



**“Progressive Societies in the Balkans”  
PES Balkans Conference  
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
30-31 March 2010**

**Report**

**1. Introduction**

On 30-31 March 2010, the Party of European Socialists (PES) held its annual Balkan Conference with the topic “Progressive Societies in the Balkans” in Sarajevo hosted by the SDP of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose of the conference was to discuss progressive and social democratic strategies towards EU membership of the Western Balkans region. The PES was represented by **PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen as well as PES Secretary General Philip Cordery and the party leaders from the region, Zlatko Lagumdžija** (SDP Leader, BiH); **Zoran Milanovic** (SDP Leader, Croatia), **Branko Crvenkovski** (SDUM Leader, fyr of Macedonia); **Edi Rama** (SP Leader, Albania); **Ilir Meta**, (LSI Leader, Albania); **Ranko Krivokapic** (SDP Leader, Montenegro); **Adrian Năstase** (PSD President of the National Council, Romania) in addition to **Kristian Vigenin** (MEP S&D Group, BSP, Bulgaria), and many other party representatives from all over Europe.

The PES vision of Enlargement 2014 as well as strategies for fair growth, social justice and sustainable development for the region were discussed during three respective panels. As such, this political event fostered agreement amongst national and party leaders on drafting progressive, social democratic strategies as a constructive contribution to the EU Enlargement process and policy priorities in the Western Balkans.

**2. Enlargement 2014: A PES vision for the Western Balkans**

As presented in the final and unanimously adopted political declaration of the conference, the PES feels that a common agenda for the Western Balkans towards EU membership is needed. **This vision is “Enlargement 2014”. It is to be understood as a milestone towards EU membership for the countries of the region. The roadmap for this vision is the Thessaloniki European Council declaration of 2003, which stipulates the EU’s values and the continuation of Enlargement in the framework of the Stability and Association process (SAP). The vision of “Enlargement 2014” bears in mind that some countries may join the EU before the year 2014.** In summary it therefore represents the PES contribution to Mr Füle’s commitment of support to the Western Balkans and provides the region with political direction in its efforts to join the EU.

**This PES vision is to serve as an incentive and concrete roadmap for related strategies and efforts in the region.** This is necessary as the EU Enlargement strategy is lacking cohesion, focus and clear commitment. The enlargement fatigue displayed by certain Member States in turn threatens the popular consensus for EU integration in the region and may result in disillusionment and at worst political extremism. Therefore, the EU has to give a clear roadmap, for which “Enlargement 2014” is the PES proposal.



### **3. Discussion Panels findings and policy recommendations**

#### **Panel I: “The progressive strategy to EU membership 2014”**

**The EU membership perspective is restated as a driving force for regional cooperation, institution building, political reforms and political stability.** The progress of the region is welcomed. Extreme nationalism, organized crime and human trafficking, social exclusion and a weak civil society and scarce NGOs activity were recognized as the challenges to the EU agenda, to be overcome with increased efforts.

The related quality of the EU approach lacks vision of solidarity with the region and strategic focus for the long-term. It is feared that Enlargement fatigue may delay the process and create new tensions in the states of the region. The Enlargement agenda cannot be pushed forward if it remains too vague and lacks a strategic focus for the long-term.

**As highlighted by PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen summing up the consensus that the debate about the “if” is over and that the task is now to concentrate on the “how”.** Building on the recent presidential election victory in Croatia and the positive overall pro-European policy record of the Serbian and the Montenegrin governments, social democracy is the political force in the region having the most adequate strategies to lead it to EU membership.

For these reasons, the social democratic vision of “Enlargement 2014” was welcomed as a driving force and clear target thus creating momentum in the process and the related debate. As practical steps to achieve towards this objective, regional cooperation through the fora of CEFTA and the RCC (see below) is essential. **Continued cooperation with the ICTY the protection of minority rights and a determined fight against corruption are fundamental importance for EU membership. A constructive social dialogue with empowered trade unions and civil society is crucial for creating a broad multiethnic consensus for EU Enlargement in the region and socially inclusive and fair societies.**

Elections have to adhere to EU standards. **Minority and gender rights have to be promoted. Politics in the region have to be transparent, multiethnic and gender balanced** for the creation of progressive societies. In this context, visa liberalisation remains crucial for giving hope, increasing efforts and promoting intercultural understanding. This will also aid in resolving persisting regional and domestic issues.

#### **Panel II: “Western Balkans for fair growth, jobs and social justice”**

In their opening interventions, the panellists acknowledged the detrimental effects of the global financial crisis in the region, already struggling with high unemployment of up to 40%, large shadow economies and substantial public deficits of up to 51% of GDP. An overreliance on IFIs can lead to a vicious cycle of foreign debt.

The panellists called on the EU to show more solidarity with the region in overcoming the crisis. The main criticisms listed during the panel included the restrictive structure of the IPA barring non candidate countries from technical assistance for the components III-V emphasizing regional, human resources and rural development. While the EU Commission rationale assumes that institutions and administrative capacities in the region are too weak to ensure effective and efficient use of the funding provided, it should be underlined that strong multiethnic state structures can be only based on a well educated population and a solid economic base. Therefore, a comprehensive reassessment of the current funding priorities is called for.



In addition, the EU funds for the period 2007-2013 are substantially lower in comparison to the previous 10+2 rounds of Enlargement with regards to relative numbers and per capita proportion. A record of strong economic growth cannot compensate for this decrease in financial assistance. In contrast to the preceding accession candidates, the countries of the region have emerged from a recent past of conflict disrupting and destroying fundamental economic and institutional basis. As stated above, the financial crisis will further disrupt the economic processes of the region, whose economic base is already frail. **Consequently, EU pre-accession assistance has to take this problematic into account and should result in an absolute increase of funding in addition to reassessed funding priorities.**

**A Marshall plan for the region based on the common values of social inclusion, fair growth and equality of opportunity is of outmost importance. In this context, empowered civil society and trade unions as agents of social justice are essential. To overcome the development gaps in the region, knowledge based economies have to be created and the region has to be embedded in all strategies and deliberations of the EU 2020 agenda.**

A good first step in this context is to expand the TAIEX, and Twinning programmes (encompassing short term seconding for the enforcement and implementation of EU legislation and long term seconding of EU experts for previously agreed on projects respectively) for potential candidates. In this context, the funding approach of other instruments like the EIB and EBRD, have to be reassessed towards this goal. For instance the EIB from 2000 to 2009 spent only 4% of its funding for the region (including new EU member states) on health and education, which clearly is insufficient.

The too macro-economic policy culture of DG ECFIN has to be reviewed. As the EU Commission service in charge of economic analysis and policy advice to non-candidate Western Balkan countries, DG ECFIN should have a more progressive approach (vis-a-vis social affairs, health care investments, pensions) in its annual assessment of the Western Balkans countries' medium-term Economic and Fiscal Programmes (EFPs) and annual, or in particular cases, biannual bilateral economic dialogue with each country. In this context, the EU Commission could give non-binding recommendations for the earmarking of funds in a number of social and environmental policy areas.

**A comprehensive, substantial and specifically designed education and scholarship programme for the region regardless of candidate status** in addition to the current global and large regional Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Comenius and other components of the EU life-long learning programmes should be a core element of EU strategy towards the region. **Accelerated visa liberalisation and educational exchange programs are of outmost importance.**

For increased social inclusion, the concepts of a social dialogue with and the empowerment of trade unions, civil society and NGOs must remain a priority. It was observed that the **current EU Integration process lacks protection of people's socio - economic rights and an understanding of social dialogue, social responsibility and respect towards obligations prescribed by the adopted legislation and therefore has to be reviewed as well.** Strong efforts need to be made with regards to the youth and gender dimension on which the combined consequences of the global crisis, the phased IPA approach and few first class education opportunities as well as low social inclusion have the most detrimental effect.

In conclusion, the panel reiterated **Enlargement 2014 as a driving force giving concrete incentives for investments. Specific efforts for youth and women's employment are needed to meet the previously mentioned goals and in addition to prevent a brain drain in the long term.**

### **Panel III: "Ensuring sustainable development in the Western Balkans"**

The panellists observed that more had to be done to promote sustainable development in the region. In particular, the problem of capacity and implementation was cited as a major challenge. Economic growth must not be at the expense of the environment and sustainable development.



While the EU progress reports note advancement in the candidate and potential candidate countries in the region on the subject of sustainable development, issues nevertheless continue to persevere. The most important problems include waste management, water quality and river pollution as well as industrial pollution and risk control in addition to nature protection. The virtual absence of reliable, comprehensive and current sets of data on the subject may indicate a low degree of related commitment by relevant international policy actors. A good first step is to create a more comprehensive set of data and to redefine the Eurostat indicator framework –currently only focusing on EU Member states and candidate countries- to aid the EU to more effectively implement strategies in order to meet the challenges of sustainable development and monitor progress on the subject. In this context, related statistic surveys have to be expanded to non-candidate countries as well.

The countries of the region are willing to commit to sustainable development, evidenced by the passing of related laws. **What remains problematic is the implementation and scope of these laws. Local authorities often lack the administrative capacity to effectively execute new legislation. Therefore, it was agreed that the region has to pool its resources and capacities. The regional cooperation fora of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) have to be strengthened with regards to increased policy input and output and foremost policy delivery.** Increased and maintained technical assistance in this sector by the EU and other actors is crucial. In this context the EU has to review its restrictive approach to the IPA for potential candidate countries. A single focus on macroeconomic variables, infrastructure development and institution building will not resolve these issues.

The economies of the region have to be assisted in becoming greener and knowledge based. It is regrettable that the components III – V of the EU Pre-Accession instrument (IPA) - are not open to potential candidate states. Such a strategy means that no technical assistance and project guidelines for these policy priorities are provided and this approach clearly hampers the region's efforts in creating green economies and green jobs. Only a holistic approach can be truly effective.

Energy efficiency and related projects were put at the top of the agenda. In general, the EU should provide more technical assistance in the promotion of green infrastructure and seconding of experts regardless of candidate status and all countries should be included in the relevant IPA instruments. **Most importantly, the EU has to make a joint EU 2020 policy with the region a top priority. A social dialogue with trade unions, civil society and empowered NGOs as well as a fight against organized crime is needed to increase advocacy and available resources.**

#### **4. Follow up of conference and immediate practical steps for the near future**

As part of the conference PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and PES Secretary General Philip Cordery hosted a leaders dinner and an International Secretaries breakfast respectively. Both meetings reiterated the central findings and recommendations of the conference, reflected in this report and the final declaration of the conference.

As an outcome of the International Secretary Meeting, several practical steps following the conference were agreed on.

The idea of a specific **PES Western Balkans Enlargement task force** was endorsed:

- **It will be headed by Mr. Kristian Vigenin, PES Presidency member, MEP.**
- **This working group will be entrusted with setting benchmarks and priorities on Enlargement 2014.**



- **The member parties of the Western Balkans region are invited to nominate MPs and experts for the task force.**

It was pledged to increase party and party foundation cooperation and networking by creating a comprehensive email list and there will be further discussion on regional issues on the occasion of PES meetings and conferences.



## Annex:

- i. Programme of Conference
- ii. Conference List of Participants

**PES Balkan Conference  
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### Programme

#### Tuesday 30 March 2010

Morning      Arrival of participants

16.00 – 17.15 **Opening Session:**  
“Enlargement 2014: A political priority for European Social-democrats”

17.15 – 18.30 **1<sup>st</sup> session and debate:**  
“The progressive strategy for EU Membership 2014”

18.30            Family picture

18.45 - 19.45 Contacts with media  
Venue: Hotel Europe

20:00 – 22:00 Leaders’ Dinner  
Venue: Hotel Europe

20:00 – 22:00 Reception for other guests hosted by SDP  
Venue: Hotel Europe

#### Wednesday 31 March 2010

08.30 – 09.30 Breakfast working meeting with international secretaries

09.30 – 10.45 **2<sup>nd</sup> session and debate:**  
“Western Balkans for fair growth, jobs and social justice”

10.45 – 12.00 **3<sup>rd</sup> session and debate:**  
“Ensuring sustainable development in the Western Balkans”

12.00 – 12.30 **Closing**

12.30 – 13.00 Press conference



**PES Balkan Conference**  
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**List of Participants**

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen	President	PES
Philip Cordery	Secretary General	PES
Edi Rama	Leader of PS and Mayor of Tirana	PS, Albania
Arta Dade	International Secretary and Member of the Parliament	PS, Albania
Arben Ahmetaj	Member of Parliament	PS, Albania
Ditmir Bushati	Member of Parliament	PS, Albania
Endri Fuga	Advisor	PS, Albania
Ilir Meta	Leader of LSI and Deputy Prime Minister Of Albania	LSI, Albania
Edmond Haxhinasto	Vice-Chaiman of the Party	LSI, Albania
Majlind Lazimi	Coordinator of Foreign Affairs	LSI, Albania
Brunilda Paskali	International Secretary	LSI, Albania
Ulrike Hartmann	International Secretary	SPO, Austria
Zlatko Lagumdžija	Leader	SDP, Bosina Herzegovina
Zeljko Komsic	Vice-president of SDP and member of Presidency of B&H	SDP, Bosina Herzegovina
Alija Behmen	Member of the SDP Presidency and Mayor of Sarajevo	SDP, Bosina Herzegovina
Sasa Magazinovic	Member of the SDP Presidency and Secretary International	SDP, Bosina Herzegovina
Sergei Stanishev	Leader of BSP, Former Prime Minister of Bulgaria	BSP, Bulgaria
Kristian Vigenin	Member of the European parliament	BSP, Bulgaria
Boyan Chukov	Vice-Chair of the BSP Foreign Affairs Council	BSP, Bulgaria



Deniza Slateva	International Secretary	BSP, Bulgaria
Teodora Petrova	Press officer	BSP, Bulgaria
Anna Miteva		pBS, Bulgaria
Elenko Bozhkov		pBS, Bulgaria
Zoran Milanovic	Leader of the SDP	SDP, Croatia
Karolina Leaković	Member of Parliament	SDP, Croatia
Milan F. Zivkovic	Secretary of National Policy Commission	SDP, Croatia
Per Bodker Andersen	CoR Co-Chair of the Joint Consultative Committee with FYROM and Councilor of Kolding	SD, Denmark
Sinikka Hurskainen	Member of Parliament	SDP, Finland
Alain Richard	Member of the PES Presidency Former Minister of Defense	PS, France
Christian Castagna	Member of the International Secretariat	PS, France
Felix Porkert	Advisor to the International Secretariat	SPD, Germany
Bolter Dietrich	Senior advisor new media	SPD, Germany
Paulina Lampska	International Secretary	PASOK, Greece
Philippos Savvides	Member of the International Relations Department	PASOK, Greece
Lapo Pistelli	Responsible for Foreign Relations	DP, Italy
Luca Bader	In charge for Europe and North America	DP, Italy
Branko Crvenkovski	Leader of SDUM and Former President Of Macedonia	SDUM, FYR Macedonia
Zoran Popov	International Secretary	SDUM, FYR Macedonia
Blagica Kolevska	Member of Cabinet	SDUM, FYR Macedonia
Maja Ilievska	Member of Cabinet	SDUM, FYR Macedonia
Zoran Jovanov	Member of Cabinet	SDUM, FYR Macedonia
Predrag Sekulic	Political director	DPS, Montenegro
Ranko Krivokapic	Leader of SDP	SDP, Montenegro
Ivan Vujovic	International Secretary	SDP, Montenegro



Jelena Mitrovic	President of Youth of SDPM	SDP, Montenegro
Adrian Nastase	President of the National Council	PSD, Romania
Corina Cretu	Member of the European Parliament and International Secretary	PSD, Romania
Denise Bromzetti	President	PSD, San Marino
Gerardo Giovagnoli	Secretary General	PSD, San Marino
Michele Chiaruzzi	President	PSD, San Marino
Michele Muratori		PSD, San Marino
Milos Jevtic	Member of Parliament and International Secretary	DS, Serbia
Anja Zlatarov	International Secretary of Youth	DS, Serbia
Milos Amadovic	International Secretary	SDU, Serbia
Dusan Milivojevic	member of Political Council of SD Youth	SDU, Serbia
Bojan Kostres	Deputy President of LSV, Member of Parliament and former President of the Parliament of Vojvodina	LSV, Serbia
Aleksandra Jerkov	Member of Parliament and member of the Executive board of LSV	LSV, Serbia
Patrick Vlačič	Minister of transport and vice-President of Social democrats of Slovenia	SD, Slovenia
Dijana Galijasevic		SD, Slovenia
Zoran Thaler	MEP, Vice - Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia Parliamentary Cooperation Committees	SD, Slovenia
Tanja Fajon	Member of the European Parliament	SD, Slovenia
Dejan Levanič	Member of the National Assembly	SD, Slovenia
Damjana Karlo	International Secretary	SD, Slovenia
Ana Damjana	Policy adviser	SD, Slovenia
Boris Potočar	Member of the Youth forum of Social Democrats	SD, Slovenia
Sanja Bajramović	Member of the Youth forum of Social Democrats	SD, Slovenia



Pedro Sanchez	Member of Parliament	PSOE, Spain
Reza Talebi		SAP, Sweden
Rob van de Water	Special Adviser on policy towards Neighboring countries	S & D Group
Petroula Nteledimou	President	ECOSY
Amalija Koren	Vice President	ECOSY
Thomas Maes	Student network coordinator	ECOSY
André Gerrits	Chairman	Alfred Mozer Stichting
Kurt Bassuener	Senior Associate	Democratization policy Council, USA
Jovana Jokismovic	Accomplice	Centre of Modern Skills Serbia
Lena Hjelm-Wallen	President	European Forum
Danijel Tadic	Project manager Alfred Mozer Stichting And European Forum	European Forum
Paul Pasch	Country Director Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
François Issarel – Savary	Senior policy advisor	FEPS
Mladen Popovic	Program Coordinator	NDI BiH
Andrea Cellino	Director of Policy and Planning	OSCE, BIH
Slavica Drajkovic	Resident Advisor	TACSO, BIH
Toshe Zafirov	Project Assistant	PROGRESS – Institute for social democracy
Yonnec Polet	Head of the International Unit	PES
David Capezzuto	Policy Advisor International Unit	PES
Michael Oberreuter	Assistant International Unit	PES

