
TUSK VOWS TO FIGHT POPULISM, ELECTED NEW EPP CHIEF

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Outgoing EU Council president Donald Tusk pledged Wednesday (20 November) to fight political populism as he was elected leader of Europe's main conservative parties during their group meeting in Croatia.

The former Polish prime minister will be tasked with boosting the fortunes of the European Peoples Party (EPP) — which includes German Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU and France's Republicans.

Tusk leaves his Council job, which he described as Bureaucrat-in-chief, on 1 December.

The EPP is still the largest group in the European Parliament but is under increasing pressure from far-right, liberal and green blocs, which all made gains at the last elections.

Tusk, 62, replaces Frances Joseph Daul to become the EPP's first leader from the European Union's eastern states.

At the start of the meeting Tusk vowed to fight against political populists, manipulators and autocrats — seen as a swipe at Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

Orbán's Fidesz party was suspended from the EPP grouping earlier this year because of the Hungarian government's anti-Brussels poster campaign.

EPP votes to suspend Hungary's Fidesz party membership

The European Peoples Party (EPP) suspended Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's ruling Fidesz party over alleged violations of EU rule-of-law principles on Wednesday (20 March), in a compromise solution that allowed the EPP to keep its bad boy in and bolster party unity ahead of the European elections.

Someone * also worked hard, but only on his narrative and self-creation, putting up a fence and billboards with anti-migration propaganda, Tusk said, alluding to Orbán.

In 2015 Hungary erected a steel fence along its border to keep out migrants.

Since then, Budapest has continued to pass laws hostile to migrants, alarming EU officials.

Let us all stand together on this most important political battlefield, on one side parties of irresponsible populism, on the other, our party of responsible popularity.

Im ready to fight and I hope you are ready too.

Tusk also harked back to the 2015 migrant crisis, Europes worst since World War II, and a deal reached between the EU and Turkey to reduce the migrant influx after hundreds of hours of negotiations.

Talk with France

Among the pressing issues Tusk faces is a renewed dispute about EU enlargement.

Roughly 2,000 participants in Zagreb – Merkel among them – discussed ties between the EU and the Western Balkans, a volatile region with six nations aspiring to join the European bloc.

Last month France angered other leading EU countries by blocking attempts to start membership talks with Albania and North Macedonia.

All eyes on France after inconclusive enlargement summit debate

After a long night of inconclusive discussions, EU heads of state are set to return to the EU enlargement issue today (18 October). All eyes are on France, as Emmanuel Macrons position has so far been the major stumbling block for opening accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania.

French President Emanuel Macron insisted that the EU must strengthen existing ties before adding new members.

But the European Commission and Tusk do not agree, arguing that the two countries have met all the criteria.

Now we have to talk with France, and we will do so very intensively, about which elements should be improved and changed in the accession process, Merkel told reporters Wednesday in Zagreb.

Her compatriot Ursula von der Leyen, the president-elect of the European Commission, said: It is in our common interest that the Western Balkans have a European perspective.

Von der Leyen backed the EU bids of the six countries – Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia and Serbia.

We share the same continent, we share the same history, we share the same culture, she told the meeting earlier.

She said after meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković that she hoped a deal could be reached as soon as possible.

Plenković, whose country takes over the EU six-month rotating presidency in January, said earlier

he wanted to help unblock the situation regarding Northern Macedonia and Albania.

Many in Brussels fear that if France or other reluctant Western countries continue stalling their ambitions, regional capitals may fall under Russian or even Chinese influence.

Kaynak/Source: