



Saving Europe: for Youth and Progress

Resolution adopted by the PES Council in Prague on 3 December 2016

1. Saving Europe

The European Union (EU) is one of our **most important achievements**. It has turned our continent into one of the greatest examples of international cooperation, peace, stability, and solidarity for the benefit of European people. In March 2017, we will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome that started us off on this historic journey.

Yet this wonderful achievement is **under threat**. The European Union, as a community of countries, peoples and common policies, is being challenged. The values on which it is built are under attack: **solidarity, cooperation, cohesion, diversity and equality**, including **gender equality**. What is under threat is the possibility for everyone to have **a fulfilling and secure job**. The assurance that **children will have a better life than their parents**. What is undermined is the rule of law, the sense of mutual responsibility, the rules of respectful cooperation, the regard for diversity and the objectives of inclusion. The vision of **harmonious societies, multicultural societies, egalitarian societies**.

These changes are the result of years of neoliberal and conservative policies across Europe. Years of misguided austerity, of increasing inequality, of insecurity have provided fertile ground for despair. Confronted with an insecure international context and a changing world environment, citizens are expressing their worries, seeking more stability and protection.

Today, populists are taking advantage of this situation to spread their lies, hatred and division, as the results of the British referendum and the American elections have shown. In many countries, the far right is now an ugly reality.

As members of the Party of European Socialists (PES), we act every day with determination to reverse these dangerous trends. The coming months will be crucial. **For us, the EU means prosperity, solidarity, and rights. It means equality and hope.** It means working for a better life for all citizens and for all generations, now and in the future.

What is at stake is not only the EU, but all the principles which make it possible to build sustainable, prosperous, fair societies where everyone can enjoy a good life.

2. For Youth

Our political struggle is driven by the conviction that the life of tomorrow must be better and brighter than that of today. Due to failed austerity policies that have increased poverty, unemployment, and youth unemployment in particular, in many parts of the continent, children face the risk of being worse-off than their parents' generation for the first time. The PES sees young people as a fundamental asset for our societies, for our democracies, and for the economic recovery of Europe. We, the progressive family, are at the forefront of the battle. We have launched an initiative with concrete measures to help young people to find their place in the society and integrate in the labour market, based on employment, education, culture and child policies: **a European Youth Plan**. At the pan-European Youth Plan Action Day on 16 November 2016, hundreds of PES Activists, PES Ministers and PES Members of European, national and regional parliaments, together with the Young European Socialists took to the streets in cities all over Europe, with 112 events in 83 cities, and 30 countries, to make their voices heard: **Act for Youth!**

- Our flagship policy, the **Youth Guarantee**, is a success. It has **given nine million young people an offer** of employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education since it started rolling out three years ago. Still, more remains to be done. The European youth unemployment crisis is far from over. In the light of the Youth Guarantee's very promising debut, we are convinced that it should continue and receive further support. **It should become a permanent feature of EU employment policies** and a central component of the European Social Model.
- We **call for 20 billion EUR** to be made available for the Youth Guarantee until 2020. This increase of the Youth Guarantee's annual funding to five billion EUR would allow improved and speedier implementation in the few countries that have seen more limited youth employment policy reforms thus far. It would also allow us to extend the scope of beneficiaries up to the age of 30, to better reach specific target groups, and to improve the quality and sustainability of offers. We are, and will remain, the political family that ensures Europe invests in its youth.
- Life opportunities, but also life inequalities do not start with adulthood. They start from the very early stages of life. The EU is the richest region in the world, and yet, unacceptably one in four European children faces poverty and social exclusion. European children must have the opportunity to acquire the skills and capabilities that will enable them to break this cycle of disadvantage.
- To provide equal chances, the PES is fighting for a **European Child Guarantee**, spearheaded by the S&D Group in the European Parliament, to support EU member states, regions and cities in policies that enable every child to have access to free healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition.
- Studying, training or working abroad broadens the mind and personal horizons and strengthens European identity – much needed assets in the struggle against today's resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia. For 30 years the Erasmus student exchange programme has been a huge success in enabling young people to travel within Europe, study and learn abroad, and to better know the European peoples and share European values. To continue this success, the mid-term revision of the EU budget must enable Erasmus+, the EU's current programme for education, training, youth and sport, to reach even more young people as well as more learners and professionals from all educational levels and from all parts of society, although there are some difficulties and scarce funds to support them.

- Culture is not a luxury. It is the spark that enriches our societies, and can strengthen civic attitudes and self-development. It is a power for real progress and transformation. That is why the PES promotes the introduction of **European Culture Cheques** for young people to participate in cultural life. The Italian government's initiative, that will support access to culture for over 550,000 young people, should serve as an example at European level.

3. For Progress

It is time for action to bring a progressive and social Europe. More than ever, the EU needs to guarantee and strengthen existing social and workers' rights, may they be individual or collective, with ambitious social standards, identified and adopted in EU law. Improving working conditions, equal pay for equal work, decent jobs, working time regulation, health and safety at work, maternity, paternity, parental and carers' leave are an absolute priority.

We are supporting the **European Social Summit that will be hosted by the Swedish government in Stockholm in the autumn of 2017.** The PES fully supports the realisation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** initiated by the United Nations at international, but also at European level, which we consider to be "Social Democratic Goals": fostering fair economic growth, social development and environmental protection without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is necessary to support these goals which we consider fundamental with appropriate financial resources that are consistent with evolving challenges for Member States, including through a reform of the EU budget and using new common financial tools.

Social Progress

- We want to integrate social progress in the DNA of the EU. Social progress must be at the heart of EU policy making to improve the everyday life of people. The **Pillar of Social Rights** can provide the framework for a **Social Progress Protocol** that clarifies that neither basic economic freedoms nor competition rules take precedence over fundamental social rights. In the event of conflict, fundamental social rights must have priority. We will strike a new balance which places sustainable social progress at the top of the EU's agenda.
- For us, job quality is as important as job availability. We will continue to fight precarious jobs, in-job poverty, zero-hour contracts, and other such forms of exploitation. To offer a decent standard of living to everyone, we will introduce **decent minimum wages across Europe**, to be reached either by law or through collective bargaining. We stand ready to develop and implement these policies with the **social partners**, and will continue to support a strong and vivid social dialogue.
- To face the challenges of fast-changing economies and the increased risks of social dumping, we want to **extend decent social protection to all forms of employment**, including those created in the care sector and in the digital economy. The digital economy is transforming our societies and profoundly modifies social and economic interactions. For this evolution to benefit our society as a whole, a laissez-faire approach is not enough. We will put forward our proposals to ensure this transformation happens in a fair way. We will prevent the creation of new forms of exclusion and exploitation, including in the digital platform economy.
- We stand firm in our fight against social dumping, flags of convenience, letterbox companies, and bogus self-employment. We want strong standards, clear rules for establishment of companies and stronger means of control for Member States. No company can be allowed to escape its fiscal and social responsibility, just as no employee can be denied their social and labour rights. We fight for equal pay for equal work at the same place, and for the same

working rights and conditions. There should be swift progress on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive.

- In case of layoffs, we want a European framework to manage restructuring in a social and responsible way with proper information and consultation. To prevent poverty and social exclusion, we call for the establishment of a European social protection floor that guarantees **universal access to quality health services, including sexual and reproductive health rights and basic income security**.
- Sharing working time is one of our tools to create employment, and allow Europeans to reach a proper balance between their work and their private life.
- We are **fighting inequality**. For us, **non-discrimination** is a core principle to guarantee all EU citizens equal access to social security and social services. We do not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, religion, origin, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation or of any other form of discrimination.
- Women's rights are fundamental human rights. We will continue to promote an effective **gender equality**, closing the gender pay and pension gap with clear and binding targets. We advocate sanctions against the private sector when it persists in not meeting legal requirements on equal pay. We will reopen the debate on EU regulation regarding paid maternity and parental leave. We stand side by side with all women whose rights are being attacked in Europe.
- We will fight to tackle stereotypes, prevent hate speech and hate crime, notably to ensure effective non-discrimination for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people throughout the EU. We want a Europe where the rights of all EU citizens, residents and their families are guaranteed by law and recognised in all Member States. It is imperative to adopt as soon as possible the 2008 Equal Treatment Directive (anti-discrimination directive outside of work), to fully protect all European citizens in all aspects of their lives.

Economic progress

- The European economy is recovering but not at the pace we want. More needs to be done to ensure **sustainable economic growth, financial stability and social wellbeing**. Our political family is fighting **against austerity-only policies** and pushing for more **growth and investment** in Europe. While this has finally led to the creation of the European Fund for Strategic Investment that we called for, we cannot consider that the job is done and must ensure that this is not at the expense of the much needed Structural and Cohesion Funds.
- It is now time to take the next step and establish a **reinforced, long-term European investment strategy**. This requires public and private investment, giving public authorities the ability to invest and deliver quality public services, which can improve people's lives and bring about positive change for the economy and society, by developing new markets and technologies, environment-centred sustainability, and ensuring a true transition towards a sustainable economy and a better society. The European Union's economic policy should not be only about fiscal monitoring and sanctions but also strengthen the possibilities of swift economic recovery by applying more flexibility margins in the Stability and Growth Pact.
- The European Union and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) must be instruments of **solidarity, cohesion, and equality**. A fiscal union is necessary for a monetary union. We need more convergence of fiscal policies and instruments such as a Eurozone budget to absorb symmetric and asymmetric shocks and to promote balanced growth, structural

convergence, high employment and social progress. We must strengthen the EMU with a more democratic and accountable decision-making process, through a democratically legitimate governance structure with parliamentary control. Upward economic and social convergence among regions and states can reduce inequalities and promote sustainable growth and social progress throughout Europe.

- The economic empowerment of women is a central priority. New policies which reduce the multiple gender gaps on the labour market need to be put in place in order to promote women's employment across all sectors and all levels with respect to equal pay and work life balance for women and men. We want effective measures to reach the EU2020 target of 75% employment rate for women and men. We want to promote **progressive and sustainable structural reforms**, such as the Youth Guarantee, that are designed to fight unemployment and inequalities, strengthen our European social model, and ensure smooth and sustainable economic recovery.
- **Redistributive tax systems** are the cornerstone of developing fair societies. Globalisation and digitalisation do not change this principle. We remain committed to putting an **end to tax evasion**, tax avoidance and aggressive tax planning, and to closing tax havens. These rogue practices, including money laundering, not only hamper economic growth but also put our welfare systems at great risk. Our aim is to make the taxation system fairer and transparent, to ensure profits are taxed where economic activity takes place, to put an end to the fiscal race to the bottom, and to make the financial sector serve the real economy. The swift and ambitious implementation of the European Deposit Guarantee Scheme, the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base and the **Financial Transaction Tax** will contribute towards reaching this aim.
- International trade agreements must contribute to the enhancement of our European norms and standards on workers' rights and conditions, environmental sustainability, health and safety norms, and they should strengthen the position of developing countries. Civil society organisations should have equal access to arbitration systems in international trade agreements.

Environmental progress

- Social and economic progress is unthinkable without **protecting our environment**. Today's fossil fuel combustion, nuclear waste and natural resource overconsumption are putting environmental, social and economic burdens on future generations. This is why the European Union's economy needs to move towards a carbon-neutral model, mainly based on enhanced energy efficiency standards, reduced consumption, and larger scale deployment of renewable energies. We must revise the EU's 2030 climate and energy targets.
- In line with the PES declaration "21 Progressive Proposals for COP21", we reiterate our call for the introduction of a European system of carbon taxation and to effectively phase out the use of fossil fuels and all environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020.
- The scarcity of natural resources and the volatility of their prices on the international markets demand a move towards a more **resource-efficient economy** to support a new European industrial strategy. Moving towards a circular economy and reusing materials will also have positive effects on lowering the energy consumption of industry and will create new sustainable, qualified jobs in the industries reusing, recycling or up-valuing discarded products and resources.
- This change must be a **just transition**, offering **new opportunities** for workers in high-carbon, resource-intensive jobs in the decarbonised, circular economy of the future. Social

dialogue should be key in this process and can be benefitted by further strengthening regional capacities. A Just Transition Fund should be set up, and revenues from the European Emissions Trading System should support this.

Security

- We strive to make Europe a continent where **everyone's security is guaranteed**, and all **fundamental freedoms and rights are fully respected**. These two priorities must go hand in hand.
- In the past months, important legislative steps and concrete counter-terrorism actions have been taken at the European level. In the common fight against terrorism, we reaffirm that Member States and law enforcement agencies should continue **deepening their cooperation, enhancing the quantity and quality of information shared** and guaranteeing the interoperability between all relevant databases in line with the necessity and proportionality principle. Additional efforts must be undertaken in order to **fight the illegal trafficking of firearms and explosives, counter the issue of foreign fighters** and **disrupt the financial sources** used to finance terrorist groups.
- Terrorism cannot be tackled with security-only measures. We believe that it is an absolute **priority for the EU to work towards preventing radicalisation** in our societies, alongside efficient programmes to disengage people from radical groups. As progressives, we will continue to push for the development of comprehensive **policies promoting social inclusion and integration** while empowering families, schools and social workers into detecting and preventing the radicalisation of young people.

Migration and integration

- Since September 2015, more than 1.3 million refugees and other migrants have come to the European Union. Our first and foremost concern is that **no more lives are lost at sea on the dangerous journey that leads to Europe. Much more needs to be done to prevent these deaths**. Europe must live up to its humanitarian and legal duty to save lives and help those in need of international protection, including vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, women, and LGBTI people.
- We want to tackle the root causes of migration by promoting peace as a precondition for security, prosperity, resilience, fair trade, genuine opportunities and lasting prospects for people to improve their living conditions at home. Our policy should not become a tool to prevent the continuous and natural phenomenon that is migration. We want to approach, and work more closely with, third countries to make the management of migration a mutually beneficial project. Important steps have been taken in the effort to **dismantle smugglers' and traffickers' businesses and improving European border management**. But, in order to be fully successful in breaking their business model, we need to create **more safe and legal ways** for refugees and other migrants to have a future in Europe. Much remains to be done to promote solidarity and **shared responsibility**, in full respect of international law and human rights, between Member States, as well as on a global scale. The Asylum package reform should target the highest standards.
- We need to make sure that violence, in reception centres and facilities and elsewhere, is adequately prevented by national authorities, including when it is directed towards LGBTI and women.
- Our answer to the rise of extremism and hate is clear. We want strong **integration policies that promote living together and respect our diversity**. Migration plays a key role in our societies, and is a source of social, economic and cultural development. We want to counter the prevailing negative narrative about migration.

- We support the new partnership framework with key countries in Africa and the trust fund for Africa. We want to improve peoples' lives in these countries and the region by investing in long term economic and social development, education, security, the rule of law and human rights.

Global progress

- In these challenging times, we are convinced that only a strong EU with a shared vision and common action in the fields of foreign, security and defence policies can play fully its role for a fair, peaceful, prosperous and rules-based world. Resolving conflicts and restoring peace, in our neighbourhood and beyond, remain key priorities of our external policy.
- The PES is following the recent developments in Turkey and calls on the Turkish government to return to a credible political process and political dialogue, essential for the country's democracy and stability in the region. We have great concerns about the arrest of the co-chairs of the HDP, as well as the detention of several HDP members, journalists and human right activists in Turkey. The PES wishes to see a Turkey that remains anchored in the EU. If the rule of law and human rights are not restored, we call on the Commission and the Council to initiate a temporary freeze of the ongoing accession negotiations.
- We believe that multilateralism is a key principle with the UN at its core, and we will support the new UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in his efforts. To help build a safer and more resilient world, we will continue to promote **peace, democracy, regional cooperation, human rights, women's rights and gender equality, the rule of law, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change** in Europe and worldwide.
- A thorough revision of the CSDP is needed and it should be based on strong principles, efficient financing and coordination with NATO. The EU must take greater responsibility for its security and defence. There should be an evaluation of how our defence capacities can be used more effectively and efficiently. Europe must be better equipped, trained and organised to contribute to the collective effort. In order to counter terrorism, the EU and its Member States need greater information sharing and intelligence cooperation.
- We will strive towards actively promoting **trade as a vital instrument** for inclusive growth, job creation, competitiveness and the promotion of fundamental values and EU standards which fully defend human rights and sustainable development as well as social and consumer protection. It is of crucial importance to unblock the modernisation of the EU's trade defence instruments and address public concerns in order to promote **a trade that is open and fair**.
- A responsible and united EU guided by clear principles and values, as described in the **Global Strategy** proposed by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, is the right way to serve our shared European values and our common European interest, using common means for a better world.

4. For the future

As the Party of European Socialists, we know that this is a dangerous and unstable time. This only strengthens our determination. Thanks to our strong presence in national governments and parliaments, and as the second strongest group in the European

Parliament, we have succeeded in putting in motion key changes. In the face of the neoliberal and conservative majority, we stand for more fair growth, social justice and equality in Europe.

But this is not enough. We want more. Today, too few citizens are feeling the benefit of shared prosperity and too many have concerns about their future. Many young people no longer feel represented. Turnout in elections is decreasing in many countries, as citizens have less and less confidence in politics and democratic institutions.

To fight these trends, we are constantly evolving, adapting to the changes and new realities in our societies. New technologies, new realities in our cities and countries have not only changed the way in which people communicate, but also the way people do politics. We will continue to adapt in order to be closer to European citizens' needs and aspirations.

Now is the time to revive hope. It is time to defeat despair and to put an end to the rise of populists, extremists, and racists. The months ahead will see many challenges, with key elections in several member states in 2017 and beyond. We are engaged in the battle to bring progressive policies and solutions. We are looking to strengthen our role in Europe with more PES participation in government, as a big political family that has brought equality, freedom and prosperity to the many.

We will continue to campaign for the European Youth Plan in 2017 to ensure that it will become a reality for European young people. Today we are building the basis on which we want to win the European elections of 2019, with a common programme, a common campaign and a common candidate.

We remain uncompromising in our adherence to honesty, transparency and social responsibility. We remain uncompromising in our principles and our commitment to building progressive societies, with shared prosperity and equality for all – societies that give a better life to future generations and real solutions for citizens.

These are the foundations on which we are fighting to change our society, and to change Europe for the better.