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**PES Europe ministers: potential of the Conference on the Future of Europe must be realised**

Citizens were promised a Conference on the Future of Europe that would be a genuine forum for citizens to share their views and deliver meaningful change, and this is what the new presidency of the Council of the EU must deliver. This was the message as socialist and democratic ministers met in Brussels this morning.

Convening to coordinate ahead of the General Affairs Council later today, progressive ministers discussed the Conference, their priorities for the new presidency, and the coronavirus pandemic.

The ministers welcomed the appointment of the new Chair of the PES Europe Ministers network, Finnish Minister for European Affairs and Ownership Steering, **Tytti Tuppurainen**, who said:

*“The Conference is about giving voice to citizens and about creating debate which leads to real improvements in how our Union responds to the needs of its citizens. As we begin a new presidency, and approach the first conclusions of the Conference, it is vital that this objective is delivered.*

*“The efforts of socialists and democrats have been tangible throughout the process. It was a socialist presidency of the EU Council that overcame the institutional impasse. Since then, we have been actively contributing to the Conference.*

*“We are, however, worried that the Conference is running out of steam. In the coming, critical, months, more must be done to fuel this democratic exercise. We must respect our citizens and ensure that the Conference is a real forum that allows for equal participation of all parties, even in these challenging times. We must not miss this moment to hear our citizens. .”*

Ministers discussed the upcoming French presidency. They underlined that our political family will continue to push to put the social dimension and sustainability at the centre when negotiating key legislative dossiers, particularly concerning the green and digital transitions and the minimum wage directive.

On the continuing pandemic, PES ministers urged member states further strengthen vaccination campaigns and in particular the roll-out of booster doses.

The meeting praised the late David Sassoli who passed away this month. The European Parliament President was a powerful force for Europe and for the cause of social democracy.

PES Europe ministers also welcomed a new colleague to the meeting. Pascual Navarro was appointed Spain’s Secretary of State for the European Union last month. He takes over from Juan González-Barba. The meeting also reflected on the good work of Michael Roth, Germany’s former Minister of Stage for Europe and the previous Chair of the PES GAC, who left government in December following the formation of the new German administration. PES Europe ministers thanked Michael Roth and Juan González-Barba for their valued work over the previous years.

The meeting was attended by (TBC):

* **Tytti Tuppurainen**, Minister for European Affairs and Ownership Steering, Finland
* **Vincenzo Amendola,** Undersecretary of State, delegated to European Affairs, Italy
* **Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi**, Parliamentary Secretary for European Funds, Malta
* **Ana Paula Zacarias**, Secretary of State for the European Union, Portugal
* **Pascual Navarro**, Secretary of State for the European Union, Spain
* **Hans Dahlgren**, Minister for European Affairs, Sweden
* **Iratxe García Pérez**, President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament
* **Yonnec Polet**, PES Deputy Secretary General