



Party of European Socialists
European Parliament
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Conclusions of the meeting of the PES Network for South East Europe,
4-5 July 2003, Skopje

The follow-up to the Thessaloniki Summit – South East Europe and EU Integration

The PES Network for South East Europe, meeting in Skopje from 4-5 July 2003, welcomes the declaration of the EU – Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki and especially the commitment that **the future of the Balkans is within the European Union**. The meeting notes that the *'Thessaloniki Agenda'*

acknowledges the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) as the framework for the eventual accession of the countries of the Western Balkans to the European Union,
foresees a deepening of the SAP through the establishment of European Partnerships,
opens EU programmes, especially in key areas such as education, research, energy and the environment, to SAP countries,
recognises the importance of co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs, especially the fight against organised crime and human trafficking, and of the social and economic development of the SAP countries,
and renews the emphasis on regional co-operation as part of the process of EU integration.

The Network notes that the Summit concluded that the pace of integration was in the hands of the SAP countries. Nevertheless, the Network believes that more could be done by the Union to assist the SAP countries and calls on the EU to review the financial resources available through the CARDS programme.

The Network notes the importance of the issue of the European Union's visa policy both for the citizens of South East Europe and of the European Union. It welcomes the conclusions of the Thessaloniki Summit to ask the Commission to hold discussions, within the framework of the SAP, with each of the Western Balkan countries regarding the requirements necessary to take these issues forward in concrete terms.

The responsibility of social democracy

The PES Network brings together socialist and social democratic parties from the EU, from countries that are part of the current enlargement and the countries from the Western Balkans. Its aim is to advance the process of integration through co-operation between social democratic parties, members of parliament and governments. In response to the challenge set out at Thessaloniki, the PES Network for South East Europe proposes:

to organise meetings of our party leaders alongside the meetings of the EU-Western Balkan Forum launched at Thessaloniki. It welcomes the initiative of

the Socialist International to organise such a meeting in Albania in the autumn and hopes to be actively involved,

to promote the exchange of experiences and best practice between parties from the countries that are part of the current enlargement and the Western Balkans. This should be done both bilaterally between parties and through Network meetings on specific themes. It would welcome the active involvement, where possible, of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity and its participating foundations in this work.

to strengthen co-operation and dialogue between social democratic parliamentarians from the EU, accession countries and Western Balkans through an annual meeting of social democratic groups in the national and European parliaments. It would also welcome a move towards bilateral co-operation between the European Parliament and individual national parliaments of the Western Balkans, and for increased structured parliamentary dialogue between the national parliaments of the EU and the parliaments of the SAP countries.

to develop common policies between our parties to tackle common problems and to take the process of regional co-operation further,

to build on the work of the CEE Gender taskforce and to strengthen women's participation in our political parties.

The Network welcomes the recent initiative by IUSY and ECOSY to bring together young members of political youth organisations from Kosovo, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia to discuss the future status of Kosovo. It believes that the future status of Kosovo should be addressed and should be based on the democratic will of all citizens of Kosovo, on the respect for rights of minorities and on the return of refugees and of displaced persons. The Network notes that parties from Kosovo have not as yet taken part in its work and resolves to organise a delegation to Kosovo to begin a dialogue with all parties interested in working with us.

The Network will hold its next meeting in Zagreb in the autumn. It supports Croatia's application to join the European Union and congratulates the Social Democratic Party of Croatia for the role it has played in making the application possible.