

ACTIVITY REPORT

DECEMBER | 2009
JANUARY | 2014



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

PES

PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

CONGRESS

28/02/14 - 01/03/14

ROME

This report of Group activities completes previous reports submitted to the PES Congresses in Prague in December 2009 and in Brussels in September 2012. It is now time to sum up the Group's activities, achievements and expectations while we are close to the end of the current European Parliament term of office¹.

¹ For PES Group activities during the last European Parliament mandate see http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/media3/documents/4019_EN_pse_group_achievements_2004_to_2009_en_090514.pdf
"A proud record of achievement - Socialists at work in the European Parliament of 2004-2009".

INTRODUCTION

The 2009-2014 legislature has seen many firsts. It is the first legislature with full co-decision powers under the Lisbon Treaty. And it is the first legislature for our expanded group, re-founded in 2009 with new progressive allies and a new name: the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. It is also the first legislature where Europe and the European Parliament made the headlines, were discussed on every street corner and sparked fierce debates across Europe – from Helsinki to Athens and London to Bucharest. What started out as an American financial crisis soon turned into a European economic crisis, triggered a debt and lending crisis, and left us with the greatest social crisis modern Europe has encountered.

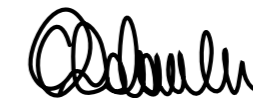
In the midst of this historic turmoil, we acted – and we will continue to act – for the benefit of all citizens. The situation is often oversimplified, with Europe getting the blame for the crisis and the failure to deal with it, but the Europe that failed is the one of neo-liberal and right-wing majorities. We have to use the fact that Europe is in the spotlight to highlight what is possible with a progressive, social Europe. As progressives, we are committed to fighting for equality and opportunity, for prosperity and solidarity – regardless of national borders.

As the second-largest group in the European Parliament, we achieved some major successes over the last five years. Responding to the crisis of youth unemployment, we campaigned for a European Youth Guarantee that will offer young people a chance to build their own lives. Faced with 28 different – often unstable and poorly regulated – banking and financial systems, we delivered better, more coherent financial regulation. And witnessing civil rights and liberties under attack, we fought persistently for fundamental rights and progress, for women, minorities and the most vulnerable.

Looking back, we achieved many things. Looking forward, there is still a lot to do. Together, let us continue to work hard for a better, for a progressive Europe of social justice and solidarity.



Hannes Swoboda
S&D Group President



Anna Colombo
S&D Secretary General

THE PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE OF SOCIALISTS AND DEMOCRATS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



PHOTO ©European Union 2012

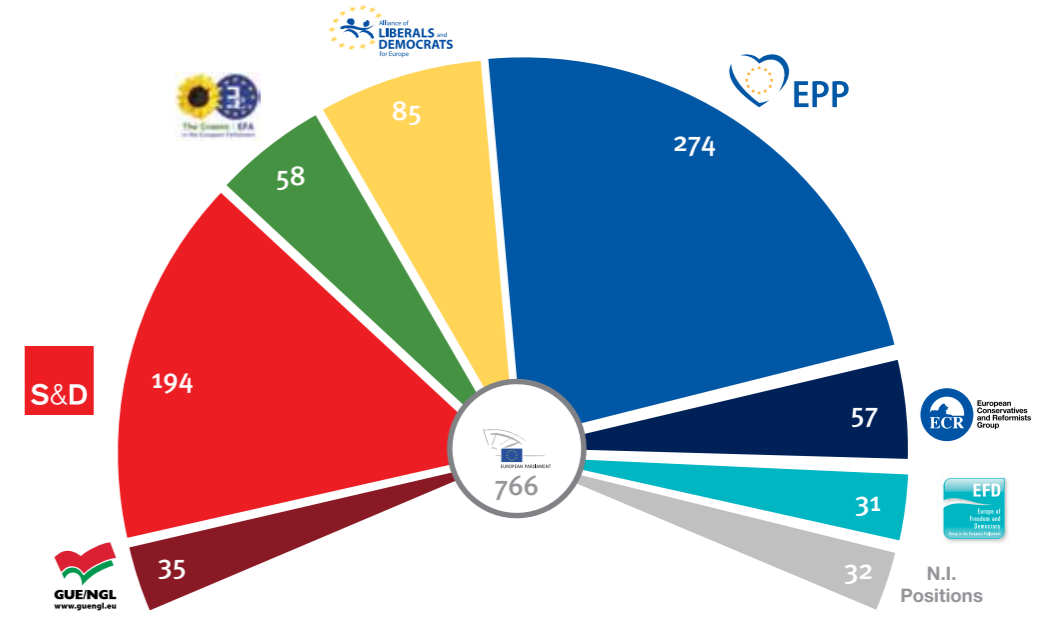
S&D MEPs voting at the European Parliament's plenary session, Strasbourg

The 2009-2014 legislature started with the establishment of the new Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, incorporating all those forces represented in the former PES Group as well as the MEPs of the Italian Partito Democratico. The Group was chaired by Martin Schulz until his election as president of the European Parliament in January 2012. The Group then elected Hannes Swoboda as its new president.

The results of the 2009 European elections were below our expectations with 184 out of 736 seats, down from the 217 out of 785 seats during the last mandate. The S&D Group fell back to an exact 25% share of European Parliament seats, 2.6% less than the PES Group share during the previous European Parliament mandate. The new S&D Group is as EU-wide as it could possibly be, being the only Group with national delegations from all 28 EU member states.

Today the Group has increased to 194 MEPs².

² Notably due to the arrival of 18 new MEPs through the Lisbon Treaty and the accession of Croatia



The composition of the European Parliament (January 2014).

In 2009 the EPP (European People's Party) managed to retain its dominant position in the European Parliament despite the defection of the British and Czech conservatives, while two new groups were established on the right and extreme right: the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, mainly consisting of conservative Eurosceptic forces from the United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic, and the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group which is a collection of anti-European, xenophobic and far-right MEPs.

With the European Parliament swinging to the right, the S&D Group was faced with the enormous challenge of nevertheless maintaining its decisive role in the European Parliament, whose powers have broadened considerably following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009. During the previous legislature, as the second political grouping, the PES Group played the lead role in building progressive majorities. These majorities were based on a high degree of consensus within the PES Group and, in a number of cases in key policy areas, by linking up with the Greens (The Greens/European Free Alliance) and the GUE Group (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left) and splitting the Liberals (The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) and/or EPP. Traditionally, on social and economic issues the more centre-oriented group of EPP MEPs can in some circumstances be won over to the other side. When it comes to

progressive values, ethical questions and non-discrimination, the Liberal Group is a potential partner. However, it was clearly more difficult to establish progressive majorities in the new, more right-wing Parliament.

In such a context our Group has to be as united as possible. Defining a common line on political issues where positions can differ amongst us is our constant aim. We know from experience that **building a common and progressive political vision in our Group is the key to political success**. This is a major difference from the EPP, a Group acting essentially as a conglomerate of political forces ranging from an 'old guard' of genuine centrists and Christian democrats to more radical parties positioning themselves at the very limits of the extreme right. In fact it too often seems that the sole purpose of this group is to counterbalance the influence of socialist and other progressive forces in Europe by using its numerical strength.

The S&D Group continued its fight to build progressive majorities in the European Parliament, firstly by uniting the left and subsequently by trying to prevent the right wing from establishing a majority against us.

As regards the internal organisation of our institution, experience has shown that a reduced number of S&D MEPs does not necessarily result in a weaker position. A combination of good candidates and skilful negotiations resulted in numerous key positions being obtained by the

Group, both in the institution's governing bodies and in parliamentary committees. Firstly, the president of the S&D Group, Martin Schulz, was elected as president of the European Parliament in 2012 with a comfortable majority of 387 votes out of 670. The S&D Group also secured the three first European Parliament vice-presidencies (Giovanni Pitella, Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez and Anni Podimata) and two posts as quaestors (Boguslaw Liberadzki and Lidia Geringer De Oedenberg).

As a consequence **the Group has a strong input into European Parliament internal policies** regarding the budget, information, communication and relations with citizens, as well as in legislative conciliations and European Parliament relations with national parliaments, candidate countries, the Mediterranean area, Latin America, the UN, the Council of Europe and other multilateral bodies.

While the number of positions chairing European Parliament committees was limited (6 out of 21 under the d'Hondt system), the S&D Group were able to obtain the following key positions:

- Pervenche Berès, Committee on employment and social affairs
- Paolo de Castro, Committee on agriculture and rural development
- Matthias Groote, Committee on the environment, public health and food safety
- Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Committee on civil liberties, justice and home affairs
- Vital Moreira, Committee on international trade
- Brian Simpson, Committee on transport and tourism

As of February 2014 the S&D Group Bureau is constituted of the following members and responsibilities:

- Hannes Swoboda, President of the Group
- Enrique Guerrero Salom, Parliamentary Secretary
- Bernhard Rapkay, Communication, Inter-institutional relations
- Véronique de Keyser, Foreign affairs including the Southern dimension, Arab spring and Middle East
- Libor Rouček, Foreign affairs including transatlantic relations, the Eastern dimension, Russia and the Balkans
- Patrizia Toia, Sustainable development and competitiveness
- Corina Crețu, Gender mainstreaming and women's issues
- Stephen Hughes, Economic and social model
- Göran Färm, Budget and cohesion policy
- Sylvie Guillaume, Citizens' Europe
- Edit Herczog, Treasurer

REVERSING THE TREND: THE NEED FOR BROAD SOCIALIST, SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND PROGRESSIVE STRATEGIES



PHOTO © Michael Contes

Engaging with citizens at the Open Days event in the European Parliament, Brussels, 4 May 2013

The need to establish broad **socialist and social-democratic strategies** has never been greater, since we are still in a minority position. In the European Parliament, S&D representation has lost some ground. In Council there is a clear conservative majority, but recent elections in several member states have led to government changes in favour of **progressive forces** and we expect that this positive trend will continue in the near future. Within the Commission the current situation is the most difficult, with only 7 of 28 Commissioners coming from our political family, making this institution unrepresentative of the wider political balance in the EU.

Given this situation, the PES and the S&D Group have no other option than to forge stronger links between socialist and social-democratic members in the three EU institutions and in national parliaments. We should all remember that the EU and its institutions constitute a major instrument for socialists, social-democrats and progressives to implement the policies and policy changes we stand for. In addition the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has given the European Parliament an even more important role in the European decision-making process.

Recent elections in Europe have proved that more and more people are disappointed and outraged by **conservative policies**, which have obviously failed in these times of economic, financial and social crisis. It is now time for us to show that united, **we represent the real alternative to**

these policies, leading to a fair way out of the crisis, **based on solidarity, social justice, investment and jobs**. This is the right time to mobilise parties, parliamentarians, foundations and party members at all levels. **In order to be effective in Europe it is important to bring together a coalition of progressive forces**. In our work in the European Parliament we have a long experience of this and after the elections, we look forward to working with all those who share our values and want to build a better, fairer Europe.

We expect good results in the forthcoming European elections. Recent polls show that **our political family is now gaining more and more voter confidence** while the EPP is paying the price for its dogmatic and irresponsible policies leading to more poverty, social exclusion and recession. We may, once again, be the first Group in the European Parliament. However let us remain vigilant. Our success will depend on our relentless efforts to mobilise voters and show them our commitment to **an ambitious, fair and social alternative for Europe**. There is also a worrying increase in the level of support for extremist and populist parties and movements in Europe. Simultaneously, too many left-wing voters are turning to the radical left. We need to convince European citizens that radical and protest votes are wasted votes, and that change is only possible in Europe by having **the strong progressive and constructive presence of the socialist family** in all EU governments and institutions, including of course the European Parliament.

It is first of all up to the PES to ensure that the debate on the future of European social-democracy becomes **a truly cross-border discussion** and not just the sum of national deliberations. The S&D Group, while respecting of the role of the national parties and the PES, made its own contribution to the debate, making use of the fact that the Group constitutes a unique permanent meeting place for European socialists, social-democrats and progressive forces. With the support of our MEPs, our Group president Hannes Swoboda contributed actively to the strengthening of internal co-operation within our political family and undertook a tour of Europe to meet leaders and representatives of our political forces.

“**EUROPE IN THE WORLD – ONLY TOGETHER CAN WE BE STRONG**”

AN S&D GROUP OPEN TO SOCIETY

We believe in the importance of consultation with researchers and civil society to help us to develop our ideas. With this in mind, a first series of round tables with researchers, politicians and civil society took place from 2009 to 2011 to take stock and draw the lessons from the 2009 European elections. Since then, the S&D Group has continued its dialogue with citizens, civil society representatives, academics and politicians.

The S&D Group continued its work with the **Global Progressive Forum** (www.globalprogressiveforum.org) and several conferences were held, in and outside Europe, focusing particularly on the issue of human rights and democratisation. The GPF is a shared initiative from the PES, the S&D Group and the Socialist International. **This forum aims to bring together a diverse range of people from Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, India and Latin America** to discuss and

propose alternatives to the negative aspects of globalisation, especially where under-developed and developing countries are affected.

In order to have **a direct dialogue with citizens** and the wider public in the run-up to the European Parliament elections, the S&D Group launched a new initiative on the future of the European Union: **'Relaunching Europe – an alternative vision for the future'** (www.relaunchingeurope.eu). Under this initiative we have begun a dialogue with citizens all over Europe, as an S&D answer to complaints about a failure to connect with citizens in the past. The Relaunching Europe events have taken a fresh look and seen lively exchanges of ideas in a very interactive way, reaching citizens in cities all across Europe³, concentrating on citizens' daily local concerns. It also contributed to the successful development of our online community.

³ In 2013 and 2014 no less than 24 debates were organised in 20 member states, gathering some 6,000 participants on the spot and another 14,000 online.



S&D Group youth conference, European Parliament, Brussels, 6-7 June 2012

Another important activity was **'Progressive Economy'** (www.progressiveeconomy.eu) an initiative launched in 2012 with the objective of generating **a truly public and informed debate on economic and social policy** at European and national – as well as global – levels. **It aims to actively promote progressive thinking** in these areas at academic and political levels, in a dialogue with the public and leading academics. Progressive Economy is a long-term initiative with a strategic vision of contributing to progressive thinking and action.

In Brussels we also organised conferences **with young people from across the EU**, listening to their concerns, demands and expectations in these times of crisis.

We are proud of our daily co-operation and open dialogue with the PES and other socialist and social-democratic bodies such as FEPS (the Foundation for European Progressive Studies), YES (the Young European Socialists, formerly ECOSY) and the Global Progressive Forum. This co-operation and dialogue is evident through the large number of jointly organised activities where our Group has invested a lot. **We are also**

committed to improving our relationship with representatives of civil society and other partners in order to improve co-ordination, future perspectives and mutual trust, and with a particular focus on two categories: trade unions (and in particular ETUC) and NGOs⁴ and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)⁵. We place an even greater emphasis on co-operation with socialist groups in the national parliaments, in the context of the European sovereign debt crisis and the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty⁶.

“**WE WANT TO PUT EUROPEAN PEOPLE AT HEART OF OUR ACTIVITIES AND ENCOURAGE DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH CITIZENS. THEY ARE THE KEY PLAYERS OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY**”

⁴ A key objective of the Group's civil society outreach work has been to reach representatives of civil society beyond Brussels. The ultimate objective must be to ensure that information circulates amongst trade union activists and civil society representatives in the 28 member states. This will raise the political profile of the Group creating a multiplier effect. It is also worth noting the involvement of the S&D Group in the European Parliament trade unions intergroup, fostering a constant consultation with the European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC) and developing synergies on topical EU legislative issues.

⁵ The PES Group in the CoR and the Workers' Group in the EESC are our key partners in a constant dialogue and co-operation on legislative and political issues. For instance we set up a joint task-force on the reform of the Cohesion Policy which led to the adoption of a ten-point manifesto for the negotiations on the 2014-2020 programming period. Another example is our co-operation with the EESC Workers' group on the Directive on the Single Permit.

⁶ Our president, Hannes Swoboda, organised conferences with his counterparts from a majority of national chambers in the EU. The debate focused on EU-wide issues such as a "Socialist Agenda for Europe", "Alternative Ways out of the Crisis: Fiscal Pact, Growth and Employment" and "The Next Multiannual Financial Framework, Own Resources and Financial Transaction Tax". Another item was the role of parliaments, be they national or European, in the European Semester.



PHOTO © European Union 2012 - Pietro Naf-Oleari

The European Parliament in Strasbourg, France

THE S&D GROUP'S POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

OUR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE



The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has had a major impact on the competences of the European Parliament and as a consequence on the instruments available to the S&D Group to implement its political priorities. With a few exceptions, the new treaty placed the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council as a lawmaker in areas where this has not been the case previously, most notably in setting the EU budget (the European Parliament has full parity), agricultural policy and justice and home affairs.

For the S&D Group, the defining political battle of this legislature was the **fight against the economic, financial and social crisis**, and for a new model of development. This new model reflects a shift from a narrow, market-dominated vision towards a broader vision of our society, with a different balance between economic, social and environmental concerns; a new balance between market forces and smart regulation; and a new central role for sustainability. **Developing a more equal society** is, of course, a question of fairness and social justice. But it is also our conviction that building a socially inclusive society is essential for economic recovery and sustainable growth.

Since the start of this term, the **S&D Group has actively promoted a balanced, smart, fair and courageous response to the crisis**. We have long been calling for a different way out of the crisis as an alternative to the 'austerity-only' strategy imposed by the Commission and the right-wing majority in Council. **Our Group was at the vanguard of the fight for financial regulation**. For too long the financial sector has acted without any controls and in an irresponsible way, serving only the short-term profits of speculators, and increasingly disconnected from the real economy. We demanded the establishment of a true banking union where banks would be submitted to real scrutiny and where the excesses of the financial sector would be paid by the banks and no longer by the taxpayer. **We insisted on the need for a financial transaction tax**, now being considered as a possible first step in the

form of enhanced co-operation between 11 member states. We fought to limit the too-often indecent bonuses in the sector. We demanded a clear separation between a bank's commercial activities (credit, deposit) and more risky speculative activities. We advocated for better and more transparent information on financial products; guarantees for the reimbursement of clients' deposits in the event of bank failures; a tough fight against fraud, mismanagement and market abuses, including strong penalties; and limits on purely speculative trading systems such as high-speed trading. We opposed speculation on food and agricultural markets.

Our Group has also extensively worked in the field of **fair taxation and the fight against tax havens and tax fraud**. We have constantly advocated in favour of realistic fiscal consolidation adapted to each member state's capacities, measures in favour of increased public investment, a global response to the sovereign debt crisis (Eurobonds), and more democratic legitimacy in the way decisions are taken as regards European economic policies. **We worked on an alternative reform of the Economic and Monetary Union**, making it less technocratic and more ambitious. However, many of these essential elements of a new growth and jobs agenda have not been taken on board fast enough or fully enough. This fight is far from over and will remain a key focus of our work during the next parliamentary term.

Central to our approach is our insistence that a **greener economy** must go hand in hand with a

fairer, more prosperous Europe. We believe that a new, more sustainable economic model is central to **our fight against climate change** and will create invaluable opportunities for employment and wealth creation. We intend to keep this topic high on the political agenda, with a twin focus on boosting high-quality jobs and protecting the environment. **The creation of some 10 million new green jobs by 2020** will be a core objective, supported by action on renewable energies, energy efficiency – in particular in older homes – and sustainable transport, while promoting re-skilling schemes and research and development.

The crisis has put Europe's social model under enormous pressure. However, we oppose its gradual dismantling under the cover of 'anti-crisis' structural reforms. We fought hard for an ambitious social agenda: restoration of full employment; decent work and stronger social rights – including gender equality, the revised **Posting of Workers Directive** and a **Framework Directive on Public Services**. We took the lead in **the creation of a Fund for European aid to the most deprived**, with a proper budget, sound consultation and the involvement of civil society, charities, food banks etc. We got huge support for our call in the European Parliament – so far ignored by the Commission – for European legislation on advance preparation and socially fair management of restructuring processes. We strongly defended the **European Social Fund** and its role in employment promotion and social inclusion, demanding that 20% of the fund would

be used to combat poverty and at least €3 billion of the fund would be used to combat youth unemployment. We enlarged the scope of the **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund** and insisted on the need for more ambitious legislation on protecting workers from electromagnetic fields. We are concerned by the high level of youth unemployment and believe in the importance of education, addressing the skills mismatch on the labour market, fighting for quality traineeships and the integration of new technologies and ICT skills in education curricula.

Putting citizens and the real economy at the heart of legislation and policies was our priority, based on a strong social dimension in the new European single market. We led the reform on public procurement and concessions which represent a huge flow of public investment, which is even more important in times of crisis. We ensured the new system is able to stimulate growth, is based on criteria promoting innovation and high social and environmental standards, and is compatible with quality public services. We played a leading role in the reform of **product safety and market surveillance** in order to enhance consumer protection in a way that is compatible with the competitiveness of our companies and products. Other priorities for our Group were the horizontal **Consumer Rights Directive**, the new legislation on consumer rights enforcement, our demands for the universal right of access to a basic bank account and easier and quicker recognition of professional qualifications.

SOLIDARITY AND COHESION THROUGHOUT EUROPE



PHOTO ABOVE: Recovery through more European solidarity, Relaunching Europe event, Nicosia, 30 January 2014

No less important was the battle on the EU's financial future. Indeed, the EU budget remains one of the most powerful financial instruments for solidarity among member states and for financing growth and job creation. Whilst agriculture and cohesion policies remain the two main spending areas we successfully obtained a quite sizeable increase in spending on innovation, research, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), education and infrastructure although we would have favoured an even larger increase.

After lengthy negotiations and confronted with a stubborn austerity drive from the majority of the Council of Ministers, the S&Ds had to agree on the multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020, representing a historic decrease of around 3.5%. But the **battle to ensure sufficient EU resources is not over**. We managed to include a revision clause for a review to be undertaken by the Commission by the end of 2016, with proposals for revision. This leaves the door open for better investments on key priorities in the future. Moreover we obtained increased investment in 2014 and 2015 to help the EU economy to exit the crisis, notably in favour of projects and policies such as the **youth guarantee** to fight youth unemployment; research; **SMEs**; education and training for all (**Erasmus +**); and an increase of the Fund for European aid to the most deprived. Culture was not neglected thanks an ambitious **'Creative Europe'** programme backed by an appropriate level of funding.

The current financing of the EU where 85% of funds stem from national contributions poisons

the debate by the logic of 'fair return'. Our Group fought for an improved system of genuine and autonomous own resources, transparent, fair, sustainable, understandable, efficient, fiscally neutral and compliant with the EU treaty. Faced with the blatant failure of the Council to make any progress, we obtained the establishment of a High-Level Group which should develop a roadmap for reforming the financing of the EU by the end of 2016.

How European funds are managed is of prime importance to the S&D Group. Our work on the drafting of the revised Financial Regulation emphasised the need for transparency, accountability, simplification and flexibility in the use of financial resources. The S&D Group insisted that member states must clearly recognise their responsibility for the administration of EU funds. Our Group supported the enhancement of the European Anti-Fraud Office's powers and encouraged the Court of Auditors to better scrutinise the performance of EU policies and programmes, and therefore **the effectiveness of the spending of taxpayers' money**. Finally we supported the development of an EU criminal law, including a European Public Prosecutor, to protect the financial interests of the EU.

A new Common Agricultural Policy for 2014-2020 was adopted with important changes, such as greater transparency in relation to beneficiaries of CAP money; a fairer distribution of subsidies between older and newer member states and within member states; ensuring subsidies only go to genuine and active farmers; supporting young

and new farmers; and making environmental criteria a condition of receiving CAP funds. The S&D Group welcomed the changes, even though the more radical reform we had campaigned for was blocked by some member states and by right-wing MEPs in the Parliament. We will continue to demand greater transparency, a less bureaucratic system and the creation of stable rules for the medium and long term so farmers can plan their investments safely. **We want to support European farmers and a strong CAP**, reinforced by 2020, which is effective, fair, sustainable, responsible and able to tackle new challenges.

We successfully negotiated a reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy** which will ensure the sustainability of European fisheries and the recovery of fish stocks, bringing an end to overfishing by reducing overcapacity, gradually eliminating discards and fishing above maximum sustainable yield level, and regionalising fisheries management to achieve a healthy marine and freshwater environment.

The Group has played a crucial role in negotiations with the Council and the European Commission on the legal framework for the **Cohesion Policy 2014-2020** by re-affirming the importance of regional cohesion and solidarity. As the largest EU investment programme, cohesion policy is and remains an EU-wide policy, providing resources and experience in tackling economic and social problems in all EU regions. The S&Ds fought for **the creation of simpler and more flexible rules for all**

beneficiaries. The Group stressed the decisive role of national, regional, local authorities and civil society, including NGOs, in drawing up and implementing partnership agreements. **Our policy aims at promoting smart, 'green' jobs, especially through backing SMEs, research and innovation, sustainable transport, telecommunications, renewable energies, fighting poverty and unemployment, social exclusion and responding to the needs of the disabled and the elderly – as well as taking into account globalisation, climate change and demographic challenges**. The Group also called for a common strategic framework to coordinate cohesion policies with other EU policies, to avoid overlapping and ensure more effective use of EU funds.

"TAX EVASION IS MONEY STOLEN FROM THE PUBLIC AND GROWTH AND JOBS LOST. IT IS TIME TO STOP FRAUDSTERS AND TAX EXILES!"

A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT THE SERVICE OF CITIZENS

The urgent need to tackle the current crisis has, to some extent, relegated environmental concerns and the concept of sustainable development to a lower level in the global political debate. Yet these concepts remain valid and we strongly believe that they should be fully integrated in our global approach to a fair way out of the crisis.

We successfully concluded negotiations on **a new Energy Efficiency Directive**. While far from meeting our original demands, the agreement will, nonetheless, significantly help achieve the 20% energy efficiency target by 2020.

We led the way on new legislation to help support and finance the modernisation of Europe's creaking infrastructure, so that it is fit to meet our mobility, climate and energy goals. Granting of permits for the projects identified as of European interest will be streamlined and expedited, and public funding will be used efficiently to leverage private investment and target new infrastructure which is in the public interest but not sufficiently viable to be financed by the markets alone.

We took a leading role on the strategically important **Horizon 2020** framework programme for research and innovation (2014-2020), a fundamental tool for Europe to overcome the crisis and return to economic growth, where we put a special emphasis on supporting small businesses and human capital.

We advocated the **development of high-quality digital infrastructure** to underpin all the sectors of a modern and innovative economy and society, and for a connected society where all citizens would have access to the internet, wherever they live. We will continue this fight despite the lack of ambition on the part of the Commission and the budget cuts decided by the Council.

We kept the consumer at the heart of our decision-making, in pushing for **reduced prices for mobile phone roaming calls**, texts and internet use, initiating a campaign to put an end to the concept of additional roaming costs altogether and calling for an EU-wide market with no difference between national and EU roaming prices.

We led the European Parliament position on supporting infrastructure investments to connect Europe with a **properly funded, multi-modal, efficient and sustainable European transport network**. We prioritised greener modes of transport such as rail and inland waterways. We paved the way towards the achievement of a true **European Railway Area** while keeping public service operations and social and working conditions in the sector high on the agenda. Regarding the implementation of the **European Single Sky**, we continue to act to ensure that the benefits of lower costs and reduced fuel consumption are delivered. We fought for the **improvement of passengers' rights** in the event of flight delays or cancellations.

Airport noise regulations and the social rights of airport workers were other priorities. We defended proper funding in the fight against maritime pollution and pushed for the deployment of infrastructure for alternative fuels.

To protect our environment, our Group was very active in the adoption of the **Directive on Restricting the Use of Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment**, which ensures that toxic waste is reduced to the minimum when disposing of this type of equipment. We also played a very active role during the legislative process on the Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, contributing to reducing environmental damage while retaining the valuable resources in electronic equipment. In supporting the **Regulation on CO₂ Emissions from Vans** we encouraged the development of **green technologies designed to boost job creation** and to give our manufacturers a competitive edge over cheaper and more polluting vehicles.

Other examples of our action for the environment are the new **Regulation on Biocidal Products**, the **'Seveso III' Directive** which deals with the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances and the Regulation on Illegal Logging of Timber. We spearheaded a push for the European Parliament to take a position in favour of a new ambitious climate and energy framework for 2030, including binding



targets for CO₂ reduction, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

We consider that **fair access to safe, high-quality healthcare for all EU citizens is essential**. With the **Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross-border Healthcare** we managed to achieve a good balance between the right to seek the best treatment and the protection of financially sustainable national healthcare systems. We also worked hard on important pieces of legislation such as Falsified Medicines and Pharmacovigilance which aim

to improve patient safety in relation to medicines in general. We took the lead in the adoption of the **Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to Consumers**, which was much needed after the scandal surrounding the fraudulent use of horsemeat in frozen foods. Work has almost concluded on a revision of the **Clinical Trials Regulation** where we made significant progress in updating the legislation with rules that will provide better safeguards for those taking part in clinical trials, and putting efficient procedures in place enabling the EU to regain its competitive edge in the ever-demanding

search for new medicines and cures. We also played a leading role in drafting legislation, soon to be concluded, to deter young people from taking up smoking. We were also effective in steering through tighter rules on the approval and use of medical devices to ensure safety and reliability, and prevent malpractice or fraud, as happened in the case of the defective breast implant health scare.

PHOTO ABOVE: The S&D Group hosted an Alternative Energy Summit discussing a progressive energy plan for Europe, Bibliothèque Solvay, Brussels, 1 February 2011

OUR STRUGGLE FOR A DEMOCRATIC EUROPE AND THE PROTECTION OF CITIZENS' FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS



PHOTO © Uroš Kekuš Kleva

PHOTO ABOVE: S&D Group Roma trainees, European Parliament, Brussels, 9 April 2013

In the area of creating a citizens' Europe, the Group has fought a fierce battle **to defend and promote our values of common human dignity, common humanity and personal security**. On fundamental rights, we have pushed the European Parliament to call for **a coherent EU human rights policy, a more effective EU response to breaches of rights, democracy and the rule of law, and a permanent scoreboard on justice, the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights**.

The battle to ensure that the Schengen system is treated as a European concern continues. We opposed any attempt to call into question, undermine or renationalise such an essential part of the European project, based not only on an internal market, but also on the basic principle of **freedom of circulation**. We have led moves to make it easier for citizens to have public documents recognised across borders.

Our work against the extreme right, including its effect on the Roma, emphasises **our strong and united position against extremism**, drawing attention not only to its dangers, but also to its impact on 'mainstream' right-wing politics and governments.

The Group has maintained a positive approach on the issues of legal migration and integration, in the face of rising xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric. We achieved a positive result on the **Seasonal Workers Directive** and we continue

to negotiate on legal migration. Leading the way on the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund**, we have prioritised funding for action to foster integration and bolster the **Common European Asylum System**. We argued for a sustainable asylum policy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms in European and international legislation. Hence our support for the EU asylum package which should ensure major improvements to the daily realities of asylum seekers, offering a fairer, quicker, more consistent and better-quality system across Europe.

Our Group will continue to push for an ambitious European approach to non-discrimination, ensuring that existing legislation is properly implemented and monitored – and that the horizontal directive is not buried or watered down in Council.

We continue work to ensure that the Lisbon Treaty produces a more democratic Europe for the citizen. We have had particular successes on the **SWIFT agreement** (on data transfers between banks) where the European Parliament, using its new powers under the Lisbon Treaty for the first time, refused to consent to a questionable agreement between the EU and the United States in the field of data processing and transfer in the fight against terrorism and serious crime. This forced the Commission and the US to negotiate a new agreement giving better democratic guarantees, although the final result remained controversial in some aspects. In order

to address citizens' concerns on data protection, we were at the forefront of negotiations that led to an agreement within the Parliament on new laws that, if adopted, will guarantee the principles of citizens' rights, consent and information. **Our concerns over data protection led us to play a pivotal role in the Parliament's rejection of ACTA, the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement**. While acknowledging that the infringement of intellectual property rights is on the increase and that measures at international level are needed, our Group was fully aware of the many serious concerns expressed by citizens, given the vagueness of the ACTA text, over the potential threat to civil liberties. Intellectual property and copyright have been a huge battleground and we have worked for a balanced view, respecting the rights of creators as well as online consumers' rights.

We strongly supported the European Citizens' Initiative, and the regulation establishing it, as a means of increasing direct democracy, public participation and involvement in the European debate.

We led the European Parliament to set up **a temporary committee on organised crime, corruption and money laundering**, pushing for an EU definition of mafia-style organised crime, in order to stop human trafficking, corruption and money laundering, and to return the money to the legal economy.

In the debate on the future direction of democracy in Europe, **we have argued for European values, including equality and social justice, and for institutional reforms that respect the community method, democratic participation and a greater role for the European Parliament**. We have worked hard to have the EU adopt an effective statute for European political parties and foundations, accede to the European Convention on Human Rights, and for parliamentary committees of inquiry to have powers in line with their responsibilities.

“**THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND THE RIGHT TO CITIZENSHIP ARE AS IMPORTANT AS DEFENDING SOCIAL RIGHTS AND STANDARDS FOR ALL**”

EUROPE IN THE WORLD: ENHANCING THE UNIVERSAL VALUES OF DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY



PHOTO © Uros Kekus Kleva

Over the last few years the S&D Group has developed a coherent foreign and defence policy, based on the **principles of solidarity, freedom, justice and equality**. The Group has constantly defended respect for international law and human rights, and advocated multi-lateralism based on efficient world governance rules. It has developed a more strategic, coherent and integrated EU foreign policy, making full use of the institutional innovations of the Lisbon Treaty, in favour of European citizens and citizens from third countries. We supported the appropriate bodies in promoting these policies, such as the World Forum of Progressive Parliamentary Leaders, which we are committed to developing with the support of

the Global Progressive Forum. The Group has multiplied its contacts with progressive MPs, most notably in the four joint parliamentary assemblies, and with civil society across the world.

Latin America has a lot in common with Europe while still facing huge problems of poverty and inequality. Progressive forces are now governing most Latin American countries and have positively changed the face of the continent. **We are co-operating with Latin America on its regional integration and sustainable development**, strengthening the strategic progressive partnership with the EU. We made it clear that we were not prepared to sign a trade agreement with Colombia until it has put a roadmap in place to improve its human-rights record and to improve the situation for trade unionists. We also support the building of a stronger partnership with Brazil to help it increase its presence on the world stage.

Our Group constantly supported the development of an Eastern Partnership. However, we are concerned about the lack of progress in some of these countries toward the standards we expect. This is the case with Belarus which continues to be a flagrant abuser of human rights. We welcome the association agreements with Moldova and Georgia, but we regret the failure to reach an agreement with Ukraine, whose internal situation remains a source of concern. We have not, however, closed the door to a future EU-Ukraine agreement.

We consider that EU enlargement has been a success, as recently proven by Croatia. **It is good for all citizens in stimulating our economies, encouraging job creation and promoting our human rights values and social standards.** We believe that the Western Balkan countries and Turkey have their place in the EU, although, in the latter case, we need to pay close attention to the evolving situation in terms of compliance with our democratic values. The doors remain open to Iceland.

The Group has continued to play a leading role in Mediterranean and Middle-Eastern policies in the European Parliament and beyond – through the GPF in particular – in the context of the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. S&D MEPs have taken key parliamentary initiatives to actively support the democratic transition processes, notably in Tunisia. We were also active as regards Libya and Syria. In the latter case we focused on the humanitarian catastrophe and visited Syria's neighbouring countries to assess the situation. We held discussions with representatives from the Syrian opposition and with youth representatives from 'Arab Spring' states and other countries. We encouraged the development of partnerships and trade relations between the EU and southern Mediterranean countries. The situation in the region is fragile and fighting corruption and strengthening social justice remain the key challenges. Therefore, **we fully support**

progressive like-minded groups and parties, notably within the framework of the 'Arab Social Democratic Forum', especially young people. S&D presidents have visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory with a view to further strengthening our relations with sister parties and like-minded actors in civil society there. **We want the EU to be a 'player' in the region** rather than just a 'payer'. We opposed the EU-Israeli trade agreement as a protest against the Israeli settlement policy and blockade of the Gaza strip. We opposed EU funding of activities linked to settlement activities. We encourage the relaunch of peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

The Group continues to pursue its objectives towards a **Transatlantic Progressive Network**. In these times of financial crisis and rising unemployment both the EU and US need to develop their economic and trade relations, so this dialogue remains critical. Any deal, however, must be compatible with our values and social and environmental standards. In the spirit of this, on **PNR (Passenger Name Records)** and SWIFT our Group played a leading role in shaping the Parliament's position and mediating with our US counterparts to secure a balanced relationship. We were among the first to express our outrage and call for the suspension of negotiations when the news broke about the huge US spying scandal.

The S&D Group and its president have been active players in the dynamic shaping of **EU-Russia relations** throughout the last decade, maintaining a constant dialogue, advocating human rights and having regular meetings with partners from 'A Just Russia' and representatives of the legislative body and the Moscow government.

In recent years the S&D Group has also developed **a dynamic and substantive**

dialogue with China. Our Group was very active in the organisation of the EU and China High-Level Political Parties and Groups Forum, one of the most pre-eminent initiatives. We have constantly supported an improvement of relations with China while **demanding more respect for human rights and higher social and environmental standards.** These principles also formed the basis of our efforts to improve EU relations with the rest of Asia. We have made increasing efforts to create new discussion forums with emerging powers, including Brazil, India and South Africa.

Our Group used the European Parliament's new powers in external relations policies – most notably in international trade agreements – **to fight against discrimination and for equality of rights and opportunities, paying particular attention to the situation of women and children, trade unions and civil society organisations.** We have firmly stated our fundamental values and constantly insisted on including binding social, labour and environmental rules and standards in all free trade agreements. As mentioned earlier in this report, we were at the forefront of the rejection of ACTA by the Parliament, ensuring that defending intellectual property rights and innovation does not come at the expense of encroaching on civil liberties.

We were very vocal in our condemnation of rogue regimes such as in North Korea. In the case of Iran we are willing to use the recent political window of opportunity to develop better relations and dialogue.

We have ensured that development issues are kept high on the agenda. **We must put to an end to gambling with food prices.** We are in favour of a traceability system for raw materials.

EU companies should not make profit at the expense of the rights of people in developing countries to fair working conditions and a decent life. Poverty eradication, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, aid effectiveness and policy coherence for development remain our political priorities. **Our approach is based on human rights, respect for all minorities, equality, respect for women's rights, social justice and good governance.** We supported the regionalisation process, multilateralism, a better representation of developing countries in regional organisations, the role of local and regional authorities, and dialogue with civil society. We pushed for new forms of co-operation such as Sud-Sud and the triangular co-operation. The S&D Group prioritised relations with Africa as equal partners by helping our neighbours stand on their own feet and putting to an end the plundering of this continent by imposing high standards on EU companies working there, in terms of environmental protection, human rights and the duty to pay fair taxes. We are proud that the EU is the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid and do not want this to be challenged by conservative financial austerity. **We want to develop an EU volunteer force in the field of humanitarian operations.**

Recent conflicts, extremists on our doorstep, hostile countries trying to develop or acquire weapons of mass destruction and drug trafficking are for us important reasons to promote and encourage **a common defence and security policy (CSDP) for the EU.** The Group has actively supported the successful transfer of tasks previously fulfilled by the western European Union into the architecture of the EU through the CSDP, with specific emphasis on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's mutual defence and solidarity clauses.

PHOTO ABOVE: Giving a voice to young citizens, Relaunching Europe event, Nottingham, 1 December 2012

ABOUT THE S&D GROUP

The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (the S&D Group) is the second largest political group in the European Parliament with 194 members from all 28 EU member states.

We stand for an inclusive European society based on principles of solidarity, equality, diversity, freedom and fairness. We promote social justice, jobs and growth, consumer rights, sustainable development, financial market reforms and human rights to create a stronger and more democratic Europe and a better future for all citizens.



Women MEPs and staff of the S&D Group, International Women's Day, European Parliament, Brussels, 8 March 2013



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