

# S&D Interparliamentary Newsletter - Connecting with National Parliaments

BRUSSELS, 13/07/23

## S&D POLITICAL FAMILY MEETINGS JUNE/JULY 2023



The Treaty of Lisbon recognises **the important role of national parliaments in ensuring the effective functioning of the Union**. Interparliamentary **dialogue** is a permanent process, but it is reinforced at institutional and political level with each meeting.

European and national parliamentarians came together again in three different interparliamentary committee meetings (ICM) in Brussels, to debate key EU policies: the NextGenerationEU plan (CONT), enlargement policy (AFET) and the child guarantee (EMPL).

The S&D Group on its side convened **one political family meeting** with its members from the different national foreign affairs committees - to reaffirm its commitment to enlargement - and **reached out to its national sister parliamentary groups** to assess the outgoing Swedish presidency and prepare the incoming Spanish one.

## 20 YEARS AFTER THE THESSALONIKI DECLARATION. PROGRESSIVES CALLED FOR A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ENLARGEMENT

20 years ago, the leaders of the EU and the Western Balkans committed themselves to the [Thessaloniki Declaration](#). In the first few lines, they agreed on unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries, stating that the future of the Balkans is within the European Union. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki Declaration, the prospect of the Western Balkans' countries accession to the EU has been faced with numerous internal and external hurdles. Despite some efforts by the EU and those aspiring to become its future members, **further enlargement has not materialised since Croatia joined the EU ten years**

ago.

The [AFET ICM on 27 June](#) was therefore an opportunity for an intensive exchange between parliamentarians from the national parliaments and the European Parliament, on highly topical issues such as **the cost of non-enlargement** and the importance of **strengthening security and democratic resilience through the enlargement process**.



At the **progressive political family meeting**, parliamentarians reiterated their strong support for the European integration of the Western Balkan countries, but agreed to reassess the accession policy for Turkey.

**A spiral of inertia has overtaken the accession process in the last 20 years, however** in the current context of war on the European continent, enlargement policy has been brought back to centre stage. Progressives deplored that the enlargement process has been neglected over the years and agreed that it **is high time that EU Member States moved from mere statements to concrete action**.

S&D parliamentarians from the European and national parliaments strongly believe that the EU's enlargement policy **strengthens stability and democracy**, and that this important and successful policy needs to be continued. At the same time, all candidate countries must remain fully focused on implementing real reforms, particularly in the areas of the rule of law, judicial independence, freedom of expression and the fight against corruption. In addition, some parliamentarians insisted that the EU should not envisage any further enlargement without treaty reforms (in particular in the area of foreign affairs).

To sum up, the progressive family is committed to reviving the fight for the values written down in the Thessaloniki Declaration. Once again, the progressive family is ready to make a historic difference in EU enlargement policy.

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## FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE S&D INTERPARLIAMENTARY NETWORK MEETING

On 7 July 2023, the S&D Group in the European Parliament held the **third S&D Interparliamentary Network Meeting**. This network is celebrating its first anniversary and is proud to have doubled its size to now include **27 Member States and 32 parliamentary chambers**. To date, the network consists of former ministers, MEPs and MPs, secretary-generals, heads of cabinet, cabinet members, senior political advisers and press spokespersons working for socialist, social-democratic and labour national parliamentary groups.

This meeting provided a unique moment to look back at the [Swedish presidency](#) of the Council of the EU with [MP Matilda ERNKRANS](#), vice-president of the committee of EU affairs in the Swedish Riksdag, and to look forward to the [Spanish presidency](#) with [MEP Domènec RUIZ DEVESA](#), AFCO coordinator in the European Parliament.

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### Sweden: the invisible presidency



Matilda ERNKRANS, SAP Member of the Swedish Parliament, clearly described the Swedish **Presidency as an invisible one**. It has however to be recognised that the Presidency of the Council of the European Union demonstrated robust support for Ukraine and put even stronger pressure on Russia. The results after six months of hard work: decisions to send one million artillery shells and billions of euros in support to Ukraine's armed forces, clear EU recognition of Ukraine's impressive reform progress and strengthened sanctions against Russia.

In addition, some important legislative decisions were taken under the Presidency – despite the government – notably in April the Council adopted [the Fit for 55 package](#) and reached an agreement in June on [key asylum and migration laws](#).

For Matilda, the key lesson to draw from this Presidency is that the parliamentary dimension of the presidencies is a fantastic opportunity for parliamentarians, which should be used more. It can indeed be a very useful tool for parliamentary groups to push the governments in place to move on EU affairs.

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### Spain: a Presidency closer to European citizens

On 1 July, Spain took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The times continue to be turbulent, with many challenges still in place for the second half of 2023: war in Ukraine, cyber threats and inflation creating social hardships across the EU. This term of the Council presidency is the last complete one before the European elections in June 2024 and includes many legislative files that are close to completion.



**Domènec RUIZ DEVESA**, PSOE Member of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, exchanged with the members of the S&D interparliamentary network on the programme and priorities of the incoming presidency. He firmly believes that the [Spanish presidency](#) will respect the progressive legacy of the previous Spanish Council presidencies of Felipe González and JL Rodríguez Zapatero. Indeed, Spain is advocating for a global, autonomous, digital and ecological Europe that combines innovation and social justice. The Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union will work towards these goals under **the motto "Europe, closer"**.

The main lines of action during the six months of the Spanish Presidency are based on [four priorities](#): reindustrialising the EU and guaranteeing its open strategic autonomy, advancing in the green transition, promoting greater social and economic justice, and strengthening European unity.

Domènec recalled that the Spanish Presidency coincides with the **30th anniversary of the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty and the creation of EU citizenship**. This is the reason why the Spanish Presidency will strengthen the **European Citizenship dimension of the Union** during its presidency and **promote institutional deepening** and improved decision-making processes. Domènec highlighted that the Presidency has committed itself in its programme to follow-up on the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#). The Presidency will also strive to adopt



legislation regarding **the transparency and targeting of political advertising**, the **arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament** and in municipal elections, and the statute and funding of **European political parties** and European political foundations. Lastly, the Presidency will also work to adopt legislation regarding the **reform of EU election law** and will continue to support European initiatives aimed at increasing the EU's resilience in the face of hybrid and cyber threats. A very progressive Presidency has got underway; let's hope that the parliamentary elections in Spain will confirm this direction.

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**WHAT'S NEXT:**

- 19 July - DROI Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on **'the coordination of EU delegations and EU Member States' embassies on human rights in third countries'**, European Parliament, Brussels
- 17-18 September - **COSAC Chairpersons meeting**, Congress of Deputies, Madrid
- 20 September - AFCE Interparliamentary Committee Meeting **on the preparations for the European elections 2024**, European Parliament, Brussels
- 20 September - PETI Interparliamentary committee meeting to **deepen the cooperation with the petitions committees in national parliaments with a view to exchanging best practices and reflecting on new approaches**, European Parliament, Brussels
- 20-21 September - 13th Meeting of the **Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol** pursuant to Article 88 TFEU and the Europol Regulation (EU) 2016/794, European Parliament, Brussels
- 1-3 October - Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**, Congress of Deputies, Madrid

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## PRESS RELEASES:

- [European Parliament takes significant step towards improving air quality, under S&D leadership](#), 27/06/2023
- [Give women in prostitution a voice and a way out!](#) 27/06/2023
- [Excluding rape from gender-based violence directive “unforgivable” say S&Ds](#), 28/06/2023
- [S&Ds: Facing global challenges together requires equal partnership with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Countries](#), 28/06/2023
- [“The EU needs the progressive and pro-European impulse of the Spanish presidency under Pedro Sánchez's leadership”, says Iratxe García](#), 30/06/2023
- [S&Ds push to end abusive lawsuits against journalists and activists in Europe](#), 10/07/2023
- [Nature Restoration Law endorsed despite conservatives' opposition: a monumental victory for people and the planet](#), 12/07/2023
- [S&Ds: European conservatives undermining efforts to improve EU ethics standards](#), 12/07/2023
- [S&Ds: We stand for human rights, freedom and fair peace in Middle East. Why is this controversial for EPP and far-right?](#), 12/07/2023
- [We urge the EPP and Renew to vote in favour of longer 'cooling-off period' for MEPs and a ban on lobbying-related side jobs](#), 13/07/2023

## Our Team



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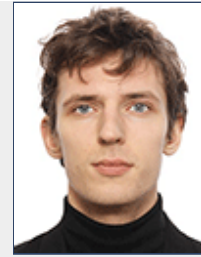
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The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (the S&D Group) is the second largest political group in the European Parliament. We stand for an inclusive European society based on principles of solidarity, equality, diversity, freedom and fairness. We promote social justice, jobs and growth, consumer rights, sustainable development, financial market reforms and human rights to create a stronger and more democratic Europe and a better future for all citizens.

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