

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER

## Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 17 and 18 October 2019

The priority of our Group has always been to avoid a no-deal Brexit scenario, so as to reduce uncertainty, to protect the peace process in Ireland and Northern Ireland and to safeguard citizens' rights. A deal is the best way to achieve this, but not at any price. We will study in detail to see if our red lines are respected. The European Parliament will have a final say in case the agreement on the table gets the backing of the British Parliament. Regarding the next multiannual EU budget, we want to start negotiations as soon as possible with the Council, but one thing must be clear: we will not accept anything less than the 1.3% GNI that was already adopted by the Parliament in November 2018. The just transition to a sustainable economy needs fresh money.



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## Situation in Syria

The EU seems to be united in condemning the Turkish military operation, but bitterly fails to take concrete action. What is needed is a high-level diplomatic effort to immediately stop the Turkish incursion and to re-start the settlement process on the Kurdish question. This military operation brings a humanitarian disaster to the people in North-East Syria; it makes the situation for Syrian refugees in Turkey very insecure; and it could enable Islamic State to resurge - all effects which also have a direct influence on European citizens.



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## Search and rescue in the Mediterranean

The European Parliament will debate search and rescue in the Mediterranean next week. Saving lives at sea is both a moral duty and a legal obligation. Too many people are losing their lives in the Mediterranean. This is an urgent situation and we have a system that is in urgent need of reform. But we are not getting that same sense of urgency from the Commission or Member States. The priority for the S&D Group is to strengthen search and rescue operations, making them more reliable and sustainable. Search and rescue cannot be left to NGOs alone and we certainly should not be criminalizing their efforts.



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## European Court of Auditors Annual Report

The presentation of the European Court of Auditors' (ECA) Annual Report marks the beginning of the discharge cycle related to 2018 financial year.

We welcome the ECA Annual Report for 2018 and the conclusions of the Court, which demonstrate that there is a continuing improvement in the management of EU's finances. However, challenges and problems remain in high-risk spending areas, which require further measures by the Commission and the Member States for reducing the risk of errors and for increasing absorption and performance of EU budget resources.



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## 2017 discharge of EU Council and Council

Since 2009, the Parliament has not been granting discharge to the Council. This year, once again, the Council did not provide the Parliament with the required information in order to grant discharge, and did not deem necessary to reply favorably to the Committee on Budgetary Control's invitation to its annual discharge hearing of "other institutions".

In March 2019, the Parliament voted against granting discharge to the Council, which automatically postponed the decision of granting discharge to October. In the light of no significant improvement since March, the Parliament will maintain its position to vote against discharge.

Our group managed to secure the adoption of a very balanced report, recognizing the slight progress made by Council, remaining, however, very firm on Parliament's expectations. It is worth stressing that a wide majority adopted the S&D amendment expressing concerns about Presidency sponsorships.



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**THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER**

## 2019 Sakharov Prize

On Thursday the Conference of Presidents will take the decision on the 2019 Sakharov Prize laureate. This year the Socialists and Democrats jointly nominated three Brazilian activists: Chief Raoni, Claudelice Silva dos Santos and posthumous, Marielle Franco, and I am very glad that our nominees are among three shortlisted finalists. They represent voices for human rights and protection of the environment. It would be the first time that the Sakharov prize is awarded to environmental human rights defenders and an LGBTI-activist. The climate emergency that we are facing is more than enough reason to give this award to people fighting against the destruction of our planet and to defend indigenous people's rights. More and more environmental activists are losing their lives and the numbers of threats, harassment and violence against them are increasing at an alarming rate, especially in Brazil and the countries surrounding the Amazon forest.



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**S&Ds president Iratxe García Pérez's press conference on Tuesday 22 October from 10:10 to 10:30 CET in Strasbourg in room LOW N -1/201 - Watch live at [www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu)**

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