



40 years Final act: reviving the Helsinki spirit

S&D Group declaration at the occasion of the Conference "Europe in crisis: a call for a new dialogue"

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40 years ago, men and women representing the people of Europe as well as the USA and Canada, decided that after a period of growing tensions between East and West, the time had come to enter into serious political dialogue promoting security, economic cooperation and human rights throughout Europe.

40 years later, Europe is divided and faces serious security challenges.

The hope that after the fall of the Berlin wall and with the reconfirmation of the Helsinki principles in the Charter of Paris, Europe would see a longer period of democratic development and intense cooperation working for a common future has been shattered by growing tensions between the EU and Russia due to the Ukraine crisis as well as by the growing impact of antidemocratic and populist forces throughout Europe.

European Socialists and Social Democrats in government, in opposition and in the European institutions have always been crystal clear, then and now. We will confront any forces on the European continent undermining the basic values of freedom and tolerance. In the case of Ukraine we reject the annexation of Crimea and reconfirm the crucial importance of the full implementation and full respect of the Minsk agreement by all sides, with the aim to reach a definitive political solution so as to restore peace, territorial integrity and stability in Ukraine and thus being able to remove sanctions.

In the early seventies Social Democrats such as Willy Brandt and Olaf Palme played a leading role in designing the security architecture of the Helsinki agreements based on the concept of common security. This initiative gave a push for change towards peace, stability, the elimination of tensions, democratic development and respect for human rights. It is in their spirit that the Socialists and Social Democrats in the European Parliament declare that the time has come to avoid permanent division of Europe and revive the Helsinki process by again bringing opponents together at the same table. We demand a Europe wide dialogue to reassess the previous commitments regarding the three Helsinki priorities: European security, building up economic relations and promoting human rights. In this dialogue practical cooperation should be promoted regarding the supply and demand of energy, the environment, transport and counter-terrorism.

We are now in a situation where political, diplomatic, but also people to people contacts have decreased to a minimum. The S&D Group in the European Parliament proposes the following three concrete steps in order to bring closer three political aims:

Three concrete steps:

1 The EU should contribute to efforts for increasing cooperation and confidence building by inter alia promoting free movement of people throughout Europe with visa facilitation and liberalisation.

2 In the short term, as a first step of good will and in order to promote dialogue, we urge both the European Union and Russia to remove from their sanction lists all those who are members of Parliament.

3 We urge the European Union institutions and Member States having signed the Helsinki final act to put their weight behind the initiative to bring together all countries and successor countries having signed the Helsinki act 40 years ago, to prepare for a renewed dialogue at the highest possible level

A "standing conference" should be set up in order to prepare for a summit in the framework of the OSCE by 2016 at the latest.

Three political aims:

1 A renewed Helsinki process dialogue should assess the present situation in Europe with the aim to restore solid political relations while ensuring full compliance with international law and the commitments as laid down in the Helsinki final act, based on respect for human rights, minority rights and fundamental freedoms, independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of states, inviolability of borders, equal rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts. We want to reinvigorate the role of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

2 Peace, territorial integrity and stability in Ukraine need to be restored, while strengthening the role of the OSCE in the country. The EU and Russia should intensify their dialogue to achieve peaceful solutions to the frozen conflicts in the shared neighbourhood, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria on the basis of the strict adherence to the principles of international law.

3 The EU and Russia should jointly outline a broader agenda for tackling global challenges, in the framework of effective multilateralism. We should build on positive precedents, where the EU, Russia and US worked together to achieve a result that strengthens the global security, such as the nuclear agreement with Iran which is a milestone in terms of non-proliferation and regional security in the Middle East.

Such a constructive cooperation should be extended to other areas, such as efforts to end the civil war in Syria, stabilise Afghanistan and Iraq and fight against ISISL/Daesh and other UN-designated terrorist organisations.