



A new momentum for Europe

Respecting Democracy means a European Growth Agenda Declaration adopted by the PES Presidency, 10th May 2012

François Hollande's election as President of France last Sunday heralds a new momentum for Europe and for European social democracy.

Over the past ten days there have been regional and local elections across Europe that also point to a new dynamic. These results illustrate that European citizens will no longer buy into the 'fear agenda' that austerity policies have been built on. People have had enough of watching their social provisions shrink as growth shrinks along with them. It is a rejection of a conservative policy that has failed spectacularly. It must consign the "austerity only" chapter of the EU to the past.

The Merkozy relationship dominated Europe for too long. It strangled our economies, weakened our societies, and put the viability of the European project in jeopardy in the eyes of many of our citizens. Recent electoral results in Greece show how deeply their policies can fracture societies, strengthen extremist parties, and give a platform to populist irresponsible voices that threaten to waste the many sacrifices citizens have made, and to put the country on a dangerous path towards a Eurozone exit.

Our vision of Europe is one which privileges growth and investment, which puts solidarity before sanctions, and which protects people. We in the PES believe that in order to grow out of the crisis creating new jobs, improving the quality of work and strengthening growth must be equally important to balancing budgets. This approach is both economically sound and socially responsible.

We have consistently brought this argument to the fore over the past two years yet conservative and liberal majorities have been blind to that simple reality. They insisted on an ideological approach that relied on austerity alone. They imposed it in their own countries, on the whole of Europe, and most harshly on countries in need of support. The human cost of these policies, characterized by mass unemployment and rising poverty, cannot be quantified. To undo the damage and relaunch our economies we need a European Growth Agenda.

The social tragedy of youth unemployment in particular will have grave consequences not only on Europe's economies but also across our societies. To avoid losing a generation of young people we need to make the European Youth Guarantee a reality. We need to guarantee every young person an equal and fair start in working life. The Youth Guarantee needs to be complemented by a 10 billion Euro youth employment programme in order to tackle the problem where it is most urgent.

Now a new era of opportunity begins in Europe. A new era that will relaunch growth, create jobs, and promote investment. A new era where Europe's youth will be given the chance to contribute to our society. An era of renewed hope for the future and for the European project. Now we have the opportunity to rebuild a Europe of hope, so that people across the continent can see that Europe does not have to be the cause of their problems, but instead can be the solution to them.

