



The fundamental political choice at the European elections of 4-7 June: a vote between a new direction for Europe or passive conservative formulas

Declaration adopted by the PES Presidency, 8th May 2009

European citizens are faced with a fundamental political choice at the European elections of 4-7 June. The recession is deepening; 27 million people could be unemployed by next year if further action is not taken. The PES wants to put people first in fighting the crisis; we want a new direction for Europe.

We, Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressives, are committed to fighting for people's jobs, their livelihoods and their futures. We are proposing a new strong, progressive economic recovery plan for Europe – to be implemented within the first 100 days after the European elections - to fight mass unemployment, create jobs and protect people from the threat of poverty and inequalities.

In contrast, in the face of collapsing growth figures and massive job losses, Europe's conservatives have ignored the full scale of the crisis for too long. They offer no plan to relaunch the economy in the manifesto they adopted last week. They still believe that market fundamentalism will get us out of the crisis, when we know that that is what caused it.

Since the beginning of the crisis, a yawning gap has emerged between what the conservatives are saying and what they actually stand for. Europe's socialists and social democrats have been campaigning for years to introduce robust and effective regulation of the financial markets as well as invest in a more sustainable economy that serves people. Instead, Europe's conservatives have blocked our efforts in the European Parliament and defended the de-regulation that has led us into this mess. The conservatives say they now want regulation of financial actors. But the legislative proposals they are now making, after months of non-action, are full of loopholes and will allow a new crisis to occur.

Europe's conservatives are now opposed to our stronger European recovery plan, in spite of all the evidence that it is now urgently needed. They prefer to be passive and allow the recession to take its course, while hard working families lose their jobs and incomes. Young people are most likely to be in temporary, low-quality jobs with few rights or opportunities. Now an entire youth generation could be lost to long term unemployment. Conservative government leaders claim that they are making a large budgetary effort against the recession: but we have shown that much of those budgets are welfare payments for those losing their jobs, not real investments to create new jobs or safeguard existing jobs.

The priority of Europe's conservatives remains their age-old agenda of tax cuts for the rich, as spelt out in their manifesto attack on taxation. We believe that it is a matter of fairness: the well-off should bear their fair share of the burden. It is unacceptable that Europe's hard working families should alone be expected to suffer the pain of the crisis.



While we have worked with Barack Obama's Democratic Party to promote strong and coordinated global efforts against the financial and economic crisis, Europe's conservative leaders, including Chancellor Merkel, President Sarkozy, Prime Minister Junker and outgoing Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek have all criticised the progressive approach of the new US administration and undermined transatlantic dialogue for the recovery. We believe that partnership with progressives across the world, including the Obama administration, is crucial for a new progressive agenda that puts people first.

The differences between Europe's conservatives and Europe's socialists, social democrats and progressives are clear. There is a fundamental political choice facing people in these European elections: between a progressive vision of the European Union in which people come first; or a conservative vision of the European Union in which people's futures are left in the hands of the market.

We urge all European citizens – women and men, young and old – to vote for PES candidates to give a new direction to Europe by voting in the elections of 4-7 June 2009.

