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European Parliament Plenary Session

Strassburg, 24-28.11.2014

1) Speech of Pope Francis at the European Parliament, 25.11.2014



Having thanked Parliament for the invitation, Pope Francis went on by expressing disappointment over Europe which seems to be more and more losing its central position in the world and gives the impression of being somewhat old and tired.

Nevertheless, he recognised and praised the commitment of Europe to the defence of human rights and the dignity of the person. Every person is part of a social context and alone and together with the others, contributes to the benefit of the community.

A privatised mindset leads to a “throwaway culture”.

The motto of the European Union, Unity in Diversity, does not mean uniformity of political, economic and cultural life. It means taking account of the rich diversities from which unity is made up. Like a family in which everyone can be themselves together.

Family, as the most precious element of any society, is the first area where education, the development of a person’s capacities, starts. The second area is labour. There is a need to restore dignity to labour by ensuring proper working conditions. Moreover, there is a need to find new ways of joining flexibility with stability and security on the part of the workers.

We cannot allow the Mediterranean area to become a cemetery.

EU membership of countries in the Balkans could be a response to the desire for peace in the region.

The time has come to build a Europe, not around the economy, but around the values of the human person. A Europe, proud of its past and confident of the future, caring for, defending and protecting man, every man and woman.

2) New European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Marianne Thyssen, under fire, 25.11.2014

The new Commissioner had to reply to critical questions, or should I say had to face razor-sharp questions from the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

Marita Ulvskog (MEP, Group of Socialists and Democrats, Sweden), Vice-Chair to the Committee, had drawn up two questions on behalf of the Committee, namely about:

- Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive (PE 485.130) and
- The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 (PE 485.131)



In her typical Marianne Thyssen style, the same she used to practice during the many years she had been Member of the European Parliament, she answered intelligently and to the point.

Remains of course the fact that these dossiers will not directly lead to legislation, although themes such as prevention policy, definition of working accidents, occupational diseases (for ex. ebola), stress, burnout, will certainly require that she gives those subjects her attention before the end of her mandate.

The same MEP asked about the 'Employment and social aspects of the Europe 2020 strategy (PE 485.133)'. Considering the financial impact which, without any doubt, results from parts of this question, in my view, a solution to this problem would be initiated by the Commission President, who gave a presentation of his 315 billion euro plan for jobs and growth the next day.

3) The €315 billion plan for jobs and growth of Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, 26.11.2014

The aim of this investment package is to stimulate European growth and reduce unemployment through public-private partnerships and increasing the loaning capacities of EU institutions such as the European investment bank. Moreover, the Commission President underlined that targets of investments should be the member states' infrastructure and the implementation of the internal market.

This corresponds with promises made by Juncker when he outlined the new Commission's policy objectives.

Points of interest to Eurofedop will be the public-private partnerships. We may also raise the question if people want to use the money put at their disposal (at 0%)?

4) Paneuropean working group of the EPP group, 25.11.2014



The Paneuropean working group of the EPP group welcomed Lieutenant general Guy Buchsenschmidt, Commanding General of Eurocorps.

The title of his speech was:

"Eurocorps, an instrument of peace – at the service of EU, NATO and United Nations".

The session was chaired by Paul Rubig (ÖVP, Austria) and the secretary of the Paneuropean working group, Julien Vanderbeeken.

if it were only for our colleagues of Defence, I wouldn't have to say anything about the origin and composition of Eurocorps in my short report. For, indeed, a couple of years ago, Eurofedop visited Eurocorps in Strassburg with more than thirty colleagues.

The extension of Eurocorps with Poland (in its last phase) and later on with Romania will certainly be a reinforcement.

European politics should abandon the idea nourished by countries such as the UK: "NATO is everything and the EU is nothing".

After the debate on the situation as it is today, considering the actions of Putin and the threat of IS, the meeting participants agreed that Europe should make sure not to fall asleep.

What can we do in Europe? What can the European Parliament do?

First of all, make the right analysis, for example as regards Ukraine, educate our societies on the dangers and, finally, show some "courage". Abandon the idea that all comes down to "peacekeeping". We should not keep withdrawing ourselves behind what we believe to be "safe" Schengen borders.

On behalf of Eurofedop, Bert Van Caelenberg stated that the Subcommittee on Defence of the European Parliament has up till now, in line with the evolution of the WEU, exclusively focussed on the industry, the development of new military material. There is a need for a new European Defence policy! This is certainly a wish formulated by countries such as Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Croatia, ...

We will follow the developments in the Subcommittee on Defence for you.

5) Contacts



Elmar Brok, MEP (EPP Group, Germany),
Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee



David Casa, MEP (EPP Group, Malta),
Coordinator - Employment and Social
Affairs

We had contacts with:

- Elmar Brok: conversation on evolution in the Western Balkans and preparations for our project in Hungary in February 2015.
- David Casa: congratulations on his appointment as president of the EPP group on social affairs. Agreement to plan a meeting with UHM in Malta.
- Members of the Committee on Social Affairs.

From the administration, we could not get any clear information on support which would be given to the creation of an "intergroup public services". This is namely related to the problem that 39 applications have been introduced, for 22 intergroups which will be created.

Bert Van Caelenberg
Secretary General