



Plenary Update

Socialists and Democrats Group
In the European Parliament
Strasbourg - September Plenary Session

PRESS
CONFERENCE
with Gianni Pittella
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Our Priorities

► *Wed 13* State of the Union

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Citizens believe in the need for a stronger Europe. A new European momentum is being built but for it to gather pace we need to live up to people's expectations with actions and not only words. After Brexit and after the next crucial elections, we will have no more excuses left and only 18 months to deliver. We must update the core functioning of the European Union. We don't care about scenarios. We care about substance and we expect – and we demand – Juncker be courageous and visionary in next week's State of the Union speech.

The revision of the Treaty can no longer be a taboo. Let's speak frankly: The European Council is the real problem here. The European Council far too often wields the veto that undermines the decisions taken by the European Commission and the Parliament. This political governance should be radically changed providing a more democratic and balanced functioning. We encourage the Commission to adopt extraordinary measures to overcome this stalemate, being aware that the European Parliament is ready to throw its institutional and democratic weight behind this battle for change. We propose to the Commission a new alliance to counterbalance and outweigh the very negative role played by the Council.



PITTELLA
Gianni

► *Tues 12* Situation in North Korea

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Military escalation is not an option. Diplomatic multilateral efforts are the only responsible way forward to resolve the situation with North Korea. Hence, we call on China, Russia and the US to throw their political and economic weight behind the international commitment to find a peaceful solution. In this volatile context, it is crucial Europe is united and as vocal as possible in order to counter-balance any possible unilateral and irreversible action. At the same time the international community should be ready in the case of any offensive action by the North Korea regime. Europe, along with the international community, should consider all possible measures to put maximum pressure on the Pyongyang regime, including further sanctions.



PITTELLA
Gianni

► *Wed 13* The future of the Erasmus+ programme

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The 30-year anniversary of Erasmus+ should not only be a reason to celebrate but also an occasion to think about the future of the programme. The culture committee has presented a resolution to start discussions on a follow-up programme after 2020. The Socialists and Democrats have always viewed Erasmus as an important investment in Europe's future and have therefore pushed strongly for strong financial support. We aim to give every citizen under 27 the opportunity, to take part in at least one of the programme's options in future. This requires a much larger budget for the next programme period.



KAMMEREVERT
Petra

► *Wed 13* Draft amending budget No 4/2017 accompanying the proposal to mobilise the European Union Solidarity Fund to assist Italy

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After Italy's application to the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) following the three earthquakes between August 2016 and January 2017, the European Parliament will grant €1.2 billion to Italy to repair the damage.

The grant is the largest ever pay-out through this fund. In fact, it exceeds the limit of total EU spending allocated to disaster aid in 2017. This is why the Commission is committing funds that were designated for 2018 (so-called 'front-loading'). However that means that next year we will already have used more than half of the money available for the EUSF.

Nevertheless, granting disaster aid is a strong signal to Italy and European citizens. The EU will act on one of its core values: solidarity. At the same time, nobody can predict how much money we will need next year for disaster aid. By using next year's funding now, less money will be available. Consequently, we will need to fight for additional money for the EUSF in the upcoming negotiations for the EU budget 2018.



GEIER
Jens

► **Mon 11** Impact of international trade and EU trade policies on global value chains

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ARENA Marie

The European Union is the largest trading block in the world and the largest supplier of goods and services. It therefore has a key role to play and must be able to ensure that human and fundamental rights, and the goals of sustainable development are respected.

With this initiative report, we call for rules to be established obliging multinational corporations to respect human and environmental rights, as the EU has already done on conflict minerals and in the wood sector.

► **Thurs 14** A new skills agenda for Europe

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NEKOV
Momchil

The New Skills Agenda for Europe, set out in the Commission communication 'A New Skills Agenda for Europe - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness', launches a number of actions and initiatives. It aims to make better use of the skills available and to equip people with the new skills needed to help them adapt and anticipate change, find quality jobs and improve their life chances.

The report welcomes the way the New Skills Agenda encourages a shared commitment from education providers and employers to a common vision of lifelong-learning policies. It calls for everyone to have the right to real access to skills, at every stage of life, in order to acquire the fundamental skills for the 21st century.

Moreover, the S&D Group considers there is a need to balance the Commission proposal. It should include a stronger focus on access to quality education for all, support for learning mobility, stronger involvement of social partners, more recognition of non-formal and informal learning skills, and better provision of digital skills, as well as using digital technologies in an innovative and creative way.

Education and training are not only key factors in enhancing employability, but also in fostering personal development, social inclusion and cohesion, and active citizenship. Equal access to quality education and adequate investment in skills and competences are therefore crucial to tackling high unemployment rates and social exclusion, especially among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

► **Tues 12** EU strategic relations with India

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GILL Neena

A strengthened partnership between the world's largest democracies is vital to implement the Paris agenda on climate, preserve global peace and stability, and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the current fast-changing global context in which populism and isolationist approaches are on the rise, we also need to engage India as a potential key partner for strengthening the rule-based global order.

The S&Ds welcome this report as a good basis for further strengthening relations and were successful in securing positive language on climate change and co-operation on renewable energy, universal disarmament and non-proliferation, human rights – including the rights of women and LGBTIQ people – and fostering freedom of expression and diversity.

The Socialists and Democrats now call on both sides to tap the potential of relations between the EU – as the world's leading trading bloc – and India - which tops the ranks of the fastest growing major economies – to fight poverty and inequality, create jobs and growth, and advance gender equality.

► **Tues 12** Promotion of internet connectivity in local communities

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ZORINHO
Carlos

The WIFI4EU Initiative was a strong political vision that will soon become a reality throughout the EU, guaranteeing that, regardless of where they live or how much they earn, every European should benefit from high quality wifi connectivity. This will help us move towards a 'European gigabit society', making it economically competitive and socially inclusive. As a reference project, WIFI4EU can lead the way to effective connectivity for EU citizens. Geographical balance between and within member states can be ensured through the creation of a single authentication system valid throughout the EU and capable of promoting digital inclusion.

► **Tues 12** Arms export: implementation of Common Position 2008/944/CFSP

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AYALA
SENDER Inés

The latest figures show that exports from the EU28 amounted to 26% of the global total in 2012-2016, which makes the EU28 collectively the second largest arms supplier in the world after the USA (33%), just ahead of Russia (23%). According to the most recent report by the Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports (COARM), EU countries were granted arms export licences with a total value of €9.40 billion in 2014.

The report urges EU member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to significantly improve consistency in implementing the common position in order to improve the security of civilians suffering conflict and human-rights abuses in third countries, and the security of the EU and its citizens, and to create a level playing field for EU companies. It stresses that in this context applying the Common Position consistently is essential for the EU's credibility as a values-based global actor.

We as the S&D Group have long supported the call for creating an arms-control supervisory body under the auspices of the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, the creation of a mechanism which could sanction member states that do not comply with the common position, and finally stronger reporting obligations.