



CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS

Palma, April 21-23, 2024

Presidency Conclusions

The Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC) took place from April 21 to 23, 2024, in Palma, within the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2023. This Conference brought together Speakers, or their representatives, of EU Member States Parliaments and the European Parliament, EU candidate countries and guest countries with special partnerships with the European Union. It was inaugurated by His Majesty the King of Spain and presided over by the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies, Ms. Francina Armengol, and the Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Pedro Rollán.

Speakers took part in the different working sessions and showed their interest in the matters discussed in the Conference. However, it is to be noted that, pursuant to article 5 (1) of the Stockholm Guidelines, some Speakers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements and therefore should not be seen as fully endorsing all statements included in these Conference Conclusions, which, as customary, are adopted as Presidency Conclusions.

The Speakers welcome the initiative of the Speaker of the Congress of Deputies of holding the prior Conference of Women Speakers on April 21, 2024, following the commitment undertaken in the Conference of EU Speakers held in Prague on April 24 and 25, 2023.

I. The Strategic Autonomy of the European Union faced with the new challenges for liberal democracies in times of social media and artificial intelligence as regards foreign and defence policy: the illegal invasion of Russia against Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East

The Speakers

1. Stress that during these last years the European Union has been faced with a multidimensional crisis which has exposed Europe's vulnerability in its capacity to respond to international threats and conflicts.
2. Consider it essential to continue promoting the concept of the open strategic autonomy of the European Union, enabling it to attain an autonomous capacity in terms of responding to crises and international conflicts, both as regards those taking place on European soil and in its vicinity or which may have direct consequences on the security and interests of the European Union, while continuing to rely on its partners. Bearing in mind that the declared aim of the European Union is to promote peace, they affirm that strategic autonomy shall allow the EU to act as a global actor with geopolitical relevance, within the framework of multilateralism and international relations.
3. Reiterate their condemnation of Russia's illegal aggression of Ukraine which represented a blatant violation of international law and the United Nations Charter, and endorse the continuation of sanctions adopted by the EU, in the response to Russia's war of aggression and the illegal annexation of Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions designed to weaken Russia's economic base, depriving it of critical technologies and markets and significantly curtailing its ability to wage war.
4. Welcome the holding of the Second Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform, jointly organized by the Czech Republic and Ukraine in Prague in October 2023, as a tool aimed at consolidating inter-parliamentary efforts for the liberation of Crimea and the town of Sevastopol, and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity.
5. While respecting the security and defence policy of certain Member States, advocate for the continuation of the provision of all types of support to Ukraine (humanitarian, military and for the reconstruction) with a view to alleviating the humanitarian consequences of the war, and for Ukraine to be able to legitimately



defend itself from the Russian invader, including its continuous and indiscriminate attacks against civil targets in violation of international humanitarian law.

6. Declare that the joint action of the European Union faced with the crises caused by the war in Ukraine the COVID -19 pandemic, with the rupture of the food and energy supply chains, has accelerated the reflection at European level on the need for a strategic autonomy beyond security and defence, including the reduction of the European economy's strategic dependencies on non-democratic regimes as regards the supply of basic necessities, raw materials, basic foodstuff, essential products, medicines and technological products. Science, technology, trade, data and investments are becoming sources and instruments for international political pressure. In the face of this reality, the European Union must strengthen its industrial, agricultural, energy, financial and technological autonomy, so as not to establish new dependencies while reducing current ones.
7. Recognize the crucial role of developing cross-border energy connections between the EU and neighboring countries in enhancing the EU's strategic and energy autonomy which will not only secure energy supply and resilience but also foster cooperation and solidarity.
8. Consider that a greater strategic autonomy must have an open nature and be based on the diversification of supply chains and a closer cooperation with other partners, promoting the revamping of our trade relations with countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Indo Pacific, as well as enhancing our relations with other partners who share the same values. Strategic autonomy of the Union can only be long term if partnerships are held with countries sharing the EU's democratic values and principles.
9. While respecting the security and defence policy of certain Member States, consider, furthermore, that this strategic autonomy must be understood as complementary to the transatlantic link and the necessary cooperation between the European Union and NATO, pursuant to the terms of the 2016 Global Strategy of the European Union and the Strategic Compass adopted by the European Union in 2022. EU-NATO cooperation should be based on the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity, transparency, mutual openness and decision-making autonomy of the two Organisations.



10. Express their opinion that to achieve European strategic autonomy, it is essential to ensure sufficient investment to the military capabilities of the Member States that will contribute to collective deterrence and defence. In this sense, the implementation of specific initiatives such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) or the European Defence Fund is crucial. They show their support to reindustrialization, promoting to this end the development of European strategic industries and technologies. This way, it is ensured that the investment in defence shall also contribute to obtain industrial and technological autonomy which, in turn, shall have a positive impact on economy, society and employment in the EU Member States.
11. Underline that the European Union has developed multiple types of missions and operations, which complement each other and thus achieve the characteristic comprehensive approach to crisis management that has become a hallmark of the European strategy, with a special focus on stabilising the Neighbourhood countries and regions. These missions cover both those which entail the deployment of military forces, and those focused on training tasks or on the building of the necessary stable structures and capacities to allow weak or failed States to fight the plague of terrorism on their own. In this sense, the goal set by the Strategic Compass for the European Union to equip itself with its own military instrument, enabling the Union to act in the defence of the security of its citizens, its interests, and its democratic values, developing to such end a rapid deployment capability of up to 5,000 troops to respond to different types of crises, becomes particularly relevant.
12. Make a joint call for an immediate humanitarian pause respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 2712, 2720, and 2728, and for rapid, safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid directly to the civilian population in need, in and throughout the Gaza Strip, stressing the humanitarian crisis and the devastating effect of war on civilians, particularly on women, children, disabled and elderly people, and they urge EU member states and candidate countries to contribute to the “Amalthia” initiative. They condemn all terrorist actions, including the Hamas brutal and indiscriminate attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and recognise the right of the State of Israel to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law. They demand the immediate and



unconditional release of all hostages, as well as ensuring humanitarian access to address their medical and other humanitarian needs, and further demand that the parties comply with their obligations under international law in relation to all persons they detain, including the release of the remains of those hostages who have been killed or died. They urge reactivation of the Israeli - Palestinian peace process to support the search for a just and lasting comprehensive two-state solution to the crisis in the Middle East.

13. Recognise the urgent need to take decisive action to effectively combat anti-Semitism, which has risen significantly in Europe since the attacks on October 7, 2023.
14. Strongly condemn the unjustified attacks of Iran against Israel on April 13/14 which constitutes an unprecedented escalation and severe threat to regional security. Call upon Iran and its proxies in the region to refrain from any further escalation and provocation. And call on the EU to reiterate its commitment to the security of Israel and to de-escalation in close contact with all sides.
15. Commit themselves to actively cooperate with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, and to contribute to the resolution of conflicts in the Mediterranean region, with particular emphasis on promoting an effective cooperation in the field of legal migration, including recruitment agreements at countries of origin, and on the search for a fair and adequate¹ solution to illegal migration and human trafficking.
16. Note with concern the increase of extremism in many countries and the awakening of authoritarianism.
17. Warn about the disinformation in social media and about the risk of new technologies and artificial intelligence being used to undermine democracy and human rights and to restrict fundamental freedoms especially against women politicians. Advancing media literacy and critical thinking to address the challenges posed by fake news, misinformation and disinformation, is essential in this regard.
18. Warn about the citizens' trend to position themselves in electoral processes as a result of the use of certain tools by social media. They support digital transformation to face challenges such as cybersecurity, cybercrime, access to a safe 5G infrastructure, disinformation, and artificial intelligence. They welcome

¹ According to the Hungarian National Assembly the human trafficking supporting illegal migration is a crime and should be addressed by criminal law measures.



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the adoption of the new Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act of the European Union. They express their support to Europe's commitment to the international regulation of artificial intelligence and encourage it to assert itself as an active participant in the development of artificial intelligence.

19. Underline the central role played in the democratic life of the European Union by the national parliaments and the European Parliament which guarantee the legitimacy of EU's actions and make the voice of its citizens heard; and they call on European citizens to actively participate in shaping the future of Europe by exercising their right to vote in the incoming European elections which will take place from June 6 to 9, 2024.

II. Strengthening the European Union from an economic and social perspective: the new fiscal rules of the European Union and enhancement of the Economic and Monetary Union in the context of prospective enlargement, social rights and environmental and climate change challenges

The Speakers

20. Welcome the unanimous political agreement on the reform of the economic governance framework of the European Union reached by the 27 Member States in December 2023, followed by a provisional agreement on 9 February 2024 between the Parliament and the Council in the inter-institutional negotiations on the effective coordination of economic policies and multilateral budgetary surveillance ('preventive arm' Regulation), with effect from budget planning for 2025, which aims at ensuring a sustainable reduction of deficit and debt, favouring the design of counter-cyclical fiscal policies, with special protection of investments in the four priority areas for the future of the European Union (green, digital, social and defence) and a transitional mechanism to compensate for the increase in the cost of debt due to rapidly rising interest rates, as well as a series of additional safeguards for loans and investments under the *Next Generation* EU Recovery and Resilience Plans. Call on the attention that the implementation of the political agreement should serve the increase of EU's competitiveness.
21. Consider that the agreement reached shall grant countries a greater control over their adjustment pace, with new simpler and balanced fiscal rules, aligned to the



post-pandemic reality, to reduce debt in a manner compatible with boosting investment and inclusive growth.

22. Acknowledge that currently, in the context of the Economic and Monetary Union, the European Union is faced with two fundamental challenges: completing the Banking Union and developing the Capital Markets Union (CMU). Among the main goals of the Banking Union there is the draft Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive and the Package on Crisis Management and Deposits Insurance. As regards the CMU, proposals such as the Directive and Regulation on Markets in Financial Instruments, the Directive on Alternative Investment Funds, the Regulation and Directive on Infrastructure of European Compensation Markets and the Retail Investment Strategy Package stand out.
23. Welcome the agreement reached at the extraordinary European Council of February 1, 2024, amounting to a total of 50 billion euros, to establish the 2024-2027 Ukraine Facility (envisaging 33 billion euros in loans and 17 billion euros in non-repayable support), conditional on Ukraine conducting a reform and investments plan and maintaining the EU requirements as regards democratic mechanisms, rule of law and human rights².
24. Recall the need to create new and genuine own resources to enable the European Union to finance its climate, digital and defence priorities, and to meet the repayment of the Next Generation EU plan from 2028 onwards, in accordance with the interinstitutional agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission.
25. Consider the enlargement process as a merit-based process, which, in view of the current “geostrategic” conditions and, in line with the Granada Declaration, shall contribute to strengthening our continent and to promote peace, provided that the requirements of being part of a community of values based on the respect for the rule of law and an internal market based on mutual trust are met. They welcome the opening of negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, which represent a significant political endorsement in the difficult context of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Confirming their commitment to the European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans, they welcome the progress made in regard to the Western Balkans’ accession process, which is gradual, reversible and merit-based, while calling on them to undertake the credible and

² The Hungarian National Assembly calls for respect for the rights of national minorities.



- essential reforms that remain to be carried out. They welcome the decision of the March 2024 European Council to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and they note that Georgia has been granted candidate status conditional on the fulfilment of a series of recommendations.
26. Support the need to continue working during the coming months on the drafting of a new Strategic Agenda for the period 2024-2029 with the enlargement process on the horizon, addressing issues such as the reform of EU policies, the management of its budget and the necessary institutional reforms.
 27. Acknowledge the relevance of the social economy in the European Union, a sector made up of approximately 2.8 million organizations, foundations or associations, which generate between 6 % and 8 % of the EU's GDP and contribute more than 13 million employments to the economy, that is, 6.3% of the workforce.
 28. Welcome the adoption by the Council of the European Union on October 9, 2023, of its first recommendation in the field of social economy, aimed at promoting social inclusion and access of persons performing this type of activities to the labour market.
 29. Affirm that enhancing social rights, in accordance with Member States legislation and practices, is a necessary condition for democracy. And express their commitment to understanding environmental policy as part of social justice policies.
 30. Believe that it is essential to maintain a long-term strategic approach to energy security, with a view to gradual decarbonising all sectors of economy, reducing dependence on third countries, diversifying supply sources and promoting renewable and clean sources of energy to fight climate change and protect the environment, taking into account the interest of European citizens and entrepreneurs.
 31. Express their commitment to a just and balanced ecological transition, which must be reconciled with a common agricultural policy capable of ensuring our food sovereignty and security, and with a strong industrial policy designed to make the European Union a truly competitive industrial power, and which must be linked to employment, reskilling and reindustrialization programmes and to the recovery of degraded areas. They consider that the European Union must link its security and sustainable economic development to the preservation of biodiversity and the conservation and protection of natural areas and the



restoration of land and marine areas, taking the lead in achieving a legally binding international framework on eliminating plastic pollution in line with the Plastics Strategy of the European Union.

III. Parliamentary cooperation and development of Democracy: IPEX (EU information exchange) and the Role of Parliaments in Democracy

The Speakers

32. Declare that Parliaments are one of the essential institutional pillars of representative democracy and of the rule of law. They are at the heart of democracy and must be involved in decision-making processes as well as scrutinise and hold governments to account. Parliaments reflect and guarantee political pluralism, on which social support and the democratic legitimation of State institutions are cemented.
33. Express their commitment to the strengthening of Parliaments as the key aspect of the international strategy for the development of democracy, which contributes to political stability, security and defence capabilities, economic development and to the quality of life of citizens.
34. Believe it is necessary to improve the capacity of Parliaments to address a series of global and strategic challenges, and to focus on the participation of women and young people.
35. Take note of the conclusions of the Summit of Women Speakers held on April 21, 2024, in Palma, prior to the EUSC, and in this regard, consider it necessary to promote at all levels a firm commitment with a sustained policy for the elimination of violence against women. Combating any act of violence based on being a woman must be a priority, both at European Union and Member States level.
36. Take note of the “Joint Declaration for more Gender-sensitive Parliaments”, an initiative of the Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives and commit themselves³ to continue fostering this initiative in all the national Parliaments and in the European Parliament with a view to more gender-sensitive parliaments.

³ The Hungarian National Assembly, pursuant the second paragraph of the preamble of Presidency Conclusions, is not in a position to make such a commitment.



37. Acknowledge that the incorporation of women into the workforce has caused one of the most profound changes during the past century, and this fact calls for a new way of cooperation between women and men enabling a balanced sharing of responsibilities in the professional and private sphere, as well as reducing the pay gap. They believe it is essential to promote equal career opportunities for men and women.
38. Commit themselves to continue working to support the European Agenda for Culture of 2018, bearing in mind that to protect culture, and understand its relevance for the construction of egalitarian societies, is to protect democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms and the Welfare State.
39. Acknowledge that putting an end to poverty is the greatest global challenge facing our world today. And they call for greater promotion of education, culture, and science as the main tools to fight social inequalities and the risk of poverty.
40. Consider it necessary to defend the cultural and linguistic plurality of the European Union, understood as one of our main shared heritages, and that, in accordance to the principles and the rules laid down in the Constitutions of each Member State, minority languages be promoted, and their use encouraged, in all fields of life, including the parliamentary sphere.
41. Note that European Union Parliaments and many others are increasingly involved in parliamentary diplomacy and in providing technical support to the strengthening of Parliaments worldwide, acknowledging that peer support is the most efficient manner to share lessons learnt and transfer knowledge to evolving Parliaments which, in turn, results in a stronger democracy worldwide.
42. Welcome the IPEX Conclusions adopted in the meeting of Secretaries General of the Parliaments of the European Union held in Madrid on January 29, 2024. They thank the Czech Parliament for the work done during the last year of its Presidency of the IPEX Board and for hosting the Annual Meeting of IPEX Correspondents in 2023. They invite the countries that have been granted EU candidate status to join the IPEX network, looking forward to a future constructive cooperation. And they request the Spanish Presidency of the IPEX Board to actively work in the implementation and development of the Rolling Working Plan for 2024-2026.
43. Thank the Belgian Senate for its willingness to formally hire the IPEX Information Officer, the European Parliament for providing financial and human resources



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- for the development and operation of the IPEX website and the Italian Parliament for its offer to host the next IPEX Users Conference in 2024.
44. Welcome the efforts of the Speakers who attended the León Summit to commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism, on June 30, 2023, who warned of the need to recall the origins of parliamentarism to understand the profound social change it brought about in the organisation of medieval societies, understand its relevance for the subsequent constitutional development of all modern democracies and be aware of why democracy is the best of all possible systems of organisation as opposed to the easy recipes of authoritarianism.
 45. Take note of the initiative aimed at drafting a common “Charter on the role of Parliaments in a Functioning Liberal Democracy” outlining the fundamental principles and the key elements of modern parliamentarism inherent to a liberal democracy, taking due account of the Conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held in Prague on 24-25 April 2023 and of the Declaration of León on Parliamentarism adopted at the León Summit to commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism on 30 June to 1 July 2023 in León.
 46. Take note of the draft “Charter on the role of Parliaments in a Functioning Liberal Democracy” prepared by the European Parliament First Vice-President Othmar Karas, and commit themselves to continue fostering modern parliamentarism by for example conducting debates in all the national Parliaments and in the European Parliament on the strengthening of parliamentarism in the European democracy for which the proposed Charter could serve as a basis; these considerations could preferably take place before the end of 2024 to jointly advance and reflect on further ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism in a functioning democracy with a view to informing the next Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments to be held in 2025 about the results.

Palma, April 23, 2024