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To: undisclosed-recipients;;
cc:
Subject: Foreign ministers urged to back strict rules on EU-level
political parties

From Tony Robinson, Spokesman, Party of European Socialists.
Brussels: 25 October 2001: Tel:

PES STEPS UP PRESSURE FOR EU LAW ON POLITICAL PARTIES

The Party of European Socialists today stepped up pressure for an effective new EU law to regulate political parties organised at European level.

The law would increase openness in EU affairs by establishing the parties as independent bodies and severing their current links with political groups in the European Parliament. It would also provide them with a degree of EU funding and bring their finances under tighter public control.

But PES President Robin Cook today voiced concern at moves to water down the draft law's definition of EU political parties.

Said Mr Cook: 'The definition of a European party must be a serious one. It is not serious to suggest that we should recognise minor political groupings with no international alliances as European.'

Mr Cook called on foreign ministers, who are to discuss the proposed European Party Statute on 29 October, to give EU recognition only to parties with regional, national or European MPs in at least a quarter of the EU's member states. He pointed out that the five main European political parties all supported this definition.

Mr Cook stressed that he wanted the new legislation to take effect as soon as possible. But he described as 'unrealistic' a 20-day deadline for the parties to sever their links with the European Parliament, recruit staff, move into new premises and set up office equipment.

Said Mr Cook: 'The Party of European Socialists will continue to strive for the success of this project and for greater transparency and accountability in EU political bodies.'

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For more info please phone Tony Robinson on Belgian mobile

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