

EFA Group in the European Parliament

Unity in Diversity

Summary Overview of the Work of the EFA Group
of MEPs in the European Parliament

2014 -2019



European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

INTRODUCTION

The **European Free Alliance** (EFA) Group in the European Parliament is made up of MEPs representing Europe's stateless nations, regions and minorities. Over the 2014 -2019 Parliamentary term, EFA MEPs have come from Catalonia, Galicia, Latvia, Basque Country, Scotland, Valencia and Wales.

The work of EFA MEPs has covered a wide range of policy areas, guided by the following principles:

- the right to self-determination
- decentralised decision-making
- defending human rights and civil liberties
- protecting the environment
- sustainable economic development

This report is intended to give a brief overview of some of the highlights of the group's work during this parliamentary term.



2018 – L to R: Miroslavs Mitrofanovs, Ana Miranda, Jordi Solé, Josep-Maria Terricabras, Jill Evans, Ian Hudghton, Alyn Smith.

KEY ISSUES

EFA MEPs have been active in a wide range of policy areas over the course of this parliamentary term, and some of these are summarised below.

Catalonia and the Right to Self-Determination

EFA MEPs' engaged in a range of activities and campaigns both inside and outside the European Parliament, in support of Catalonia's right to self-determination, and called for the release of political prisoners. This follows Catalonia's referendum on independence, and the subsequent detention and trial of Catalan political and NGO leaders. EFA MEPs Josep-Maria Terricabras and Jordi Solé were also instrumental in setting up the **EU-Catalonia Dialogue platform**.

Read more:

[You don't need to be a Catalan independentist to support the referendum on self-determination](#)

[MEP delegation to visit Catalan political prisoners](#)

Brexit & citizens' rights

EFA MEPs have been active in the European Parliament in calling for the rights of all citizens to have priority and be respected in the context of Brexit. They have also supported a people's vote in order to give the people the final say on the outcome. MEPs Ian Hudghton and Alyn Smith called for Scotland's democratic choice to remain in the EU to be respected. EFA MEP Jill Evans made the case for continued EU citizenship.

Read more:

[Brexit - Scotland's democratic will must be recognised](#)

[Possibilities for keeping EU citizenship after leaving EU set out in new report](#)

Migration in the Mediterranean / Refugees

EFA MEPs called for a more humane approach and greater solidarity for refugees fleeing to Europe, including those crossing the Mediterranean in precarious circumstances. EFA MEP Ana Miranda saw the crisis first hand aboard one of the rescue ships.

Read more:

[Open Arms – 'Saving Life is not a Crime' – MEP Ana Miranda](#)





European electoral law

As a member of the Constitutional Affairs committee, EFA Group President Josep-Maria Terricabras was closely involved in the process of reforming EU electoral law. He worked to ensure that any reform should not unfairly affect smaller parties, and also fought for greater gender equality.

Read more:

[EFA MEPs criticize changes to European electoral law](#)

Violence against women

EFA MEPs supported greater efforts at EU level to deal with gender based violence. EFA MEP Jordi Sebastià was a member of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee. He organised a conference in the European Parliament, which highlighted the need for a European strategy to tackle gender-based violence.

Read more:

[Speaking out against gender-based violence](#)

Fundamental Rights within the EU

MEPs from the EFA group were active in defending European citizens' fundamental rights in a number of different issues. One notable example was the case of the young people of Alsasu who had been prosecuted using terror laws for a case that appeared to have no such connotation. Other cases, particularly in Spain, of apparent abuse of fundamental rights were also raised by MEPs J-M Terricabras and Jordi Solé.

Read more:

[Defending Fundamental Rights in the EU: the Spanish case](#)

Geo-blocking and minority languages

Broadcasting in minority languages was a key issue for EFA during this past term, especially the particular challenges posed by geo-blocking to minority language communities. It is often the case that languages, including minority languages, are not organised along state boundaries.

Read more:

[Cross-border broadcasting and Europe's linguistic heritage](#)

CETA & TTIP

EFA MEPs regularly raised concerns about the potential negative effects for EU citizens of trade deals such as CETA and TTIP. Whilst supporting trade, there were concerns that the particular deals could undermine EU workers' rights and environmental standards.

Read more:

[EFA MEPs join CETA protest](#)

[TTIP could undermine public services and democracy, says EFA MEP](#)

Turkey

Concerns were raised about human rights in Turkey, and in particular the Turkish government's treatment of its Kurdish minority. There were also criticisms of a deal between the EU and Turkey to allow for a return of refugees.

Read more:

[EFA Group Statement on EU-Turkey agreement & the refugee crisis](#)

Erasmus+

EFA MEPs Ernest Maragall and Jill Evans were particularly active in supporting the growth of this EU programme which has helped generations of young people study in other EU countries. Ernest authored a report which called for more mobility in vocational training, and Jill fought to ensure young people could still be involved even if the UK left the EU.

Read more:

[Unlocking the potential of Erasmus+](#)



Basque Peace Process

EFA MEPs have long supported a peaceful resolution through dialogue of the debate around the constitutional status of the Basque Country. Often working with the cross-party Basque Friendship group, they called on the EU to promote dialogue between the different parties.

Read more:

[Otegi - Spanish government must change course in search of peace](#)

Language Diversity

Promoting multilingualism and respect for their rights of Europe's linguistic minorities has long been at the heart of EFA's work. They called for a European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity to support Europe's regional, minority, and endangered languages.

Palestine

As well as continuing to support a peaceful, negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, EFA MEPs including Jordi Solé, worked to ensure adequate funding for Palestinian refugees.

Read more:

[Plea for continued support for Palestinian refugees](#)

Press freedom

EFA MEPs Josep-Maria Terricabras and Ana Miranda spoke out in favour of journalists' freedom of expression in the European Parliament following the tragic murder of Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak and his partner. Both condemned the killings and Terricabras called for more action to tackle corruption, whilst Ana Miranda also spoke of attacks on freedom of expression in Spain.

Read more:

[EFA MEPs speak out on press freedom](#)

Read more:

[Support for European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity](#)



REPORTS (EFA RAPPORTEURS)

The European Parliament plays its role in the legislative process through reports by individual MEPs appointed by their committees, known as 'rapporteurs'. EFA MEPs have held these influential positions on a number of occasions over this parliamentary term on a range of important issues.



Language Equality in the Digital Age

Jill Evans

The European Parliament overwhelmingly endorsed a report by EFA MEP Jill Evans calling for action at the EU level to bridge the digital language divide. The report considered the use of languages in digital technology and made a number of recommendations for action by the European Commission.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)



Labour Market conditions favourable for work/life balance

Tatjana Ždanoka

Tatjana Ždanoka's report on Creating Labour Market Conditions Favourable for Work-Life Balance won the backing of the European Parliament. The report was intended to lay out the parliament's view in advance of anticipated European Commission proposals in this area.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)



Hong Kong

Alyn Smith

As a member of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Alyn's report was a review and appraisal of the situation in Hong Kong, twenty years since the handover. As Alyn pointed out, Hong Kong is Europe's fourteenth biggest trading partner.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)



Erasmus+ and other tools to foster mobility in VET – a lifelong learning approach
Ernest Maragall

Erasmus+ was launched in 2014 and brings together all of the EU’s education, training, youth and sport schemes, enabling students and many young people to study in another European country. This report called for the programme to do much more to promote mobility in vocational training across Europe.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)



Fundamental Rights in the European Union 2017
Josep-Maria Terricabras

Josep-Maria Terricabras’ report looked at the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union and called for “impartial” investigations into the excessive use of police force. It also warned of the EU’s ineffectiveness when it comes to combating “serious and persistent breaches” of European values.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)



Guidelines for the Employment policies of the Member States
Miroslavs Mitrofanovs

In this report, the European Parliament was invited to give its consent to the Commission’s proposal for guidelines for the employment policies of the EU’s member states. Common priorities and targets are established and set out through this process.

[READ FULL REPORT](#)

DELEGATIONS

Israel & Palestine
June 2015

A number of EFA MEPs took part in a delegation to Israel and Palestine in 2015, supporting a two state solution through negotiation and dialogue. The visited Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Hebron and Ramallah, meeting a range of politicians, NGOs and representatives of civil society, both Israeli and Palestinian.

Read more:
[EFA Group - Visit to Israel and Palestine](#)

Lebanon
September 2018

A delegation of EFA MEPs to Lebanon in September 2018 aimed to find out more about the reality of the country, where one in every four inhabitants is a refugee. During their visit they met Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, and visited NGOs and refugee camps.

Read more:
[European Free Alliance delegation in Lebanon](#)





2017 – L to R: Ian Hudghton, Jill Evans, Josep-Maria Terricabras, Tatjana Ždanoka, Alyn Smith, Jordi Solé.



2014 – L to R: Ernest Maragall, Alyn Smith, Jill Evans, Josep-Maria Terricabras, Ian Hudghton, Tatjana Ždanoka.

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