



## **PES Presidency call: support democracy and prosperity for all Europeans**

### **PES Presidency Declaration adopted on 3/12/2020**

In July 2020 European Leaders reached a historic agreement on a long-term European Budget above one trillion euros and a recovery package worth 750 billion euros to assist Europe rebound from the economic, social and sanitary strains of the COVID-19 pandemic. This success was made possible thanks to the efforts of our governments, and the commitment of the German Presidency with the determining role of the SPD. COVID-19 had already taken its toll on societies and economies, without sparing any EU Member State. Yet many challenges still lay ahead, with a second wave ongoing, and a bleak economic forecast. Our governments took extraordinary measures, not only to control the spread of the disease, but also to ensure that citizens, SMEs, business could withstand the shock of this crisis. We are proud of the role of our political family in this achievement: this financing is not a luxury, but it is what can keep our societies afloat, and help support the fair and sustainable transition that we need.

The July decision to establish these funds is a central pillar of Europe's recovery. A long-term vision that ensures just green and digital transitions, that tackles inequalities and poverty and promotes social and fiscal justice was outlined. A European Budget with new own resources and the financial means to strengthen recovery and ensure that Europe lives up to future challenges without further burdening public finances were agreed. That decision was Europe acting on behalf of its citizens. It was Europe putting safety and long-term wellbeing on the front line.

July's European Council agreement was a courageous decision to support European citizens, SMEs, and businesses in the face of this unprecedented pandemic. beyond any past agreement on the European Budget. Part of this agreement is something that should be self-evident for all: the strengthening of democratic accountability and the rule of law.

Our S&D group contributed decisively to further strengthen the Council agreement and fought so that the European Parliament acknowledged the urgency and fast agreed, in November, on an MFF and a recovery instrument worth 1.8 billion euros with an agenda that promotes socially just transitions, the green deal, cohesion, gender equality, and ensures sustainability of financial resources. The European Parliament's plenary consent is not far away. At the same time, European Parliament with the S&D group in the lead and the German Presidency on behalf of the Council, agreed on a new effective and applicable Rule of law conditionality mechanism to protect the fundamental values on which the EU is founded: respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and strengthening the fight against corruption.



Everyone understands the need to set in motion July's agreement without delay. It is not a theoretical exercise, this money will save jobs, will save small businesses, will support the unemployed and those in need. Yet in the midst of this unprecedented situation certain European right-wing governments, most notably those of Viktor Orbán (leader of the Fidesz party in Hungary), and Mateusz Morawiecki (from the PiS party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Poland) are doing the unthinkable, and blocking this much needed European Budget and European recovery package for purely party-political considerations and to sustain their personal power. Despite all the calls from the opposition and very large segments of society in their countries, not only are these governments vetoing the recovery, but they do so by arguing against the clauses that are there to defend fundamental democratic values for the respect of the rule of law.

This cynical approach is a direct attack on the citizens of Europe, including their own citizens who will be the first who suffer from this approach, and on the fundamental values on which Europe is built. Europe rests on independent judiciaries to ensure that laws are respected. It depends on free press that society uses to make decisions on voting. It depends on free civil society it can consult with. Europe is more than economic checks and balances, it is a Union that depends on the rule of law to move forward: this applies to all European countries, especially as we are witnessing concerning trends that undermine fundamental freedoms. Democracy and fundamental rights are core elements not a mere bargaining chip.

We call on these governments, as well as those enabling their actions, to immediately stop vetoing the wellbeing of all European citizens, including their own, and unblock the way for a social and sustainable recovery. We call on the European political groups to which they belong, especially the EPP and the ECR, to take swift and decisive action to protect the rule of law, democracy, and social and economic recovery in Europe. We call on all to support the agreed Rule of Law conditionality mechanism which cannot be compromised. As PES Presidency we will continue to fight for the protection of democracy, as well as the prosperity of all. We will never give up on either.

