S&Ds to von der Leyen: Europe must deliver for people and strengthen its sovereignty

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STRASBOURG, 15 September 2026

Ahead of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union address and debate in Strasbourg on September 16, 2026, the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) call for a change of direction: away from deregulation and towards better living and working conditions for Europeans, tangible social justice, and a stronger, more sovereign Europe.

Iratxe García Pérez, president of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, said:

*"Europe is facing a choice. Not simply between different policies or political parties, but between two very different visions of our future. One vision is built on fear, power without limits, nationalism and the rule of the strongest. The other vision is the Europe we believe in: a Europe that protects its people, defends democracy and international law, fights climate change, guarantees social rights and has the strength to decide its own future."**

A Europe that delivers for its people

The S&D Group has delivered on the Affordable Housing Act to tackle the short-term rental crisis and now we call on stronger rules to combat speculation. We also expect a Quality Jobs Act with stronger workplace rights, safeguards against artificial intelligence and algorithmic management, better protection for mental health, support for collective bargaining and action to close gender gaps.

Affordable, high-quality food must also be a priority, ensuring fair incomes for farmers and fishers, resilient supply chains and sustainable European production.

The S&D Group demands clean energy at fair prices must combine energy independence and competitiveness with support for households and industry.

It also insists the Green Deal must be strengthened, not dismantled: climate action is essential to Europe's health, security and future.

A sovereign Europe, strong at home and abroad

The S&D Group stresses the need for a genuine European Defence Union, joint procurement and stronger European industrial and supply-chain capacity.

The Group also expects firm commitments to support Ukraine in its defence against Russia's war of aggression, advance a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, defend international law and the International Criminal Court, and pursue credible, merit-based enlargement based on democracy and the rule of law.

A fairer digital world, not unchecked Big Tech

The S&D Group pushes for a Digital Fairness Act to protect minors and consumers from addictive design, dark patterns, unfair personalised pricing, and data misuse, and put limits on the use of targeted advertising. Europe must build trusted platforms, cloud, artificial intelligence and data infrastructure, while ensuring that Big Tech pays its fair share and respects democratic rights.

A budget to match ambition

Delivering on the S&D Group's priorities requires adequate and sustainable financing. The Group will oppose any attempt to weaken the Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework during the upcoming negotiations.

The next MFF must protect cohesion policy, the Common Agricultural Policy and social investment, including a strong, visible European Social Fund. New own resources are needed to finance Europe's social, environmental, digital and industrial objectives, alongside gender budgeting.

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Government ::

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Europe :: EU :: Sovereignty :: Ursula Von Der Leyen ::

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Europe cannot be asked to do more with less.

President Iratxe García Pérez:

*“And as we approach the State of the Union debate, this is the choice Europe must make. Not between north and south. Not between east and west. Not between security and freedom. Not between competitiveness and climate action. Between a Europe that retreats and a Europe that acts. Between those who believe the strongest should decide everything and those who believe that democracy, solidarity and the rule of law make us stronger.**

* Speech given by S&D Group President Iratxe García Pérez to Forum Europa, hosted by the New Economy Forum, on 8 September 2026

About the S&D

The Socialists and Democrats are the biggest progressive force in the European Parliament. It brings together MEPs from all over Europe.

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