Press release | 04.02.2010

Bank data transfer:

EU Parliament sends clear signal for protection of civil liberties and democracy

After today's vote in the EP civil liberties committee, which today recommended rejection of the EU agreement to transfer of SWIFT bank data to the United States, Greens/EFA home affairs expert **Jan Philipp Albrecht** said:

"The EU Parliament's civil liberties committee vote has sent a clear signal in favour of civil liberties and democracy in Europe. The EU Parliament as a whole must now follow the committee's line when it votes in Strasbourg next week. To give consent to the SWIFT agreement as it stands would entirely undermine the position of the Parliament, which has only recently gained co-legislative powers in this area. The Council and the Commission have not respected the fundamental criticism about the lack of sufficient protections with regard to privacy and the rule of law as voiced by the Parliament already in September. During the whole procedure, there were repeated attempts to deprive parliamentarians of their legal rights to participate in the process. Parliament must not vote in favour of the agreement under such circumstances, or it will completely betray its responsibilities as EU legislator and representative of the people.

An unambiguous rejection by Parliament next week would give a much-needed wake-up call to Council and Commission that they can't continue to negotiate in secret.

The EU must adopt a strong negotiating position towards the United States on common standards for data transfers. The US government is already denying any room to negotiate and is putting the EU under extreme pressure. The Commission is fooling nobody when it suggests

Parliament can still improve privacy in the future if it accepts this interim agreement now. The Greens are in favour of good transatlantic relations, but not at the expense of fundamental rights in the EU."

Note to editors:
29 votes in favour, 23 against, 1 abstention

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