

**DEBATE ON TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY****The presentation of the programme of activities of the Belgian Presidency***Iratxe García Pérez, President of the S&D Group:*

Belgium will be at the helm of the EU at a crucial time for Europe. Key legislative files are still under negotiation and must be concluded, such as the reform of the fiscal rules to end brutal austerity, as well as rules for platform work to ensure fair work and wages for all. The European elections will take place in a few months, and their outcome will set the course for years to come. In our immediate neighbourhood we continue to be confronted with rising tensions and wars in Ukraine and Gaza. I am confident that Belgium is well-equipped to handle these challenges and steer Europe through tumultuous waters with a steady hand. Not least, we count on Belgium to lay solid ground-work to limit the damage of the following Council Presidency, which will be held by Orbán's Hungary.

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DEBATE ON TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY, VOTE ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY**Empowering consumers for the green transition***Biljana Borzan, Vice-president of the S&D Group and European Parliament's negotiator on the topic in the committee on the internal market and consumer protection:*

Today, 56% of consumers consider the environment when purchasing goods and services. With this new law, we want to better protect them against unfair practices, such as greenwashing or early obsolescence. Thanks to the S&D Group, the provisional deal will include a ban on generic environmental claims like "environmentally friendly", "natural", or "eco", if the claims cannot be verified and a ban on the commercial communication of products with design features that limit their durability. Products with a commercial guarantee will have a label indicating its length and a reminder of obligatory legal guarantee. In that way, consumers will be able to identify which products will last longer.

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DEBATE AND VOTE ON WEDNESDAY, 16 JANUARY**Review of the economic governance framework***Margarida Marques, S&D MEP and European Parliament's co-negotiator on the reform of EU fiscal rules:*

We are confident that next week the European Parliament will adopt its position on the long-awaited and much-needed reform of EU fiscal rules. The Socialists and Democrats are proud of their achievements in the parliamentary negotiations. The final compromise agreed by the European Parliament has a strong progressive signature ensuring fairer EU fiscal rules that will shield European people and companies against austerity by bolstering investments and social rights. The Parliament's agreement is far better than the European Commission's proposal and the agreement reached by EU member states. It is also much better than going back to the old rules or having no rules at all. The EU needs to overhaul its outdated and inefficient fiscal rules without further delay. Therefore, after the expected finalisation of the process in the Parliament next week, we hope for constructive and smooth negotiations with EU member states with the aim of having the final agreement by the end of this legislative term.

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DEBATE ON MONDAY, 15 JANUARY, VOTE ON TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY**Ozone depleting substances and fluorinated gases regulations***Tiemo Wölken, S&D spokesperson in the European Parliament's committee on environment, public health and food safety:*

Next week, the members of the European Parliament are ready to endorse new legislation that will result in a massive reduction in emissions from fluorinated gases (F-gases) and ozone-depleting substances (ODS), which are major contributors to the climate crisis. Our Group has played a pivotal role in urging the different political groups in the European Parliament and the European Council to establish phase-out targets and timelines to ensure that ambition is met with practice and in order to give essential certainty for industries as they decarbonise. With the ozone depleting substances and the F-gases regulations, in total, the EU is expected to achieve a reduction equivalent to 500 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions by 2050, to the benefit of people and the planet.

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**DEBATE ON TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY, VOTE ON THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY****The humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a permanent ceasefire, and the risks of regional escalation:**
Evin Incir, S&D MEP and European Parliament's negotiator on the resolution

We are calling for a ceasefire to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians in this humanitarian tragedy. We urge Israel to respect and enforce international and humanitarian law. Thousands of Palestinians have died, and 1.9 million people have been displaced since Israel launched its war on Hamas in Gaza. An outright famine and a public health disaster are unfolding. Meanwhile, rocket attacks on Israeli civilians continue and more than 120 people are still held hostage in Gaza. The spectre of further regional spillover of the war is looming dangerously close. A permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the complete release of all hostages held by Hamas should pave the way for a genuine peace process, ultimately leading to a just and lasting peace and two states.

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**DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY, VOTE ON THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY****The situation of fundamental rights in the EU in 2022 and 2023**
Katarina Barley, S&D MEP and European Parliament's negotiator on the topic in the committee on civil liberties, justice and home affairs:

Democracy and fundamental rights are under threat in different member states and the broad consensus on the common European values is at risk of crumbling. Unless we act against autocrats like Viktor Orbán in Hungary, the decline of the respect for fundamental rights will continue as long as they are in government. Meanwhile, doing nothing sends the completely wrong message to other member states where corruption, political interference, and restrictions on media freedom are on the rise. By voting for my report on the grim state of fundamental rights, the European Parliament is sending a specific message to the Council on Hungary: it is time to trigger the next phase of the Article 7 procedure. We have to do everything in our power to limit Orbán's ability to hold the EU hostage and we have to act before Hungary takes the reins of the Council presidency.

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**DEBATE ON MONDAY 15 JANUARY, VOTE ON TUESDAY 16 JANUARY****Markets in financial instruments regulations**

Eero Heinäluoma, S&D MEP and negotiator on the revision of the EU legislation on markets in financial instruments:

Next week, the European Parliament is set to endorse the revision of the EU legislation on markets in financial instruments aimed at increasing transparency and fairness of European financial markets. The Socialists and Democrats strongly support the new rules, in particular the introduction of a general ban on 'payment for order flow' - a practice where brokers direct consumers' investments to certain trading venues for a fee. This practice can present a significant conflict of interest, as it can encourage directing consumers to trading venues that offer the highest compensation for brokers, instead of the best option for their clients. The ban will significantly improve the protection of small investors in the EU.

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*S&D Group press conference
Iratxe García Pérez, S&D president
Tuesday, 16 January, 10:00 - 10:20
Daphne Caruana Galizia room - Strasbourg
Weiss N-1/201
Webstreaming here
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/>*

Journalists who want to participate and ask questions can connect via this link

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