



22 January 2016

PES Presidency declaration on Poland

The Party of European Socialists expresses its great concern over the recent political developments in Poland and unites in support for the European Union authorities to activate the procedure of the Rule of Law Framework, putting a monitoring mechanism in place. We stand fully behind the action plan proposed by the European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans. We welcome the initiative of the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, who invited the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo to explain the situation in the European Parliament. We believe that the dialogue between the European Institutions and the Polish Government is a good initiative.

In the aftermath of the 2015 Polish Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the newly elected representatives have pursued a legislative agenda that is threatening the principles of the country's democratic order. The revision of the law on the functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal, together with the new bill regarding the media law, show that the objective of the governing party – Law and Justice – is to undermine the democratic system of check and balances. We also express serious concerns over the new regulations for police surveillance approved by the Polish parliament on January 15. If the new rules come into force, they will allow widespread electronic eavesdropping and encroach upon citizens' privacy, in particular their use of the internet. The European Union has acted in order to evaluate how far these reforms affect Poland's capacity to respect the rule of law, which is one of the fundamental values of the EU and which each and every Member State is expected to respect. The PES Presidency supports the initiatives taken by the European institutions to ensure that the independence of the judicial system and freedom of speech are respected not only in Poland, but also in all other Member States.

Monitoring is the first essential step to move away from the defensive accusations, which the Polish government has formulated against individual EU officials, their respective EU Member States Ambassadors residing in Warsaw and the other EU Member States. The objective must remain to clarify the nature of the ongoing developments and offer a comprehensive overview, following which the EU as a

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Community should decide whether to put in place any further measures. Preservation of democracy, rule of law and peaceful cooperation amongst nations is a European issue, and consequently the EU must act to safeguard it across its territory.

To that end, in response to the claims of the Polish government that the reforms are the prerogative of a sovereign state, the European Union must insist that these cannot translate into potential breaches of the values set out in the Treaties. In this sense, the EU has acted upon the concerns raised by the Polish Ombudsman and by independent Polish journalists, and must also respond to growing social mobilisation within Poland. The PES stands side by side with Polish people concerned for the future of their country, many so worried as to demonstrate it on the streets. We must reassure those citizens, and public offices whose impartiality is under threat, that their voices have been heard, will be protected and acted upon.

To that end, the PES and all its members will continue working for the creation of a comprehensive and effective framework for the protection of the European values set out in Article 2 of the TEU. This will be done as well as doing their utmost to help their sister party – SLD– on the way to reconstruction, offering in solidarity support to see the centre-left rebuild its position and reenter the Parliament by the next elections. The PES will continue supporting SLD to bring back Poland on a path towards more social justice, equality and high investments in more and better jobs. The failure of the former Government in social questions was crucial for the change of power. SLD is the only party which has the potential to guarantee democracy as well as social justice in Poland.

