Beat: Politics

Hannes Swoboda: 2013 crucial year for Europe and European Union

2013 crucial year for Europe

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USPA NEWS - Next year will prove to be crucial for the future of Europe and the European Union, Hannes Swoboda, leader of the EP's Social Democrat, said in a Facebook chat. The Austrian MEP stressed that growth and investment rather than extreme austerity is the only way for Europe to come out of the crisis.

During the chat on 25 October he discussed everything from tackling youth unemployment and supporting the Erasmus programme to fighting tax evasion.

Mr Swoboda was bombarded with more than 120 questions during the chat, but managed to fire off a record-breaking 46 answers in just 45 minutes. He also met the three winners of our Facebook editor for a day competition, who attended the chat.

As might be expected, many questions focussed on the current economic crisis. Mr Swoboda called for a policy for debt reduction via growth and investment, meaning fiscal responsibility in the long term instead of extreme austerity in the short term. "Only by this can we create more jobs and more jobs mean more income and more income means more taxes and more taxes will result in a reduction of the debt and allow for more room for investment." He added: "Austerity can only work for single countries if all other countries have positive growth. Austerity cannot work if everybody goes the same way. Then, the downward spiral is set in motion."

He was also asked about the European Youth Guarantee that he supports. "In view of the extreme unemployment rates, especially among Europe's young, it is important to offer young people a chance for a job or for further education. In some countries, this kind of guarantee already exists, now we need it for Europe, to give every young person this chance."

Many people raised the Erasmus programme, which could be cut if more money isn't found in the EU budget. Mr Swoboda said: "We made it very clear [to the Commission and the Council] that sufficient money for the Erasmus programme must be made available. We got the promise from both sides to actively work for an additional budget, to ensure the future of the Erasmus programme."

When asked about taxes, Mr Swoboda responded: "We need a common European strategy against tax havens in Europe and also around the globe. There is a huge amount of tax evasion and tax avoidance. Up to €1 trillion is lost to tax authorities in Europe every year."

He also spoke out in favour of the proposed banking union. "We certainly need the banking union but it must be well-designed and that means that finally all of the banks must come under one supervision."

Mr Swoboda was asked in what shape the EU would emerge from the current crisis. "It is still not possible to answer which way Europe will go but I am convinced that we have to stick together in order to succeed in managing the global challenges.

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