

LIFE IN EUROPE

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A EUROPEAN FAMILY



PSE

Socialist Group in the
European Parliament

**This booklet
“Life in Europe” will
show you how much of
your daily life is touched
by decisions made
by your representatives
and governments in
the European Union.**

**Members of the Socialist Group in
the European Parliament play an
important role in these processes.
Here you will find out about what
we’ve managed to achieve so far
and what we plan to do to improve
life further for people in Europe.
We hope you find this interesting
and useful.**

Meet the family

JACQUELINE

Mother, 34, working in a private company which is making the most of the European market by developing its activities with associates in one of the new member states. It imports organic and fair trade goods from outside the EU and must deal with various aspects of trade policy.



JOSÉ

Father, 45, working from home as a freelance translator. Also volunteers part-time with a local group of young unemployed people converting a piece of waste land into a nature reserve. His first wife died of cancer and Jacqueline is his second wife.



FERNANDA

José's **daughter**, 21, a wheelchair user, currently combining work with the design team in a big store and training as a fashion designer. As a multinational, her company is affected by international trade rules. She has many friends who like going out but she's more keen on spending time with her boyfriend Darek.



PHILLIP

Jacqueline and José's **son** aged three. Enjoys the things that most toddlers like.

DAREK

Fernanda's **boyfriend**, 24, from Poland and just starting a small business of his own, sourcing unusual glass ornaments and crafts from his own country to sell in local shops and fairs. Until recently he was studying in the same college as Fernanda.





0700 Getting up

José and Jacqueline are getting ready for the day. The quality of the water in the shower and the safety of the toothpaste and other everyday products are ensured by EU legislation.

Water, water everywhere.... how come it's fit to drink?

Since 1976, European laws have been driving up standards on Europe's beaches and more and more of them are winning blue flag status. Socialist MEPs backed updated laws that will raise standards even higher and will improve the information available to the public. The new rules will also cover inland waters like lakes and rivers as well as beaches and will take effect by 2009. Socialist MEPs have also been active in designing rules for drinking **water** in order to make sure that it is safe and clean.

What's in your bathroom cabinet?

Cosmetics and toiletries must be free from dangerous ingredients. We also think that you should know exactly what's in your toothpaste or your face cream so that you can decide whether you want to continue to use it or not – that's especially important if you're sensitive or have allergies. Socialist MEPs shaped European law on cosmetics to meet this need. Again, with safety in mind we were successful in achieving a law that phases out animal testing for cosmetics and replacing these tests with non-animal alternatives as soon as they become available and are safe. Eventually there will be a total ban on testing cosmetics on animals.



0800 Breakfast time

For once, the family are all breakfasting together. EU labelling and safety requirements mean they can trust the labels on their preferred breakfast foods. In addition, a new law will help get rid of misleading labelling on food packaging, by giving the consumer information on all the ingredients rather than just the one the producer wants to promote.

Safe food from farm to fork

Remember BSE and the chicken dioxin scares? At the height of the BSE crisis, Socialists in the European Parliament led a major European inquiry into the causes and repercussions of the crisis. We put the whole issue of **food safety** at the top of the agenda and pushed for a new approach to food production, labelling and traceability based on putting consumer health and information first. To be sure that these standards apply right across the European Union, so that food produced in one country and exported to another is also safe, European law sets the framework and your governments have to make sure that the inspections and audits are properly carried out. Food produced outside the European Union and imported also has to comply with the safety rules. Any food or feed found to carry a danger to your health must be withdrawn from the market by the producers.



0900 Going to work

José has just waved off his wife, Jacqueline, and daughter Fernanda. He's taking his son Phillip to the nursery. The EU supports environmentally friendly public transport and makes sure road vehicles are safe and no longer use leaded petrol.

Safer and cleaner travel

Energy and the need for a secure supply have been hitting the headlines of late. We have all become very aware of Europe's dependence on imported energy, of the increasing price of petrol at the pumps and our growing home fuel bills, and the mounting global threat of climate change. The Socialist Group is convinced that diversifying energy sources could help to tackle these challenges. We want to see industry and individuals use **energy** more efficiently and actively support the use of renewable energy sources. International targets must be met.

Every year at least 40.000 people are killed and almost two million are injured in road accidents in the European Union. The human cost of this carnage is immeasurable and the direct and indirect economic costs have been estimated at €180 billion – that's 2% of the Union's GDP. Road accidents have become the most common cause of death for people under 45. Socialists in the European Parliament are actively involved in projects to improve **road safety** in Europe.

Highly efficient transport networks are prerequisites for today's economy. In Europe we want to see goods and people circulate quickly, easily and between member states, minimising damage to the local environment. Socialists in the European Parliament have been involved in the development of trans-European transport networks right from the start. The **trans-European transport network** is one of the essential ingredients in competitiveness and job creation in Europe.



1000 At work

Jacqueline has to decide on the best way to transport the goods her company imports and sells. Goods entering the EU have to satisfy customs checks whether they come by air, road or by sea.

Import, export Safety at sea

The European Union is surrounded by seas and oceans. Twenty-two member states have coastal regions and around 90% of our external trade and 40% of our internal trade goes by sea. Well over two billion tons of freight are loaded and unloaded at European Union ports each year. Between 3 and 5% of the European Union's GDP is estimated to be generated by marine based industries, even without including raw materials such as fish, gas and oil. and maritime regions count for over 40% of GDP. The sea is big business and vital to the European economy and at the same time it is a precious environmental resource that we need to protect at a European and international level. Sadly there are still some ship owners who break international and European rules on safety and environmental protection putting their crews and the environment at risk. Socialists in the European Parliament have been leading the campaign for **safer shipping**, for polluter pays rules, for a maritime safety agency, and for a comprehensive new set of measures to cover all aspects of maritime safety.

When you send or receive a delivery, buy a large household item or even do your normal weekly grocery shop, a lot of **packaging waste** is generated. Some of that waste is from essential packaging and some is totally unnecessary. Socialists in the European Parliament want to see a range of strategies employed to cut down on packaging and packaging waste and to increase recycling and reuse. To that end, we have backed tough Europe-wide targets.



1100 At work...

José is now back at home working on his computer. The EU supports teleworking projects to let people work from home and meet their family commitments.

Just a click... working online

Being able to **work from home** could mean much greater flexibility, especially for those juggling work and caring responsibilities.

Socialists in the European Parliament have been calling for Europe wide regulation of so-called 'atypical' work because those people who do have flexible working methods – homeworking for example – should also feel secure and protected in their jobs.



1200 At work...

Fernanda is checking some newly imported fabrics for her next set of designs. To qualify later in the year she will write about her work experience in the company.

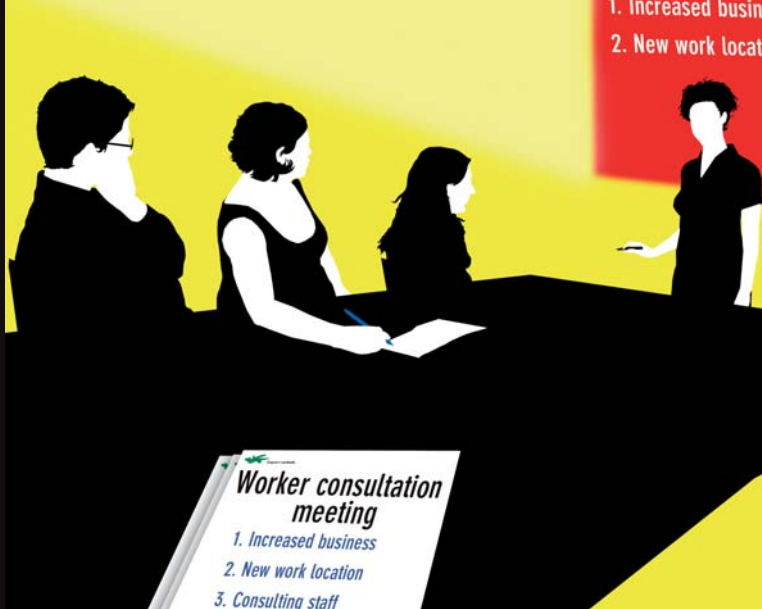
New designs

To enable Europeans to study and work in other countries, it is important that the **qualifications** they hold are accepted and understood across borders. With Socialist Group backing, the European Union has launched the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

The Socialist Group believes that Europe's most precious competitive asset is a well-educated and trained workforce that is motivated to respond to change. We have pushed for more training and retraining, focusing on the concept of **lifelong learning** to ensure that Europe's workers are adequately equipped for today's challenges.

A new European action programme for lifelong learning will cover school education, higher education, vocational training and adult education with a special focus on mobility and languages.

The 27 countries of the European Union work together as one in **international trade** negotiations. Together the Union makes up just 8% of the world's population but over a fifth of global trade – the European Union is the world's largest single trading bloc. Working together, the member states have much more influence over world trade policies than they would have alone. Socialists in the European Parliament strongly believe that world trade can be a force to make poverty history. Much depends on how the rules that govern trade are set and Socialist MEPs have a good record of campaigning for international trade rules that link trade with rights for workers, development and environmental sustainability.



1300 Still at work...

Jacqueline is in a lunchtime meeting about the effects of moving part of the company. EU law ensures that workers are not kept in the dark. She and her colleagues want to understand what this might mean for them.

Staying involved in the big decisions

The Socialist Group believes that workers must be informed about decisions that affect the future of their company and, more than that, we believe that a good employer should also consult its workforce about such decisions. Solutions found together are better than solutions imposed. As the European internal market becomes more and more integrated and companies work across European borders, we need to make sure that this consultation and information mechanism also works across borders too. We played a central role in putting in place a set of comprehensive rules for **worker consultation and information**.

Socialist MEPs believe in a fair balance between the needs of industry and the interests of workers. We do not agree that the way to increase productivity is to make people work longer for less. There is strong evidence to support the idea that in fact shorter working hours and flexible working methods lead to higher productivity. **Working time** rules are there to ensure that an employee can only be asked by their employer to work for a certain length of time and that s/he is entitled to breaks and holidays. The European Parliament has now proposed improvements to working time rules and we are waiting to see how governments will respond.

In many areas of life, the gap between men and women has narrowed. The world today is not one that our grandmothers would recognise and the life chances that many of us have compared to them are enormous. But many women still do not have **equal opportunities**. If they did then the world would be a very different place. It's a world we want to see – one where everyone has equal chances in life. It's not something that will happen overnight but Socialists in the European Parliament are on the job **to tackle the inequalities which still exist – for example on the question of pay, where women can still earn a lot less than men for equal work.**

Have you ever felt that you've been denied a job because of your race, sexuality or disability? Have you ever suffered racial abuse or harassment? Socialist MEPs worked together with community groups to put pressure on European Union governments to put in place tough **anti-discrimination** laws in Europe. Since the Amsterdam Treaty came into force in 1999, new laws on equality have been enacted.



1400 Booking a break

José is still at his computer but this time he's booking a last-minute London weekend break for himself, Jacqueline and two friends. His rights both as a passenger and as an online buyer are guaranteed thanks to Europe-wide rules.

Your rights and safety when you fly

Until recently, your rights and redress as an airline passenger have been pretty weak, if you were told about them at all. Thanks to the work of Socialists in the European Parliament, those rights have now been greatly strengthened and fixed in European law. Responding to disabled passengers across Europe, Socialist MEPs decided that it was high time to tackle airlines and airports to get justice for disabled fliers. They battled successfully, working with disability rights groups, to get some tough new laws that apply wherever you are in the European Union. If you want to know more about your **rights as an air traveller**, there is a Europe-wide freephone number that you can call – 00 800 6789 10 11.

Socialists in the European Parliament have long argued for a Europe-wide list of unsafe airlines and rules to stop unsafe planes using European airports. The Council of Ministers has agreed that this would be the best option for safety and announced the creation of a European blacklist of unsafe air carriers and passenger information about the identity of the air carrier operating their flight. The EU-US 'Open Skies'

agreement ensures that European airlines can land in many more US destinations giving customers more choice. By acting together, European Union member states continually work to increase levels of safety throughout their territory for air passengers and for staff by tightening up on security controls, luggage screening and training for airport staff and air crews.

On-line buying and e-commerce are rapidly becoming one of the most important sectors in the modern European economy. Estimates say that there are over 300 million European internet users and the percentage of European Union households connected to the internet had grown from 18% in 2000 to over 50% by 2007. Nearly 80% of Europeans have already shopped on-line. We believe that, just as you are protected by consumer laws when you shop in your high street, you should be covered as on on-line consumer too. European rules in this area are pioneering. Socialist MEPs are now working on new ways to make sure that you are protected in this fast-changing new market.



1500 Business taking off

Darek is taking delivery of a consignment of glassware at his warehouse on an industrial estate part-funded by the EU. His new business is taking off and he's able to use many of his student exchange contacts.

Supporting regions, supporting student mobility

The European Union is one of the most prosperous economic zones in the world and the Socialist Group believes that Europe's potential should not be compromised by economic and social disparities between member states and among its regions. Our Europe is built on fairness and a balanced distribution of wealth and resources to the regions and communities that really need support. We believe in a **regional policy** that redresses the economic imbalance between the wealthiest and poorest regions of the Union, promoting solidarity, helping lagging regions to catch up with the most prosperous ones, restructuring industrial regions in decline, diversifying the economies of rural areas, setting job creation as a primary concern, strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union and helping member states to face the challenges of enlargement and globalisation.

The **Erasmus** programme has been running since 1987 and in that time has become one of the European Union's big success stories – over one million students have received grants to help them study abroad. This has enriched the lives and careers of those students and has been good for understanding and for the economy. Now some 31 countries take part in Erasmus. Socialist Group MEPs think that the Erasmus programme is now even more important than ever. That's why we have argued for the integration of Erasmus into a new lifelong learning initiative so that people can benefit from education and training opportunities all through life. That's why we argued successfully in the 2006 spending round to find extra money for education and that's why we are campaigning to safeguard Erasmus in future and to have higher Erasmus grants so that all students, whatever their background, can benefit from this chance.



1600 Play time

José has just collected Phillip from nursery and has stopped at a new playground on the way home. He and Jacqueline were both able to take time off when Phillip was born, thanks to EU rules.

Time with children

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament is committed to finding ways of helping working parents square their working lives with caring for their children. . At a European level there is the parental leave directive which introduced the right to **parental leave** for both mothers and fathers on the birth or the adoption of their child. This applies until the child reaches eight years of age. We believe that this is a major breakthrough in equal opportunities policy and a first step in the introduction of more flexible ways of organising a work-life balance.

What is more important than your children's safety? In the home you do everything you can to keep your child safe – and public spaces should also be child friendly, wherever you may be within the European Union. Socialist MEPs campaigned successfully for tough Europe-wide **safety standards** covering the equipment in children's **playgrounds**. Standards have been set for things like equipment height, surfacing and barrier heights. Swings, slides, seesaws and roundabouts are subject to rigorous testing.



1700 Staying healthy

Darek has a medical check and vaccinations before he and Fernanda take a trip to West Africa in a few weeks to visit a friend working on a health project.

Healthcare and public services

The new **European health insurance card** replaces the old E111 and will make it much easier for you to access healthcare wherever you are in the European Union. Rather than filling in all the old paper forms when you travel to another EU member state, carrying the card will entitle you to health treatment during a temporary stay

Quality and availability of **public services** is high on the list of people's concerns today. People are asking whether Europe can contribute to more and better jobs, social security and universal public services. For the Socialist Group in the European Parliament each of these things is a key element in what has been called the European social model. Public services – or services of general interest – include services such as social care, healthcare, water distribution, public housing, education and training. These services are paid for locally and it should be up to local communities to decide what kind of services they want – Socialists in Europe, however, want to see common rules on cross-border services and believe in putting people oriented services first.



1800 Buying wisely

Fernanda has gone shopping on the way home and noticed a petition supporting the EU's bid for tighter controls on chemicals in everyday products. She's reading labels extra carefully as she chooses a toy for Phillip.

Toxic-free shopping

Exposure to **chemicals** takes its toll on human health. A third of occupational illnesses can be put down to exposure to dangerous chemicals, not to mention the risks from general environmental pollution. The EU has already prohibited the use of certain chemical substances in common consumer products, such as toys, and now a new EU law, spearheaded through parliament by Socialist MEPs, will set up a monitoring system for tens of thousands of chemicals produced in or imported into the EU. For the very first time, these chemicals will be properly tested for their environmental impact. The new law is called REACH. If REACH cuts illnesses caused by chemicals in Europe by 10%, it could save 4,500 lives a year.

As a citizen of the European Union, there is a range of different ways in which you can **have your say** about what's happening in Europe. You can write to your MEP, petition the Parliament, or, in cases of maladministration you can take your case up with the Ombudsman.



1900 Hand-luggage only

Jacqueline is busy packing for her weekend break, being careful about what she puts in her hand-luggage, knowing this will speed things up at the airport. Her friend texts while she's packing reminding her about increased security checks and the restrictions on liquids in hand luggage.

A safer world for all of us

We all exchange information via email and phone calls and sometimes this information can be personal or sensitive and we want to make sure that it is kept confidential through sound **data protection** rules. But terrorists and criminals are also making more and more use of modern communication methods to commit crimes and outrages. Investigations following the bomb attacks on Madrid and London show how useful it can be to police and prosecutors to be able to trace communications and images to identify those responsible. European Socialists believe in finding a fair balance between the need to intercept and follow-up all suspected terrorists and international criminals whilst protecting the right of individual citizens to go about their daily lives with their privacy intact.

In a globalising world, Socialists in the European Parliament believe strongly that international problems require international solutions. We firmly back international law and international humanitarian law and support the role of the United Nations. Action must be taken to protect European citizens from **terrorism** and to stop acts of terror before they happen. But we also believe that it is essential to deal with those factors that allow terrorism to breed, be they poverty, racism or environmental destruction.



2000 Catching up with the news

José is flicking between channels to catch the evening TV news and sees reports of a terrible flood where aid will be needed urgently.

News – how we respond

The European Union – **the world's biggest donor of development aid** – has been quick to react to global tragedies. Following the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, we proposed a €93.6 million aid package for 2005-2006. €30 million of this has been put towards the relief operation in addition to the €13.6 million emergency **humanitarian aid** that was released immediately, with a further €50 million for **reconstruction** and rehabilitation of the area. We also contributed a 207 million euro post-Tsunami package to support rehabilitation and long term reconstruction in Indonesia, with funds channeled through a multi-donor trust fund. Socialists in the European Union have worked to ensure that the money for reconstruction is spent in a sustainable way. Local communities must be rebuilt from the "bottom up" – involving at every stage the people whose communities are affected.

News – how it reaches us

Pluralism, diversity and press freedom is not something that can be left to the market to regulate. Profit and advertising cannot be allowed to drive media law. The rate of mergers in the media sector is now faster than in the rest of the economy. Socialist MEPs want to build a broad European coalition for pluralism in the media that simply cannot be ignored by member states and media owners.



2100 A quiet night in

Darek and Fernanda are celebrating two years together and enjoying a quiet evening, planning their holiday. Like many of their friends they know the safe sex message is important everywhere – here at home and in the country they'll be visiting in a few weeks.

HIV/AIDS – we can all help

The **HIV/AIDS** epidemic has transformed the demographic landscape of much of Africa. In countries such as Botswana and Zambia, there is a real problem finding vital public workers because so many have fallen victim to the epidemic. Socialists in the European Parliament strongly believe that promoting sexual and reproductive health rights and services is the key to preventing the further spread of HIV/AIDS – teaching the safe sex message, promoting the use of condoms and empowering women and girls so that they can negotiate safe sex.

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