


European Union – an area of Freedom, Security and Justice



PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF THE PARTY OF EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS



Europe's key challenge is to tackle people's real concerns, hence the commitment to build a genuine area of freedom, security and justice, based on human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law. This is now an EU responsibility, at the top of the political agenda since 1999 when a progressive strategy was defined to allow our citizens to enjoy **freedom in security**, guaranteed through a solid legal framework with **justice** accessible to all.

Freedom

To guarantee freedom, the EU is creating rules to enable citizens to live, work and travel safely in the EU. One of our top priorities is to **guarantee the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms**. We monitor annually compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights regarding Human Rights in the EU, and so want this Charter integrated into the Treaties, to make it legally binding.

Our other **key priorities** are:

- the fight against all forms of discrimination;
- the guarantee of free movement;
- stronger rights linked to European citizenship;
- a balance between security and safeguarding citizens' rights including personal data protection.

The EU is also creating a **common asylum and immigration policy**. We want common rules for:

- all seeking protection under humanitarian obligations;
- a common framework for fair management of immigration;
- fair treatment of third country nationals, through integration policies and by granting legal, social and political rights to long-term residents.

A partnership with countries of origin is vital to promote co-development, respect for human rights and the fight against human trafficking.

Security

The EU must promote freedom by strengthening customs services and internal security whilst guaranteeing respect for individual rights and freedoms through joint action to:

- prevent crime and combat organised crime (human trafficking, sexual exploitation, arms and drug smuggling, corruption, fraud, money laundering, etc.);
- combat terrorism as well as racism and xenophobia;
- have stronger co-operation between national police forces and appropriate measures to control external borders.



Justice

A genuine area of justice is needed to safeguard freedom so people can approach courts and authorities in any Member State as easily as in their own. We want:

- better co-operation, compatibility and more convergence between national legal systems to stop criminals taking advantage of current differences and we are pressing for mutual recognition of judgements and decisions across the EU;
- common minimum standards for the protection of individuals' rights in criminal procedures.

Our Approach & the role of the European Parliament

As many of these issues touch on national sovereignty, most measures must be adopted in the Council of Ministers unanimously, meaning slow progress towards consensus and weak final measures. Parliament is still not directly involved in decisions in this area but is only consulted, and although **its position** in defending citizens' rights is **almost always adopted in Parliament** it is not binding, and in controversial areas it is not incorporated by the Council.

Nevertheless, we can claim success in many areas:

- **Public access to documents** ▶ considerable improvements so the adopted regulation means real progress in the fight for openness and transparency.
- **Data protection** ▶ introduction, application and monitoring of data protection rules in the EU institutions and bodies.
- **Fighting racism and xenophobia** ▶ stronger provisions and a clearer definition of offences.
- **Eurojust** ▶ creation of this judicial unit, to stimulate and improve co-ordination of investigations and prosecutions between Member States.
- **Fight against terrorism** ▶ common definition of terrorism and a common scale of sanctions, crucial in forging a common EU anti-terrorism regime.
- **European Arrest Warrant (EAW)** ▶ implementation of Parliament's pre September 11 proposal for the EAW to combat terrorism. will end the need for extradition as decisions are mutually recognised.
- **Europol** ▶ we want Parliament to have democratic control over this European Police system, stronger data protection measures, and more effective means to tackle organised crime and terrorism.
- **Immigration and asylum** ▶ more positive provisions (generally opposed by the 'right' in Parliament) including more categories of people to have the right to family reunification; creation of a status for long term residents to protect their rights; and harmonised rules for residence permits covering economic activities, studies, or training. Progress towards a Common Asylum Policy, in particular, through clearer criteria for determining the country responsible for an asylum application and minimum standards for granting refugee status.

These are just a few examples where we have secured better provisions for the citizen.


Common problems need common solutions so we want the new Constitution to:

- include simpler and more understandable rules;
- create easier decision-making through majority votes in the Council;
- involve Parliament in all decision-making procedures to guarantee democratic control.

Only this way can we build the genuine European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice we want.



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