



**Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament**

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
B-1047 Bruxelles
T +32 2 284 2111
F +32 2 230 6664
www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

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Dear President Von der Leyen,

The forthcoming parliamentary debate on the State of the Union will address our collective ability to live up to an unprecedented set of international and internal challenges. These challenges are coalescing into an existential moment for the world and for the European Union. This will require a more assertive and confident Union matching its economic weight with equal political weight on the global stage, and a European Commission capable of showing strong and inspiring leadership.

Now more than at any time since its inception, our Union must remain a beacon of hope, protecting and strengthening its leading role as a rules- and rights-based global actor in an increasingly ruthless and unpredictable world. As a new world order emerges in which Europe must position itself, one thing is clear: upholding international law, including the law of the sea, is an absolute minimum. We cannot allow backsliding into a multipolar world based on extortion, in which the strong dominate the weak. The EU should urgently take the lead in consistently putting international law as the core principle in all its external policies, from Gaza and Ukraine to trade with the US, China and the rest of the world, and it must remain a staunch defender of the United Nations.

More than ever, our Union must provide security and wellbeing for its inhabitants by defending and promoting an inspiring model of society built on peace, social justice, solidarity and democracy.

The next State of the Union debate must send a powerful message to our citizens. At a time of profound economic and technological changes, of war and destruction so close to our Eastern and Southern borders, of grave internal and external attacks on democracy and human rights, of increasingly disruptive climate change, and of deteriorating living and working conditions for millions of Europeans, the European Union and your Commission have a historic responsibility.

We call on you to send a powerful message of security, solidarity and sustainability, through a set of game-changing external and internal policy initiatives for 2026.

European Security, Credibility and Responsibility

Ukraine deserves just and lasting peace, which requires the EU's resolute support and proactive diplomacy. This means stronger economic sanctions against Russia coordinated with allies, effective military and humanitarian aid, robust security guarantees, sustainable financial support, and genuine accession negotiations free from bilateral blockages. Russian public assets

should be confiscated in order to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine and compensate the victims of aggression. Russia's war of aggression is not only about Ukraine's survival, but also about peace and prosperity in Europe.

Defence is more than tanks and fighter jets. If we fail to address the vulnerabilities that fuel distrust in democracy, we may be well armed but lose the battle against populists and foreign interference. Investments in defence must also strengthen social cohesion across regions and Member States. National rearmament alone is not enough. The Commission must propose a comprehensive programme for European defence, covering planning, research, procurement and hybrid threats, and ensure that EU funds drive joint action rather than fragmentation, waste, and dependency. Only by building a true European Defence Union can we secure our future.

The catastrophic humanitarian situation in **Gaza** is testing the EU's credibility. The continued inaction of the European Commission in the face of blatant violations of international and humanitarian law is intolerable. Even while waiting for Member States to act, the Commission has the power to lead: put a proposal of sanctions on the table in the Council that strictly enforces labelling rules for settlement products, and suspends the Association Agreement or withholds EU research funding as long as Israel breaches ethical standards or contractual obligations. Anything less undermines the EU's standing as a global defender of international law.

As the world's biggest global trading bloc, we have a responsibility to demonstrate that trade based on fair and equal terms is a win-win for all countries involved. Accepting illegal unilateral tariffs and bending our legislation to external pressure would set a dangerous precedent, massively eroding both our credibility and our autonomy. We firmly believe that the EU must approach transatlantic trade with confidence in its own strength and in the rules-based multilateral system. Today, the agreement with the US is neither fair nor balanced: it undermines European jobs and industries, erodes the WTO framework, and risks turning Europe into a rule-taker rather than a rule-maker. We therefore demand that the Commission defends European workers, safeguards our sustainability and due diligence laws, and decreases our critical dependencies on third countries in energy, digital and defence.

Building partnerships with like-minded countries who respect international law is now more important than ever. The EU needs to invest more in building a strong coalition with those countries, thus forming a front against the autocratic logic and tariff war of President Trump.

Solidarity

Our citizens need to be better protected and supported in their livelihoods. After months of inaction on social justice, the European Union must act now, across several areas, to achieve a social breakthrough for our citizens and workers.

Several policy initiatives, if they are ambitious and concrete enough, can make such a combined difference in the lives of many million Europeans, workers and families. We expect your full support in providing the EU with an **Affordable Housing Plan**, with a dedicated budget to ensure decent housing for all Europeans, a legislative proposal on short-term rentals and reform of state aid rules enlarging the scope to support affordable housing; **an Anti-Poverty Strategy** capable of eradicating poverty from Europe by 2050; and a properly financed **European Child Guarantee**. In this context, we also urge you to bring forward an ambitious **quality jobs package and fair**

mobility package that protects and supports people in a changing work environment, ensures better living conditions through decent wages, fosters social dialogue, and promotes and protects collective bargaining, for which we expect stronger EU-level measures. This should include a legislative proposal on the use of **artificial intelligence at the workplace, the right to disconnect, and the prevention of psychological risks.**

Furthermore, at this time of profound economic and social change, this agenda needs to be reinforced by a **Just Transition** Directive, guaranteeing training rights, and early anticipation of change through collective bargaining and social dialogue.

Europe also needs to stay on course with regard to **women's rights.** While those rights face unprecedented challenges elsewhere, we need to reaffirm our profound commitment to a society of equals. This is why we expect from your Commission an ambitious post-2025 Gender Equality Strategy, including a legislative proposal on rape on the basis of absence of consent, adding access to safe and legal abortion to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as a comprehensive EU Women's health strategy and action plan to ensure access to sexual and reproductive rights for all European women.

Solidarity and social justice should also be strengthened further in the next Commission Work Programme by inserting **social conditionality** into a revised Directive on Public Procurement, and by submitting a proposal for an EU framework for the **taxation of capital**, including minimum effective taxation of capital gains to help reduce inequalities and the taxation of labour versus capital.

Finally, the Commission must advance new initiatives to develop **Health for All**, notably through a comprehensive, ambitious and binding European Mental Health plan, a revision of the Tobacco Directive to strengthen and expand several of its provisions, and a legislative framework for sustainable food systems.

Sustainability

In an increasingly hostile and destabilised global environment, the notion of sustainability takes on a new meaning. Sustainability needs to define our climate policy, our democracy, the financing of our policies, and our digital transition, if we are to uphold our value-based European model of society.

Global **climate policy** is in survival mode. The European Union must continue to defend global commitments, notably through pro-active climate diplomacy, and pursue ambitious climate policy at home. In this fragile context, there can be no backtracking on the European Green Deal. In your State of the Union address, we ask you to recommit yourself and the Commission to stay on the path to climate neutrality by 2050 and uphold an ambitious 2040 EU climate target of at least 90% domestic GHG reduction. Furthermore, the Commission needs to urgently set out the relevant revisions of sectoral legislation, so that all sectors and industries will be contributing their fair share to this ambitious target. We call on you to provide a Green Deal Implementation Strategy, including the Social Climate Fund and an action plan and reporting tools to accelerate follow-up and implementation.

At a time when core democratic values are increasingly under threat, it is essential to reaffirm our common commitment to defending **democracy**, reinforcing the rule of law as a non-negotiable core principle of our Union, as well as the fundamental rights and freedoms that form

the backbone of the EU. Strengthening the European Democracy Shield must be a central priority for your Commission, and action must be taken now. This applies particularly in the fight against foreign interference, disinformation and manipulation, which continue to erode public trust and distort democratic processes across Member States. The European Commission should also re-affirm its unfailing support to the role of civil society and NGOs, whose role is an essential component of any healthy democracy.

In order to sustain ambitious policies across many fields, including in defence, social and housing policies, climate, research or food safety, the EU needs an adequately sized future **Multi-Annual Financial Framework** for 2028-2034. These will be critical years determining the very future of the European Union as a secure, stable, cohesive and influential global player. Europe cannot underfinance its own future. A sufficiently resourced MFF will require a genuine system of own resources together with new joint borrowing and a permanent investment capacity.

Last but not least, the European Union must re-affirm and sustain its full sovereign capacity to define and implement its own digital rules in a way that is fully compatible with its underlying values and democratic principles. The rules defined in the DSA, DMA and AI Act are non-negotiable, and their implementation must be entirely respected by all third countries and their companies. The European Commission must reject any calls for derogations and there can be no backtracking. Instead, the Commission should take steps to move towards the development of a European digital public infrastructure.

In my letter to you dated 11 July 2024, before the plenary vote on your election as President of the European Commission, I wrote to you that the continuing rise of far-right and anti-European forces obliges us, more than ever, to deliver concrete results to our citizens and that this new term may be the last opportunity to convince Europeans that the pro-European and pro-democratic political forces can make our continent more secure, more prosperous, but also more sustainable and more just.

This firmly remains the view of my Group, despite the challenging task of maintaining all political actors among these forces on track. I ask you to use the opportunity of the State of the Union to draw a clear line between those forces and forces opposed to the European project and to democracy, and to contribute forcefully and convincingly through your proposals and initiatives to the success of a pro-European and pro-democracy agenda that can deliver security, solidarity and sustainability for all.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iratxe', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Iratxe García Pérez

President

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament