



DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY

The rule of law and the consequences of the ECJ ruling
Iratxe García Pérez, S&D Group president

Next Wednesday, the EU Court will give its final verdict on Poland and Hungary's feeble attempts to annul the new rule of law conditionality mechanism. Already in the statute books for over a year now, the Commission has dithered and delayed for far too long, failing to trigger a crucial tool that makes access to EU funds conditional on respect of the rule of law and fundamental values. The Fidesz and the PiS governments have been able to play the Commission into hiding behind this court case before triggering the mechanism. S&D MEPs fought hard for this direct link between EU funds and the rule of law so that we can protect our citizens' taxpayers money from funding autocratic leaders and protect citizens living with the consequences of illiberal and oppressive policies. The time for delay tactics is over. The S&D Group's message in next week's plenary debate will be loud and clear: there are no more excuses to hide behind.

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DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY

EU-Russia relations, European security and Russia's military threat against Ukraine
Pedro Marques MEP, S&D vice-president for foreign affairs

Next week's plenary debate will demonstrate Europe's unity and unwavering support to Ukraine, its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia must immediately stop threatening neighbouring Ukraine with renewed military action. It must also stop undermining Ukraine's democratic development and economic prosperity. I welcome clear signals that any military aggression would have major consequences and would be met with severe sanctions on Russia. Russia's threats against Ukraine threaten security in Europe as a whole. Diplomatic efforts must continue to de-escalate the situation, but European security cannot be based on shady deals and shaky guarantees. It must be firmly anchored in the principles and mechanisms which have been jointly agreed and established in Helsinki in 1975 and in Paris in 1990 and are represented by the OSCE. The S&Ds will always stand for a sovereign, prosperous and stable Ukraine. Only Ukrainians can decide about the path to the future that their country should take.

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DEBATE ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY

The surveillance of politicians, prosecutors, lawyers, and other persons and entities in the EU member states using cyber surveillance software
Birgit Sippel MEP, S&D spokesperson on civil liberties

It is crucial that the European Parliament investigates the Pegasus spyware scandal which uncovered mass surveillance undertaken by authoritarian governments to infiltrate phones of journalists, politicians, opposition figures, diplomats, lawyers, religious figures, academics and human rights activists all over the world. The dimensions are multifaceted and not limited to the continuous erosion of the rule of law in certain Member States. The Pegasus spyware as a targeted digital surveillance spyware clearly infringes fundamental rights to privacy and protection of personal data in and outside of the EU and it adversely affects other fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of thought and religion, freedom of expression and information, or freedom of assembly and of association. The European Commission must live up to its

role as guardian of the treaties, and stop hiding behind the excuse that it would only be the responsibility of national authorities. Clearly, neither the Polish or the Hungarian authorities will launch independent inquiries. This scandal goes far beyond Poland and Hungary which is why we, the European Parliament must step in. What we need is more transparency and oversight of companies offering aggressive cyber-surveillance products or spyware, and a ban for governments to make use of such products. EU governments have a responsibility to draw a red line under the use of spyware. As we have heard in the recent hearing organised by the LIBE committee, there are serious risks that such dissemination and use of intrusive surveillance technologies are spreading more widely. The European Parliament must act and investigate the distribution and use of spyware such as Pegasus, and come up with the concrete recommendations, that - at the end of the process - will be adopted by the whole House.

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DEBATE AND VOTE ON THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY

Protection of workers from the risks relating to exposure to carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxins at work

Helène Fritzon, S&D negotiator on carcinogens and mutagens

Next week, the European Parliament is set to vote on a recent political agreement concluded with EU governments on updating the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive (CMD). The S&D Group successfully managed to include 12 reprotoxic substances, which can damage fertility or cause irreversible harm to foetal development, in the workplace harm-prevention rules. Currently, more than 2 million workers are exposed to at least one reprotoxic substance at work. We also achieved better protection for Europe's healthcare workers by including hazardous medicines in this legislation, mostly used to treat cancer. The S&D Group works towards realising the goal of zero deaths at work.

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FINAL VOTE ON WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY

Empowering European youth: post-pandemic employment and social recovery

Alicia Homs, S&D MEP responsible for youth

The Covid-19 pandemic is hitting hard young people, especially when it comes to jobs and their mental health and well-being. 2022 is the European Year of Youth, a year dedicated to improve the post-pandemic economic, employment and social situation of European young people. The S&D Group is calling for concrete actions to combat unemployment and poverty, ensure quality and decent working conditions and ban unpaid internships.

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DEBATE ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY, FINAL VOTE ON WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY

Strengthening Europe in the fight against cancer

Nicolás González Casares, S&D MEP and negotiator

Next week, we are going to vote on the final report of the special committee on beating cancer (BECA). It will mark a milestone in the fight against cancer in Europe. We are proud as socialists to have made sure the principle of social justice, the fight against inequity and inequality and the gender perspective are all at the heart of the report. The battle is not over yet. We will vote on important amendments to introduce scientific evidence and WHO recommendations on tobacco and e-cigarettes into the report so that the preventive measures are respected when the EU reviews legislation in this area.

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DEBATE ON TUESDAY 15, VOTE ON WEDNESDAY 16

Implementation of the Toy Safety Directive

Brando Benifei, S&D rapporteur

The European Union is a world champion in consumer protection, but for us Socialists and Democrats, we have to pay even more attention to children's safety, as particularly vulnerable consumers. No compromise is acceptable when it comes to child safety and we are especially vigilant to the implementation of EU legislation when it comes to the manufacturing and sale of toys on the European market. It was an honour for me and my group to draft the report assessing the implementation of the EU Toy Safety Directive in the committee on internal market and consumer protection. Our group finds this Directive a good step forward for the safety of European children, yet we think that

several problems remain due to a lack of flexibility, the emergence of scientific evidence pointing out previously unknown toxic chemical substances and risks, and enforcement problems, especially when it comes to the persistently high number of dangerous toys circulating on online marketplaces. This is why we call for a revision of the Directive. Digitalisation is another issue that features in the report, addressing so-called connected toys, where security features for kids against cyber threats are inadequate or almost non-existent. These hold major security risks. My work in this field is firmly supported by the entire S&D Group, but this support goes far beyond our political family. The report was adopted by unanimity in the committee on internal market and consumer protection and I am optimistic about the vote in plenary on Wednesday. Our children deserve the highest possible level of protection when they play and we need to do our utmost to guarantee it.

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DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY 16, VOTE ON THURSDAY 17

Charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures

Giuseppe Ferrandino, S&D MEP and Parliament rapporteur

We will vote for the necessary change that road transport in Europe needs. This Directive will give a strong signal to the world of transport to encourage the use of cleaner vehicles. It is an important battle that the socialist group must win so we are able to fulfil our commitments in the European Green Deal.

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S&D Group press conference
Iratxe García Pérez, S&D president
Tuesday 15 February, 10.10 - 10.30
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:
<https://broadcaster.interactio.eu/join/66e2-hy1p-1w4u>

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