



Leaders' statement on the EU agenda

Adopted on 19 June 2008

The current challenges facing Europe and the world underline more than ever the need for strong and progressive European leadership. Climate change, a global financial crisis, continuing poverty and unemployment, rising food and energy prices and uncertainty about the future of migration – all these questions demand progressive action by the EU and its Member States. Many European citizens feel uncertain about the future. It is time to act.

After the Irish referendum

We respect the result of the recent referendum in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty. This is not a “no” to Europe. But it reflects a need for Europe to deal in a more focused way on people’s real concerns. We must tackle the feeling of uncertainty amongst people and families. We must focus on creating more and better jobs, on purchasing power in response to rising food and fuel prices, on tackling climate change and securing supply of sustainable and affordable energy, as well as ensuring better migration policy. This is all about managing globalization in a better way for all through common actions in Europe in a way that people can understand. We firmly believe that the ratification process should continue so that all 27 Member States can pronounce themselves on the Lisbon treaty. On that basis we need to reach a political agreement on Europe’s future in order to move forward in tackling common challenges.

The European Union must establish responsible policies that meet Europe’s actual and long term needs, rather than reactionary and populist policies that do nothing to address fundamental problems or fears in the long term. The European Union should develop progressive and ambitious internal and external policies to meet the common challenges we face. The next French Presidency of the European Union has a particular responsibility to ensure this, as it will have the task of tackling key issues, including climate change, Social Europe, migration, economic governance and the renewed Barcelona process. We are concerned that some statements made by the forthcoming French Presidency of the European Union do not inspire confidence that the Presidency will be inclusive and progressive. For example, initial proposals on the Mediterranean forgot the achievements of the Barcelona Process and marginalized some Member States of the EU, while current proposals on the European Migration Pact appear to be unbalanced and reactionary. Furthermore, we are calling for substantive proposals on Social Europe and other key priorities for Europe’s citizens.

The Party of European Socialists will seek to promote a progressive European agenda for the remaining political period until the next European elections in June 2009. For this purpose, we are setting out our demands to the incoming French Presidency of the European Union.

Tackling the financial crisis

The global financial crisis is not over. The European economy has been affected, with high profile difficulties of major European financial institutions, job losses in the real economy and some impact on the housing market. Several European governments have begun to take measures to address the consequences. However, there must be complementary European action to prevent any future financial crises taking place. We will not accept that irresponsible and unsustainable financial speculation should either result in people losing their jobs or their homes, or that healthy companies are laden with excessive debt.

For this reason, we want a new European initiative to counteract the loss of jobs and growth, to revitalize the European economy. We can do this by using the potential of Europe: we want concerted European action to create more and better jobs in the European economy, based on improved economic governance and more investments. We call on the French Presidency of the EU to support the PES' initiative for European cooperation on investments to boost job creation and growth. Furthermore, we call for European action to make financial markets transparent, accountable, responsible and sustainable, both at European level and at global level. This should include setting out the right institutional framework at European and global levels for governance of the financial markets.

Financial markets need to be efficient, transparent and accountable. But the recent financial crisis shows that financial markets are not working in an optimal way and do not seem capable of self regulation. We need more transparency and effective supervision along with new risk management models. In addition, a new deal, involving all financial actors, is needed so that they all behave in a way which is supportive of the real economy.

The Party of European Socialists has already established a progressive cooperation with the US Democrats on how to tackle the financial crisis. We will play an active role in ensuring that the European Union seizes upon the change of US leadership, which we expect in November 2008, to introduce the best transatlantic policies regarding the financial markets.

Creating a New Social Europe

Europe's citizens are concerned about jobs losses as well as the future of our welfare states. In an ever more competitive world, many ordinary people are asking what the future holds for them. The European Union must provide them with real opportunities and new hope. A proactive response to the financial crisis will be part of the answer. For this reason, we strongly support the goal of the EU Lisbon Treaty for a social market economy. But there must be further action to ensure decent work, with better wages, and decent lives for all citizens in the future.

The upcoming French Presidency of the European Union has failed to feature Social Europe as one of its top political priorities. No substantive proposals have yet been tabled, despite the pressing concerns of Europe's citizens regarding unemployment, workers' rights, access of women to the labour market, and social justice.

Europe's socialists and social democrats believe that the European Union can and should create a New Social Europe. We believe that the EU must develop a dynamic, social market economy, based on the general interest of all Europeans. There must be no room for doubt: the European Union must take a strong and clear stand against social and fiscal dumping.

The European Union should promote economic cooperation to boost green growth and jobs through a new investment strategy. The economic interdependence that European Member

States have in the Single Market would enable us to do this. Our calculations show that the EU could create several million more jobs, with a significant, positive impact on the fight against climate change, notably through the growth of green industries like renewables.

Furthermore, the European Union needs a whole new set of policies to guarantee decent work and workers' rights. We call on the Council and European Parliament to adopt a balanced and progressive agreement on the Working Time Directive and Temporary Agency Workers' Directive as soon as possible to ensure decent working conditions for all. Recent cases at the European Court of Justice appear to call into question fundamental workers' rights. The European Union must make an unequivocal commitment to the fundamental rights of workers and their trade union rights. The PES calls on the French Presidency to review all relevant Community law, notably the Posting of Workers Directive, and propose all necessary changes, in order to ensure that national, regional and local systems of collective bargaining are upheld within the European Union.

We call for new policies setting out the distinction between the Single Market and public services. Our values – including universal and equal access to public services – are not for sale. We will not accept that EU competition and business rules should interfere with these fundamental rights. The PES is committed to protecting the special values and features of public services - including universal service obligations, guaranteed quality and continuity of service, consumer rights and affordability. The PES will not accept any proposed legislation on health or other services that would compromise these special values and features or interfere with the right of Member States to organize and deliver public services. Therefore, the PES believes that an appropriate legal framework should be established for services of general interest in the European Union.

Equal rights for all

Over fifty years ago, the European Community set out in its founding treaties that it should combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. However, we have not yet achieved this as discrimination persists in our diverse societies. The PES believes in an inclusive society based on equal rights for all. Therefore, we believe that any proposed new European legislation on discrimination should benefit all discriminated groups and ensure equal rights and treatment for all.

Furthermore, the PES is committed to gender equality as a fundamental value of our movement. In addition, for our Party and for our national parties, it is a fundamental question of democracy and legitimacy that women, as more than half of EU citizens, should be equally represented at all levels of EU decision-making. We commit ourselves to doing all possible to increase the participation of women in the European elections, both as voters and as candidates, as back-benchers and as candidates for senior posts.

Fighting climate change effectively and fairly

We reaffirm our strong determination to fight climate change through ambitious policies and regulatory means. We consider climate change to be one of the key challenges of the European Union and of the world, at present and for the years to come. A Green Europe is not a cost, but about achieving a better quality of life and new, quality jobs for ordinary people. Millions of more jobs could be created in new green industries. Competitiveness and environmental sustainability are not an either-or: we need both. A Europe without a better climate policy will be costly for people and the planet. Europe's socialists and social democrats, at all levels of the decision-making process, will do their utmost to ensure that by early 2009 the European Union will have achieved a political agreement on the set of legislative proposals known as the climate change and renewable energy package,

including the improvement and extension of the greenhouse gas emission allowance trading system and the setting of strict emission performance standards for new passenger cars.

We believe that far-reaching measures against greenhouse gas emissions will not only serve to save our planet, but will also strengthen Europe's technological lead in environmentally friendly products and services and, thereby, our international competitiveness in the future. We believe that the EU should initiate strategic talks with the world's most important suppliers and buyers of energy with the aim of ensuring stable and sustainable development. By fighting climate change today, we are creating the conditions for new economic growth and jobs. The EU and our member states need to accompany this evolution in a coordinated way at all appropriate levels by developing ambitious, joined-up and long-term policies - including a stable and forward-looking regulatory framework and new investment in research, innovation, infrastructure and skills as part of a new European strategy for sustainable development. In this context, we also need to ensure that the fight against climate change and the industrial changes that Europe needs to undergo will result in new social and economic opportunities for the socially less favoured parts of our societies.

Rising energy prices demonstrate that sustainable development is not just an environmental issue, but also a fundamental question of social justice. We are seeing rising fuel poverty. The European Union must take the lead in developing a strong social dimension to environmental and energy policies, including energy efficiency measures.

Creating a fair and effective migration policy for Europe and the developing world

The European Union is a region that has been enriched by migration over the centuries. However, pressures for migration have increased due to continuing poverty and underdevelopment in neighbouring regions, which may be further exacerbated by the consequences of climate change. The European Union must develop partnerships with third countries in order to promote their sustainable development and give new opportunities to their peoples. The EU must also work with them to fight illegal immigration and the criminal networks which promote it.

The EU should develop a fair, humane and responsible migration policy, which supports legal channels of migration and ensures the rights of migrants. Europe must not become a fortress to the rest of the world. But neither should it fail to address the real challenges it has with migration. The right policy balance should be struck, which refuses populist and xenophobic attitudes. For European migration policy to be a success for host countries and migrants, it should be based on facts, fairness and mutual responsibility. Some proposals for a European Migration Pact are worrying in their tone and their content. The Presidency of the European Union should not be used as a vehicle for a hard-line, right-wing agenda. We need sustainable, long term solutions for Europe and developing countries. The desire to seek a better life for oneself should not be considered a criminal act.

We must respond to people's worries in a clear and consequent way. The European Union and its Member States must establish clear rules for legal migration and effective policies for integration of migrants, based on human rights and mutual respect.

Immediate action to address the current global food crisis

The EU must take immediate action to address the current global food crisis. The EU and its Member States need to increase emergency funding to prevent starvation, and to contribute to the additional \$500 million required to avoid a reduction of food rations distributed by the UN World Food Programme. It is also essential to tackle the root causes of the crisis by investing massively in sustainable food-producing agriculture, especially in developing countries. The EU must take the initiative to analyze the implications and consequences for

Europe, as well as prevent speculation on primary foodstuffs, so that the hunger and despair of many does not profit the few. All appropriate measures must be taken for this purpose. Speculators seem to be playing a role in the food crisis by buying futures contracts. Indeed, since the beginning of the financial crisis commodity prices have drastically increased, with the price of rice rising by 217 percent, wheat by 136 percent, corn by 125 percent and soybeans by 107 percent. Rising food prices, combined with decreasing purchasing power, are making the lives of ordinary people even more difficult. Member states should take all necessary measures to ensure that this does not result in rising poverty in our societies.

At this moment, the EU must reaffirm its commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. EU member states have committed themselves to increase their annual volume of development assistance to 0,56% GNI in 2010 and 0,7% GNI in 2015. In this crucial year for development - including the G8 meeting in Japan, the High Level Forum on aid effectiveness in Accra, the UN MDGs Summit and the Financing for Development Conference in Doha - the EU and its Member States must set out clearly how they intend to achieve their target by providing timetables, from now until the 2010 interim target.

Strengthening Euro-Mediterranean relations

In the framework of the Barcelona process, Euro-Mediterranean relations have aimed at fostering closer links between the EU and its neighbouring countries to the South, to establish a common area of peace, stability, economic development as well as of important social, cultural and human exchanges. Deepening and strengthening the Barcelona Process, the Union for the Mediterranean should be the way to give a new impetus to Euro-Mediterranean relations and to achieve our common goals. It is therefore necessary to ensure that its objectives are complementary to existing EU policy, as part of an inclusive process, with all Member States and partner countries involved in defining a new, common roadmap. This must be a two-way process, based on human rights and democracy. On the one hand, this roadmap must comprise concrete measures, such as projects in favour of the environment, de-polluting the sea, building roads and infrastructures, and other initiatives for a sustainable development of the region. On the other hand, the EU must be adamant in the respect of human rights, democratic reforms and human development in order to ensure that the renewed "Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean " will be beneficial for the population on both sides of the Mediterranean shores.

Furthermore, we call on the European Council and the European Commission to support the idea of a "Union for the Black Sea" to mirror Europe's strengthened relations with its Southern neighbours. This Union would strengthen partnership with Europe's Eastern neighbours and find common solutions to such common problems facing the region as the environment, migration and security matters, as well as preparing countries that are eligible for membership of the European Union.

Paving the way to the European elections of June 2009

The Party of European Socialists states its unequivocal commitment to develop a new people's agenda for Europe in our manifesto for the next European elections in June 2009. We want to build an active Europe delivering results for people in this new political period.

We are committed 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 in the European Parliament for this purpose. We, the European socialist, social democratic, labour and democratic progressive family, are ready, together with other progressive forces, to provide

real answers to people's concerns and aspirations in this new phase. We represent the change for a better Europe.

The PES engages itself to present Europe's citizens with a real political choice at the next European elections. The choice is between a progressive vision of the European Union where we put people first or a backward-looking, neoliberal European Union where the real challenges facing people are not tackled. It is only by having real political choices that citizenship and democracy in Europe will have a true meaning for people.