



The European Union

is all about achieving more by working together rather than acting independently as individual nations. The impact on the world stage of 375 million people in 15 Member States – soon to be 450 million in 25 States – acting in unison is considerable. The daily lives of all these people are becoming so increasingly connected that decisions to tackle such issues as the environment and the economy must be made at European Union (EU) level to bear any consequence. As such, decisions at EU level are made by the European Parliament, whose members are directly elected by the citizens of Europe every five years, and by heads of governments and ministers of Member States meeting in the Council of Ministers.

The European Parliament

is comprised of 626 representatives from all 15 EU Member States. The European Parliament passes laws affecting many aspects of our daily lives, in negotiation with the Council of Ministers. Each Member is actively involved in the committee work in which policies are formulated and legislative proposals, made by the European Commission, are amended. These committees cover issues which affect us all in many ways. Members of the Socialist Group are involved in all of Parliament's committees:

- Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy
- Budgets
- Budgetary Control
- Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs
- Economic & Monetary Affairs
- Legal Affairs and the Internal Market
- Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy
- Employment and Social Affairs
- Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Fisheries
- Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism
- Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport
- Development and Co-operation
- Constitutional Affairs
- Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities
- Petitions



Our Members play an important role in the work of the Interparliamentary Delegations which regularly meet Members of other parliaments from future EU Member States or other regions of the world. Such meetings are important in making the European Parliament's voice heard on issues such as trade, human rights, and development.

The Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Social Democrats (PES Group)

is committed, as a matter of highest priority, to ensuring that the future enlarged Europe works effectively from 2004. To that end, it played a leading role in the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe, with the aim of drafting an EU Constitution and bringing forward proposals for much-needed reform of the EU's institutions. The Convention, which successfully completed its work on 10 July 2003, comprised Members of the European Parliament, national parliaments, representatives of Member State governments, the European Commission and civil society.

The PES Group often forms alliances with other groups in the European Parliament successfully to advance its objectives. It is in this way that we ensure that employment and social aspects are included in economic policies and that we contribute to promoting a healthier environment and more sustainable development. The PES Group also continues to promote progress in the building of a European area of peace, freedom, security and justice. The Group played a central important role in the drawing up of the Charter of fundamental rights which guarantees civil, political and social rights to all European citizens.

Examples of achievements

of the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists (the PES Group) across various areas of work:

Employment/Social

This area has always been a core part of our work. The PES Group was instrumental in getting an agreement concluded at EU level on basic labour standards and making business more aware of its social responsibilities. Thanks to sustained pressure from our Group there are now more measures that ensure protection of health and safety at work, including limits on working time.



Agriculture

The PES Group made sure that reform of the system would be transparent, and would lead to a comprehensive decoupling of support payments from production, and is pressing for a move towards:

- supporting farmers in their role as custodians of our countryside and wildlife habitats;
- preventing depopulation;
- supporting structural development in rural areas;
- safeguarding employment;

These goals are especially important in view of the delicate situation of world markets. At the same time, attention must be given to reducing negative effects on developing countries and ensuring that the food we eat is safe.



Economy/Growth

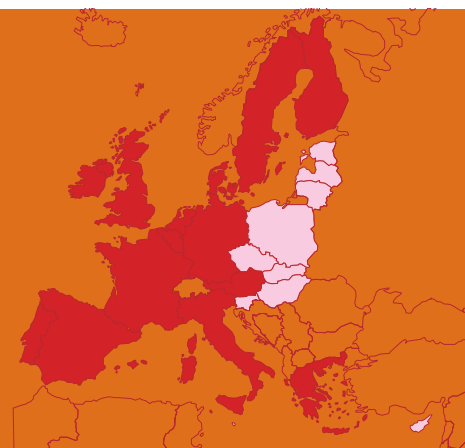
The PES Group's work in the European Parliament turned the following political priorities into concrete achievements:

- close monitoring of the successful introduction of Euro banknotes and coins, including a proactive and transparent monetary policy for the European Central Bank;
- ensuring development of the ECB monetary policy strategy towards concrete strategies for sustainable growth and employment as well as success in achieving price stability;
- promotion of a more intelligent and flexible interpretation of the Stability and Growth Pact, including the recognition of structural reforms and public and private investment initiatives;
- ensuring the architecture of the international monetary system develops towards a more regulated global financial services management;
- further harmonisation of EU competition policy, including a stronger role for the European Commission in tackling competition distortions, and more involvement of trade unions over restructuring and merger control policy;
- promotion of public and private investments through public-private partnerships in the areas of education and training, life-long learning, research, environmentally-friendly production, information and high technologies, telecommunications, energy and transport networks;
- mitigation of illegal tax 'competition' which is distorting the single market, as well as increased Europe-wide tax co-ordination;
- more openness in Europe's economic co-ordination process with regular and direct involvement of the European Parliament.



Enlargement of the EU

The PES Group has from the start actively supported EU enlargement, making a decisive contribution to the reunification of Europe. The PES Group has launched the Willy Brandt Programme (named after the former German Chancellor who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his policy towards Eastern Europe). It ensures close co-operation with sister parties in the countries set to join the EU in 2004 and a two-way flow of information with these countries. Members of the Group regularly attend events in the accession countries and trainees from these countries are able to gain practical work experience in the Group's secretariat. The aim is to ensure the smooth integration of the future MEPs and staff into the Group from the summer of 2004, and to introduce and support the Observers from the accession countries who arrived in the Parliament in May 2003.



Equal Opportunities

Socialist Members of Parliament were at the forefront of the move to include an anti-discrimination clause in the European treaties. The EU is now competent to take appropriate actions to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. This follows on from a strong record in the PES Group to secure equal opportunities for women (particularly at work) and ensuring parental leave rights for all parents. The Group also recently urged for the directive protecting pregnant women at work to be fully implemented.

Environment/Consumer Protection

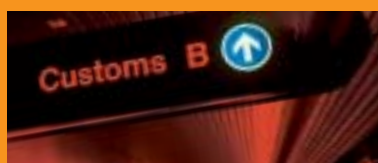
The record of our MEPs in the European Parliament clearly indicates our commitment to the wellbeing of the environment. As a result: packs of cigarettes and other tobacco products now feature illustrated health warnings; a Europe-wide ban on testing and marketing of animal-tested products is in place; calls were made at the World Sustainable Development Summit for clear environmental targets and action as well as the implementation of the Kyoto protocol to cut greenhouse gases; the European Food Safety Agency will be independent and open in its work. On consumer protection, the Group backed the ban on dangerous chemicals in children's toys and promoted greater food safety measures.



Foreign Affairs

Socialists are by nature internationalists. We actively support measures to provide the EU with greater weight in international affairs so as to promote its values, human rights, and security around the world. The PES Group believes that European initiatives should be based on a broad concept of security, founded on co-operation, sustainable and democratic security. Openness and accountability will be key in this area in the future. Our successes to date in this field include:

- the creation of the Stability Pact for the Balkans and Agreements with Balkan countries to promote stability and bring these countries closer to the EU (as a result, Croatia recently applied for EU membership);
- strengthening the EU's relations with Mediterranean countries by promoting the Barcelona process and fostering social, political and economic development in all Mediterranean countries;
- developing a new strategy for the Wider Europe which will involve all countries neighbouring the enlarged EU so as to avoid new economic, social and political divisions;
- continued support for Human Rights in the resolutions adopted by the Parliament and the inclusion of funds in the EU's budget for the promotion of Human Rights.





Freedom/Security/Justice

One of the PES Group's top priorities is to guarantee the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms. To this effect we support the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Treaties as well as more rights linked to European citizenship. Other priorities include:

- the fight against all forms of discrimination;
- the freedom of movement inside the EU for all citizens;
- a common asylum and immigration policy;
- maintaining a balance between security and safeguarding citizens' rights including personal data protection.

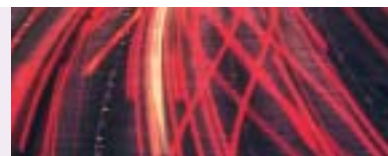
Achievements of the Group in the areas of freedom and justice:

- greater openness and transparency in public access to documents;
- introducing, applying and monitoring of data protection rules in EU bodies and institutions,
- combating racism and xenophobia through clearer definitions of offences, wider scope in aggravating circumstances for racist offences and strengthened provisions against racism on the Internet;
- the creation of the Eurojust – Judicial co-ordination unit to improve the co-ordination of investigations and prosecutions through co-operation between national authorities;
- fighting terrorism through the drafting of a common definition of terrorism and harmonisation of sanctions – a major step forward in forging a common EU anti- terrorism regime;
- creation of a European Arrest Warrant, alleviating the need for extradition as decisions will be mutually recognised across the EU;
- enabling more categories of people to have the right to family reunification, improved status and rights of long-term residents, greater harmonisation of rules covering residence permits for those in paid employment and self-employed economic activity, and drawing up a clearer definition, objective criteria and mechanisms for determining which Member State is responsible for an asylum application.

Furthermore, the Group believes that Europol should be subject to the democratic control of the European Parliament, that there should be stronger data protection as well as better means for Europol to fight organised crime and terrorism.

Transport

The central challenge of transport policy is the achievement of a balance between the need for mobility and high levels of safety and environmental protection. We have been active in shaping the directive on maritime safety and promoting the Maritime Safety Agency. We also strongly support pedestrian and road safety through controls of working time in the transport sector and strengthened European rules on limits of alcohol levels in the blood of drivers. The PES Group has promoted the creation of a European Rail Safety Agency and a European Rail Freight Network as well greater interoperability between national railway networks. As for air travel, the Group has adamantly advocated increased aviation safety, the rights of air passengers, and the creation of a single European sky or air traffic control area. Furthermore, we pressed for development of an Ecopoints system to be developed to reduce traffic congestion, and finally, we have worked to defend the interests of all consumers in the Postal Services Directive.



... putting you and your concerns first

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