



Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament

PRESS CONFERENCE with Gianni Pittella
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**Gianni
Pittella**

Negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

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The S&D Group is leading the parliamentary negotiations to send a strong message to the Commission when it negotiates with the United States on behalf of the EU. At committee, the S&D managed to win strong protection of labour and environmental rules, as well as the use of public courts instead of any investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism. The goal is to give a strong mandate for the Commission to negotiate a ground-breaking partnership that will positively influence global trade so that economic growth gained with new markets benefits citizens, workers, consumers and SMEs.

The S&D Group will not accept any kind of private arbitration. ISDS is definitely not the way forward. Both the United States and the European Union have reliable national courts which should be the regular procedure to solve any disputes. The right of governments to regulate in the public interest must be unambiguous, and the principle of equal rights between national and foreign investors must be safeguarded.



**Elena
Valenciano**

Sports, human rights and the Baku games

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Large sporting events have a great potential to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights, but they can also be used by host governments - more and more by authoritarian or non-democratic regimes - as an opportunity to boost their global standing and provide a distorted image of a worrying human rights situation. The upcoming European Games in Baku, to be held from 12-28 June, will represent a vital and sensitive choice for the EU and its member states. We should collectively stand up for human rights and urge the Azerbaijani authorities to fully respect freedoms of expression and association, stop further shrinking the democratic space and release without delay the great number of human right defenders and activists currently facing imprisonment or prolonged pre-trial detention.



**Liisa
Jaakonsaari**

The state of EU-Russia relations

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Despite recent worrying developments, the S&D stresses the importance of a long-term perspective for re-engagement and co-operation with Russia, on the condition that Russia fully implements the Minsk agreement and respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Europe needs to stay firm and united and we cannot compromise on our core values of respect for human rights and democracy. The emergence of a Russian blacklist targeting a number of Members of the European Parliament is unconstructive and diminishes mutual trust. However, in the long-term, the ultimate objective should be to restore dialogue and engagement with Russia to achieve peace in Europe.



**Tanja
Fajon**

Smart Borders Package

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While awaiting new legislative proposal on the so-called Smart Borders Package, the Parliament will discuss with the Commission the state of play and way ahead on Tuesday. Key issues voiced by the S&D group remain unexplained, namely the proportionality and necessity of establishing brand new, costly systems at our external borders with huge impact on travellers' fundamental rights and with serious data protection concerns. We will demand evidence from the Commission that the main objectives of the proposals will be clearly defined and properly achieved. The aims of better border management and facilitated border crossings could be better achieved by simply updating and enhancing existing systems, such as the Visa Information System (VIS) or the Schengen Information System (SIS II). The S&D group remains extremely concerned about the possibility of the law enforcement access to the proposed new system, which seems to be central to the proposals, without proper analysis and in the light of the judgment of the CJEU on the Data Retention Directive.



Kati Piri

2014 Commission progress report on Turkey

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In terms of foreign policy, energy security, the fight against terrorism, trade, and migration; Turkey and the EU are important strategic partners. It is in the interest of both to have a closer and more effective cooperation. The S&D Group supports the EU accession process of Turkey, but has serious concerns about the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of expression and media freedom. These are core European values which must be upheld if Turkey wants to make further progress in the accession talks. The European Union must also stand ready to assist Turkey in dealing with the influx of the nearly 2 million refugees the country is currently hosting. We expect a new government to make progress on important democratic reforms, including a sustainable solution to the peace process with the Kurdish community and lowering the 10% electoral threshold which leaves many Turkish voters unrepresented in the Turkish parliament.



Maria Noichl

The EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015

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By the end of this year, the commission's strategy for equality between women and men will come to an end. Current numbers are showing that this cannot be the end, rather the beginning in order to make the EU a gender equal place: 33 % of women experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, the EU has an average gender pay gap of 16% and a gender pension gap of 39%, that is why the European Union is still far away from being a gender equal place. This is why the S&D underline the need of not only a follow-up, but for a new, progressive and forward looking strategy for the coming five years. The Commission should both engage in binding solutions and help the member states in coordinating their work for gender equality and to end discrimination in all areas of life. We need to adopt a strong resolution in order to send a clear sign to the European Commission and to the citizens and women of Europe.



Miroslav Poche

European energy security strategy

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Ensuring its own energy security is without doubt one of the most important tasks for the EU. It is far from being connected to just the geopolitical situation, as is often presented, since it also requires a change in our general approach and way of thinking. Our clear goal for the future is to eliminate our dependency on imported fossil fuels. We consider effective energy use to be one of main pillars of energy security and this is why we once again should stress our clear support for the binding EU 2030 targets of reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions (by at least 40% compared with 1990 levels), a binding EU 2030 energy efficiency target of 40%, and a binding EU 2030 target of producing at least 30% of the total final energy consumption from renewable energy sources. Energy must serve as an engine for sustainable growth in the EU, not as an obstacle, and it must go hand in hand with strict health and environmental protection legislation. This is why I have submitted, on behalf of the S&D Group, an amendment calling for a moratorium on shale gas in the EU and I believe that we will find sufficient support to incorporate it into the final text.



Birgit Sippel

Situation in Hungary

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In April, the Hungarian government announced its intention to hold a public referendum on migration by presenting a questionnaire including twelve highly suggestive controversial questions, which present poverty migration as mass phenomena, mix up migration with terrorism and accuse the EU of interfering with Hungarian sovereignty. A few days later, President Orbán discussed the reintroduction of the death penalty. Following on from the plenary debate on the situation in Hungary during the May plenary session, the EP will emphasise its strong criticism of the developments in Hungary by voting on a resolution on Wednesday. The resolution, clearly taking up many of the S&D's long-held demands on this topic, asks the Commission to put forward proposals to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the respect for democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights in member states, mandating the LIBE Committee to come up with a legislative own initiative report before the end of the year. It further asks the Commission to present a report on the situation in Hungary by September.

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