

STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN **SOCIAL DEMOCRACY**

REPORT OF SIX ROUND TABLE DEBATES 2010/2011
AND THE JUNE 2011 BARCELONA CONFERENCE



S&D

Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

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FOREWORD
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OPENING SESSION

FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present to you on behalf of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, this report of six round table debates which took place in 2010 and 2011, as well as the Barcelona Conference of June this year.

The round tables and conference brought together S&D Group members with leaders and personalities from inside and outside our direct political family. A series of themes were discussed; from globalization, migration and integration, to youth and politics, a progressive agenda for foreign policy, the importance of European integration for Social Democracy and trends regarding electoral support for progressive policies.

For a renewal of our political family, we need to invest in a frank debate involving our parties, parliamentarians, foundations and party members at all levels.

The November PES Convention constitutes an important platform to further debate progressive policies and a good occasion to present this brochure, which we think contains highly interesting contributions for a renewed political platform which will sharpen our political profile.

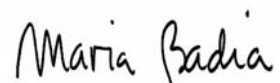
Alongside the PES, FEPS, national parties and foundations, the S&D Group will continue to debate the future of European Social Democracy. We stress that a strengthened European Social Democracy and a strengthened European Union go hand in hand. If we want to deliver on our political programme, we need a strong European Union in combination with an increased presence of Socialists and Social Democrats in national governments (Council), the Commission and the European Parliament.

By the time of the EP elections of June 2014, we should strive to be the decisive political force required to face Europe's challenges.

We hope you enjoy reading this brochure.



Martin SCHULZ
President



Maria BADIA I CUTCHET
Vice-President responsible
for the Round table programme



OPENING SESSION, S&D GROUP CONFERENCE

Barcelona, 20 June 2011

Keynote speech

Jacques Delors

Former President of the European Commission

Social Democrats must rebuild society, restore a sense of individual worth and give ordinary people better long-term prospects.

The political right is pursuing a short-term, 'quick-fix' agenda, as clearly demonstrated by their handling of the economic crisis: they have used the state to save the banks at any cost and regard the welfare state simply as a buffer, while the centre-left sees it as a means to allow every individual in a society to play a proper role.

The culture of 'the market and nothing but the market' is damaging societies, marginalizing communities and fostering a loss of hope amongst individuals and families. It is now up to Socialists and Social Democrats to restore social values, cushion the shock of globalization, and reverse the domination of the financial world.

In the 'golden Sixties', Social Democracy allowed people to aspire to something better. Now, traditional working classes are being tempted by the siren call of populism, which is attracting people in poor, marginalized communities who were once more in tune with Social Democratic aspirations.

Today people have possessions "in abundance", but remain poor in terms of possible life choices and potential career paths, and feel alienated.

Short-termism, from the media to political parties on all sides, is a key problem. Greece is a classic example of this: if EU leaders had taken "ten minutes" to think about longer-term solutions to the Greek problem instead of "quivering in their boots at the sight of the markets", something might have been done.



The right is focusing on the short term; the left must embrace the longer term and make it our domain: we have to hold out some prospects for people.

People feel lost. They are scared by globalization and are looking for something to “tag onto”. The populists and demagogues of the right or left talk about the nation versus Europe. In fact, reinforcing the European Union is part of the answer, because it is not possible to tackle social or fiscal dumping, or issues such as immigration or the shock of globalization, without a European solution.

But Europe is not speaking with one voice: the institutions in charge of Europe are not there when we need them – the EU as a political body is fraying at the edges. Politicians are not working together.

We Social Democrats must speak out against this: would anyone accept a situation in their own country where seven government members say seven different things at once?

This shows how 'Europe' has been declining at a time when we have never needed it more. Europe has to choose between decline and survival. Crises are leading to a retreat by European institutions which must be reversed.

The idea of basing jobs and growth on market-orientated policies is wrong: people need money and money is king these days, but we do not have to accept the right-wing discourse that money rules. We have to speak out against this in a society in which financial institutions have not only been saved by ordinary people paying higher taxes and going into debt, but are now back up and running and applying speculative pressure again. This is immoral.

It is essential for the Social Democratic movement to restore the balance between capital and labour, and between solidarity and responsibility. Our political goal must be to rebuild society and ensure that everyone feels that they have a place in it, rather than allowing society to fall apart. People need unions and associations, and we must devote proper thought to that. We have to restore respect for collective bargaining – we cannot have truly democratic countries without proper negotiations between representatives of labour and industry.

It is vital to protect the environment, ensure a universal welfare state and share responsibility from one generation to another. Adapting to economic and technical change, and using education to reduce inequality, are also key elements.

Behavioural changes are needed both in governments and businesses as well as among ordinary citizens: are we prepared to put that radical change to the people, rather than just talking about it?

For the last 60 years, Social Democracy has brought people together. The welfare state has helped to build an inclusive society in which people have had prospects, a degree of dignity and a sense of individual control over their lives. This process is breaking down now and people are turning inward again, so we have to rebuild society.

We have to get across the idea that we are all in the same boat; that we all belong. That is part of the boldness that Social Democracy needs to demonstrate at this critical moment.

ROUND TABLE DEBATES

ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: PERSPECTIVES AND POTENTIAL ONE YEAR AFTER THE 2009 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

Limelette, 9 June 2010

Main presentations

Bernhard Weßels

Senior researcher at the Social Science Research Centre (WZB) and Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, Humboldt University, Berlin

Some have predicted the end of Social Democracy on the grounds that its main goals have been achieved (the welfare state, relative prosperity and reduced social inequalities) and Social Democrats find it increasingly difficult to differentiate themselves from other parties.

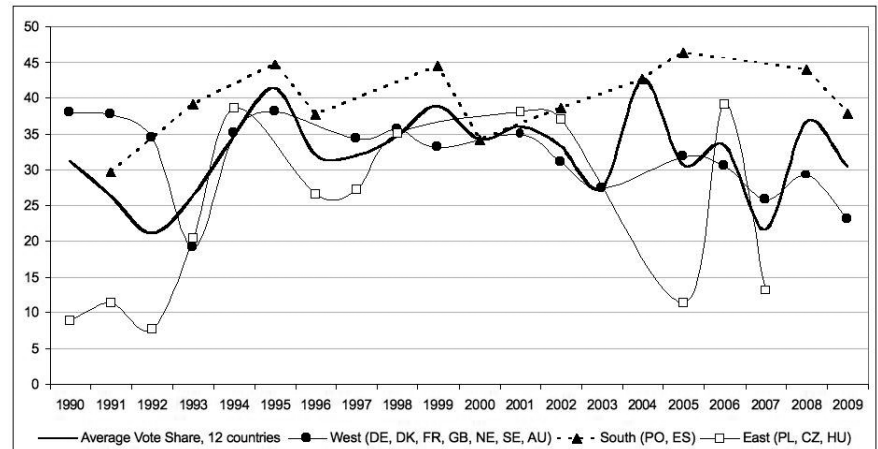


But an analysis of election results across Europe between 1990 and 2009 does not point to an overall decline in support for Social Democrat parties, either in terms of their share of the vote or involvement in government. The problem is more cyclical in nature, combined with extreme volatility in voter behaviour in some countries.

But Social Democracy does face serious challenges, most notably because there is no such thing any longer as a 'core' voter the movement can rely on. The proportion of voters with a fixed allegiance to any one party is declining and the public now judges parties on their performance and outputs.

The trade unions are disproportionately represented in the movement, but their membership is declining. Rising education standards also pose a challenge for a movement which tends to attract the less educated, and falling support among young voters is a cause for concern.

Social Democrat parties were undoubtedly the 'big loser' in the 2009 European elections, although falling turnout was partly to blame. Given that Social Democrat supporters are generally more likely to stay at home than other parties' supporters, the movement needs to make a greater effort to mobilise them.



Average Vote Share of Social Democratic Parties Overall and Divided into Groups of Countries, 1990-2009

Source: Bernhard Weßels, Is There Any Truth in the Thesis of the End of Social Democracy? An Empirical Analysis of the Election Results and Voter Profiles of Social Democratic Parties in Europe over the Past 20 Years, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, International Policy Analysis (IPA), August 2010. Author's calculations based on the database "Parties, Elections and Governments", research unit "Demokratie", WZB. Paper download: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/07414.pdf>.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen

President, Party of European Socialists

The 2009 Euro-elections were not truly pan-European elections and were rather a series of referenda on the respective national Governments. Social Democratic parties therefore generally lost in countries where they were already weak and did well in those where they were already strong. Although Social Democratic parties lost ground in the elections, no other mainstream parties made any significant gains. The turnout was the lowest ever. Reversing this trend of voter apathy is the single biggest electoral challenge for European Social Democrats.

This apathy is born of a feeling that voting for European representatives will not make a difference. The fall in support for



“ Snapshots of the debate

“Voters are becoming very volatile. They are trying to catch the rainbow and when they don't find it, they go to other parties.”

“We cannot just keep things as they were. As society changes, our message cannot be the same as it was 20 years ago.”

“Social Democracy is a child of the industrial society and the industrial society was in a permanent state of flux and change. We are used to change and we can innovate in the face of globalisation.”

“People see us as very technocratic parties: we need strong leaders and a very clear set of values.”

“You have got to give people a message of hope, the promise of a good future.”

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Social Democracy also reflects the conservative success in exploiting the ‘fear factor’, particularly about immigration and job insecurity.

The Social Democratic family also suffered from the failure to name a single candidate for the European Commission. Happily this has been addressed by the PES and we now have a firm commitment to fight the 2014 election with a clear candidate at the head of the campaign.

Social Democrats must counter the conservatives’ retreat towards ‘the politics of disengagement’. The right-wing parties’ focus on individualism and market forces is an attempt to shrink the public sphere.

The fight back must be waged at both the national and European level. The Social Democratic family must promote the value of the public sphere, the benefits of equality and the strength of community. By adapting our programmes to the world today, modernising our politics and making a progressive connection with voters, we can reinvigorate the Social Democratic way and prepare for 2014. The PES initiative ‘Our Vision for Progressive Societies in the 21st Century’ aims to do just that, by involving all actors of our family, from activists through to party leaders, in an open debate on the renewal of Social Democracy.

SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

European Parliament, Brussels 12 January 2011

Main presentations

Maria João Rodrigues

Special Advisor to the EU institutions and Party of European Socialists

Progressives are increasing their influence across the world, in Latin America, the United States and in Asia, but the tide has turned the other way in Europe. In a sense, Social Democrats are victims of their own success – today's European societies are clearly the outcome of the work of Socialists and Social Democratic movements, and we need to remind people of our major achievements – but that on its own is no longer enough.



Our political identity is defined, most of all, by our values, rather than by the groups who support us. Social Democracy should not be defined mainly as a party of the working class. Our starting point should be our values – freedom, equality, social justice and the concept of sustainable development – and we need to mobilise around them.

As progressives, we should be in favour of concepts of progress. For the working class, this means higher wages; for others, it means better quality of life. We should base it on quality of life and well-being: we need a new concept of success, excellence, responsibilities and duties. We need a new concept of freedom which is about empowering people and to create a sense of belonging.

The European model faces significant challenges, but it is still the best in the world. We should be proud of that. We need a convincing message that we can sustain this model, but to do so, we will need to reform it.

In the current historical conditions, Social Democracy needs stronger action at European level in order to implement its new agenda. That is why we need to build a stronger European political party.

Catherine de Vries

Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Amsterdam

Social Democrats face three main challenges: the end of cleavage-based voting and the rise of 'political switching'; ideological splits among potential supporters; and an increase in anti-elite, anti-state rhetoric.

The days of core electorates are over: voters now consider many different options and make up their minds who to support at a much later stage. Most do see Social Democrat parties as a viable option – i.e. one of the parties they would consider voting for – and then look for the information they need to decide which way to vote. This makes election campaigns and short-term factors much more important than in the past.

The 'ideological split' among potential supporters also poses a significant dilemma for Social Democrats: at heart, much of the electorate is on the left economically but on the right culturally (i.e. on issues such as immigration and globalisation). This does not fit well with Social Democracy's traditional, international approach and also highlights the need to launch a real debate on sensitive issues such as immigration and culture.



The third challenge – the rise of anti-elitism and an anti-state discourse, fuelled by populist parties – is of most concern. Voters increasingly doubt whether politicians act in the general public's interest and this mistrust of authorities helps explain why Social Democracy has not been able to capitalise on the financial and economic crisis.

A three-pronged strategy is needed to meet these challenges. Social Democrats should:

- Present a new vision of the future;
- Consider how to challenge the populists' current monopoly on defining "fairness" in the political debate, and promote a more inclusive society;
- The politics of emotion are very important – it is not about facts, it is about the image you portray and the vision you set out.



“ Snapshots of the debate

“We should rally people's hearts, not just their minds; we should fight for them with an optimistic mindset.”

“Our values are still appealing. These are basic values which have been proven throughout the history of the last 130 years, but we do not articulate them enough.”

“For Conservatives, the solution to uncontrolled speculation is more fiscal discipline, full stop. For us, it is fiscal discipline, yes, but also cooperation for growth and European solidarity.”

“New forms of democratic debate are emerging. This is an opportunity for a new way to do politics. Political parties should find new ways of participating in the debates in these virtual communities. It is a new frontier for political action.”

”

THE EU AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Barcelona, 20 June 2011

The “EU and Social Democracy” Round Table focused on the key issue of how to counter rising Euroscepticism and persuade national political leaders that a strong Europe is essential to address the many challenges we face in today’s world. Impulse speakers – Hannes Swoboda, S&D Group Vice-President; Policy Network Chairman Roger Liddle; Daniel Innerarity, Professor of Philosophy at the Basque Country University; and Anne Muxel, Directrice de Recherche CEVIPOF, Paris – and participants agreed on the need to do much more to persuade people that we need more Europe, not less.

The European Union is one of the greatest political innovations in recent history, and could be seen as a pilot project for the new type of politics required in today’s interdependent, globalised world. But Social Democrats must do much more to counter rising nationalism and Euroscepticism by explaining what the European Union is for, defending Europe and common European policies, and working to convince the public (and many national politicians) that Europe is part of the solution to the many challenges we face, not part of the problem, and that we need more Europe, not less.

Much is made of opinion polls that highlight growing distrust in the EU, but in fact this is not just a problem for Europe - it reflects a general decline in trust in politics and politicians more widely, with similar levels of distrust recorded in national governments, parliaments and parties. However, this declining trust in politics is a particular problem for the left because it is through politics that we want to change society.

It is also particularly marked among young people, who will only turn out to vote when they feel that there is something important at stake and are not at all interested in European elections because they do not see them as an opportunity to influence European policies. Social Democrats need to find a way to speak to these younger generations.

The impact of the global crisis is fuelling this growing distrust. Social Democrats are perceived as lacking a convincing response to the crisis and failing to come up with an alternative to the right wing argument that all we can do in the face of our current difficulties is to cut government budgets. The key question for Social Democrats is how we can save the welfare state and our welfare institutions at a time of budget consolidation. We have to be very strong and clear on this issue.

We also need to admit where we made mistakes in the past and we must appeal to people's hearts as well as their minds, which is something we have not really done until now. People are not against politics per se, but they do want a different kind of politics, and our challenge is therefore to do things differently.

We cannot go on repeating the same things we said ten or 20 years ago, as if it was "business as usual". It is not. Social Democracy is under real attack and we need to fight back. We must dare to propose our own, alternative economic and social model instead of just adopting the right-wing's agenda. We cannot prevent globalization, but we can show our citizens that we are determined to protect them against unfairness and injustice in our societies.



We must also explain that the solutions cannot be found inside our nation states – the EU is our answer to globalization. Security is what citizens want most and through Europe, we can offer them greater security.

Is there such a thing as European Social Democracy? Yes, but too many politicians are still looking for solutions to the challenges we face inside nation states and the EU is used as a scapegoat by everyone when things go wrong. Take, for example, the current euro-zone crisis: the Union is blamed by other Member States for the bad situation in Greece and by the Greeks for the very tough austerity measures imposed on the country to deal with this situation. National political leaders must shoulder their responsibilities and get people to understand that saving the euro is not just a question of solidarity but also of enlightened self-interest.

Europe is in the midst of a crisis of political representation. There is a vacuum when it comes to spelling out a long-term vision of the future, and Social Democrats can and should fill this gap, developing proposals to give young people greater hope for the future and encourage them to accept and embrace a shared political and social destiny.



GLOBALIZATION, GOVERNANCE AND PERMANENT CHANGE

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION AND PERMANENT CHANGE

European Parliament, Brussels 8 December 2010

Main presentations

Miguel Angel Moratinos MP

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Spain, 2004-2010

The Social Democratic movement faces a paradox: at a time when there is an urgent need for social justice in the wake of the financial and economic crisis, voters are not supporting us in the numbers they used to.

We need to develop a new kind of social movement which goes beyond traditional party structures. Above all, Social Democrats have to win elections – we cannot do much with only three or four leaders around the table in the European Council.

We *do* have answers to the challenges we face, but have tended to be on the defensive in response to neo-liberal claims that we are to blame for the crisis. We have not yet really found a convincing response to the confusion, uncertainty and loss of confidence.

We need to offer a positive vision of the future that people can believe in. We should not try to copy the neo-liberal discourse or move sharply to the left, but provide our own answers. For example, why is it that we always cut budgets in areas that please the markets but cause problems for our citizens? It is ironic that a Conservative Prime Minister in the UK has cut the defence budget, which no Social Democrat leader has ever dared do, even though reducing defence spending has always been part of our political programme.

The state does not have many instruments at its disposal to control what markets do, and we now live in a more individualistic and fragmented society, so we need a new vision for the 21st century – a new model of citizenship.

Martin Schulz MEP

President of the S&D Group

Traditionally, Socialism was an international movement, but Social Democracy is in danger of becoming increasingly national, while the other parties are now more international.

European solutions are inevitable and absolutely necessary. We should have the courage to be the first party to say, “we cannot do this at national level, we need European and global solutions”. In the mid-term, we can win elections on the basis of this approach.



For 50-60 years, Europe was not just the promise of peace but also of social justice: it brought people more jobs, money and wealth, and that is why they trusted it. We are collectively responsible for the fact that people no longer have any trust in institutions, no confidence that politicians will be able to guarantee them a future. They are right: none of us can do it alone.

We politicians say that Europe brings more growth, but people see that it brings fewer jobs; we say it brings more wealth, but they also see that in some ways, it undermines prosperity. There is a gap between our European promises and reality, and this is a consequence of our focus on the nation state.

Joaquín Almunia

Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for competition policy

Social Democrats can and must put forward an alternative to the prevailing idea that the markets run the society. Economic growth has delivered greater quality of life, in particular through the welfare state. It has broken down barriers, given citizens more opportunities and made them more autonomous. As a result, they are more individualistic and want more opportunities. Meanwhile, ageing societies are increasing the demand for labour from the rest of the world, but increased immigration is leading to social tensions and some populist voices. New forms of communications are emerging. All of this will strike at the heart of our political model.

Social Democrats need to come up with a vision of the future which can attract broad support again – while we have traditionally focused on the weakest in society, we must also focus on all those who depend on their own efforts to live decently.

If we want to become the representatives of the majority of our society again, we need to target the concerns and aspirations of the whole population. We are the only party that can reach out to the poor, but we must also reach out to everyone else.

Social Democrats must also make it clear that without Europe, Member States will not be able to succeed when facing the challenges of the future. Without Europe, we will not achieve our goals.





“ Snapshots of the debate

“The answer lies in ‘going European’. We can cope with the crisis if we act at European level, rather than at national level. We no longer have the tools at national level to solve the problems we face.”

“We need an open society, we need to defend our values, we need more Europe.”

“We don’t particularly want leaders of hedge funds to vote for us, but we should not erect barriers between ourselves and the majority.”

“If we give up the fight, accept that the markets are all powerful and decide that we should not play a role in regulating the invisible hand of the market, then we might as well throw in the towel.”

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GOVERNANCE AND GLOBALIZATION

Barcelona, 20 June 2011

The “Governance and Globalization” Round Table built on the discussion in the previous Round Table on “The Social Democratic Alternative in the context of globalization and permanent change” in Brussels in December 2010. Impulse speakers - Zoran Milanovic, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia; S&D Group Vice-President Stephen Hughes; and Maria João Rodrigues, Chair of the PES Progressive Societies Network – and participants agreed that this is a moment of great opportunity for the centre-left to seize the initiative on this issue.

The global landscape has changed completely and global governance is now a far more important issue than it was even a decade ago. Many of the most urgent challenges facing Europe can only be tackled effectively through action at the global as well as regional/national level, and a new development model is needed to respond to those challenges. Europe can and should play a central role in shaping that model, but it will need to be quick and nimble-footed if it is to do so.

Both the existing multilateral institutions and the G20 are necessary, as the G20 more closely reflects 21st century realities and is a promising process which can be used to leverage much-needed reforms in multilateral bodies. Stronger institutions of global governance will also be crucial to address the defining issue of 21st century politics: the relationship between markets and governments.

This is a critical moment in terms of shaping European and global governance: although Europe faces many problems, it is still the continent where a synthesis of economic, social and environmental development can be achieved - but that synthesis is now in danger.

People distrust Social Democrats because we are perceived as having accepted globalization as inevitable without trying to shape or govern it. If we want to be credible with the electorate in the future, we must admit to our mistakes when in government and develop a coherent, cogent message. And we must do this now, while in opposition, so that the voters know what they will be buying when the time comes.

The left has a golden opportunity now to fight back: what is needed now is a big leap of imagination to deliver a new form of global governance, and those on the left have that imagination. Social Democrats can and must demonstrate to voters that we have an alternative – that globalization can be made socially responsible without having to go down the protectionist, anti-internationalist route.

Social Democrats need to take the movement's internationalism far more seriously than is the case now. National parties still focus on the nation state as the solution, but this will not work: we must promote our core values – freedom, equality, social justice, sustainable development – within an international framework and strive to improve quality of life for all through these institutions.

Our national leaders do not take much interest in what is happening at European level, even though, in a globalised world, it is impossible to deal with global problems at the national level - we need European solutions, we need more Europe to be able to deal with the challenges we face in an effective way. We need to build a stronger Europe because it is an essential political tool for achieving our long-term objectives. If the left does not become European, it will eventually cease to exist.

The key demand from citizens in response to globalization is security: above all, economic security but also security from terrorism, crime and environmental threats. The public also want to ensure that bankers help pay for the damage done to the financial system. But the Social Democrat message on these issues is not clear, both because of communications failures and because of disunity among our parties and governments.

Social Democrats need to develop a clearer message, so that voters understand what we stand for. Over the past 20 years, we have embraced much of the dominant pro-market ideology and thus lost some clarity of identity. The movement has spent a great deal of time developing an alternative economic strategy, but it sometimes seems as if the position papers which emerge from this process are among the best-kept secrets in the universe!

We must remain truthful to our core values and protect them, but must also develop a pragmatic and practical response. We need a long-term vision coupled with bold short-term actions. Our mission now must be to work with citizens to make sure that they can regain control over their lives in the new world we are now living in, so that together we can create a fairer, greener and more democratic society.

YOUTH AND POLITICS

YOUTH AND POLITICS: TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF CITIZENSHIP?

European Parliament, Brussels 12 May 2010

Main presentations

Anne Muxel

CRNS Director of Research at the Centre of Political Science Research at Science Po (CEVIPOF), Paris

There is a common perception that falling turnout among youngsters is the result of apathy among the younger generation. But while turnout is significantly lower among young people than in the population as a whole – generally about 10% lower – this does not mean they have no interest in politics.

Over three-quarters of young people think it is important to vote and two-thirds feel it is the most effective form of political action; they are calling, however, for representative democracy to be combined with participatory democracy (for example, in the form of Internet-based discussion forums and actions, demonstrations and protests). There is a growing spectrum of means of political expression and young people are better at using all these different possibilities, particularly in defence of values such as equality, human rights, pacifism and anti-racism.

So is falling turnout a sign of a break down of civic spirit and a democratic deficit, or does it rather point to the emergence of a new model of citizenship?

There are many reasons why young people do not turn out to vote. Some of them are structural: they are at a very dynamic time in their lives when they are focused on finding jobs (especially during a period of economic crisis) and on starting their adult lives, and there may be practical reasons why they do not register to vote in countries where this is required.



But there are other reasons too: a lack of trust in politics and the weakening of political allegiances, with many young people deciding only at the last minute who to vote for (if they vote at all). This is coupled with the fact that voting habits, which are formed at an early age, are much less enshrined in today's youngsters than in older generations.

This growing indifference and withdrawal from the political system could spark a real crisis in representative democracy and undermine the legitimacy of the system.

It is vital to restore the credibility of, and confidence in, politics as a pre-condition for finding a solution to this problem. There is also a growing need to highlight 'attractive issues' which matter to young people, as they will turn out to vote if they think it will make a difference on the issues they care about. Improving democratic and political education in schools to familiarise young people with the significance of politics at an early age is also important, and consideration should be given to lowering the voting

age, as has already been done in some countries.

Above all, now more than ever, there is a need to "forge a social project which young people will sign up to." For Socialists and Social Democrats, there is every reason to invest in this. Although young people are generally less left-wing than two decades ago, they still tend to be more left-wing than the population as a whole.

Janelle Ward

Assistant Professor, Department of Media and Communications, Erasmus University Rotterdam

The new media are important tools to promote political participation among young people and the population as a whole. However, having a presence on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter is not a guarantee of greater interaction with young people, who are often cynical about their content. Nobody believes that Facebook pages of senior politicians are actually written by the politicians themselves, prompting youngsters to ask: "Why should we engage with ghost-writers?"

There is one thing worse than being totally inactive online: establishing a presence and then letting it stagnate. Social networking sites require a committed individual or team effort to maintain an active presence.



“ Snapshots of the debate

“In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the socialist world movement was an emotional movement which captured the hearts of young people. We stand for the same things now as we did then, so why don't young people come to us?”

“We have become too technocratic. Young people see us as professional politicians. We need to let our emotions come out and show more passion.”

“The focus should never be on what we have to do to attract people - it should be on providing answers to the problems we face. If young people think we are aiming at political survival, they will not grant us even that.”

“Young people are the ones who are able to go onto the streets to fight for what they believe in. At the moment, it does not seem that we have a message that will really make them get out and fight.”

“Young people are working in NGOs, for international organisations, volunteering, working with disabled children. This shows that they do want to get involved – they do want to make a difference.”

“Social media offer huge possibilities and are popular, but cannot replace build traditional social relationships between people. If we do not succeed in convincing people through face-to-face contacts, how can we expect to do it one step removed through the social media?”

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PLENARY DEBATE I
BARCELONA CONFERENCE

SETTING THE AGENDA FOR A RENEWED EUROPEAN UNION

Barcelona, 20 June 2011

The opening plenary debate of the conference focused on identifying the key elements of a Social Democratic agenda for a renewed European Union. Panellists and participants discussed the issues which should be at the heart of the centre-left's campaign in order to achieve its goals and win back public support.

Ramón Jáuregui

Minister for the Presidency in the Spanish government

We need to ensure that in future, politics dominate and govern the economy and markets and not the other way round. That is what people want and expect from us.

We also need to reformulate the role of companies with regard to society. That is why the left must stress corporate social responsibility. A new labour society is emerging and our old dream of a decent work should be modernized within the framework of the knowledge economy. It is essential to ensure that competitiveness is compatible with social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

The financial crisis has clearly shown that fiscal policy needs to be reshaped in a way that achieves more harmonization in Europe and is more progressive from a social point of view. Indeed, the management of the welfare state and public services should also be reconsidered to make them financially viable. Equality in the 21st century means having equal opportunities, and that must therefore be our top priority.

We can only address the challenges we face and achieve our goals through a European and international response, and we must fight rising Euroscepticism and the re-emergence of nationalism, which is calling the basis of the EU into question.



Steven Hill

Political writer and columnist, California, USA, Author: Europe's promise

Europe must defend and build on its successes. It still has an essential role to play as a global leader in finding solutions to the problems we face and developing responses to the two biggest challenges confronting us: how to ensure a growing world population can enjoy decent living standards and how to do this in a sustainable way.

In many ways, Social Democrats should prevail in the current situation. However, instead of electoral victories, we see a relatively weak support. Why is this? It is partly because the Social Democrat message is not clear enough. The centre-left needs a coherent program and should focus on identifying key priorities to deliver to voters at the next election.

The overriding issue among swing voters is security – primarily economic and job security, but also concerns about related issues such as security of the social system and border security, which are closely linked to immigration and the fate of the Eurozone. All of these come under the broad umbrella of “security.” Social Democrats must show that they understand people’s concerns and have answers to the issues they care about most.

Bernadette Ségol

General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation

Trade unions are part of the solution to the many challenges we face and have a crucial role to play. However, EU Member States often treat us as part of the problem, and seem intent on undermining the foundations of the trade union movement and destroying our representative structures in Europe.

Trade unions see the European Union as part of the solution to those challenges, not part of the problem, but we have difficulties in getting that message across. Populist messages are much easier to convey and we need help to counter this. But Europe is doing very little to help: social legislation is being unpicked and the EU is undermining efforts to build a social Europe. If Europe wants our help, then we need to get something to prove that it is contributing to social progress.

The left also needs to take a more positive approach, highlighting what we have achieved, focusing on the possibilities opened to us for action, and conveying a sense that we can do something about the challenges we face if we work together.

Matthias Machnig

Minister for Economic Affairs in Thüringen, Germany

Social Democrats face a difficult situation because many of the promises we made in the past have not come true. We said growth would deliver increased security, but there is less social responsibility now; we promised progress

would lead to greater democracy, but the opposite has happened; and political parties, governments and the EU institutions are no longer masters of the situation. All this is leading to the delegitimisation of the Union and the nation state.

Social Democrats do have a communication problem, but we should not put the cart before the horse: we also have problems of substance and credibility, and we need to address these first.

Our three watchwords should be progress, justice and security.

We need to develop a credible Social Democratic economic policy for the next 3-4 years, focus on creating decent jobs, stress that the markets cannot solve everything, develop European growth and industrial policies, and identify ways to foster convergence at the European level.

Only then should we focus on how best to get the message across clearly and effectively, to give voters the clear choice between left and right.

Enrique Barón Crespo

Former President of the European Parliament and the PES Group

Social Democracy is not in a “crisis of disappearance” – voters will come back to us when they realize that the policies introduced by right-wing governments across Europe are not working and are making matters worse. But we do need to renovate and renew ourselves.

As Socialists and Social Democrats, we have not yet taken the necessary steps to create a European alternative. This is an important challenge and we need to rise to it, and deliver a clearer, more streamlined message at the next elections.

The European social model is widely appreciated outside the EU, and others want to be like us. We must remind our voters of what we have achieved, defend the progress we have made and explain the importance of advances like the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

We need to open up the debate within our movement and develop an entirely new program which addresses the very real problems ordinary people face – in short, we need to put a face on European Social Democracy.

Bernhard Weßels

Lecturer at Humboldt University, Berlin

Many people are now questioning whether politics can solve problems and one of the key challenges for the Social Democratic movement is to restore the public's belief in politics. This will not be easy, but the left is in a better position to do this than the right.

Social Democratic parties also often lack a clear profile and message. We need to identify clear priorities, lead the voters rather than run after them, and make elections meaningful again. If people know what is at stake, turnout will increase.

Once these messages have been developed, Social Democrats need to focus on mobilising our supporters: if you are in contact with potential supporters, they are much more likely to turn out to vote for you on election day.

Kaisa Penny

President of ECOSY

Although young voters are still generally more left-wing than right-wing, Social Democrats do not involve them in policy debates enough. We do have good programs and solutions to the many problems we face, but we often tell people about them instead of giving them a sense that they can influence our approach. Put simply, politicians should not talk to or about young people, but should talk with them.

Young people would turn out to vote if they felt they could influence decisions. That is why they tend to get involved in single issue movements – e.g. human rights and environmentalism – where they feel they can make a difference, or to support smaller parties like the Greens, where they feel they can have more influence.

There are many ways and organisations through which one can join the social democratic movement, but in order to have real influence, or raise to a position of power, one needs to get involved in all of them. We must create new forms of participation that allow people to get involved in ways that suit them.

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ROUND TABLE DEBATES

DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM

Barcelona, 21 June 2011

The “Democracy and Freedom” Round Table focused on how best to counter the threats to democracy and freedom within the EU, as well as promoting democracy and freedom outside the Union. Impulse speakers - Christian Levrat, President of Swiss Socialist Party; Alfred Gusenbauer, Chair of FEPS Next Left and former Chancellor of Austria; Catherine Trautmann MEP, PS-F Delegation leader in the S&D Group; and Jan Pronk, former Minister for Development and a United Nations Special Advisor – and participants agreed that Europe’s credibility is at stake and stronger action is required to defend the EU’s fundamental values.

The current threats to democracy within the European Union stem from a loss of confidence in politics and politicians. This is more of a problem for Social Democrats than for the right, because defending participatory democracy is a crucial plank of our political program but has never been an important part of theirs.

The protests of the ‘indignados’ in Spain are a kind of parallel social movement, a rebellion against the entire political and financial world, linked to this loss of confidence in democratic governments. The depoliticisation and alienation of young people from the political process is a matter of serious concern. They have lost hope and we need to find a way to give it back to them.

Employment is a fundamental right and inequalities arising from a lack of jobs amount to a restriction of freedom, which contributes to increased support for populist, right-wing parties and poses a serious threat to Social Democracy, particularly when immigrants are perceived to be responsible for increasing unemployment among the local labour force; i.e. our electorate. Strong economic and social measures are crucial to counter this, but Social Democrats have not been able to implement the necessary reforms since the financial and economic crises began because we are not in power in most EU Member States.

Europe's credibility is at stake, given the threats to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in some countries within the EU. Now more than at any other time in the past 20 years, strong European action is vital to defend media freedom and combat other threats to democracy, which are potentially contagious. This requires strengthened EU surveillance of media freedom, respect for democratic principles and fundamental rights, and an early warning system to ensure that the Union reacts quickly when threats to them emerge.

In several European countries, national identities and value systems are perceived to be under threat from the religious confrontation with Islam. For many years, Social Democrats did not dare to discuss issues such as multiculturalism and immigration because of fears that this would spark internal divisions. This was a mistake, opening the door for the populist right to become stronger and stronger, and putting Social Democrats on the defensive on this issue.

Now, in avoiding a proactive stance on Europe – another unpopular issue among voters – we risk making an even bigger mistake, given that the necessary rebalancing of power within the social market economy can only be achieved at the European level.



Social Democrats must not leave the issue of Europe to the right-wing populists. We must take up the fight for Europe, and we must fight for the kind of Europe that we want to achieve our goals – i.e. for the “Social Democratization of Europe”. Our message to the people must be that the only possibility is Europe, but it must be a Europe with strong economic government, political legitimacy and a rebalancing of the market economy in favour of growth, employment and social justice.

When it comes to defending democracy outside the EU, all the current indicators are pointing in the ‘wrong direction’ (the growing scarcity of natural resources, the impact of climate change, food and energy crises, rising poverty worldwide, etc.) and the West, including Europe, has all too often been on the wrong side in a conflict-ridden world, either neglecting conflicts, supporting the wrong parties or leaders, or resorting to military intervention without addressing the causes of conflicts.

The EU is also all too often guilty of hypocrisy: for example, talking about sustainability while failing to do enough to cut CO₂ emissions; defending free trade while reaping the benefits of subsidized agricultural exports; reforming energy policy based on the use of bio fuels and thus increasing food prices; putting economic interests above human rights and democracy in free trade agreements.

Credibility is the key word in this context: we need a common, coordinated, integrated policy to address all these issues. The only valid answer is conflict management based on values and human security.

PROGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY

A PROGRESSIVE AGENDA FOR THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 30 June 2010

Main presentations

Massimo d'Alema

Former Italian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)



The EU has long campaigned strongly for multilateral world governance and yet, paradoxically, we now have a US administration that is asking for multilateralism and Europe seems unable to “get ready for this appointment” and present feasible solutions to global problems.

EU foreign policy is a projection of its capacity to play a leading role in elaborating a strategy to get out of the current economic crisis. The crisis has highlighted: 1) a deficit of democracy (we lack governance and control); 2) a deficit of equality (globalisation has produced huge global economic inequalities); 3) a deficit of innovation (with low wages in developing countries sustaining high

profits without any kind of innovation policy). Europe has been unable to propose any real alternatives and project a clear profile, with implications for the relevance of its foreign policy.

The projection of the EU's image abroad also depends on displaying unity in international institutions, but it is seen by the international community as a “Europe of nations, in conflict with each other for the sake of their prestige”.

The two priorities for a progressive EU foreign policy agenda must be to improve its performance in its 'macro-region' (the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Turkey) and develop a strong position on the Israel-Palestine conflict, a vital issue but one where the Union's position is both weak and uncertain. It must also continue to work on its relationships with the East, especially Russia and has a moral duty to build a constructive presence in Africa. Above all, we need a clear vision of the identity we want for Europe.

Jan Pronk

Former Dutch Minister for Development and Cooperation, former UN Special Representative for Sudan, Professor at the International Institute for Social Studies, The Hague

The world order has changed completely over the last decade. Globalisation means there is no longer any distinction between traditional foreign policy and international economic, trade and climate policies, and no distinction between EU foreign policy and the international policies of individual Member States. However, the EU is not seen by the outside world as relevant any more, because it is perceived as internally divided and very slow to act.

The future will be conflict-ridden because of increased poverty, rising unemployment and the climate challenge. The most important objective for EU foreign policy should therefore be conflict management, based on protecting human rights, enhancing security and pursuing policies to reduce inequalities, eradicate poverty and promote environmental sustainability. The protection of human rights, in particular, requires us to begin negotiating solutions to conflicts from the start, as violations generally get worse the longer a conflict goes on.

EU foreign policy should have four main objectives: meeting the targets we have agreed in the past (including the Millennium Development Goals and the Kyoto targets); finding a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict; participating in international peace operations within the United Nations, based on a DDD approach – Diplomacy, Development and Defence; and resolving internal disputes and strengthening the EU's common position in a range of areas.

The inequality and poverty in the world is partly a result of our policies. Equality is an unattainable goal, but we can push for less inequality – that has to be the objective of our foreign policy.





“ Snapshots of the debate

Europe's decreasing role throughout the world is the responsibility of the conservatives, but where are the progressive forces to be found? We have not managed to come forward with a strong and clear alternative policy.”

“Europe should be leading on the recovery, on climate change, on trade, on better standards and on reform of the financial system, and that is not the case at the moment. Our family should push for Europe to take its responsibilities.”

“Before we start telling the rest of the world what to do, we have to find support within the EU for going beyond national interests.”

“It is a mistake to think you can get round the Israel-Palestine conflict. In fact, it is the central nexus, but Europe's position lacks clarity and determination.”

“Reducing inequality is a very important element of foreign policy because it could help to reduce the potential for conflict and that it is a key objective of foreign policy.”

“It is important to identify the common interests of the EU as a political entity, not just as a free market.”

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MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, IDENTITY AND TOLERANCE

MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND IDENTITY

European Parliament, Brussels 4 May 2011

Main presentations

Anna Terrón I Cusí

Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration, Spain

Social Democrats need to ensure the debate about immigration is based on facts, the reality of the situation rather than myths. Public perception tends to identify migrants as poor and 'different', although this is not accurate. The right-wing claims that we are not as good at managing migration as them, another inaccuracy.

We should talk about “integrated societies”, instead of “integrating people”; about how to create one integrated society made up of people of different origins who share a minimum set of shared values. We need to focus on individual rights and to base our approach on equal treatment.

The basic idea underpinning Social Democracy is social cohesion. We need to look at the reality for each individual in terms of their rights, ensure respect for those rights and treat everyone as the same under the law. Without that, there can be no social cohesion.

Like all human phenomena, migration is a complex phenomenon that implies positive and negative aspects. We have to recognize the positive contribution migration makes to our societies, but also the problems. And we have to solve them, managing migration policies in an effective way. The only way to counter nationalists and populists,



who champion exclusion and blaming others, is to focus on the real situation and ‘keep it cool’. We must not echo the slogans of the right.

Today, more than ever, we must address this issue within a European framework. We cannot manage the movement of people in the 21st century unless we develop an international governance model for migration.

António Vitorino

Former European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs

The public’s perception of immigration is an important element of a broader problem: people have serious doubts about the sustainability of the European social model and tend to perceive migration as a burden on our welfare state rather than an asset.

Socialist governments have failed to highlight the positive contribution migrants make to the economy, fearing this would undermine their credibility on security issues. Some felt the need to prove they were as tough as the right on security issues by copying them. This was a mistake. We do not have to choose between the two: we can be very tough in insisting on the need to fight illegal migration to protect legal migration.

Populism is not new, but some mainstream centre-right parties are now abandoning their values, fearing that they can only maintain their support by copying the populists. This poses a serious threat to the sustainability of our entire political model.

Integration is a trade-off between tolerance and intolerance. We cannot tolerate migrants calling into question our key values. We cannot, for example, accept any exception to equality between men and women in the name of “cultural specificities”.

Europe’s skills and manpower shortages mean that in future, it will be competing to attract skills, not rejecting people. Are we brave enough to make this argument? I think we should be – very important values are at stake. We sometimes appear convinced that we are destined to lose on this issue and cannot take the risks which would give us a chance to win. It is time to show our determination to stand firm in championing our position on immigration.



“ Snapshots of the debate

“Instead of seeing immigration as a threat to security, as many on the right do, we need to underline the fact that it is essential to sustain our European model.”

“There is no way we can handle this issue at national level. We need to make it European. We now have the tools with the Lisbon Treaty. We need to start using them.”

“The way people integrate is to become enabled, empowered, more prosperous, able to live in a decent place. These are the issues we need to focus on.”

“The fight against all forms of discrimination is our fight: this should be the dividing line between us and the right on this issue.”

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Emir Kir

Minister of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Mobility, the Civil Service, Equal Opportunities & Administrative Simplification

We should avoid linking the words “migration, integration and identity” together in the public discourse. This is the right-wing approach; a way of stigmatizing foreigners on their soil. It is very dangerous to base identity on culture of origin, philosophy, creed or place of birth.



We also need to be very careful when talking about integration:

should we say that people who are working and paying taxes and living in our neighbourhoods need integrating simply because their skin colour is different or they have a different religion?

What we should really be focusing on is social integration: access to education, childcare, skills and jobs. We must promote equality of opportunity. Many people still face discrimination because of their skin colour. The fight against discrimination and promoting diversity must be a priority.

Let’s get back to fundamentals. The big fight for the Socialist movement has to be equality. Our priority must be to ensure equality between all workers. This should not be a debate between nationals and foreigners. Instead of seeing foreigners as a problem, we should play up the positive aspects of having them on our soil: they enrich us and are vital to our economic success.

IDENTITY AND TOLERANCE

Barcelona, 21 June 2011

The “Identity and Tolerance” Round Table focused on how best to manage migration and promote integration while countering populism and xenophobia. Impulse speakers - Gema Martin Muñoz, Director of "Casa Arabe"; Henning Meyer, Editor of Social Europe; Anna Terrón I Cusi, Secretary of State for Immigration and Emigration, Spain; and Juan Fernando López Aguilar MEP, PSOE Delegation leader, S&D Group – and participants highlighted the need to avoid misleading terminology and agreed that Social Democrats must establish a credible international civil rights program to counter right-wing populism.

Social Democrats must lead the fight against rising xenophobia, which is fuelling a racist populism that targets specific groups often simply because of who they are, rather than what they are perceived to have done.

The Arab revolution has thrown up an intriguing double standard: while the region is embarking on major democratic change, Europe is moving backwards because of growing racism and behaving in a schizophrenic fashion, supporting the Arab democratic revolution while discriminating against immigrants coming from those very same countries and exposing them to Islamophobia.

When talking about this issue, politicians must be careful to use the right terminology: talking about "tolerance" suggests a special concession from Europe, when the emphasis should instead be on dignity, mutual respect, human rights, citizenship and equality before the law, which must be a universal principle.

Europe must also establish a new relationship with migrant and minority communities. Xenophobia is fuelling racist populism and a rise in the extreme right, prejudices against one group are likely to fuel prejudices against others, and prejudice



against immigrants have little to do with reality: it is high even in countries where there are relatively few migrants, such as Poland and Finland.

Xenophobia is exacerbated when people feel threatened and have a sense of personal insecurity. Social Democrats must address these insecurities and anxieties, and break the link between this and intolerance and prejudice towards others. We need to address the concerns of those who feel left behind, rather than dismissing or ignoring them, as well as addressing migrants' concerns.

The left must be at forefront of the fight against stigmatizing and scapegoating minorities – so-called right-wing 'populism', which is an anti-European phenomenon. Social Democrats urgently need to get back to a vision of the construction of Europe in the era of globalization which allows us to manage complexity rather than running away from it and does not excite prejudice against those who are 'different'.



There are no short cuts to integration: majorities very often ignore and marginalize minorities in society until a minority is so big that it can no longer be ignored by any self-respecting democracy. That minority then becomes an important niche and the process of integration begins.

European Social Democrats should look at the American experience of the 1960s in promoting minority rights, and become the 'civil rights' party. Europe is ready for a credible integration program and promoting minority rights is not only the right thing to do on humanitarian grounds, but is also a smart strategic political move for the Social Democrats, as it will cement support for the centre-left among minority groups for the long term.

The right often does the exact opposite of what it says on migration policy. At one stage, for example, Spain experienced major immigration with a corresponding impact on the labour market, which the right accepted, but then blamed migrants for the wider impact this had on society.

Migration is not just an issue which stems from beyond Europe's borders: take, for example, the debate in Denmark, which considers itself under pressure from migration from neighbouring EU Member States, Sweden and Germany. Perceptions of 'immigrants' also vary: a second-generation Finn born and living in another EU country is likely to be accepted as a 'local', whereas a second-generation African is more likely to be regarded as an 'immigrant'.

The link between the labour market and migration is also important, because while labour markets are international, the welfare state is national. Policies should be shaped to extend social entitlement through an international framework, making it possible for individuals to take their rights with them when they move.

Free movement is now under threat at the European level, with the risk of the reintroduction of border controls, and there is an urgent need for an international model of social protection and equal rights. Otherwise, the whole of society will be damaged.

In the past, Social Democrats have tended to treat migration and integration as taboo subjects which they dared not discuss, and thus allowed the centre-right to dominate the debate. But this is an issue which can and must move up the Social Democrat agenda, both to ensure equal treatment of migrants and non-migrants before the law and to combat the populist threat.

PLENARY DEBATE II
BARCELONA CONFERENCE

A RENEWED SOCIAL DEMOCRACY TO FACE EUROPE'S CHALLENGES

Barcelona, 21 June 2011

The final plenary debate of the S&D Group Conference focused on identifying the key steps required to get Social Democracy 'back on track' across Europe. Panellists and participants discussed how best to ensure that Social Democracy becomes a decisive political force again by the time of the next European Parliament elections in 2014.



Ricardo Lagos

Former President of Chile

Europeans must press ahead with completing the construction of Europe. Otherwise there is a risk that the entire structure will “come tumbling down”.

Europe has survived by becoming ever more closely integrated, and this is the message it has sent out to the rest of the world for the past 60 years.

Europe has always been the example that others wanted to follow, because of the way it has combined democracy with a solid economy and social progress. But now all that is being called into question. The world has been turned on its head, with bankers determining the conditions in which politicians have to operate and politicians saving the banks.

Social Democrats must make it clear that we cannot leave it to the markets to resolve the problems we face. Global policies will be required to address these challenges, instead of leaving everything to the markets, and Europe has a central role to play in developing those policies.



Jacques Delors

Former President of the European Commission

Social Democracy has achieved so much in the past in Europe that some now question whether we can “bounce back”. Europe will not be true to itself unless it maintains the heritage that we Socialists have given it: everyone has a place and must feel at home in society, and every Member State has its place in the European Union.

We need to reconstruct society and move away from individualism of the right. And we need to fight against national populist reflexes: we cannot respond to global challenges by going back to the national or even local level. The only level that can work is Europe and we need to explain this to the public.

Europe is in a very fragile situation: we face a choice between survival and decline, and we are regressing as the years go by. Unless there is a miracle, we will be forced to take an institutional leap forward if we want to save the euro. We need to end the cacophony of voices, be more disciplined and have just one person speaking on behalf of Europe.



Alfred Gusenbauer

Chair of FEPS Next Left and former Chancellor of Austria

Europe is facing a deep economic crisis and the policies pursued by right-wing governments are making it worse. Their prescription – austerity and cuts – is medicine that will not only be painful, but will also make us sicker than before.

It is not all that difficult to win the next European elections: we just need to set out a Social Democrat alternative to this, and show that we can do better and build a more socially-just society – and we need to get this message across effectively.

We must not respond to the rise of nationalism and populism by giving up on Europe. There is no alternative: the answer to the key question of how best to strike a new economic balance lies at the European level. If Social Democrats give up on Europe, we will be impotent because we do not have any other answers up our sleeves: Europe gives us the only tools we have to address these issues.

But what sort of Europe? We have to make it a Social Democrat Europe - there is an indivisible link between restoring the social balance in our societies and democratizing Europe. If we do not tackle the social issues that we face on a European and global scale, we face a struggle for economic survival.

Martin Schulz MEP

President of the S&D Group

In today's globalised world, we cannot tackle a series of challenges using only the tools available at national level such as managing of financial markets, climate change and the shortage of food supplies. In the face of a more and more international economy, in particular social rights acquired at national level can increasingly only be maintained, protected and supplemented at European level.

There is still wide support for European integration, however people are opposed to Europe as it is today. Europe is being discredited because it is managed wrongly and perceived as being socially unjust. This is



what we have to change. We should offer a left-wing alternative to the austerity and spending cuts promoted by the conservative right and propose concrete measures supporting economic growth and employment.

We should be ready to deliver clear messages. As Socialists, we tend to analyse and explain things in great detail. Although within the conservative party family we see major programmatic differences, they do manage to unite behind simplistic, populist slogans.

While avoiding populist simplifications, the left should have the courage to communicate a number of clear messages: for example, that growth in the economy must also lead to growth in citizens' income; that fair wages are essential for economic recovery; and that we cannot keep cutting public services because only rich people can afford to live in a poor state.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen

President of the PES

Social Democrats need to offer voters a clear choice. People need to see a difference between our approach and that of our opponents. We must distinguish ourselves from the right. If we do that, we can win again.

The key question is not whether we need Europe – of course we do – but what kind of Europe we need. If we are to achieve the changes that we want, we must build bridges with our national parties so that they recognise this and make Europe a key element of their national programmes.

We are the ones who have a coherent, consistent and concrete macro-economic programme at the European level to get Europe back on track.

The key question that people ask themselves in life is 'can I make it?' We need to give them a roadmap that addresses their fears and gives them hope for the future – and we are doing this.

The financial transaction tax was long called for by the PES and S&D, and it has only been belatedly and reluctantly adopted by the right. We have proven that we are the ones who want real change to the global financial system. Socialists and Social Democrats must work together in Europe to make it a reality.



THE BARCELONA APPEAL

The S&D Group, meeting in Barcelona on 20 and 21 June 2011, encourages Socialists and Social Democrats across Europe to engage in a debate on how to regain political strength. We believe our values should shape the world that emerges from the crisis. By the next European elections in June 2014, we want once again to be the leading political force in Europe and create progressive majorities within the European Council, Commission and Parliament.

The conference debated four key political priorities in depth. These are questions to which, with new energy and fresh ideas arising from society, we want to respond effectively.

We, as European Socialists and Social Democrats, make the following commitments:

1. POLITICS REGAINING GROUND

We will work for a progressive and fair economic recovery that creates jobs, respects the welfare state, fosters growth and promotes high social and ecological standards.

Those who caused the crisis cannot bring us back to the path of progress. In order to lead the way out of the crisis, we have to give the market economy, especially the financial sector, a regulatory framework which is a key element for a new social-economic model. Politics should lead the markets.

2. DEFENDING PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

We will invest in managing migration and promoting integration. We will fight populism and xenophobia with all our strength. Our aim is to improve dialogue with voters and to regain the initiative in these crucial policy areas where fundamental values are at stake.

3. A HEALTHIER DEMOCRACY

We will vigorously defend democracy, citizens rights and media freedom both in Europe and around the world. As the Arab Spring has shown, people everywhere crave the empowerment that democracy brings.

European socialists and social democrats will engage in new forms of political participation and political communication, through which our democracies can be strengthened.

4. A STRONGER EUROPEAN UNION

We will promote a strong, reformed and progressive EU and we will defend Europe against xenophobic nationalists and Eurosceptics. We insist on the EU being a common area of freedom and justice.

We strongly believe that it is only through the European Union that we can meet the challenges of globalisation.

PARTICIPANTS

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|
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