



On the eve of the EU summit next weekend, heads of state and government affiliated to the Party of European Socialists will meet in Rome, hosted by the Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, to outline the progressive vision on the future of the European Union and the key challenges that it faces. The outcome of these discussions will inform the position of all PES heads of government in the European Council the following day.

These are the priorities our leaders will be discussing.

Renewing Europe's promises: solidarity and progress

Sixty years ago, on 25 March 1957, Europeans signed the Treaty of Rome and in doing so planted a seed that would grow into the European Union. With it grew an era of stability, peace, democracy and prosperity. With it, Europeans weeded out a history of division, violence and narrow nationalism. With it, new opportunities were given to millions of men and women, students, workers, farmers, entrepreneurs, consumers and travellers. On 25 March 2017 in Rome, we have to live up to our responsibilities, reaffirm our unity and relaunch the process of European integration.

But today, many citizens no longer see the EU as a source of solutions, or a source of inspiration. The global financial crisis of 2008 has undermined the social fabric of many countries. The EU is one of the best guarantees of a better future for our continent's citizens, and an answer to fight against nationalist, populist, isolationist and xenophobic tendencies.

As European progressives, we have always fought for the values of respect, solidarity and fundamental rights that are the foundation of the EU. We believe that the EU needs a new direction based on these principles. We want to renew Europe's original promise: a future of prosperity, equality and fairness for all its citizens. We want a Europe without austerity and unemployment. European integration is not only an ideal that we share; it is also vital to ensure the internal cohesion of our societies and the development of our economies and the process of economic and social convergence among member-states in the European Union.

As the sixtieth birthday of the European Union approaches, we are determined to fight for Europe's priorities:

We will fight for strong social rights for all. For Europe to become a truly Social union and improve quality of life for all its citizens, we must fight for effective welfare, income security, universal access to healthcare, and an end to discrimination. This also means

putting an end to social dumping, exploitation and precarious work. The European social and labour acquis should be respected in all member states. The Gothenburg social summit that will be hosted by the Swedish government at the end of this year must mark a decisive social turn, in a dynamic process that we want to launch on the occasion of the Rome Summit.

We will work for a fairer economy. To support the inclusive social model that we promote, Europe must embark on a massive new long-term European strategy of public and private investments to support sustainable economic growth and promote convergence. The rules of the EU, such as the Stability and Growth Pact, must promote these goals, not hinder them. At the same time, the Economic and Monetary Union need to be completed, and we must develop a Eurozone fiscal capacity and strengthen the EU budget. If we do not act together to tackle common challenges, they become more expensive, and they can be dealt with much less efficiently if at all. Finally, a fairer economy also means that everyone must contribute their fair share. The European Union must spearhead the fight to end tax havens and international tax evasion, implement the Financial Transaction Tax and ensure that citizens' deposits are safe.

We want to invest in a strengthened European Youth Plan. Our plan will support the young people of Europe by promoting jobs and strengthening the Youth Guarantee, by promoting education to ensure that the Erasmus+ programme truly benefits all young people, and by supporting culture with a European Culture Cheque. It is also a plan to care for Europe's children, guaranteeing that they can access quality healthcare, childcare, nutrition and housing.

We will put sustainability at the core of the EU's activities. Our vision is to work harder for cleaner economic model and to focus more on renewable energies, resource efficiency, and the fight against climate change following the success of COP21. But no country alone can achieve these goals. A strong European Union that leads the battle in our continent and internationally is vital for a green and sustainable future.

We will enhance democracy. We want to put Europe's citizens at the very centre of participative decision-making at local, national and EU level. We will be relentless in defending the rule of law in every member state. The disconnect between citizens and politics will not be solved by isolationism or petty nationalism. The appeal of the new wave of populists is based on lies. All institutions of the EU need to reconnect with the citizens and regain their trust through their actions. To reinforce European democracy, we remain committed to the process that we initiated in 2014 for a common candidate for the European elections.

We will work together in solidarity toward the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to tackle common challenges like the refugee crisis, to put our efforts into a globalisation process that contribute to equality and sustainable growth, to project Europe as an actor for global peace, and to enhance the safety and security of our citizens.

It is high time for Europe to return to the path of social justice and shared prosperity. We, Europe's socialists and democrats, are committed to making this change a reality for all Europeans.