

**PES**

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DEMOCRATS

# **///EUROPE ///IN THE LEAD**

Progressive solutions to  
global challenges

Resolution adopted by the  
PES Congress in Málaga,  
on 10 November 2023

## **I. PROTECTING CITIZENS THROUGH TRANSITIONS**

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2. Fighting unemployment, labour market exploitation, poverty and social exclusion
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Improving the life of citizens has always been the priority of our political movement. It has been our goal in the current European mandate and will always remain our main objective. A few months before the next European elections, **we, the Party of European Socialists, want to reiterate our determination to work for bettering the lives of European citizens.** Since the last European elections, Europe and the world have undergone massive crises and changes. Through the Covid-19 pandemic, through the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and the ensuing rise in energy prices and the cost of living, the uncertainties regarding supply chains, through the ever more visible impact of climate change and biodiversity loss, through the erosion of democracies, through demographic change, our members have fought to support citizens. These crises made the existing inequalities between men and women more visible and deepened them, especially the gender care gap and the gender income gap.

Our work is far from over and will require the same determination to ensure a future of shared prosperity, equality, and stability. **We have never shied away from bringing about the necessary progressive changes: for us politics is about framing transformations and planning the future. We have one objective: ensuring that no one is left behind.** We want to ensure that everyone can live with respect, dignity and security: empowering everyone to choose their life, their career, and their place in society. Everyone should be treated equally, be able to develop their full potential and live in dignity. We will continue to provide real solutions to the needs of the people, not false narratives, or simplistic fixes. The Party of European Socialists will continue working to provide common solutions to our common problems.

In the current global context, the European elections of 2024 will be crucial in 3 major ways:

- **First**, to determine if, and crucially how, our societies will manage the transformations of today's society.
- **Second**, to put democracy, the rule of law, and gender equality at the very heart of the European Union.
- **And third**, to determine the position and the role of the EU in today's and tomorrow's world.

As Party of European Socialists, we want to focus on those priorities by **building a future of solidarity, cohesion, and equality.** To achieve this, we need a strong parliamentary group of our family in the next European Parliament to push forward a progressive agenda and to counter the worrying and dangerous alliances between conservatives, liberals, and far-right parties in different Member States. That is the best guarantee to stay on the path toward a future that is social, sustainable and feminist; a future that respects the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, intergenerational solidarity and diversity, a future that uplifts and empowers our democracy and societies and all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.

We, socialists and democrats, will take the decisions needed to solve the problems of our time, to protect democracy, protecting our citizens throughout the transitions occurring in our world, and uphold the essential role of the EU on the world stage, with the following 25 objectives.



# I. PROTECTING CITIZENS THROUGH TRANSITIONS

The world is always changing. However, the pace and depth of the transitions that our societies are going through is much faster than it has been in decades. The climate emergency and the threat to nature and biodiversity are posing existential threats and challenges that humanity has not faced in centuries. Demographic change challenges our labour markets and social security systems. The link between civilisation and digital technologies has become a reality that changes the way we work, the way we relate, and the possibilities and dangers of our future. **Our political family has always been about progress, about bringing about positive change for our citizens. For this to happen in a way that is beneficial to the many and not only a small elite requires it to be framed by politics and the polity.** All transitions need a gender perspective. Employment rates are back to pre-2008 levels, yet many still live in precarious conditions. We remain convinced that neoliberal politics are politics that can ultimately only harm the workers, the middle classes, as well as the vast majority of European citizens, and that the politics of the far right lead to the outright destruction of social welfare systems, healthcare, education and public services. **The cost of living is increasing, and we need to protect people's purchasing power so that everyone can live a life in dignity.** We need new policies and better decision-making, but we also need to remain true to our fundamental values. **Worker rights, quality jobs with good wages, social justice, solidarity and equality were the foundations on which we built our societies,** and they must remain the foundations on which we construct our future. To accompany our societies through these many transitions, we want to focus on the following priorities:

## 1. QUALITY JOBS FOR ALL

Our family has put social issues at the heart of European policymaking. The EU started implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, endorsed a Social Action Plan, and strengthened the links between its social, climate and economic agendas. This mitigated the impact on citizens of the various crises the EU faced over the past years. Yet strengthening social policies and combating inequalities is still needed more than ever. **We will continue to put people's welfare and social justice at the centre of our political action.**

We want to ensure quality jobs for all, regardless of their age or gender. The green and digital transitions are radically transforming our economies: new jobs are created, and others are disappearing. **Strong investment in green and digital technologies, in the circular economy as well as in other more traditional sectors such as care, health-care, transport and housing renovation can lead to great job creation.**

These jobs must be as socially sustainable as they are environmentally sustainable, with decent working conditions, fair wages, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, and a fair labour mobility. Our fight for fair minimum wages, for stronger collective bargaining, for the rights of platform workers, or for pay transparency pave the way. **Our next battles are the regulation of artificial intelligence and algorithms in the workplace, closing the gender pay and pension gap, the better prevention of psychological and mental health risks, an EU strategy on realising the 'Vision Zero' approach to work-related deaths in the EU and ensuring the quality of traineeships across the EU.** Ensuring good conditions everywhere will also help reduce labour shortages in certain sectors where safety at work is a particular issue.

Working weeks are still too long for some, irregular schedules compete with family life, and technologies blur the line between professional and private time. **We are fighting for workers' right to disconnect, and we support a reduction of working time while maintaining the same salary level.** Experiments of 4-day workweeks have shown their positive impact. We will keep fighting to improve citizens' wellbeing, enabling workers to better combine their professional and private obligations and reach an

equal share of unpaid domestic and care work between men and women. One in three women in the EU do not have a paid job and women do the large majority of part-time work in the Union.

When Covid-19 hit, we secured the creation of the SURE instrument, which allowed governments to mitigate unemployment risk and protect workers from redundancies. **As SURE proved successful, we want to further develop it as a permanent tool for governments to address future crises.** With changing labour markets in the EU, we push for an ambitious strategy on education and training, ensuring citizens and workers acquire the necessary digital skills and AI literacy. A digital, sustainable and circular economy needs a well-trained and technically skilled workforce. **We will create an EU Upskill Programme in various areas of information and communication technology and the green transition, ensuring that everyone can have the required skills for the labour market and sectors with shortages.** Enhancing workers' competences will prepare them for the new labour market and help them move from sectors in decline to new activities that meet the needs of the twin transition and ensure a fair sharing of their benefits. As new digital jobs will be created, we have to take action for women to pursue careers in STEM, an area still dominated by men. We call for an ambitious investment in high-quality and affordable education for all, including through the creation of the European Education Area by 2025, while ensuring the qualifications and skills needed for a just and sustainable transition. **These upskilling efforts must be rewarded with better jobs and higher wages.** During Covid-19, we proved that we could safeguard workers from losing their jobs, we will show the same determination for the sectors phased out in the transition.

We stand by trade unions at both national and European level, in full respect of their autonomy. To encourage collective bargaining in the Member States also means that Union policy and legislation must allow room for independent and equal national social partners to negotiate collective agreements. **We are convinced that reaching the objective of 80% collective bargaining coverage by 2030 will guarantee better working conditions, better wages, and a better functioning EU economy.** Social dumping, work-related crime and the exploitation of workers have no place in the European labour market. They undermine wages, workers' rights and our

fight for decent work for all. Considering their strong cross-border dimension, they require a European answer.

#### KEY PROPOSALS

- We want **the European Pillar of Social Rights to continue guiding the next European Commission**. We will fight for the full implementation of all 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its inclusion in the EU institutional framework.
- **Adopt an ambitious Platform Work Directive** by the end of the legislative mandate, ban zero-hour contracts and fake self-employment in all sectors and fight all types of precarious work.
- **Improve working conditions for essential workers and increase investment**, especially in the care sector, to enhance the profession's attractiveness to men and women, ease labour shortages, alleviate recruitment problems and promote the retention and wellbeing of staff.
- Ensure workers have the **right to access upskilling, reskilling and life-long learning** during paid working time.
- **Regulate artificial intelligence and the use of algorithm in the workplace**, enshrining the **human-in-control** principle in EU law, and ensuring an adequate level of AI literacy within the workforce.
- **Close the gender employment, pay and pension gaps** by 2030 by introducing binding targets per Member State and age group.
- **Make work safe through a directive on psychosocial risks at work**, including mental health risks, a broader directive on work related musculoskeletal disorders and rheumatic diseases and a 'Vision Zero' approach to work-related deaths in the EU.
- **Defend workers' right to disconnect and push forward a reduction of working time keeping the same salary level** via collective bargaining or legislation.
- **Strengthen and defend workers' and trade union rights**, including union access to workplaces, the right to organise, the right to bargain collectively, and the right to strike.
- **Strengthen the role of social dialogue and independent trade unions**, nationally and at European level, increasing collective bargaining coverage to 80%, in line with the Adequate Minimum Wages Directive and incentivising collective bargaining by allowing trade unions in well-functioning national self-regulatory systems room to negotiate collective agreements. Trade unions' role in the management of the just transition must also be reinforced by strengthening democracy at work both at the national and European level.
- **Revise the European Works Council Directive** to strengthen information and consultation of workers.
- **Revise the Directive on Temporary Agency Work** to prevent exploitation throughout the subcontracting chains and ensure equal treatment between workers.
- **Continue to push for a fair workers' mobility, preserving work-life balance** as well as avoiding brain drain and labour shortages in their country of origin.
- **Strengthen the mandate of the European Labour Authority** with investigative and sanctioning powers to combat social dumping and labour exploitation effectively.
- **Limit subcontracting** and ensure joint and several liability throughout the supply chain.
- **Support the creation of a real European Education Area by 2025**, to ensure quality, accessible and affordable education across EU, and to establish a common European framework for the recognition, validation and accreditation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education.
- **All internships, traineeships and apprenticeships must be paid**, and exploitative practices prevented.
- Support a **smooth transition from work to retirement** at the end of one's career.
- **Better reflect wage distribution and wage inequalities in the European Semester** as a step towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal 10 to reduce inequality within and amongst countries.

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## **2. FIGHTING UNEMPLOYMENT, LABOUR MARKET EXPLOITATION, POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Our fight for jobs also means ensuring that everyone has the possibility to work. We will continue to combat unemployment and will not leave the long-term unemployed behind when there is so much useful social and environmental work to be done. Guidance, trainings, re-skilling and upskilling must be made available to ensure that everyone can have the skills required for the modern labour market. The PES is also fighting to reconnect the long-term unemployed with meaningful work through Local Employment Guarantees.

**Access to adequate social security benefits for all workers and for the self-employed is a pre-condition to prevent in-work poverty** and labour market segmentation and to foster a level-playing field in the Single Market. Yet, social-security systems in Europe are too often designed for workers with a full-time contract of indefinite duration and ill-equipped to protect vulnerable groups. This has bad consequences - not only for those individuals but also for the functioning of labour markets, the stabilisation capacity of welfare systems and their funding.

The prevailing levels of inequality the EU faces call for public action. **Our political family is determined to bring wellbeing to all our citizens, through well-funded public services and strong welfare states.** We want the EU and its Member States to work towards the complete eradication of poverty in Europe with the introduction of a European Anti-Poverty Law. As a first step, we are now pushing for robust national minimum income schemes as the best way to provide a safety net that can protect people against suffering and deprivation. We will fight the non-take up of social benefits by promoting automatic payments.

#### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Introduce a European Anti-Poverty Strategy**, paying particular attention to the gender dimension, and monitor it through the European Semester.
- Boost the relevance of the **EU Platform for Combatting Homelessness** and secure an operating budget.
- Support the S&D-driven call of the European Parliament to **allocate at least EUR 20 billion of funding to the European Child Guarantee** and push for more ambitious child poverty reduction targets.
- We want a **European complementary unemployment reinsurance mechanism**, to support Member States in the event of a strong increase in unemployment.
- Build on the **success of SURE to make it a permanent instrument** to be prepared for future crises.
- Fight inequalities through **quality public services and investment strategies**.
- Secure funding for **Local Employment Guarantees**, building on the success of the Youth Employment Initiative.
- Continue to **fight for increased social investment** and improve access to social protection for workers and the self-employed.
- Launch a concerted effort to **combat work-related crime on the European labour market**, including initiatives to close legal loopholes, strengthening enforcement of existing legislation and strengthening sanctions linked with the infringement of labour market legislation aiming to protect workers.
- **Ensure that access to European funding is linked to social conditionalities**, including clear collective bargaining conditions, and that companies that do not comply with labour rights are excluded from it.
- Minimum income is often the last social safety net. **National minimum income schemes must be strengthened across the EU** in order to improve the lives of citizens throughout the continent.
- Develop **common minimum standards for workers social security benefits** with a focus on duration, adequacy, and accessibility of the benefits.
- Continue working on the transparency, the simplification of administrative requirements and procedures, clarity of rules, **transferability of rights and entitlements and provision of social security systems**.
- Ensure better traceability of citizens' social security rights to fight fraud and exploitative labour practices. Cross-border enforcement should be further improved for better transparency and coverage, with true digital tools such as a **European Social Security Pass and a European Labour Card**.
- Support the **inclusion of a Social Progress Protocol in the EU Treaties** to guarantee that workers, trade union and social rights take precedence over economic freedoms in the event of conflict.
- **Rebalance the European Semester by implementing the Social Convergence Framework**.
- Adopt a **Sustainable Development and Social Progress Pact**.



### 3. ENSURING SECURE, SUSTAINABLE AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY FOR ALL

**Ensuring energy security and affordability for all is imperative for our political family.** At the last PES Congress in Berlin in 2022, we adopted a **European Pact for Affordable Energy and Social Cohesion** to protect European citizens' purchasing power. In an exceptional time, we successfully spearheaded the agreements on keeping energy prices low with a cap on market revenues from renewables, nuclear and lignite, a windfall tax on fossil fuels, a price cap on gas and other energy sources, and a new liquified natural gas (LNG) price benchmark to curb market volatility. The EU has now set up a mechanism for joint gas procurement and has updated state aid rules to assist industries and society.

We are fighting for a **stronger and strategically independent Energy Union** that ensures security of supply, sustainability, and Europe's wellbeing. While the EU reduces reliance on Russian gas with REPowerEU, we call for accelerating the complete phase out of fossil fuel usage, the rollout of renewable and low-carbon sources, and the production of renewable hydrogen in line with strategic independence energy needs. Europe needs to invest in comprehensive grid and storage infrastructure, in new renewable energy production capacities, in interconnections, in ensuring the fast deployment of renewable sources for energy generation and transmission, in increasing energy efficiency, and in promoting structural changes to reduce energy demand. **We call for the regulation of the energy market to prevent artificial wholesale and retail price spikes, and to ensure greater price predictability, stability, and affordability.** To embrace this transformation towards carbon neutrality, Europe needs massive investments in public digital infrastructure and innovative technology, to become a digital leader, retain its global competitiveness, and unlock huge benefits in terms of efficiency and productivity, thereby reducing emissions.

#### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Intensify investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency** and aim for a 100% renewable or low-carbon energy mix to ensure sustainable energy independence and energy affordability.
- Accelerate the **roll out of renewable-based power and renewable energy production chain capacities**, including renewable hydrogen to completely phase out fossil fuels, and address strategic energy independence needs.
- Focus on the **development of clean technologies**, including the production of renewable hydrogen, to ensure that Europe is the leading force in green energy production and the maintenance of a competitive industry with quality jobs.
- **Ensure energy cohesion**, and an efficient energy system by investing in sufficient renewable energy production, in EU strategic infrastructure and a pan-European energy grid and storage facility that ensures uninterrupted energy supply throughout Europe.
- **Protect our strategic infrastructure**, including our energy grid, against foreign interference.
- Push for the **progressive reform of the wholesale electricity market** to ensure that affordable energy is provided, developing a long-term strategy to ensure price predictability and affordability while incentivising investment in renewable sources.
- **Protect the most vulnerable**, develop a strategy against energy poverty, ensure social and territorial cohesion, and consider energy a social service of general interest.

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## 4. THE GREEN DEAL FOR A JUST TRANSITION TO END CLIMATE CHANGE

The green transition must be accomplished as fast as possible. **Our ultimate targets are to reach carbon neutrality no later than 2050 and keep global warming to 1.5°C.** This must be underpinned by a just transition that protects workers and the most vulnerable and takes into account the gender perspective. **The PES continues to fight for a transition that prioritizes the wellbeing of society and goes hand in hand with our economic interests. The Green Deal must remain Europe's compass in this fair and sustainable transformation.** It is about providing support so that no one is penalized or left behind, but without any pauses in the ecological transition that must move forward. With instruments such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility we aim to ensure that there are sufficient investments to underpin the energy reforms that will help build an alliance between environmental and social progress.

Socialists and democrats are the architects of political breakthroughs such as the European Green Deal, the Climate Law, and the Fit for 55 package. With the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, we achieved a price on carbon pollution and addressed carbon leakages. We pushed for an emission reduction system that includes more sectors and evens the playing field with the second Emissions Trading System. With RefueLEU Aviation, AFIR, and FuelEU Maritime, we set binding targets to accelerate the decarbonisation of all modes of transport and boost the uptake of sustainable fuels. We pushed for green mobility, aiming to limit emissions from vehicles, make the air cleaner, urge greater innovation in clean technologies and ensure territorial justice. We pushed for the protection and restoration of our forests. **By framing the sustainable transition with the Green Deal, we can achieve dynamic economies, environmental protection, and a more social Europe.** We will ensure that carbon emissions are reduced by at least 55% by 2030 and call for the reduction of short-lived emissions, such as methane. We will improve quality of life in Europe and push to create the right conditions for other countries to join us on a journey towards a greener future.

**The fight against climate change is also a fight against inequality.** With instruments such as the Renovation Wave, the Just Transition Fund, the Social Climate Fund, and the good implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds, we aim to make sure that all citizens benefit from a green and sustainable future. The implementation of the One Health approach should interlink human health, animal health and the environment. Animal welfare needs to be an integral part of a society of solidarity and a healthy planet.

**The European Green Deal has revolutionized our present and future. It ensures that Europe leads the green transition while strengthening its social model and providing more and better jobs throughout all EU regions,** and a better environment in which citizens can enjoy better health.

It also sets a strong example in international fora such as the UN COP. Europe has been leading the discussions to keep climate targets in place. Our political family will keep aiming to maintain the ambition on climate mitigation and adaptation first and foremost at this year's COP28. The impact of climate change is already being felt and will only get worse with time. The increasing number and scale of the natural disasters that have hit many in Europe and the world this year – such as floods, droughts, storms and forest fires – are a stark confirmation of the need to act now, without any breaks. In Europe, we will continue spearheading this transition process. **We call for a new Investment Plan for the Green and Digital Transitions,** to bring forward legislation that ensures positive societal changes, and greater equality, including gender equality.





## KEY PROPOSALS

- Ensure that we **reach climate neutrality at the latest by 2050** and reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, as well as propose ambitious EU-wide post-2030 intermediate targets for 2035 and 2040 in accordance with the European Climate Law and scientific recommendations. Our commitment to the EU becoming climate neutral in line with the international commitments of the Paris Agreement should be reflected in a future revision of the EU treaties.
- Maintain international **pressure at the UNFCCC to ensure that global warming is kept at 1.5°C**.
- Stress the need to accelerate climate action in all sectors of the EU economy, including transport and land sectors, enhance ambition and promote a green and just transition, contribute to emissions reduction, push for affordable, inclusive, safe and green mobility, railway usage and infrastructure, as well as sustainable, aviation and maritime fuel.
- **Ensure that the green transition leaves no one behind and is socially fair**, placing particular attention to most vulnerable groups, SMEs and territorial cohesion, with instruments such as the Just Transition Fund and the Social Climate Fund.

- **Establish green social protection schemes** with EU support to cover people against the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and the impact of this transition on jobs and living conditions.
- Ensure a **shift to a circular economy** by incentivising more sustainable modes of production and consumption.
- **Preserve precious raw materials and reduce waste** through the sustainable use of raw materials.
- Ensure the **adequate support of vulnerable groups** and areas directly impacted by climate change and biodiversity loss with early prevention, adaptation, and financial assistance mechanisms. Focus on fast rehabilitation services for people and areas already hit by forest fires, floods and other natural disasters and step up international efforts for nature restoration.
- **Call for an Investment Plan for the Green and Digital Transitions** that leverages the positive interaction between digitalisation and the fight against climate change.
- **Ensuring that consumers actively participate in the green transition**, through the adoption of Empowering consumers in the green transition and right to repair proposals.

## 5. PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY

The EU's transition towards sustainability must also be a path towards restoring biodiversity, including with the full implementation of the Nature Restoration Law. **The biodiversity and climate crises are interlinked.** Overuse of land and sea, the direct exploitation of organisms, pollution and invasive alien species have contributed to the severe degradation of biodiversity and the ecosystem. Europe's forests, air, sea, water, soil, pollinators and animal species must be protected and restored, leading to healthy environments for our citizens, better health, resilient ecosystems and liveable cities. **There should be zero tolerance for environmental crimes that reduce quality of life in the long term.** Strict sanctions must be imposed on polluting companies that affect human health and the environment. A healthy seabed and soil can capture more carbon, assist in achieving climate neutrality goals, and produce food. European agriculture, fishing and aquaculture must become green and sustainable, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy. More funds need to flow towards small and medium sized farms and rewards should be given to those who meet environmental and biodiversity criteria. We will fight for the reduction in the use of pesticides, the reduction of plastic and chemical pollution, and the affordability of organic food. **Access to clean air, water and food are human rights.** Access to water is the challenge of the century. We must promote water efficiency, the resilience of water sources and water storage and the development of distribution infrastructures. Society must learn to adapt to better water management practices in order to ensure universal access to water and food security. European solidarity and investments are needed to prevent water scarcity and ensure continuous water supply across the EU. The way forward is to make responsible use of our resources and materials, shifting to a circular economy, as described by the Circular Economy Action Plan. In our effort to restore and protect the environment we commit to follow a science-based approach and be in constant dialogue with social partners, civil society and local communities.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Restore Europe's forests, air, sea, water, and soil,** reduce deforestation through sustainable forestry and ensure the protection of natural reserves.
- **Strengthen the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** to ensure that EU agricultural policy contributes to climate transition and increased biodiversity to secure sustainable, long-term food production within the EU.
- **Strengthen animal welfare standards** through the adoption of strong and ambitious legislation.
- **Provide incentives for carbon capture, water filtration and clean air provision.**
- **Reduce the amount of microplastics** released in sea, air, and soil and ensure a complete ban on intentionally added microplastics in products.
- **Promote the use of environmentally friendly pest control systems** and reduce the use of chemical pesticides. Member States should set targets to reduce their pesticide use and ensure that the EU wide targets are achieved, while taking into account national specificities.
- **Promote the use of more sustainable and environmentally friendly fishing practices.**
- **Safeguard food security** by ensuring the resilience of our sustainable food production and consumption, restoring nature, and ensuring the affordability of healthy food, including organic food.

## 6. AN ECONOMICALLY RESILIENT EUROPE THAT IS READY TO FACE CRISES

Public investments at the local, regional, national and EU level, supported by European resources, are key to a resilient, sustainable, and fair economy. In addition to this, for several years, **we defended an update of the EU's economic governance framework to better reflect the investment needs of our societies, with more credible targets, duties, and obligations to avoid social regression.** In the context of the green and digital transition, we must take necessary measures to ensure that all resources in the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Structural Funds are accessed effectively. At the height of the pandemic, we adapted to the impact that this extraordinary crisis had on public finances. We pushed for the activation of the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact, allowing us to overcome the Covid-19 crisis successfully. This temporary option must be kept on the table for exceptional crises in the future. Mechanisms to account for the assistance given to Ukraine in the new economic governance framework should be explored.

The proposals of the European Commission open the way for a progressive economic governance reform. We must use this opportunity and the ongoing legislative process to reinforce the capacity for green and social spending, promoting shared prosperity, reducing social and gender inequalities and ensuring no return to austerity, better democratic accountability and greater coordination at European level, while strengthening our commitment to make public finances social and economically sustainable. The reform of the economic governance rules must ensure that they are effective on the ground.

**Next Generation EU, the biggest investment plan Europe has ever had, is one of the greatest successes of social-democratic-inspired European economic policy,** of which we are proud. In addition to making full use of existing instruments, we continue to stand for a permanent long-term EU investment capacity with real European solidarity. Building on the success of SURE, developing it as a permanent tool would permit countries to address future emergencies by protecting workers from economic instability. The European Semester must be complemented with instruments to address social imbalances by introducing a Social Convergence Framework.

We support the completion of the Banking Union to protect taxpayers from bankers' mistakes. We also support the full implementation of the Basel standards for banks, to ensure the resilience of EU banks against domestic and international turmoil. The shadow banking sector should be subject to the same levels of regulatory standards and oversight. Cryptocurrencies are even more unstable and predatory than traditional finance and must be subjected to the same regulatory and anti-money-laundering oversight.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Reform the EU economic governance framework to stimulate growth and resilience-enhancing public investment** to prevent fiscal-structural plans from causing social regression, with a social "do no significant harm" clause.
- **Build on the success of SURE to make it a permanent instrument** to be prepared for future crises.
- **Fully integrate the Social Convergence Framework** as part of the European Semester, establishing social objectives at the same level as economic and environmental ones.
- **Complete the Banking Union** including the third pillar, and advance the Capital Markets Union.



## 7. AN ECONOMY AT THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE

**We want to promote the European model of social market economy.** We want to create an environment that supports SMEs, cooperatives, innovative start-ups, and industries that contribute positively to transitions as a key component of the European economic fabric, with an indicative target of one million new start-ups by 2027, fostering women's entrepreneurship in particular. We remain committed to the implementation of the Commission's Social Economy Action Plan, which will adapt the regulatory framework and will raise the visibility of social economy enterprises while creating an environment for the social economy to thrive, including the necessary access to markets and finance.

Private finance and corporations must serve our public objectives. We need to complete the Capital Markets Union to mobilise private capital, but we must also introduce clear green standards and reporting requirements to prevent greenwashing. The CMU project should benefit everyone, including ensuring good outcomes for ordinary citizens and their savings. The European Commission and European system of financial supervision, including the European Central Bank must act jointly to reorient the financial system towards enabling our transition goals, making it more resilient in the face of climate risks.

**Companies must be held accountable for their activities throughout their value chains.** The burden of proof should be placed on them to demonstrate that they are in full compliance with international standards.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- *Increase measures to **steer private investment towards the green transition**, ensuring that its implementation does not deepen inequalities between regions.*
- **Set common targets** for public bodies, enterprises, fund managers and pension funds **to divest from fossil fuels and invest in green assets.**
- **Combat greenwashing** by introducing EU-wide minimum standards for sustainable investment funds, to avoid investment funds being labelled as green while still funding unsustainable economic activities.
- **Strengthen the mandate of the European system of financial supervision** to make the financial system contribute to the transition and strengthen its resilience to climate risks.
- **Adopt an ambitious Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and Forced Labour Regulation** to make European companies accountable for the social, human rights and environmental conditions throughout their value chains.
- **Implement the Social Economy Action Plan.**
- **Adopt social and gender equality conditionality in public procurement.**
- **Support women in the economy**, in particular by supporting women's entrepreneurship and start-ups.



## 8. TAX JUSTICE: ENSURE ALL INDIVIDUALS AND CORPORATIONS PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE

**Fair and progressive taxation is essential both to the functioning of welfare states and to tackling inequalities. Those who earn more, should also contribute more to the common good – not the other way around.** In order to make that happen, Member States must coordinate and cooperate more on tax matters and financial transparency, ensuring the proper implementation of the public country by country reporting directive. Our governments secured the OECD/G20 deal on minimum corporate taxation, and we will pursue the global fight for tax justice, so that wealthy corporations and individuals cannot evade, avoid, or optimize their tax bills. This deal enjoyed overwhelming support among Member States, yet the EU implementation was delayed by Member States that raised unrelated disputes. To prevent blockages by Member States and ensure a smoother implementation, several measures must be considered, including, but not limited to, a move towards the extension of qualified majority voting in certain tax matters. **Many corporations have taken advantage of the energy price instability to increase profits margins; these should be subjected to additional taxation.** We need to put a stop to this greedflation, whereby corporate profits soar and price hikes are pushed towards consumers, which diminishes people's purchasing power. According to the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, **rising corporate profits account for almost half the increase in Europe's inflation over the past two years** as companies increased prices by more than spiking costs of imported energy. In the EU, the top 1% own 25% of all wealth.

**Extremely wealthy individuals should also be made to contribute through additional taxation and by ensuring that income from capital is not taxed less than wages.** Current taxation policies reinforce gender biases, inequality, and traditional gender roles. While most Member States have abolished tax regulations that explicitly differentiate between men and women, implicit biases are still prevalent. Taxation policies need to be made gender sensitive.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- Support the **implementation of a coordinated taxation of capital gains** in the EU Member States.
- Distribute wealth fairly by **taxing the ultrarich with an EU initiative to support the implementation of a wealth tax** and a tax on top earned income in Member States.
- Support the European Parliament in calling for the European Commission to **assess the feasibility of an excise duty on the repurchase of shares** by corporations.
- Address the profit-driven inflation identified by the IMF and the ECB by continuing to **support the European framework to recover windfall corporate profits**, especially on the energy market.
- Further **halt tax competition by harmonising corporate income tax bases** in line with the ongoing OECD/G20 process, so companies cease to exploit different EU legislations to minimise their tax bills.
- Continue the efforts to **establish a Financial Transactions Tax by relaunching the enhanced cooperation** process to achieve an FTT in as many Member States as possible.
- If a global deal cannot be reached on reallocating taxing rights, **implement a Single Market Levy on multinationals operating in the EU.**
- **Ensure that the application of sales taxes does not disproportionately affect women**, notably those on menstrual products.
- Europe needs a **common financial registry and a Financial Intelligence Unit to better tackle illicit financial flows** by improving monitoring, accountability and law enforcement. We support the Unshell Directive, which will put an end to corporate entities that serve only to avoid tax.
- **Introduce obligations for firms enabling tax avoidance.** We must go further by introducing penalties for intermediaries making profits by helping large corporations to avoid taxes.
- Move towards the **extension of qualified majority voting in specific tax matters.**

## 9. QUALITY OF LIFE IN CITIES AND REGIONS

Changes need to be made at global, continental and Member State level, but many must take place regionally and locally for them to be successful. **The question of social justice and territorial cohesion is inseparable from that of a fair transition.** We need long-term solutions to ensure that this transition offers industrial modernization, promotes social cohesion, averts rural delocalization, addresses depopulation and talent drain, and encourages an active and healthy lifestyle. **This transition can strengthen the wellbeing and longevity of generations to come.** Everyone deserves a good quality of life, irrespective of their background, age, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.

**The EU should demonstrate solidarity through a strong cohesion policy, to support regions, cities, coastal, outermost, sparsely populated and rural areas in the sustainable transformation of our societies.** We must engage in the debate on the future of cohesion policy, building on the progressive principles of cohesion. **We must develop sustainable and affordable solutions for all regarding urban planning, public transport, housing, including social housing, care services, buildings, energy and public spaces.** Citizens need to be able to make informed choices to actively contribute to tackling climate change and our environmental crisis. Tools such as the New Urban Mobility Framework, Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition and the Right to Repair Initiatives, give citizens the opportunity to become active actors and beneficiaries of the green transition. Furthermore, initiatives such as the Urban Agenda for the EU and the European Territorial Agenda may provide useful guidance in the implementation of funds at local and regional level.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- *Simplify and **flexibilise rules and procedures of Cohesion Policy**, strengthen the place-based approach, keep a long-term perspective of investments as well as create synergies with and draw lessons from other existing instruments and funds.*
- *Ensure **Member States meet the requirements to receive funding.***

- ***Provide the funding allocated to Cohesion Policy.** To ensure ongoing implementation of projects and programmes for a cohesive Europe in the context of rising costs, an inflation compensation should be explored.*
- *Cohesion Policy is one of the most successful policies of the EU. It promotes territorial convergence, social and economic development, equality, and benefits its citizens, its regions, its Member States, and the Union as a whole. It is the most visible manifestation of European solidarity. **The next Multiannual Financial Framework must ensure a strong Cohesion Policy**, while promoting measures to support the efficient and full use of the available funds.*
- ***Strengthen the multilevel governance model** through increased involvement of local and regional actors in decision-making processes, as they are the government level closest to the citizens.*
- ***Support the development of cross-border administrative cooperation** and the infrastructure that goes with it, with the funding of INTERREG.*
- ***Introduce an Erasmus+ for civil servants of the EU Member States.***
- *To sustain a rich cultural sector is a key element in the welfare of citizens and **ensuring European cultural diversity as a fundamental EU value.***
- *Support measures that **empower and strengthen the role of local and regional authorities** in delivering the policies that better the lives of all citizens and create cohesion between cities and communities.*
- ***Introduce new dimensions to the concept of “rural proofing”**, such as demographic impact, job creation, educational framework and gender impact to better take into account the reality of rural areas in EU policies.*
- ***Assist regional and local authorities** in the drive to strengthen and further develop **sustainable and affordable public transport**, exploring free travel for target groups such as the young, the elderly and low-income families.*



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## 10. AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL

**Our political family is fighting homelessness and fiercely stands up for the right to housing.** For too many Europeans, finding an affordable and decent place to live is a dire problem. **We call for a European Plan for Affordable Housing** that would support the construction of new affordable housing and the renovation of the existing housing stock. We further advocate for reforms of the state aid rules to allow national and local authorities to invest more in public housing. We must protect tenants and promote the principle of good governance at all levels and for all regulations in the field of housing. Those struggling in the housing market the most, among them the young and elderly, must especially be supported. Our political family advocated for the Renovation Wave and Affordable Housing Initiative. We additionally want to ensure a balanced approach on measures on short-term rentals.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Introduce a European Plan for Affordable Housing** that reforms state aid rules to allow national and local authorities to invest more in public housing. Specifically, revise the Services of General Economic Interest Directive in view of broadening the definition of social housing to enable the implementation of sustainability goals such as social mix and social cohesion.
- **Support the Renovation Wave and the New European Bauhaus** as key components of the green transition, through significant public investment in energy-efficient renovation and construction.
- Seize the opportunity of the green transition and Renovation Wave **to increase the safety of buildings.** Develop an EU-wide residential fire safety strategy that secures the objectives of the Green Deal and that protects the most vulnerable citizens.
- **Introduce a European definition of areas vulnerable to energy poverty,** locate them by an audit of the European building stock and take targeted action in these areas.

- **Introduce anti-speculation policies** targeting the explosive growth of short-term apartment rentals and the accumulation of housing property owned by investment and vulture funds.
- Assist cities in establishing and **implementing the approach of Housing First** and secure funding in this regard.
- Introduce and better take into account specific **qualitative criteria** going beyond the financial bid when it comes to **tenders for public housing projects.**
- **Introduce tougher regulations preventing housing being left vacant** and avoiding the privatization of public or social housing.
- Include **affordable and quality housing indicators in the European Semester.**
- Promote making **at least 30% of new construction affordable housing for the lower-income group,** and another 30% affordable for the middle-income group.



## 11. AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE QUALITY CARE AND HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Care and support must be core values of our society. **Access to healthcare, prevention and early detection of diseases is a fundamental part of our model of society. It is also one of the biggest concerns of our citizens.** Covid-19 highlighted the vast disparities in European healthcare systems and demonstrated the need for high and well-funded quality healthcare for all. As socialists and democrats, **we furthermore recognise the vital role of healthcare workers and advocate for fair working conditions, decent wages and strong labour protection.**

The Covid-19 crisis demonstrated that the EU is a crucial actor in cross-border health crises. Health authorities in the EU worked in solidarity. This was unprecedented and offered the best chance of success, amongst others in offering vaccines to all our citizens. Such collective action remains important as the EU continues to be confronted by new emergencies, such as war, inflation, natural disasters and climate change, increasingly serious disruptions in the supply of medicines and health products, the risk of new pathogens with pandemic potential, and increasing levels of antimicrobial resistance. **The EU should therefore strengthen its health emergency preparedness and response systems.**

Quality healthcare must be affordable and accessible to all. **We promote the One Health approach and to use the European Health Union to supplement national healthcare systems.** We recall that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown gaps and opportunities for improvement, including in terms of health workforce as well as availability and affordability of medicines. Working together at EU level may help preventing such issues in the future. It is also high time for fair pricing, transparency, and equal access to medicines, while supporting innovation in the sector. We need to act in a coordinated manner. Possibilities to coordinate voluntary joint procurement of treatments, materials, and equipment, also outside of crises, should be facilitated by the European Commission.

Putting mental health on the agenda is long overdue. We must deliver on the implementation of an EU Mental Health Strategy, promoting a preventive approach, identifying resources and needs, fighting stigma, raising standards, and disseminating best practices. Particular attention must be paid to those who are disproportionately affected by mental health issues such as the young, the elderly and women.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- *Support measures prioritising and establishing **affordable quality healthcare and treatment for all** by, implementing Principle 16 of the European Pillar of Social Rights which grants “everyone [...] the right to timely access to affordable, preventive and curative health care of good quality”. Additionally pursue an ambitious reform of the EU pharmaceutical legislation putting access, affordability and environmental sustainability at the centre.*
- *Modernise the European framework for the **support and organisation of the healthcare professions**, including revising the Professional Qualifications Directive and developing a strategy fighting medical brain drain in Europe to allow for a territorial cohesion in access to healthcare.*
- ***Increase investment in public healthcare** both in urban and rural areas where it is needed, to ensure access to quality healthcare wherever citizens live.*
- ***Increase EU action on non-communicable or chronic diseases**, including the implementation of Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan.*
- *Promote **increasing the ratio of medical practitioners per inhabitant** and facilitate accessibility to consultations.*
- *Fully exploit the shared competence that the EU and its Member States have on defined aspects of public health. To better prepare for future pandemics, **improve the EU health emergency governance framework and include the European Health Union in a future revision of the Treaty**, with continued respect for health systems as a national competence.*

- **Fully avoid or reduce to a minimum “out of pocket payments” for patients.**
- Foster and **invest in gender-specific medical research.**
- **Reform public incentives for medical research** and innovation to better address the highest medical needs for our patients and society.
- Implement **models of fair and transparent medicine prices in Europe.**
- Pursue the **voluntary joint procurement of medicines** and medical equipment, facilitated by the European Commission.
- Antimicrobial resistance is one of the biggest threats to global health. **We need to practice prudent use of antibiotics for the benefit of the society** as a whole, with a holistic EU action plan, including a more ambitious EU list of antibiotics specifically reserved for human use and better monitoring, reporting, and education in EU Member States.
- **Implement an EU Mental Health Strategy** by promoting a preventive approach.
- **Develop and implement national mental health strategies** in every EU Member State.
- **Promote the “health in all policies”** principle in all public institutions such as schools, sport, agriculture, urban planning, and other fields.
- Prioritise **access to and affordability of quality medicine** and improve the environmental sustainability of production.



## 12. SUPPORT QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

**Public services are the asset of those who have none,** they are essential for every European citizen and a crucial part of our society. We want well-funded public services, including social services, which are essential for making our societies more equal, strong, and resilient, particularly in times of crisis. We will continue to push for investments that benefit everyone and allow for a redistribution of wealth. **The EU must support this strengthening of the welfare state.**

Services of general interest are core elements of the EU social market economy and are instrumental to the daily lives, comfort and security of citizens and enterprises. Competition policy and state aid rules must be on the side of the people, not corporate interests, and must not impede public and non-profit alternatives to the marketization of public services.

Public authorities at the local, national, and European level have a key role too in promoting quality jobs in Europe. They must promote collective bargaining, the respect of trade union rights and guarantee decent working conditions, fair remuneration and stable contracts. As buyers of private goods and services, they have a strong leverage over private companies. Public procurement must be put to good use with a strengthening of social clauses. We cannot accept that public money supports a race to the bottom.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Ensure universal access to high-quality and affordable public and essential services** and make it a top European priority.
- **Support the digitalisation of social services, where appropriate. Still maintain offline access** to social services.
- **Ensure that all public procurement contains binding quality, environmental and social clauses, including on collective bargaining.** No public funding should go to any company that fails to uphold high social standards, decent working conditions and respect for workers and trade union rights.
- **Ensure access to services of general and economic interest through a revision of the de minimis regulation and the Services of General Economic Interest Directive.**
- **Continue investing in public services** and ensure they have the means to meet their mission.





## II. PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND GENDER EQUALITY

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The defence of democracy has historically been at the very root of our political movement. **The fight against dictatorships and autocracy, the promotion of all forms of equality, and the equality of all citizens is the motor that drives our political action.** Today, the socialist and social-democratic family must step up to defend fundamental values that ought to be taken for granted but are under direct and indirect threats. We see the disregard for the rule of law by some right-wing EU governments, a real backlash against women's rights and the rights of the LGBTI community, and a willingness by some conservative powers to do away with the historical responsibility to keep the far right out of power. Internationally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a direct challenge to the international order that must be based on the respect of sovereignty, multilateral understandings, and the right of self-determination. At the same time, the evolution of our world gives birth to new opportunities but also new threats to the good functioning of democratic societies. The role, freedom, and independence of media, or the future of social media and the regulation of artificial intelligence are key areas where politics must step up to secure plurality and freedom as key elements of the democracy of the 21st century. The following objectives are our guideline for a strong defence of democracy, in Europe and abroad:

## 13. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

We have seen serious challenges to the rule of law, media freedom and fundamental rights. The rise of the far-right leads to attacks on the rights of women, the LGBTI community, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. **We must protect the rights of the most vulnerable who are the most affected by the far right and its policies.** We must protect the independence of judicial systems and judges, the right of everyone to a fair trial, the NGOs and activists and also safeguard freedom of expression and a free press. **The rule of law conditionality mechanism must be applied comprehensively and resolutely.** Any decision to lift a measure under the mechanism must be based on reliable proof that the targeted Member State has thoroughly corrected the detected systematic shortcomings. **Granting European funding to Member States must always be conditional on full respect for the fundamental democratic and human values** on which we have all agreed, and on the application of effective anti-corruption policies. Additionally, we must empower the European Commission with more effective tools to safeguard our democracy and strengthen the democratic role of the European Parliament, moving towards the right of initiative.

**The PES condemns the rapprochement of some parties of the traditional right and liberals with the far right,** and their willingness to work with them at all levels. We must fight the normalisation of the far right which contributes to their ascension and access to government. This normalisation is also fuelled by those traditional right-wing parties that increasingly adopt far-right discourse and policies, which contribute to their diffusion in society. Furthermore, several far-right movements responsible for blocking the development of the European project are particularly close to the interests expressed by Russia in its illegal war against Ukraine.

**We encourage the involvement of civil society in shaping the future of our society and condemn all governments and movements that threaten NGOs and activists but also journalists and whistle-blowers** for doing their work. Media freedom and pluralism are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights because they are a fundamental pillar of any democracy. **We will fight to preserve and promote the pluralism and independence of media.** In this

context the adoption of a strong European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) is crucial. We consider abusive court proceedings aimed at silencing journalists, human rights defenders, academics and anyone carrying out acts of public participation unacceptable, and therefore fully support the proposal for an anti-SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) Directive, another achievement of our political family. At the same time, it is clear that we must set clear rules to ensure that social media plays a constructive, and not a destructive role for democracy. Narrow business interests of Big Tech companies cannot be allowed to undermine democracy. Additionally, it is critical that strong safeguards are put in place to prevent any malicious foreign interference and abuse. We are looking forward to reviewing the European Commission proposal on the Defence of Democracy Package, which is set to outline a comprehensive strategy on this topic before the European elections 2024.

**As socialists and democrats, we believe that transparency, accountability, and integrity are essential principles within the EU institutions.** Unethical individual behaviour must be prevented, persecuted, and condemned as it undermines the credibility of the Union as a whole and is a threat to democracy and public trust. It is therefore of the utmost importance to strengthen confidence in the Union's decision-making and democracy if we are to prevent the far-right and other regressive movements from seeking to undermine our principles, values and institutions.

**Democracy is the cornerstone on which the EU is built and without it no society can be fully inclusive, free, and equal.** We want to promote democracy and active citizenship at the local, regional, national, and European level. It is important for our democracy to consider and represent all voices. Political participation and representation therefore need to be fully accessible and inclusive. Democratic societies must give a real voice to all citizens not only during election time, but by permanently empowering them through meaningful consultations and mechanisms such as participatory budgets on national and local level.

## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Support the full exploitation of the Lisbon Treaty** to ensure the best execution of European policies and improving EU decision-making, including the activation of passerelle clauses for extending Qualified Majority Voting in Council.
- **Support the timely and full implementation of the rule of law conditionality mechanism** alongside other tools and mechanisms aimed at protecting the EU's financial interests.
- **Support the full and consequent application of clear deadlines for recommendations in the European Commission's annual rule of law report** and establish clear links between the report and other rule of law tools that could be triggered if Member States ignore recommendations: be they the Article 7 procedure, infringement procedures or the conditionality mechanism.
- **Reform the Article 7** procedure, ensuring the Commission and Member States can act more swiftly in cases of serious breaches of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights within EU Member States.
- **Fight the normalisation of the far-right parties and far-right discourse. Continue to defend a "cordon sanitaire"** of democratic and pro-EU political groups in the European Parliament against far-right parties by creating our own progressive narrative.
- **Addressing territorial neglect** – which creates a geography of discontent and the rise of the far-right – **with place-based solutions** to provide opportunities for all, invest in innovation locally and promote public engagement at the local and regional level.
- **Tackle economic inequality and insecurity**, which are known to lead to a decline in confidence in the democratic system and parties and increase the chance of driving them into the arms of far-right parties.
- **Empower the European Commission** with more effective tools to safeguard our democracy and play a driving role in making the forthcoming Defence of Democracy package consistent with social democratic values.
- **Promote active, participatory citizenship exercises** recognising the value of partnering and engaging with civil society at all levels and across all institutions.



- **Protect journalists, whistle-blowers, civil society activists, and media freedom.** Fully support the proposal for an anti-SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) Directive.
- **Set clear rules on the operation of social media**, notably to avoid the spread of malicious fake news.
- **Take active protective measures against foreign interference in critical media**, by stepping up action with social media platforms to improve algorithms resistant to misinformation, by creating effective digital and media literacy programmes that strengthen public resistance to misinformation, and by supporting sanctions for major technology companies that fail to tackle the problem.
- **Achieve a strong European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)** to protect media pluralism and independence in the EU.
- **Reversing the trend of shrinking civic space** in the EU by strengthening the recognition, protection and engagement of civil society actors.
- **Encourage the EU institutions to strengthen and align their ethics** and integrity frameworks, including by ensuring effective monitoring, oversight and enforcement.
- **Increase transparency and democratic scrutiny in the use of EU funds**, and investigate and prosecute individuals and organisations found guilty of fraud against EU funds with the support of the EPPO and OLAF, which have to be empowered with the necessary powers and provided with sufficient human and financial resources.



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**PES**

SOCIALISTS &  
DEMOCRATS

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## 14. A EUROPE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION, WHERE EVERYONE IS TREATED EQUALLY

**Europe must not blink when it comes to defending human rights.** Increasingly we are seeing backlash and resistance to gender equality, women's rights and LGBTI rights across Europe. These attacks are inherently linked to de-democratisation and undermine European values and fundamental rights. The PES calls for the implementation of an EU Women's Rights Charter that takes into consideration the intersectional inequalities that women face in all their diversity and ensures women's rights can never be revoked.

**At every level, women must be equal participants in decision-making, negotiations, and solutions. The feminist fight is central to our political family.** The PES is fully committed to the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving full gender equality by 2030. We are the ones behind the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, and the EU Care Strategy. We are proud that after 10 years of fighting, our family secured the adoption of the Women on Boards Directive, pushed for the adoption of a strong Pay Transparency Directive, and advocated for EU accession to the Istanbul Convention. The EU is still far from being the Union of Equality that we want. We must close the gender care gap and address the acute feminisation and undervaluing of informal care. We need to make the "equal carer – equal earner" model a reality. It is imperative that women and others who provide care are acknowledged accordingly to its value. We need a European feminist economy that does not reinforce existing gender biases but tackles all kinds of discrimination. Recognising the value of the care economy is one step in closing the gender pay and pension gaps and gender inequalities in the labour market.

**Gender is a cross-cutting issue that should be considered from the beginning and continuously implemented throughout all policy-making processes.** To achieve our goals of a European feminist economy, gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender impact assessments should be committed to in every financial decision at EU and national level, including the Multiannual Financial Framework, particularly in economic transitions, as well as reallocating EU money to promote gender equality measures. We are pushing for the EU to establish a formal Council configuration for gender equality, diversity, and anti-discrimination and to adopt an intersectional feminist foreign policy.

**We will work to unblock the Anti-Discrimination Directive in the Council to ensure that the EU offers comprehensive protection against discrimination in all areas of life,** regardless of a person's gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. Racism, as well as other forms of discrimination, remains a real problem in our societies, and we will continue the fight for open and inclusive societies. **Diversity is part of the wealth of our continent.**

In a Union of Equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to free, safe and legal abortion care and the availability of free, safe and modern contraception, has to be a reality for every person in the EU, as they are not only a question of healthcare, but also of fundamental rights. **We want to include the right to free, safe and legal abortion care in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.** Furthermore, we want to make comprehensive education on sexuality and relationships a right; we want easy, legal, safe, and affordable access to contraception, abortion care, and menstrual hygiene. These rights must be equally extended to the LGBTI community since all discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity has no place in democracy.

## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Unblock the Anti-Discrimination Directive** in the Council as a tool to fight racism and discrimination.
- **Strengthen and reinforce equality bodies and trade unions** to successfully tackle structural discrimination, including by collective redress.
- Take steps **to close the gender pay and pension gaps** by fully transposing the EU Women on Boards Directive, EU Work-Life Balance and Pay Transparency Directives into national law; and by monitoring implementation reports closely.
- **Implement and enhance the European Care Strategy to a holistic “Care Deal for Europe”.**
- **Fight gender stereotypes and the rise of anti-‘gender ideology’, anti-‘feminist’, anti-LGBTI movements** that undermine and resist gender equality, women’s rights and LGBTI rights by taking all necessary steps to develop and implement an EU Women’s Rights Charter.
- **Ensure gender-related commitments in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans are fully implemented.**
- Fight to **ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights are fully respected.**
- **Include the right to abortion in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.**
- Ensure **easy, legal, safe and affordable access to contraception, abortion care, menstrual hygiene and menopause care.**
- All young people in Europe should have access to **mandatory, age-appropriate, scientific, and comprehensive sexuality education, including about healthy sexual relationships** and early intervention programmes that educate on doxing, revenge porn and exploitative pornographic materials.
- **Fight for the protection of LGBTI rights everywhere,** with the implementation of the LGBTI Equality Strategy.
- **Adopt the Recognition of Parenthood Regulation** aiming at strengthening the rights of children in cross-border situations, which is particularly relevant for rainbow families.
- **Implement the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.** To support persons with disabilities and their families, all policies and practices must be disability-mainstreamed.
- **Introduce an ambitious EU-wide Disability Card,** effectively guaranteeing the free movement of persons with disabilities.
- **Implement gender impact assessment, gender-mainstreaming and gender budgeting** of all European policies and governance, including economic transitions such as the green and digital transitions.
- **Establish a formal and permanent Council configuration for gender equality, diversity, and anti-discrimination,** and adopt an **intersectional Feminist Foreign Policy.**
- Integrate **gender budgeting into the future 2027-2033 MFF.**
- **Fully assess the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** and incorporate the results in a **Gender Equality Strategy 2.0 for 2025–2030** that includes a dedicated budget.
- **Fully assess the LGBTI-Strategy 2020-2025** and incorporate the results in an **LGBTI-Strategy 2.0 for 2025–2030.**
- **Strengthen the European Institute for Gender Equality.**
- **Ensure gender parity in the College of Commissioners,** as well as a **Commissioner dedicated to gender equality.**

## 15. ERADICATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

As part of the EU Gender Equality Strategy, **we will push for the eradication of gender-based violence for all ages through tools like the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence and by adding gender-based violence to the list of EU crimes.** We will closely monitor the quick and comprehensive ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU and continue to advocate for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by all EU Member States and all countries around the world. The EU must implement a dedicated framework tackling online violence and cybercrime which limit women's right to express themselves equally, freely and without fear. We will push for dedicated frameworks that safeguard women of all ages against sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and online violence, including doxing, revenge porn, cyber harassment, or threatening behaviour.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Fight gender-based violence by adopting a comprehensive legal framework** addressing the continuum of violence against women and girls. Adopt a dedicated and enhanced directive on violence against women and domestic violence that includes a consent-based definition on rape, and provisions that criminalise all forms of sexual abuse (including verbal and non-physical) and online violence against women and girls.
- **Extend the list of EU crimes** in accordance with Article 83(1) TFEU to introduce consent-based rape and sexual assault legislation across the EU that follows a yes-means-yes approach.
- **Establish a unified EU definition of femicide** and improve data collection on this issue and on gender-based violence at national and EU-level.

- **Implement a dedicated directive that specifically tackles online violence and cyber-violence** against women and girls.
- **Call for the EU's ratification and ascension to both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention** on combating violence and harassment in the world of work.
- **Introduce mandatory gender-based violence prevention** and sensitivity training for first responders.
- **Monitor the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU** and promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by all EU Member States.
- **Recognise hate speech and hate crime as a form of violence by adding hate speech and hate crime**, including those committed against women and girls, **to the list of EU Crimes.**
- **Close the gaps in anti-discrimination and hate crime legislation** to adequately cover sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.
- **Introduce and support education-based prevention programmes in early childhood education, schools, and universities**, to tackle gender-based violence.



## 16. A EUROPE THAT WORKS FOR ITS YOUTH AND CHILDREN

We have made future generations a priority by initiating the European Child Guarantee and reinforcing the European Youth Guarantee, ensuring quality offers of employment and education for all young people in the EU, including those not in employment, education or training (NEETs). We will continue fighting for equal access to quality and inclusive early childhood education and care for all children in Europe, well-funded and inclusive schools, better working conditions for caregivers, educators, and teachers, and to reduce youth unemployment as we firmly believe in the transformative power of education. Free quality education at all levels and with the necessary financial support must be accessible to all, to reduce early school leaving and youth unemployment. We call for an effective and target-oriented implementation of the European Education Area by 2025, including through the automatic mutual recognition of degrees to make education and employment accessible across borders. We furthermore fight for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences as well as reinforced youth work structures. Moreover, we call for the creation of an EU legal framework to allow for paid internships only. This should take into account the specificities of each Member State and the principle of subsidiarity. Everyone deserves fair pay for their work. Additionally, age constitutes a cross-cutting matter, so policies must cater to the needs of the youth and of all generations. **We must ensure that the younger generations can always have a better future than their parents so as to ensure intergenerational equity and social progress.**

### KEY PROPOSALS

- Support the S&D-driven call of the European Parliament to **allocate at least EUR 20 billion of funding to the European Child Guarantee** and push for more ambitious child poverty reduction targets.
- Promote the **introduction of binding quality standards for offers under the Youth Guarantee**, including fair remuneration and access to social protection.
- Promote **extended funding for the Youth Guarantee**.
- **Promote and invest decisively in an inclusive and accessible vocational education and training (VET)**, its attractiveness and visibility.
- **All internships, traineeships and apprenticeships on the open labour market must be paid and exploitative practices prevented. An EU legislative initiative on Quality Traineeships**, taking into account national specificities and the principle of subsidiarity, will benefit millions of young people all over Europe.
- Commit to **clear targets and measures to ensure the effective implementation of the European Education Area**, to be achieved by 2025, such as the automatic mutual recognition of diplomas across the EU.
- Also ensure the **recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences and youth work**.
- **Widen Erasmus+** so that it includes a large number of students from all levels and types of education, with a focus on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Introduce a “green Erasmus”** to raise awareness of green jobs. Furthermore, facilitate the access of young people to green jobs by developing, together with social partners, education and skills strategies and active labour market policies.
- **Introduce the teaching of at least two foreign languages** since early childhood education.
- Guarantee that **everyone has the means and knowledge to access digital services**.
- **Call for a strengthening of the European Youth Dialogue Programme** to ensure that young people and decision-makers exchange and cooperate with each other, while opening up new avenues for youth participation.

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## 17. FOSTERING INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE

Our political family works for intergenerational solidarity to be better able to face the challenges of the future and the ageing of the European population. **We fight for citizens' rights at all ages. We want a Europe that ensures a life in dignity, including autonomy and wellbeing, at every point in life.** We defend workers' rights at all ages, including decent working conditions and wages, and deploying lifelong learning. Pension systems must remain public sources of income for old age, be gender-responsive and must give fair consideration to career breaks. This also includes affordable care and healthcare services at all ages,

investment in adapted housing as well as age-friendly communities. Our political family furthermore emphasises non-discrimination and the right to political and civic participation at all ages. We also want to ensure proper funding to preserve the sustainability of European cultural sectors. Culture, in all its diversity and forms, is a crucial part of the European identity. This includes spreading digital literacy whilst equally maintaining offline alternatives for administrative procedures. We must also make sure that transport networks are accessible and that pedestrian and cycling infrastructure are safe.



## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Invest in adapted housing**, the public provision of assisted living and care homes. Assist local authorities in providing progressive initiatives in this regard such as intergenerational co-living and the concept of a life-resistant home.
- Assist local authorities in **providing age-friendly cities and communities**, as promoted by the World Health Organisation, and secure relevant funding.
- Provide guidelines and best-practice examples to EU Member States on how **to prevent and combat ageism** in different policy areas.
- **Introduce a White Paper on Ageing**, proposing social and economic measures related to growing ageing in Europe such as in relation to the labour market, quality of work, active ageing, supply of care and healthcare, silver economy.
- **Continue to support lifelong learning** as part of the European Education Area. Emphasise lifelong learning to cut across all ages as well as formal, informal and non-formal education of all types.
- The EU should **develop a European Education Plan to ensure quality education and lifelong learning** across the Union and with sufficient financial means.
- Support more **structural and sustainable funding for culture and access to culture** that is inclusive and cuts across all ages, amongst others by comprehensive support for youth centres and local cultural projects.
- **Safeguard the Creative Europe Programme** to promote and protect both cultural sectors as well as cultural heritage and diversity.
- Reflect Principle 15 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on old age income and pensions in the monitoring and policy guidance provided by the European Union to **provide truly fair pensions for both women and men**.
- Continue to **promote strong pension standards**, allowing for decent life in old age across the EU.
- Implement the Council Recommendation on the **revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care**.
- **Maintain offline options for administrative procedures**.
- The next Commission Work Programme should give a **high priority to topics related to the young, the elderly, active ageing, and intergenerational solidarity**.

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## 18. A EUROPEAN COORDINATED ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICY

Migration is a structural feature of human societies and a component of globalisation. As such, migration requires a united, multilateral, and multilevel approach based on shared responsibility, respect for human rights and international law. **It is our moral and legal duty to offer asylum, protection, and humane treatment to asylum seekers coming to the EU, irrespective of origin and any other consideration.** We must continue the fight against the smugglers and traffickers who ruthlessly lead hundreds of people to their death. It is crucial to have a common predictable and reliable framework for search and rescue, including rapid disembarkation in a place of safety.

**Our political family has put forward a progressive Pact on Migration and Asylum, presenting an opportunity to move from an ad hoc, crisis-driven approach to a fair, safe, sustainable and predictable one.** European co-legislators must make every effort to find an agreement on a Pact before the end of this political mandate. The Pact ensures high standards of protection for the people arriving at the EU borders while smoothing procedures. The common EU asylum and migration system must be based on true solidarity and shared responsibility, fair and effective procedures, humane reception conditions, partnerships on equal footing with third countries, legal pathways, and effective inclusion. We must continue the fight against the smugglers and traffickers who ruthlessly lead hundreds of people to their death. No Member State nor individual region or city should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility. Only together and with the right policies we can turn challenges into opportunities.

The unity with which EU countries and their citizens have welcomed the many Ukrainian refugees, and swiftly activated the Temporary Protection Directive, shows that with policies based on solidarity, we can deal with the biggest of crises. We are proud of the continued commitment of Europeans to offering asylum and protection. People, particularly women, children and LGBTBI people, fleeing war and persecution are highly vulnerable and at risk of human smuggling, trafficking, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. The EU must prevent and fight smugglers and traffickers through a strengthened Anti-Trafficking Directive, which includes criminalising

the use of services obtained from victims of trafficking when the user knows that the person is a victim. It must strengthen the governance, responsibilities, transparency, and accountability of Frontex. We must have common, effective border management, while safeguarding fundamental rights. We must always act in the child's best interest and ensure strengthened rights including a reinforced right to family reunification, especially for minors. Children should never be detained or separated from their families. EU funds should not be used to build walls or fund externalisation.

Mutually beneficial cooperation with third countries is essential, especially with African and Latin American countries. Special attention must be given to climate change-induced migration. We will push for the establishment of safe, humanitarian regular corridors for asylum seekers as well as effective regular avenues for labour migration. Member States must step up their resettlement pledges and establish complementary pathways through joint leadership.

A common EU asylum and migration system must include a humane and dignified return policy, which respects the principle of non-refoulement and safeguards the fundamental rights of the people on the move. Voluntary return and reintegration must be prioritised.

**Migration has always existed, and it always will. We need to foster a progressive narrative on asylum and migration that applies to all migrants, people with a migration background and the welcoming society.** Member States must implement the EU Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration. When managed well, migration can help strengthen the economy, generate new jobs, and maintain the welfare system for Europe's ageing societies. It can be a great source of innovation and opportunities for all. However, not well-managed migration leads to a series of difficulties, therefore we need everyone to participate.

We need a feminist migration policy, taking into account the needs of migrant and asylum-seeking women and girls and their human rights by finally adopting a comprehensive migration and asylum framework that specifically addresses their experiences.



## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Finalise the adoption of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, for a fair, safe, sustainable, and predictable approach to asylum and migration**, based on protecting the individual right to asylum ensuring safeguards of people's rights, high standards of protections and solidarity between Member States, particularly in the form of relocation.
- Promote the need to **tackle climate change-induced migration**.
- **Establish safe and regular avenues for asylum and migration**, alongside fair and humane return policies.
- **Finalise the adoption of the Single Permit Directive**, ensuring strong safeguards against abuse and exploitation of workers.
- **Promote community sponsorship programmes for beneficiaries** of international protection.
- **Ensure a common EU return policy for those who are not found in need of international protection**, safeguarding human rights, international standards and prioritising voluntary return to safe countries of origin. The best interest of the child must always be a priority.

- **Protect migrants and asylum seekers from exploitation and trafficking** by strengthening the Anti-Trafficking Directive and rules that prevent and combat trafficking in human beings.
- **Strengthen the EU Employers' Sanctions Directive**.
- Boost mutually beneficial **cooperation with third countries**, including a proposal on better recognition of third country nationals' qualifications and diploma and skills assessment.
- Put forward a **proposal on fair labour migration schemes for workers with different skills**, or work experience guaranteeing strong protection against abuse and exploitation.
- Encourage the **implementation of the EU Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration**.
- Foster the **creation of a fund to which municipalities could apply directly to receive support for integrating refugees**, while also funding projects for local communities.
- **Revise the EU directive on voting rights in municipal elections**, to promote better representation of the voice of non-national residents.



## 19. STRENGTHENING CITIZENS' RIGHTS ONLINE

The EU must play a leading role in promoting a digital transformation in line with our fundamental values and principles and that leaves no one behind.

**First, we need to ensure that non-digital alternatives for basic and essential services, including financial and banking services, must be available for everyone, notably for elderly citizens and people with disabilities.** We must ensure that everyone has the means and knowledge to access digital services while continuing to protect the importance of human social interaction for a strong and equal society. We want to promote digital cohesion, recognising that access to decent digital infrastructures is a fundamental right. Furthermore, social media platforms must be regulated.

**Second,** we must secure massive investments in European public digital infrastructure in order to **ensure quality access to internet for all, support research and development and innovation projects,** but also in privacy protection, security, child safety online and offline, media freedom, pluralism, independence, and cultural diversity. We must defend the principle of net-neutrality to promote diversity and competition in the digital sector. We are committed to this principle and advocate for connectivity regulation that ensures equitable and fair end-to-end access to the whole internet for all users and online services, where content, services and applications are not unjustifiably degraded or blocked and the access to online services remains affordable for all, particularly for those with low income.

**Third,** while **artificial intelligence (AI)** is a transformative technology that can bring certain social benefits, it **must always be human-centred and human-driven.** The use of AI must be trustworthy, respect human dignity and serve societies and citizens without reproducing or exacerbating existing stereotypes and prejudices or create new forms of gender and intersectional inequalities. Bias may occur when using datasets for training a model, if those datasets poorly represent the people that the model will serve. That is why we must strive towards overcoming bias in datasets. We want the swift adoption of the European AI Act, taking these concerns into consideration. Furthermore, we need to ensure that if damage caused by AI arises, citizens are compensated accordingly. Hence, we recall the need to start negotiations on the Liability of AI Directive, as soon as the AI Act is adopted. Moreover, citizens should receive adequate training on AI and robotics, including about the opportunities and risks they present, and have all the necessary tools to evolve in the labour market.

**Fourth, what is illegal offline, should be illegal online.** Everyone must be fully protected from cybercrime and online violence, including women, children, the elderly, journalists, and whistle-blowers, while simultaneously ensuring that security online is fully aligned with the protection of our fundamental rights.

**Finally, we need real participation of everyone,** notably women and underrepresented people, in the digital age. It's vital that we provide the means for re-skilling and up-skilling for those who wish to enter the industry to ensure that no one is only a passive consumer or becomes a victim of increased digitalization. They must be leaders and actors in this industry – starting from education to top positions of leadership.

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## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Protect citizens' privacy online.** Work towards the adoption of the e-Privacy Regulation to strengthen the protection of the confidentiality of communications.
- **Promote digital cohesion across Europe** by improving broadband connectivity and access in every region in Europe.
- **Promote gender equality in the digital sector** and sphere, by increasing the involvement of women in STEM.
- **Provide non-digital alternatives for basic and essential services** in a non-discriminatory way, available to all, including the elderly and disabled people.
- Support for the **EU accession to the Convention 108+ of the Council of Europe** for the protection of individuals with regard to the automatic processing of personal data.
- **Ensure social media platforms' accountability and transparency** and protection of fundamental rights of users online through the enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA).
- **Invest in European public digital infrastructure** and research and development: support investments in e-government services and applications, accessibility, e-learning, e-Health, as well as accessible digital solutions for the elderly and the disabled.
- **Protect citizens from cybercrimes:** support new legislation to enhance the cyber-resilience of the financial sector in the EU, namely through the recently adopted, Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA).
- **Protect children from sexual abuse online** through effective regulation and prevention.
- **Adopt a European Artificial Intelligence Act** for an AI driven by ethical principles to ensure that the technology remains human-centred, human-driven, and respectful of human dignity.
- Promptly **start negotiations on the Liability of AI Directive.**
- **Stricter management of EU research and development funds to prevent funding for the development and use of spyware.** The use of spyware for law enforcement should be directly regulated through measures on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and by measures on import to the EU. There is a need for EU standards regulating the use of spyware by Member States. If authorities invoke national security for using spyware, they should demonstrate compliance with EU law and principles of proportionality, necessity, legitimacy, legality and adequacy.
- Push for the **inclusion of monitoring of spyware use** in the Commission's annual rule of law reports in the EU Member States.

## 20. ENSURING THE SECURITY OF ALL CITIZENS

**Everyone has a right to live in a secure and safe environment.** We support measures that increase personal security while protecting individual and collective rights. In a world where new, borderless, and more sophisticated criminal threats are emerging – including cybercrime, counterfeiting, environmental crime, financial crime, human trafficking, and terrorism – it is essential that we act effectively and collectively against these crimes. These crimes seriously undermine not only our fundamental values, but also citizens' trust in our democracy and institutions. This is why **we must continue to strengthen police and judiciary cooperation.** It is important that Europol uses its tools to effectively coordinate and support fighting cross-border crime to truly become a joint EU agency supporting investigation and crime prevention. This needs to be matched by greater parliamentary oversight of Europol, both by the European Parliament and by national parliaments. We will also continue to encourage community-led crime prevention programmes and promote urban design that provides safe spaces for the community to gather and feel secure.



### KEY PROPOSALS

- **Strengthen European cooperation through Europol to fight cross-border crime** to truly become a joint European crime prevention and investigation support agency, including by strengthening joint investigation teams. Such development must be matched by strengthened parliamentary scrutiny.
- **Promote community-driven crime prevention** through environmental and urban design programs designed to create safe spaces for everyone, taking into account the specific needs of women, children and older persons in that respect.
- **Protect EU citizens against organised crime** by strengthening EU's rules on anti-money laundering.
- Support measures that **increase personal security** while protecting individual and collective rights.
- Support the **revision of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive** to effectively prevent and fight trafficking in human beings.
- **Reinforce the work against firearms-trafficking** and make it a priority for the EU's work against organised crime.
- Insist on a **fully independent EU Child Centre to help coordinate and facilitate the fight against Child Sexual Abuse** and obligations to report and remove material. This should be done in accordance with the DSA, in full respect of fundamental rights in particular the right to privacy, data protection and by protecting end-to-end encryption.



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# III. SECURING EUROPE'S POSITION IN THE WORLD

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Europe is one of the richest continents, having one of the best systems of welfare states and protection of working people. As Party of European Socialists, we remain convinced that the European social model is the key to thriving and equal societies that work for the wellbeing of all their citizens. In order to continue and thrive, and in order to maintain the high level of social protection that we know and cherish, Europe needs to adapt to the changes that are taking place in our continent and in the world.

**From the way in which we engage with our international partners, to the way in which our Union operates, we want to drive a process of adaptation that is based on the fundamental values of our political family, such as equality, democracy and progress.** International trade should be organised in a fair and sustainable way without contributing to deforestation, biodiversity loss or breaches of human rights and labour rights. In order to lead Europe in the world, we want to focus on the following priorities:

## 21. MAINTAIN FULL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

**Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is not just a violation of sovereignty but a war on European values. We will maintain our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty** within its internationally recognised borders.

The EU must continue to provide political, humanitarian, financial and military support to Ukraine, remaining particularly vigilant to prevent women and children from falling victim to sexual violence, trafficking, and exploitation, as conflict exacerbates existing gender inequalities and disproportionately affects women.

Socialists and democrats must lead the EU in developing a reconstruction plan centred around social fairness and inclusion, sustainability, good governance and local ownership, and transparency and accountability, in line with Ukraine's commitments as an EU candidate country. The EU must maintain support to the Republic of Moldova as it faces spillovers from Russia's war in Ukraine and relative hybrid threats.

Women's empowerment is essential to the support for Ukraine. Meaningful participation of women in conflict-related policies and post-conflict reconstruction increases the sustainability and success and the resilience of local communities. Protection and support for women activists and NGOs, educators and leaders in conflict zones must be a priority.

The international community must cooperate closely to secure justice for victims of war crimes and hold the President of the Russian Federation and Russia's political and military leadership accountable. **The EU must continue looking into ways in which frozen Russian assets could be made available for use in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction**, in accordance with EU and international law. Furthermore, the PES supports further sanctions on Russia and their stricter enforcement until a just peace is re-established on Ukraine's terms.

The PES will stand for an EU that supports Ukraine's resistance while maintaining diplomatic efforts to ease the humanitarian crisis created by Russia's war, in close coordination with Ukraine and international allies. The EU should use all its economic and diplomatic influence to put pressure on Russia's allies and be a key player in the construction of a new European peace and security framework, based on strong security guarantees for Ukraine, the opening of a process of EU membership and a close association with the NATO framework. The PES must be the leading force behind this effort, placing the EU as a key actor – in close cooperation with the OSCE – to shape a “new Helsinki” architecture around key security and peace guarantees based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and coupled with a strategic review of the EU neighbourhood policy.

The PES stands with all regions of the world against the fallout from this war, especially the food crisis that is harming the Global South. The EU is working at an unprecedented speed and scale to mitigate the consequences and has already committed to providing EUR 8 billion for global food security alone. The PES supports the extension of this aid and will push for change in the world's food systems in favour of fair, sustainable, and resilient food chains.



## KEY PROPOSALS

- **Support Ukraine's resistance to the Russian invasion** by political, financial, humanitarian, and military means.
- **Support women and girls in Ukraine**, particularly in conflict areas, including on gender-based violence, on women's empowerment, and within the entire rebuilding process.
- **Ensure women's full and equal representation** and meaningful participation in all levels and all stages of conflict related policies and decision-making.
- **Support displaced people** by offering collective protection and improving efforts to fight exploitation, particularly in the case of vulnerable groups.
- **Support the development of a reconstruction plan for Ukraine** centred around social fairness and inclusion, sustainability, good governance and local ownership, strengthening social dialogue and the involvement of trade unions, as well as facilitating the involvement and integration of civil society organisations that are working in Ukraine and frontline countries at all levels of this process.
- **Maintain the pressure on Russia's capacity to pursue its aggression by implementing severe sanctions and preventing their circumvention.**
- **Sanctions on luxury goods** such as diamonds should be installed as soon as possible, preferably within the context of the G7 to increase their effectiveness.
- **Support the International Criminal Court** and international investigations related to the crime of aggression and war crimes.
- **Support a stronger EU policy on the countries that help circumvent EU sanctions on Russia.**
- **Continue looking into ways in which frozen Russian assets could be made available** for use in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction.
- **Support EU Member States in facing the repercussions of the war**, from rising energy and food prices to providing support to Ukraine, Moldova and displaced people, to the establishment of solidarity lanes for the export of Ukrainian agricultural products.
- **Support the countries hit by the food crisis** by providing immediate humanitarian relief and including food security, resilience, and sustainability in long-term development aid programmes.



## 22. PROMOTE STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS AND INNOVATION

Our family has brought a paradigm shift in Europe by rehabilitating the role of public investment. **In sharp contrast with the austerity approach of the conservative majority after the 2008 financial crisis, we responded to the Covid-19 crisis with Next Generation EU.** This shows how much we can do when we invest in our future, pool our resources and act with unity and solidarity. **Next Generation EU is the biggest investment scheme the EU has ever had,** of which our political family is a proud proponent. We therefore continue to stand for a permanent long-term EU investment capacity with real European solidarity to finance the green and digital transition, to form part of a broader Investment Plan for the Green and Digital Transitions coordinated with the Member States.

The changes ahead of us require large-scale investments both public and private: in sustainable energy alternatives, in the promotion of a circular economy, notably for critical raw materials, and in the EU regaining a leading role in the digital transition. If we want Europe to be an international hub for innovation and technology, we must invest in that goal. **We must invest in a model of economic development that put the people's wellbeing at the centre,** a model that protects the environment, and looks beyond GDP as the sole measure of success.

The war and the pandemic made it clear that we cannot rely entirely on external trade for strategic goods such as energy, food, clean technologies, microchips, batteries, raw materials, and medicines and health products. The EU needs to diversify and de-risk its supply chain for essential goods and critical commodities and achieve genuine open strategic autonomy in key sectors. New collaborative European investments must be made to build sovereignty in strategic sectors. At the same time, the union's competition policy and state aid framework must ensure that the internal market remains open, fair and competitive also in the future. The exposure of our continent to the microchip shortage a few months ago is a clear warning that Europe must invest in its ability to stand on its own feet. We must support building a European battery industry, extracting and recycling rare earth materials, and similar initiatives that will further that goal. Like the Biden administration did with the US Inflation Reduction Act, public investment and support should include social and environmental goals. We must also be ready to intervene with a European rescue framework to protect firms from unfair foreign competition, provided they abide by ambitious social and employment standards. The EU needs massive investments to strengthen our resilience and ability to protect our citizens in times of crisis, which is why the PES calls for a "Made in Europe" strategy by 2030, to level the playing field for European industry in compliance with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.



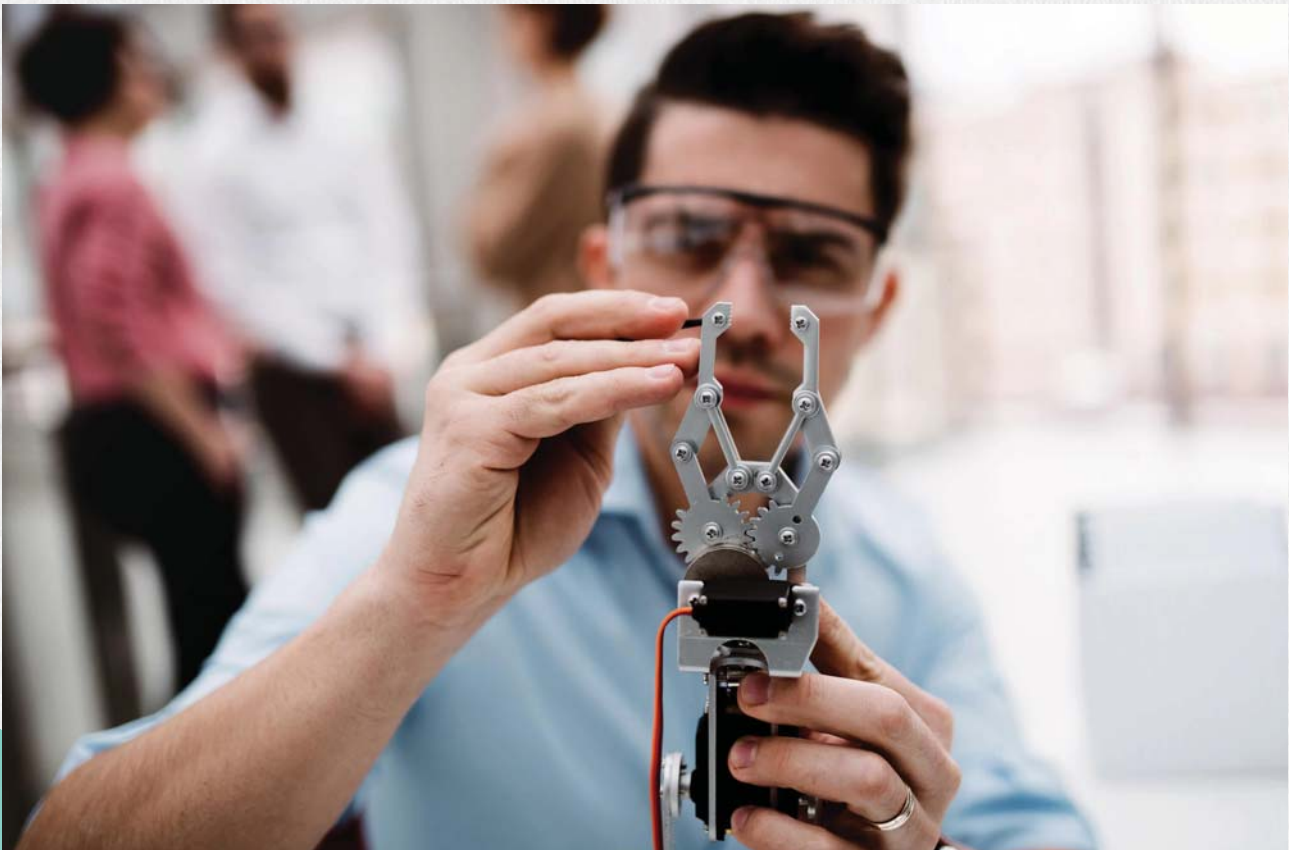


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## KEY PROPOSALS

- Put forward a **new Investment Plan for the Green and Digital Transitions**.
- Endow the EU budget with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies, through a **revised and ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework** consistent with gender-responsive budgeting principles and sustainability targets, which also should be considered in the context of enhanced own resources.
- Continue to **stand for a permanent long-term EU investment capacity** with real European solidarity.
- Explore **new sources of revenue to allow the EU budget to support investment** in all Member States.
- Promote a **European rescue framework to protect firms from unfair foreign competition**.
- Engage the discussion on **the establishment of European Public Goods**.
- **Develop a “Made in Europe” 2030 strategy** to reduce European dependencies and increase our production capacities in strategic sectors and to level the playing field for European industry in compliance with WTO rules.
- Develop an **ambitious, sustainable and open EU trade agenda** based on common values and respect of social, environmental, consumer protection and human rights.
- **Use the Critical Raw Materials Act** to set ambitious reuse and recycling targets for circularity of critical raw materials.
- **Introduce a Critical Medicines Act** to improve the EU’s security of medicines supply and reduce dependencies from non-EU countries.
- **Fraud with EU funds must be prosecuted more severely**.
- **Looking beyond GDP alone, also develop objective indicators to better include environmental and social aspects of progress**.



## 23. SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally hampered an already unstable geopolitical landscape and has threatened the rules-based international order. The EU will need to reshape its role in a multipolar, disorderly global environment. We are being challenged in the ongoing battle of narratives on universal democratic values. The EU needs to resolutely reach out to reliable and like-minded partners to conclude mutually beneficial partnership agreements. These partnerships should be mutually beneficial by addressing concrete needs in the partner countries and allowing the EU to diversify and de-risk its current supply chains. **The EU must work with its partners to eradicate poverty and promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, fair global trade rules and respect for international commitments on social rights, gender equality, climate change, and protecting children, in a world of challenging alternative narratives by authoritarian countries.** We praise the work of human rights defenders worldwide and call for countering the shrinking space for civil society globally.

The PES wants constructive relations with the United States to continue our dialogue towards a common progressive agenda on social and environmental standards. We also support an enhanced dialogue with China to cooperate on issues, such as climate change, global security, and reforming international institutions. However, any consistent and ambitious EU-China Strategy must uphold human rights and democracy.

We will continue to support strong relations with our partners in Latin America through an ambitious trade, cooperation, partnership and investment agenda. We will also step up the Africa-EU partnership to address common challenges, promote sustainable growth, and accelerate the green and digital transitions. Europe must ensure that Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the multiple impacts of the war, do not put a wedge in the relations between the EU and our friends and partners in the Global South. Regarding our neighbourhood, we support EU actions that promote economic ties and support human rights, democracy, peace, and stability. Europe must likewise promote stability in the Arctic and work to prevent military escalation and exploitation of natural resources.

**The PES supports strengthened cooperation with the United Nations to reform and reinforce the multilateral system.** The EU must speak with a single voice in the UN fora and use rotating and permanent seats of Member States in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to bring on a rules- and human rights-based agenda. The EU must promote and deliver on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement and the EU Global Health Strategy. The EU must play a strong role in global rules-based non-proliferation efforts, with the aim of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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## KEY PROPOSALS:

- **Restore and strengthen the rules-based multilateral order** in cooperation with our international partners.
- **Reform the WTO** to make it fit for the challenges of the 21st century, the green transition, and the digital revolution, ensuring a level playing field.
- **Set up an EU comprehensive strategy for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals** and their realisation by 2030, accompanied by a financing plan.
- **Address the shortcomings of the EU Global Gateway**, ensuring a clear development mandate and transparent, democratic, and effective public scrutiny.
- **Establish equal partnerships rooted in democratic values, human rights safeguard and social, environmental and governance standards**, to diversify and de-risk EU current supply chains.
- **Increase EU support to human rights defenders and civil society** worldwide.
- **Reassess the current trade and development portfolio of the EU** in light of the impact of the war in Ukraine, investing in our good relations with third countries.
- **Renew the dialogue with the African Union** on migration, development, trade, security and climate change.
- Invest diplomatic and technical capital to **develop an ambitious trade agenda with Latin America**.
- **Strengthen the relationship between the EU and Latin American countries** to deepen our political, economic and trade relations and build a common progressive agenda rooted in our shared principles, values and interests.
- **Revise and implement a strategy for EU-China relations** to ensure cooperation on global challenges such as climate change, rebalance trade and economic relationships, uphold human rights, and strengthen multilateralism while being rooted in the three pillars of the current strategy: China as a partner, a competitor and a rival.
- **Strengthen further EU cooperation within the United Nations**, promote an ambitious UN reform in favour of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, and fully commit to the agenda 2030 and the development of an ambitious and effective successor.

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Participants at the PES EU-CELAC Summit 'Together for Global Justice'. Pictured front from left: Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark, António Costa, Prime Minister of Portugal, Gustavo Petro, President of Colombia, Stefan Löfven, President of the PES, Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain, Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, Alberto Fernández, President of Argentina, Gabriel Boric, President of Chile. Pictured second row, from left: Achim Post, Secretary General of the PES, Ely Schlein, leader of PD Italy, Iratxe García, President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Alicia Bárcena, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission, Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships, and Giacomo Filibeck, Executive Secretary General of the PES.

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## **24. A FORWARD-LOOKING EU: READY TO IMPROVE ITS FUNCTIONING AND MEET INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES**

The debate on the modernization of the EU's architecture and decision-making processes is influenced by the new geopolitical reality and a world plagued by war and characterized by increasing fragmentation. The prospect of an enlarged EU has been accelerated lately. That is why **changes in the rules and functioning of our institutions are necessary for the EU to act efficiently, decisively, and with unity. A serious assessment is needed to determine what Treaty changes are necessary to achieve European sovereignty, promote social justice, make Europe more sustainable, and foster European democracy and its influence in the world.** Majority rules in certain policy areas, including certain common foreign policy fields, are necessary to ensure more democratic decision-making processes and a well-functioning EU, and to build a strong EU with strategic independence.

The PES remains at the forefront of supporting accession negotiations, provided that all potential future Member States fully respect EU standards on rule of law, democracy, and fundamental EU values. **No country can be considered to become a Member State without having implemented all necessary commitments and reforms.**

The PES welcomes the decision to grant candidate status to **Ukraine** and **Moldova** and supports the inclusion of Georgia once they have met the conditions identified by the European Commission. We call for the rapid start of EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova once they have met all accession criteria set by the European Commission's recommendation. We also welcome the opening of negotiations with **Albania** and **North Macedonia** and the decision to grant candidate status to **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. We continue supporting accession negotiations with **Montenegro**. We agree to advance accession negotiations with **Serbia** only if the Vučić government aligns with EU sanctions against Russia, makes significant progress on its EU-related reforms, and refrains from sabotaging the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue through provocations or any other means. Following **Kosovo's** application for EU membership, which reflects the continued pro-European orientation of its citizens and its clear geopolitical strategic choice, we call for Belgrade and Pristina to achieve a permanent solution under the facilitation of EU High Representative/EC Vice President Josep Borrell. We welcome the adoption of visa liberalization for Kosovo. We regret that the EU accession process of Türkiye has stalled for several years as a result





of the direction taken by the Turkish government. In the absence of a drastic change of course by the Turkish government, **Türkiye's** EU accession process cannot be resumed in the current circumstances. Furthermore, we support a rapid deepening of **Switzerland's** integration into the EU when a mutually beneficial framework is agreed on.

We stress our continuous support for all efforts towards resolving the long-standing **Cyprus** problem, within the UN framework, in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions, and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded and the *acquis*. We condemn any action or occupation that violates the integrity and sovereignty of nations anywhere in the world, including in Cyprus.

More Europe also entails protecting and strengthening one of the European Union's greatest achievements: the Schengen Agreement. That is why we call for **Romania** and **Bulgaria** to be allowed into the Schengen area immediately, as both countries meet all the criteria. The PES also supports a rapid modernization of Schengen visa applications to deepen the EU's relations with Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland and simplify travels for business and tourism.

## KEY PROPOSALS

- *Finalise without any further delay the full **inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria in the Schengen area.***
- ***Modernise European architecture to adapt it to the new realities,** including by extending qualified majority voting to certain critical sectors.*
- *In the context of enlargement, we need to **engage in a debate and assess whether the treaties and the functioning of our institutions are well-adapted, and what changes are necessary,** to achieve real European sovereignty, to promote social justice and our European values, to make Europe more sustainable and more equal, and to promote the role of the EU in the world. This is necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the EU.*
- *Continue **supporting the enlargement process** through targeted financial and technical support to reforms in candidate countries.*
- ***Increase regional cooperation with candidate countries and potential candidates** on security, energy and migration.*
- ***Strengthen the democratic role of the European Parliament, moving towards the right of initiative.***
- ***Ensure democratic accountability of new crisis management bodies.***

## 25. STRENGTHEN EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The EU must act faster and more assertively in an increasingly unpredictable geopolitical climate. The Strategic Compass presented by our political family provides the necessary framework to strengthen the EU's role as a reliable partner and security provider, as well as to enhance our ability to independently defend and promote our fundamental values. The PES welcomes the ongoing process of bolstering our Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) while respecting the specific security and defence policies of each EU Member State.

The PES supports a Common Security and Defence Policy that complements NATO through collaborative development and procurement, coordinated and smarter defence spending, sharing and pooling of capacities, countering hybrid threats, cyberattacks and disinformation, boosting EU intelligence cooperation and the EU defence industrial sector. The EU must promote investments on innovative technologies that can reduce the environmental impact of military operations and advance the EU's position as a leader in green and cutting-edge technologies. Defence investments are critical and should not be made at the expense of development, cohesion and social funds. We also stress the need to incorporate a gender and an intersectional perspective in our CSDP. **EU foreign and security policy must be a feminist one with gender equality as one of the overarching goals.** Equal representation of women and girls in foreign policy actions is key, as they are disproportionately affected by violence, poverty, armed conflicts, and the impact of climate, health and other emergencies.

### KEY PROPOSALS:

- **Implement the Strategic Compass** ensuring synergies with all the policies and priorities of the European Commission.
- **Strengthen the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.**
- **Increase cooperation with NATO to ensure effective procurement and spending**, avoid repetitions, and improve intelligence coordination.
- **Address the challenges faced by the European defence industry**, such as significant fragmentation, lack of cross-border cooperation, limited international competitiveness and the lack of common standards and regulations, while promoting transparency, accountability and ethical standards in the production and trade of defence products.
- **Work towards decarbonising the military industry** to reconcile the expansion of EU investments in the defence sector with the commitments of the European Green Deal and the targets of the European Climate Law.
- **Strengthen European defence cooperation and integration**, including through increased joint procurement of defence products, providing adequate support to European defence industry SMEs, greater cross-border and further investment in joint research and development projects, including dual-use products.
- **Incorporate a gender and an intersectional perspective in CSDP operations** and missions, in line with the EU's longstanding commitment to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

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## **IV. CONCLUSION**

As the European elections are approaching, we are proud that our political family has supported people through very challenging years at every political level. We have been at the forefront of making Europe stronger, more resilient, and better prepared to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Rooted in our values, we are ready to fight for democracy, for the wellbeing of our citizens through the various transitions of our societies, and for Europe's role in the world. With these objectives in mind, we will continue our efforts to drive progress, foster equality and unity in our pursuit of a Europe that is more inclusive, just, and democratic.

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