’s interests over air carriers’ during the February 2014 plenary debate on updating rules on compensation and assistance to passengers whose flights have been cancelled or delayed.

“We have a compromise which seeks to prevent air carriers avoiding their responsibility towards the travelling public. There are various issues that are an improvement on 2004: in terms of travelling with children, for people with disabilities, for passengers travelling with musical instruments, and for those on multiple-leg tickets. We have a balanced compromise on pricing which is a new standard for aviation.”

JAROMÍR KOHLÍČEK



“Flights to the ultra-peripheral regions fall under the category of ‘extra -community flights’ despite the fact they are part and parcel of the European Union and its territory. They do not deserve to be penalised and receive lower levels of compensation.”

YOUNOUS OMARJEE

Culture & Education

With culture and education falling victims to the EU's continued austerity drive and privatisation, the group warned of the consequences for two of Europe's greatest assets, its highly educated workforce and its wide and diverse cultural landscape.

ERASMUS

With the Erasmus programme at risk as a result of European economic policy backing privatisation, and the dismantling of the public sector, the group warned of the consequences, particularly for the southern European countries hit hardest by the crisis.

"In my own country, Spain, everyone in education is protesting in order to defend free, public education, which is at risk due to these cuts and the economic intervention of the Troika, which is suffocating southern Europe. The fact that this programme is being put at risk is going to further aggravate the situation and, moreover, accentuate the harsh budget cuts, tax increases, restrictions on and reductions in additional grants and the burden of debt taken on by students and families in order to avail themselves of the universal right to a good education. What is more, European and social cohesion are also being put at risk, which to some extent is creating a two-speed Europe, which we are not prepared to accept; the whole of the educational community must operate under the same conditions and at the same level."

WILLY MEYER



HEARING



**Communication Rights
in the Digital Spectrum**

**COMMUNITY RADIOS, CULTURAL
DIVERSITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION
IN THE SPECTRUM DIGITAL SWITCH OVER**

Wednesday 9th May 2012
European Parliament
Brussels
Room ASP 1G2 • 16h30-19h00

In a later development, the group opposed the fact that a new guarantee system for student loans institutionalised student debt.

"In the current budgetary environment, Erasmus for all is a kind of miracle. It has even escaped Council's cutbacks. Even with the original Commission proposals, it will be one of the few EU programmes to be substantially increased. One can only welcome this, particularly for young people in the EU who are the main beneficiaries. Rather than pushing member states to develop exchanges, the loan guarantee scheme will encourage students to get into debt to pay for their education. This will particularly affect the most disadvantaged young people who are already struggling to continue higher education. This proposal is symbolic of the EU's neoliberal shift and it forces European students into an American-style system where only those who can afford it can go to university. We refuse to endorse this potential new direction for Erasmus - we want university for all."

MARTINA MICHELS

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS

When a programme titled "Europe for Citizens" whose aim was to financially support initiatives to highlight the causes of the totalitarian regimes in modern European history was adopted by the European Parliament in November 2013, the group was critical.

“An unscientific and revisionist culture of remembrance is being cultivated by a majority in the European Parliament. It is unacceptable that such a historical mutation is passed on to subsequent generations, whereby Communists and Nazis are equated and we are simultaneously urged to forget the fascist dictatorships of southern Europe or Europe’s colonial past. Moreover, these forms of memory culture insults all members of democratic forces who lost their lives in the struggle against such regimes”.

MARTINA MICHELS

CAPITALS OF CULTURE

Each year, two cities are chosen to be the European Capitals of Culture and host cultural programmes for a whole year. The group supports this initiative, particularly its focus on sustainable urbanisation and social solidarity.

“This report is naive about the relationship between politics and culture focusing only, for example, on “the feeling of belonging to Europe” which has been undermined by the crisis and not understanding that it is precisely this anti-social Europe that causes rejection. However, it is a project that works well and that’s why it is worthwhile continuing it. Beyond the development of tourism, the report highlights that European capitals are instruments for social inclusion, requiring the participation of many. It requires a project centered on sustainable urbanization and social solidarity. I support this project putting value on our heritage.”

JEAN-LUC MÉLENCHON

CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME



entertainers and creative people working in precarious jobs and have little social or legal protection. Therefore, we have to stand up to the massive cuts in the cultural sector in times of crisis. Without broad and strong European support policies in the cultural and media sector, Europe will lose out.”

MARTINA MICHELS.



The group welcomed the programme proposed by the Commission to streamline the different EU cultural programmes and to call for a financial instrument in favour of the cultural and creative industry.

“The European cultural landscape is diverse and is a great asset. Strong culture and media promotion at European level is of great importance. But we’re not just talking about high culture, but also many everyday projects. Culture is increasingly considered as a commodity and it should be possible to work with the market.

However it is important to recall the UNESCO Agreements on the dual nature of cultural goods. We must not close our eyes to the fact that culture is not just about funding, but in many places artists,



GUE/NGL STUDY DAYS

The second half of this term of office saw the group hold study days in Denmark (June 2012), Cyprus (September 2012) and Ireland (Dublin and Derry, May 2013) as well as smaller-scale events in Latvia (September 2013) an international conference in Istanbul (October 2013) and a further conference in Athens (February 2014). The topics addressed at these events dealt with current affairs; the Multiannual Financial Framework; the financial and euro crisis; the impact of austerity policies; asylum policies; economic alternatives to the neoliberal dogma; abortion; cross-community dialogue; Turkish-Kurdish issues; Latvia and the euro; and Left parties in Europe.



REPORTS & OPINIONS BY GUE/NGL MEPs (2012-2014)

1-3-2012

COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

OPINION on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013) (Marie-Christine Vergiat)

2-3-2012

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Citizens (2013) (Inês Cristina Zuber)

27-3-2012

COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

OPINION on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of a new Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for by the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Mozambique (Gabriele Zimmer)

28-03-2012

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the European Parliament's recommendations to the Commission on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (Gabriele Zimmer)

24-4-2012

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

REPORT on an EU approach on criminal law (Cornelis de Jong)

25-4-2012

COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

OPINION on the implementation of EU water legislation, ahead of a necessary overall approach to European water challenges (Nikolaos Chountis)

26-4-2012

COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on voluntary and unpaid donation of tissues and cells (Jiří Maštálka)

8-5-2012

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products (João Ferreira)

9-5-2012

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a mechanism for monitoring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions and for reporting other information at national and Union level relevant to climate change (Takis Hadjigeorgiou)

9-5-2012

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Union Programme for Social Change and Innovation (Inês Cristina Zuber)

9-5-2012

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

OPINION on the protection of animals during transport (Kartika Liotard)

5-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Annex I to Council Regulation (EC) No 1528/2007 as regards the exclusion of a number of countries from the list of regions or states which have concluded negotiations (Gabriele Zimmer)

5-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

OPINION on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 (Kartika Liotard)

5-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

REPORT on the trade aspects of the Eastern Partnership (Miloslav Ransdorf)

8-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

REPORT with recommendations to the Commission on Access to Basic Banking Services (Jürgen Klute)

8-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional and Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal (Jaromír Kohlíček)

21-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2004/109/EC on the harmonisation of transparency requirements in relation to information about issuers whose securities are admitted to trading on a regulated market and Commission Directive 2007/14/EC (Helmut Scholz)

25-6-2012

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (Inês Cristina Zuber)

3-7-2012

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (Nikolaos Chountis)

17-7-2012

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

REPORT on the role of women in the green economy (Mikael Gustafsson)

19-7-2012

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

REPORT on enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum (Kyriacos Triantaphyllides)

6-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

OPINION on the EU 2011 Report on Policy Coherence for Development (João Ferreira)

17-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

OPINION on Budget 2013: Section III (Commission) (Cornelis de Jong)

17-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation

(Helmut Scholz)

20-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

OPINION on the proposal for a Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020

(João Ferreira)

20-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy

(Younous Omarjee)

20-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

OPINION on the interim report in the interests of achieving a positive outcome of the Multiannual Financial Framework

2014-2020 approval procedure (Inês Cristina Zuber)

24-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

OPINION on the interim report in the interests of achieving a positive outcome of the Multiannual Financial Framework

2014-2020 approval procedure (Marisa Matias)

27-9-2012

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

REPORT on small-scale coastal fishing, artisanal fishing and the reform of the common fisheries policy (João Ferreira)

16-10-2012

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the award of Concession Contracts

(Thomas Händel)

18-10-2012

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Globalisation

Adjustment Fund (2014-2020) (Alda Sousa)

8-11-2012

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) (Younous Omarjee)

21-11-2012

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the award of concession contracts

(Sabine Wils)

27-11-2012

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

OPINION on development aspects of intellectual property rights on genetic resources: the impact on poverty reduction in developing countries (Helmut Scholz)

11-12-2012

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

REPORT on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, in accordance with point 28 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management (application EGF/2012/006 FI/Nokia Salo from Finland) (Alda Sousa)

06-12-2012

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY
REPORT on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU (Kartika Liotard)

10-1-2013

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
OPINION on asbestos related occupational health threats and prospects for abolishing all existing asbestos (Sabine Wils)

17-1-2013

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY
REPORT on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): the contribution of the EIT to a more innovative Europe (Marisa Matias)

30-1-2013

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
OPINION on the impact of the economic crisis on gender equality and women's rights (Gabriele Zimmer)

31-1-2013

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL LIBERTIES, JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS
OPINION on the Implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Cornelis de Jong)

1-2-2013

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
REPORT on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing
(Kartika Liotard)

25-2-2013

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS
REPORT on 2011 Annual Report of the European Central Bank
(Marisa Matias)

21-3-2013

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETARY CONTROL
REPORT on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth European Development Funds for the financial year 2011
(Søren Bo Søndergaard)

27-3-2013

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
(Younous Omarjee)

30-4-2013

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM
RECOMMENDATION on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Agreement between the European Union and the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation providing a general framework for enhanced cooperation
(Jaromír Kohlíček)

29-5-2013

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY
OPINION on the impact of the crisis on access to care for vulnerable groups
(Inês Zuber)

3-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
OPINION on implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012 (Martina Anderson)

4-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY
OPINION on the implementation and impact of the energy efficiency measures under Cohesion Policy (Miloslav Ransdorf)

10-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

REPORT on the proposal for a Council decision on the adoption of a Supplementary Research Programme for the ITER project (2014-2018) (Vladimír Remek)

19-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on collective management of copyright and related rights and multi-territorial licensing of rights in musical works for online uses in the internal market (Helmut Scholz)

20-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (Sabine Wils)

27-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

OPINION on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Nikolaos Chountis)

28-6-2013

COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

REPORT on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in accordance with point 28 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management (application EGF/2013/000 TA 2013 - Technical assistance at the initiative of the Commission) (Alda Sousa)

15-7-2013

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

REPORT on cross-border collective bargaining and transnational social dialogue (Thomas Händel)

18-9-2013

COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on consumer product safety and repealing Council Directive 87/357/EEC and Directive 2001/95/EC (Jiří Maštálka)

30-9-2013

COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

REPORT on misleading advertisement practices (Cornelis de Jong)

21-10-2013

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

RECOMMENDATION on the draft Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol Amending the Agreement on Government Procurement (Helmut Scholz)

25-9-2013

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE

REPORT on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on imports of rice originating in Bangladesh (Paul Murphy)

06-11-2013

COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

OPINION on the on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2012 and the Union's policy on the matter (Mikael Gustafsson)

11-11-2013

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

OPINION on regional quality branding: towards best practice in rural economies (Alfreds Rubiks)

14-11-2013

COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

REPORT on the European Retail Action Plan for the benefit of all actors (Cornelis de Jong)

19-11-2013

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

REPORT on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features (Jürgen Klute)

02-12-2013

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

REPORT on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending certain Regulations in the field of fisheries and animal health by reason of the change of status of Mayotte with regard to the Union (João Ferreira)

19-12-2013

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

REPORT on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council repealing Regulation (EEC) No 1192/69 of the Council on common rules for the normalisation of the accounts of railway undertakings (Jaromír Kohlíček)

13-01-2014

COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the action plan for a competitive and sustainable steel industry in Europe (Patrick Le Hyaric)

24-01-2014

COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRY, RESEARCH AND ENERGY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts (Marisa Matias)

27-01-2014

COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

RECOMMENDATION on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and the financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Gabonese Republic (João Ferreira)

30-1-2014

COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

OPINION on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Animal Health (Kartika Liotard)

31-1-2014

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

REPORT on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2012 (Inês Cristina Zuber)

11-02-2014

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

OPINION on the enquiry report on the role and operations of the Troika (ECB, Commission and IMF) with regard to the euro area programme countries (Helmut Scholz)

17-02-2014

COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REPORT on optimising the potential of outermost regions by creating synergies between the Structural Funds and other European Union programmes (Younous Omarjee)



GUE/NGL MEPs 2011 - 2014



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Hrvatski laburisti - stranka rada
Nikola VULJANIĆ



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Marie-Christine VERGIAT



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DIE LINKE.
Sabine WILS



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Mikael GUSTAFSSON



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DIE LINKE.
Helmut SCHOLZ

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Lothar BISKY
Bairbre DE BRÚN
Ilda FIGUEIREDO
Joe HIGGINS

Elie HOARAU
Miguel PORTAS
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