



**A New Direction**

**for Progressive Societies**

**Resolution n°2**  
**A New Way Forward, A Stronger PES**  
Adopted by the 8<sup>th</sup> PES Congress

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The PES is a major political force in the European Union, represented in all EU institutions, committed to putting people first in Europe and across the world. The European elections did not allow us to strengthen our overall numbers in the European Parliament. While some PES parties did make gains or maintain their position, we did not achieve the breakthrough we campaigned for, that of winning the elections and delivering a new direction for Europe. Moreover, despite some promising exceptions, we are far fewer in government now than we were at the turn of the century.

The PES believes these results are a call to action as well as a call for reflection. As long as Europe's citizens are facing monumental challenges, as long as their jobs and livelihoods are at risk, as long as our planet is endangered, we will stand by people and fight on their behalf for their futures. For this reason, we intend to learn the lessons of these election results and define a new way forward. In order to achieve this, we commit to strengthening the Party of European Socialists.

### **The biggest election winner: apathy**

The European People's Party, while losing some members to a new conservative, euro-sceptic group, retained their position as the largest group in the European Parliament elections. However, we believe that their election win was a Pyrrhic victory. The vast majority of Europe's citizens did not vote for their programme of business as usual.

214 million European citizens did not vote in the elections last June. Many of these non-voters were traditional supporters of PES parties. In a context of serious crisis – where unfettered global forces almost led to the meltdown of the financial system with far-reaching consequences for people across the world and despite strong public intervention preventing the worst from happening – citizens were not convinced that democratic politics was able to make a difference.

Far-right, nationalist parties played on people's fears about the future and gained ground with xenophobic and racist discourse. Social tensions have risen as a result. Reactionary eurosceptics also made gains by portraying the European Union as a threat to people, rather than as a way of shaping global forces and improving their lives.

We believe these election results highlighted the fears, uncertainties and disillusionment of voters at a time of profound crisis. Many protested against mainstream parties by abstaining or voting for fringe parties.

The 2009 European Parliament is by far the least progressive we have ever had. Europe's conservatives dominate the European Commission and Council. We believe this could have grave consequences for ordinary people across Europe: inadequate policies to tackle the crises we're facing will mean ordinary people could suffer a further decline in their working and living conditions. That is why the PES must define a new way forward as a matter of urgency.

## The way forward

### 1. Developing our vision for Progressive Societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

In the past five years, the PES made enormous progress in developing a distinctive political approach and proposals to tackle Europe's greatest challenges. The PES Manifesto – "People first: A New Direction for Europe" – was our most ambitious ever. Our vision for a New Social Europe was influential in taking forward efforts for the renewal of our welfare states. The PES had a clear plan to tackle the financial and economic crisis with concrete proposals for action at local, regional, national and European levels. An alternative progressive European recovery plan, a proposal for an Employment and Social Progress Pact, financial market regulation, and a Global New Deal were all initiatives of our political family to face down the crisis and establish root-and-branch reform.

Nevertheless, our proposals were unable to motivate a majority of citizens to vote and to vote for us. In essence, we were not successful at conveying the fact that the financial and economic crisis is fundamentally a failure of conservative ideology across the world. Many people were not persuaded that we offered a genuine alternative. We must make the choices clearer.

It is only through a fundamental re-evaluation of our vision of social democracy that we can successfully address the issues raised by our electoral losses.

We must renew social democracy from the bottom up to face today's challenges and meet citizens' expectations. Our aim is to develop a new vision for Progressive Societies in the 21st century, with solidarity at its heart. The globalized world implies that we cannot undertake this debate in isolation of each other. Conflicting national solutions are doomed to fail. A vision for social democracy and a progressive society must be coherent at local, regional, national, European and global levels if it is to be successful. We should take care to include people who have in the past been under-represented in the political debate and decision-making, such as women, young people and minorities. Therefore, the PES will undertake a deep and wide-ranging reflection and coordinated activities and campaigns with our member parties, our parliamentary groups in the European Parliament and the Committee of regions, PES Women, ECOSY as well as PES observer organisations and stakeholders, in the course of the next two years.

### 2. Tackling apathy

It is profoundly worrying for democracy that so many people are choosing not to vote. Most citizens are disillusioned with politics: they think it no longer makes a difference to their lives or realistically shapes the future. The PES and its member parties and organisations must strongly engage in all relevant processes to return people's trust and confidence in our politics.

The crisis has only served to accentuate this feeling of impotence amongst ordinary people. Global forces have run riot in their economies, destroyed jobs, businesses and incomes. While governments have intervened, people see rising layoffs, depressed economic prospects and the return of bankers' bonuses as evidence that politics does not fundamentally change things.

There is indeed a historic trend in declining turnout for European elections. Many people do not know what the European Parliament does. Having regard of the fact that the debate on EU institutional reform is now completed, we now need to articulate clearly the party political differences that exist on European policy issues. But this disconnect reveals the central challenge for politics and democracy in a globalized world.

In the past, citizens believed that their national parliaments had the powers to solve problems within their countries. The democratic contract was clear between the citizen and the state. But in today's globalized world, people know that not all problems can be solved within their countries. We must work harder to convey that the EU is the means by which we can achieve our progressive goals in a globalised world. And, as socialist, social democrat and progressive parties, we did not make that vital political link clear between our progressive goals at the local, regional, national and European levels. That we can only deliver progressive solutions to people's problems by pursuing the same objectives at the local, regional, national and European levels.

The PES and our parties must pursue a new politics of engagement with people in order to regain people's trust, voicing their values and articulating their aspirations by offering real, progressive and distinctive political choices and solutions.

### **3. Challenging a resurgent but fragmented right-wing**

Europe's right-wing has changed in a number of ways in the past decade. It has fragmented between traditional pro-European parties and eurosceptic and nationalist parties. Eurosceptic and nationalist parties – some of which have left the EPP to form their own conservative group – use Europe as a scapegoat and think nothing of the grave and destructive implications of isolating their countries and peoples from Europe and the world.

Many right-wing parties have borrowed social democratic language to mask their conservative positions. They have pursued a deliberate political strategy of blurring political differences, particularly on social and economic issues such as women's rights which many conservatives had previously opposed. Right-wing pro-European politicians often falsely claim that there is a right-left European consensus. Praise for the welfare state, calls for financial market reform and Keynesian fiscal stimulus, as well as support for the social market economy are just four rhetorical points used for increased electoral appeal. This is in spite of the very different reality revealed by their practice of power.

At the same time, many right-wing parties actively deploy the anti-immigration, anti-minority or xenophobic rhetoric of the hard right to extend their electoral appeal further and span across the political spectrum. This plays on people's uncertainties and fears with inflammatory identity politics. There is no evidence to suggest that such hardline rhetoric



results in anything but higher social tensions, more fear and ineffective migration and integration policies.

We must challenge this resurgent but fragmented right-wing, both those mainstream conservatives who seek to dupe the electorate and play on their fears as well as the eurosceptic fringes. In an increasingly interconnected world and faced by many common challenges we cannot afford to look inwards and retreat to the fringes of Europe – as many political parties on the right have done. It is in the best interest of our citizens for us to remain engaged at the heart of Europe - joining forces with like-minded parties across Europe to achieve real progressive change in the best interests of our citizens. Sacrificing powerful alliances and the European mainstream for short-term political gain can never be the way forward.

In our work with other democratic political parties we must be guided by our principles of equality, fairness and respect for cultural, linguistic, ethnic or national minorities and apply the same standards at home and abroad. We must be prepared to speak out against injustice and intolerance where it exists and refuse to legitimise prejudice by staying silent.

The PES must be coherent and cohesive in all institutions to maximise our influence at European level. We must make our voice heard as an opposition force to conservative and neo-liberal policies. And we have to address the growing issues of culture and identity, currently dominated by the right, which so concern our citizens. The PES and our member parties and organisations intend to make the political choices clear and make a difference during this political term – these are the key preconditions for winning the next European elections.

#### **4. Confronting the far-right**

The European elections saw the emergence of more far-right parties, exploiting people's fears to advance their own politics of hatred. None of our basic political principles will be sacrificed. Therefore, it is all the more critical that PES member parties clearly distance themselves from any far-right parties, as well as their ideologies and actions, now and in the future. PES member parties must unite to force these parties and their toxic ideas into political quarantine. These parties used populist rhetoric to appeal to fears arising from growing unemployment, economic restructuring, migration and broader social change. The far-right has tapped into a new identity politics, fuelled by social malaise, especially amongst working class voters.

We believe their stance as protest parties attracted disillusioned voters more than their actual xenophobic positions. Our task must be to expose and confront the dangerous, racist rhetoric as well as the misogynist and reactionary positions of these parties, exposing the venom at their heart. But it is also essential that we address the actual fears and grievances that have driven a minority of citizens to vote for them.

## 5. Strengthening our methods and instruments for a stronger PES

In order for our reflection on social democracy to be inclusive and ultimately effective and for us to influence European policy-making and act as a credible force for opposition to conservative policies, the PES must strengthen its instruments and extend its reach.

We must deepen the collective work undertaken with and between our member parties in government and in opposition as well as within and between our member organisations and with all relevant stakeholders. The PES should not only be a platform for member parties and organisations to discuss European policies, but also the place where member parties come together to formulate the political vision, strategies and policies for socialists, social democrats and progressives across Europe.

**PES Leaders will be the driving force** of this increased cooperation. In their meetings, strategic political issues will be debated and decided to determine our common direction.

A reflection will be reopened on how to make the PES decision-making process deeper, more integrated and effective, including the possibility of extending majority voting in all PES bodies.

We will strengthen even further the **cooperation between PES members with decision-making responsibilities in all EU institutions**, notably with our governments, particularly when they hold the EU Presidency, with our Commissioners, with our Members of the European Parliament and of the Committee of the Regions.

**We must strengthen the cooperation between our governments** as a priority for improving our cohesiveness. We should bring together PES Prime Ministers, ministers, and sherpas, to coordinate policies before EU meetings and also exchange best practices on how to govern together, how to implement common objectives and shape outcomes in the long-term.

We will also involve our opposition parties in order to better prepare them for entering government. The PES will develop a strategy and set up a task force to support member parties in their electoral campaigns for the European as well as national elections. The PES will also develop a strategy to support those of our parties who have won elections.

The Lisbon treaty increases the role of national parliaments, hence the need for stronger cooperation. We will create a platform for cooperation between our national parliamentary groups, both through meetings and via the Internet. This platform will serve as a forum for exchanges of experience and for common work on all political questions of mutual interest.

We will revitalize our PES issue-based networks and working groups to mobilise the most relevant decision-makers and thinkers, while respecting the structures **of our member parties and organizations**. We want to develop and strengthen networks in all areas of our work. It is important that member parties and organizations recognise these networks as a platform for communication and for strategic input for the politics and strategic development of the PES. We will also explore new, more decentralised ways in which to work with decision-makers and thinkers in each of our member parties, including national parliamentarians, regional and local leaders, in order to increase the relevance and inclusiveness of our work.



The PES should strengthen PES Women's work and presence through an ongoing and clear gender mainstreaming approach in all policy areas, as was the case in the PES election manifesto. The PES should also guarantee a strong presence of women in all PES bodies, decision-making processes and positions to fulfill our social democratic values of equality and democracy. The PES needs the support and presence of women, who represent 50% of our voters, if we want to be credible and convincing to our electorate of progressive women and men.

The PES should also reinforce the involvement and representation of other networks such as ECOSY, Rainbow Rose and the European Seniors' Organization in order to guarantee a true reflection of today's society and the real values of socialists, social democrats and progressives throughout Europe.

It will also be crucial to reinvigorate our cooperation with stakeholders, such as our partners in the trade union movement and all spheres of civil society on a regular and coordinated basis.

Modernising politics, revitalising our party structures, bringing in new female and male generations of politicians are objectives of all our member parties and is an integrated part of how to renew social democracy. The PES will play its full part to serve these objectives by **setting up a PES network on Modernising politics.**

**The PES will also consolidate the role of PES activists.** All members of the PES member parties are automatically members of the PES. Yet, we invited them to be more closely involved in the life of the PES by becoming PES activists. All PES activists are required to be members of their national party. We can proudly state that we are the only European Party that has **20,000 grassroots activists** from all Member States. PES activists have led a tremendous campaign during the European elections. Party members are vital for building a genuine European Party, so we will provide more tools for them to get involved. This is why we have decided to **recognize their role in the PES statutes and create a 'PES activists initiative'** in order to build a true European activism, and be heard by PES bodies. PES activists are fantastic multipliers that give PES member parties the opportunity to raise awareness amongst all party members on European politics. We must nurture their involvement.

## 6. Presenting our common platform

The PES Manifesto "People first: a new direction for Europe" was a great step forward in providing a **strong, common platform** for the 2009 European election campaign. Never before had we managed to present such a programme of action with common objectives and proposals, agreed by all our leaders, parties and member organisations, and involving party members, trade unions and civil society.

In order to present this common platform and communicate our distinctive political programme to voters with PES member parties, we developed strong common elements in the European election campaign. The European Days of Action were a resounding success, especially on the local level, demonstrating the value-added of the European dimension of

the campaign. Many PES member parties and organisations made efforts of their own to promote the PES manifesto.

However, it proved difficult to give visibility to our common platform and, therefore, to make the political choices clear in the European election campaign. This highlights the need to work with the media to improve media coverage of European issues.

One of the key problems was the absence of a unifying leadership personality to embody our common platform and implement our programme in the event of electoral victory. While the EPP had nominated José Manuel Barroso as their candidate for President of the European Commission if they won the elections, our political family was unable to present an alternative and appeared divided. While our main message was “a new direction for Europe”, we did not manage to publicly support a common social democratic candidate to challenge the conservative incumbent.

Giving a face to a political platform is imperative in today's politics, especially in such difficult elections as the European ones. To make this election relevant, citizens must know that their vote can shape the executive and change policies. We therefore make the commitment of choosing a PES candidate for the European Commission Presidency for the next European elections.

## **7. Winning and exercising power to implement our vision for Progressive Societies in the twenty-first century**

**The role of a political party is to promote its values and goals and to win and exercise power in order to implement its political vision and programme.** This is also valid at European level. Our ultimate objective is to become the predominant political force governing the European institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council. This is the only way to change European policies and take our continent in a new direction.

In the next five years, we will use all our decision-making responsibilities to pursue a more progressive European agenda. We will strengthen our progressive alliances with trade unions and civil society for this purpose. But in order to take Europe in a fundamentally new, progressive direction, we need to win the next European elections. We need a majority of seats in the European Parliament. The campaign for the 2014 elections therefore starts now. We will explore all means to **strengthen the PES for the purpose of preparing for the next European election campaign.** We will continue our fight for a fairer and a more social Europe, and be ready to take the lead in 2014.

We will work on developing a **strong, common Manifesto** inspired by our new vision for Progressive Societies. In this way, the PES will be able to propose to Europe's citizens a clear common vision together with concrete policy proposals to implement it.

The PES commits itself, at the same time as it adopts its Manifesto, to choose a candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission and to adopt a common campaign strategy. We need to build on the experience of the 2009 campaign and develop, with our female and male Leaders, candidates and activists, a **more integrated European campaign strategy** with closely linked to national, regional and local campaign strategies, to show public opinion



the unity of our political family around our candidate and our programme. For this reason, all member parties should include in their own Manifesto for the European elections language and proposals from the common PES Manifesto. A stronger involvement of all our Party Leaders in the European election campaign will also contribute to showing the unity and engagement of our party at the highest level.

At the same time, winning a majority in the European Council is just as important to give a new direction to the European Union. **Winning national elections is therefore the concern not only of national member parties but also of the PES as a whole.** Likewise, winning local and regional elections is essential for European social democracy. The PES will develop measures to increase the cooperation inside our party to meet this goal.

**Strengthening the Party of European Socialists is fundamental for the future of European social democracy. The PES and its member parties and organizations are strongly committed to investing all our energy and resources into developing our vision, modernising our structures, broadening our bases and achieving our common ambition of conquering and exercising power in Europe and in the Member States in order to develop progressive societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**