

Common paper
PES GAC Ministers meeting
The need of a stronger European Union in challenging times

Paris, 14 November 2016

Introduction

The European Union is facing difficult times, with internal and external crisis and a changed international environment. We want a Europe being aware what it stands for, delivering concrete results to its citizens and shaping our globalized world. The election of Donald Trump as 45th President of the United States of America could have further impact on defining our role as Europeans..

We must more than ever decide what future we want for Europe, how we strengthen Europe to promote its interests and its values. If we want to take our part in tomorrow's world, we must decide what we want to achieve together. More than ever, we must stand together to build a more united and strong Europe ready to tackle challenges we are facing.

It is our responsibility to promote a progressive Europe together. Following our previous meetings, we want to continue deepening our discussion and coordination for relaunching the European project. Europe must stay true to its common values, to its interest, to its ambition. The EU is internationally known for ensuring growth, innovation and competitiveness, social security while preserving common values, individual freedoms, open and diverse societies and democratic participation. Not only internally but also externally these principles are our guidance.

The anniversary of the Rome Treaty on the 25th of March marks an important landmark in the history of the European Union. It is crucial that we seize this occasion for a push in the

right direction to promote our common values and the rule of law. In Rome in March we will be ready to present our progressive European Strategy for making Europe better. Europe must be relaunched to promote security, solidarity, sustainability, equality and fairness.

There are several important steps in the process that we should seek to influence, especially the Malta summit, the incoming ‘White Paper’ of the European Commission, and the interinstitutional agreement on the European Commission work Programme for 2017, in which we should aim at incorporating our progressive vision.

1. An ambitious social turn for the European Union

- Relaunching Europe can only happen if the European Union takes the direction of a more social union. Social justice is a condition for a sustainable Europe. Social security must be safeguarded at all costs. The announced European pillar of social rights constitutes an opportunity to take steps and to strengthen our social model, reduce inequalities, guarantee high social standards and fight precarity. We should seize the occasion offered by the pillar and the preparation of the White Paper to strike such a new balance in favour of a more social Europe. For stronger social inclusion, stronger social cohesion within member states and among member states and a prosperity that all European citizens benefit from, we need to strengthen existing rights, may they be in terms of working conditions, access to skills and quality jobs, universal access to services in high education, childcare or health care. We must ensure that rights are properly implemented and that strong standards are met across Europe.

- The EU must set ambitious standards to promote an economic and social convergence between Member States. More attention should be paid to cross-EU differences in wages, productivity and prices. We must build on social dialogue and

collective bargaining to protect European's labor standards, and foster upward convergence in a growth-friendly way. For instance, the definition of a European minimum wage standard adapted to the member states' situation is a major step forward should be at the core of the European pillar of social rights.

- To face the challenges of fast-changing economies and the increased risks of social dumping, it is essential to extend social protection to all forms of employment, including those created in the digital economy.
- Considering the existing precedence of economic freedoms over fundamental social and labour rights in both European case-law and the macro-economic coordination of the European Union and the Eurozone, we, as progressive, must contribute to rebalance both legislation and policies in favour of social rights with a social progress protocol.

2. Ensuring Economic Growth, Social Wellbeing and creating jobs

2.1 Further enhance the investment dynamic

It is due to our constant and decisive political pressure that Europe now enjoys an Investment Plan. The statement of the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker to double the European Fund for Strategic Investment both in duration and in financial capacity is a welcomed step forward. But more can be done to effectively stimulate economic growth and employment.

- As progressives we are committed to delivering sustainable and inclusive growth: we must ensure that the EFSI is prolonged and promotes both territorial and social cohesion and contributes to social and economic convergence across Europe.
- As progressives we have been calling for an ambitious investment strategy as the cornerstone of delivering sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing.
- The European Semester must take into account the social dimension, and promote the implementation of progressive reforms and fair and redistributive tax systems by Member States. Member States must be allowed to create space for policies favorable to growth and employment without breaking with the targets of the

Stability and Growth Pact. Stepping up the fight against tax fraud and evasion is crucial for ensuring fair social and fiscal systems.

2.2 Deepening the Economic and Monetary Union

The deepening of the EMU should be put back on the political agenda. Discussions on implementing the second phase of the 5 Presidents report should accelerate, in order for the Union to create and reinforce much needed solidarity mechanisms.

- The deepening of the EMU has to be completed without delay, whilst strengthening its governance and democratic accountability. We have to ensure the swift completion of the Banking Union with a European Deposit Guarantee Scheme that promotes both risk sharing and risk reduction. The aim needs to be safeguarding citizens deposits.
- Our common currency is strong but it needs the trust of the citizens. This is undermined by a lack of progress on its social dimension and fair taxation among its member states. Hence, as a general principle, any step to further deepen the EMU should be accompanied by progress in the field of common taxation, in particular with regard to transnational corporations, as well as the development of a social union underpinned by common social minimum standards.
- The current architecture of the euro is not sufficiently resilient to external shocks or internal imbalances. Completing the EMU will involve the continuous intensification of political governance as well as fiscal burden sharing in a gradual and pragmatic evolution. A fiscal capacity remains a missing keystone in the EMU architecture. In the long run it should provide macroeconomic stabilization.

3. Promoting a fairer Single Market

We have repeatedly highlighted the importance of delivering a fairer Single Market in order to promote productivity, the creation of jobs and attract investment and innovation. We as progressives have to ensure that employment and social standards as well as appropriate

levels of regulations are put in place to prevent any possible weakening of the European Social Model.

- The development of the Digital Single Market offers great future growth and employment opportunities and we must promote a fair and inclusive digital economy as well as to modernize our public services to come closer to citizens. Further we must continue the development of Roaming, geo blocking and portability.
- The Capital Markets Union can unlock alternatives platforms for investment especially for SMEs.
- The creation of the Energy Union can help decarbonizing Europe's economies and increase its external energy security, which are two major issues. In the same time, we must ensure that in this process energy remains affordable and that citizens are empowered to take control of their energy bills in the review of Energy Union-related energy legislation. The European Union and its Member States have to fully implement their commitments in the context of the Paris Agreement and the Energy and Climate Package, and should review its 2030 climate and energy targets in view to the international 2018 stock tale of climate commitments. In the present situation the European Union has to take the lead to preserve the Paris agreement on climate change.

4. Act4Youth: youth have to be at the core of our progressive European project

Every fifth young person in Europe under the age of 25 is out of work. Additionally to the high unemployment rate amongst Europe's youth more than 30 % of young people aged 18 to 24 and 27.8 % of children aged less than 18 were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2014.

That's why the PES launched the initiative for a European Youth Plan, which next to labour market integration through a permanent and extended Youth Guarantee also promotes policy proposals for social inclusion of Europe's youth through broadened Erasmus for All, European Youth Culture Cheques and a European Child Guarantee. The first step for this plan to become reality will be to ensure 20 bn EUR are made available for the Youth Guarantee until 2020.

5. Tackling the issue of migration with efficiency and humanity

We as progressive are very committed to solidarity towards refugees and between member states which is at the core of our European construction.

With the comprehensive approach to solve the refugee and migration issue which includes the external dimension and international engagement, a common border protection, a European asylum policy with a fair burden-sharing mechanism based on common values we have the possibility to show global responsibility and solidarity but also safeguard internally the fundamental pillar of free movement of people. The Schengen area needs to be strengthened and we need a fair review of the Dublin regulation.

It is our priority to continue to work on targeted migration partnerships with countries in the first five priority countries Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Ethiopia. The European Council decided that the High Representative is to lead the implementation and ensure close coordination between the EU institutions and services and the Member States. We must speed up the implementation of the compacts, in respect of the principles mentioned in the Valetta Action plan.

6. Europe must ensure its own security and strengthen its defense cooperation

Ensuring internal security and fighting against terrorism must remain a priority of the European political agenda. December European Council must decide on concrete steps to implement the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and security policy making full use of the Treaties' opportunities, in order to make steps forward in building our Common Security and Defense Policy. Our political family believes the European Union has crucial role in guaranteeing the safety of our citizens, addressing the root causes of terrorism, strengthening the defense and management of our borders while safeguarding the people's fundamental rights and the democratic, open and tolerant societies we live in.

- Sharing information is a key action in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. We as progressives ask Member States and law enforcement agencies to deepen their cooperation and to enhance the quantity and quality of information shared and guarantee the interoperability between all relevant databases. We

strongly believe that all Member States must share efficiently their data on people which are considered to be a threat to EU's national security.

- Strengthening the control of the EU's external borders by carrying out security checks to all individuals, including European nationals, entering and leaving the European area could address certain gaps in identifying individuals which have been flagged for terrorism. In the same time, when it comes to collecting data, registering entry and exit records and exchanging information, the EU has to provide enough safeguards to guarantee people's rights to privacy and data protection.
- By setting up the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS), authorities will have an additional tool aimed at gathering information on citizens traveling in the EU. We hope that the Commission will be able to make a detailed proposal soon enough.
- As progressives we believe that defeating terrorism can only be done by tackling the phenomenon at its roots. It is vital for the EU to invest massively in programs aimed at preventing the rise of radicalization in our societies and on the internet, alongside having efficient de-radicalization programs and persuasive counter narratives.