

PES Priorities for the EU Policy Agenda 2006

Europe requires a profound debate. We should regain the trust of the citizens by becoming once again a space of growth and employment, of solidarity and modernising of social security to help people to live and work during changes and challenge of globalisation.

Europe needs a new deal. It is up to European socialists to formulate this new proposal and show that there is an alternative way to just falling back to national interests and giving up the European project.

The answer lies in improving the lives of our people, being on their side on globalization, job security, pensions, improving public services and living standards. We need more European solidarity in order to guarantee more cohesion between rich and poor regions, a more efficient economic and social Europe in order to protect and to give more opportunities to all citizens, more economic coordination and common investments in order to boost growth and employment, more political Europe in order to defend our values in the world together, more of a democratic Europe in order to serve the citizens.

In April 2004, the Party of European Socialists presented its Election Manifesto for the 2004 European parliamentary elections: "Growing Stronger Together". This Manifesto presented five PES commitments for the coming political term:

- Boost Europe's growth, fight poverty and create more and better jobs;
- Bring the European Union closer to its citizens;
- Manage migration and pursue social integration;
- Build a more secure, sustainable, peaceful and just world;
- Promote Europe as an area of democracy and equality.

Following the European Parliament elections and the investiture of the European Commission, the PES addressed its objectives in relation to the EU policy agenda to the EU institutions in our political declaration "Developing Europe 2004-2009" of December 2004. We established that three principles should guide us in the achievement of our manifesto commitments and shape what Europe delivers to its citizens in this political term. These principles are prosperity; equality; solidarity:

Prosperity: we must aim to provide more and better jobs, working towards our goal of full employment, which is the basis for creating a sustainable welfare state and better quality of life for all our citizens. Our prosperity must be respectful of the environment.

Equality: we must eliminate discrimination and ill-treatment on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, age and disability.

Solidarity: we must provide the conditions for socially inclusive societies, protecting those most in need and providing services of general interest, so that prosperity benefits all citizens.

The PES wishes to move step by step in the achievement of our commitments throughout this political term. Our annual priorities will highlight key issues on which the EU should act in order to create the conditions for prosperity, equality and solidarity in Europe.

The PES calls on the European Union and on all our partners - at European, national and regional levels - to pursue the implementation of these priorities in the European Union.

Prosperity

The PES Election Manifesto put boosting growth, fighting poverty and creating more and better jobs as its first commitment.

Europe suffers from persistently low growth, which jeopardises the social democratic aim of full employment, higher living standards and high quality public services. EU enlargement has now made Europe into the largest economy in the world. This must now be used to the advantage of each of our economies.

EU member states are part of a Single Market that has generated a high degree of economic interdependence and prosperity. We have the tools at our disposal to use this economic interdependence for the creation of more and better jobs as well as raising our actual and potential growth.

A new European Growth and Investment Strategy must be developed, using each of the tools at the EU's disposal - the existing broad economic guidelines, Growth and Stability Pact and Lisbon Strategy - towards our primary goal of promoting growth and welfare for all citizens. More specifically the Lisbon strategy will be translated into national programmes to be prepared between June and November 2005 and to be implemented in the next 3 years.

Furthermore, such efforts towards more growth must be based on sustainable energy sources, which reduce Europe's dependence on environmentally-damaging energy supplies. Europe must develop forward-looking energy policies that prepare our economies and our societies for the

future. Our environment is our most precious resource and must be employed proactively to generate sustainable prosperity.

As a world region, Europe must face up to the challenge of climate change through the gradual shift towards sustainable energy sources. The move towards renewable energy is an imperative and should take place through a strong and consistent commitment to achieving clearly-defined targets.

If Europe is to be prosperous in the long-term, growth, investment and sustainability must be mutually reinforcing.

In the aim of creating sustainable prosperity within Europe, the PES calls for:

- **1.A multi-annual European Growth and Investment Strategy for more and better jobs.** One of the challenges facing the European Union is how to increase the means for research, innovation and training.
- **2.A common effort of member states and European institutions for the doubling of the target for renewable energy**

Equality

In the PES Election Manifesto 2004, the PES committed itself to promote equality and to fight all forms of discrimination. Our Manifesto called for an increase of the participation rate of women and the removal of barriers that prevent women from taking up jobs.

Equality must be a principle, but also a genuine practice in Europe's workplaces. We must step up our efforts to fight discrimination, which acts against Europe's social and economic interests. Workplace discrimination remains far too commonplace within the European Union, particularly on the grounds of race and gender. It infringes fundamental rights and deters participation in the labour market.

A primary goal is to eliminate the gender pay gap, which prevents European economies from achieving greater participation of women in the labour market and under-values the real skills and capacity provided by the female labour force.

In the aim of advancing equality within Europe, the PES calls for:

- **3.More effective European anti-discrimination legislation and implementation in the workplace, in particular, with regard to equal pay between men and women and the conciliation of professional and family life.**
- **4.More effective legislation to eradicate violence against women in society, as well as in conflict and crisis situations, and the trafficking of women and children.**

Solidarity

The PES Election Manifesto expressed our commitment to strengthen the European Social Model and defend workers' rights by reinforcing European social legislation as well to ensure affordable, accessible and high-quality public services.

Services of general interest, essential as they are to the wellbeing of all citizens, are central to the values and objectives of social democracy. These services - including health, education, social care - are the foundations for social cohesion and equality of opportunity within our societies. In light of the current drive for an internal market in services, the PES wishes to ensure that the appropriate legal framework is established for services of general interest in the European Union.

Furthermore, solidarity must be achieved not only within but also between Member States of the European Union. This is fundamental to Europe's social model. Economic and social cohesion is a main goal of the European Union, but still remains to be achieved.

Enlargement to ten new member countries in Central and Eastern Europe was a historic achievement for the European Union in 2004 which should be continued with Bulgaria and Romania, in the framework of the established calendar, on condition that these two countries comply with their engagements. But great inequalities in wealth and living standards between new and old member states reveal that there continues to be a deep divide within Europe. In the coming years, the EU must make concerted efforts to ensure that this divide is breached.

In the aim of promoting solidarity within and between the Member States of the European Union, the PES calls for:

- **5.In light of the current drive for an internal market in services, the PES wishes to ensure that the appropriate legal framework is established for services of general interest in the European Union.** 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 reflect on and consult on the best ways of ensuring that these special values are preserved.
- **6.The strengthening of common efforts for economic and social cohesion between Member States, including for example the development of trans-Europe networks.**

- **7. The strengthening of the European social model and the defense of workers' rights by reinforcing European social legislation.**