

PES Activity Plan 2001-04

The Berlin Congress is the starting point for a new PES. Under the impulse of a newly elected President the restructured PES must take up the organisational and political challenges it faces and develop its activities, whilst fully respecting the financial rigour imposed by new budgetary constraints.

At Berlin the PES will define its political and strategic priorities for the years ahead based on the "21 Commitments for the 21st Century" of the manifesto adopted in Milan at the last Congress. These priorities are set out in the resolutions and will be translated into concrete actions and activities. From today, with the electoral challenge of 2004 in mind, the PES must constantly work to win citizens to the European cause and engage them in the debate about the future of Europe.

1. Political priorities

A European Union at the service of its citizens

At the centre of PES activities must be the commitment to engage citizens in the construction of a united Europe and to put everything in place to build a Europe that serves the citizen and responds to their needs and concerns. Jobs, health, food safety, education, lifelong learning, the introduction of the Euro into daily life, social protection, equal opportunities, the environment, the fight against crime, racism and xenophobia are some of the issues close to the citizens and to which they are demanding concrete answers from the PES and its Parliamentary Group in their day-to-day activities.

Modernising and strengthening the European social and economic model

The PES, working through its member parties and organisations, will face up to the challenge of globalisation by working for the development and modernisation of the European social and economic model. The PES will defend, therefore, a healthy, modern and competitive economy, sustainable growth and full employment whilst developing an open, pluralist and multi-ethnic society based on solidarity and greater social cohesion, a society respecting the need for food safety and agriculture. The PES will continue to organise ministerial co-ordination meetings for the ECOFIN and Social Affairs Councils in the framework of the "Lisbon Process" – a process begun by the PES in 1999 with the Guterres Report on "A European Employment Pact – A New European Approach" adopted at the 1999 Milan Congress.

Enlargement

The PES will continue to actively follow, at all levels, the enlargement process of the EU. The member parties of the applicant countries are more and more closely involved in the PES' activities. Their representation in the different bodies of the party, most notably at Leaders' meetings and in the Presidency, will be strengthened and their participation in the other activities of the PES will grow, speeding up their progressive integration.

The full integration of each party from a candidate country could take place once the membership negotiations with the EU have been concluded. In order to facilitate this integration the PES Enlargement Working Group will continue its work and its visits to the candidate countries, in close collaboration with the Forum. The PES will hold a meeting in Tallin in Estonia this year (following similar meetings in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw) and will continue to hold twice yearly meetings in the coming years.

The Post-Nice Debate

The PES must take an active part in the public debate about the future of the European Union. The first PES Council, to be prepared by the Presidency, could be the ideal moment to debate in detail the PES' views on the future of the construction of Europe and to present proposals and strategies to European citizens. This will be done by a high level working group, set up to draft a discussion paper for the first PES Council.

Common Security and Defence Policy

The PES working group on security and defence policy, set up at the Milan Congress, will continue its work in close co-operation with PES Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs, other relevant Ministers, the PES Parliamentary Group and the EU High Representative for the CFSP. This working group will closely look into the development of policies and mechanisms for conflict prevention and crisis management.

Food Safety and Agriculture

The present serious crisis in agriculture which has struck part of Europe, with its social consequences for rural areas and the loss of confidence by citizens in food quality and production methods, requires that a serious debate be launched in the European Union. EU enlargement and the Union's wider responsibilities in the world underline this need. At its Berlin Congress the PES will establish a working group which, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Group's working group, will follow this issue very closely.

Sustainable Development

At the PES Summit in Stockholm the Leaders agreed to set up a working group on a strategy for sustainable development. A first discussion will be held during the Berlin Congress during the roundtable on "Modern Social Economy – A Modern Social Democracy." The working group will then be formally launched at the Gothenburg Summit and will continue its work during the Belgian and Spanish Presidencies, presenting its conclusions at the PES Summit in Barcelona next spring. These will then be presented to the United Nations Rio Summit follow-up Conference in South Africa.

Immigration Policy

The PES Leaders' Meeting in Stockholm decided to set up a working group on immigration and asylum. This was endorsed by the Bureau on 30 March. This will present the conclusions of its initial discussions to the PES Summit in Brussels on the eve of the Laeken European Council, which will largely be dedicated to this matter.

Developing the PES' External Relations

The recent events in the FYROM show, once more, the fragility of the stability of the Balkans. The PES must continue its work, begun in Vienna in the summer of 1999, to contribute to the success of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe in its different areas; democracy, economic development and stability. The PES will develop links with different actors in civil society in these countries in order to support their development and to help to consolidate them. During the Berlin Congress the PES will set up a Network for Southeastern Europe.

Relations between the EU and Russia are essential for the prosperity and stability of the continent. The PES must examine the ways in which it can establish contacts with parties, NGOs and other civil society organisations in Russia that share its values and principles.

The PES, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Group and European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, should develop its work and its contacts with sister parties in those countries of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean (which will contribute to the success of the Barcelona process), which are not candidates for EU membership.

The PES should develop its relations with sister parties from the other side of the Atlantic, notably the US Democratic Party, and undertake contacts with sister parties in Latin America and the ACP countries.

Preparing the 2004 European Elections

The PES will develop a series of activities to prepare for the national and European election campaigns and to help our parties achieve victory in 2004. The PES Parliamentary Group must become the largest group in the European Parliament once more. The drafting of the European Elections manifesto will be, as in the past, a key moment in the co-operation between the PES and its member parties.

2. The Organisation and activities of different bodies

The consolidation and democratisation of the PES

All the bodies of the PES must work actively on the development of European political parties based on the new Treaty article agreed by the European Council at Nice. The PES must closely follow the implementation of the European party statute and make the transition towards a new legal and financial base a success. Transparency and sound financial management must be central to this project.

The PES must also apply all the proposals in the resolution on "Strengthening the PES" to be adopted by the Berlin Congress in order to give it a greater and more democratic legitimacy amongst its member parties and the public.

PES Summits

The President and the new leadership of the PES, the Prime Ministers and party leaders, the leader of the Parliamentary Group, the Commissioners and the EU High Representative for CFSP will continue to meet on the eve of European Councils to prepare these meetings and to discuss matters of importance to the work of the PES. Prime Ministers and leaders from sister parties in the candidate countries will join them at least once a year.

Ministerial co-ordination

The co-ordination meetings, which take place on the eve of Council meetings between ministers, party spokespeople from opposition parties, the parliamentary group and the relevant Commissioners, will continue according to the wishes and priorities of each Presidency. The link between these meetings and the development of PES policies needs to be increased. The proposals, contributions and suggestions from these meetings should be at the centre of the PES' policy debates.

Preparing the first PES Council

A new body for the PES, the Council will be the forum for political debate and strategic discussions inside the PES. The PES Presidency must prepare the first Council, which takes place next year, in such a way as to ensure its success and a high level of media coverage.

PES Presidency

This new body will implement Congress decisions and set the political guidelines of the PES. However, it must also be a dynamic body, the visible face of the PES capable of a swift response to events and public concerns. The Presidency shall ensure the continuity, coherence and visibility of PES activities.

The PES and ECOSY (PES youth section)

The roundtable on "What kind of Europe for the future generations", held in Paris on 1st July 2000, brought together 500 young Europeans and political leaders and was a great political and media success. The PES should learn from this event and work closely with ECOSY (PES youth section) to establish closer links between the different generations in the PES and promote common activities and approaches.

PES Summer University

The PES Summer University allows future political leaders to get to know each other and to debate key areas of European policy. It also serves in the setting up of a network of young social democrats and socialists to complement ECOSY (PES youth section). The 6th Summer University will take place in Italy in Reggio Emilia at the beginning of September 2001 and will focus on EU development policy. The PES commits itself to continue this activity in future years.