

Brussels, 21 February 2020

Honourable President,

Honourable State Secretary,

Ahead of the EU General Affairs Council (GAC) session scheduled for the 25th of February, we, Leaders of the European Parliament of the different political Groups, write to you to express our deep concerns over the serious lack of progress in the Article 7 proceedings against Poland and Hungary.

We observe with deep concern that despite this alarming situation and repeated calls and informal exchanges of views, this very important issue of the rule of law in both Poland and Hungary is not present nor foreseen to be discussed in the forthcoming GAC meeting.

We are well aware that discussions around the next Multi-annual Financial Framework are very important, but the Council cannot ignore the also important and continuous threat to its funding principles and that every missed opportunity to restore full respect to the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights in the European Union has severe consequences for those being targeted on the grounds by the different reforms. The Council cannot turn a blind eye to the different debates and resolutions adopted in the Parliament in the last three months or the different legal actions taken by the Commission in both cases: it is high time to act!

Moreover, and one more time, we call on the Council to respect the provisions enshrined in the Treaties and to guarantee that the standard modalities for hearings referred to in Article 7(1) of the TEU ensure the same treatment for Parliament as for the Commission and one third of the Member States for the purposes of presenting the reasoned proposal.

Despite efforts made by the Finnish Presidency to engage in informal dialogue with Parliament, we believe that informal exchanges cannot replace formal channel.

For all the above reasons, and on the respect of the principle of sincere cooperation between institutions enshrined in Article 4(3) of the TEU, we insist to invite the European Parliament to the next GAC Council to present its findings in the ongoing procedures related to Article 7 of the TEU. ;

Since the triggering of Article 7(1) of the TEU, the failure by the Council to make effective use of Article 7 of the TEU continues to undermine the integrity of common European values, mutual trust, and the credibility of the Union as a whole.

The European Union is a community founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and as reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and embedded in international human rights treaties on the rule of law.

These values and rights are not negotiable and should be defended and discussed in a proper Hearing in the correct GAC format with the presence of the European Parliament.

Iratxe García Pérez
President, Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European
Parliament

Manfred Weber,
President, Group of the European People's Party

Dacian Ciolos,
President, Renew Europe Group

Ska Keller and Philippe Lamberts,
Co-Presidents, the Greens/EFA

Martin Schirdewan and Manon Aubry
Co-Presidents, Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left