



ACTIVITY REPORT 2022



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

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President's foreword

Dear Comrades,
Dear Friends,

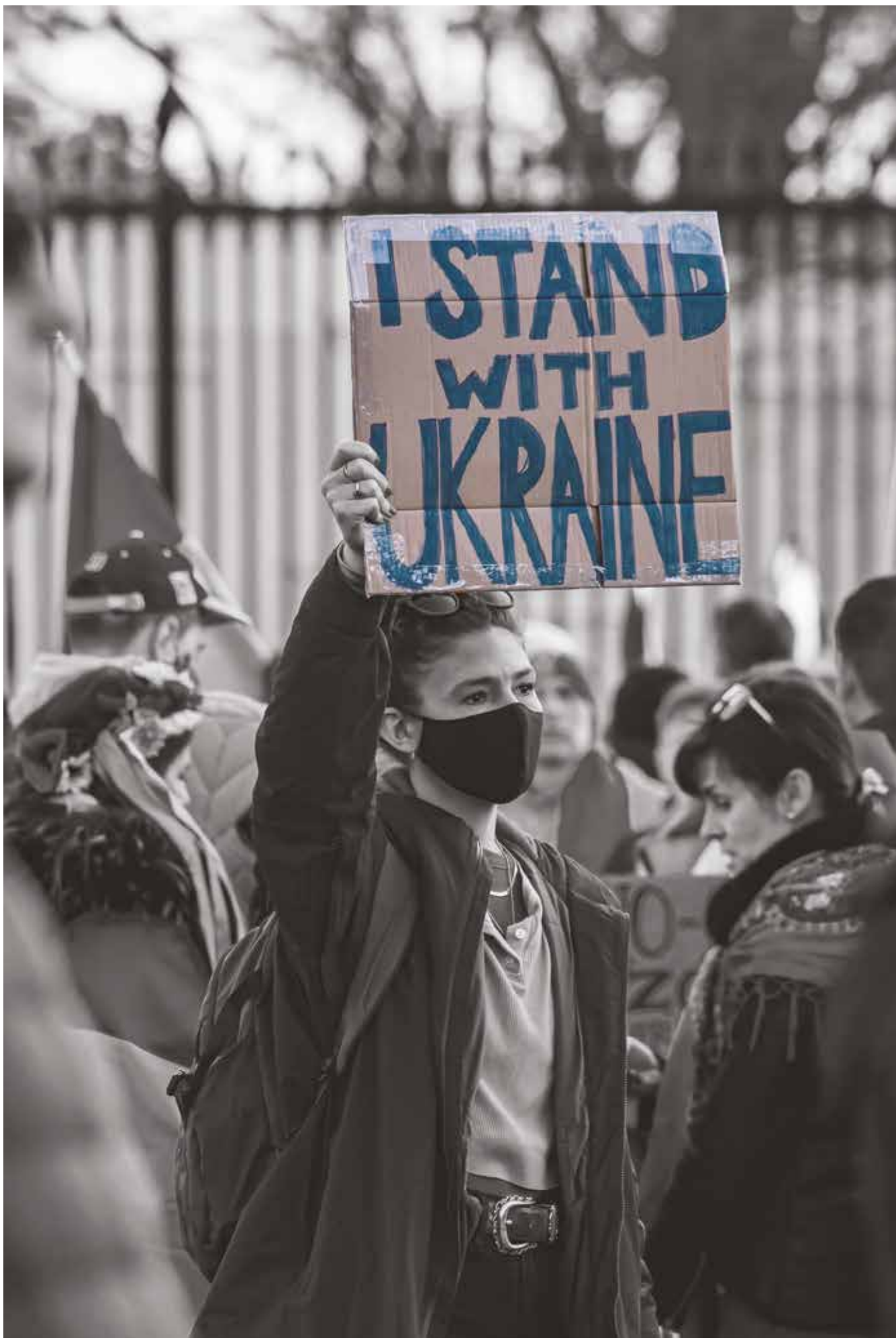
It has been challenging times for all of us since the last PES Congress in 2018 and the European elections in 2019. While we were still coming to terms with saying farewell to our British friends, we were confronted with the COVID pandemic in 2020, and then the war in Ukraine in February 2022. Putin's war has come as a shock, and has disrupted our lives on every level. Like everyone else, we experienced the devastation caused by the pandemic, and we are now suffering from this war of aggression. Nevertheless, we can say with conviction that the S&D Group, together with our Prime Ministers, Commissioners and the PES, has been, and still is, at the forefront in tackling the health and the socio-economic crises caused by the pandemic and the war. I truly believe that the people of Europe recognise these efforts.

Looking back, we can be proud of what we have achieved so far. Our Group has been the driving force behind some of the most notable accomplishments in the EU's recent history. Together we have shown that it is both possible and necessary to reshape the way our Union operates. We started this mandate by delivering on our promise to ensure gender parity in the European Commission for the first time. During the pandemic, we proved that there was a credible alternative to the failed response to the 2008 crisis, and the subsequent years of austerity.

This crisis has truly been a wake-up call, and an opportunity for our Group to implement our political and policy agenda towards more integration, solidarity and sustainability. Today we are witnessing how the military occupation of Ukraine by Putin's regime, with all its repercussions, is putting even more pressure on the existing challenges we face: the pandemic, climate change, energy crisis, social justice, state of democracy, equality and women's rights, to mention but a few.

Friends, we are living in extraordinary times. In times of uncertainty, the best thing we can do for our democracies and for the Union is to strengthen our social policies. Since the last PES Congress, the S&D Group has delivered, but our future requires a radical rethinking of our society. We need therefore to fight for and deliver on game-changing projects such as the European Green Deal, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Next Generation EU, the Rule of Law mechanism, and for changes on Tax Transparency. We need to strengthen the EU's place in the global order. To sum up: we have to deliver a truly green agenda with a red heart. Together, we have successfully initiated this shift, and I am sure that our Group will continue to work tirelessly to improve people's lives, and to make the S&D the biggest parliamentary group in 2024.

Iratxe García Pérez
S&D Group President



On the 24th of February 2022, peace in Europe was shattered. It was shattered by Russia's use of indiscriminate force to rewrite history and deny Ukraine the freedom to choose its own independent path.

Response to the war in Ukraine

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has become the biggest geopolitical challenge and threat to stability in Europe since the Cold War. From day one, the S&D Group has been a leading force in its support for Ukraine, and for sanctions against Russia. Our immediate reaction to the invasion was to secure the adoption of the **European Parliament's resolutions on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and on the social and economic consequences of the war for the EU.** In March 2022, a delegation of S&D Group members visited Ukraine in a show of unwavering support for the Ukrainian people, who are fighting this unprovoked, illegal and unjustified war.



Within the Secretariat, we have set up a traineeship programme to welcome young progressive Ukrainian interns and give them the opportunity to work alongside S&D Group staff.



Inevitably, the war has had a major impact on the geopolitical order and security architecture in Europe. The S&D Group **supports Sweden and Finland's bid to join NATO**, and crucially important, S&D lawmakers have called for the granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.



We fully support the ambitions of these countries to fulfil EU membership criteria. At the same time, we remain strong advocates of the EU's enlargement to the Western Balkans. In this spirit, we also welcomed the launch of the negotiation process with Albania and North Macedonia in July 2022.



More than half
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In addition, the S&D Group has worked hard to ensure the adoption of a strong resolution that highlights the urgent need to **protect children fleeing the war in Ukraine**. More than half of the millions of refugees who have fled Ukraine are children. There are also millions of children displaced within Ukraine. We want an effective response from the Commission and the Council in the form of an EU-Ukraine Child Protection Package that will protect vulnerable children fleeing war, both in the EU and in Ukraine.







The European Union as a catalyst for peace

Globally, we continue to promote the EU as an important catalyst for peace, human security and sustainable development. In this context, the S&D Group successfully called for the setting up of the **EU's Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime**, and we are consistently working to target economic and financial enablers of human rights abuses through a complementary EU anti-corruption sanctions regime.

We managed to include provisions in the EU budget for the S&D's flagship project the **'European Observatory on the Fight against Impunity'**, which is aimed at closing the accountability gap, and giving voice to the victims of serious human rights violations and abuses, in a safe environment.

COVID-19: Strategic autonomy supported by a fair & just transition

The first half of the 2019-2024 parliamentary term has not only been dominated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic as well. The havoc wreaked by the pandemic exposed many structural weaknesses, and worsened existing inequalities in our world of global interdependencies. Against this backdrop, strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy has been widely discussed, as the EU must be able to protect its citizens, pursue its interests, and stand for its values globally. The concept of **strategic autonomy** was originally referred to in the context of security and defence. However, the term is now more widely applied to a broad range of policies. Enhanced strategic autonomy enables the EU to cooperate with its partners where possible, but act autonomously when needed, and without falling into the trap of autarky.

Once again, the pandemic highlighted that the EU has a responsibility towards developing countries throughout the world, giving support in a spirit of equal partnership, solidarity, and cooperation. We must live up to this responsibility if we want to create a safer, more prosperous, and more equitable world for future generations.



Against this background, the S&D Group called for a review of the European Economic framework to ensure **a fair and just transition**, and allow the EU to react to the COVID outbreak and the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Our Group ardently called for the suspension of the Stability and Growth Pact, with the activation of the escape clause to be maintained for as long as required. Furthermore, the Group has intensified the debate within the European Parliament on the review of the **EU's fiscal rules**. With the S&D Group at the helm, the report, which calls for a golden rule for sustainable investments and an EU fiscal capacity, was adopted in July 2021.



COVID-19: Vaccines & the recovery package

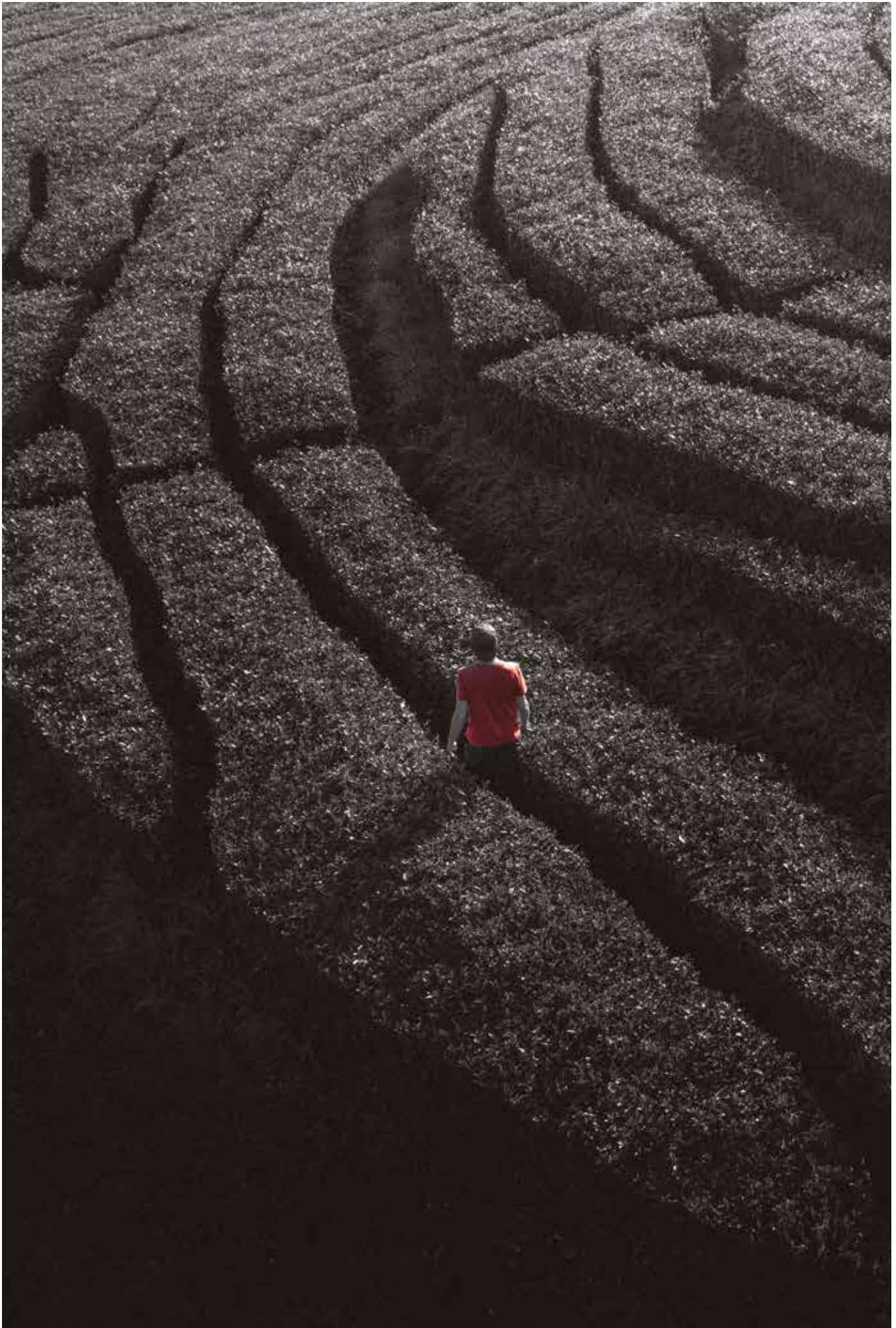
Crucially important, the European Parliament led by the S&D Group, called for **the temporary waiver of the WTO TRIPS patent on Covid-19 vaccines** to accelerate global vaccine rollout and save lives. In 2021, we were instrumental in the adoption of the resolution on the Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights waiver for medical provisions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This paved the way for the breakthrough in discussions on this issue at the WTO Ministerial Conference one year later. We will now look at extending this and broadening its scope.

Our Group took a decisive lead in the negotiations on a historic recovery **package of EUR 1.8 trillion**. We succeeded through tough negotiations to ensure that the Recovery and Resilience Fund promoted social justice and social cohesion, and included criteria for environmental sustainability and the digital transition. Thanks to our Group's demands, the EU is now equipped with an unprecedented instrument of solidarity in Europe. National governments can pool resources and mutualise debt by issuing recovery bonds guaranteed by the EU budget. In addition, it also includes a COVID Recovery instrument and a Multi-Annual Financial Framework for 2021-2027, which adequately reflects our priorities. Furthermore, our members managed to increase the funding for specific EU flagship programmes, channelling additional resources towards social recovery, employment, health, education, the environment, innovation and youth, as well as humanitarian aid. Our Group further succeeded in introducing horizontal principles into the MFF that would ensure long-term improvements overall, and would align all EU policies with targets for gender equality, climate change, and biodiversity, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Our parliamentary Group also successfully promoted the reform of the system of own resources in the EU budget. In addition, we skilfully negotiated a new rule of law conditionality mechanism, which aims to protect the financial interests of the Union as well as taxpayers' money.



Our Group took a decisive lead in the negotiations on a historic **recovery package of EUR 1.8 trillion**.





Companies must show for example, what steps they are taking to address gender equality and diversity in their company, or what level of cooperation they have established with trade unions.

Tax justice & transparency

The Group also succeeded in its demand to have a permanent sub-committee on tax policy set up within the EP, that would fight tax evasion and ensure fair taxation across the board. The subsequent tightening of EU rules in order to prevent **money laundering and enhance transparency** was a major success, thanks to the S&D Group's steely determination.



S&D lawmakers also led the negotiations on the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive**. This directive aims to ensure that companies are more transparent about their environmental and social footprint. The deal will introduce a single set of **mandatory reporting standards** for all large companies, as well as listed SMEs. Companies will have to disclose information to the public - and not only on their annual financial statements - but also on what efforts they are making to reduce CO₂ emissions, become more sustainable, and protect biodiversity. In addition, companies must publish detailed information on their employment policies. They must show for example, what steps they are taking to address gender equality and diversity in their company, or what level of cooperation they have established with trade unions.



Our Group has long recognised the urgent need to tackle the climate crisis.

On our initiative, the European Parliament declared a climate emergency in 2019, and we have been working tirelessly to make sure that Europe leads the world in preventing a climate catastrophe.

Responding to the climate emergency

In June 2021, our efforts paid off!

The European Climate Law, which had been proposed and promoted by the S&D Group from the outset, was finally adopted. The goals enshrined in the **European Green Deal** that would transform and make Europe's economy and society climate-neutral by 2050, were written into law. Shortly after, **the Commission launched the Fit for 55 package** with the aim of steering the EU's climate, energy, land use, transport and tax policies towards the reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.



In July 2022, S&D Group members brokered a deal on the package based on three key pillars: the EU Emissions Trading System, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and on CO₂ cars emissions. **However, S&D Group lawmakers had to vote this deal down at the June plenary in Strasbourg in a tactical move.** We made it clear that we would not tolerate the undermining tactics employed by the conservatives and the far right, who together attempted to water down our ambitious targets and scupper the deal. We will continue to work on this important package to achieve our aims. **The S&D Group has long been pushing for the Green Deal proposal, which is now at the core of this Commission's work.**



Social rights at the heart of key policies

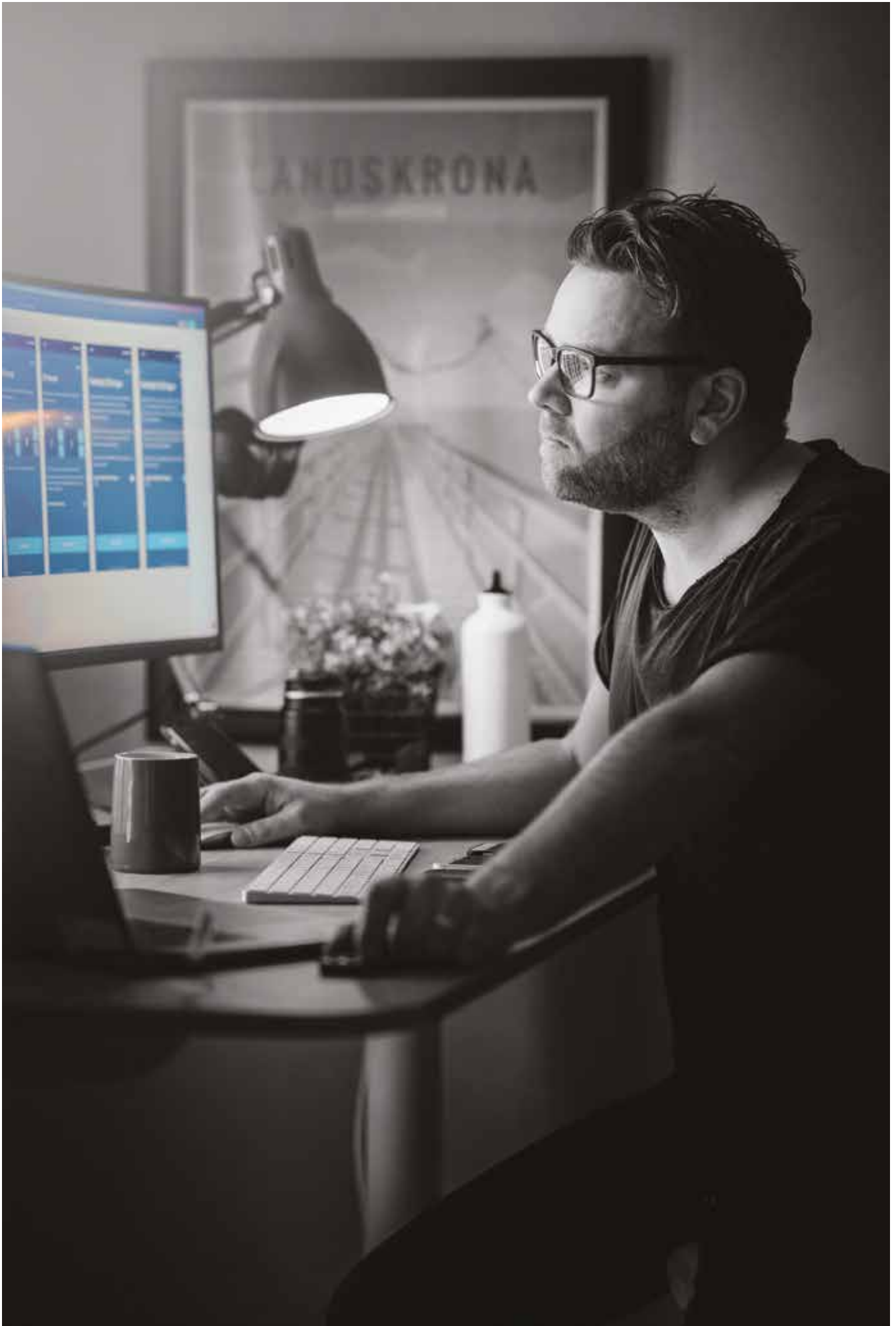
Additionally, S&D lawmakers made sure that the EU's strategy on climate change was bolstered by a **Social Climate Fund**. This fund is guided by robust mechanisms that will enhance social justice and solidarity goals, and will counteract the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable in society. The transition must be just or it will not be worth calling a transition at all. A green Europe is a fair Europe, that improves the well-being of people and leaves no one behind!

In the same vein, during the **reform of the Common Agricultural Policy**, the S&D Group worked to ensure that, for the first time, the CAP integrated a social dimension to the sustainable development of Europe's rural areas. We consistently argued throughout negotiations for the continued greening of European agriculture, while ensuring a strong rural development policy. Under our watch, the Common Fisheries Policy has also been remodelled making it more sustainable, and better adapted to take account of the regional specificities of the sector. The most important Cohesion policy regulations, which include the **Common Provisions regulation** and the European Regional Development Fund, were adopted for 2021-2027 under the leadership of S&D rapporteurs. They were successful in ensuring that Cohesion policy is more in tune with the green transition and digital transformation, and is closer to citizens.





Members have been consistently calling for better social rights as an effective way to improve people's lives. This is why we set out concrete social targets in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, which was adopted at the Porto Social Summit in May 2021. The adoption of the **Minimum Wages Directive** is another notable and significant achievement thanks to our Group.



The S&D Group has set the new gold standard for digital regulation - and not just in Europe - but around the world.



Digital policy

When it comes to digital transformation, our members worked tirelessly to ensure a high level of consumer protection across the board. Through their work on the Digital Markets and Digital Services Acts, the Group **put an end to the digital Wild West**. In fact, the S&D Group has set the new gold standard for digital regulation - and not just in Europe - but around the world. Furthermore, the Commission's proposal aimed at improving working conditions in platform work, is in response to pressure from the S&D Group to provide **a strong legislative framework to protect social rights** and ensure fairness in digital sectors.



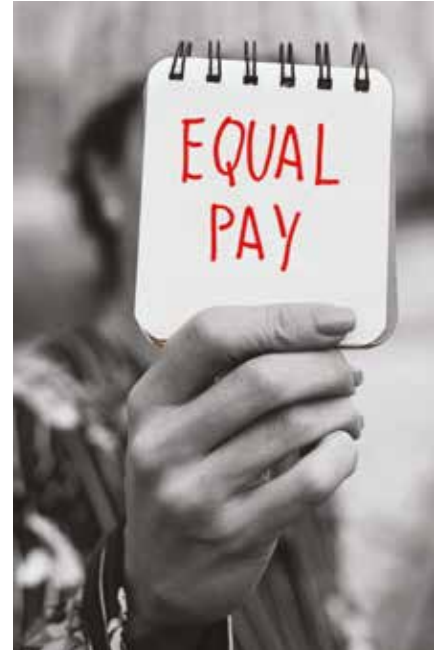
Women's rights and gender equality remain central to the S&D Group's political agenda.

For over a decade, the S&D Group has led calls to increase the presence of women on corporate boards.

Women's rights

This finally paid off! In what is a landmark law, the Women on Boards Directive will introduce a transparent procedure to reach a **minimum of 40% of women on non-executive boards of EU companies by the end of June 2026**, with binding measures for achieving that goal. In addition, the S&D Group pushed hard for a new pay transparency law. This is a first and necessary step to end pay discrimination between men and women.

The pay gap is far too high. On average, **women in the EU earn 14.1% less than men** in comparable positions. The Group was also instrumental in the successful adoption of a historic report calling for **guaranteed access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the EU**.



The report also calls for **reliable sex education, fertility treatment, modern forms of contraception and safe and legal abortion**. We were also unwavering in our calls for action to stop violence against women and domestic violence. This subsequently led to the adoption of a Commission proposal to fight gender-based violence through legislation and practical measures.

A progressive force in the European Parliament



The S&D Group has been a leading force in the European Parliament since the last European elections. In 2019, we were highly successful in maximising our influence and leverage when Commission President-elect, Ursula von der Leyen, sought our support for her Commission. We insisted that establishing gender balance among the new College of Commissioners was imperative to securing our support. We led by example in proposing a team of S&D nominations that fully respected gender parity. Furthermore, we skilfully used our position to ensure that a substantial part of our Socialist family's **progressive agenda was included in her Political Guidelines**, and we subsequently elected the first gender-parity Commission after a lengthy process of hearings.



Until the mid-term, the European Parliament was presided over by S&D Group Member, the late President David Sassoli. Under his leadership and beyond, our Group has been the driving force in the process of reforming the European Parliament. We have learnt lessons from the experience of carrying out our political work within the confines of COVID-19 measures, and have still managed to enhance the EP's democratic legitimacy and give greater visibility to its work. This process is still ongoing, and President Sassoli's legacy is beginning to bear fruit. He set in motion the widespread changes to the way in which the Parliament's plenary and committees work, so as to bring about a more modern, effective, and crisis-resilient Parliament. We thank him for his vision and leadership.



Furthermore, the Group played a pivotal role in coordinating all the EP's political groups, and in particular during the crucial mid-term constitutive process. Since January 2022, the S&D Group has held the position of chair of the influential Conference of Committee Chairs, which is responsible for coordinating the work of parliamentary committees, compiling legislative priorities, and holding regular legislative dialogue with the Commission and Council. The S&D Group has now five Vice-Presidents and one Quaestor in the Bureau of the European Parliament, which means that it is the largest political force in this body.

Building Europe's future





Brexit

During the negotiations on the long-drawn-out Brexit process, our Group **was instrumental in building a strong, united position to ensure a fair divorce settlement.** This included the full protection of citizens' rights, a protocol designed to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, and the preservation of the **Good Friday Agreement.** Throughout the negotiations on the **EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement,** we successfully insisted that the Parliament would not grant its consent to any trade agreement that did not uphold high standards, and include a fair and level playing field.

Since then, the UK Government has tabled a bill that would unilaterally and unlawfully suspend the Northern Ireland protocol, in contravention of what it signed up to. **S&D members continue to demand that this international agreement be fully respected.**



The Group remained strongly committed to defending fundamental values, and in particular, the rule of law. Following the Court of Justice's ruling that a rule of law conditionality mechanism complies with the EU Treaties, S&D members kept up pressure on the Commission to act accordingly on Hungary and Poland's breaches of EU law. Furthermore, our Group was firmly behind the creation of a **European Asylum Agency.** Through this agency, we can show our genuine solidarity by giving practical support to EU governments when it comes to asylum procedures. The agreement reached on the agency is a positive development, and is **evidence that the reform of the Common European Asylum System is possible.** It marks a first step towards real solidarity, more effective asylum procedures, and increased protection of fundamental rights. S&D lawmakers worked hard to ensure that the Agency will support the relocation, transfer and resettlement of applicants or beneficiaries of international protection in the EU.



#Progressives4Europe initiative

Throughout the Conference on the Future of Europe process, the Group showed its firm **commitment to giving the EU more capacity to improve people's everyday lives**. In the face of the recent global health emergency and the ongoing war on European soil, it is crucial that the EU can respond adequately to people's expectations. **This may mean concrete adaptations in the form of changes to the EU Treaty.**

During the Conference on the Future of Europe we continually engaged with citizens through our #Progressives4Europe initiative.

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This multilingual debating platform gave citizens the means for **sharing their opinions and views on how they want to see the EU evolving in the future.**

The S&D Group also worked on the reform of the EU's electoral law. **Proposed changes** would include the introduction of an EU-wide constituency list system, where lead candidates would compete for the nomination of the Commission President.



On the European Electoral Law, **we spearheaded a cross-party agreement on transnational candidate lists for 28 additional seats in the EP.** EU-wide constituency lists would be balanced, in order to avoid large Member States dominating the choice of candidates. They would also use a “zipped” list system to **guarantee gender balance by alternating women and men.**



Europe in the world

In the area of trade, our lawmakers managed to secure a legislative proposal from the Commission to **guarantee sustainable and responsible business practices**. This proposal would envisage the introduction of mandatory due diligence obligations and corporate accountability. Moreover, we made sure that ambitious trade and sustainable development provisions would be included in both EU legislation and in agreements with third parties.

There is huge potential in a deeper relationship with Latin America. It goes well beyond trade, and encompasses the need to reinvigorate the multilateral system, to resist assertive authoritarianism, and to fight inequalities and climate change.

Trade unions and civil society organisations would be involved as valid stakeholders in the relevant trade dialogues and negotiations. Two examples of enhanced cooperation are the **International Procurement Instrument Regulation**, which is aimed at improving the access of European economic operators, goods and services to the public procurement and concessions markets of third countries, and the **EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment**.



In spite of the difficult working conditions brought about by the pandemic, we still forged ahead with the organisation of some important missions. An S&D Group delegation, led by President Iratxe García Pérez, visited Israel and Palestine in June 2022. The delegation gathered first-hand information on the constantly deteriorating situation in the occupied territories, which is undermining the two-state solution. In August 2022, the President led an S&D Group delegation to Argentina, Brazil and Chile, with the aim of strengthening S&D ties and enhancing cooperation with new progressive political forces in these countries. There is huge potential in a deeper relationship with Latin America. It goes well beyond trade, and encompasses the need to reinvigorate the multilateral system, to resist assertive authoritarianism, and to fight inequalities and climate change.



In addition, we were instrumental in the setting up of the EU-UK Parliamentary Assembly, and the special committees on COVID-19 and on **foreign interference**, as well as the **committee of inquiry into the Pegasus spyware scandal**.

Stronger together

In spite of the pandemic, the S&D Group forged ahead with its outreach activities. This included a successful external Group meeting in Valletta, as well as Bureau meetings in Madrid and Helsinki. We are conscious of the importance of maintaining strong links and furthering good cooperation with Socialist and Social Democratic parties in government.

Despite the constraints of the pandemic, our Group has continued to promote fruitful and effective dialogue and develop synergies with our strategic partners.



Our partners include trade unions, non-governmental organisations, civil society representatives, as well as the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions. In addition, we strengthened ties with members of our sister groups in national parliaments, and not just through regular meetings, but by establishing a strong political network at staff level. Over the course of a year, more than 200 MPs and MEPs were invited to gatherings of our political family organised around the regular institutional meetings and conferences. These contacts offered a unique opportunity for our MEPs and Members of National Parliaments in the EU to meet, discuss and coordinate our positions and priorities. These meetings, and in particular the Progressive Caucuses co-organised with the PES, played an important role during the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The Group is very active in reinforcing dialogue and improving synergies with our sister parties at every available opportunity. Since the start of this mandate, almost all of our Prime Ministers have addressed a Group meeting in Brussels or Strasbourg. We will continue this practice, which is important in strengthening cohesion within the socialist family.



We continue to deepen and intensify collaboration with our sister organisations. Those based in Brussels are the Party of European Socialists, the Young European Socialists, the Progressive Alliance, the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions, and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies. We also keep in close contact with our sister parties and organisations across Europe, including the Group of Socialists and Democrats in the Council of Europe, and beyond, such as the International Union of Socialist Youth. The main goal, wherever possible, is to create synergies inside the political family, to ensure a wider outreach and greater impact of the changes we propose.

For example, the Global Progressive Forum has proven to be a genuine asset in external policies, organising public conferences and webinars on topical issues. It successfully hosted a three-day event in November 2021, which brought together more than 80 high-level speakers to discuss and set out our priorities for the next decade. Other prominent events organised by the Group during the first part of the current parliamentary term included the fourth edition of the S&D Group's Africa Week in February 2022, and the first edition of the S&D Group's Latin America Days in November 2021.

Progressive Society



The Progressive Society’s policy report sets out over two hundred policy recommendations on all aspects of sustainable development, explaining how sustainable well-being can be achieved in concrete steps and actions.

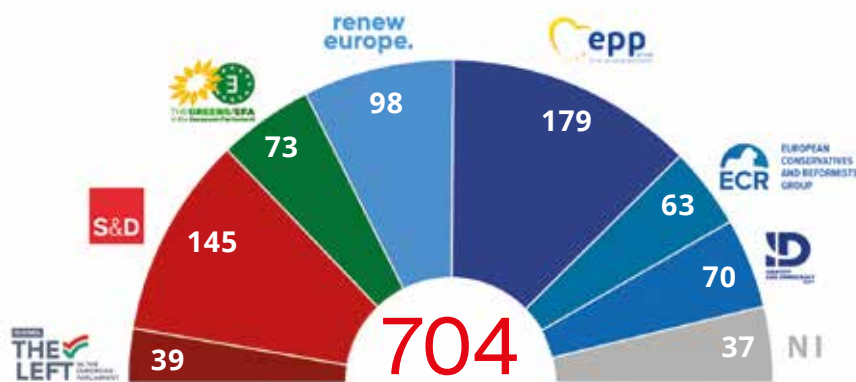
Finally, beyond our parliamentary work, the Group has invested a lot of time and energy into developing our future political vision as a progressive European force. In the framework of our **“Progressive Society”** initiative, we set up a high-level group of policymakers and experts.

This distinguished Independent ‘Commission for Sustainable Equality’ (ICSE) as it was called, was co-chaired by Spanish Deputy Prime Minister, Teresa Ribera, and former Danish Prime Minister and former President of the PES, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen. In 2021, the ICSE presented a major policy report on “Sustainable Well-Being” to the S&D Group. The report sets out over two hundred policy recommendations on all aspects of sustainable development, explaining how sustainable well-being can be achieved in concrete steps and actions.



S&D Group in numbers

Share of seats in the European Parliament - situation on October 2022



2nd



largest political group in
the European Parliament

145
members



26
countries





In Memoriam

We would also like to pay special tribute to our dear colleagues from the S&D Secretariat who sadly left us over the past two years. **Michael Hoppe**, Secretary General and **Solange Hélin-Villes**, Head of Unit for Press and Social Media, will always be remembered for their many years of dedication to the Group, their tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to the S&D values, and their enduring friendship.

About the S&D Group

The S&D Group is represented by 145 MEPs across 26 EU countries. The S&D Group is the second largest political group in the European Parliament and our MEPs work in all parliamentary committees and interparliamentary delegations.

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

And don't forget to stay updated on all our initiatives and reactions on



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Group of the Progressive Alliance of
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