

## S&D

### **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats**

#### History of the S&D

The ideological roots of today's S&D can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the workers' rights movement diverged into a communist branch, advocating for a proletarian revolution, and a more democratic branch, arguing for parliamentary majorities to advance their political agenda.

After the Second World War, seeking to expand their voting base, social democratic parties across western Europe slowly started to denounce socialism and the nationalisation of the means of production. This, at the time very controversial step, opened the social democrats up to more middle-class voters and, in turn, transformed them into one of the dominant political forces of the post-war era, enabling them to implement their new agenda of a "social market economy".

#### Ideological Wings of the S&D

Since their inception, most social democratic parties were shaped by the seemingly eternal debate between their two main wings: On the one hand those (today often called "Progressives") seeking closer ties to more activist leftist parties and on the other hand, those ("Moderates" or "Centrists") trying to move their parties closer to the political centre, building alliances with Liberals or moderate Conservatives. Today, this debate mostly revolves around the question of whether the social market economy is suited to deal with the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century or whether the long-dead idea of "democratic socialism" needs to be revived to approach these new challenges. This division has the potential to weaken and divide the S&D, should it not find common ground within its members.



#### Core Issues for the S&D

Traditionally, the S&D committed themselves fully to issues faced by the working population, pensioners, and the lower middle class. These include predominantly a minimum wage, better union representation, unemployment insurance and paid sick leave. Over time this agenda was expanded and new programs were created, which form the basis of today's welfare state. The more prominent of those were affordable health insurance, universal access to higher education, and parental leave. To guarantee the proper funding for these programs, Social Democrats have become staunch advocates for progressive taxation without loopholes.

Today, issues like accelerating social inequality, debates about race and gender and, of course, climate change, are rapidly altering the political landscape. Addressing these challenges without pitting working-class voters and centre-left intellectuals against one another is essential for the S&D. With the added rise of right-wing populism one can see the distinct possibility of a total collapse of the Social Democratic idea... or the opportunity for its greatest triumph yet.