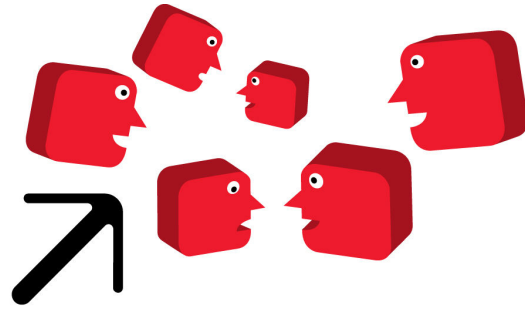




PES Council
Sofia, 22-23 November 2007



Adopted resolution

PES Council, 22-23 November 2007

“Our Vision: The New Horizon for Europe June 2009”

Today, European member states are faced with important common challenges. Globalization, climate change, population ageing: each presenting risks for the future of European societies, but equally presenting new opportunities and a better life for citizens in Europe and the world if we succeed in developing policies that manage change in the interests of all, not just those of a few. The Lisbon treaty will modernize the EU's decision-making and provide several of the essential changes we need to tackle these common challenges. It will provide new tools to further social justice, economic progress, environmental sustainability, democracy, and fundamental rights within the European Union. For this reason, European socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats will campaign for ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, with the perspective of building a more social and political European Union.

Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats want to develop a new horizon for Europe, on the basis of people's aspirations and concerns for the future. A new horizon that reaches beyond narrow, vested interests to a new, progressive vision of the common good in the European Union. This vision will provide us and all of Europe's people with a clear direction, setting out our common objectives and how we are going to achieve them in our day-to-day work in the years to come. We know that the European Union is capable of successfully developing concrete policies that make a real difference to people's lives, as shown by the guaranteed right to paid holiday and parental leave for workers across the EU or the protection of public health by banning dangerous chemicals. The Party of European Socialists states its unequivocal commitment to develop a new people's agenda for Europe for the next European elections in June 2009. We want to build an active Europe delivering results for people in this new political period.

For this reason, the PES engages itself to present Europe's citizens with a real political choice at the next European elections: a choice between the centre-left and the centre-right, between a forward-looking vision of positive European engagement, and a populist vision of nationalistic retreat. The question is: which direction do people want for the European Union and for its member states? Do we want fewer policies and cooperation across Europe to tackle common challenges like climate change and the fight against terrorism? Or do we want policies and cooperation to meet these challenges for the security and benefit of all Europe's citizens? It is only by having real political choices that citizenship and democracy in Europe will have a true meaning for people.



The PES is conducting an open consultation on progressive priorities and policies for its manifesto for the next European elections. This process, which will last until June 2008, allows party members, trade unions and civil society to contribute to the PES' orientations for the European elections of June 2009. The four themes of this consultation, covering each of the challenges facing European countries, are the following: New Social Europe; Save our Planet; European democracy and diversity; Europe in the world.

New Social Europe

A new horizon is needed: the New Social Europe. The PES has set out a roadmap of ten principles, at our last Congress, to build a New Social Europe at local, regional, national and European levels. These principles include full employment, strong social dialogue and inclusiveness, to name but three. The task now at hand is to formulate the policies needed at European level - as a complement to local, regional and national policies - to implement this roadmap. The European Union is the only region in the world combining economic prosperity, social justice and environmental sustainability, based on shared values. Our welfare states are a formidable achievement of the twentieth century. However existing inequalities and new global challenges are together placing new pressures on our welfare states and create a risk of permanent social divides in our societies: between the children of poor and the children of rich families, between the low-skilled and the highly educated, between immigrants and native Europeans. The fight against inequality across Europe is fundamental in order to extend the opportunities of globalization to all citizens and make a positive difference to people's lives.

The Lisbon Treaty, once ratified, will be a better basis to fight for the interests of Europe's peoples. It will clearly provide new tools for more effective European cooperation in the social and economic fields. The treaty recognizes for the first time the specificity of public services, enshrines the principle of universal access and allows for specific principles and conditions to be established for the operation of services of general economic interest, such as water supply. This will allow us to ensure that a stronger internal market, underpinned by an improved European competition policy, can combine effectively with Europe's welfare states, and with protection of fundamental rights, to the benefit of all in the EU. The new treaty will streamline decision-making in the field of migration, allowing us to develop an effective and sustainable migration policy for all European member states, while protecting the right of individual states to decide on the number of migrants entering their countries. It will enable stronger and more sustainable growth, and steps towards full employment in the EU, through more effective coordination of member states' economic policies. These are just some of the issues for which the new European treaty provides instruments which can help Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats offer new and better solutions.

Save our Planet

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, with the closely related question of energy security also requiring a solution at European level.. Steps to develop a European climate and energy policy have just begun. Either we radically reduce emissions of greenhouse gases or the effects of global warming will be irreversible. We regard the fight against climate change not as a cost but as a new source of opportunities, of job creation and of competitiveness for Europe. A new horizon for European social democracy will be to develop a truly integrated strategy for sustainable development, in which environmental policies become an integral factor of economic and social progress. Smart, green growth is key for the future. The Lisbon treaty gives us new tools to reach this new horizon by making the fight against climate change and energy solidarity fundamental objectives of the EU and enabling better decision-making on essential policies for the fight against climate change like transport and energy. It will also allow us to strengthen coordination to protect against natural disasters. The task incumbent on us now is to define precisely the priorities and policies for change at European level. We have to determine a new direction to Save our Planet.



European democracy and diversity

The European Union has aimed to establish peace, democracy, freedom and human rights throughout the European continent. The diversity of Europe's peoples – linguistic, cultural, national and regional diversity - has been enriching Europe's common heritage and fostering mutual respect and learning. Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats believe that a new horizon for European social democracy lies in strengthening democracy and turning diversity into an even greater strength for Europe. Citizens want to be involved in democratic discussions and decision-making. Representative democracy should be consolidated and new forms of participatory democracy should be explored. European democracy is based on the principle of subsidiarity whereby decisions should be taken at the most appropriate governance level, whether that be European, national, regional or local. It is through listening to people that the PES hopes to identify exactly how the EU can better engage citizens and conduct the EU's democratic decision-making. The Lisbon Treaty contains a number of important tools with which to strengthen democracy: the European Parliament will play a greater role in policy-making with national governments and national parliaments; the European Commission President will be elected by the European Parliament; national parliaments will have a right of prior scrutiny of draft European legislation; and the Committee of the Regions will strengthen its political rights by being able to directly refer to the European Court of Justice in order to defend its prerogatives and in case of violation of the subsidiarity principle. The principle of participatory democracy is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and European citizens will for the first time be able to present citizens' initiatives to the European Commission, requesting that it introduces specific European measures. There are many possibilities for building a more democratic European Union and making our diversity a real strength. Our ambition is to define a new direction, in partnership with Europe's citizens, to achieve it.

Europe in the world

Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats deeply believe in the need for a more social globalization and for more effective tackling of common threats such as international crime and terrorism. By acting in common and improving Europe's current policies, the European Union has the potential to become a potent force for good in the world. A new horizon for European social democracy in which we project our shared values – social justice, respect for human dignity and fundamental rights, equality, freedom – across the world. The PES has already begun to define a new vision for Europe's international role, in the resolution adopted at this Council. We believe that globalization is in desperate need of better governance and political leadership. We must remove the root causes of conflict, defining policies – like fair trade and decent work - offering new hope and prospects for people in the Middle East, in Africa, and throughout the developing world. The Lisbon Treaty will give us greater means to develop this vision, such as by enabling improved European cooperation in the fight against cross-border crime and terrorism or allowing the EU to sign up to international treaties. Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressive democrats now wish to pursue a real dialogue with people to determine a clear, new direction for Europe in the world.

The PES is listening and ready to learn from all of our discussions with party members, trade unions and civil society across Europe. We look forward to developing a new generation of European policies, for the next political period from 2009 to 2014, which speak to the aspirations and address the concerns of European citizens. We aim to build up a strong centre-left majority around these aims. A democratic and progressive Europe needs a strong progressive camp of political and social forces able to tackle successfully the historical challenges we are facing. The PES is crucial to reach these goals. In this process we will define together a new horizon for Europe at the next European elections of June 2009.

