



## **Activity report December 2009 - September 2012**

### **Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament**

#### **PES Congress 28/29 September 2012**

This report of Group activities completes a first report submitted to the PES Congress in Prague in December 2009. This previous report had a short time frame concentrating on activities and developments since the June 2009 elections to the European Parliament<sup>1</sup>. It is now time to sum up the Group's activities, achievements and expectations over a longer and more significant period of the current EP term of office.

#### **The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the EP**

The 2009 - 2014 legislature started with the establishment of the new Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament incorporating all those forces represented in the former PES Group as well as the MEPs of the Italian "Partito Democratico". The Group was chaired by Martin Schulz until his election as President of the European Parliament in January 2012. The Group then elected Hannes Swoboda as its new President.

The results of the 2009 European elections were below our expectations with 184 out of 736 seats, down from the 217 out of 785 seats during the last mandate. The S&D Group fell back to an exact 25% share of European Parliament seats, 2,6% less than the PES Group share during the previous EP mandate. The new S&D Group is as EU-wide as it could possibly be, being the only Group with national delegations from all 27 EU Member States and observers from Croatia.

In July 2012 the Group increased to 189 Members<sup>2</sup> and welcome 7 Croatian observers.

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<sup>1</sup> As regards the PES Group activities during the last EP mandate see [www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/media3/documents/2890\\_en\\_PSE\\_group\\_achievements\\_en\\_090514.pdf](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/media3/documents/2890_en_PSE_group_achievements_en_090514.pdf) : "A proud record of achievement - Socialists at work in the European Parliament of 2004-2009").

<sup>2</sup> Notably further to the arrival of 18 new MEPs as provided by the Lisbon Treaty.

The composition of the EP is as follows (11 July 2012):

Group of the European People's Party	271
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	189
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	85
Group of the Greens / European Free Alliance	59
European Conservatives and Reformists Group	52
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left	34
Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group	34
Non inscrits	30
European Parliament	754 seats

In 2009 the EPP managed to maintain its first position in the EP despite the defection of the British and Czech conservatives, while two new Groups were established on the right and extreme right: the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, mainly consisting of conservative euro sceptic forces from the United Kingdom, Poland and the Czech Republic, and the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group being a collection of anti-European, xenophobic and far right MEPs.

With the EP swinging to the right, the S&D Group is faced with the big challenge of nevertheless maintaining its decisive role in the European Parliament, whose powers widened considerably from December 2009 when the Lisbon Treaty came into force. In the previous legislature, as the second political grouping, the PES Group played the lead role in building progressive majorities. These majorities were based on a high degree of consensus within the PES Group and, in a number of cases related to key policy areas, by linking up with the Greens and the GUE Group and splitting the Liberals and/or EPP. Traditionally when it comes to social and economic issues a more centre oriented group of EPP Members can in some circumstances be won over to the other side. When it comes to progressive values, ethical questions and non-discrimination, the Liberal Group is a potential partner. However it became clear how difficult it had become to establish progressive majorities in the new, more right-wing Parliament.

In such a context our Group has to be as united as possible. Defining a common line on political issues where positions can differ amongst us is our constant aim. We know out of experience that building a common and progressive political vision in our Group is the key to political success. This is a major difference with the EPP, a Group acting essentially as a conglomerate of political forces ranging from an "old guard" of genuine centrists and Christian democrats to more radical parties positioning themselves at the very limits of the extreme right. In fact it too often seems that the sole purpose of this group is to counterbalance by its numerical strength the influence of socialist and other progressive forces in Europe.

The S&D Group will continue its fight to build progressive majorities in the European Parliament by uniting first of all the left and by subsequently trying to prevent the right wing from establishing a majority against us.

As regards the internal organization of our institution, the constitution of the European Parliament in 2009 had shown that a reduced number of S&D MEPs does not necessarily result in a weaker position. At the occasion of the January 2012 Mid-term review of the European Parliament, a combination of good candidates and skilful negotiations has again resulted in numerous key positions, at the level both of the institution's governing bodies and the parliamentary Committees. First of all the President of the S&D Group Martin Schulz was elected as President of the European Parliament with a comfortable majority of 387 votes out of 670. In addition the S&D Group obtained the three first EP Vice-Presidencies (Giovanni Pitella, Miguel Angel Martinez Martinez and Anni Podimata) and two posts of Quaestors (Boguslaw Liberadzki and Lidia Geringer De Oedenberg).

As a consequence the Group has a strong involvement in EP internal policies regarding the budget, information, communication and relations with citizens, as well as in legislative conciliations and EP relations with national parliaments, candidate countries, the Mediterranean area, Latin America, the UN, the Council of Europe and other multilateral bodies.

Also when it comes to Chairs of Parliamentary Committees the S&D Group had a successful mid-term constitutive session. While the number of chair positions (6 out of 21) was limited (under the d'Hondt system), we were able to obtain the following key positions:

Pervenche Berés	Committee on Employment and Social affairs
Paolo de Castro	Committee on Agriculture and Rural development
Matthias Groote	Committee on the Environment, public health and food safety
Juan Fernando López Aguilar	Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home affairs
Vital Moreira	Committee on International trade
Brian Simpson	Committee on Transport and Tourism

As regards the internal organisation, as of September 2012 the S&D Group Bureau is constituted with the following membership and responsibilities:

Hannes Swoboda, President of the Group  
Enrique Guerrero Salom, Parliamentary Secretary  
Bernhard Rapkay, Communication, Interinstitutional relations  
Veronique de Keyser, Foreign Affairs including the Southern dimension, Arab spring and Middle East  
Libor Roucek, Foreign Affairs including transatlantic relations and the Eastern dimension, Russia and the Balkans  
Patrizia Toia, Budget and cohesion policy  
Corina Cretu, gender mainstreaming and women's issues  
Stephen Hughes, Economic and social model  
Marita Ulvskog, Sustainable development and competitiveness  
Sylvie Guillaume, Citizen's Europe  
Edit Herczog, Treasurer

### **Reversing the trend: the need for broad Socialist and Social Democratic strategies**

The need to establish broad Socialist and Social Democratic strategies has never been greater, at a time when we are still in a minority position. In the European Parliament, S&D representation has lost some ground. In Council there is a clear conservative majority, but recent elections in several Members States have led to government changes in favor of progressive forces, and we have great expectations that this positive trend will continue in the near future. Within the Commission the situation is the most difficult, with

only 6 of 27 Commissioners coming from our political family, making this institution unrepresentative of the wider political balance in the EU.

In this situation the PES and the S&D Group have no other option than to invest more than ever before in stronger links between Socialist and Social Democratic members in the three EU institutions and in national Parliaments. Our political family has to learn the lessons from the past, where internal division led to difficult situations such as in the case of the re-election of José Manuel Barroso as Commission President.

The S&D Group would like to reiterate its commitment, already expressed in our report to the Prague PES Congress, to work with the PES to address a fundamental problem within our family. Over the last decade the EU and its institutions in general and the cross border cooperation of Socialists and Social Democrats in particular has not always received the attention it needs from Socialists, Social Democrats and progressives at national level. We should all remember that the EU and its institutions constitute a major (potential) instrument for Socialists, Social Democrats and progressives to implement the policies and policy changes we stand for. In addition the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has given the European Parliament an even more important role in the European decision-making process.

The Group welcomed the fact that the PES had made the strengthening of our political family a major theme of its Prague Congress. Currently, electoral support for a majority of our parties remains lower than needed, but recent elections in Europe proved that more and more people are disappointed and outraged by conservative policies, the failure of which is blatant in these times of economic, financial and social crisis. It is now time for us to show that united we represent the real alternative to these policies, leading to a fair way out of the crisis, based on solidarity, social justice, investment and jobs. This is the right time for a mobilisation of parties, parliamentarians, foundations and party members at all levels.

It is first of all up to the PES to ensure that the debate on the future of European Social Democracy becomes a truly cross border discussion, and not the sum of national deliberations. The S&D Group, in full respect of the role of the national parties and the PES, intends to make its own contribution to the debate, making use of the fact that the Group constitutes a unique permanent meeting place for European Socialists, Social Democrats and progressive forces.

With the support of our Members, the Group President is willing to contribute actively to the strengthening of internal cooperation in our political family and has undertaken a tour of Europe to meet Leaders and representatives of our political forces.

We believe in the importance of consultation with researchers and civil society to help us to develop our ideas. With this in mind, a first series of round tables with researchers, politicians and civil society took place from 2009 to 2011 to take stock of the 2009 European elections and draw the lessons thereof. Following this up, the S&D Group met in Florence on June 29 to launch a new initiative on the future of the European Union: "Relaunching Europe – an alternative vision for the future", creating an opportunity for in-depth reflection and analysis of the founding values of the European Union. This aims to broaden decision-makers' perspectives and encourage a move away from daily crisis management towards a longer-term view and a reflection on what Europe and Europeans need.

We are proud of our daily cooperation and open dialogue with the PES and other socialist and social democrat bodies such as FEPS, ECOSY, the Global Progressive Forum and others. This daily cooperation and dialogue are expressed by a large number of co-organized activities where our Group has invested a lot of human resources and funds<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The S&D financial participation to such co-organized events amounts to € 529,686 for the period 1 July 2009 - 30 June 2012 and another amount of € 118,825 is committed for the rest of 2012. Our financial participation takes place

We are also committed to upgrading our relationship with the representatives of civil society in order to improve coordination, future perspectives and mutual trust, and we focus particularly on two categories: Trade Unions (and in particular ETUC) and NGOs on one side<sup>4</sup>, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the other side<sup>5</sup>. We have decided to put an even greater emphasis on cooperation with socialist groups in the National Parliaments, in the context of the European sovereign debt crisis and also in the logic of the Lisbon Treaty<sup>6</sup>.

### **The S&D Group's political priorities and parliamentary action**

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has had a major impact on the competences of the European Parliament and as a consequence for the instruments in the hands of the S&D Group to implement its political priorities. With a few exceptions, the new Treaty placed the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council as a lawmaker in areas where this has not been case so far, most notably in setting the EU budget (the EP enjoys full parity), agricultural policy and justice and home affairs.

### **Our social and economic alternative**

For the S&D Group, the defining political battle of the new legislature is the fight against the economic, financial and social crisis and for a new model of development, reflecting a shift from a narrow, market-dominated vision towards a wider vision of our society, with a different balance between economic, social and environmental concerns; a new balance between market forces and smart regulation; and a new central role for sustainability.

We aim at developing a more equal society, fighting strongly against these inequalities which the current crisis has exacerbated. It is of course, and above all, a question of fairness and social justice. It is also our conviction that building a socially inclusive society is essential for economic recovery and sustainable growth.

Since the start of this term, the S&D Group has actively promoted a balanced, smart, fair and courageous response to the crisis. Since early 2010, we have been calling for a different way out of the crisis as an alternative to the "austerity-only" strategy imposed by the Commission and the right-wing majority in

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mostly in the form of conferences, round tables, workshops, working lunches or dinners, production of material, stands, delegations and subsidies, in compliance with the financial Regulations governing the use of EU finances.

<sup>4</sup> A key objective of the Group's civil society outreach work has been to reach representatives of civil society beyond Brussels. The ultimate objective must be to ensure that information circulates amongst trade unions activists and civil society representatives in the 27 Member States. This will raise the political profile of the Group creating a multiplier effect. In this respect our cooperation with SOLIDAR is of particular importance, given its pivotal role between NGOs, Trade Unions and EU institutions. It is also worth noting the involvement of the S&D Group in the EP Trade Unions Intergroup, fostering a constant consultation with the European Trade Unions Confederation and developing synergies on topical EU legislative issues.

<sup>5</sup> The PES Group in the COR and the Workers' Group in the EESC are our key partners in a constant dialogue and cooperation on legislative and political issues. For instance we set up a joint task-force on the reform of the Cohesion Policy which led to the adoption of a ten-point manifesto for the negotiations on the 2014-2020 programming period. Another example is our cooperation with the EESC Workers' group on the Directive on the Single Permit.

<sup>6</sup> Our Group Leader Hannes Swoboda is in the process of organising conferences with his counterparts from a majority of national chambers in the EU. The debate has so far focused on EU-wide issues such as a "Socialist Agenda for Europe", "Alternative Ways out of the Crisis: Fiscal Pact, Growth and Employment" and "The Next Multiannual Financial Framework, Own Resources and Financial Transaction Tax". Another item to be dealt with in near future is the role of parliaments, be they national or European, in the European Semester.

Council. Our key proposals are gradually entering the Commission's and the Council's agenda: the FTT, differentiated consolidation depending on each member state's capacity, measures in favour of increased public investment (project bonds, EIB), Eurobonds, tighter financial regulation and more democratic legitimacy for European economic governance. However, these essential elements of a new growth and jobs agenda are not taken on board fast enough or fully enough, allowing for the crisis to remain deeply entrenched and unemployment to reach even higher levels. This fight is far from over, and will remain a key focus of our work during the remainder of this parliamentary term.

Central to our approach is our insistence that a greener economy must go hand in hand with a fairer, more prosperous Europe. We believe that a new more sustainable economic model is central to our fight against climate change and will create invaluable opportunities for employment and wealth creation. We intend to keep this topic high on the political agenda, with a twin focus on boosting high quality jobs and protecting the environment. The PES Manifesto commitment to create 10 million new green jobs by 2020 will be a core objective, supported by actions on renewable energies, energy efficiency in particular in older homes, and sustainable transport, while promoting re-skilling schemes and R&D.

Among the key battlegrounds are the new EU 2020 strategy; financial regulation; the restoration of full employment; decent work and stronger social rights - including gender equality, a revised Posting of Workers Directive and a Framework Directive on Public Services. The crisis is putting Europe's social model under enormous stress. However, we oppose its gradual dismantling under the cover of "anti-crisis" structural reforms. A clear line must be drawn between the necessary modernisation of our social systems and labour markets, and the reduction of social rights and justice. Our Group remains deeply committed to a true "Social Europe", which needs to be relaunched as soon as politically possible.

### **Solidarity and cohesion throughout Europe**

No less important will be the forthcoming battle on the EU's Financial Perspectives - and the related issues of spending on agriculture, fisheries and cohesion policy - which will have far-reaching consequences for the Union's capacity to serve Europe's citizens. The EU budget remains one of the most powerful financial instruments for solidarity among Member States and for financing growth and jobs.

The ongoing negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 should provide the resources to match the needs of a more ambitious European Union, facing greater challenges than ever, and in particular the need to finance the policies related to the EU 2020 strategy. We insist on a "bottom-up" approach to the negotiations, where the goals and principles are agreed before assigning any figures. We also insist on a more transparent, fair, sustainable, understandable and efficient own-resources system, fiscally neutral and respecting EU Treaty competences.

How European Funds are managed is of prime importance to the S&D Group. Our work on the drafting of the revised Financial Regulation emphasised the need for transparency, accountability, simplification, and flexibility in the use of financial resources. The S&D Group has insisted that Member States must recognise more clearly their responsibility for the administration of EU funds. Finally our Group supported enhancing the European Anti-Fraud Office's powers.

We support an in-depth reform of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013, to promote the production of viable foods; long term management of natural resources; measures to combat climate change; and balanced territorial development, to create jobs in rural areas. A reformed and reinforced CAP should be able to deal with the volatility of agricultural raw material prices, increase food access for the destitute, and guarantee the Union's role in global food security. There must be clearer legitimacy for the use of public funds for agriculture, focussing them on compensation for the public goods that farmers provide to society, such as protection of the environment.

The Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy should ensure the sustainability of European fisheries and the recovery of fish stocks, bringing an end to overfishing by reducing overcapacity, gradually eliminating discards and fishing above Maximum Sustainable Yield level, and regionalising fisheries management to achieve a healthy marine and freshwater environment.

The Group is playing a major role in negotiations with the European Commission and the Council on the legal framework for the future Cohesion Policy and wants to re-affirm the importance of regional cohesion and solidarity. Our Group's position, as defined in the ten point common document with our comrades of the Committee of the Regions, stresses issues such as smart growth, opposition to macroeconomic conditionalities, the intermediate regions category and the role that regions and local authorities play in partnership contracts. Our policy also aims at fighting poverty and unemployment, promoting sustainable transport, linking climate targets and demographic challenges and calling for a common strategic framework to coordinate cohesion policies with other EU policies.

### **A sustainable development at the service of citizens**

The urgent need to tackle the current crisis has to some extent relegated environmental concerns and the concept of sustainable development to a lower level in the global political debate. Yet these concepts remain valid and we strongly believe that they should be fully integrated in our global approach to a fair way out of the crisis.

We successfully concluded negotiations on a new Energy Efficiency Directive. While far from our original demands, the agreement will nonetheless significantly help achieve the 20% energy efficiency target by 2020.

Work is ongoing on new legislation to help support and finance the modernisation of Europe's creaking infrastructures, putting in place a sustainable, efficient and modern infrastructure fit to meet our climate and energy goals.

We ensured the leadership of the strategically important Horizon 2020: Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020), a fundamental tool for Europe to overcome the crisis and return to economic growth, where we put a special emphasis on support to SMEs and human capital.

We kept the consumer at the heart of our decision-making, in pushing for reduced prices for mobile phone roaming calls, texts and internet use, initiating a campaign to put an end to the concept of additional roaming costs altogether, calling for an EU-wide market with no difference between national and EU roaming prices.

We are leading the EP position on supporting infrastructure investments to connect Europe with a properly funded multimodal, efficient and sustainable European network in transport. After a long and hard negotiation with the Council on the recast of the first railway package, we paved the way to the achievement of a true European Railway Area while keeping public services operations and the social and working conditions in the sector, high on the agenda. The implementation of the European Single Sky is being delayed, but we continue acting to ensure that benefits for lower cost and reduced fuel consumption are delivered.

For the sake of our environment, our Group was very active in the adoption of the Directive on restricting the use of hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment, which ensures that toxic waste is reduced to the minimum when such equipment has to be disposed of. We also played a very active role during the legislative process on the Directive on Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment, which contributes to avoiding environmental damage while retaining the valuable resources in electronic equipment. In the scope of the Regulation on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from vans we encouraged the development of

green technologies designed to boost job creation and give our manufacturers a competitive edge over cheaper and more contaminating vehicles.

Other examples of our action for the environment are the new Regulation on biocidal products, the "Seveso III" Directive related to the control of major accident hazards involving dangerous substances and the Regulation on illegal logging of timber.

For us, fair access to safe and high-quality healthcare for all EU citizens is essential. The most outstanding example of our action in this field is the Directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, where we managed to achieve a good balance between the right to seek the best treatment and the protection of the financial sustainability of national healthcare systems. We also worked hard on important pieces of legislation (such as Falsified Medicines and Pharmacovigilance) which aim to improve patient safety as regards medicines in general. Finally, we took the lead in the adoption of the Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers.

### **Our struggle for a democratic Europe and the protection of Citizens' fundamental rights**

In the area of Citizens' Europe, there are several issues of strategic importance in which the Group has fought a fierce battle to defend and promote our values of common human dignity, common humanity and personal security.

The battle to ensure that the Schengen system is treated as a European concern continues. We oppose any attempts to put into question, undermine or renationalize such an essential part of our European project, based not only on an internal market, but also on the very principle of freedom of circulation.

Our work against the extreme right, including its effect on the Roma, emphasises our strong and united position against extremism, drawing attention not only to the dangers of right-wing extremism, but also to its impact on "mainstream" right-wing politics and governments. On immigration, asylum and integration, our approach, using the EP's greater powers post-Lisbon, seeks to tackle the roots of migration to the EU and asylum seeking, and also a positive approach to legal migration and integration. We want to promote a sustainable asylum policy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, European and international legislation.

Our Group will maintain pressure for an ambitious European approach on non-discrimination, ensuring that the already existing legislation is properly implemented, used and monitored - and that the horizontal directive is not buried or watered down in Council.

We continue work to ensure that the Lisbon Treaty produces a more democratic Europe for the citizen. We have had particular successes on the SWIFT agreement where the European Parliament, using for the first time its new powers stemming from the Lisbon Treaty, refused its consent to a questionable agreement between the EU and the United States in the field of data processing and transfer for the fight against terrorism and serious crime. This forced the Commission and the US to negotiate a new agreement giving better democratic guarantees, even if the final result remained controversial in some aspects. This was part of our work to pursue citizens' concerns on data protection, an issue we put high at our political agenda.

Another important innovation of the Lisbon Treaty is the European Citizens' Initiative which enables one million EU citizens to call directly on the Commission to propose a legal act, hence increasing direct democracy, public participation and involvement in the European debate. Our Group strongly supported this initiative in the negotiations on the Regulation setting it up.

Our Group played a pivotal role in the rejection by the Parliament of ACTA, the Anti Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. While acknowledging that intellectual property right infringement is on the increase and that

measures at international level are needed, our Group was fully aware of the many serious concerns expressed by citizens given the vagueness of the ACTA text, potentially threatening civil liberties.

### **Europe in the world: enhancing the universal values of democracy and solidarity**

During recent years the S&D Group has developed a coherent foreign and defence policy, based on the principles of solidarity, freedom, justice and equality. The Group has maintained its openness in order to promote its values on an international scene evolving toward new geopolitical balances and an even stronger interdependence. The Group has constantly defended respect of international law and human rights and advocated multilateralism based on efficient world governance rules. It has developed a more strategic, coherent and integrated EU foreign policy, making full use of the institutional innovations of the Lisbon Treaty, in favour of the European citizens and those from third countries. It has applied the new powers and instruments provided to the European Parliament by the Treaty, notably in the field of trade.

The success of our international policy initiatives also depends on active working relations with progressive forces elsewhere in the world. Through the activities of European Parliament delegations and the four Joint Parliamentary Assemblies (ACP/EU, EUROLAT, EUROMED and EURONEST) the Group has multiplied contacts with progressive MPs from across the world. Delegation missions were also an opportunity for our MEPs to get in touch with civil society and numerous NGOs, in close cooperation with the local progressive Foundations.

It is particularly worth noting Latin America and EUROLAT, where S&D MEPs and MPs from progressive parties in Latin America recently intensified their contacts and agreed to increase their cooperation by establishing permanent communication mechanisms and joint activities. Another example is the World Forum of progressive parliamentary Leaders, which we committed to develop with the support of the Global Progressive Forum.

The Group has been paying particular attention, as a priority area, to the EU's eastern and southern neighbours, where the Group's capacity to effect positive change is the greatest, while we support EU enlargement and the accession process of candidate countries, with special regard to the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The S&D Group has promoted the accession of Croatia to the EU, especially by accompanying our sister party during the negotiation process, hosting Croatian observers, trainees and staff. The same applies to Iceland.

The Group has continued playing a leading role in Mediterranean and Middle East policies in the European Parliament, also through GPF, in particular in the context of the Arab Spring and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. S&D Members took key parliamentary initiatives concerning Tunisia, Libya and Syria in particular. Several conferences and other events related to the Arab Spring were organised, notably with youth representatives from Arab Spring and other countries in addition to the Syrian opposition. S&D Presidents visited Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory with the aim of further strengthening our relations with sister parties and like-minded actors in civil society. As a concrete action our Group has developed an "Arab Spring traineeship".

The Group pursues its objectives towards a Transatlantic Progressive Network. The Group has strengthened and coordinated its transatlantic relations, shaping the exchange of information between Members and expanding the network and activities to fields where both legislators have an essential role, e.g. financial regulation and FTT, economy and trade, civil liberties and social justice<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> On PNR and SWIFT the Group had a leading role in shaping the EP position and mediating with the US counterparts, showing its commitment to a balanced relationship.

The S&D Group and its Leader have been active players in the dynamic game of EU-Russia relations throughout the last decade, maintaining a constant dialogue and having regular meetings with the partners from "A Just Russia" and the representatives of the legislative body and the government from Moscow.

In recent years the S&D Group also developed a dynamic and substantive dialogue with China. Our Group was very active in the organisation of the EU & China High Level Political Parties & Groups Forum, one of the most preeminent of numerous initiatives.

As already mentioned, our Group continued its dialogue and cooperation with Latin America countries of which a majority is governed by centre-left political forces. The Group made effort to address the new Latin America realities, diverse and very different from those prevailing at the beginning of the previous parliamentary term. The Group is already very active in the preparation of the next World Conference of the Global Progressive Forum, to be held next spring in Brazil.

At the same time, we are making increasing efforts to create new discussion forums with emerging powers, including Brazil, India and South Africa.

For several years our Group has been requesting the appointment of a Special Representative for Human Rights, working in close cooperation with the Parliament, as much more needs to be done in order for human rights to run like a "silver thread" through EU external policy. Stavros Lambridinis, a former S&D Member, was nominated by the Council to the post.

Our Group used the EP's new powers in external relations policies, and notably in international trade agreements, to fight against discrimination and for equality of rights and opportunities, with special attention to the situation of women and children as well as to our cooperation with and support to trade unions and civil society organisations. We have firmly stated our fundamental values and constantly insisted on including binding social, labour and environmental rules and standards in all Free Trade Agreements. As mentioned earlier in this report we were at the origin of the rejection of ACTA by the Parliament, ensuring that defending intellectual property rights and innovation does not come at the expense of encroaching on civil liberties.

Solidarity remains a key concept for our Group. We have ensured that development issues are kept high on the agenda. Poverty eradication, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, aid effectiveness and policy coherence for development remain our political priorities, in an approach based on human rights, equality, social justice and good governance. We supported the regionalisation process, multilateralism, a better representation of developing countries in regional organisations, the role of local and regional authorities and dialogue with civil society. We pushed for new forms of cooperation such as Sud-Sud and the triangular cooperation. We made relations with Africa as equal partners a priority for the S&D Group.

Our Group put particular emphasis on promoting and encouraging a Common Defence and Security Policy for the EU. We are engaged in dialogues with experts and NGOs with the aim of seeking to identify and address the short and long-term threats to European citizens. The Group has been actively supporting the successful transfer of tasks previously fulfilled by the Western European Union into the EU architecture under the CSDP with specific emphasis on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty's mutual defence and solidarity clauses.