



The New Social Europe by PES President Poul Nyrup Rasmussen

Launch of the report
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Brussels

Thank you so much for being here.

And thank you to Jacques Delors, co-author of the New Social Europe for being with us. It is not a coincidence that Jacques Delors has had such a great influence on the European Union. Those of us who know Jacques Delors know that he has a will and decisiveness of iron and many exceptional qualities.

Dear friends, I want to say that among us today we have our PES Presidency members. I hope that you will receive them well. We belong to the same political family and the same ambition and there's certainly a need to join our political forces in the beginning of this New Year (2007).

I also want to say that I'm happy that the media are here. We will try to make our message clear and purposeful.

Friends, on your tables you have our report called "The New Social Europe". We regard this report in the European Socialist Party as a sort of milestone in our political history. It is a turning point for raising our political influence and role in the European political arena.

I want to say to you today that we cannot talk about a New Social Europe without recognising that we have a Social Europe. There are those who doubt that Social Europe exists. I think if I ask anyone of you with a similar background to my own, you would say, of course, we have a social Europe. We have a Social Europe because all over the European Union we have welfare states and these welfare states would not have been there without us.

These welfare states did not develop by themselves. They came about as a result of political will; they came about because there was a strong trade union movement and they came about because we united our political forces. Now the welfare state, the welfare states of Europe are under threat, under pressure from all sides and that is why Jacques Delors accepted to join our work on this New Social Europe and I owe, on behalf of the PES, a great thanks to Jacques Delors for investing his intellect, his energy and his youthfulness in this work. When I say youthfulness, I'm talking about his mind and of course also about his activity level, which sometimes makes me feel a bit older than I actually am!



There is a Social Europe and there is certainly a need to renew this Social Europe. If we don't renew it, we will lose it - we have an obligation to be front runners in this renewal process. If we are passive and do not face up to the challenges of globalisation and of economic or political conservatives and right wing forces, we risk losing the best features of these welfare states in this century. That is why we must recognise the trend towards increasing social divides as a consequence of globalisation, unless we act. We must recognise that over a half of the European population feel insecure. They do doubt whether they can manage, do doubt whether their children can live and prosper, in the good sense, in this new globalised economic era. We know that many people fear for their welfare state's future.

In a world of climate change, population ageing, and globalisation, we know that there are opportunities, but we also risk losing if we, the PES and its member parties, fail to act. Transforming all these hesitations and insecurities into a new direction which we can unite upon: that is our ambition. We held a Congress in Porto recently. At this congress we decided on the roadmap for the New Social Europe. And let me just guide you through this roadmap.

What you have on your screen now is the 10 principles for the New Social Europe. You will see that these 10 principles compose this roadmap. I know that the new member states in Eastern and Central Europe do not have the same point of departure economically as in Scandinavia or in Western Europe. Of course I know that the reforms to be taken will be different depending upon whether you are talking about the UK, the Scandinavian countries, the Eastern and Central European countries, continental Europe or the Mediterranean. But, we will each have one direction and 10 principles to follow. In all our socialists and social democratic member parties – from Hungary to Finland to Malta to Ireland - you will see the same type of argumentation, the same references to these 10 principles.

The first principle concerns rights and duties. This value of rights and duties is so old that some of us cannot even remember when it emerged, but we know that rights and duties is one of the cornerstones of the Labour movement. Why do we mention it now? Because we cannot imagine a new society without clear rights and duties, not only for the ordinary worker, but also for the CEO. We want to create a new cohesion based on co-responsibility for everyone, whether we talk about the public sector, or whether we talk about the private sector managers. Rights and duties is a far reaching principle to ensure the cohesion and coherence of our societies.

The second principle is as naturally important as the first, but not easy to realise: that is full employment.

The third principle is investing in people, which is closely connected to full employment, and has to do with education and qualifications in the new world. It's essential because we don't want to compete in Europe on lower wages. We want to compete on the best qualifications, to be at the top of the value chain, giving the best opportunities for all to raise skills and achieve the most highly skilled workforce in the world, with everyone on board, leaving no one behind.

Inclusiveness is our fourth principle and a fundamental value for us.



Our fifth principle is universal child care. Can I say that a small number of European countries already regard universal childcare as a quite obvious and natural phenomenon. For example, the Scandinavian countries ensure that working women and men do have access to childcare for their children, while they're at work. The reason why we have made universal child care a major principle for the New Social Europe is that it's absolutely key for ensuring equal treatment and opportunities between men and women – allowing parents to participate fully in the labour market – and addressing the democratic deficit we have in many countries. It's a key for breaking the generational cycle of poverty, in which the children of poor parents – who have fewer chances of getting the best educational opportunities from an early age - become tomorrow's poor adults. Childcare is essential for ensuring that our kids grow up with social awareness and a sense of how to live in a community.

Equal rights for women and men: our sixth principle. Zita Gurmai is here, our President of PES Women. She knows that equality has not yet been achieved: we had a campaign last week showing that women still earn on average 17 and 18% less than men, and in some member states, there is an even greater difference of 24%.

Social Dialogue: John Monks, Secretary General of the ETUC is here. I just want to say that principle number seven is fundamentally important in many aspects. We cannot do without social dialogue, without strong trade unions, and we need to strengthen the influence of the social partners at the European level as well as at the national level. This has to do with cohesion and it has to do with reforming our society in such a way that employees can be with us. I just want to mention in this respect that John and I, amongst others, are deeply involved in work about capital funds, about hedge funds and about private equity funds that are a new phenomenon of a magnitude that we have never seen before in Europe.

Diversity and integration is our eighth principle – which becomes more important every day, as well as achieving sustainable societies in the face of climate change. An active Europe, principle number ten, will be vital in achieving all our other principles in this New Social Europe. Let's join together to defend our values.

Europe is a unique region in the world. Nowhere else on this planet will you find so many welfare states and so many states in a transformation process trying to create a coherent welfare state. But we can lose it if we are not clear about the direction in which we want to go in, as part of our roadmap, in a common effort.

I hope that this social agenda will not only be an agenda for the Party of European socialists, but can also be an agenda to inspire a new treaty. All my life I have fought for this simple idea that there must be a society which is a framework for every individual to develop his or her talents. This framework we call society is under pressure for the moment and we must work together with the following message for the whole of Europe: "Europe is a political construction, it is the fourth democratic house besides the national, the regional and the local democratic houses and we need to be stronger in our political presence, in our political direction and our political methods". Together we must build a New Social Europe.

I thank you very much.

