



RENEWING SOCIAL DEMOCRACY
CONTRIBUTIONS TO A EUROPEAN-WIDE DEBATE

With Forewords by:
Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
Alfred Gusenbauer

Edited by:
Ernst Stetter
Karl Duffek
Ania Skrzypek



CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4	SONJA LOKAR	
FEPS/KRI		The historic crossroads	93
The Next Left - Lessons from the past, challenges for the future	5	HENNING MEYER	
POUL NYRUP RASMUSSEN		The Parliamentary Elections 2009 – a brief analysis of party, politics and communication issues	101
Foreword	8	TOMAS PETRICEK	
ALFRED GUSENBAUER		The European Parliament’s Elections in June 2009: Socialist Perspective	105
Renewing Social Democracy –Designing a New Political Vision	11	MACIEJ RAŚ	
MERCEDES BRESSO		The 2009 Elections: Socialists at the crossroads	109
Towards a Progressive Europe	15	ERNST STETTER	
FLORIN ABRAHAM		Challenges for the Next Left: 10 observations on Solidarity	115
A new Left for New Capitalism	21	Eric SUNDSTRÖM	
ATILLA ÁGH.		The Next Left: Thoughts on the European Elections 2009	123
The dual challenge for the Next Left: Europeanization and Modernization – the sweet-bitter story of HSP in the 2009 elections	29	Dimitris TSAROUHAS	
GEORGE BAKATSIANOS		The 2009 European Elections and Social Democracy: a tough road ahead	129
The two paradoxes of the European Elections and the future of social democracy	35	Antun VUJIC	
PAOLO BORIONI		Next Left – European Social Democracy: Between postpones and the next Left	133
How well is the new Democratic Party doing?	41	Andrew WATT	
RENÉ CUPERUS - MONIKA SIE DHIAN HO - FRANS BECKER		Contribution to the FEPS publication “Next Left” - After the European elections. What consequences for socialists	139
The Polarization of the Dutch Electorate	49	BIOS-ANNEX 1	
JAN NIKLAS ENGELS - GERE MAASS - KARINA MROSS		Members of the “Next Left” Focus Group	147
If we loved Europe a little more... – after the European Elections: why we need more European Social Democracy and more social democratic Europe?	55		
PETER FILZMAIER			
We failed terribly – the disaster of the S&Ds in the EU Parliamentary Elections	65		
GÉRARD FUCHS			
Les Elections Européennes en France – une défaite pour le Parti Socialiste	71		
ANDRAS INOTAI			
Next Left – the future of social democracy in a globalized world and in an uncertain Europe	73		
MARIA JOAO RODRIGUES			
The Renewal of socialism and social democracy	79		
ANNA JUGANARU			
The Next Left – Last European Elections and their consequences for social democratic parties – the Romanian Case.	85		

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The “Next Left” Focus Group has been established as a follow up of the reflection process, which gathered experts from different fields and of different origins in order to assess the results of the last European elections. Their analyses and diagnoses reflect different trends in the pan-European debate on the future of social democracy. Therefore diverse views collected in this publication in forms of essays and academic papers provide a uniquely composed mosaic of inspiring thoughts. Undoubtedly they may serve as reference and input to a global debate on the future of democracy, political parties and naturally of the social democracy itself.

We would like begin thanking Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, the President of the PES, for his kind attention to our project, expressed in addressing this publication with a foreword.

Our next debt is to Alfred Gusenbauer, Chair of the FEPS “Next Left” Focus Group, who led us through the discussions’ meanders and who encompassed all the findings in an excellent summary.

We would like to thank each of the authors who agreed to contribute to this publication and provided the very fresh perspective on the left in Europe. For their efforts to not only draft a sincere assessment of the state of social democracy, but also to provide hope mapping the opportunities, we are most obliged.

Last but not least, we would like to express our gratitude towards all the member foundations, who support us by contributing to the debate

NEXT LEFT

LESSONS FROM THE PAST, CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The Treaty of Maastricht of 1992 marks the historical moment for the European Union and social democracy. A Community based on economic principles transformed itself into a politically and socially aware European Union. Reflecting it, the leading political families established formally their European parties. Within the following two decades they have grown, aspiring to be the clearly and loudly heard voice of the European Union citizens.

Today we are all proud of what the Party of European Socialists (PES) became, with the fact that they unite diverse member parties for one symbolic and meaningful Manifesto. Furthermore, it is exciting to see the new opportunities created by the parties themselves to enhance the participation of grass roots members through tools such as PES activists. Since 2007 the European Parliament has given to the European parties an instrument of reflection and thinking... in allowing them to establish European political foundations.

Despite these, how hopeful, conclusions, we cannot help but wonder – why is it then so that the same period is in fact the age of a democratic crisis in the EU? To name some examples, one needs to return to the issue of institutional reform – which since the Treaty of Amsterdam is a tragic record of setbacks and disappointments, crowned by the failure of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. The general gridlock is even more clearly visible by the record of the decisions taken on the EU level, especially by the Council. The paradox is here that the more democratic the process is, the fewer obstacles are there and the more issues can be decided by Qualified Majority Vote instead of unanimity, the less conclusive outcomes there are. Maybe this is also why the European Union provokes citizens’ resentment.

The turnout in the European elections is falling from one to another vote, having established itself on the level of 43% - which is by 20% less than what was noted 30 years ago by the first direct European elections. The outcome of the elections additionally provides more and more place for right wing, anti-democratic forces in the European Parliament. Having that in mind, it is arguable to state that the current crisis of social democracy must be analyzed in a broader context of a crisis of democracy as such.

In order to assess such an overwhelming crisis, one has to start with the question of values. For social democracy the leading ones have been traditionally solidarity, democracy, equality and peace. Solidarity is the progressive answer to how society is seen. Nowadays it needs redefining in order to be even more precise to tackle the issue of rising individualism. Its character must be captivated in order to respond to the changing, globalized world through a strong call for international solidarity.

Equality is the motivation to construct a system in which each and everyone has the same opportunities and is empowered to be able to seize them. Democracy and peace linked with solidarity and equality provide four strong pillars on which an understanding of what a state, a European Community and Global Governance means and should be about.

The democratic crisis demands stronger than ever that social democracy clarifies what the European Union can deliver to the citizens; to challenge globalisation and the role Europe and its citizens will have. This is more than a challenging task. Especially that since in the 90s social democracy accepted capitalism as a ruling economic theory and abandoned at the same time the entire debate on industrial/post-industrial society. As a consequence of that, not only the distinctive vocabulary, but also the entire philosophical backbone was forgotten and even lost. This left social democracy unarmed. Even in contemporary circumstances of grave economic crisis, currently mainstreaming neo-liberal ideologies appear absolutely vulnerable.

Clarifying the role of state and the organization of the societies and through that also the mission for the European Union will allow social democracy to sharpen its image and re-emphasize the cleavages between them, conservatives and liberals. It will assist in regaining the prerogative to interpret the centre of the society, which was conquered recently by Christian democrats monopolizing the characteristics of 'moderate, reasonable.' At the same time it will allow to overcome the fragmentation from the 90s in between the advocates of the traditional and the third way supporters.

Having allowed the traditional lines of division to be blurred by political correctness, the left lost clear links with the views of groups it aims to defend and represent. As long as these are not reestablished, as long as social democracy and its voters think with false images about one another, there will be no breakthrough in the electoral score and governing opportunities for the left.

These, as also many other themes are part of the debate that within FEPS is named as the 'Next Left' project. It unites academics, journalists, political stakeholders from all the streams – all in a spirit to find answers, to build together the way out of crisis. Its principle is to inspire, to believe in hopes that are historically entrusted in us – and possibly we may inaugurate with it a new era on the EU level.

The articles of this book are expressively reflections by the authors themselves. They are not stating the "usual" official positions. We would like to contribute with this publication to the needed intellectual debate on social democracy. This is also part of opening a true European space for political reflection

Ernst Stetter

Secretary General

Foundation of European Progressive Studies

Karl Duffek

Director

Renner Institute

Ania Skrzypek

Policy Advisor

Foundation for European Progressive Studies

A NEW DIRECTION FOR PROGRESSIVE SOCIETIES

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen

President

Party of European Socialists

Prime Minister of Denmark 1993 - 2001

The renewal of social democracy is by no means a straight forward, simple debate. Now is the opportune time for such a process of reflection and evaluation within our political family.

'The Next Left' by its very name implies a study of what has gone before and also of the current state we find ourselves in. 'What's next?' tacitly demands an evaluation of the past and present in order to formulate the best approach to the future.

In the European elections last June we did not achieve the breakthrough we campaigned for, that of winning the elections and delivering a new direction for Europe. Moreover, despite some promising exceptions, we are far fewer parties in government now than we were at the turn of the century.

I believe these results are a call to action as well as a call for reflection. As long as Europe's citizens are facing monumental challenges, as long as their jobs and livelihoods are at risk, as long as our planet is endangered, we will stand by people and fight for them, and with them, for our future. For this reason, we intend to learn the lessons of these election results and define a new way forward.

The vast majority of Europe's citizens did not vote for business as usual. The biggest election winner was apathy: 214 million European citizens did not vote in the elections last June. Many of these non-voters were traditional supporters of PES parties. In a context of serious crisis, citizens were not convinced that democratic politics was able to make a difference.

The 2009 European Parliament is by far the least progressive we have ever had. Europe's conservatives dominate the European Commission and Council. We believe this could have grave consequences for ordinary people across Europe: inadequate policies to tackle the crises we're facing will mean ordinary people could suffer a further decline in their working and living conditions. That is why we must define a new way forward as a matter of urgency.

What we need now is a thorough re-evaluation of our vision of social democracy to enable us to successfully address the issues raised by our electoral losses.

We must renew social democracy from the bottom up to face today's challenges and meet citizens' expectations. Our aim must be to develop a new vision for Progressive Societies in the 21st century. The globalized world implies that we cannot undertake this debate in isolation of each other. Conflicting national solutions are doomed to fail. A vision for social democracy must be coherent at national, European and global levels if it is to be successful.

Solidarity has always been one of the guiding principles for our political family. That is yet another reason why we must ensure that this process of renewal and reflection is pan-European. To move forward together we must look to each others' experiences. We must understand our past weaknesses and our current strengths. In doing this, we will exploit our common potential to renew and develop our movement. The contributions gathered here begin this long process. They are broad and diverse and offer much food for thought. We have a lot of work to do together.

I would like to thank my good friend Alfred Gusenbauer for his dedication in chairing the FEPS Next Left Focus Group. I would also like to thank the editors of this book: the Foundation for European Progressive Studies and the Karl Renner Institute. Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the authors whose works are collected in this publication and everyone contributing to this European-wide debate on the renewal of Social Democracy. I look forward to future debates and contributions to the Next Left project.

I wish you happy reading and fruitful reflection!

RENEWING SOCIAL DEMOCRACY – DESIGNING A NEW POLITICAL VISION

It has been a great pleasure of mine to chair the work of the FEPS Focus Group 'Next Left' and it is an honor to present to you herewith the initial conclusions of this European-wide debate that gathered politicians, academics, journalists and communication experts.

I am very proud that just within six months the debate evolved, bringing together a conclusive assessment of the recent electoral scores with constructive proposals towards renewing and strengthening social democracy in the future. What needs to be underlined is the historical importance of this debate, which – being the first ideological round after the times of division around the third way – marks the beginning of a new era for the left.

Moving to the main findings, our reflections could be grouped into 5 categories: **Crisis circumstances** (Contemporary Crisis, Rebuilding the movement); **Policy agenda** (Our Values in Modern Times; Democratic EU, Policy Agenda for the EU); **Organizational challenges** (An uncomfortable truth – who our members are today; Towards an organizationally stronger European Socialist Family; Socialist Education); **Communicating social democracy** (Media as the 4th power, Communicating social democracy); **Future Roadmap** (10 suggestions for 2010). This structure allowed us to address what we believe are the core challenges facing our movement today. Our deliberations are exemplified in the few points that carry particular importance for the next left debate:

1. The background of any contemporary debate is the multilayered crisis: financial, economic, employment, social, environmental, food, energy. Yet another crisis, which is of a different nature, can be observed from the individual/citizenship level, through governmental, European to finally intergovernmental scale; the democratic crisis. This is naturally closely related with the fact that there seems to be a general deficiency within the traditional democratic parties' system and their ideologies. This shortcoming disables one's capacity to govern and causes distrust amongst citizens in the democratic process in general and politics in particular. The first and biggest challenge ahead for social democracy, therefore, is to break through and use these circumstances as an opportunity to reboot.
2. The crisis shakes at the core of the political reality as we know it, as seen in parties' political programmes. Neither unregulated capitalism, nor further liberalization of all aspects of production (including intellectual property) and trade can be defended by contemporary liberals. The traditional model of the family, in which generations live together and benefit from each other's achievements and securing each other's needs (also in aspects of elderly care or child care) is no longer up-to-date and conservatives will need to find a way to deal with that. At the same time, socialists will need to reflect on the new content of their leading motto "improving living and working conditions" when the labour market changes so fast, imposing a new philosophy with regard to issues as working time. What is needed is not only a debate on what to do now, but what the cornerstones of our ideology should be about. The answer of social democrats must be complex.
3. Social Democracy has always been a movement. It originated from the workers movement and kept strong ties with trade unions, social service providers, emancipation movements, students' unions, pacifist

movements etc. The challenge is to re-establish these links and find a way to cooperate, overcoming myths and prejudices existing on both sides. While transforming the agenda, social democracy must define for itself what are the possible groups and organizations that social democracy tries to represent and advocate for.

4. Values are the moral spine of a political movement. Despite their universal character, their actual meaning needs to be defined by the movement itself, in order to relate to the contemporary world. In that process, values need to be organized in a way that they provide a set of beliefs, which allow us to comprehend and assess the reality, and coherently set up the goals and ways to reach them (policies). Last but not least, the meaning of our values needs to be close to both people's minds and hearts, so that indeed they would be ready to stand up in the name of these values and work towards a better world constructed upon them. For the socialist family it is imperative to return to a debate on its values. The priority in this elaboration shall be given to: (a) solidarity, (b) equality, (c) democracy and (d) peace. Each of these values need to be re-described and modernized on different levels. If one takes solidarity as an example that would mean: (a) solidarity in the era of globalization (International Solidarity), (b) solidarity in the times of dramatic Climate Change (International Solidarity, Intergenerational Solidarity), (c) solidarity in the light of the demographic challenge (Intergenerational Solidarity) and (d) solidarity in post-financial crisis reality (Solidarity of the working class).
5. On the issue of the policy agenda, social democrats need to respond for themselves to the question of what they believe a state is; what the EU is and what are the instruments that they have to use as subsidiary on each level in order to ensure that their value based policies are executed in the most effective manner. The issue of polity and policy must be discussed in the EU context – as remaining vague on that does create ambiguity in explaining European citizens of the added value. Social democracy must define its battlefield and how, as a European political force, it can be legitimised and held responsible to their promises. For the same reasons, social democrats should reflect on their role in the EU context, both as parties in opposition as parties in government. Drawing a conclusion from the fact that in a majority of EU member states social democrats constitute opposition, one needs to see how to create the most effective way to still influence decision making.
6. There needs to be a clear vision on Europe that social democrats are easily to be identified with. It has to be a positive, progressive one. For that reinvention a new leading key message needs to be considered. It should follow the successful 'Social / A new Social Europe' method, which was used by Willy Brandt for the first time in 1972, and renewed by PES in 2006. The classical way of composing the programme on the European level, which is constructed of three 3 pillars - (a) Social Europe, (b) Institutional Europe, (c) International Europe – should be debated if that synthesis is still accurate. With the development of new competences of the EU, also new areas of policy-making shall be conquered by social democrats and the ownership over the agenda claimed. In this context the debate about the location of the left in the political spectrum is not bringing answers. On the contrary, it shows conflicts within the movement itself. In any case, the majority of the voters are not aware of the content of the political sciences theory of the left and right division. What does differentiate us is our set of values and policies and only through them should social democracy describe itself.

7. Since the beginning, the 'socialist movement' and the 'workers movement' have been synonyms. So much, that no one has even wondered if this relation has not loosened throughout the years. While so many significant changes are taking place within the political life of the last three decades – economic and labour market transformation, trade union evolution, social services providers expanding work etc. – it is crucial that we find a new understanding of this relationship. This is how the movement arrived at the situation in which on the one hand it is trying to sustain the tradition of being the workers' movement, on the other it is facing from the side of the workers itself criticism of becoming 'elitist'. The dichotomy, emphasized by the situation in which politics turned from a mission into a profession for many, results in programmes being created for a hypothetical 'them', rather than for 'us'. It is reflected in sentences like 'these people whom we stand with and for'. Additionally, political scientists have been analysing the evolution of the national parties as a development from the state of movement to a state of elitist professionally organized parties run by an apparatus in party headquarters and local offices. The change in the world of media usually (with several exceptions) makes parties invest large capital in the 'modern' communication strategy (spots, billboards) rather than in door-to-door campaigns. This provides an extraordinary organizational challenge – to analyse our own membership, to see who we have become and reflect what the best way is to return to the principle of being a movement, to organize and activate, to enhance democratic civic participation within the party and in society.
8. Social democracy has always been a movement of hope and opportunity. This is why education and training has traditionally played a crucial role in equipping members with knowledge about the world and the movement, with the ability to understand and critically assess policies, and with a challenge to develop one's self and contribute to the progress of society. This noble tradition is however no longer cultivated on a large scale across the member parties. From the side of our members there is less and less enthusiasm for the conferences and debates of a regular set-up (Q&As), while at the same time there is no new concept of socialist education. This results in a situation in which the core know-how of social democracy is no longer cultivated. Unaware members naturally find it challenging to comprehend, promote and defend the policy. It makes the movement more vulnerable to the attacks of (euro-)sceptics, and enhances the tendency to generalise, which is causing a gap between the movement and the people. Social Democracy must reinvent the methods of socialist education, and enhance the debate within the movement. For that, it shall use its own expertise of international and national trainings, as also establish working relations with partners (i.e. trade unions) to learn from their initiatives. The goal is to support the construction of party political training curricula for activists, local and regional councillors
9. Digital era meant a new path and a very quick evolution of media. Everyone from everywhere can currently process information which, thanks to the tools available over the internet, can reach undetermined number of people. This requires a new way of seeing the media and their role as 4th estate (power) in the democratic system. This should include considering: new opportunities for mobilisation and organizing the movement via i.e. virtual communities, virtual meeting spaces; educational role of traditional and new media; issue of new skills required from the politicians – such as ability to present a message through i.e. twitter, facebook, YouTube. There is a need for social democracy to be active on that field, a need to ensure that the process can be seen as a democratisation of media, through making them available to all, does not pose new dangers such as, e.g. the

distribution of xenophobic messages. Parallel to this, social democracy must create a strategy of what to do to solve the issue of the presence of media on the EU level – either through Europeanising the national media (raising the awareness of interconnectivity of local/national/EU news) or through creating a new set-up on the EU level.

10. A new reality requires a new vocabulary. This is a challenge for social democracy – to reinvent its vocabulary, to make it both modern but also clearly originating from our movement proud tradition. This must be done in order to prevent in the future that the Christian Democrats 'steal' our vocabulary, proposals and vision. Once done on the European level, it must also be reflected upon how to ensure a balance between *international* English (widely used in Brussels) and the language, that translated into the mother tongues does not turn to be ambiguous. The traditional words such as: *class, worker, comrade* are to be brought to a meaningful state. Reforming tools of expression must also allow escaping from the defensive position social democracy got itself to, in which it no longer *stands and struggles for*, but *defends* for example the welfare state.

These ten points reflect the state of the debate and prove that there is a need for designing a new political vision. For successfully completing this challenging work we will need to use our entire potential. This is why the continuation of the process is to maximize the openness to all contributions, to reach out to different partners, to provide a framework of pan-European reflection and above all to provide an added value to the debate on social democracy.

You, dear reader, are very welcome to join us!

Alfred Gusenbauer

Chair of the Next Left Focus Group

Foundation for European Progressive Studies

TOWARDS A PROGRESSIVE EUROPE

A paper by Mercedes BRESSO

Key words:

**Apathy, market regulation, redistribution, welfare state,
multi-level governance, equality of opportunities**

Summary:

Our political family needs to have a debate about what kind of Europe we want and how we want our societies to develop. In this context, we must argue for a change in the way the EU and our countries, regions, towns and cities are governed. In order to be able to reverse declining patterns of support for European social democracy and rebrand it in a way that effectively addresses people's social, economic and environmental concerns, we must revisit our attitudes towards the market, redefine the role of the state in the context of a broader multi-level governance architecture and reconfirm our commitment to equal opportunities for all.



The outcome of the European elections, harshly punishing socialists, social democrats and progressives across the EU, must constitute a turning point for our European political family. It is clear that we must stop turning the other cheek to the forces of unregulated globalisation and neoliberal capitalism. It is time to go on the offensive. It is time to fight apathy and regain voter confidence.

Taking this step forward calls for a frank discussion about the areas we have fallen short, without however denying the substantial legacy in terms of citizens' welfare bequeathed to European societies by socialist and social democratic governments. In the face of the mighty economic forces of globalisation and a European integration project that continues to grow larger and deeper, socialists, social democrats and progressives of different Member States in Europe must be able to take a qualitative leap forward and become true European socialists, social democrats and progressives. This is all the more relevant on the eve of the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, a treaty that accords even greater recognition to the EU as a political entity, and amidst a financial and economic crisis that has plunged the Union and the world into deep recession. The Lisbon Treaty is a major step in the institutional development of the European integration process, since it defines the specific European Union model as a democratic supra-national structure which relies on strong institutions and an open political process. Yet, the economic, social and environmental crisis, the difficulties in ratifying the new Treaty, and the urgent need for coherent EU positions on key global challenges such as climate change, financial regulation or the fight against poverty, show that the political and institutional framework of the new Treaty is indispensable but it will not be sufficient. It needs strong political will and clear political vision to be translated into tangible results in order to reach the citizens. This is why socialists, social democrats and progressives need a return to the political debate about what kind of Europe we want and how we want our societies to develop. We have to focus our activities and ambitions on the people, whose lives and opportunities we want to improve. It is also imperative to argue for a profound change in the way that the European Union is governed.

It is the magnitude of the tasks at hand that should dictate the way they are handled and not the other way round. Sadly enough, this has not been understood by all constituent parts of the Party of European Socialists. Take for instance the rationale and content of the PES campaign for the 2009 European elections. It was meant to be a European campaign rather than the addition of 27 separate national ones. Despite the tremendous work that the PES put into the elaboration of its Manifesto – through unprecedented bottom-up consultation over an entire year – PES member parties' campaigns focused, in their majority, on national rather than European issues. As national interests curtailed, to a certain extent, the PES Manifesto's ambitions and voters had been growing disillusioned with a European project whose added value in their everyday lives seemed all the more elusive, the biggest election winner was apathy. As many as 214 million European citizens, in their majority traditional supporters of PES parties, shrugged their shoulders and decided not to vote. With less than half of eligible voters having exercised their democratic right, we are faced, once again, with the EU's failure to effectively communicate to citizens at grassroots level the ideological and practical implications of European integration. This is where Socialists, Social Democrats and Progressives from the local and regional tiers of government have a particular role to play as three quarters of European legislation is implemented at sub-national level. The results of the European elections for our political family indicate that the social democratic electorate has not been sufficiently mobilised. This is partly due to growing social and ideological divergences within the social democratic electoral basis: on the one hand, working classes are attached to protection and security in all its forms, being wary of

globalisation; on the other, the better educated middle classes are more flexible and adaptable to change, as well as more attached to environmental values. Elaborating a political programme that satisfies such an electorate, especially amidst an unprecedented global economic crisis, is a challenge. The PES did present a balanced manifesto, proposing a viable project for a new social Europe, both flexible and secure, as well as environmentally sustainable. Yet, this loud and clear proposal got entangled in national politics, complacent party structures and lethargic multipliers, thus failing to reach and convince those at grassroots level who needed to hear that the PES offers a real alternative. Our responsibility as representatives of the local and regional levels of government is considerable because we are closer to workers and in better position to illustrate to them how the European funds are used at local and regional level to make a difference in their lives. In my capacity as President of the Piedmont Region (Italy), I can confirm that, over the past 20 years, 400,000€ have been invested each day through the Structural Funds, mobilising a total of 1 million € per day thanks to their leverage effect with regard to private investments.

The key question at this stage is how to reverse declining patterns of support for European social democracy and rebrand it in a way that becomes once again relevant to people's concerns: social, economic and environmental ones. To do this, we must revisit our attitudes towards the market, redefine the role of the state in the context of a broader multi-level governance architecture and reconfirm our commitment to equal opportunities for all.

Socialists, social democrats and progressives have always acknowledged the fact that markets are good servants but bad masters, yet they failed to halt the reversal of roles, the disastrous consequences of which are now felt globally. I will not of course argue against open markets because I strongly believe that they are the best available means of creating prosperity and stimulating innovation and growth. The single European market, with its liberalisation of goods, services, capital and labour, came to life thanks to socialists, social democrats and progressives, and it has been Europe's credible answer to globalisation as the alternative would have been economic stagnation and poverty. With globalisation gathering force and the European single market getting more integrated, there came greater economic growth creating both winners and losers. This is because such growth has all too often been decoupled from prosperity and has ineluctably led to greater economic interdependence, as well as growing inequalities. European socialists, social democrats and progressives failed to see in time the deficiencies of the markets and the need for regulation in order to establish a much needed structure of global governance to harness globalisation. Our duty is to ensure that political decision-making takes precedence over the markets' so-called "invisible hand". Despite the fact that deregulation and laissez-faire in economic and social terms have proved to be disastrous, the risk of returning to "business as usual" is visible. This must not happen. We have to make sure that we have learned our lesson from this crisis: we have to put in place the necessary safeguards that it will not happen again, make sure that rules are respected and can be enforced, and help those who now suffer the consequences of the crisis. Stronger European supervision and more cooperation between all European national regulatory bodies, better regulation of all financial institutions and products and more effective protection of pensions and savings are necessary prerequisites for avoiding a relapse of the crisis. In order to overcome this crisis and to orient Europe towards a sustainable future, considerable changes are necessary – not least with regard to the kind of jobs which are available and how they are organised. Smart Green Growth is a sustainable path to exit the crisis and help people re-enter the labour market. The economic crisis must not be an argument for reducing efforts but, on the contrary, for stepping up action to fight

climate change and for strengthening the technical know-how and developing activities aimed at addressing climate change. In other words, we should use the crisis as an opportunity for setting up a better development strategy and putting people first. This is why we socialists, social democrats and progressives are supporting the smart green growth model. The deep structural changes which are necessary to overcome the crisis are exactly the right opportunity to re-orient our economic activity towards sustainability. Local and regional authorities can play a decisive role when it comes to job creation in sectors linked to smart green growth, such as renewable energies, energy efficiency including in buildings, water and waste management. What is more, unlike the traditional purely economic growth model which has created deep social inequalities, smart green growth empowers citizens to be more in control of their future, not just in environmental terms but also in economic and social ones. Being at the same time renewable energy producer and consumer is an eloquent example of the significant breakthrough that smart green growth can bring in terms of state energy monopolies. And this is just one field. Changing economic growth into green growth undoubtedly requires significant investments, not least in appropriate training in green skills and jobs. Moreover, it would be naïve to believe that everyone will be fit to jump on the smart green growth train of opportunities. The current crisis has been so damaging that there cannot be a direct substitution of job losses by green job creation. Much as I am fully aware of the incontestable merits of training and lifelong learning, these cannot be the panacea for the tidal wave of unemployment that the crisis has left behind. This is the time when we, European socialists, social democrats and progressives, must revisit redistribution, a concept that has lately become a taboo in our ideological discourse because it got associated with interventionist practices of the past. After all, people's welfare has been, is and will continue to be the core value of our political family.

With welfare states under increasing pressure because of a multitude of factors including dramatic demographic changes, redistribution - a task traditionally undertaken by the state, which intervened to correct social imbalances and distortions within its borders - is aboard a vehicle that may prove ineffective. This is because nowadays, both challenges and opportunities go well beyond the confines of national borders. Climate change and renewable energies are a resounding example of policies that cannot emanate from the national level of governance alone. And the answer to this is not a stronger central state. Multi-level governance is a matter of basic democracy, legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency. Local and regional authorities are key actors in the process of harnessing globalisation and of shaping a cohesion and solidarity model that does not constitute a return to strictly national approaches. To successfully take forward a European integration project that defends a more social Europe, our duty as a political family is to ensure that Europe has adequate means at its disposal. A more ambitious European budget translated into effective regional and cohesion policies is instrumental in attaining this goal. This is the reason why I strongly oppose any form of renationalisation of European policies, and therefore, of recentralisation of cohesion policy through an ever growing sectoral approach towards community policies, at the expense of cohesion policy. Socialists, social democrats and progressives should defend a future cohesion policy based on a regionally-sensitive approach, which allows for the adaptation of interventions to regional, and even intra-regional, specificities and recognises the key role of local and regional authorities in its design and implementation. It would be unacceptable to reduce cohesion policy to a redistributive policy aimed only at those regions with a weak GDP because such an approach would be at odds with both a European policy based on inter-regional solidarity and the territorial cohesion goal introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. The future of Europe at a time when reinforcing territorial cohesion and solidarity is at stake in the context

of the current economic, social and environmental crises calls for a strengthening of the political role of the local and regional dimension, and consequently also of the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Although national governments may prove unable to address supra-national challenges, Europe cannot be managed by the European institutions alone either. In addition to the role played by the European Parliament, such institutions need strong and legitimate relays such as local and regional politicians. The European Union will attain its objectives only if its institutions, national regional and local government authorities and the citizens themselves all contribute. This partnership should be an intrinsic part of the process of drawing up and applying Community policies.

Our commitment to equality of opportunities is also a key issue when it comes to proposing a convincing political paradigm that places all citizens at the heart of its concerns. We will not be able to achieve equality if we do not acknowledge differences and adapt the policies of our own political family accordingly. It is an intellectual and ideological fallacy to perceive equality as sameness. This is valid for the entire spectrum of discrimination grounds stemming from gender, ethnic origin, nationality, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation but also from simple lack of adequate skills and competencies. The rhetoric of rights and obligations can only be democratically founded if both elements of the equation are duly safeguarded. Without undermining the importance of other forms of discrimination, I wish to focus in this final chapter on migrants and women, who are all too often victims of multiple discrimination.

Immigration policy has caused some ideological malaise amongst socialists, social democrats and progressives while the right has high-jacked the issue, exploiting people's fears and prejudices. Our role as a political family is to elaborate a coherent discourse on migration, addressing not just its economic potential but its deep and long-lasting social and societal repercussions. Ensuring that legal migrants have the same rights in order to have the same duties as other workers is a 'sicyphean challenge' for our political family but also a legal and moral obligation. Enabling immigrants to integrate for their benefit and for the benefit of the communities in which they live is the only option for us. At the same time, we need to have the courage to stamp illegal immigration networks and combat human trafficking. Asylum is a fundamental human right for those fleeing from persecution, which is why we must ensure that a firm and fair system protecting the vulnerable and exploited is in place and is not subject to abuse.

Let me now turn to gender equality. Socialists, social democrats and progressives have won some gender battles but gender discrimination is deeply rooted in national cultures and practices. Women's participation in economic and political life is strikingly divergent across the EU. Surely, gender parity cannot start from top political positions. It has to be applied at all levels of representation, from local and regional, to national and European. The 50-50 Campaign for Democracy, launched ahead of the European elections by the European Women's Lobby and strongly supported by PES Women should be a permanent item in the political agendas of all socialists, social democrats and progressives across the EU. It is worth noting that men hold 76% of parliamentary seats in the EU and while the number of women Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) has risen from 30 to 35%, they are disproportionately absent from key leadership positions in the EP. Our political family and all its constituent parts must at last realise that it can no longer adopt a sectoral approach to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming must be a genuine ideological and political reflex for socialists, social democrats and progressives. It is also a precondition for successful policy making. Take for instance the current economic

crisis: how can a recovery plan be successful if it fails to acknowledge the impact of the crisis on women, who are today the single biggest force for economic growth on the planet? The same goes for entry plans into the labour market since women make up a high percentage of those with atypical work patterns. I strongly believe that political campaigns of European socialists, social democrats and progressives should make gender equality their top priority. At least, this is what I personally have chosen to do. Not to pay lip service to women's issues but out of sheer conviction.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this essay attempted to highlight some key challenges facing our political family. The European social democratic project has not lost its foundation but it needs to rethink the way it reaches out to its voters. Our duty as politicians, whether at local, regional, national or European level, is to plea for more and better integrated Europe that empowers citizens to fully exercise their democratic rights. This is where we all socialists, social democrats and progressives naturally belong and it is this European political sphere that we must all strive to strengthen.

A NEW LEFT FOR A NEW CAPITALISM

A paper by Florin ABRAHAM

Key words:

crisis, change, solutions, citizens, participation

Summary:

The author studies the general causes of the European social democracy's decline, identifying four types of crises: identity, leadership, cooperation and solidarity.

The need is revealed for a new ethics of market economy and the European left needs great projects, the most important being that of turning the Union into a global actor.

The June 2009 European elections, unfolding for the first time on such a large scale, in 27 Member States, revealed the weaknesses of the European democratic left, be it social democratic, socialist or labour. The election results have determined the shivery reaction of the political and intellectual leadership of the European left, not so much for the decrease of the EP share, but by relating to a confessed or only presumed expectation: during economic crises, the left, through its traditional message centred around the role of the state, easily wins the support of European citizens, thus winning elections. The finding after the end of the European elections, that the working hypothesis was invalidated by reality, by the rise of the far right, raised astonishment reactions and interrogations reflecting the surprise status. “What happened to the European left, why didn’t we win the European elections?”, seems to be one of the actual questions for European left wing politicians and thinkers.

The following short material subscribes to this broad debate, by trying to offer some answers to the causes of social democracy’s shortcomings as well as ideas that can become solutions for reinvigorating the left.

Elements of the broader context

The situation of European social democracy must be understood in the context of a succession and overlapping of four broad crises, all of them having a global dimension. Without entering into a detailed presentation of them, one must highlight, in the context of this analysis, the unfolding of:

The International system crisis, marked by the fact that international institutions and international law do not cover anymore the reality of power distribution. The Georgian crisis of last year, when a country (namely Russia) intervened militarily on the territory of another country for the purpose of unilaterally promoting there its own political logic, and the international community realized that it did not have the instruments to impose a comeback to the status quo ante, marks the symbolic moment of the beginning of the end of the unipolar system. Now, the international system can be characterized as an unstable non-polarism, as it is unregulated. This consolidates non-polarity in two ways: a great part of the cross-border fluxes take place outside sovereign governmental control and, most of the times, without their knowledge, thus diluting the influence of great powers. Likewise, globalization increases the power of non-state actors: energy exporters, terrorist organizations, multinational companies, but also media or international organizations’ bureaucracy. For the European citizen, this new stage of transition of the international system means an increasing uncertainty state concerning the future of Europe and, especially, its potential role in the competition with other global actors (for example, the recent gas crises can be also regarded as consequences of the EU’s geopolitical fragility).

The crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. There is a widespread consensus in accepting the fact that the current economic and financial crisis marks the end of an entire conception about the market and its relations with public institutions, be them governments or regulation bodies. Ideological commitments towards the *laissez-faire* market theories and the social Darwinism theories, as well as the principle of the shareholders’ priority over the other co-interested groups, have distanced the leaders of the business environment from the values of bona fide, careful management and preoccupation for public interest. As a consequence, the immunity system of capitalism, ensured by market discipline, is eroded, while the cancer of “irrational exuberance”, of greed and self interest reaches metastasis. It is obvious for everybody that world economy cannot continue following previous models, but solutions are not easily foreseeable and, anyhow, there are no universal recipes and miraculous solutions. The economic crisis, through its direct effects (unemployment, poverty) increased the sensitivity of

European voters to radical or miraculous solutions, a situation that increased pressure on traditional parties, either right wing conservative and Christian democratic or left wing social democratic and labour.

The crisis of democracy. The Kantian dream of universal peace and democracy proves to be a chimera. Mixed forms of leadership, apparently democratic, substantially authoritarian tend to become dominant, as long as the feeling that democracy is worn-out becomes widespread. Parliaments and, most of all, parties are delegitimized and the citizens turns from participation to apathy. This is also the background of the social democracy crisis, which we will touch upon below.

The environmental and climatic crisis. Even the most hard-line oil magnates have come to recognize the fact that humankind is on the verge of an imminent conflict with the natural environment. The successive technological systems created after the various stages of the industrial revolution leave a brutal mark over the environment. Subsequent to the climatic crisis are the food crisis, the water crisis and, most visible, the demographic crisis.

All these four crisis are present and undisputable, each contributing in a way or another to the creation of the citizens’ priorities agenda, to the topics of public debate and, finally, to the psychological environment in which the elections took place. The essential fact is that **the crisis situation strengthened the people’s need to have certainties, to have strong guarantees concerning their security and the security of the communities in which they live.** The four abovementioned crises have determined the transfer of public agenda from consumerist exuberance to fears concerning survival during crisis situations.

Which left, which crisis?

From an ideological point of view we can hardly speak of a “single” European social democracy, in spite of the existence and functioning of the Party of European Socialists. Although the existence of a core of common values of the left (*freedom, equality, social justice, solidarity*), from an electoral point of view, for voters the “European left” is (still) a virtual reality. That is why, at the first level of analysis we must take into account the concrete situation of each country, by referring to two types of axes: a) ruling or opposition party; ii) country having a strong or weak left wing tradition. There are cases of ruling parties in countries with a left wing tradition, but which lost the elections (for example, Germany, the United Kingdom, Hungary), but also cases in which opposition parties in countries with a strong tradition, which also lost elections (the most significant example is France). We can also identify cases in which the left does not have a strong tradition, but where the ruling party won elections (Romania) or, on the contrary, it lost (Bulgaria). These cases reveal the fact that one cannot establish a single explanatory matrix, which would include all situations. Therefore, one cannot raise a single diagnosis for the results of European elections, because, in fact, in the elections for the European Parliament, citizens take into account both the situation in their own country, and implicitly their position towards the government, and their expectations from the European Union. This leads to the fundamental ambiguity which persists in interpreting the results of European elections.

If we explore things in depth we can notice though the fact that, beside specific situations, *the crisis of the left is not determined by the present economic and financial crisis, but it is only deepened by the latter, which made older weaknesses more visible.* We consider this is an important observation, as it opens the way towards an evaluation of the present state of the European left from a much broader perspective.

Thus, we acknowledge the fact that during the last 15 years social democracy has undertaken a process of getting closer to the centre (see the *Third Way*), adapting to the new realities after the Cold War by taking over some of the economic thesis of neo-liberalism. Thus, social democracy has repeated the experience of liberal parties from the interwar period and especially after World War II: its ideas become part of the portfolio of all parties and the force of liberal parties decreases very much. Thus the left did not seem to be so different from the right and this confusion concerning the identity of political forces has weakened the capacity of social democracy of integrating the social body in a set of common values. Thus, we identify all indications of an **identity crisis**. The left that got closer to the centre has had the most important victories at the end of the 90s, but remained fixed in the project, a situation making it vulnerable to attacks of smaller forces, which were however better ideologically structured: the greens and the former communists. The latter took over parts of the tradition voters of social democratic parties, the rest being attracted by the far right.

The revelation of the identity crisis in which social democracy finds itself is highlighted by the debates taking place around the most important issues of the electoral campaign: the economic crisis. The right wing leaders and parties have made an abrupt ideas turnover, promoting the idea of a massive and immediate state involvement in the economy for creating regulation mechanisms or even for direct investment, thesis for which the left had been blamed for decades. The right got closer to the ideas of the left, but gave the impression that it does it with conviction, while social democracy faltered between traditional ideas and neo-liberalism. For the great public, the approach differences within the left concerning an exit from the economic crisis, was perceived as inconsequence. Even inside the PES there were approach differences in what concerns solutions for the migration problem, the labour force mobility or the minimal social standards. Thus, while eastern parties promised an opening of labour markets within the EU, the western ones promised protectionist measures for the national labour force. The economic crisis was the occasion to emphasize **the crisis of cooperation and solidarity**, as some governments (social democratic or just with the participation of the left) promoted the logic of “each one gets away on its won.” Instead of adopting a radicalization of traditional left wing messages, a part of social democratic parties have skated towards economic nationalism.

Subsequent with the identity there is also a **communication** crisis. The left generally proved to favour immigration policies and proposed the resolution of social and cultural cleavages through integration. The latter are *soft* methods, compared to the divisive radical discourse of the right (stopping immigration; economic protectionism and nationalism; stopping European integration); social democrats have proposed more balanced solutions to the problems to which the right has offered direct answers and which seemed to have much simpler solutions. The result was that, for a part of its former voters, **the left has become too open, too progressive, too innovative compared to the voters' fears and expectations**. This is an essential observation, which can mark the cleavage within the European left in the future: between parties / leaders mainly preoccupied in preserving “ideological purity” and parties / leaders preoccupied by maintaining power at any cost. In fact, the situation was anticipated even during the electoral campaign, by the attitude towards the PES *Manifesto 2009*. While some parties / leaders wanted to capitalize as much as possible the document resulting after consultations at European level, other parties did not even take into consideration the trans-national programmatic document (it is the case of the Slovakian Socialist Party). The division between the ideological and the pragmatic currents, existing in almost all PES member parties, overlaps that between the advocates of action concentration at national level and those wishing an intensification of trans-national cooperation. This diversity of opinions within the left wing parties sometimes degenerated in open confrontations, which contributed to weakening the electoral appeal of social democratic parties.

The most sensitive aspect, but which cannot be avoided during the analysis is the **leadership crisis**. We must recognize a certain incapacity of the European socialist left to promote trans-national image leaders, which would inspire and gather the voters. We can notice that international social democracy, with some notable exceptions, does not have charismatic characters, able to generate sympathy of those outside the militant core. The need for charismatic leaders is not a whim, but in fact it becomes a precondition of success in politics, in the context of an increasing role of mass media over decision making. People are voting for ideas, but ideas seem to be more attractive if they are conveyed by people having remarkable political qualities.

Does the present leadership crisis mean the fact that the left is no more interesting for people having remarkable political qualities? By no means; the left has a remarkable human resources basis, but the current leaders deficit could be explained by the facts that: a) in the “shadow” of former international left wing leaders no other personalities appeared, as one of the perverse effects of charismatic leaders is that they did not encourage the emergence o politicians with the same qualities, crushing all competition from the very beginning; b) the polycentric organization of most left wing parties made that party leaders are the result of compromises between factions and the result of these negotiations is the smallest common denominator, therefore politicians without a strong personality; c) social democratic parties are, many of them, too bureaucratic and the fingerprints of left wing mandarins over leader formation mechanisms is, sometimes, too strong. This leads to the confusion between the manager-leader and political communicator-leader; iv) a part of left wing leaders are not able to convince because there is a pronounced dissonance between their behaviour and their message; thus, they are considered to be fake politicians.

What next?

Of course, there is the inevitable question: “How long will the social democracy crisis last?” Maybe it would be nice for the 2009 European elections to be the very end of this crisis. But reality seems to contradict the wishes of left wing people. Until the next European elections, due to be held in 2014, European social democracy can recover and it could even become the main continental force. Until then, however, it is almost a certainty that the left will not be able to avoid two symbolic defeats: in the United Kingdom and in Hungary. Of course, the motivations of decreasing confidence of citizens in British Labour and Hungarian socialists are mainly national, but the decrease of the European social democracy force acts as an encouraging factor for these tendencies.

Therefore, in order to be able to cope with a relatively quick recovery, the left wing leaders must be prepared, for start, to manage the new failures, which seem to become ever more inevitable, the only missing piece being the size of the defeat.

What must and can be done?

Clearly, we must distinguish between what is necessary to be done and what can certainly be done. Several left wing militants, technocrats and even politicians feel the need for a re-foundation of social democracy, of a “New Left”, but such a wish can be just a seductive utopia. The essence of a visionary and courageous policy is to turn the necessary into possible. This fundamentally means **not to give up on the left's fundamental values, but**

to come back to them, however by applying them to an ever changing reality. This new era, whose boundaries are barely visible, could be called "New Capitalism".

The present economic and financial crisis is not only a fight for survival between banks, companies or enterprisers, it also fundamentally involves competition between several explanatory models. **Our efforts must be oriented towards creating the interpretation framework for the nature of the capitalism's crisis.** The left should come with its own answers in order to avoid the mistake made at the end of the Cold War, when neo-liberalism was the winner and social democracy had to move to the centre. We must convince people of the fact that the crisis stage can end faster only by applying our solutions and that they are the guarantee for the avoidance of similar crises in the future.

But more than insisting with technical explanations about the nature of the crisis and its solutions, **the left must refresh its message concerning the ethics of market economy** (of the New Capitalism) in order to convince people that only by reinventing themselves similar crises to the present one can be avoided. This ethics could be synthesized under the formula "anti-greed".

Left wing leaders must reflect upon their public conduct (as the image of "caviar left" overshadowed in many places the image of "democratic left") in order to become credible in promoting a new market economy ethics. **A re-foundation of the left thus depends on the re-foundation of the civic contract between politicians and citizens.** Politicians must turn towards people's problems and quit on acting solely according to the exclusive logic currently governing the life of political parties.

An important point of this new civic contract consists in taking responsibility for errors made in the past. Social democrats must have the courage to admit the fact that the State alone is not a miraculous solution, but instead it is a very part of the problem. Therefore, not only we need to rethink market rules, but also state functioning rules. Common people must receive guarantees that both the market and the state function in a transparent manner and according to some predictable rules.

Social democratic parties must make **an effort to simplify ideas communication strategies**, so that their generous ideas can reach in an accessible form to the citizens. The left has too much seemed to be too sophisticated and, thus, artificial. We cannot regain the confidence of our citizens if we do not convince them that we are acting naturally, sincerely in what we enterprise within the public space.

The European left needs great projects, around which the energies of its sympathizers, militants and leaders could focus. This great project must be **turning the European Union into a real global actor**, an ambition implying both deepening integration, by a clearly federal re-organization and creation of a European demos, and strengthening action capacity at international level (in the fields of politics, economics, cultural influence and fighting climate changes).

Creating a "New Left" for a "New Capitalism" is not only a necessary but also a possible project and the responsibility for this endeavour does not rest only with the leaders or the sympathizers, with the national parties or the Party of European Socialists. It is the very duty of each left wing European, according to each one's needs and competences.

Aftermath: the left after the German elections

After the shock of European Parliament elections the left was dealt another blow: in the EU's largest state, German social democrats got the worst result since the foundation of the Federal Republic.

The result of the 27 September 2009 elections strengthens the decreasing trend of European social democrats, while the conservative or Christian-democratic right managed to consolidate its electoral basis. The unsuccessful period of German social democracy must be correlated with the decreasing electoral turnout indicating the fact that left wing disappointed voters has either stayed home or voted for other parties. SPD's weak result withers away the illusion of technocrat leaders and proves the harmfulness of grand coalition governments over the secondary partner.

SPD's defeat can also have European consequences by decreasing the European left's force in the competition with the conservative and Christian-democratic right. Jose Manuel Barroso's second mandate and the minority position of social democratic commissioners imposes a rethinking of social democrat's action forms, both at communitarian and at Member States' levels. The left's difficult situation at European level imposes the urgent improvement of PES leadership capacity. The Prague Congress can be the proper occasion for re-launching European social democracy.

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THE DUAL CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT LEFT: EUROPEANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION THE SWEET BITTER STORY OF HSP IN THE 2009 ELECTIONS

A paper by Atilla ÁGH.

Key words:

**apathy, extremism, division to new and old member states divide,
Hungarian specificities**

Summary:

This paper draws attention to the deep divide between the two groups of the losers in the present global crisis, i.e. between the “relative” losers reacting with apathy and the “absolute” losers reacting with different kinds of extremism. These reactions can be observed in the results of the 2009 EP elections and they can be best studied in the case of Hungary, since the social divide between the winners and losers is the deepest in this country. The Next Left has to elaborate a proper balance between competitiveness and solidarity for the EU as well as for its member states in the spirit of Lisbon Strategy.



The 2009 EP elections have brought a setback for the Left (PES), an advance for the extreme right and the stabilization of the lead of the Right (EPP). The mainstream approaches have emphasized that the rightist lead has been caused by the global crisis, since the Left has not given proper responses for the ensuing social crisis and the Right has promised more “law and order” type of security, while the protest votes have gone to the extreme right in an unprecedented manner. These approaches have certain plausibility, yet they do not have enough explanatory power because they have still been based on the conventional wisdom, instead of elaborating new analytical devices for explaining the new situation with the monster waves or tsunami of social exclusion.ⁱ

Obviously, all EU member states have a dual, external and internal, challenge. Namely the external one has been represented by Europeanization-Globalization and the internal one by domestic structural adaptation challenges. The ongoing global crisis, however, has provoked a much deeper social shocking effect than the usual crisis cycles. This dual challenge needs a profound analysis in the West in both aspects: (1) the unpreparedness of the big member states in the post-welfare period due to the long lasting *reform fatigue*, and (2) the lukewarm attitude the leftist parties towards the globalization threats due to the serious lack of their anticipatory capacity. These indications may only suggest some further research directions, including the populist turn of centre right parties to the leftist slogans to promise support for the masses threatened by the global crisis. This short paper, in turn, focuses on the lessons that can be learned from the new member states (NMS), first of all from Hungary.ⁱⁱ

Apathy and extremism: the conflicting actors

The results of the 2009 EP elections have shown a widespread apathy as well as an upsurge of various kinds of extremist parties. Accordingly, the EPC analysis says: “While the biggest ‘winner’ of these elections was unquestionably the ‘party of non-voters,’ the most striking result was probably the mixed bunch of populist, anti-EU and anti-immigration forces that have swept almost the entire EU.” (EPC, 2009:3). The key to understand these results is, indeed, identifying these two kinds of the losers: (1) the relative losers of recession who reacted with apathy that caused low turnout, and (2) the absolute or impoverished losers, including the young virtual losers without perspectives, engaging in the different kinds of extremism.

Hence, a new conceptual framework has to be elaborated to discover the reasons for both apathy and extremism. While the middle class strata with apathy are relatively homogeneous, and wait only for the return of economic growth, the various extremists groups are quite different from one another in their social compositions and political-ideological views. Thus, a differentiated approach is needed to describe these various marginalized groups and their political movements. The soft and hard Eurosceptic parties can easily be identified, although much less so in their combinations with the “soft” and “hard” populist parties or movements. There is an overwhelming journalism, however, in the treatment of radical right and extreme right, since their border lines have often been blurred. These two camps are basically different, since the far right parties are within the constitutional system, but the anti-systemic parties are against the democratic order.ⁱⁱⁱ

The FEPS paper has launched a hypothesis that the “missing voters” were to a great extent potential social democratic supporters: “It is worth noting, however, that many of the votes for populist, Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant parties came from what have traditionally been socialist and social democratic

heartlands. As such, the centre right did not exactly win these elections. Rather, the centre left failed to appeal to its traditional base as extremist played on the fears that arise from increasing unemployment.” (FEPS, 2009:3). In fact, this statement carries the main message and it goes to the good direction, but without the meaningful differentiation of two kinds of losers, i.e. without giving a full explanation of the election results. In general, social democrats have remained undecided between the support of the dynamic modernizing strata and that of impoverished strata, thus not striking so far a proper balance between competitiveness and solidarity in the spirit of Lisbon Strategy.

The old and new member divide has returned with a vengeance

The new member states (NMS) have been the biggest losers in the global crisis. As a result, the impact of global crisis on the EU has reproduced the deep divide between the old and new member states that began to fade away before the crisis. Right or wrong, the populations of the NMS still felt abandoned by the EU already in the first years of membership, and this malaise has been reinforced by the global crisis. Actually, the economic Westernization process was mostly beneficial for the NMS before the crisis, but it has turned to a great extent to the opposite due to the crisis. Many citizens consider that the EU entry has been too much to the benefit of the large companies located in the old member states, and the Westernized sector has neglected their subsidiaries during the crisis causing a lot of damages to the East-Central European (ECE) populations. This malaise may indicate overdriven fears but it reflects a real new tension in the NMS.^{iv}

The systemic change has produced two generations of losers in the NMS, first with the transition in the early nineties and second with the EU entry in the mid-2000s. These two monster waves of mass social exclusion have recently been reinforced by the global crisis and the Golden Age of populism has begun. Given the fact that the monster waves of mass unemployment with impoverishment have been bigger in the NMS, the same contradictions have appeared here more markedly than in the old member states. First of all, in ECE there have been large overlaps and mutual shifts between the centre right and extreme right parties, since even the centre right parties have been penetrated by the radical social and national populisms. It may be a good point of departure for the general analysis taking the NMS as a model case with explanatory power in discussing the 2009 EP elections. Although there has been a big difference between the centre-right parties in the East and West in the EU, nonetheless the infantile disease of the ECE centre right parties embracing radical populism may indicate the new tendency of the Western parties as well, even if they mostly keep a distance from the extreme right unlike their ECE counterparts.^v

Mini case study on Hungary

The results of the latest Hungarian EP elections have been outstanding in three respects and their analysis may shed a new light on the electoral fortunes of the Left and Right, and on the Golden Age of populism with the virulent extreme rightist parties. First, the electoral turnout in Hungary has been the highest (36%) in the new member states, therefore the usual lazy argument has to be excluded that everything can be explained in ECE by the low and decreasing participation. Second, the Hungarian Left (Hungarian

Socialist Party) has suffered the biggest defeat among the leftist parties (a setback from 9 to 4 seats with a 25.8% loss compared to the latest national elections), and/or among the governing parties. Third, the Hungarian extreme rightist, hard and militant anti-EU party, Jobbik has managed the biggest victory (15% with 3 seats) as a storm emerging from the blue sky.^{VI}

The split between the winners and losers has been the deepest in Hungary, including the split between relative and absolute losers and both camps have reacted with fear and anger. The public opinion surveys have indicated the shift of preferences among the Hungarian population to the security as a basic value and to the fears about the durable social crisis with the increasing unemployment. The party landscape has also changed beyond recognition, since already the pre-election surveys showed that the slight majority of Hungarians did not consider Jobbik as an extremist party, whereas the same surveys proved that this majority comes from the Fidesz supporters. Hence, the biggest public debate in Hungary between Left and Right after the EP elections has been about the party background of the Jobbik voters. The centre right has claimed that they have been disappointed socialist voters, however, the post-election surveys have also demonstrated convincingly that they have mostly come from the Fidesz. There has been a large overlap between the Fidesz and Jobbik supporters with frequent shifts between the two parties. Most Jobbik voters have also been Fidesz supporters and vice versa, whereas a large part of Jobbik voters has also been recruited from the young, first voters and from those living in small settlements.^{VII}

Fidesz has been the strongest centre right party in ECE, so the usual “double game – double discourse” attitude can be best analyzed in its case. The ECE centre right parties have been open to the radical right, even sometimes to the militant right, therefore they have developed a double game. They have shown a European face to the EU with a balanced, moderate conservatism to the domestic audience, at the same time they have sent coded messages to the radical and extreme right to widen their electoral support. This double discourse has been greatly facilitated by the slogans of national and social populism that, as a common denominator, has also provides continuity between moderate and extremist statements. Fidesz has refused to distinguish itself unambiguously from the anti-systemic right and it has echoed all excuses for the extremist mob, keeping its strategy of belittling the importance of Jobbik and of accusing the Left of exaggerating the size, influence and danger of the extreme right. With this strategy Fidesz has hoped to recruit the voters of extreme right to its own electorate, therefore it has not been ready for any kind of the meaningful confrontation with the extreme right. Fidesz has just managed some kind of limited actions through a “velvet distinction” from the Jobbik. After the 2009 EP elections, however, Fidesz worries about the Jobbik, since with its growing strength the Fidesz has lost its former control over this party. The Hungarian public opinion has been profoundly divided on this issue, since the Fidesz supporters have at least tolerated or even welcome the EP participation of Jobbik, whereas the Left-Liberal supporters have considered it as the biggest danger for the country.

Jobbik as an “enfant terrible” in the Fidesz family

Jobbik was born some years ago in the Fidesz family. Its president was initially a member of the same “civic circle” organization as the president of Fidesz. Since the September 2006 mass demonstrations against the leftist government the Jobbik supporters have participated at all Fidesz public events with their own symbols (the so called Árpád flag) and slogans. Fidesz has developed a wide nationalistic agenda, which has overlapped with

many Jobbik demands both politically and culturally, even in some municipal self-governments Fidesz cooperates with Jobbik. Actually, Jobbik has grown out of Fidesz and it has only continued the Fidesz type of discourse and symbolism, just shouting more markedly and openly the anti-European as well as anti-Jewish or anti-Roma slogans stemming originally from the coded Fidesz messages. However, the Jobbik has directed these slogans openly against the democratic system demanding a new systemic change combined with the manifest expression of the Hungarian chauvinism. The main slogan of Jobbik is “Hungary for Hungarians”, mobilizing the “real” Hungarians against the “traitors” and putting all the blame on minorities (Roma and Jewish). Jobbik meetings were attended the Hungarian Guard, a notorious para-military organization that has recently been declared illegal and banned by the court. Above all, those deeply concerned by the “law and order” type of security have been Jobbik supporters, since the pockets of poverty are situated in the small settlements with high social tension and with the high percentage of Roma population. All in all, Jobbik has close connection with the Hungarian fascist traditions and this worst kind of traditionalism has been combined with the “modernity” using the instruments of the internet mobilization.^{VIII}

Electoral summary about Hungary:

1. Explanation of the outcome of the elections: there has been a political turbulence with high government instability, since the global crisis hit Hungary particularly badly. The Bajnai government has introduced a new crisis management package with austerity measures causing further disillusionment or malaise. In addition, the personality role has become very important in the HSP due to the serious leadership disorientation after the resignation of Ferenc Gyurcsány.^{IX}
2. Analysis of results (see Annex): relatively high turnout (36%) and shifting left-right balance, since the centre right (Fidesz) had an overwhelming victory (56%-14 seats) and the centre left (HSP) a decisive defeat (17%-4 seats), with the high degree of protest votes to Jobbik, on the militant extreme right (15%-3 seats). The small conservative party (MDF) has managed above the threshold (5.3%-1 seat), and four other parties have run but have not succeeded in getting representation in EP (altogether 6.19%).
3. Issues of campaign, EU or national, Use of PES Manifesto: The transnational party federations were not at all visible and the EU issues played little part in the campaign, even less than in 2004. Although the Fidesz indicated its position on some EU issues, it still focussed on the negative campaign against the government, while the HSP made only some references to the excellence of Hungary in using the EU funds but actually with no reference to PES Manifesto. The Jobbik had some kind of anti-EU campaign but its main campaign message was that the Romas and Jews were responsible for all bad that hit the real Hungarians.^X Taking Hungary as a model case, social exclusion pushing to apathy and extremism, the Hungarian EP elections in 2009 can provide two lessons for the Next Left:
 - (1) Europeanization cum Globalization at the main historical turning points needs a profound internal transformation in all member states and this modernization may demand high social costs, even in the most developed states.
 - (2) This social cost produces an anti-European resistance that has to be overcome by the mainstream parties.

But the Left has a special task to manage this social crisis elaborating carefully a proper balance between globalization and modernization, or between competitiveness and solidarity against apathy and extremism^{xi}

Turnout was in 2004 and 2009 in Hungary (38.50-36.29%), in Slovenia (28.35-28.25%), in Czech Republic (28.30-28.22%), in Poland (20.87-24.53%) and in Slovakia (16.97-19.64%) compared to the EU average (45.47-43.10%).

Annex: Basic Data on the 2009 EP elections in Hungary

Party	Number of votes	Percentage	Seats
Fidesz	1.632.309	56.36	14
MSZP	503.140	17.37	4
Jobbik	427.773	14.77	3
MDF	153.660	5.31	1

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ⁱ On the 2009 EP elections see for instance the New EPERN Briefing Series (www.sussex.ac.uk/sei) from which I use the paper of Agnes Batory on Hungary.

ⁱⁱ "As other parties have started to use social-democratic programmes and messages in their campaigns, social-democrats currently 'platforms.' (FEPS, 2009:4). There has been a widespread discussion about the transition from the traditional to the new social democracy (see recently Bailey, 2009), as the 2009 EP elections have indicated, this process has not yet produced competitive results.

ⁱⁱⁱ For instance the Law and Justice party in Poland belongs to the radical right, while Jobbik in Hungary is an aggressive and militant anti-systemic party. The extremist parties usually have also a para-military organization like the Hungarian Guard at Jobbik.

^{iv} "Several of the countries which joined the EU in 2004 have been among the hardest hit by the economic crisis. (...) Even before the crisis there was a growing sense in many of the new member states that they had received unfair treatment from the EU. (...) the assumption to the east was that their factories would be first in line for closure, despite being newer and more efficient. Second, many of new member states saw their financial services sectors almost completely taken over by banks from the old member states. (...) The fears now are that the struggling foreign-based parent companies will starve their subsidiaries of much-needed capital to rebuild their own balance-sheets, hitting the banks, businesses and borrowers in the new member states with an additional credit squeeze." (Taylor, 2009:36). There is no space in this paper to develop the idea at length that the NMS worst hit in the global crisis (see Ágh, 2009), and see also the reactions of the NMS in the latest Eurobarometer data, EB 2009a,b.

^v The exceptional case is Slovakia where the merger between the centre and the radicalism has taken place on the Left in the case of Smer, in a coalition with those two parties of the national populism, which are functionally on the radical right. For embracing radical right by centre right in the West see e.g. the cases of UMP and CSU.

^{vi} On Hungary: "The governing Socialists had a terrible day, reduced by more than half from 9 to 4 seats. Worryingly, a significant vote of 14.77 went to the extremist Jobbik who gained 3 seats." (FEPS, 2009:3). "Two factors are important for explaining this outcome. One is the global economic crisis, and the other the fact that the governing party that has confronted with it had been in office for seven years. Their combined effect was to magnify the characteristic anti-incumbent bias of second order elections to extreme proportions." (Batory, 2009:1). HSP lost 25.8%, Labour 18.9% and PS in Portugal 18.3% compared to their results in the latest national elections (calculations from Babus, 2009:9). Law and Justice Party gained 15 seats at 27.4%, an increase from 12.7% in 2004, but is not an anti-systemic party.

^{vii} Security with the family is on the first place in the values, in this respect the 2009 ranking of values reflects the 2003 ranking and differs from the 2008 ranking. The biggest fear of citizens is the deepening of crisis (Karácsony, 2009c). The pre-election surveys already indicated, the majority does not see Jobbik as extremist party, and this majority comes from the Fidesz supporters (Karácsony, 2009a and Publicus, 2009a). The electoral preference of Jobbik voters in the 2006, in the latest parliamentary elections was: 37% for Fidesz, 8% for MIÉP-Jobbik, 17% for HSP, 8% for other parties, while 25% did not vote (mostly young people – first voters) and 5% are don't knows (Publicus, 2009b). The same situation is shown in the post-election surveys, since 56% of Fidesz voters in 2009 consider the EP parliamentary participation of Jobbik as positive (Forsense-Századvég, 2009). In the regular month by month survey, the first post-election results demonstrated the large overlap and shuttling between Fidesz and Jobbik because the largest second preference of the Fidesz voters is Jobbik (17%) and the largest second preference of the Jobbik voters is Fidesz (40%), with 90% of second preferences for Jobbik coming from Fidesz (Szonda Ipsos, 2009a,b).

^{viii} Jobbik has become ill famed in the international media and it has brought shame for the country. E.g. it has been mentioned as "nasty party" by *The Economist*, 2009.

^{ix} There has recently been Fidesz dominance in public opinion, among those who have a favourite party. At the time of the EP elections Fidesz had 61% and the HSP 17% support, whereas Jobbik 8% and the Liberals (SZDSZ) only 1% (Karácsony, 2009b).

^x The transnational party federations were not at all visible and EU issues played little part in the campaign. Fidesz published a long manifesto, "Yes, Hungary could do better" with a wide range of the vague EU policies, but they did not use it in the campaign, given that domestic politics provided them with more powerful ammunition. The HSP did even less, with a reference to the EU Structural Funds "What was built in your district between 2004 and 2009?" (Batory, 2009:4-6).

^{xi} "The greatest challenge for the left is for the Socialist Party to re-invent itself and avoid yet another divisive leadership battle in the wake of this defeat, giving time for some of positive impacts of the current cabinet's recent measures to be felt before the next elections are called." (Batory, 2009:11).

THE TWO PARADOXES OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

A paper by George BAKATSIANOS

Key words:

elections, financial crisis, electorate, citizens, future

Summary:

The present contribution deals with the two interrelated “paradoxes”, characteristic of the last European election outcome: the diminished interest of the European citizens for the elections and the EU undertaking as a whole, expressed by the low participation (43%) despite the reinforcement of European Parliament role and the apparent defeat of social democracy despite the rejection of “neoliberalism” as culprit for the current financial crisis. Furthermore, it attempts to put forward some ideas on the future physiognomy of social democracy in order that the latter regains not only its status and political hegemony but also its significant contribution to the European cooperation system.



Introductory remarks

The European elections on the 7th of July 2009 took place in an extraordinarily fluid international environment, in the framework of which the European Union (EU) is in pursuit of its own orientation and role. It is about an international environment of various challenges, from the deepest financial crisis and its socioeconomic repercussions to the deterioration of climate and environmental issues, as well as the aggravation of the illegal immigration, the organized crime and the citizens' security issues. The list is completed with regional tensions and the geoeconomic/geopolitical disturbances that are bound to crystallize in the new, under shaping, multipolar power game that has already been signaled with the American hegemony giving ground to emerging new players as Russia, India, China and Brazil (BRIC).

In such a transitional framework, the assessment of the behavior of the electorate and the decoding of political messages transmitted by the European citizens is a complicated issue that demands rigorous analysis as well as different readings of the results. On the occasion of the successful -in our opinion- remark of the *Der Spiegel* political Review that "Europe has been rendered more eurosceptical and conservative", we confine our analysis to highlighting and attempting to interpret two interrelated -although explainable- "paradoxes" that are characteristic of the elections' outcome:

- a. Firstly, the diminished interest of citizens for the EU that manifested itself through the historically low turnout in the European elections (43%), despite the fact that the only directly elected institution of the EU, the European Parliament (EP), has progressively expanded its domain in a way that issues affecting directly the daily life of the European citizens fall within its competence.
- b. Secondly, the defeat of European social democracy that was apparent from the historically sharpest plummeting of the percentage of the second most powerful political formation, that of the Party of European Socialists (PES), from 27,6 to 22%, as opposed to the maintenance of the majority grip of the conservative European Peoples' Party (EPP), which has suffered relatively small losses from 36,7 to 35,7% (alike the Coalition of Liberal and Democrats as well as the Left Coalition besides PES, while the Greens and the extreme/anti-European coalitions have been reinforced), in times when the "neo-liberalism" is rejected as culprit of the global financial crisis.

The diminished interest of citizens for the EU

As far as the first paradox is concerned, the abstention from the European elections is the most impressive ever, besides the fact that either it complies with national particularities (for example it is more intense in countries of eastern Europe, potentially because of lack of adequate information on the EU) or it varies from conscientious choice to mere indifference or it is stabilized through perennial voting behavior on European level. In relation to the increase of power of the extreme/antieuropian coalitions and the fact that 200 members out of the 736 of the European Parliament are against the European venture, although without rejecting it as a whole since the proeuropean parties acquire 80% of the votes, the conclusion drawn is that the EU is loosing ground and its attraction and a constantly increasing portion of European citizens is on the verge of systemic voting.

We are looking for the reason behind the negative response of the electorate given the fact of the successive reforms of the founding Treaties of the EU -from the Single European Act to the Lisbon Treaty- have assigned substantial competences to the EP in a way to get it involved in more than 90% of the legislative work of the EU, while drastically restricting the decision making with consensus, and giving it the opportunity to affect not only the national legislation (almost 80% of their work) but also a series of daily issues of citizens.

This "paradox" can be initially explained through the very institutional character of the EU, the sui generis (con)federative physiognomy of the "Union of states and peoples" (as constitutionally defined) that was structured out of constitutional political procedure and without the equivalent national (or federal) separation of powers. Its formation was based on a procedure of progressive ceding national competences to community institutions, with the EP falling short of the national parliaments and on a developing technocratic elitism with the European Commission and the economic aspect playing the leading role. On its part, the European civil society hasn't been yet in position to transform into a unified supranational reality. As a result, the European public space continues to be managed mainly by the nation states, while the European citizen has been alienated from the bureaucratic decision making procedures in Brussels. In this way, the deficits of democratic and social legitimization of the EU constitute a major problem for the institutional identity and the future of the European cooperation system.

Moreover, the aforementioned can be vividly deduced from the manifestation and management of the snag the "constitutional maturing" of the EU has come upon from 2005 and on, in the beginning having failed to ratify the EU Constitution and later on, the Irish referendum having rejected the replacing Lisbon Treaty. The essence of this is very well expressed through the recent ruling of the German Constitutional Court that "the European Parliament is not a representative body of sovereign people but a supranational body of peoples of member states".

Besides the institutional parameter, the diminished interest for the European elections expresses a wider deficit of political trust towards the EU, an intensely judgmental disposition towards its weakness to surpass the general crisis of strategic orientation that was accentuated by two developments of crucial importance: Firstly, the last big and hasted enlargement of the EU towards eastern Europe (in 2004 and in 2007) that, albeit it stabilized European space, led to a motley ensemble of 27 member states lacking cohesion and dynamics. Secondly, the current global financial crisis that highlights all the inherent shortcomings, inter alia the bureaucratic inertia in Brussels, the difficult coordination of national strategies even to the "least common denominator" as well as the falling back to national solutions in an era that demands strong common reaction and adoption of new audacious reorientation. Consequently, instead of European policy making and common responses to current major challenges, the European citizen is receiving an out-of-date journalese of Brussels.

On the one hand, the consequent de-politicization of the agenda of the European elections lacking of alternative proposals and staking of substance for the EU, and on the other, the dominance of national agendas and voting of citizens driven mostly from national criteria, have confirmed once more the ascertainment of political scientists for "second order" elections. Under these conditions, the EU slips into a course of political discredit that can be reversed only through an institutional and functional reform of the European venture undertaken by "real European" political parties. Certainly, such an extremely difficult -given the present facts- perspective presupposes strong and looking-forward political will towards a new European governance and development architecture in the new globalized environment.

The defeat of European social democracy

Regarding the second “paradox,” the landslide defeat of social democratic/socialist forces (which was felt more dramatically by the governing parties of Great Britain, Spain, as well as by the socialdemocratic party member of the governing coalition in Germany and the opposition party in France, while the opposition party in Greece constituting the only exception- puts the very equilibrium of the European political system to the test. From an ideological point of view, the defeat can be described of “strategic character,” given that the European social democracy has lost the momentum and privilege of a clear response to “neoliberal” choices for markets deregulation that caused the financial crisis.

Consequently, it is a matter of question why, in the European elections, the unprecedented financial and socioeconomic crisis (that started manifesting itself during the Spring of 2008 in the swollen, profit seeking financial sector and led to recession, loss of incomes, sharp increase of unemployment rates, deterioration of inequalities and other social issues) did not benefit social democracy as a natural political champion of the balance between capital and labour as well as the so necessary Keynesian rules for regulating markets and the wider redistributive role of the state, all of them have been crystallized into the post-war European social model.

The attempt of justifying this “paradox” cannot be confined to the phobic syndromes and insecurity of the citizens that -as ascertained through history- trigger moderate to extreme conservative voting and currently, are maximized due to the uncertain development of global magnitude crises and challenges. Attempting to interpret the loss of ideological and political hegemony of European social democracy, we have to take into consideration the wider crisis of its identity in the era of rapid technological advances and of extremely competitive conditions of open markets and societies. Indeed, since the fruitless quest for “an alternative model for reforming capitalism” during the decades of ‘60s and ‘70s, the social democratic parties of the post cold-war era have crossed to the other edge, that of the “third way” (of Anglo-Saxon inspiration), meaning the adhering to the “neoliberal globalization” while adopting inconsiderably the theorems of prevalent “privatization,” “deregulation” and “flexibility”, approving, in other words, the pre-war propositions of Hayek (main critic of Keynes) for unsupervised markets (above of that time nation state control and towards an ideal federation).

In the midst of international financial crisis and challenges of supranational character, the developing ideological confusion and the retraction of European social democracy between “monetary obsession/social liberalism” and more traditional “state intervention/left turn” (in order to give answers to the crisis and the fundamental issues of production and redistribution of wealth) have resulted in lack of distinctive and reliable political discourse, weakness of articulating clear and realistic proposals and the retreat of its reforming capability. On the contrary, most of the governing conservative forces have shown flexibility and managerial realism, assimilating Keynesian methods and exercising protectionist policies, mainly on national basis (attempt to introduce market rules, financial support of enterprises). In this way, the center-right took revenge from center-left intruding into its ideological armory (the reverse having took place during the ‘90s), while on European level the “national characteristics” proved to be stronger than the “ideological/political”. The most telling examples are the rhetoric of Gaullist Sarkozy against “financial capitalism” and jointly with Christian democrat Merkel backing of its regulatory framing against Labours’ Brown support for the financial City. In other words, while the view in favor of the return of the state and politics in regulating the markets and in protecting the weak has been vindicated, the “neoliberal” version of social democracy has been defeated as a consequence of its twofold weakness: to attach content to the

inadequate but not obsolete –for the time being- nation state reference and elaborate a supranational alternative for the EU.

In particular, in view of the European elections, the European social democracy neither had a visionary strategic plan for the future physiognomy of the EU nor it proposed concrete alternative solutions for exiting the crisis and confronting the challenges of the new situation the citizens face. The PES Manifesto has confined itself to an effort of counterbalancing the different approaches of the members of the social democratic/socialist family and it did not articulate a front-loaded synthesis of views defining the political priorities and setting hierarchal the goals of a new, radical, reforming EU agenda.

Another reason for PES low outcome is the divide in his bosom regarding current issues (for example regarding the candidacy of Barroso that endorsed by the socialist Presidents Brown, Thapatero and Socrates, while opposed by others) as well as the lack of strong charismatic and leading figures coming from the social democratic parties -mainly in big European countries -that would have inspired and mobilized the European peoples. Last but not least, we have to take into consideration the postmodern differentiation of European societies that entails the corrosion and/or the loss of traditional social references of the European social democracy (unions, employees) as well as the difficulty in gaining over new dynamic middle classes that find smaller parties more attractive. This emanates from the evaluation that the two big political coalitions either are not considerate of citizens anxieties or they do not differentiate substantially in their choices since both of them adopt a general mixture of market characteristics and social policy.

The future of Social democracy

In a post- election setting of weak conservative Europe, unable to overcome its multiple crisis, what is in store for the European social democracy will be judged from its ability to surpass its own identity crisis and regain its hegemony in the field of public policy making, hammering a modern radicalism and a new trust with the European citizen.

Towards this purpose it is necessary, besides the ideological ankylosis or the governing practices of the past, to redefine the PES strategic policy and above all to elaborate a comprehensive and realistic project that will constitute the progressive European answer to the financial and socioeconomic crisis.

At the same time, a project of this kind would form the new, post-EMU development model for the Europe of the 21st century through defining the necessary deep reforming initiatives, such as market supervision mechanisms, structural policies of supporting the real economy and the social state, investing in knowledge, innovation and sustainable green growth.

Meanwhile, a qualitative transition of the EU to the new global environment and the governance of the latter pleads for the completion of a project including proposals for the intended governance of the EU itself, a project that will lift the antinomy between national and supranational towards a new common and functional direction, will found the Community system on a rock-steady, democratic and social legitimization basis, defining, in parallel, its geopolitical ability while taking also into consideration the possibility of EU differentiation into a multiple speed cooperation system.

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THE EU ELECTIONS 2009 IN ITALY – HOW WELL IS THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY DOING?

A paper by Paolo BORIONI

Key words:

Italy, Democratic Party, success, confusion, turnout

Summary:

The article deals with the history of the development of the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party) in Italy and compares the result of the two constituting parties, Democratici di Sinistra and Margherita, in the 2004 and 2009 elections. It draws the conclusion that this merger has successfully gathered a more than substantial portion of the potential voters coming from the two parties separately. Contrary to this, the formation process of the Democratic Party seems to be still incomplete: its electorate appears to be very confused and uncertain, most probably as a consequence of the considerable strategic mistakes made by the party leadership since its foundation in 2007.



How well is the new Democratic Party doing?

First and foremost, last Italian European election offers the possibility of a comparison between the process of stabilization of the two new main parties of the Italian political spectrum:

- on the center-left (Pd-Democratic party, a merger of reformist left wing, progressive Catholics and a small portion of social-liberals)
- on the center-right the Pdl (Popolo della libertà-The freedoms' people, a merger of Forza Italia, the liberal-populist party created by Berlusconi in 1994, and Alleanza Nazionale, the party coming from the post-fascist MSI and now member of the EPP).

The previous election of 2004 is important since the two main founders of the Democratic Party in 2007 (Democratici di Sinistra and Margherita, Prodi's party) already at that time attempted a pre-merger experiment with a common list called Uniti nell'Ulivo. Therefore, it is somehow fruitful to compare the EU elections of 2004 and 2009 to understand the degree of success of the project to date.

If one focus on the result of Forza Italia+Alleanza Nazionale in 2004 and compare them to the outcome achieved by the new Pdl at the EU election of 2009 one can draw the conclusion that this merger has successfully gathered a more than substantial portion of the potential voters coming from the two parties separately.

Contrary to this, the formation process of the Democratic Party seems to be still incomplete: its electorate appears to be very confused and uncertain, most probably as a consequence of the considerable strategic mistakes made by the party leadership since its foundation in 2007. The two main mistakes are probably the following: 1) A very scant and contradictory investment in the local mass-organisation of the party; 2) a strategy tending to a majoritarian two-party system (i.e. the one pursued in 2008 and soon after: not anymore based on broad alliances, but basically on a two-party competition between Pd on the center-left and Pdl/Berlusconi on the center-right). This strategy proved to be very unsuccessful both in supporting the coalition behind Prodi's government in the early 2008 and in forming a new center-left alternative to Berlusconi since then. This is for two very clear reasons: such an "American" or at least "Anglo-Saxon" majoritarian vision is logically unable to provide the pubis for alliances, both with the center of the political spectrum (i.e. the moderate Christian-Democratic party called Udc, which left Berlusconi's coalition in 2008 just because opposing a two-party system based on populist and media-based leaderships, and which achieved good results both in the national election in 2008 and in the EU election in 2009) and with the far-left parties (Rifondazione Comunista and especially the red-green new merger called Sinistra e Libertà, which left Rifondazione Comunista just with the purpose of supporting the center-left on the left flank).

As a result, on the base of other empirical and local facts of the recent European election (see below), it is rather clear that a large portion of the potential electorate of the Democratic Party from 2004 EU election is resenting today's lack of political action. Consequently, many potential PD voters are presently preferring to vote either for other more anti-Berlusconi populist parties of the left (Italia dei Valori, founded by the former anti-corruption judge Antonio Di Pietro, which recorded a significant success in the last EU election) or (especially) are choosing not to vote at all. In this specific sense, and albeit turnout remains comparatively high in Italy's EU elections, low turnout to the detriment of the left is also a more and more typical feature of the Italian EU's election.

Evidence and analysis

In the main slide shown in the presentation, as well in the other data below in this paper, we use figures in absolute terms more than percentage. These figures are a clear evidence of what we have just stated above.

The new merger-party of the right, Pdl, with Berlusconi's populist leadership, has succeeded in gathering the votes of the two merger parties still running as single parties in 2004. This does not represent a success in absolute terms, because in 2004 (as well as in all elections between 2002 and 2006) the center right always performed very poorly. Still, the fact that, with a much lower turnout than in 2004 the party gets +264.943 popular votes on the national level than in 2004 seems to be very significant.

Even after the landslide victory at the national election of 2008, in which the center-right coalition was more than 10% bigger than the center-left as a whole, the Pdl had not been able to gather the whole potential of the two parties resulting from the national election of 2006. Thus, the real winner of the election was then rather Lega Nord, after all (however somewhat paradoxically) the oldest and most traditionally rooted party in Italy, and as such probably capable of gathering center-right voters not too positive about too many changes on their side of the political spectrum.

From the point of view of the center-right traditional electorate, it must be very satisfactory that, since the foundation of the new merger-party Pdl took place, several successes have been achieved: 1) the fall of Prodi's government in the winter 2008, although this event was much more the result of the center-left internal splits and failing strategies than of Berlusconi's action; 2) The unusually (most likely unique) smashing victory at the election of 2008; 3) The fact that Berlusconi's government, albeit being far from very successful and respected, is non the less able to last, and therefore to keep away the return of the left. For historical reasons, this is a good result in itself for conservative and moderate Italian voters, which for the first time in 1996 have seen the left-wing in office and still have to get used to this possibility (see presentation slide 2 and 3).

To be sure, as one can see below and in the presentation, the center-right as a whole did not have a clear victory in 2009. It was confirmed, for example, that even when in power and in his full capacity of using both his private power and the power of being in office and even though the opposition is in very poor condition, Berlusconi and his center-right remains well below the threshold of 50% of the popular vote. This aspect of the output of the last EU election was very widely noted among observers and analysts of all kinds.

Nonetheless, the result of PD is negative since the new party is losing votes in all multi-regional constituencies (North-East, North West, Center, South and Islands, comprising Sicily and Sardinia: see below). The party gets 2 million votes less than the Uniti per l'Ulivo electoral alliance in 2004, meaning that over 2/3 of those who did not vote compared to 2004 are PD voters. This appears confirmed by a simple comparison: center-left is losing about 2 million votes compared to 2004, while the center-right block as a whole only misses 136.000 votes compared to 2004, which is especially noteworthy if we take into account that, as mentioned above, the center Christian Democrats of Udc have left the right-wing block since. For a number of reasons, therefore, the 2009 election shows that the regrouping of the Italian political party-system and the new party-mergers have so far been to the advantage of the center-right.

Italian electorate, non the less, still maintains the feature of a remarkable stability, with the only notable exception of the national election of 2008, in which the joint catastrophe of the fall of Prodi's government and of the "American" two-party strategy chosen by the PD leadership (based on the conviction that if you say other progressive parties are unusefull their electorate will gladly vote for the PD because the vision of an American party-system is good in itself) contributed to give Berlusconi an unprecedented landslide victory.

If we consider the opposition to Berlusconi as a whole (the parties and movements left of his coalition) we can see that they have got 90000 votes more than in 2004. This fact, summed with the above mentioned data leads us to the very likely conclusion that the center party of UDC has left the main part of its traditional moderate electorate to its previous center-right allies (confirming that only very small fractions of the Italian electorate migrate from the left to the right). This means that this party, collocated in the middle, i.e. out of both center-left and center right, has consistently profited from the difficulties and the mistakes made by of the PD, so that a substantial part of the catholic electorate supposed to vote for it (following the progressive catholic groups around Prodi and, for example, catholic unions) is now instead voting for the Udc-centrists. This seems to be further confirmed by the fact that in every single and different multi-regional constituency the better are the result of the PD, the worse get the result of the UDC, and vice-versa.

As to the PD as such, its electorate from 2004 (and most likely from the national election of 2006: i.e. its potential electorate of the near future) is at present partly not voting, partly voting for the centrist UDC, partly voting for the anti-Berlusconi left-wing populists from Italia dei Valori. What is happening is thus very likely that: 1) center and left-wing oriented electorate keep refusing to vote for Berlusconi; 2) that the current inability of the Democratic Party to be the motor of a new progressive party organization and the corner-stone of a new alliance causes much disappointment. Consequently, some moderate sectors of Pd's potential (and/or previous) electorate incline to vote for the Udc-moderate party, while other sectors of this electorate, fearing that the ineffectiveness of PD's opposition leave too much room to Berlusconi, vote the more populist morality-party of Italia dei Valori. Many, as we have seen, in extreme frustration totally refrain from voting.

Further conclusions to be drawn

On the other hand, a more optimistic approach is possible if, as we have seen, it is true that:

1. the parties left of Berlusconi's coalition opposing him in parliament and outside have a majority of the popular vote;
2. a substantial part of the votes for the centrist Udc come from the Democratic Party, and therefore are likely to ally with and/or vote for the PD again;
3. the very large majority of the non-voters at the EU election of 2009 potentially belong to the democratic party and to parties likely to support a viable alliance with it.

Now, if we assume these pre-conditions as logically true, than a center-left political alternative capable to exploit the many and ever more evident weak points of the government in office appears viable.

In conclusion, popular vote for the center-right appears to be as solid and as strong as it has always traditionally been in Italy. At the same time, even in this very negative national and international conjuncture for the whole political left of the EU, the determination of those decided not to vote for the center-right

(and, there is reason to believe, for a center right led by Berusconi) remains about as consistent. However big the power of the media in nowadays democracy, and however big the personal power of Berlusconi in the Italian media, there is no evidence that the electorate is being increasingly brain-washed. On the contrary, there are clear sings of stability in the electorate through the last 15 years (again, with the exception of the national election in 2008).

Moreover, one must consider the majority of the popular vote the center left parties already have, and sum this majority with the potential of non-voters or frustrated vote that the democratic party can gather once its seminal current congress has provided it with a new strategy. When we consider this potential of the popular vote, then we can conclude that a majority in parliament can be achieved even without resorting to radical and/or populist center-left parties which would render unstable and unreliable a future coalition around the Democratic Party.

	2009	2004		difference	
NAZIONAL					
Voters	32.748.675	35.717.655		-2.968.980	
Partito democratico	8.008.203	10.105.836		-2.097.633	
Popolo delle liberta	10.807.794	6.806.245	FI	264.943	
		3.736.606	AN		
Lega nord	3.126.922	1.613.506		1.513.416	
Italia dei valori	2.452.731	695.179		1.757.552	
Unione di centro	1.996.953	1.914.726		82.227	
Rifondazione comunista	1.038.284	1.969.776	RC	-1.563.954	totale due liste
		787.613	PdCI		
Sinistra e liberta	958.507	803.356	Verdi		
NORD-OVEST					
Votanti	9.104.088	9.585.171		-481.083	
Partito democratico	1.999.954	2.517.235		-517.281	
Popolo delle liberta	2.898.951	2.164.118	FI	37.862	
		696.971	AN		
Lega nord	1.684.440	994.531		689.909	
Italia dei valori	634.574	170.946		463.628	
Unione di centro	460.045	357.702		102.343	
Rifondazione comunista	260.845	528.797	RC	-484.620	
		197.236	PdCI		
Sinistra e liberta	182.019	201.451	Verdi		
NORD-EST					
Votanti	6.597.587	6.986.319		-388.732	
Partito democratico	1.775.784	2.193.042		-417.258	
Popolo delle liberta	1.779.700	1.429.180	FI	-230.880	
		581.400	AN		
Lega nord	1.205.330	551.926		653.404	
Italia dei valori	455.220	129.025		326.195	
Unione di centro	353.776	248.656		105.120	
Rifondazione comunista	148.336	321.126	RC	-385.309	
		143.476	PdCI		
Sinistra e liberta	133.850	202.893	Verdi		

	2009	2004		difference	
SUD					
Votanti	6.597.587	6.986.319		-388.732	
Partito democratico	1.775.784	2.193.042		-417.258	
Popolo delle libertà	1.779.700	1.429.180	FI	-230.880	
		581.400	AN		
Lega nord	1.205.330	551.926		653.404	
Italia dei valori	455.220	129.025		326.195	
Unione di centro	353.776	248.656		105.120	
Rifondazione comunista	148.336	321.126	RC	-385.309	
		143.476	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	133.850	202.893	Verdi		
ISOLE					
Votanti	2.682.339	3.588.153		-905.814	
Partito democratico	612.076	855.754		-243.678	
Popolo delle libertà	894.485	670.306	FI	-287.168	
		440.335	AN		
		71.012	UDEUR		
MPA	304.548	15.320	MPA	265.313	
		23.915	Pensionati	Pensionati	
Italia dei valori	184.213	66.146		118.067	
Unione di centro	255.764	373.464		-117.700	
Rifondazione comunista	69.121	147.642	RC	-273.621	
		75.897	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	56.575	55.042	Verdi		
VARESE (provincia)					
Votanti	483.200	506.644		-23.444	
Partito democratico	84.073	113.087		-29.014	
Popolo delle libertà	159.338	120.736	FI	3.225	
		35.377	AN		
Lega nord	122.131	85.571		36.560	
Italia dei valori	29.854	7.248		22.606	
Unione di centro	24.066	16.927		7.139	
Rifondazione comunista	10.809	22.653	RC	-21.962	totale due liste
		7.770	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	7.585	9.933	Verdi		
ROMA (comune)					
Votanti	1.308.323	1.550.545		-242.222	
Partito democratico	403.230	544.330		-141.100	
Popolo delle libertà	492.004	223.377	FI	-3.403	
		272.030	AN		
Lega nord	12.488	3.050		9.438	
Italia dei valori	123.915	38.459		85.456	
Unione di centro	55.569	70.316		-14.747	
Rifondazione comunista	46.496	115.097	RC	-98.539	totale due liste
		41.303	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	50.592	39.227	Verdi		

	2009	2004		difference	
BENEVENTO (provincia)					
Votanti	166.145	178.245		-12.100	
Partito democratico	31.391	41.801		-10.410	
Popolo delle libertà	75.576	27.251	FI	1.630	
		21.240	AN		
		25.455	Udeur		
Lega nord	622	557		65	
Italia dei valori	15.676	2.971		12.705	
Unione di centro	9.870	15.128		-5.258	
Rifondazione comunista	3.654	5.718	RC	-1.713	totale due liste
		2.757	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	4.825	1.717	Verdi		
LAZIO					
Votanti	2.926.492	3.258.673		-332.181	
Partito democratico	782.198	966.666		-184.468	
Popolo delle libertà	1.187.913	534.044	FI	68.290	
		561.824	AN		
		23.755	Udeur		
Lega nord	29.691	7.279		22.412	
Italia dei valori	231.255	64.704		166.551	
Unione di centro	153.852	215.667		-61.815	
Rifondazione comunista	103.822	216.760	RC	-158.589	totale due liste
		83.370	PdCI		
Sinistra e libertà	104.724	67.005	Verdi		

THE POLARIZATION OF THE DUTCH ELECTORATE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS
IN THE NETHERLANDS:
THE POSITION OF THE DUTCH LABOUR PARTY

A paper by Frans BECKER, René CUPERUS and
Monika SIE DHIAN HO

Key words:

right wing populist, turnout, polarisation, ignorance, indifference, political education

Summary:

The -in name- pro-European, pro-internationalist social-democratic parties are, in practice, ignorant and indifferent to European politics. By the rank and file, the EU is perceived as a far away elite project. By the national political elite, Europe is seen as a non-starter for ones political career. Only a minority thinks and publicly advocates that social-democracy needs a European project to realize its goals. This schizophrenic, lukewarm position of social-democrats towards the EU was both tested and punished in the Dutch elections of the European Parliament in June 2009. These elections were highly polarized due to a populist attack on direction and practice of the EU, which lead to a strong pro-EU and anti-EU-frame of parties of social-liberal academic professionals versus the rightwing-populist movement of Geert Wilders. The Netherlands is a more polarized country since the European elections. The political landscape has splintered. With great urgency, social-democrats need to re-orientate and reposition themselves in this new landscape.



The Netherlands is a more polarized country since the elections of the European Parliament in June 2009. The political landscape has splintered. The Dutch contribution to the PES and EPP groups will be more marginal than ever. The Dutch Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA), the party of Wouter Bos, lost four of its seven seats in the European Parliament, scoring a historical low 12,1 percent. The Christian democrats, the other major coalition partner, also took a severe beating: it went from seven to five seats.

The big winner of the election was undoubtedly Geert Wilders, whose right wing populist Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) went from zero to four seats, making it the second biggest Dutch party in the Brussels parliament in its first European election. Despite a low turnout (36,5 percent; 2,5 points less than in 2004) the PVV was able to attract 16,9 percent of all voters.

Does this result mean that the Netherlands is now firmly in the eurosceptic camp? Not quite. The eurosceptical Socialist Party gained slightly compared to the 2004 election but lost big-time compared to the 2006 national election. Moreover, the electoral gains of the eurosceptic PVV are offset by the success of the pro-European progressive liberal party D66 (that won over 10 percent of the voters and went from one to three seats in the European Parliament) and the pro-European Green Left party (that went from two to three seats).

Where did the former PvdA voters go? To start with, many stayed at home: the PvdA suffered heavily from the low turn-out (whereas the Christian parties were relatively successful in 'homing in the base'). Furthermore, the party bled on two sides: half of the votes that the PvdA lost compared to the national elections of 2006 went to the pro-European D66 and Green Left; and one third to the eurosceptical SP, PVV and Party of the Animals (PvdD). The PvdA is more and more squeezed between cosmopolitan academic professionals (running away to the pro-European, pro immigration, pro liberal, pro globalization social-liberal D66 party and Green Left) and the nationalistic, populist, xenophobic, protectionist voters of the left-wing populist Socialist Party or the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders.

When we look at the election results for the European Parliament between 1979 and 2009, it is clear that the political centre is more and more under pressure.

European integration as a political issue

For decades, European integration has hardly been politicized in the Netherlands. Only in the 1990s the critiques got some momentum, when the liberal conservative political frontman and opinion leader Frits Bolkestein started advocating against European projects that in his vision threatened the core functions of the European Union (enlargement to Turkey, further deepening of policy integration).

The politicization of European integration got another impulse with the rise of Pim Fortuyn, who agitated against European bureaucracy and subsidies, wanted to revoke the Schengen Treaty, and pleaded for an intergovernmental EU, in which national parliaments should properly control the European actions of their respective governments and the European Parliament might as well be abolished. Fortuyn was murdered in 2002 before he could participate in national or European elections. Nonetheless the 2004 European elections saw the continuous rise of Europe as a political issue, with Europa Transparant and the Socialist Party (consistently eurosceptic since the 1990s) among the winners of the election.

The 'No'-vote in the 2005 referendum on the Constitutional Treaty was initially seen as a wake-up call for the established political parties: the unexpectedly high turn out of more than sixty per cent could be interpreted as the

coming into being of European integration as a political issue. The majority of the political parties as well as of the members of the Dutch Parliament, however, turned out to have little appetite in a continuation of the European debate. On the contrary, when asked in 2006 which lesson politicians and political parties should draw from the outcome of the referendum, the most frequent answer given was never to organize another referendum again.

A national debate on Europe, announced by the Dutch cabinet and parliament, directly after the referendum, never materialized. In the 2006 national elections campaigns and debates, Europe was absent as a political issue. And the Dutch cabinet decided to abstain from a second referendum on the new European Treaty, resulting in a parliamentary ratification of the Lisbon Treaty that went almost unnoticed by the media and general public.

In this political desert, Geert Wilders with his Party for Freedom won the 2009 European elections, because he managed to turn his frame –against Europe, against migrants, against Muslims- into the dominant one. The pro-European D66 and Green Left won because they positioned themselves at the other extreme of this dimension, as the most secure anti-Wilders vote.

The evolution of the political issue of European integration has up till now not passed the phase of mobilization of discontent. The Dutch are happy with European integration in general. The majority of the Dutch is however critical and/or anxious about some aspects of further European integration. People fear that European integration threatens the Dutch social security system and life standards, as well as Dutch identity and culture. Many feel cheated by the introduction of the euro and the 2004 enlargement round, and oppose Turkish accession. Moreover, the Dutch are very negative about the democratic character of the European Union. This critique is being mobilized successfully by a few political parties and entrepreneurs, predominantly along the cosmopolitan-nationalistic 'cultural' conflict dimension (the social-economic dimension and the ethical-religious dimension used to be predominant in the Netherlands). In the meantime, the positions of the established parties are still insufficiently demarcated. They are not taking on their leadership role. Until they do, it is not certain whether European integration as a political issue will be 'absorbed' by the classical left-right dimension, or whether political views on European integration will continue to correlate primarily with views on immigration, integration and identity.

The Dutch Labour Party: Ignorance and indifference to European politics

The Dutch Labour Party was punished hard for not speaking out on European policies and integration since the 2005 referendum (compare the Danish situation, where the established parties have not shied away from a debate on Europe, where the social-democrats have a clearly identifiable position, and did relatively well in the 2009 elections). In the run-up to the elections the PvdA has not managed to put its own themes central stage, nor engage in political conflicts in which it could develop its political profile.

Despite attempts to take on a more explicit standpoint regarding European integration in a party report 'Europe: regaining trust', published directly after the 'No'-vote, and in election programs for the 2006 national elections, and 2009 European elections, European issues have hardly played a role in the PvdA campaigns. The -in name- pro-European, pro-internationalist social-democratic parties are, in practice, totally ignorant and indifferent to European politics. By the rank and file, the EU is perceived as a far away elite project. By the political elite, Europe is seen as a non-starter for ones political career. Only a minority thinks and publicly advocates that social-democracy needs a European project to realize its goals.

The PvdA strategy for the 2009 elections was to stay away from politicizing Europe. The campaign was supposed to focus on the performance of the PvdA in the Dutch cabinet vis-à-vis the financial and economic crisis. This strategy was weakened by protracted coalition negotiations on the Dutch response to the crisis. What lacked in the end was an identifiable social-democratic policy response, distinct from that of the centre-right. If you don't politicize convincingly on the left-right dimension, you are condemned to competition on the cultural dimension, the PvdA has learned again in the 2009 elections. And on the cultural dimension, the Dutch social-democrats have no clear position yet.

The PvdA has underestimated these elections (leadership, message, money, campaign experience) and performed badly in terms of convincing candidates. Various political heavy weights declined the invitation of the PvdA leadership to run for the top position on the list of candidates. Thijs Berman who won the party referendum went all out in the campaign but was hardly known to the public (compare the successful 'guarding of the dykes' approach of the conservative liberal VVD, which assigned foreign spokesman Hans van Baalen, who already enjoyed a certain reputation in the Netherlands, to become the European candidate, way ahead of all the other parties' elections of candidates). Finance Minister Wouter Bos, the crisis manager who nationalized ABN Amro Bank, appeared rarely in the campaign. The result was a complete failure of even mobilizing the Labour voter.

Which way out?

The poor election results (as well as the reactions in the media by prominent party members) have caused a shock within the PvdA. While the CDA-PvdA-CU government is unpopular –it has completely lost its majority in the polls- the Dutch Labour party excels in unpopularity.

It is not easy to explain the basis of this extreme unpopularity, but one of the most basic causes is a lack of trust in the politics and the leadership of the PvdA. Only the real die-hards stick to the party. More specifically the lower-middle classes have lost their confidence in the PvdA. This loss of trust was demonstrated during the 2006 national election campaign, when party leader Wouter Bos challenged the future of the state pension –a welfare state arrangement that dates from and is directly connected with the social democratic prime minister of the 1950s, Willem Drees. The trust gap was further widened during the formation of the Balkenende-Bos government, when the Dutch Labour party agreed on abstaining from both a second referendum on the new EU Treaty and an investigation into Dutch engagement in the Iraq war.

Other factors relating to trust in the PvdA have a longer history and deeper roots. One fundamental problem seems to be that where a large part of the electorate is to the left on the social-economic dimension (income distribution; state-market, etc.) and puts confidence in the continental welfare state, the Dutch political elites and decision makers –including the social democrats- have moved more to the right during the 1990s with the EU as one of the driving market forces in the background. On the social-cultural dimension and with regard to Europe, there is a growing resistance to the EU and migration among the electorate. For over a decade, a large majority of the Dutch voters have believed that immigrants should conform to the Dutch way of life. On this dimension, the PvdA has a much more 'libertarian' view. The uncertainty in the lower and middle classes as a result of the Great Changes (globalization, technological innovations, the high skill society; and immigration) unintentionally has multiplied by the 'let's embrace change' programme of the social democratic reformers. The mismatch between the classical social democratic electorate and the party elites is thus the second factor in the explanation.

Given the significance of personalized political leadership, there is only one way up for social democratic politics in Europe – a new leadership. A leadership that doesn't carry the weight of reform policies can bridge the gap with the classical working class electorate and can build new coalitions. This new leadership has to regain an authentic political position, or reinvent the (centre) left again. The lack of clear political (ideological) positions, the accommodation of market forces and the too-far-modernization of social-democracy have all hindered social democrats politically. We must ask for (multi-national) commissions to restate the social-democratic position on the most pressing issues and to reconnect to the tradition of social-democratic reformism. We have to reconnect policy programs with our basic values, and provide a critique of contemporary global capitalism. A clear vision on European integration should be an integral part of that.

All over Europe, the party as an intermediate between social life and political arena has been eroded. The party has become an officeholder machine, a career machine, instead of an organization that articulates and canalizes social questions and preoccupations. So let's improve our organizations. Take care of recruitment and political education, search for roots in companies, neighborhoods and the third sector; engage in a campaign for social, cultural and economic coalitions. Lead a broad coalition to improve the quality of life for the classes populaires. Design effective electoral strategies: not only during election campaigns, but also in between. Restore the relationship with the lower skilled, build coalitions between them and the middle classes, between immigrants and natives – on a local level and institutional level. Under pressure from both the left and right, European social democracy needs to rediscover its sense of purpose. Get the soul back in the movement.

IF WE LOVED EUROPE A LITTLE MORE...

AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS:
WHY WE NEED MORE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY
AND MORE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC EUROPE?

A paper by Gero MAAß, Karina MROß, Jan Niklas ENGELS

Key words:

**voter mobilisation, indifference towards Europe, management of multitude tasks,
social democratic narrative, European policy initiatives**

Summary:

Measured against the hopes of a positive shift in power in favour of social democracy in the wake of the financial and economic crisis, European social democracy is the loser in the European elections in 2009 – among other reasons, because it is indifferent to Europe. The winners with regard to the European elections are the parties with a strong and, therefore, easily identifiable stance towards the European Union. European social democracy needs a European project with a distinctive programme, but also a personal profile. However, progress also needs to be made in managing the multitude of tasks at the national level, so that social democracy can again become a leading force in Europe.



Disenchantment with politics and falling turnout

Much has been written about the new low reached by turnout in the European elections, with a continuous fall from 63 per cent at the first elections in 1979 to 43 per cent in 2009. However, these figures do not necessarily mean that people have had enough of Europe, and for three reasons:

1. The average turnout in national parliamentary elections has also declined continuously in Europe over the last ten years.
2. Furthermore, EU enlargement, from nine member states at the first direct elections to today's 27 members, has to be taken into consideration in any attempt at interpretation. On average, in the old member states (EU-15) electoral turnout is a few percentage points higher than the average in the EU-27, even in national parliamentary elections (see table). For example, electoral turnout in the two new member states was markedly below the EU average: in Bulgaria, it was only 38.99 per cent and in Romania, a mere 27.67 per cent.
3. A steady decline in turnout is not observed in every country. While it has indeed fallen in 15 states, it has risen in the remaining 12 (in Estonia by as much as 17.1 per cent).

The reasons for falling voter turnout, therefore, point to the national level and do not indicate a disenchantment with Europe, but rather with politics in general or political parties.

Electoral turnout in the EU-15, the EU-25 and the EU-27 in national and European elections [%]

	1999		2004		2008		2009		
	EU15	EU25	EU15	EU25	EU15	EU25	EU15	EU25	EU27
European elections	49.8	99.1	45.6	–	–	–	–	–	43
National parliamentary elections	74.4	71.6	73.6	70.1	73	70.3	–	–	–

Politics in real terms – not as bad as it seems?

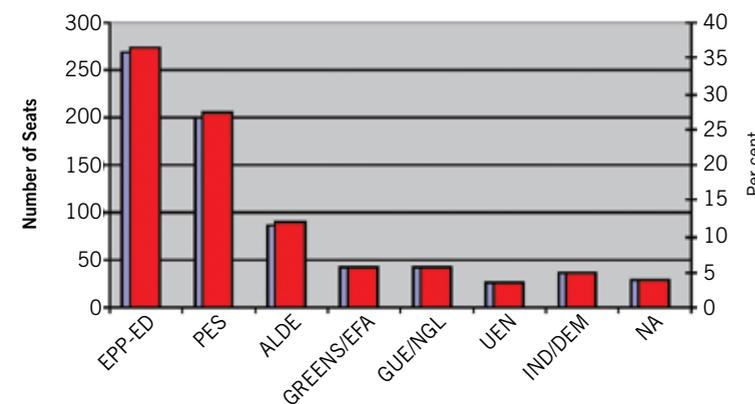
The balance of power in the European Parliament has not changed as a result of the elections. The increased share of right-wing and anti-European parties, which are extremely fragmented, has, if anything, weakened the EPP-ED Group: if it wishes to form majorities it is dependent on the S&D Group or the Liberals and the Greens. The four largest groups – EPP, S&D, ALDE and GREENS/EFA – saw changes of only a few percentage points:

- The S&D – formerly the PES – thanks to the inclusion (2.3 per cent) of the newly formed Partito Democratico in Italy, made possible by the name change, lost only around two percentage points.
- The EPP lost a small share as a result of the departure of the British Conservatives and the Czech ODS.
- ALDE experienced only a 0.6 per cent fall, while the Greens' share rose by almost two percentage points to 7.3 per cent.

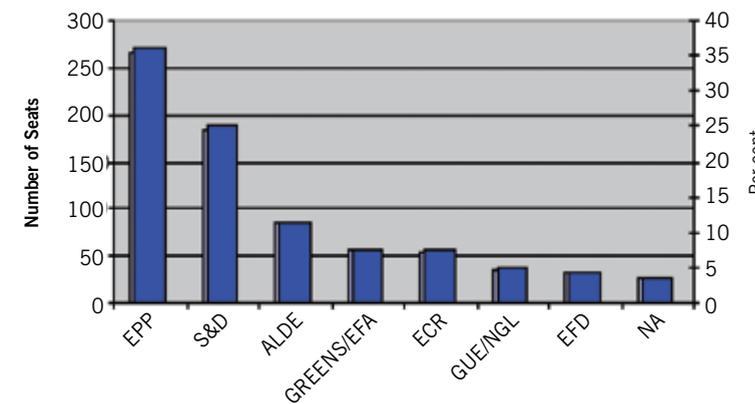
- The newly founded ECR, which comprises members from the UEN (of which it can be considered the successor), the EPP-ED and the Ind/Dem, achieved 7.3 per cent, thereby doubling the 3.6 per cent achieved by the UEN in 2004. This can be explained by the switch by the British Tories from the EPP to the ECR, furnishing 24 of the Group's 54 seats.
- The, again, newly formed EFD, which carries on the tradition of the Ind/Dem and is composed of right-wing and nationalist parties, seems as fragile as the ECR and received, altogether, only 4.3 per cent of the vote, a small loss in comparison to the 5 per cent won by Ind/Dem in 2004. The frequently asserted strength of the right wing in the European Parliament has to be revised on closer examination: most of the extreme right or right-wing populist parties have only one or two MEPs and previously strongly represented extreme right parties lost a significant number of seats, so that in the new Parliament only 39, instead of the previous 44 MEPs can be classified as extreme right.

Even though the balance of power has barely changed, hopes of a positive shift in favour of social democrats in the wake of the financial and economic crisis were dashed.

Results of the European Elections 2004



Results of the European Elections 2009



Creating trust, awakening interest and thereby mobilising the voters

A significant majority of the EU electorate stayed away from the European elections. In particular, young people, people with few qualifications and people in the lowest income brackets did not go to the polls. The poor showing of the European social democrats is often attributed to the abstention of these cohorts. But why are these voter groups more difficult to mobilise than others? According to Eurobarometer, the main reasons why people did not vote in the European elections are: a general lack of trust in politics (28 per cent), the belief that voting makes no difference (17 per cent) and a lack of interest in politics (17 per cent). It is precisely here that the European social democrats have to get to work. A politics which creates trust, sets itself apart from the other parties and awakens interest in politics and in shaping Europe’s future. So far, it has failed to do this.

European convictions as a winning formula

Leaving aside the general tendency at European elections for opposition and smaller parties to be more successful, not to mention overlaps with existing national topics and elections, the following thesis emerges with regard to the question of winners and losers in the European elections: **The winners in European elections tend to be parties which have a strong and clearly identifiable stance towards the European Union.** This applies to the frequently mentioned Eurosceptic parties, which are to be found mainly at both ends of the political spectrum and partly in conservative spheres, but also to expressly pro-European parties, such as the Greens, which are also among the election winners.

Turning our thesis the other way around, we come to an explanation of the predominantly poor performance of the European social democrats. In many countries, European policy is fiercely disputed among social democrats: France and Austria are particularly striking examples. But in the other countries, too, the party base is characterised

by what can most charitably be described as an indifference towards Europe. In addition, the member countries of the PES do not present a uniform front with regard to European policy aims and policy proposals.

The table on page 56 shows yet again that government parties tend to be ‘punished’ disproportionately and lose seats in European elections. The SPD in Germany was able to retain its number of seats in the European Parliament but lost votes, registering its worst ever results in European elections. Social democratic parties which did manage to add to their seats in the European elections are mainly in opposition. Only Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania depart from this explanation, at first glance. In Slovenia, however, the ruling social democratic SD won only 18.5 per cent of the vote, 12 per cent less than in the last parliamentary elections. In Slovakia and Romania, the alarmingly low turnouts of 19.6 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively, and the sometimes poor state of the opposition parties must be factored in to the election analysis.

Show more European courage

Many social democrats do not identify themselves with the EU, considering it largely a project of economic liberalism. Indeed, the Lisbon Process, for example – hailed in 2000 as the flagship of the member states, the majority of which were governed by social democrats – has so far failed to bring about the social Europe which was demanded.

Many, therefore, have come to see salvation as lying in the nation state. A renaissance of the European nation state, however, may no longer be capable of providing robust solutions in a world characterised by new international power structures. Spheres of activity and regulatory competences need a **European complement**. Many social democratic parties still find it difficult to think in terms of a European horizon. We need, therefore, more ‘European courage’ for social democratic answers to the challenges of globalisation in general and the current financial and economic crisis in particular. In future, only an active European Union will be able to shape globalisation in social terms.

European elections confirm: European social democrats must also come off the defensive at national level

A decade ago, social democrats governed three-quarters of the 15 member states. Under the aegis of the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda, many imagined that the EU was basking in a social democratic era. In the meantime, Europe’s social democratic and socialist parties have come under considerable pressure, as the European elections confirmed once again. The transformation of the European party landscape is marked by sometimes dramatic losses of trust in relation to centre parties, combined with growth in support for populist parties to the left and the right of the political spectrum.

In many countries, social democracy no longer coincides with the social democratic political movement: the development of a so-called ‘soft’ conservatism (characteristic of the conservative, centre-right or Christian Democrat parties in these countries), which has taken place over the last few years – in particular in Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden – confronts the social democratic reform left with problems of hitherto unknown dimensions. At the same time, social democratic parties are coming under pressure from

PES parties	Winning seats	Remained the same	Losing seats
In government	Slovakia Slovenia Romania	Luxembourg Germany	Spain Belgium (PS) Bulgaria Estonia Netherlands Austria Portugal Hungary United Kingdom
In opposition	Greece Ireland Lithuania Sweden Cyprus Czech Republic Italy	Latvia Malta	Belgium (SPA) Denmark Finland France Poland

populist left-wing movements. Furthermore, right-wing populist parties throughout Europe are recording major increases in the size of their vote, even among formerly social democratic constituencies.

Even though it would be going too far to talk of a wholesale loss of trust in relation to social democrats in Europe, it is, however, striking that precisely in the larger traditionally social democratic countries and in Scandinavia these parties have lost their shine: large parts of the population feel their lifeworlds threatened, socioeconomically, culturally and politically.¹ The territory of social democracy is no longer occupied solely by social democrats: social democratic parties in many places are no longer regarded as guarantors of social justice: on the contrary, they are often considered to be heavily complicit in the new uncertainties. Many formerly loyal voters accuse them of jumping on the neoliberal bandwagon, which ended in the current financial and economic crisis.

Against the background of the developments and uncertainties outlined here, the multitude of tasks has to be managed in such a way that social democratic parties regain credibility and again become the guardians of social democracy and a leading force in Europe:

- a clear social democratic 'narrative', expressing values with which the party base can identify, as well as goals and policies which reflect social democracy's traditional core concerns of social justice and social cohesion;
- a credible and persuasive political leadership based on an active and democratic party, which is also in a position to learn from previous periods in government and to renew itself while in office;
- making use of all the possibilities provided by the political culture and the electoral system vis-à-vis political opponents;
- a balance of activities which is technically well implemented, substantive and communicated effectively (or, in periods of opposition, proof that the government party has failed to do this);
- the ability to mobilise strategic partners (above all, the trade unions);
- the necessity, in a globalising world, of embedding national considerations in a European and international approach to strategy.

A party's overall stance is decisive for political success. Narrative, leadership, scope of action, balance of activities, partnerships and European/globalisation strategy must combine in one harmonious profile. At present, this could be said of very few of Europe's social democratic parties. It is, therefore, not surprising that social democracy suffered another setback in the European elections. Only if social democrats regain a foothold at national level can success be hoped for at European level.

Key European policy initiatives with social democratic added value

But a convincing social democratic narrative is lacking not only at national, but also at European level. At the core of such a European narrative should be a long-term paradigm change, leading to a social, economically sustainable and citizen-oriented Union with global influence. Both more 'Europe' and more social democracy are needed. European policy initiatives must be measured against the following guidelines, which promise a high degree of social democratic added value, make full use of the possibilities offered by the PES in terms of consensus building and improve the Community's ability to act:

- Live up to global responsibilities: Social democracy should make the global problems of the environment and poverty its own in order to recover national sovereignty and restore to nation states their ability to act.

- Keep strategic partners in view: Are policy proposals something that strategic social partners, above all, the trade unions, can get on board with?
- Strengthen democracy and responsiveness to the needs of ordinary citizens: How do we stand up for more democracy, the personalisation of European politics in elections and responsiveness to the needs of ordinary citizens, without at the same time ushering in a European state?
- Develop European policy options – safeguard national accomplishments: Given the fact that global and European developments have effects on nation states' economies, social systems and societies which they can no longer control, in future there must also be options at European level. These could also be aimed at safeguarding room to manoeuvre and what has been achieved – above all in terms of social policy – specifically at national level, in the knowledge of the indirect effects of European policies.
- Secure the functionality of the state: The financial crisis, via the economic crisis, must not be allowed to mutate into a crisis of the state, so that the public debt incurred due to the financial crisis compels the adoption of austerity measures and the advent of the so-called 'market state', as a result of which policy options, future viability – for example, through education – and social cohesion fall by the wayside.
- Promote/take advantage of the potential for economic policy cooperation: How can the common economic policy be bolstered after the experiences of recent economic crises? In the short term, coordinated financial market regulations take priority.

European social democracy does not necessarily have to come to love Europe right away, but more European courage and enthusiasm are essential if convincing answers are to be formulated to the challenges of our time. This applies both at national and European level. Central to this is gaining the upper hand in the debate on Social Europe and social globalisation. Of particular significance from the standpoint of social democracy is to establish a legal basis for the political commitment to social cohesion, on a par with competition law. But what sort of terminology should social democrats use to present their core project of developing and safeguarding decent, sustainable and worthwhile work in the European context? Only if we make ourselves aware of our fundamental ideals and tried and tested arguments will we be able to come up with convincing formulations which set our standpoints and projects apart from all the others.

Annex

Synoptic table: Social democratic/socialist parties in Europe and their participation in government

COUNTRY	NAME	Status in national parliament		PES	Seats in the EP/ total 09	Seats in the EP/ total ²	Next elections
		2000	June 2009				
Austria	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)	O	GP (MP)	F	4/17	7/18	2013
Belgium	Flanders: Socialistische Partij Anders (SPA)	GP (JP)	O	F	5/22	7/24	2011
	Wallonia: Parti Socialiste (PS)	GP (JP)	GP (JP)	F			

Bulgaria	Balgarska Socialističeska Partija (BSP)	O	GP (MP)	F	4/17	5/18	2013
	Partija Balgarski Socialdemokrati (PBS/BSD)	O		G+A			
	Koalicija za Balgarija (Coalition for Bulgaria)	-					
Cyprus	Kinima Sosialdimokratón (EDEK)	O	O	F	2/6	0/6	2012
Czech Republic	Česká strana sociálně demokratická (ČSSD)	GP (MP)	O	F	7/22	2/24	2010
Denmark	Socialdemokraterne	GP (MP)	O	F	4/13	5/14	2011
Estonia	Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond (SDE)	GP (JP)	GP (JP)	F	1/6	3/6	2011
Finland	Suomen sosialidemokraattinen puolue (SDP)	GP (MP)	O	F	2/13	3/14	2011
France	Parti socialiste (PS)	GP (MP)	O	F	14/72	31/78	2012
Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)	GP (MP)	GP (JP)	F	23/99	23/99	Sep 2009
Greece	Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima (PASOK)	GP (SG)	O	F	8/22	8/24	2011
Hungary	Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP)	O	GP (MP)	F	4/22	9/24	2010
Ireland	Irish Labour Party	O	O	F	3/12	1/13	2012
Italy	Partito Democratico (PD)	-	O	-	21/72	17/78	2013
	Partito Socialista (PS)	-	nr	F			
	Sinistra Democratica	-	nr	A			
Latvia	Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā Strādnieku Partija (LSDSP)	O	nr	F	0/8	0/9	2010
	Sociāldemokrātu savienība (SDS)	-	nr	-			
Lithuania	Lietuvos socialdemokratųpartija (LSDP)	O	O	F	3/12	2/13	2012
Luxembourg	Lëtzebuurger Sozialistesche Arbechterpartei (LSAP)	O	GP (JP)	F	1/6	1/6	2014 2009
Malta	Partit Laburista (MLP)	O	O	F	3/5	3/5	2013
Netherlands	Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)	GP (MP)	GP (JP)	F	9/54	9/24	2011
Poland	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD)	GP (MP)	O	F	7/50	9/54	2011
	Unia Pracy	nr	O	F			
	Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej (SRP)	O	nr	G			
	Socjaldemokracja Polska (SDPL)	O	O	G			

Portugal	Partido Socialista (PS)	GP (SG)	GP (SG)	F	7/22	12/24	Sep 2009
Romania	Partidul Social Democrat (PSD)	GP (MP)	GP (JP)	F	11/33	10/35	2012
Slovakia	SMER – sociálna demokracia	O	GP (MP)	PM	5/13	3/14	2010
Slovenia	Socialni demokrati (SD)	O	GP (MP)	F	2/7	1/7	2013
Spain	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)	O	GP (MP)	F	21/50	24/54	2012 2009
Sweden	Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti (SAP)	GP (MR)	O	F	5/18	5/19	2010
United Kingdom	Labour Party	GP (SG)	GP (SG)	F	13/72	19/78	Up to 2011
	Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	nr	nr	F			

PES status: F = full member; G = member of the PES group, but not F; A = associate member; O = observer status; PM = provisional member
 Status in Parliament: GP = government party (SG = sole governing party; MP = main partner in the government; JP = junior partner in the government; MG = minority government)
 O = Opposition party; nr = not represented in Parliament; - = party does not yet exist/no longer exists

¹A study by the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) looked into the causes of this threefold uncertainty in its consultation paper 'Social reality in Europe': http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/docs/background_document_de.pdf

²In total, there are 785 seats and 7 groups in the European Parliament; there are also members unattached to a group. The PES has a total of 217 seats in the EP and is therefore the second largest group, behind the EPP-ED.

³The 'Coalition for Bulgaria' is an amalgamation of various social democratic and communist parties, led by the BSP. PBS also belongs to the coalition.

⁴The Democratici di Sinistra and the L'Ulivo coalition merged into the Partito Democratico (PD) on 14 October 2007, to which the Christian Democrats also belong. The party is therefore not a member of the PES, although individual party members are MEPs.

⁵Since October 2007 a coalition party of various social democratic and socialist parties.

⁶From 2001: SLD and Unia Pracy RP.

Source: Authors' research and presentation.

A good overview of the election results in Europe may be found at: <http://www.parties-and-elections.de>

WE FAILED TERRIBLY – THE DISASTER OF S&DS IN THE EU PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

A paper by Peter FILZMAIER

Key words:

**voter mobilisation, indifference towards Europe, management of multitude tasks,
social democratic narrative, European policy initiatives**

Summary:

In the European parliamentary elections 2009 social democrats (S&Ds) lost about 50 seats and about six percentage points. In comparison to this Conservatives only suffered moderate losses. Besides there were big wins of nationalist oriented parties as well as of independent and/or anti-European candidates. The question is why S&Ds terribly failed no matter if they were a party in government (as in Germany, Spain, United Kingdom etc) or a party in opposition (as in France, Italy, the Netherlands etc).



In the European parliamentary elections of June 2009 Social Democrats (S&Ds) lost about 50 seats and about six percentage points (see table 1). In comparison to this Conservatives only suffered moderate losses. Besides this there were big wins for nationalist oriented parties as well as for independent and/or anti-European candidates. The question is why S&Ds failed terribly regardless of if they were a party in government (as in Germany, Spain, United Kingdom etc) or a party in opposition (as in France, Italy, the Netherlands etc) (see table 2).

Political scientists have identified several key success factors in modern campaigning:

1. party identification
2. candidate images
3. issue management
4. events
5. finance

Party identification (and mobilization)

As we know there is a dramatic decrease of party identification (and of party members and/or party activists respectively) on the one hand. On the other hand the number of independent voters has grown. Comparing 27 countries it is difficult to say if S&Ds or Conservatives have a bigger party stalwart. But by traditional wisdom party alignment is an advantage of S&Ds who usually have problems addressing swing voters.

Therefore the conclusion is that in 2009 S&Ds were not able to mobilize their base. This was the case for reasons:

- Especially among voter groups where S&Ds still have some structures for mobilization - like among retirees and members of labour unions but also among workers - they do not nearly tap the full potential of votes.
- This leads to the sensitive question of how motivated national party organizations of S&Ds were. In other words: If their voters are not interested in EU-rope where lies the interest (national) of party officials and functionaries? In most countries they were neither motivated nor willing to take responsibility for campaigning.
- Not only there is a lot of space for new parties on the EU-ropean level. Because of political mistrust and cynicism against traditional parties the only criteria for them is "to be different in any way". Often they are idealized and supported by national media. So their potential for gaining votes is in double digits and S&Ds are mainly affected because they exactly address the same group of voters with a lower or middle income.

Candidate images (and the recruitment season)

Candidates of the S&Ds are well-recognized EU-ropeans but often relatively unknown in their own country. In national elections candidates have a name recognition of 90 to 100 percent. In the European parliamentary elections personal recognition of some leading S&Ds candidates was only between 50 and 70 percent. Whilst other parties prefer "national candidates" some Social Democratic candidates were not even accepted within their parties at home.

After some bad experiences discussions on career changers seem to be a taboo but for 2014 S&Ds definitely need "new faces". If party organizations will focus on traditionally nominated candidates again they will fail once more.

Campaigning based on image profiling also has to do with competing personal stories. So you have to ask for these stories among Social Democratic candidates. Is there no image profile at all or are they strong leaders with decisiveness and strength? If not can you communicate them as caring leaders with a "one of us"-story behind them? Are they recognized as men (or women) of conviction, as visionary, as national (or regional/local) heroes, as "street fighters" for social rights, as a kind of a person with social conscience etc? In 2009 they were mainly seen as EU-ropean bureaucrats and/or part of the establishment in Brussels.

For competing personal stories long term planning is necessary. This includes popular publications on life stories, videos and the use of ICTs, and TV appearance "where the electorate is" (and not in EU-ropean and international media).

Issue management (and party competences)

In 2009 no party was able to ignore the international economic crisis as the main issue. For instance it was nearly impossible to campaign on education etc. For decades in all polls on party competences referring to the economy there has been a lead for the Conservatives of up to 20 percentage points but concerning employment S&Ds are usually in the lead by a similar margin.

Nevertheless in the European parliamentary elections on issues like unemployment and also social security (and social justice) right wing-nationalists and anti-Europeans benefited because they gained all protest votes. Even if there is a general agreement among the public with left-oriented positions of S&Ds the voters also totally lack trust in their solving skills.

This effect was strengthened by the fact that in some areas like pensions etc there is no EU-ropean competence at all. But S&Ds as "part of the system" (and as a former or present party in government) also hesitated to fundamentally criticize financial institutions and lobbies.

Referring to migration and security (law and order-) issues public opinion shows a clearly right oriented majority. S&Ds probably are in a no win-situation either to take the risk of internal conflicts by taking over right arguments or to take a minority position. In 2009 they decided to do nothing - which is not a third opportunity but the worst strategy.

(Campaign) events

As we know the influence of election campaign events on voting behaviour is limited. In most cases only unexpected mistakes of parties and/or candidates can change general trends. But the simple question for S&Ds is whether there were even any typical events etc in their EU-ropean campaigning. On the international level there was none and on national level there was no significant one either.

It makes no sense to stage events within the last five weeks if voters (and party officials) were not interested in the past five years – but you can create events (like EU-ropean days etc.) for a longer period and use them in 2014.

(Campaign) finance

Of course it is very difficult to get an overview of costs for 27 campaigns conducted by 27 national party organizations. But overall there is a strong impression that in most EU member countries Conservatives outspent S&Ds. If this is done by 2 to 1 or even more campaign experts call it a faked competition. In relation to the number of voters and their financial background even far-right oriented nationalists, anti-Europeans and also the Greens spent more money. S&Ds can complain about their lack of money – but they also have to ask why they are not willing to spend significant amounts of money in EU-ropean campaigns and what can be done to solve the problem.

Conclusions

In the long run there are three questions to answer for S&Ds. They have to critically discuss and to ask themselves if these answers are convincing and how they can be helpful in the next campaign:

- What do S&Ds really stand for? Yes, they agree on a fairer society and a social EU-rope for putting people first. But no one is campaigning for an unfair society, antisocial politics and/or putting people behind – so this is not enough.
- What have the S&Ds in the European Parliament really done for citizens? Their main groups of voters are a) retirees (and/or the 50+ generation very interested in pensions), and b) white collar employees. In European parliamentary elections the traditional vote of blue collar workers is often less than 10 percent(!). So S&Ds do not necessarily need better offers for their old voter base but a) for retirees and b) for the key swing vote among middle income employees. At least in the second group Conservatives definitely compete better. In national elections it is of course important to have very concrete answers on this question. What kind of concrete answers do you have on an international level?
- At emotional level why should a voter be in favour of S&Ds? Voter turnout is very low - see table 3 - and non-voters can only be motivated by emotions like fear, pride, disgust etc. Scholars like Pini 2009 examine different factors which are believed to play a role in influencing citizens to vote or abstain. The level of information provided through communication and publicity by the national media make up crucial elements when it comes to mobilising the population. But there is no doubt that in European parliamentary elections a “protest” voter – who is in favour of a far right-oriented party for instance - is motivated by these emotions. But what are the emotions S&Ds and their candidates provoke among voters?

⁷ By the Treaty of Lisbon amongst other differences the number of MEPs will increase from 736 to 751 but all numbers in this article refer to the electoral framework by the treaty of Nice. For an overview of current European parliamentary elections see Maier/Tenscher 2006 and Miller et al 2009. Conceptions of analysis can be found in Reif/Schmitt 1980.

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Appendix

Table 1: The European Parliament 2009

Parliamentary Group	Number of Seats	Election Results June 2009 (in %)
EPP	265	36
S&D	184	25
ALDE	84	11.4
GREENS/EFA	55	7.5
ECR	54	7.3
GUE/NGL	35	4.8
EFD	32	4.3
NA	27	3.7

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/>, June 2009.

Table 2: Results of S&Ds in the European Parliamentary Elections 2009 by Country

Country	S&D Election Results	S&D Seats	Number of Seats	Voter Turnout
EU Overall	22,5%	184	736	43,1 %
Austria	23,74% (-9,56)	4 (SPÖ)	17	46,0 %
Belgium	10,88% (-2,62) 8,21%	3 (PS) 2 (SPA)	22	90,4 %
Bulgaria	18,5% (-2,91)	4 (BSP)	17	39,0%
Cyprus	9,85% 12,28% (-4,81)	1 (EDEK) 1 (DIKO)	6	59,4 %
Czech Republic	22,83% (+14,03)	7 (ČSSD)	22	28,2 %
Denmark	20,9% (-11,7)	4 (A)	13	59,5 %
Estonia	8,7% (-28,1)	1 (SDE)	6	43,9 %
Germany	20,8% (-0,7)	23 (SPD)	99	43,3 %
Hungary	17,37% (-16,93)	4 (MSZP)	22	36,3 %
Finland	17,5% (-3,8)	2 (SDP)	13	40,3 %
France	16,48% (-12,42)	14 (PS)	72	40,7 %
Greece	36,65% (+2,65)	8 (PASOK)	22	52,6 %
Ireland	13,92% (+3,32)	3 (Lab)	12	57,6 %
Italy	26,13%	21 (PD)	72	65,1 %
Latvia	19,57%	1 (SC)	8	53,7 %
Lithuania	18,61% (+4,21)	3 (LSDP)	12	21,0 %
Luxembourg	19,42% (-2,58)	1 (LSAP)	6	90,8 %

 Malta	54,77%	3 (PL-MLP)	5	78,8 %
 Netherlands	12,05% (-11,55)	3 (PvdA)	25	36,8 %
 Poland	12,34% (+2,99)	7 (SLD-UP)	50	24,5 %
 Portugal	26,53% (-18)	7 (PS)	22	36,8 %
 Romania	31,07%	11 (PSD-PC)	33	27,7 %
 Slovakia	32,02% (+15,31)	5 (Smer-SD)	13	19,6 %
 Slovenia	18,45% (+0,75)	2 (SD)	7	28,3 %
 Spain	38,51% (-4,99)	19 (PSOE) 2 (PSC)	50	46,0 %
 Sweden	24,41% (-0,16)	5 (SAP)	18	45,5 %
 United Kingdom	15,31% (-6,55)	13 (Lab)	72	34,7 %

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/> - Data collected by the Institute for Strategic Analysis (ISA), <http://www.strategieanalysen.at>, June 2009

Table 3: Voter Turnout in EU Parliamentary Elections, 1979-2009

Election Year	Voter Turnout (in %)
1979 - EU9	61.99
1984 - EU10	58.98
1989 - EU12	58.41
1994 - EU12	56.67
1999 - EU15	49.51
2004 - EU25	45.47
2009 - EU27	43
NA	27

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/> - Data collected by the Institute for Strategic Analysis (ISA), <http://www.strategieanalysen.at>, June 2009.

LES ELECTIONS EUROPÉENES EN FRANCE UNE DÉFAITE POUR LE PARTI SOCIALISTE

A paper by Gérard FUCHS

Key words:

leadership, renovation, alternative

Summary:

To recover from its worst result since 1994, due mainly to a lack of ability to stand as an alternative, the French Socialist Party needs to drive and achieve its announced renovation process. Furthermore, the Party of European Socialists should serve as the framework within which the political reflexion in exiting the crisis is to take place.

Avec un score de 16,48% le PS obtient son plus mauvais résultat depuis 1994, en dessous des prévisions les plus pessimistes qui le situaient autour de 19%.

Les explications du résultat

Celles ci sont évidemment plurielles :

- sur le fond, le parti n'a pas retrouvé depuis la défaite présidentielle de 2002 une réelle capacité de proposition
- ses déchirements à propos du projet de Constitution européenne ont brouillé son image traditionnelle sur le sujet ;
- son problème de leadership n'a été réglé ni par le congrès de Reims fin 2008 ni par la « réconciliation » récente Aubry-Royal.
- la campagne elle-même peut faire l'objet de plusieurs critiques :
 - un début davantage centré sur le rejet (de Sarkozy et de Barroso) que sur le projet ;
 - une incapacité à faire ressortir quelques thèmes forts répondant aux préoccupations de l'opinion face à la crise, autour du chômage et des différents plans de relance notamment ;
 - des listes visant plus à satisfaire les équilibres internes du parti que la recherche du contact avec l'électorat.

Ajoutons que l'absence d'une candidature alternative à Barroso proposée en commun par les socialistes européens n'a pas amélioré notre crédibilité.

Les raisons d'espérer

Plusieurs considérations doivent cependant relativiser une situation grave mais pas sans issue :

- le niveau de l'abstention, beaucoup plus élevé que dans d'autres type d'élections, ne permet pas de conclusions pour la suite, d'autant que cette abstention a été largement populaire et doit pouvoir être rattrapée par les socialistes;
- la percée écologiste est due pour une bonne part à un transfert de voix socialistes qui peut, elle aussi, être considérée comme réversible ;
- le rapport Droite Gauche n'apparaît pas inquiétant, l'UMP ayant largement capté un électorat centriste et d'extrême droite.

On peut donc dire en conclusion que l'avenir du Parti socialiste dépend largement de sa capacité à conduire et à mener à bien la refondation qu'il annonce. On peut rajouter, compte tenu des résultats de beaucoup d'autres partis socialistes et sociaux démocrates européens, qu'il serait de l'intérêt de tous que le PSE serve largement de cadre pour la réflexion qui doit s'engager : dans la situation de crise sans précédent que nous traversons, il faut que les socialistes européens apparaissent de façon évidente comme porteurs de l'alternative à la dérégulation libérale mondiale.

NEXT LEFT – THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD AND IN AN UNCERTAIN EUROPE

A paper by Andras INOTAI

Key words:

decline, global crisis, recovery, responsibility, new formula, openness, dialogue

Summary:

“Traditional “left” and “right” attributes do not correspond to the global reality unfolding in the 21st century. The “left”'s strategy should be based on future orientation (instead of going back to the partly dark history of Europe), global challenges and human+social values. The global crisis, and more importantly, the global challenges partly overlapped by immediate crisis management, offer a number of new opportunities for social democracy. The unfolding social (and mentality) crisis can only be successfully managed by the “next left”, but certainly not only with classic instruments of the social welfare State. Similarly, Europe has to be brought back from the abyss of nationalism, extremism, xenophobia, social exclusion - probably the most imminent historical task and responsibility of social democratic parties. In addition, new patterns of the labour market have to be elaborated and implemented (including the discussion about the creation of a “dual labour market”). National budgets have to be restructuring according to longer-term priorities, such as education, innovation, health care, social consciousness and solidarity, or, in general terms, investment into the human factor. Finally, European “next left” should consider its key tasks in contributing to define the mission of the EU for the 21st century (soft power, climate and environment, supply security, migration and social inclusion, deepening and widening the EU, sustainable stability and peace in Europe). In this context, dialogue on “European values and identity” and between different cultures is an outstanding task. The European, and increasingly global demand is already perceived, the supply side answers have to be developed urgently - a historical task of the emerging “new left” of the 21st century.”

1. Some recent developments demonstrate the decline of social democracy in Europe. Elections to the European Parliament and, most recently, the outcome of national elections in Germany seem to support this opinion. However, the picture is not so dark, because in some other EU member countries the socialist-social democratic parties could keep (Portugal) or come to power (Greece). This is a clear sign that some less developed member countries of the EU with a strong catching-up pressure – and by using economic policy instruments that used to be attributed to conservative and liberal parties – have been able to get majority support. On the contrary, the new member countries are in a different logic and timeframe – with partly dramatic defeat of the socialist parties (Poland, Bulgaria in recent past, and Hungary, most probably next spring).
2. Some politicians have drawn the conclusion that the „left” will be not able to play any meaningful role in the next decades, and Europe will turn to be catholic (!) and conservative, downgrading socialist and social democratic concepts and priorities to a „historical accident”. A major message of the social democracy should be to reject any mechanistic separation between „right” and „left” (and, as a consequence, deliberate and irresponsible fragmentation of the societies). It would be more promising to end up with this 20th century distinction and lay emphasis on and call attention to another „dividing line”, namely who is future-oriented, and who is past-oriented (prisoner and hostage of history, with all potential catastrophic consequences).
3. It should not be ignored that in most less developed countries of the EU (Mediterranean, Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe) successful catching-up process has been managed by socialist/social democratic parties (in coalition with liberals). Conservative governments either did not introduce fundamental reforms (they were replaced by historical reminiscences, a flight into the past), or they accumulated huge economic (and social) conflicts that had to be managed and mitigated by social democratic (+ liberal) governments. Since the latter had to bring countries back to the „mainstream” (including adjusting them to the challenges of globalization), they had to apply economic and social policies that seemed to contradict their original philosophy and values. However, just these parties have saved the respective countries from collapse (or dramatic lagging behind), and, in consequence, resulted much more responsible for the given country (and society) than right wing conservative parties. So much about „national responsibility”.
4. The global crisis and its management and likely consequences in Europe create new opportunities for social democracy, if a future-oriented concept can be developed and implemented. To be sure, it includes also the giving up of some traditional values of social democracy, but is expected to create much more manoeuvring room in the future. The only viable and successful strategy is a „flight to the future” (Flucht nach vorne). And there is a substantial and permanently increasing demand for such an approach, particularly in the context of the consequences of the current crisis management. Therefore, the strategy should identify the potential consequences of the current crisis (management).
5. The costs of bailing-out and different „recovery packages” will have to be paid in the (near and medium-term) future. Since most of the money flew into the artificial survival of uncompetitive structures (both banking and manufacturing), there is no chance to solve the dramatically increasing debt problem (both budget and public debts) by higher productivity and enhanced competitiveness. Three options remain on the table: (a) higher taxes that would further strangle the growth potential, with very negative impacts on the labour market, (b) higher inflation (most probably scenario) starting from the USA but spreading to the EU, and, potentially enhanced by higher energy and maybe food prices, accompanying economic recovery. It is not deflation but inflation that has to be seriously dealt with in the next years, (c) the implementation of a gradual plan of reducing huge deficits by shifting a relevant part of the debt to the next (currently young) generation. Priority subjects and target groups of the social democracy are relatively easy to be identified in this context.
6. Conservative approach will not be able to solve the problems our societies will be facing in the near future. As a consequence of the economic crisis, a social crisis is already emerging. However, it will reach its peak within one or two years, with clear repercussions on the public support of current governments. Either they will not be able to manage this situation (or try to do so by creating higher level of unemployment, growing income differentiation, deeper poverty, social fragmentation, lack of cohesion and solidarity) or they will try to do it by turning to nationalism and extremism. Two different challenges originate from this situation for the social democracy. First, social fragmentation and growing lack of solidarity have to be prevented. However, it will not succeed with the traditional methods of keeping old-fashioned social welfare systems alive (in a period of less money, higher unemployment and fierce redistribution struggles). Even more importantly, it is – once again – the **historical task and responsibility** of the social democracy to prevent Europe from nationalism, extremism, xenophobia, etc. Nobody else can do it!!
7. A new formula has to be elaborated in order to unlock the unsolvable dilemma between growth and job creation. In a modern economy, at least 3 per cent and sustainable growth is required to create new jobs (up to this level productivity gains and technological development account for growth). There is no chance to reach this growth target in the EU (in the new members, due to their productivity reserves, a 4 to 6 per cent sustainable growth would be needed to achieve the basic goal of job creation). Since productivity and competitiveness are indispensable elements of keeping Europe’s economic influence in the world, it can hardly be expected that these sectors will be creating **net** additional employment. Let alone that a large part of the available manpower is not fit to cope with the structure of demand on the labour market. At the same time, growing unemployment (or even the artificial redistribution of the available working time among more people by creating part-time employment) would have negative impacts not only on the national budgets, but also on the social cohesion, regional and national political stability and on the moral values of European societies. Therefore, the consequent development of a second labour market seems to be unavoidable. Most probably, it would be forced out by crude „capitalist” rules as well (with very high social costs), but the „human face” of this dual structure can only be shaped by social democracy. Once again, it has to be underlined: this should not be any return to past values but establish the new social democratic values for the 21st century. In this context, new forms of cooperation with transnational companies (including corporate social responsibility) have to be developed.
8. Social democratic values have to be clearly manifested in the restructuring of national budgets. Much more emphasis has to be laid on future-oriented policies with the reproduction of the human factor in their centre (education, innovative capacities, research and development, healthcare – the latter not only due to the demographic changes in Europe but also because investments in education can only be „returned”, if the educated people live longer).

9. Growing solidarity in various fields, a traditional value of social democracy, has to be fundamentally strengthened. The consequences of the global crisis may lead to fragmentation and atomization of the societies but can also increase the desire (and necessity) for more economic, social and emotional solidarity. Old values can be repolished and efficiently implemented in the new environment. Main target groups are unemployed, poor people, participants of the „second labour market“, elderly people, disabled persons and persons with chronic health problems, pensioners that lost their pension and life insurance deposits as a consequence of the global financial crisis, etc. Solidarity has to be strengthened on all levels: between and among member states of the EU, between the EU and its geographic neighbourhood, within individual countries, among differently developed regions of a given country, as well as, probably most importantly, in small local communities.
10. Next to the solidarity issue the openness of European societies (social inclusion) has to be stressed, however, again adjusted to the new realities. Growing and open hostility against foreigners (migrants, asylum seekers, etc.) has to be remedied (controlled) by long-term programs of social inclusion – but not without conditionalities. The readiness to social inclusion of a given European community/society has to be linked to the readiness of incorporation (not assimilation!) of the target groups or persons as well. Europe will be exposed to unprecedented (and unpredictable) migration in the next decades. At the moment, nobody is prepared to efficiently face this challenge. The broad international experience and the traditional basic values of social democracy offer an important field of activity in this context.
11. As a new element in a future-oriented approach, enhanced solidarity has to be accompanied with growing self-help and self-responsibility of the target groups. This behaviour has to be developed carefully and gradually, but it is a basic pillar of the sustainability of democracy (not least in the new member and candidate countries of the EU).
12. Moreover, the social democracy has very important tasks on the European level. Some fields are listed below in a telegraphic style:
- (a) The „soft power character“ of the EU offers a number of advantages in the 21st century, following the blatant failure of military interventions and the imposition on other societies of „Western“ (mainly American) values. The social democracy has had several successful intermediations in international conflicts of the past decades. This credibility asset has to be fully used in the future.
 - (b) Global climate change, environmental issues, balance between growth, employment and climate protection,
 - (c) Safe energy supply of Europe, partly increased by savings (not only as a changing attitude but also as a sign of enhanced solidarity!), efficient use of energy and the development of alternative energy sources.
 - (d) Harmonizing the basic requirements of deepening the European integration process by leaving the door open to enlargement (not least but preparing EU societies to the impact of enlargement).
13. The social democracy has an outstanding (and unparalleled) role in keeping stability in Europe, both on the level of small communities, country-to-country relations and the community-level. According to historical experience, this task could not be performed by any conservative party/power in the past. In this context, the

conservative (better to say right-wing extremist and nationalistic) parties of some new member countries represent a growing danger. Unfortunately, the EPP is not ready or able to exclude them or at least to exert any meaningful discipline on them. In the short run, it can ensure the majority of EPP in the European Parliament, but it increases its responsibility for future and potentially uncontrollable developments in and between/among some member countries that would seriously undermine European stability. Considering the already dangerous level of developments, a clear position of the social democracy is urgently needed – both in policy-making and in mass communication.

14. The social democracy has a unique task in developing the broadest possible dialogue with the European society on all levels, mainly concerning the following questions:
- (a) to understand the character and impact of globalization and how to develop „optimizing“ strategies on EU, member country and small community levels,
 - (b) to start a Europe-wide discussion on „European values“ (do they exist, if yes, how and in which areas can be identify them),
 - (c) to start a Europe-wide dialogue on what is the mission of the EU in the 21st century.
15. The winners of globalization are expected to be those countries and communities that have a high level of flexibility, adjustment capacity and global perspective and consciousness. Over centuries, Europe was the melting pot of different cultures, religions, political structures, social values. In the past, and unfortunately, this diversity ended up several times in bloody wars, ethnic hatred and cleansing and the establishment of „ethnically clean“ nation-states. In the future, the chances of this „melting pot character“ have to be made full use of. If Europe succeeds to do so, we will have an emerging global power in the century of full-fledged globalization. Most probably, this is the biggest challenge but also opportunity for the social democracy in our century. Its basic values (solidarity, openness, tolerance, compromise-finding capacity) as well as its broad international experience seem to provide a good starting point – despite the temporary defeats. No doubt that the emerging challenges or the already manifest issues provisionally pushed to the background by the current crisis will be generating the global „demand“ for a globally active and forward-looking social democracy. The uncertainty is not on the demand side. There is an immediate and urgent task to develop the adequate supply side answers.

THE RENEWAL OF SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

A paper by Maria João RODRIGUES

Key words:

**new world order, new stage capitalist system, origins, foundations,
transformation, new challenges**

Summary:

Socialism and social-democracy is confronted with a new stage of the capitalist system which is being driven by unstable global finance and production chains, and which is deepening social inequalities and the ecological imbalances of the planet, without governance mechanisms strong and democratic enough to reverse these trends, making the best of globalization. Socialism and social democracy should launch a major renewal to meet these challenges, bearing in mind its main purpose: how can we strengthen development with social justice and with the democratic control of free citizens? A renewal of socialism and social democracy is necessary to cope with a new emerging world shaped by globalization.



1. A renewal of socialism and social democracy is necessary to cope with a new emerging world shaped by globalization.
2. Socialism and social-democracy is confronted with a **new stage of the capitalist system** which is being driven by unstable global finance and production chains, and which is deepening social inequalities and the ecological imbalances of the planet, without governance mechanisms strong and democratic enough to reverse these trends, making the best of globalization. Socialism and social democracy should launch a major renewal to meet these challenges, bearing in mind its main purpose: **how can we strengthen development with social justice and with the democratic control of free citizens?**
3. Before focusing on the current situation, it is useful to make a short recall of the stages of the capitalist system and of their interplay with the phases of socialism and social-democracy, which were adapting to but also shaping it. We should learn from both the achievements and the failures of socialism and social-democracy in order to rise to the historical responsibility of beginning a new effort at renewal.

The stages of capitalism and the phases of socialism and social-democracy

4. The origins of the socialist movement were contemporaneous with the stage of primitive accumulation and *laissez-faire* capitalism. While recognising the vitality of this new system of wealth accumulation in comparison with the feudal one, socialists and social democrats highlighted its inherent imbalances and called for a new system capable of increasing living conditions and the democratic control by citizens.
5. The stage of monopolist and imperialist capitalism led to a major divide in the socialist movement between two trends: those who wanted move to a socialist society by reforming capitalism in the framework of the representative democracy; and those who believed that this transition was not possible in this political framework and required a new political system defined by a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' This second trend led to the experience of communism, which was in fact a non-democratic collectivism, a State led capitalism and a deviation from the original purpose. The final recognition of this would come much later with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, after this trend had exercised widespread influence in Europe and the Third World.
6. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise that the first trend – social-democracy and democratic socialism- in spite of their influence in shaping capitalism was not able to provide the appropriate answer to the Great Depression of the 30's, with the exception of Scandinavia. Most of the socialist and social-democratic parties were too accommodating and accepted the concerns with the excessive public spending in spite of massive unemployment. Without presenting clear alternatives, they were easily removed from the governments, paving the way for conservative parties.
7. The post-World War II situation created exceptional conditions which would generate a new stage of capitalism, defined by Keynesian economic policies combined with developing Welfare States, regulated labour markets and, very often, State-owned companies in strategic sectors. The influence of socialism and social-democracy was considerable in reshaping this system, which was also maintained by right wing governments, most notably the Christian-democrat ones. This temporary conjunction of forces was behind the three decades of increasing prosperity that were experienced in Europe and the USA.
8. The gradual opening of these economies combined with the oil crisis of the seventies led to an intensification of competition among them and to an increasing pressure on their production costs and their public spending.

This has paved the way for a neo-liberal offensive calling for tax cuts, smaller States, privatisation, reduction of social benefits, the flexibilization of the labour markets and free movement in the financial markets. The first reaction of socialists and social democrats was to oppose each point of this new agenda, but they were unable to cope with the new problems emerging from increasingly open economies (see, for instance, the first Mitterrand government). It is in this context that a renewal starting in the UK Labour Party – the "Third Way" – was proposed, calling for a social-democratic agenda which should not be defensive but offensive, meaning able to benefit from globalisation. External competitiveness was considered crucial for growth and jobs and should be supported by active supply-side economic policies, fiscal consolidation, privatisation, more active Welfare States, more flexible labour markets and more dynamic financial markets.

9. This renewal had the merit of raising many crucial issues and providing some answers to adapt to globalisation, but without the ambition of shaping it. The theoretical ambiguity which was created in this period by defenders and opponents is well represented by the famous slogan "yes to the market economy, no to the market society". These kinds of appealing slogans can create dangerous theoretical and ideological traps. First, it is not possible to disentangle economy and society. Second, that is why we have several possible kinds of market economies (the so-called varieties of capitalism). Third, that is why we need more precise political choices and much more precise concepts. They can also be useful to tackle another source of ideological ambiguity: the insufficient reflection on the experience of Soviet collectivism after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in order to show clearly this was not socialism.

Recall and update on the foundations of the socialist and social-democrat approach

10. First, it is useful to make an update of the **central political aim**: socialist societies are societies where the citizens are prepared and empowered to democratically shape the way they live with freedom, social justice and sustainability. This remains a utopia but, as we will try to show, a very practical utopia.
11. A **development model** is basically defined by how its **production mode** and its **consumption mode** influence the accumulation of wealth. In the present and foreseeable conditions of information and potential productive forces, **markets** - as spaces for free initiatives regarding production and free individual decisions regarding consumption - remain the most effective way to accumulate wealth.
12. But markets are always organized according to rules. Therefore the difference between socialist and social-democrats and conservatives should not be about the benefits of markets but about the rules to organize them. For socialism and social-democracy, these rules should ensure:
 - the improvement of the working and living conditions in order to create equal opportunities
 - the quality of product and services
 - the means for regular and long term investment
 - the compatibility of production and consumption with the environment
13. The **transition** between a capitalist development model and a socialist one can take place within a capitalist environment just as the capitalist model emerged within a feudal context. This requires reforms of the capitalist system which are not only for its adjustment to new conditions but for its **transformation**.
14. Here are some key examples of **transformational reforms**:
 - regarding production and working conditions: encouraging creativity and initiative; corporate governance

that allows the participation in by stakeholders and shareholders management without undermining the basic responsibility of the managers; compensation schemes for corporate social responsibility

- regarding infrastructure: a regular technological update and a permanent concern with general access and inclusiveness; if necessary, using positive discrimination (“from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”)
- regarding consumption: free choice based on reliable information and quality control
- regarding welfare systems: protection against the major risks (health, ageing, unemployment, accidents) and general access to education
- regarding financial systems: focus on long term investment, protection of savings and general access to venture capital
- macroeconomic management focused on the commitment to full employment and the sustainability of welfare systems

15. This agenda of **transformational reforms** is underway with many achievements and many experiments. However, it is far from being fully implemented, even if there are many differences of implementation according to the so-called **varieties of capitalism**, which reflect different historical making processes of capitalism as well as different influences of socialism and social-democracy.

16. The influence of socialism and social-democracy in the **governance system** is crucial to accelerate these transformational reforms and the transition between different development models. Nevertheless, when mentioning the governance system, we are not only speaking about governments and parliaments even if they are the central institutions of representative democracy. We are also referring to the institutions of **representative democracy** at all levels, local regional, macro-regional and international. We are also referring to all the mechanisms of **participatory democracy** in the workplace, in living places, in consumption, the environment and other public goods. The purpose of socialist and social-democrat parties should be to mobilise and empower citizens and to coordinate their initiatives in all these governance structures. There is no socialism and social-democracy without more active citizenship.

17. The **leading social groups** and the **social bloc** supporting this socialist and social-democrat agenda can evolve according to the historical stage and the concrete societal conditions. It is the political agenda which determines the leading groups and the supporting social bloc and not the other way round. Today it is clear that the socialist and social-democrat agenda cannot be the “proletariat” or even the “working class” agenda, even if they can remain important driving forces.

The new stage of capitalism and the tasks of socialism and social-democracy

18. Over the turn of the century, it became clear that the capitalist system was entering into a **new stage**:

- production became intensive in **information and knowledge**, opening two possible scenarios: one of increasing divorce between conceptual and executive work with a deeper “alienation” of workers from their work; or the multiplication of knowledge workers creating more room for convergence between productivity and competitiveness on the one hand and personal competence and creativity on the other hand
- under the influence of global production chains, the **international division of labour** was deepened not only between products but also the between tasks involved in each product, creating new opportunities

with localisation but also new threats with de-localisation

- the total labour force was under a major social re-composition with the increasing participation of women, the combined effect of demographic explosion with ageing trends, the ethnic diversification created by new global migration trends
- the limits to growth imposed by scarce resources and most of all by climate change were calling for new concepts of “progress” and “prosperity” where sustainable development is playing a central role
- a poorly regulated **financial system** - focused on maximising the share value with speculative operations – increased the instability and changed the main driver of the accumulation process: economic return was becoming more connected with financial investment than to productive investment
- last but not least, the gap between these global trends and global interdependence on the one hand and the global governance structures on the other hand was becoming increasingly wide. As a positive trend, a global citizenship and participatory democracy was emerging, empowered by new information and communication technologies.

19. The current financial and economic crisis was the climax of all these trends confronting socialism and social-democracy with the need of an urgent renewal of its agenda.

20. According to the framework of transformational reforms already presented paragraph 14, the priorities to cope with these new challenges (and opportunities) should be the following:

- to turn the knowledge intensive economy into a **creative and emancipative knowledge society** with public discussion of the technological choices, learning work organisations, participation in corporate governance with a focus on innovation and corporate responsibility, development of networks of innovation at local and international level, general and tailor-made access to lifelong learning and broadband services
- promoting the **greening of the economy** by developing a new energy infra-structure and creating the appropriate incentives to change the patterns of production and consumption, with differentiated responsibilities according to the level of pollution
- promoting an **inclusive, effective and sustainable welfare system** by adapting it to the life cycle, encouraging active ageing, integrating migrant workers and supporting welfare state building all over the world
- **economic policies** should be focused on full employment, sustainable welfare systems and capacity building while ensuring that basic competition rules in the markets
- the **regulation of financial systems** should be deeply reformed in order to ensure their refocusing on long term and productive investment

21. A central and very complex challenge for this agenda is to adopt a global framework from the beginning in order to ensure that these new political orientations, even if they must be adapted and prioritised according to the development stage of each country, are simultaneously consistent in all countries. More particularly, this means that problems of social injustice in one country should not be solved by creating problems of social injustice in another country. Socialism and social democracy need to be consistently internationalist.

22. As we said in paragraph 17, the political agenda should used to define the opponents and driving social groups in each historical context: this means that the opponents are today the top managers of the financial system who resist regulation, the top managers and share holders of big companies who resist the reform of corporate governance or of work organisation, the economic and political actors who resist to the greening of the economy, the particular professional groups who want to keep privileges which cannot be extended. On the

other hand, the driving and ally groups can range from the exploited workers, to all those who aspired to a sustainable welfare system, from knowledge workers to those who want to become so, from innovators and entrepreneurs to all who want to green our working and living conditions, from women to ethnic minorities striving for full economic, social and political integration.

- 23.** Socialist and social-democrats should be able to mobilise all these groups for action using all the institutions and instruments of representative and participatory democracy at all levels of governance from local to global.
- 24.** Political creativity will be needed to renew socialism and social-democracy and to turn the current financial and economic crisis into an opportunity not of mere adjustment reforms but of transformational reforms.

NEXT LEFT – LAST EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES- THE ROMANIAN CASE

A paper by Anne JUGĂNARU

Key words:

participation, crisis, extremism, strategy, communication

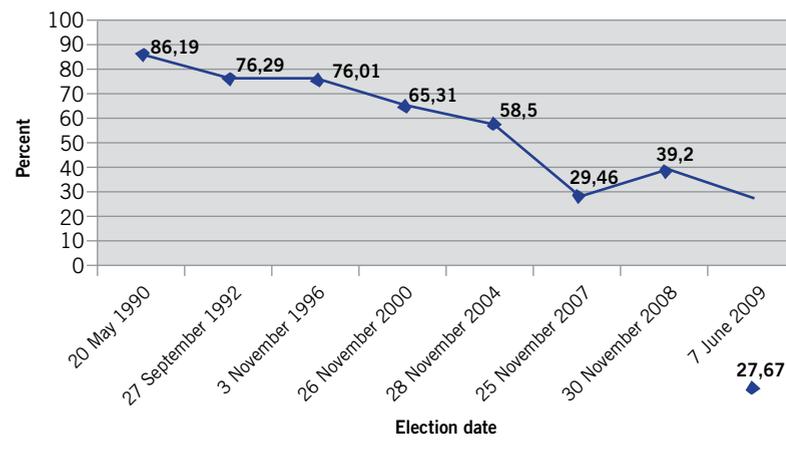
Summary:

The article aims at outlining the main features of the European elections of 7 June 2009, illustrated with the particular case of Romania, and tries to offer a series of remedies for improving citizens' perception in the future about Europe and social democracy in general. The main focus is on electoral turnout, the results, the analysis of causes for these results, specific situations (at national level) and the role of mass media.

Turnout and participation

The analysis of the Romanian electoral turnout dynamic between 1990 and 2009 outlines an alarming reality: from 20 May 1990 until 7 June 2009 almost 60% of the Romanian voters chose not to participate to the electoral process (see Figure 1). The reduction of the turnout took place in the context in which approximately 2-2.5 millions of Romanian citizens are abroad and only a small part of them are participating in the electoral process.

Electoral turnout in Romania

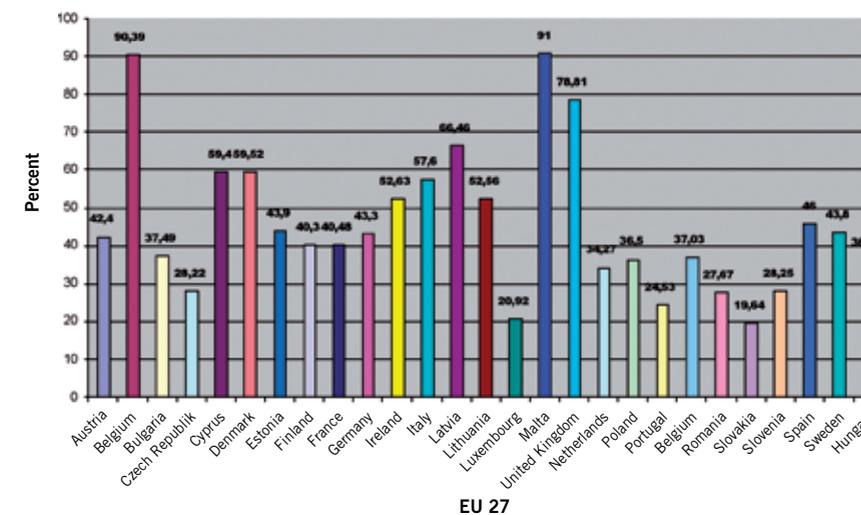


For Romanians, since the general enthusiasm of the participation to the first free elections in 20 May 1990, politics has known a continuous “unappealing” process. In two decades of democracy, Romania knew, at least formally, four democratic alternations into power (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008) but this situation did not bring the expectations’ rebirth through the virtues of politics, instead it conversely strengthened the group of those who believe that, regardless of the doctrines affirmed, parties are identical. Many comparative studies show that Romanian citizens can be put in the same category with the Europeans that have the least confidence in Parliament and in political parties.

The most dramatic diminution of turnout occurred in urban areas, hence in those places in which access to mass media is the easiest. Conversely, in rural areas, where voting has not only a participative dimension, but a ritualistic one, participation has never known such a dramatic comedown as in the big cities.

At European level, the June 2009 elections were characterized by the lowest turnout in the three decades history of direct elections for the European Parliament. If, in 1999, the EU15 turnout was 49.51%, after enlargement with 10 more countries on 1st May 2005, thus in the EU25, turnout decreased to 45.47%; in June 2009 (EU27) it represented only 43.24%. Among the 27 EU Member States there are huge differences concerning electoral turnout (see Figure 2): 91% in Luxembourg and 90.39% in Belgium (in the context of compulsory voting), and only 19.64% in Slovakia, 20.92% in Lithuania, 24.53% in Poland Romania ranks fourth (with 27.67%) in the hierarchy of countries with the weakest turnout.

Electoral turnout - June 2009

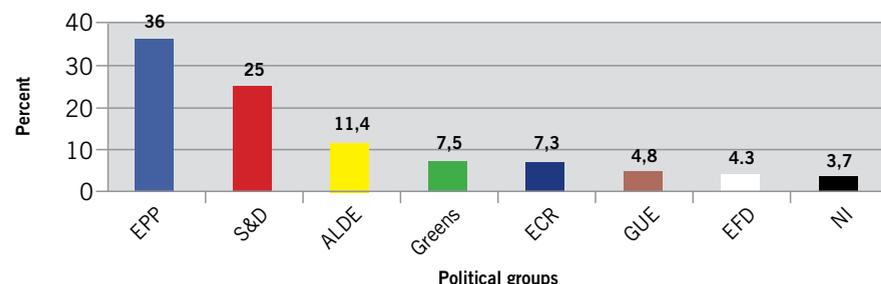


Composition of the new parliament

In the case of the popular group, we can acknowledge a marginal lack of success, as the number of seats did not vary substantially compared with the 2004 elections. Thus, the percentage of the popular group in the European Parliament decreased compared to 2004, from 36.7% to 35.9%. The immediate explanation consists in the fact that a significant part of the former EPP-ED group, made up of British and Czech conservatives, decided to establish a separate group, having a euro-sceptic and, more precisely, sovereigntists and anti-federalist vision. This action has, though, the merit of partially clarifying the heterogeneous options of the popular group, strengthening the German style Christian democratic component, which is integrationist and even federalist. This bizarre combination expressed the EPP-ED group tradition to extend its political influence by increasing the number of members simultaneously with a loss in the unity of thought and action. (Until now, however, the main strike to the EPP-ED ideological constancy was dealt by the British conservatives, as the Blairism of the third way undermined the identitar clarity of the socialist left, thus emphasizing the structural conflict between the British and the European continental political cultures.)

In the case of the PSE group, there was a significantly more reduced score (21.9% compared to 27.6%, in 2004). It only managed to consolidate in terms of numbers by welcoming the MEPs of the Italian Democratic Party, resulting from the fusion between the Democratic Party of the Left, party of reformed communists, with Margherita, having a social-liberal orientation (see Figure 3). During the negotiation process before elections several faults became visible within this group: between governing parties (opportunistic) and opposition ones (intransigent), between Nordic parties (dogmatic) and southern ones (sophisticated), between central, eastern and southern (federalist) and the western and Nordic ones (sovereigntist). In what concerns the vision over the European construction a significant clash took place between the positions of British Labour and of the Spanish Socialists. Regarding social projects, the maximal approach of French socialists and Nordic social democrats was hard to accommodate with the prudent pragmatism of German, Austrian and Italian social democrats.

Composition of the European Parliament after the June 2009 elections (Percentage)



In what concerns then group of liberals and democrats, it has also witnessed a significant decrease after elections (from 12.7%, in 2004, to 10.9% at present). The main cause was the economic crisis, which affected the credibility of the neo-liberal discourse practiced by ALDE in the past. Also, European liberal parties were not perceived as having real solutions for the crisis exit.

One of the winners of the European polls from this year was the group of European Greens. The victory is not surprising, in the context in which environmental topics are beginning to have an ever increasing share in the present society. However, some clarifications are necessary concerning the good result of the Greens (7.2% compared to only 5.5% in 2004). It was primarily based on the results from the Union's western Member States (especially in France and Germany). In the EU eastern Member States, the Greens are still an insignificant political force.

The European (radical) left was one of the groups which decreased its already diminished share in the European Parliament (from 5.2% in 2004, to 4.3%). The European (radical) left, regrouping the former communist parties from the Member States, thus continues its downward trend witnessed after the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, which became a chronic trend after the accession of the states in this region to the EU. As a matter of fact, better results were registered in the western Member States (Germany, Portugal, France) and less in the new Member States – with the exception of the Czech Republic, where the percentage of nostalgic people was significant and where communists have a more moderate action tradition, and in Cyprus, where they're in government in the Greek area.

The role of national parties

The relative success of the EPP-ED can be explained by the fact that national governments led by the leaders of component parties have better adapted to the requirements of the economic crisis, adopting, as in the cases of France and Germany, public policies that were usually employed by the left, such as measures of social protection and a more pronounced state intervention in the economy. In spite of the fact that this has created a certain ideological confusion, the spectre of the crisis was sufficient in the eyes of voters which participated in the elections and chose the right, especially in Member States of the Union's western part. In Member States from Central and Eastern Europe, success of the right was mainly due to the persistence of the "right's better economic efficiency" (anticommunist) myth, which was perpetuated, in the context of the region's emerging crisis (especially

in Poland and Lithuania), but also to the attempt to sanction the left's national governments (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary).

The abovementioned reasons also constituted the main feature of European elections, meaning the prevalence of national topics over the European ones. From this point of view, the message of the Popular group was the best adapted to the citizens' requests, citizens who continue to consider that national governments are the most coherent institutions in the fight against crisis. Also, it had become obvious that, although the governments of some new Eastern European Member States support more European integration, their population does not perceive its own identity as European but rather as national. Such a perception does not necessarily correspond to the reality (both in the west and the east of the continent) but it cannot be surprising as long as national governments and parties have the quasi-monopoly of communication and use to take all credits for the success achieved with EU support, transferring to the EU responsibility for all national failures.

Strategy and personalisation. Specific case: Romania

For the social democrats, the European elections have been an event which raised multiple challenges. Mainly, the 7 June elections were considered a test for the relationship between social democrats and their followers, a relationship which was strained by the party's participation in a Government lead de facto by president Traian Băsescu. Achieving a positive result in the elections was regarded as the opportunity to consolidate PSD's position within the European left. PSD has built a political offer inspired by the 2009 Manifesto of the Party of European Socialists, which included only projects within the competence of the European Parliament. Next to this offer, which was more technical and harder to explain to voters without a vast experience or a mature European conception, and which was used by candidates to emphasize their superiority in matters of European expertise, there were proposals and issues resulting from PSD's position of ruling party: reviving agriculture through European funds; supporting small and medium enterprises; constructing housing facilities and so on.

As a main ruling party, the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L) has set its strategic target to win the European elections as a first step for Traian Băsescu to win a new mandate as president. The PD-L list of candidates has emphasized the rapid and artificial growth of the party, because the quality of its human resources remains problematic. While the main leaders of the party can be found either in the central or local administration, the list of candidates includes relatively unknown people without a national, much less European, political experience. PD-L's electoral programme was not built upon the current or future competences the EP shall have if the Lisbon Treaty enters into action, but according to issues considered to be priorities in the Romanian population's perception of the European Union (for example, "improving the justice system," "adopting the Euro").

The central message of the National Liberal Party's (PNL) campaign ("PNL. Money for Romanians. European Money.") tried to combine a fundamental need in moments of crisis ("money") with the idea of a party with European values (the formula "Europe is liberal" was used). The electoral programme was not built around the real responsibilities of the EP, but according to the expectations projected by the party's voters. During the campaign, PNL has used a combination of negative campaign, with attacks against the PD-L-PSD government, and positive campaign (but still with an inside echo), centred around the problem of money (cancelling the flat-rate tax, 10% flat tax and 15% VAT, reducing by 10% the contribution to social security and so on).

The European elections equation was solved by the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) even before the start of the campaign, because the main danger would have been missing the electoral threshold of 5% if the Hungarian electorate were to split like in 2007. The agreement between the Union and Laszlo Tokes, through which the former received the first position on the list, has extinguished the potential sources of public tension. The second position was taken by a representative of the moderate wing, Iuliu Winkler.

The Greater Romania Party (PRM) was, at the beginning of 2009, a political actor lacking vitality, with no electoral and, also, financial support with an ever diminishing basis of militants, most of them middle-aged or older. In the month of April, however, the controversial arrest of George Becali, president of the New Generation Party and owner of Steaua Bucharest Football Club, became headline. This way, PRM has recaptured the public's attention.

Extremist and Eurosceptic parties

One of the declared winners of the European polls of this year was the group of euro-sceptics and extremists. However, apart from increasing their general share (from 12% in 2004 to 19.8% at present), a series of clarifications must be made concerning its pretty heterogeneous composition. First of all, the already existing Union for Europe of Nations (UEN) and the Independence and Democracy group (ID) had no significant increase. The increase could be witnessed in the case of non-affiliated MEPs. In this case, a large share was represented by the British and Czech conservatives groups, which, although eurosceptic, have more moderate positions concerning other European issues than the institutional construction. Also, initially, the Democratic Party from Italy was included within the non-affiliated group, although it had not decided its precise doctrinal identity, situated anyway between liberalism and social democracy; eventually it was affiliated to the PSE group.

Nevertheless, the most worrisome phenomenon of these elections is the upswing of extremist right wing parties, with a radical, anti-immigration or even anti-European message (as was the case of the UK Independence Party, which supports the very split of the UK from the EU – it got no less than 17% of the votes!). Extremism is doubled by xenophobia towards some ethnic and religious groups (the cases of ATAKA coalition in Bulgaria with 12%, JOBBIK party in Hungary with 15% of the votes, Freedom Party from Holland with 17% of the votes) or by emphasising a single issue (Pirate Party of Sweden), ignoring all other problem. Other parties consolidated their traditional contestation position towards the existing European system (National Front of France, Freedom Party of Austria).

In the general framework of European extremists, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) has a special position, since it had constantly adopted a pro-European stance in what concerns the future of Europe, synchronized with the option of most Romanian citizens. (This is another reason for saying that seats of the PRM were practically wasted, its MEPs being unable to find their place in the mainstream groups or in the eurosceptic minority groups.)

As we can see, there is a broad spectrum of right wing extremists which got into the European Parliament. However, it is hard to believe that they will be able to make up a consistent group and that they will be able to have a serious impact over the activity of the European legislative. Thus, it can be said that votes for these parties were wasted by the electorate. Nonetheless, the message towards the European political spectrum was pretty clear, even in the context of the low voting turnout: the lack of coherence and concrete results within the European

process can fill in the ranks of those unhappy with the activity of European institutions. For the moment the political exponents of this current are relatively few but very active. It is not their number, however, that must be worrisome but the tendency fuelling them. It reminds of similar evolutions from the interwar period.

However, a close analysis of the results of the last European elections indicate the fact that right wing parties did not have an even upsurge all over Europe, the phenomenon being a rather national one with European significance and implications. In general, the rise of the right wing took place in those countries where social democratic parties suffered heavy losses (United Kingdom, Netherlands, Hungary or even Austria). In fact, the lack of attractiveness of social democracy and its failure to integrate socially marginalized people or those frustrated with their social and political status has revitalized the option for extremist movements. This does not necessarily mean that social democratic voters have turned into voters of the far right parties, but the failure to promote the welfare state has determined the passivity of the left-wing voters and the activation of anti-system movements. As a general trend we can mention the fact that the far right takes its support from the middle classes, which is greatly affected at a psychological level, by the economic crisis, as it was used to high living standards and now it is forced to restrain its expenses in order to be able to face the new challenges.

The responsibility of mass media

In the category of the actors that are responsible for the reduction of the electoral turnout mass media can also be included. The media has constantly adopted not only a critical-conflicting attitude, but a delegitimizing attitude regarding political parties and politicians. Mass media's critical attitude towards political parties is normal for any democracy, but in a democratizing society critical message is often transformed in a caricature-like one, information is replaced with opinion, and the analysis with pamphlet style.

Generally, mass media did not fulfil its duty of completely and objectively communicating the reality of the ideas and policies contest at European level.

Recommendations

European social democracy should channel its efforts for organizing a new type of capitalism, that will diminish the risks of a new economic crisis occurrence of the type and magnitude of the present one. Special attention must be paid during the following period to measures to be taken at European level for stopping the economic crisis and preparing economic re-launch.

The European left will have to strengthen its level of coordination and solidarity between its action at communitarian level and the one at national level and avoid the trap of adopting nationalist messages at the level of national policies. Only a concerted action of national leftist parties with the Party of European Socialists can foster a strong competition from the progressive ideas for the rightist forces. Division of the left means the success of rightist forces. Subsequently, the rise of the far right in Europe cannot be stopped by a mere rhetoric against extremism, but only by good governance. Good governance means transparent governance. That is why the European left must set as its goal both reducing bureaucracy and making it more efficient.

It is essential to create a European public space at national level, as well as creating trans-national political

and social actors that would act and compete within this space. The next European elections must take place explicitly between European political parties (and not between national parties) and eventually in trans-national electoral constituencies. This means not only a high level re-organisation of European parties and of the relations between them and national member parties, but also creating institutionalized structures of European parties in the EU Member States. In what concerns PES, it should establish organizations of national activists that do not belong to member parties and, at the same time, open distinct national representations (even if in close collaboration with national member parties).

It will be also necessary to strengthen the component of direct communication with citizens within PSE group, so that the interest of the voters towards the communitarian legislative institution rises and its decisions have a broader public support. EP's direct communication must be accompanied by a more efficient communication programme of information and mass education around European themes.

Annex 1 – Results of the European elections from 7th June 2009 in Romania

No.	List / Candidate	Votes	Percentages	Mandates
1	PSD+PC Alliance	1,504,218	31.07%	11
2	Democratic Liberal Party	1,438,000	29.71%	10
3	National Liberal Party	702,974	14.52%	5
4	Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania	431,739	8.92%	3
5	Greater Romania Party	419,094	8.65%	3
6	Băsescu Elena	204,280	4.22%	1
7	PNȚCD	70,427	1.45%	-
8	Abraham Pavel	49,864	1.03%	-
9	Civic Force Party	19,436	0.40%	-

Sources:

The 7 June European Elections –The Twilight of Democracy? Political Analysis Report, "Ovidiu Șincai" Institute, Bucharest, June 2009, in http://www.fisd.ro/PDF/mater_noi/200/European/Elections/Report.pdf

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THE HISTORIC CROSSROADS

A paper by Sonja LOKAR

Key words:

women, invisible winners, iron rule, sandwich strategy, mainstream women coalition, bottom-up issue coalitions

Summary:

Women were invisible winners of 2009 EU elections. The iron rule has been broken. We witness double shift of power within EU parliamentary women: from the SD to the conservative women; from women from big old EU member states to the women coming from the new and smaller EU member states. SD women need to reframe the sandwich: to initiate big top down cross cutting mainstream women coalition on further promotion of gender equality based on the smallest common denominator and to give voice and insure coordinated action based on the patchwork of bottom up issue coalitions aiming to transform concrete gender equality policies. S&D parties will either understand and build their new strategy around gender equality issues, or they will not only lose their hegemony in gender equality issues, but they will lose for a long period of time altogether, and open the door for the most conservative forces of the global financial capital to return to the business as usual and to make the weakest and most vulnerable all over the globe to pay the price.

In 1995, at the UN Beijing 4th World Women's Conference, socialist and social democratic and labor parties had all the right in the world be very proud: global consensus on democracy, based on indivisible human rights, forged in the nineties of the former century, in a serial of global UN conferences on human rights (Vienna), on social solidarity and justice (Copenhagen), on demographic challenges (Cairo), on care for the ecologic health of the planet (Rio) has been culminating in the solemn slogan. Women rights are human rights! No doubt, this was the result of more than hundred years of relentless work, social creativity and initiative of the left wing forces all over the world. It was not visible than that Beijing was also a swan's song of the social democratic hegemony in the post World War II Europe.

The turn of the voting majority and public opinion to the neo-liberalism in the USA and in most of the EU member states, especially after the year 2000, based on the sharing of the poisonous gains of the casino capitalism by the better educated and better socially and politically connected people from the middle classes of the most developed world, incapability of our sister parties to elaborate a clear cut alternative strategy to the neo-liberal mantras, their giving in to these mantras in all transition countries and in too many of crucial old EU member states, started to dismantle also the Beijing consensus. In the beginning of the new millennium, in the old EU member states, and to a certain degree in the USA, Beijing gender equality consensus was still too strong, to be directly attacked.

Instead, conservative parties and governments used the strategy: suck in and divert.

Some examples:

Lisbon strategy

How have EC and conservative majority in the EU dealt with the Lisbon strategy, initially proposed by EU socialist in a different set up of political balance? PES Lisbon strategy inter alia, contained a genuine call for full employment, for gender equality in pay, in access to decent jobs, and for the public policies enabling real balance of professional and private life for women and men all over EU.

Implemented in the framework of the conservative addiction to the further deregulation of the labor market, to the dogma of free market based global economy and privatization of all public services, this strategy ended up by providing 7 million mostly badly paid, precarious new jobs for the women in EU, while the commitments for affordable child care were not respected in most of the EU member states. In this way, the majority of working women in EU did not become really economic independent but ended up in the flexible but not secure employment, many in the category of the working poor. In the prolonged recession they will be the ones to lose their jobs first.

Beijing "double strategy" - developing special gender equality mechanisms, measures, policies and projects in order to really insure gender mainstreaming, was jeopardized.

This approach was avoided by putting in place weak state gender equality mechanisms, whose tasks were after 2005 so conveniently enlarged to deal with all sorts of discrimination that gender equality became a second rate issue. Proactive gender equality policy which should attack structural foundations of gender inequality was so reduced to mere documenting and preventing of legally prohibited gender discrimination. In the prolonged recession these mechanisms will be the first to suffer budget cuts.

Bottom up empowerment of women:

Support to autonomous civil society women's movements, so crucial to invigorate and control governmental policies and to organize bottom up processes of empowerment of women, was critically diminished and deliberately focused and narrowed mostly to the project by project based activities and services of NGOs dealing with women as victims: victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, victims of hostile foreign cultural practices against women. The empowerment agenda evaporated. In the recession these already modest and victims' directed funding already started to melt down.

Global solidarity with women of the world south:

It was mostly narrowed to the MDGs and even their modest targets were not achieved.

500 000 women continue to die every year from preventable complications connected with pregnancy and birth. New EU member states already started to curtail their obligations to fund development aid, the richer EU member states also started to diminish their contributions.

Women sexual and reproductive rights:

The fiercest, direct blow came from the Bush administration in the USA which openly prohibited any support to international and national family planning institutions and projects, while conservative majority in the EU cold-bloodedly started to frame women reproductive health and rights only in the context of the demographic decline, prevention of reproductive health and fight against sexually transmitted diseases! One can clearly see how hard core conservatives from Malta, Poland, Latvia will finish to determine EU smallest common denominator in this field.

This process of sucking in and diverting was much more blunt in the new EU member states, where Beijing gender equality consensus was under constant direct attacks. Strong deregulation of the labor market, lack of rule of law for social, and economic rights of employees, further privatization and dismantling of public health, education, pension systems, services for children and elderly, robbed women in the new, in the future and candidate countries of EU from the last remains of their modest economic independence and social security achieved in former socialist and communist times. Women's reproductive rights, especially free of charge and safe abortion and the right to medically supported fertilization for single women were directly attacked by the politicized churches, conservative majorities in the parliaments, even by political manipulation of prejudices, homophobia and misogyny in referendums.

The overall result of this processes was a new class, social and political division between women in European union. Minority of women, the best educated and established ones who made it in this neo liberal environment, joint the conservative ideology and mainstream politics. The majority of the working women felt insecure and disappointed by the social democrats giving in to the neo-liberal mainstream, and opted for political and social immobility, while some of them radicalized and started to look for political partners within green, euro skeptic, far right and far left options.

PES, especially its women's organization, sensed very well this danger, and started to develop active counterstrategy: For the first time PES W organized real opposition to the conservative forces in EU, with publicly visible Europe wide gender equality campaigns: against trafficking and prostitution at the football World Cup in Germany, against pay gap, for affordable, high quality child care for all children in EU. PES W also

succeeded to make visible considerable support of some PES male and female highest EU officials and MEPs to the EWL staged 50-50 campaign at the 2009 EU elections.

PES leadership also opened considerably for their women’s activism and initiatives, and for the first time ever in its electoral Manifesto gender equality got a special chapter and a dully attention and priority in the PES electoral promises.

But all of this was too little and too late.

The analyses of the electoral campaigns and the results of EU election clearly show that most of our sister parties, especially in the biggest EU member states were absolutely not capable neither to understand, why they should really focus on women voters, neither to act accordingly by seriously investing campaigning funds and by engaging their women candidates at the top of their lists in the forefront of their electoral campaigns.

So PES and its Women paradoxically succeeded to bring the issue of parity women’s representation in EU politics at the agenda of all mainstream competitors for the seats in the European parliament, but the Greens, the center right, the liberals and even the far right, took it far more serious than our biggest sister parties.

The shortest analysis of the results of EU elections shows the following:

The winners of these elections are:

- The Greens
- Euro skeptics
- Far right
- WOMEN

The losers of these elections are:

- PES sister parties
- EPP
- ALDE
- Far left

Women politicians are undoubtedly the **invisible** winners of these elections. They have made the biggest score. Their representation in the EU parliament has soared for 4 percentage points from 31% in the outgoing EU parliament to 35% of WMEPs in the new one, after 10 years of stagnation! But the really tricky question is: which women progressed and how this will influence the possibility of the left wing and progressive women in the EU parliament to overturn the trend of gender equality hostile conservative mainstream?

Women in EU are slowly, slowly, regaining impetus in numbers. This is the first good news.

The second good news is that women in EU are slowly, slowly gaining real political power. How we can measure this?

Practically in all political party families, with the exemption of the GUE/NGL, women succeeded to break the iron rule. This rule went like this: “When a party is loosing elections, women will loose disproportionately more, when it is gaining elections, women will profit disproportionately less”

Political family	Outgoing and incoming EU parliaments 2009 – trend of growth or decline of all seats of the political party family	Outgoing and incoming EU parliaments 2009 – trend of growth or decline of women seats of the political party family
GREENS	+2.0	+7.5
UEN	+1.9	+2.3
IND/DEM	+0.6	+6.7
S&D	- 2.6	-1.2
ALDE	-1.3	+4.6
EPP-ED	-0.6	+8.7
GUE/NGL	-0.5	-1.3

This time, women made a bigger progress within the Greens and within the EUN and IND/DEM than the Greens, the UEN and the IND/DEM as a party groups. Women lost more than half less than the PES sister parties lost. And the most surprisingly: women made visible gains within EPP and ALDE, **while their parties were loosing**. These trends are the main proof that the Greens, the center right and even the far right wing parties are seriously targeting women voters and succeeded to win with women or to diminish their defeat by getting women voters on board. **The S&D did not try to radicalize their position to the real 50-50 offer, they did not catch mind and souls of women voters and they have lost!**

Something important changed also in **the ranking** of party families by the score of their women MEPs. The Greens which were always in the lead by percentage of women in the EU parliament, improved their score, coming to incredible 54%, making their priority even firmer. The liberals over jumped S&D for the 5 percentage points, coming to 45%. S&D worsened their score from the one in the outgoing parliament for 1.2 percentage points, ending at 40% of WMEPs, while EPP made the biggest progress of them all by improving their score for 8.7 percentage points, coming to 33% WMPs.. The group of IND/DEM and all other smaller party families, with the exemption of the obviously macho far left, made visible improvements. **So the first conclusion is, that conservative, liberal and women from far right are the ones who really won this EU elections. It is only realistic to expect that their impact on EU gender equality policies will grow!**

EU 27 has the structure of 15 old and 12 new EU member states.

In the past, there was a considerable difference between the share of women MEPs coming to the EU parliament for the old and the new EU member states. In 2009, this has also changed considerably:

Group of countries	All seats	EPP		S&D	ALDE	GREENS
		%of WMPs				
EU 15 old	535	37	33	41	44	54
EU 12 new	201	29	34	38	47	50
EU 27	736	35	33	40	45	54

One can see that the share of women in the parties coming from the new member states is bigger in EPP and in ALDE, while it is a bit smaller in S&D and in the Greens. But in the first three cases, the women from the parties from the new member states gained much more new seats than the women from the old EU member states.

The second conclusion is: Women from the new EU member states in the biggest party groups might well have bigger influence on the politics of European parliament on gender equality issues than in the past.

The parties **within each party family** show major differences in their approach to the issues of gender equality in their programs, priorities and concrete policies. The general rule is that the women coming from the left wing parties from the new member states have far less real political power and influence in their parties and much weaker connection to feminism than the ones coming from the parties from the old member states, with some very small exemptions to this rule. This is different in the conservative and right wing parties. Their elected women have some real power within their parties and will for sure have a decisive impact on their party policy and their party group policy on gender equality issues. The problem is that their approach to gender equality is very different of the social democratic one in most of the concrete policy issues!

The only parties in S&D family who are in the last years showing increased interest and prioritize more than before the issue of gender equality, are our sister parties from Spain, Portugal, Austria and Greece. The share of experienced socialist women MEPs with a long track of good work on gender equality has diminished, due to the bad results of our sister parties in UK, in Germany, in France in Poland and macho attitude of our sister party in Italy and in Poland. This will for sure make S&D women MEPs efforts to regain the initiative in EU gender equality politics much more difficult and complicated.

In the crisis times, when even the conservatives had to say goodbye to the dogma of the almightiness of free market, at least for a while before they get things back on track for their quick profit making business as usual, when people, women again to a greater extend than the men, are loosing their homes, their jobs, viable possibilities to fair start in life for their children, their security in the old age, ordinary women and men will have to step out of their social and political immobility and try to take collective action.

When conservatives are calling at rescue the nation state, the EC, G20 and the international financial institutions to safe their profits, SD have to radicalize their position asking for global, EU and national structural reforms leading to the realization of the civilization which respects indivisible human rights of all and natural limitation of this planet.

If social democrats do not do that, if SD women do not regain political initiative in EU, the women from conservative and far right parties will turn the story of gender equality in a very different direction. Women will be given the right to play the traditional role of wives and mothers, of non paid care workers, of underpaid working force, of the additional, spare family bread winner, at the mercies of the global corporate profit makers.

From the times of Society of Nations, global progressive women's movement has always used a sandwich strategy to move gender equality cause forward. The forming of international consensus and binding international commitments of the national governments on crucial gender equality issues helped us to form the pressure top down. Organizing massive women's civil society movements, served us to create the pressures bottom up. This sandwich enabled us to catch mainstream political actors in between, squeezing them this way to move in our direction.

In this text I made obvious that this sandwich fell apart. We need to remake and reframe it in the new global circumstances.

- We should initiate a discussion and try to form the smallest common denominator for the future EU gender equality politics in the situation of the global crises with progressive women from all political groups in the European parliament, with EU networks in ETUC and with European Women's Lobby. The request to achieve parity in all EU decision making bodies by using legally binding procedures should be a part of this cross party cooperation in the mainstream European politics. This broad coalition should be able to get from the EC a "Daphne" project for political empowerment of women.
- We should start at the same time to build issue by issue, broad, Europe and global wide specific issue coalitions, bringing together women from social democratic politics with the women in civil society, in trade unions and in academia, on decent jobs for all, on equal pay, on reevaluation of feminized care work, on minimum net and social wage, on balancing family and professional life of men and women alike, on promotion of women reproductive health and rights, on getting rid of all forms of violence against women, on strengthening of our solidarity with the people from the global south, on engendering governmental and EU mainstream recovery plans and climate catastrophe preventing strategies.

But first and foremost we, PES W, we have to persuade our male SD party leaders, in our parties at home, in the PES in EU that this time social democratic focus on gender equality is not just one of the issues our parties need to tackle in a more radical way, but it is the issue of be or not to be of social democratic movement in EU and in the world. The FEPS discussion on the New Left is the first opportunity to start this persuasion, the PEC Congress in Prague is the decisive one to make our male party leaders to pick up the more difficult but victorious road at this historic SD crossroad.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2009 A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF PARTY, POLITICS AND COMMUNICATION ISSUES

A paper by Henning MEYER

Key words:

new progressive alliance, catch 22 situation, the good society, George Lakoff

Summary:

The sobering election results of social democratic parties in almost all member states of the European Union had many causes. Apart from problems such as the lack of charismatic political personnel and a candidate for the top job of the European Commission, problems in the area of party organization on the national and European level together with a deficient political agenda and a poor use of communication techniques were key factors in the poor showing.



The sobering election results of social democratic parties in almost all member states of the European Union had certainly many causes and cannot be comprehensively analysed on a few pages as national variations did play an important role too. Apart from problems such as the lack of charismatic political personnel and a candidate for the top job of the European Commission, I would like to briefly address three areas that I think have contributed to the dismal showing. I need to emphasise, however, that the conclusions below are based on my own experiences and observations and not on scientific research.

Parties

The way many national parties are organised is becoming more and more a political obstacle rather than an advantage. Especially social democratic parties, which need to feel the pulse of society if they want to be successful, have lost touch with the daily lives of citizens in many countries. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom is a good example for this. As a result of internal party reforms since the 1980s, the party has more and more become an electoral professional party. Party membership (as in other European countries) is declining rapidly and provides evidence for the loss of societal roots as well as the more closed nature of the party organisation. Traditional party structures seem too irresponsible to social and economic change and are also particularly slow in taking advantage of new ways of creating communities.

European social democratic parties must be serious about opening up to society and forming new progressive alliances (with Greens, trade unions, NGOs and other societal groups). Almost all attempts to do this in the past were not serious and did therefore not produce the desired result. Using new technologies to build original communities around people and political issues is a good way of trying again. But the controlling nature of current party organisations poses a serious problem for an honest attempt to be more responsive and to open up structures.

This control issue is also a problem when it comes to the Party of European Socialists. It seems to me that there is no real desire to create a strong supranational party as this would mean – to some degree - loss of political power for national parties. Issues such as PES membership (and the resulting PES activists) were one example where this resistance became apparent. Apart from the quite obvious fact that many social democratic policies need intentional cooperation or solutions, many parties are not serious about this when it means political compromise. Therefore the PES policies are often vague and 'lowest common-denominator' solutions.

Politics

There is no well-developed European public sphere and hence European election campaigns are still largely fought on national issues. This fact leads social democratic parties into a Catch 22 situation. Social democratic policies need international cooperation to be realised. Many policies involve a limit to negative integration and new measures of positive integration on the European level. In the absence of a real international strategy, national and supranational approaches simply don't match up or support each other enough. Implementing social democratic policies thus becomes very difficult.

But the by far biggest problem for social democratic parties across Europe is the general lack of new ideas

and of a new programmatic identity. The last wave of pan-European social democratic thinking was the 'Third Way' in the 1990s (although its reach did not extend to all European countries). The 'Third Way' accepted in many important aspects the neoliberal orthodoxy that has been dominant since the early 1980s and accepted much of the pure market logic.

This is at least part of the reason why social democrats were unable to capitalise on the economic crisis when it struck. We were either perceived as being responsible for the crash, being old-fashioned socialists (a language that Third Wayers themselves created) or just as being indecisive or in disarray. Even though some politicians had worked on the problems leading to the crash, there was no 'I told you so' moment that would have let to support for 'let's try our solutions now.' There have not been any long-term solutions but only short-term rescue measures. And these measures didn't add up or lead to a broader programmatic vision.

In addition, the political momentum is fading again. What was hailed at the G20 meeting in April as a 'new world order' (Gordon Brown) turned out to be a big disappointment. There has not been a fundamental reform of the international institutional setup. Also, national and European measures were modest if not disappointing. The Labour Party in the UK is actually blocking further international reform of the financial sector. The noises in favour of a Tobin tax and other measures to prevent 'socially useless' activities of banks are currently coming from Lord Turner, the Chairman of the industry watchdog FSA. As the bottom of the recession has probably been reached, the pressure for reforms will ease and we will get back to 'business as usual.' This will be another big blow to the social democratic project, as it will again reveal our programmatic deficiencies.

European social democrats must work together on a new programmatic identity that sets out a real vision for a balanced politics of economic, social and environmental responsibility. The Good Society paper (www.goodsociety.eu) was written to start the necessary political discourse towards such a new programme. The debate will be driven forward in autumn.

Communication

Apart from the lack of a political programme, the way social democrats communicate must change. The use of new media and social networks has improved but has yet to make a decisive impact. This is above all because this kind of communication is seen as part of election campaigning rather than a task that should be taken seriously at all times. The way online communication of the PES stopped after the election campaign is a good example of this. The strategy must be to build long-term followers, readers and participators and organisations must be truly responsive towards their input. If this is not done but activities are only maintained at election time, people rightly have the impression that they were only appreciated and called upon in times of election. This creates a feeling of dishonesty, which is very problematic. In total this probably does more harm than good.

Especially given the lack of a true European political space the lack of an effective online strategy is serious because it could potentially compensate for a lot of mainstream media negligence. Barack Obama's use of new media in the United States is an obvious reference point that deserves closer study than hitherto.

But also the general language of social democratic politics should be rethought. The work of cognitive scientists such as George Lakoff, who analysed from a linguistic point of view why the Kerry/Edwards campaign of 2004 did not win the political argument, would be very insightful also for European social democrats. Lakoff's work provides explanation's as to why pointing out facts and opposition mistakes often does not work out in

electoral terms – even if this involves people voting against their own interests – and how the political message needs to be formulated in order to pick the right frames of people.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S ELECTIONS IN JUNE 2009: SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

A paper by Tomáš PETŘÍČEK”

Key words:

crisis of identity, citizenship, nationalisation

Summary:

The failure in the European elections has demonstrated that the Social Democratic movement faces two important challenges. First is to overcome strategic and tactical mistakes done over the last two years. They concern mainly the lack of leadership at national and European level, lack of European dimension in PES activities and nationalisation of the campaign, inappropriate response to economic crisis, etc.. However, the more important is to overcome the second challenge: the crisis of identity Social Democracy is going through.

In spite of the ambitiously presented political agenda of the Party of European Socialists for the next Parliamentary term and the tremendous effort to mobilize voters in the time of financial and economic crisis, the outcome of the elections is more than unsatisfactory for the Social Democratic family. In particular the right-wing majority in the European Parliament raises serious concerns for the progressive agenda in Europe in the upcoming years. Even though the negotiations, which followed the elections, proved that the EPP is willing to continue in the consensual policy by involving all pro-European political groups to decision-making, it is obvious that the balance of power has shifted to the right.

It is a matter of fact that it would be much harder to reach agreement in the European Parliament, in particular on issues crucial for the PES. The EPP will have obviously much more space for maneuver in areas such as social and economic policy than ever before. It will be able to exploit the new voting strength of other right-wing groups. Even though they differ in their opinion on constitutional affairs, their position in economic and social field is much closer to that of the EPP than the Socialists' priorities are. As a consequence the capacity of Socialist and Social Democratic MEPs to influence the outcomes of the decision-making will be limited, at least compared to the last mandate. Furthermore the cleavage on environmental issues and climate change will be much more important within the new Parliament. So the position of our family in the European Parliament will be weakened and it will be necessary to find new ways of cooperation with other political groups.

In order to overcome current stagnation of our movement in Europe, which has been clearly demonstrated through the collapse in the European elections, there are two factors we should consider. Firstly, the results of the Socialist family indicate that we have committed several mistakes, both tactical and strategic, over the last years and during the campaign in particular. Of course it is necessary to draw some important lessons from these faults if we are to succeed in the next European elections.

Nonetheless, this is not enough if Socialist and Social Democratic parties want to be relevant political force for the next few decades. In fact, the second factor is much more essential in this respect. The failure in the European Parliament's elections, indeed, reflects and demonstrates a deep identity crisis the Socialist movement is going through in Europe. Hence the effort of FEPS and other relevant institutions within the family should focus on building new philosophical, programmatic and political discourse of our movement, which will reflect the new realities of the world today.

Although the problem of identity crisis seems to me to be the most important issue for the Social Democratic movement, I will focus primarily on the problems related to the recent campaign and elections. There are several aspects I consider to be relevant to the analyses of the defeat of our European movement:

- Firstly, the lack of political leadership made the pan-European campaign impossible and in fact contraproductive. Even though the PES proposed well-balanced manifesto, which was obviously superior to that of other trans-European parties, it missed the necessity to personalize our political message. It was mistake, for example, not to propose candidate for the president of the European Commission when PES had already announced that it would not support Barroso after the elections. As it has been said by other commentator: *Anticipating their own defeat, a number of socialist leaders preferred to take the safe bet by announcing their support for Barroso. The results seem to prove them right. Except that this strategy is based on a self-fulfilling prophecy: it is because the socialists failed to appear united and capable of proposing a real alternative that they failed, not the other way around!* Why the PES hasn't moved in this direction? Partly it was lack of coordination with national political parties through the PES Presidency and Coordination Team.

It would provide necessary ground for the further discussion with political leadership of national parties. Partly this proposal, when discussed, lacked the support of strong personalities who would have been able to engage party presidents and get their backing for the European candidates.

Furthermore, presenting socialist candidates for key posts would have brought new dynamics to the campaign. BBC correspondent Shirin Wheeler put it clearly. *The media and citizens need clear messages and personalities to get in contact with and to engage with.* Personalities make the political manifesto visible and tangible for people. It seems to me that PES missed this opportunity. By presenting the candidate for both the European Commission president and the European Parliament president, the voters would have been able to better connect concrete personalities with Socialist policies.

- Furthermore, the campaign was over-nationalised by political parties, including socialist, social democratic and labour. As it was already mentioned, the European manifesto of the PES was excellent basis for pan-European campaign. However, it has been overshadowed by national political manifestoes and by national campaigns, which were fought primarily on national issues and problems. It was often the case of extending the traditional struggle between opposition and government, leaving out serious European topics. Nonetheless, it has been argued by voters in several European countries, that European elections should focus on European agenda, i.e. in the Czech Republic there were voices strongly criticising the campaign of CSSD; they opposed to the predominance of issues which are out of competences of the European Parliament and national representatives in the CSSD's campaign to the European Parliament.

Indeed, this hasn't been the case only of Socialist parties. However, we missed the opportunity to communicate to voters the key message: "We can represent your interests in Europe better because we are part of united European political family which knows what are the problems we face and which has a clear vision for solving them." It hasn't been often part of the narrative of national campaigns. In order to present such an image we need to have people competent to communicate EU issues running the campaign. It is hard to be achieved when campaigns are not run, in many cases, by the EP candidates, but by party leaders or party secretariats.

- Another aspect, which contributed to the failure of Social Democratic parties in the elections, was too much criticism and not enough of concrete proposals. Any successful political party has to provide alternative while criticizing political opponents. It hasn't been the case in these elections where we relied on the critique of neo-liberalism without developing alternative political discourse.

Apart of inability to formulate alternatives to neo-liberalism in economic and social dimension, Social Democratic movement is lagging behind in other issues too. Indeed the results of Greens have shown that we have missed the momentum when it comes to environmental policy and other "soft" issues. In particular, the climate change is being recognised as serious concern for significant part of population. Meanwhile, Social Democratic parties haven't convinced voters that they are able to balance economic and social interests on the one hand and environmental-friendly policies on the other. No results when it comes to "New Green Deal" as a response to economic crisis only illustrate the deficiencies in our approach to these issues. We are not able to deliver our promises because they are often in conflict with our traditional economic and social priorities.

Of course, this has something to do with the identity crisis, which has been mentioned at the beginning. If the PES and its member parties want to remain relevant for political future of Europe, it will be necessary to define new

vision of society and economy. Such a vision has to become true alternative to neo-liberal capitalist model that has proved to be failure in the last two years. However, the PES hasn't managed to come with such an alternative yet. It is obvious from its response to economic crisis as will be explained in the next point of this analysis.

- There are two aspects why the economic crisis represented and still represent problem for Social Democrats. Firstly, the movement in general failed to form a response that would be different to the right-wing economic position and propositions. In fact, our criticism of neo-liberalism and current economic and financial order has been built on the very same economic premises and believe in continuous economic growth. Therefore, people became familiar mainly with the criticism of neo-liberal model but not with the alternatives we would like to propose because they were not able to distinguish between centre-left and centre-right

The second challenge, we failed to address properly, has been the reaction of citizens to economic recession. The conviction that people will vote automatically for Social Democrats proved to be wrong. In particular, the conservative reaction of voters, who shifted their support to more protectionist and risk reducing policies, has been surprising for some. However, this situation was very similar to the one in 1930s' where only populists' and extremists' parties benefited from the economic turmoil. The Social Democratic parties were very well aware about these changes concerning people's moods; nonetheless, they haven't countered these trends with adequate policy shifts. Of course, it is not the argument to support protectionist measures. Nonetheless, at least a modification of the communication strategy would have been appropriate reaction.

Indeed, there have been other causes that lead to the defeat of Socialist family in the June elections. It is almost certain that internal party problems, scandals of political elites and infighting were detrimental for the results of some parties. An additional factor has been the low turnout, which dropped further compared to level of 2004 European elections. Of course the low turnout is disadvantageous for Social Democratic parties. In fact Socialists haven't been able to mobilise its core electorate. In particular lack of interests on the side of trade unions' members should raise serious concerns among the Socialist leadership. Nonetheless, the turnout itself is not able to explain the collapse in the elections. Even the question of the legitimacy of the European Parliament as such is not the main problem, which should concern us too much. For comparison, the turnout in the US Congressional midterm elections has been always very similar. Therefore we should spend too much energy on solving the problem of low turnout. Instead we should focus on the crisis of identity of our movement. This is the problem, which requires our attention right now.

I would like to conclude that our main task in the next few years should be to launch detailed philosophical and theoretical debate about the new forms and shapes of Social Democratic policy in Europe. The progressive left needs to put its policy once more on the proper theoretical and ideological foundations. We need to draw new transnational principles, which would become true alternative to global system of neo-liberal capitalism.

THE 2009 ELECTIONS: SOCIALISTS AT THE CROSSROADS

A paper by Maciej RAŚ

Key words:

**European socialists, European Parliament, Poland, civil society,
new progressive alliance**

Summary:

A serious change on the political scene of Europe has happened for some years. The problem has concerned the social-democratic left that is unable to launch its own attitude to changing nature of capitalism and takes part in deconstruction of welfare state. European socialists deal with a problem of their political/ideological identity. The situation is worsened – with some exceptions - by lack of charismatic leaders. European elections'09 and some others national, regional and local elections showed it clearly.

Turnout and participation

Stating that the European Union is suffering from the deficit of democracy seems to be a truism. Citizens of the EU “do not feel” the European Parliament. They treat this institution as something distant and apart from them: as something which is devoid of “normal” legislative powers. In this situation European elections are recognized more as rivalry on the domestic political scene, than as a creation of the political image of the EU. As a matter of fact, people can observe that governments of the EU member states form the EU policies to a greater degree than the Parliament does it. It is worth noticing that politicians standing for election often insert into the discourse the strict domestic (or even local) subject matter that distorts the aim of elections even more. Moreover, the common issue should be underlined: a certain decrease of trust in the democratic system in the political dimension and erosion of the civil society. For many present-day democracy looks like the gigantic media circus. That is why it is hard to count on a magnificent turnout.

The Composition on the New Parliament

The political composition of the Parliament does not differ from the “traditional” too much. However, the balance between EPP and PES has been upset to the benefit of the centre-right. Moreover, the fragmentation of the Parliament has increased recently – there are a large number of deputies apart from two main political groups. In this situation the EPP has become the main pillar of the system. Taking into consideration that the right wing parties have ruled in the majority of the EU large states, their opportunities to direct European integration have obviously increased. The question about the socialist attitude to the centre-right has also arisen: limited cooperation or distinct competition?

The results of PES constituent parties are a consequence of their policy on the national level. Largely, they are an effect of a loss of clarity by socialists, of moving towards the centre and some even becoming similar to the centre-right by some social democratic parties (vide: an agreement on neoliberalism in economies, attitudes towards the war etc.). In short term this lack of clarity could bring a successes in elections (in case of social mistrust towards liberals and conservatives), attracting the centre electorate. In longer - caused ideological misunderstanding and loss of identity. Why are people supposed to vote for the “social-democratic copies” of the centre-right parties, if they have originals? The lack of charismatic leaders – with some exceptions – has worsened the situation more.

Additionally, a reaction of right-wing governments to the world economic crisis did not help the left in elections. However, it is necessary to remember that elections took place while the crisis was still growing. In some states, e.g. in Poland, citizens had no chance to experience negative effects of the crisis and to the elections.

Specific case: Poland

The situation of the left in Poland is exceptionally difficult. The Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) has remained the only significant left-wing party. In principle, in Poland there are not political

parties which would be “more left” than the social-democrats ones. There are no radicals, communists, greens etc. (to tell the truth they exist but the majority of the society does not even realise that...). The voters lost by DLA (SLD) cannot be “caught” by left-wing rivals – they can find their way to Civic Platform (EPP) or increase the voter’s absence. Moreover, the Polish people still demonstrate a strong attachment to liberal values in the field of economy and conservative ideas in the outlook sphere. The position of the Roman Catholic Church, clearly supporting the right wing, is strong too.

For half of the present decade on the Polish political scene two right-wing parties have dominated: conservative-liberal Civic Platform and conservative-nationalist the Law and Justice Party (UEN). Together they have gathered about ¾ votes in particular elections for a few years. The left has not been able to break this division. Currently, DLA (SLD) exists on the political scene only thanks to its “traditional” electorate, based mainly on the persons connected with the previous political regime and their families. This electorate ages and thus becomes smaller. It is a paradox, for example, that the Polish left has achieved relatively good election results among the groups of voters connected with the army and police. Sociological research shows that in Poland the electorate of the left is distinguished – above all – by its specific attitude to history and the Roman Catholic Church. Economic issues have the lower significance for the electorate of the left. It is also great difficulty to attract young voters to social-democrats. Another problem is that the Polish left has practically no influence over the electronic media and press. Mass media support the liberal or nationalist Right. They openly criticise (or disregard) socialist values and politicians of the left. Trade unions (in great measure connected with the right-wing) in comparison to Western Europe gather the little percentage of workers (particularly few in the private sector of the economy).

The persistence of such a situation – which is very probable – threatens the long-lasting marginalisation of Polish social-democracy or even its atrophy after 2012. In the case of the state with large representation in the European Parliament, it will have a visible, negative influence on the PES position.

There was, there is, and there will be a Left in France, Germany, Spain, Italy and other significant countries in the EU. In case of Poland it is not so obvious. That is why the remarks on Left in Poland are so important for European socialists.

Extremist and eurosceptic parties

The significance of the eurosceptic and extremist parties will be, of course, a function of economic satisfaction and a sense of security of the EU member states’ citizens. As a matter of fact, there are some parties and politicians of the “traditional” right wing (e.g. Berlusconi, Klaus), incorporating aspects into their political agenda such as anti-integration, or anti-immigration slogans, that reduce the popularity of the far-right parties. “Traditionally”, not very expressive, social-democracy loses this part of its electorate for radical parties, competently appealing to the poorer community, people who feel alienated and disappointed with the system.

In France and Germany Greens skillfully took votes away from socialists. Votes of electors who were disappointed with “conservative” politics that socialists had led. It especially concerned a younger electorate.

The socialists’ passivity and lack of clarity can cause – in case of a future decrease the centre-right’s popularity – “catching” of votes by populists and radicals.

The responsibility of the mass media

One should agree with the thesis that the broadcast and print media focus their attention on issues that have national and local meaning. The European dimension of politics is usually not important in a political discourse for them.

It is worth to emphasizing that we can observe the evolution of media in direct toward not very demanding consumer, who is interested in simple entertainment, including political sensation. Political discourse in media is limited to catchy slogans and simplifying commentaries. This situation depreciates social-democracy so that presenting the composite image of social reality simply remains incomprehensible for many.

Reducing the social subject matter (especially devoted to the workers' problems) in the mainstream's media is also beneficial for the liberal right wing. In the period preceding the present economic crisis European society, particularly in new membership states, was generally "fed" on non-alternative, neoliberal conception of our world.

Issues at stake at European level

As it was noticed above, the European elector "does not feel" that European elections have a real influence on his life. She/he associates them rather with "great politics" of elites. Or, she/he participates in elections beguiled with promises of politicians concerning concrete domestic matters. In this context Poland has been a good example. Some candidates promised to solve local matters exclusively. On the other hand many politicians promoted the thinking not in European categories, but short-term benefits to one's own state and the party. The Prime Minister Tusk, leader of Civic Platform, promised that more votes for his party meant there more chance of choosing the Pole from EPP as the chairman of the European Parliament.

The role of national parties

The role and significance of the PES Group is too small. The PES platform is overshadowed by domestic programmes of social-democratic parties. This situation requires a change in order to reinforce the left wing in Europe. It will be difficult because of the lack of strong public demand (vide: problems mentioned above) as well as the attitude some of the leaders and members of particular social-democratic parties. It is additionally complicated by economical, political and social differences existing de facto between constituent parties of the PES Group.

Strategy and personalisation

In this point it is necessary and intentional to underline once again the importance of social-democratic parties' identity and their programmes' clarity. Socialists have to create a relevant political strategy showing their interests in ordinary people's lives. Left's long-term effectiveness can be provided only by distinguishing itself from the right wing and the radical left.

The left should remember about social equality, the division of profits from economic growth. The problem of redistribution has to be launched as it was in the past.

The expressiveness of the political platform should be accompanied by a clear message to European society, using traditional and – in a wide range – modern channels of transmission as well as new techniques of the political promotion, including new media and social networks. Sometimes, it requires reaching to – criticised above – simplifications, socio-technical manipulations and techniques of camouflage.

It is necessary to actively cooperate with the broad circle of organizations and communities: trade unions, intellectual groups, feminists, minority, local organizations etc. It is important to have connections not only with institutions, but with their members too. It seems to be especially significant when the public interest in election (and political activity in general) is falling down. Social-democrats should intensively defend and develop civil society, being in charge of institutions constituting the "third sector". Socialists should be ready to form new progressive alliances with the far-left and greens as well as with the centre-left.

The personalisation of politics is a long-lasting and deepening phenomenon. It means that the lack of expressive, popular, charismatic leaders condemns political groups to defeat. Therefore, the PES should create not only domestic leaders but also leaders at the European level. Social-democracy in Europe is still waiting for a new generation of famous leaders such as Mitterrand, Schroeder, Blair; Kwasniewski - in Poland - were in 90's. Examples of Spain and Slovakia show that charismatic leaders and relevant platforms can give relatively good results even in the complicated economic situation.

Strengthening the European project

To build up European identity and strengthen European democracy the EU has to also create a common European election code. Transnational European candidate lists are sine qua non condition of truly united Europe. That will not happen without gradual going from European integration based on the intergovernmental model toward the supranational model, that is: in a federal direction. Such action will trigger objections motivated not only ideologically and politically (especially in small states), but also for with strictly pragmatic reasons: national elites will be afraid of losing their position.

Conclusions

We are witnesses of serious changes happening on the political scene of Europe. We are dealing with the fall in meaning of the social-democratic left. I suppose that we are witnesses of the end of "belle époque" for "traditional" social-democracy. At the same time we are dealing with a problem of our political/ideological identity. The situation is worsened by lack of charismatic leaders – with some exceptions, of course.

European socialists are facing a dilemma:

- to wait – realising usual political agenda, without serious shifts – for the return of the favourable political conditions,
- to make some redefinitions (shifts), to change their approach seriously.

The first option is comfortable. But what if it turns out that present situation is long-lasting tendency? The

second option is more difficult and requiring courage. It's connected with political risks. And there is a question concerning direction of shifts.

Usually we are divided between supporters of a strong left option and those who are of the centre-left. In my opinion socialists should be ready to create new progressive alliance both: with the far-left and greens as well as with the centre-left.

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT LEFT: TEN OBSERVATIONS ON “SOLIDARITY”

A paper by Ernst STETTER

Key words:

**solidarity, European common identity, new financial equalization scheme,
decent standard of living and social coherence, internationalism**

Summary:

The idea behind the European Union is the common appreciation of the same values and the same principles. These values, universal and indivisible, are human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity based on the principles of democracy, peace and the rule of law. This has created a strong bond between the different European countries and people as part of the unique historical project of European integration. The economic and financial crisis presents a new challenge. If Europe is conscious of identity and solidarity and brings its values together, then the rethinking of the European integration process presents a new dynamic and, therefore, a place Europe should occupy in the globalised world. As such, this offers a real opportunity for building up the Next Left.

The economic and financial crisis presents a new challenge. Most discussions on the European project focus on the need for a common set of values, different cultural spheres and references in order to ensure coherence and strong action.

Defining solidarity as a key to European integration

The idea behind the European Union is the common appreciation of the same values and the same principles. These values, universal and indivisible, are human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity based on the principles of democracy, peace and the rule of law.

These values are recognised in Member States' constitutions and are part of all treaties and declarations of the EU and reconfirmed in the preamble of the Lisbon Treaty.

This has created a strong bond between the different European countries and people as part of the unique historical project of European integration. It is agreed that these European values are non-negotiable. They ensure that Europe maintains and develops peace, stability and democracy. They also aid the creation of a European identity amongst the citizens under the header of "Unity in Diversity". So far, European citizens share the same political and civic values while adhering to different cultural spheres. For a long time peace was the most important value and the European Union is built on this keystone. Nevertheless, solidarity becomes more and more important for the citizens in a national, European and international context.

The last Eurobarometer 70 from December 2008 clearly shows that Europeans believe that the main objective of building Europe is to develop the EU economy and to boost growth. In another survey on values, 53% of all Europeans regard Social Justice and Solidarity more as European values than as universal ones.

This autumn, the nomination of the new Commission and especially the Commissioners for economic and monetary affairs, and for employment and social affairs, will be of crucial importance for the future of the European Union. In fact, despite calls for more comprehensive and coordinated stimuli for a progressive recovery plan, Europe succumbed to national reflexes to "go it alone" in inhibiting, rather than enhancing, other countries' interventions. The next five years are of crucial importance to finding ways out of the political and economic crisis.

Elaboration on fundamental questions of solidarity

Therefore, the debate in Europe and the answers to overcome the crisis should be marked by two fundamental questions:

1. What does Solidarity mean in times of crisis?

So far, the identity of the European Union has been predominantly defined politically. Nevertheless, the Union is based on economic principles. The Lisbon Treaty clearly defines the EU as a "social market economy". The question is therefore, how far does Europe accept the principle and the value of solidarity?

2. Is the transforming of the neo-liberal system compatible with the principle of combining diversity and unity?

Solidarity is a precondition of a stronger European common identity. Therefore, a just economic system needs to ensure equal opportunities and a decent life for each citizen. As a consequence,

democratic mechanisms such as efficient and effective decision-making processes must be implemented.

Both questions are of crucial importance for progressive movements within the European Union. Unity means above all the capability to act effectively on the various issues of common interest on the basis of overall agreed common values.

The quest for a common definition of the European value "Solidarity" faces several challenges. There are still the inherent differences existing in the European Union: different cultural and historical backgrounds, different languages, geographical differences but more importantly different economic backgrounds and national patterns. The extended eastern borders have already brought a completely new interpretation and understanding of the same principles and the future enlargements towards the Balkans and the proposed Union for the Mediterranean will raise further questions regarding European identity and Solidarity. Another challenge is closely related to this: In European societies dealing with migration and demographic change they offer a new understanding of intergenerational and workers' solidarity.

On the other hand, as a "cruel consequence" of the crisis, the composition and the structure of the European Union are changing with extreme speed, as are the economic patterns, the internal and external balance of power and the international scene. The crisis shows that a new, comprehensive and progressive approach is needed on a long term basis. Therefore Europe needs more – rather than less – regulations which are founded on a common sense approach to wages, taxes and welfare systems.

Constructing a new financial equalisation scheme

These challenges can only be tackled through a true European debate and dialogue in a true European space. Only this can guarantee real exchange in the course of the quest for a common definition. Otherwise parallel dialogues will lead to greater divergence instead of more unity. A real European debate with the active participation of citizens from all Member States can only be created if through transnational dialogue. The discussion of re-thinking and re-shaping the economic system must be taken out of the national context.

In addition to this the current economic crisis has shown the connection between the single markets of the member states of the European Union. Every European country benefits from a stable Europe. However, a national bankruptcy endangers not only a stable Europe but also the security policy. One of the great challenges of sustainable development is to combine the desires of the society for economic prosperity with those for social security. Therefore, the economic crisis should be treated as a European problem within the international context. A problem or a crisis which affects Europeans in everyday life should be tackled through European solutions and European solidarity. This should then be combined with international coordination and well-defined efforts to rebuild the global architecture. Consequently a new financial equalisation scheme between the different member states of the European Union could be a solidarity-based solution which also has implications for reforming and restructuring EU structural funds and the Common Agricultural Policy.

The European Single Market was developed in stages and prompted by policies promoting liberalisation, cross-border trade and free commercial exchange. The current economic crisis impacts strongly on these achievements. The real question to ask is whether the path of liberalisation and deregulation is still the policy to

follow in the years to come. Alternatively, we could ask whether it is time to re-think and re-shape European market policies opening them to a serious and ongoing process of evaluation as was done at the beginning of the European integration process after World War II.

This is not only about reviewing regulatory instruments, but also reforming and reinforcing the social market economy. This re-thinking should not focus only on a combination of EU regulatory reinforcement and strengthened community capacity to rectify shortcoming as intended by the conservatives. This would effectively amount to a risk-management strategy.

Ensuring decent standard of living and social coherence

The process of re-thinking must focus on the deep reforms necessary for the currently discredited neo-liberal capitalist system. The belief that markets are self-correcting is no longer the overall answer to shape our economies. The so-called “efficient markets” model, wherein prices fully and efficiently reflect all available information, is obsolete. Also, the extreme focus on monetary policies and inflation diverted attention from the more fundamental question of financial stability. The central bankers’ belief that controlling inflation was necessary and sufficient for growth and prosperity had never been based on sound economic theory.

The fundamental question is whether to follow a system of “free-wheeling capitalism” or a reformed “social market economy” with social protections, newly organised labour markets with equal opportunities to professional education and lifelong learning to help ensure continued job prospects. Also, the question of a more “social” globalisation must be raised. A prosperous economy is more than simply a high income per capita economy, which created the obvious inequalities within and outside the European Union.

Any prosperous economy is based on innovation, but the post-crisis economy has to respect the environment and to offer job opportunities that are engaging and challenging as well as ensuring a decent standard of living and social coherence. The economy should provide security and a place within the labour market for those who have lost their previous occupations due to the changes brought by progress and innovation.

Connecting cultural values to the economic environment

Once again, we come to the question of Solidarity: Cultural values and attitudes are mutually connected with the economic environment. Dynamic surroundings based on innovation are often associated with an ethos of ambition, competition and self-help. But is this ethos also based on the value of solidarity? If one’s economic standing in society is determined by ambition, competition and self-advancement, does one’s actions reflect recourse to solidarity? The same goes for relations between states and different national economies.

One should remember that the primary concern and the starting point of the European integration process was solidarity. This is how one should look at the origins of the Common Agricultural Policy. The objective is still to ensure an adequate income for farmers, opportunities for self-development and to guarantee for the citizens enough agricultural produce to survive. This policy was simply founded on the idea of Solidarity. The Euro is another example of real European Solidarity, as an initiative which imposes the same set of rules and regulations for all participants. At the same time the Euro gives to everybody the duty to ensure its success.

Essentially this also describes the evolution of the value of Solidarity. In a very genuine sense, one can state that the economic success of post-war Europe has been a key contributor to the ongoing development of values based on solidarity. At the beginning the focus was on “meeting current needs”, but it evolved to encompass economic growth, social cohesion and environmental policies.

Besides this, the European Union claims to hold common values and principles but in many fields it is a “Union of wording” rather than a “Union of realities.” European unity has so far not been achieved in crucial sectors where it is most necessary: the budget for the Union is not yet fully appropriate or decided on democratically. The same goes for fiscal and legislative harmonisation, a common energy policy and a common environment protection strategy. Nor is unity achieved in crucial areas like immigration or the fight against international crime. But the crucial problem is now the urgent need for a coherent and overall comprehensive economic recovery policy to avoid mass unemployment and job destruction in the member-states of the EU.

The proposal of the introduction of European bonds or the creation of an EU-coordinated “Common Aid Fund” as a real alternative to the different kinds of state aid at national level is not achievable without the willingness of all members of the European Union and therefore requires the involvement of the citizens.

Increasing the involvement of citizens

In order to increase input from the bottom up and to achieve a greater involvement of citizens in further European integration, the first step is to start with a real political debate in all the member states of the Union. Unfortunately the 2009 European elections have not been used to enhance such a debate. The results, and in particular the very low turnout, highlight this missed opportunity.

The common approach of the national parties during the European elections is still to deal with domestic and even local issues. This causes strong misinterpretation among the voters and citizens about the whole purpose of Europe and the European Union. The 2009 elections show once again the fact that nearly everywhere in the European Union the elections were seen as a kind of a mid-term national election in order to punish or to favour parties on the national level for their respective policies.

Additionally, even the election posters and other campaign material (such as websites) in the different member states showed little or no indication of the European parties. This tendency fails to create a feeling of affiliation to a European platform. The intensive use of the common symbol of the PES could activate and convince the electorate.

Engaging European parties in an intensive debate on Europe

Progressive movements and parties should consider the bad results in the 2009 -European elections as a final call to engage in an intensive debate on Europe and on European values and policies:

Firstly, this can be attained by starting from now on the promotion of cross-border candidacies in the next 2014 European elections and by supporting the further development of the European political families into real European parties.

This step would have a great influence on the creation of a true European space, as it would finally shift the level of the debate from the national to the European level. On the one hand, it would reduce the democratic deficit in the European Union. On the other hand, the quest for a definition of European values would not be the aggregation of 27 different dialogues which creates even more division. Rather, it would finally become a real cross-border debate, which helps people to understand other cultures and historical backgrounds better. The improved understanding is essential for more unity, integration and, thus, Solidarity. Moreover, a reduction from 27 voices to one voice would help to fill the European space with European content.

Secondly, the creation of truly European election lists would probably also boost the citizens' participation in the European Parliament elections. It would at least be clear that this is not just another national election with national candidates and national subjects, but that this time their vote can really make a difference concerning European debates at European level. The integration process, which is still often seen as an elite-driven mechanism would then turn into a more democratic system capable of focussing on issues relevant to all European citizens.

Thirdly, the further strengthening of true European political parties is a must. The current situation in which the European party is the grouping of all national parties of a respective political family should be revised. This goes together with the option to allow citizens within the European Union to become members of a European party without being members of their respective national party. The socialist family in particular could be the "avant-garde" of such a move forward. This creates a gathering of well engaged and informed citizens and helps to further engage others about Europe and their respective political movements.

Fourthly, in order to shift the debate on European elections from the national level to a truly European level, concrete political action and legal changes also need to be enacted. Therefore, support should be given to creating a common European election code, which would determine one common European electoral system with the same Election Day all over Europe, thus enhancing the symbolic aspect of voting as one European polity. This would include transnational European candidate lists and constituencies. The objective is to make the electorate feel that their vote can really make a difference at European level.

Fifthly, the electoral process is a means of giving citizens ownership over their democracy. This was seen in the past through the extension of universal suffrage at national level. The twin fundamental objectives of the European project were that the peoples of the European Union would never go hungry and that they would never again go to war with one another. It now appears that there is a link missing between this great vision for Europe and the localised grassroots level of our democracy. As such, the shifting of the electoral process away from the boundaries of Europe's nation-states to units that link the vast European Union to its constituent parts will help to enhance European integration to the benefit of all its citizens.

These kinds of reforms in the political organisation help to enhance and strengthen the people's awareness of the relevance of the EU for their daily life and work as well for the need for more coherent policy in implementing European values. The European Union needs to begin to show better brand awareness as in the examples of clothing labels like Armani or Hugo Boss. However, this is not only about marketing and communications strategy but is, in reality, all about engagement and fostering a clear political mandate.

Encouraging European think tanks and intellectual debate

Aside from concrete political action and the need for the creation of a European public space with the aid of truly European elections, European think tanks should also influence this process and become a unifying force in the quest for identification and promotion of European values. These think tanks are the soft powers of Europe, incubators for new, progressive ideas which are fundamental in tackling today's challenges to create a better society based on common European values. Democracy and active participation cannot be forced upon a Member State by institutions. Rather, it has to grow along with citizens' desires. Think tanks have to fulfil their unifying role in a European debate searching for common values and to be a bridge between citizens and European institutions. First of all, in cooperation with citizens and researchers they should find new ways of thinking and offer thought-provoking concepts to European institutions in order to make them change their functioning and to influence them to take political action for the establishment of a European public space.

Their action would definitely help to implement this. The process of identifying and promoting common European values is most definitely runs the risk of creating more division if this process cannot be made truly European.

Embedding reforms into the tradition of social democratic reformism

For social-democratic and socialist parties the challenge is herby obvious and clear. The Left has to regain an authentic position in European politics. Policy programmes must be readapted to basic values and reconnect to the tradition of the social-democratic reformism. In a society which constantly faces new and unknown challenges, a modern social democratic party has to constantly cope by changing and readopting policies in the spirit of its ideological heritages.

"Social democratic" movements are aimed at bringing about wide-ranging changes in the society for which they are intended. Social-democratic reforms differ from adaptations of existing structures. Furthermore, programmes are decided by delegates at party conferences. In order to implement such reforms, party conferences require not only the support and guidance of spin doctors and political communications managers, but also the support of civil society.

Emile Durkheim studied the idea of socialism more than 100 years ago and wrote: "Socialism is not a science, a sociology in miniature – it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective malaise." Socialists, as Durkheim saw it, believed that workers were always on the edge of disaster because they were unable to bargain fairly with capitalists who bought their labour. But, interestingly, Durkheim saw that socialism was more than a matter of economic struggle: "For example, they are understood generally to demand a more democratic organization of society, more liberty in marriage relations, juridical equality of the sexes, a more altruistic morality, a simplification of legal processes, etc."

Even though the PES has to find an ideological homogeneity and the power to act together, there is a common ground which needs to be discussed. The ideological space where the left must situate itself is today becoming more and more complex. Traditionally there has been a question of the relationship between liberal economic policy and social justice. The left adheres more to a notion of equality and social justice, while the right prefers a more individualistic and market-oriented conception of economic liberty. It could be argued that the

adoption of the economic principles of the right (as seen in the “Third Way”) has led social democracy towards the severe problems it currently faces.

Bringing in the historical dimension of internationalism

It is essential to think about solidarity on a worldwide level, something which demands a wide-ranging cultural change. The economic and social crisis offers the Left a huge opportunity and urges us to redefine international solidarity together with European and national solidarity. This is also a return to the historical internationalism and the spirit of solidarity and peace of the 1970s from leaders like Willy Brandt to Olof Palme.

Every group has different interests. It has to be kept in mind that the process of building up an ideological identity and a unified community is a continuous struggle. These concerns notwithstanding, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel argued that the level of consciousness determined the level of social organisation. Consciousness was raised over the centuries by the clash of ideas. The prevailing set of beliefs was contradicted by another thesis: the antithesis. In the ensuing struggle they influenced each other. This synthesis of two was a new and higher level of consciousness and became the new thesis, even though it is leading to a new synthesis.

If Europe is conscious of identity and solidarity and brings its values together, then the rethinking of the European integration process presents a new dynamic and, therefore, a place Europe should occupy in the globalised world. As such, this offers a real opportunity for building up the Next Left.

THE NEXT LEFT: THOUGHTS ON THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2009

A paper by Eric SUNDSTRÖM

Key words:

PES, European Elections 2009, Social Europe, Next Left

Summary:

In spite of seemingly favourable preconditions – three crises (financial, jobs, climate) and conservatives in government across Europe, the centre-left suffered heavily at the polls in the European Elections 2009. Eric Sundström lists ten reasons, five structural and five connected to the campaign 2009, in an attempt to analyze the problems facing Socialists and Social Democrats in Europe right now.

Background: 2009 was a "campo di possibilità"

The major paradox concerning the European elections 2009 is that the preconditions seemed to be perfect for socialists and social democrats. Europe was in recession due to a financial crisis that had developed into a job crisis with increasing unemployment figures. Besides the recession, climate change was at the top of voters concern. And the centre-right was in office almost everywhere across Europe, dominating the EU-institutions as well. However, earlier in the year Barack Obama had been installed as the 44th President of the United States of America. Progressive winds were blowing across the Atlantic towards the European shore.

Needless to say, jobs have always been the major *raison d'être* of socialist and social democratic parties. From a semantic point of view, words such as "labour" and "worker" are even common in the names of our parties. And speaking of semantics: a recession is always accompanied by social exclusion. The socialist and social democratic focus on "Social Europe" had a great potential to strike a chord among voters.

When it comes to climate change, the first UN-conference on environmental issues was held in Stockholm in 1972. Olof Palme, one of Europe's leading social democrats at the time, opened the conference with insights that were not accepted by conservatives until recently. Another social democrat, Gro Harlem Brundlandt, coined the phrase "sustainable development".

The financial crisis, escalating when Lehman Brothers filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on September 15th 2008, took most of us by surprise. But Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, leader of the Party of European Socialist (PES), had already spent several years preaching and warning about the instability of the financial system.

Speaking of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, one might also mention the internal "Manifesto process" within the PES. The process leading up to 2009 election was a vast improvement compared to 2004. The leaders of our national parties, but also grassroots members known as "PES-activist", were much more involved in the common PES-approach to the elections. The PES-office on Rue du Trône also made a serious effort to integrate social media, the new silver bullet of political campaigning, into the European elections.

However, the voter did not seem to notice that the centre-left was right about the big issues. Neither did the voter seem to acknowledge that the political force representing these ideas, the Party of European Socialists and its members parties, had made a serious effort to become more transparent, democratic and open to the European democratic process and its citizens.

The election of 2009 was, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, a "campo di possibilità" (field of possibilities) for socialists and social democrats. The field was fertile, so why did we only win one of every five votes? Here are ten tentative ideas from a Scandinavian perspective.

1-5: Trends, structures and institutional problems

1. Big trends to our disadvantage: In the period after the Second World War, a number of trends in European societies have changed voting behaviour to our disadvantage. The working class grows smaller year by year, and a growing middle class with white colour jobs are not choosing our ballot by default, as their grand parents with factory jobs did. One can also argue that the process towards an "ownership society" has weakened our basic idea about a general welfare state, paid for by a substantial level of taxes. When the voter owns her house and has an additional, private health insurance through work, the idea of a welfare state and high taxes disappears

in a mist of right-wing promises: tax "relief" and state subsidies for the maid who cleans your house when you run between work, kindergarten, and the grocery store.

- 2.** A new political landscape after the Cold War: During the Cold War, several socialist and social democratic parties could portray themselves as the healthy middle way between Soviet Communism and Ronald Reagan Capitalism. Large parts of the middle class could join working people and vote for non-communist reformist parties, who often ended up as the stable governing alternative in the middle of the political spectrum. During the 1990s, several of these centre-left parties benefited from the definitive victory in our half of the political spectrum (i.e. over communism). But today, when the size of socialist and social democratic parties are smaller due to the trends described above, the political landscape is more often divided into two blocks: right versus left. This can be to our disadvantage, since voters in the middle often are sceptical vis-à-vis the reformed communist parties that are now part of our left block. Also, when the political spectrum is divided into two blocks, political leaders tend to matter more. This has lately become a problem for us (see point 7).
- 3.** Globalization, political renewal and our base. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, modern social democracy has rightly embraced a number of major trends in the post-industrial society. We do and should embrace globalisation, immigration to Europe and multicultural societies, same-sex marriage and LGTB-rights in general. However, these positions have at least to some degree alienated parts of our traditional base of working class voters. At the same time, right-wing extremist and populist parties have been good at exploiting ordinary voters insecurity in face of the big changes brought by globalization. And we have, sadly and sometimes, failed to engage in a living dialogue with our base. We took these voters for granted, went off to our well-paid jobs in the party machinery, and concentrated on the swing voters in our own part of town.
- 4.** The structure of the European Union. One can argue that the structure and practical functioning of the EU is a disadvantage for progressive, reformist parties – almost by default. The EU is built on the four freedoms and the internal market. The main focus of the centre-left, to create a "Social Europe" and put a bridle on "market Europe," force us to play catch up. And to achieve reform is difficult in a supranational political system with several balancing institutions, where decisions ultimately are taken after a long process of compromises. In this system, our political adversaries can play it easy and just try to end up close to status quo.
- 5.** The new kids on the block: Sure, Olof Palme spoke about the environment already in 1972. But that is also our problem. Socialist and social democratic parties are often portrayed, and sometimes portray themselves, as yesterday's news. If you are a modern, progressive voter who recently watched Al Gore's film "An inconvenient Truth," why not vote for the Greens instead? Or why not the reformed communist party, known for cool, young, outspoken candidates and a radical platform? Competition in our own half of the political spectrum has become tougher.

6-10: Specific problems in the European elections 2009

6. No candidate to challenge Barroso: Given the complex structure of the European Union, it has been argued that the European elections should determine directly who would become the president of the Commission.

In this way, the importance of the election would increase, the media would have a pan-European election with (most likely) two main candidates to write about, and voter turnout would probably rise. This would also increase the legitimacy of the European elections and tackle the famous democratic deficit of the EU. However, the European parliament already has the powers to reject the Commission proposed by the European Council. When the EPP-group re-nominated Barroso as president, PES had a golden opportunity to nominate its own challenger (for example Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Martin Schulz or Margot Wallström). In this way, the power to choose the president of the Commission would have been put into the hands of the citizens of Europe. Moreover, it should be noted that Barroso had a weak, right-wing leaning track record that made him vulnerable for a solid challenge from the centre-left. But the PES inexplicably failed to nominate its own candidate, a major disappointment within – for example – the network of PES-activist. The rumour says that petty politics between strong personalities in Brussels came in the way. Grassroots members of the PES were disappointed and a great chance was squandered.

7. Charismatic politicians matter: He was so totally wrong about the war in Iraq, but we progressives still seek our new leader to replace Tony Blair. In many countries, the right is now better at filling top positions with charismatic leaders. One explanation, of course, is that conservative parties are in power throughout Europe. A President's or a Prime minister's office always gives you a strong platform. But even in European party politics, with the possible exception of Poul Nyrup Rasmussen and Martin Schulz, few PES-politicians are really known among voters. But many voters know of Daniel Cohn-Bendit of the much smaller Green party EGP. Politicians are like footballers; they need constant training in order to improve. Skill is needed in order to put the ball in the net – or to turn a European Union directive into concrete politics and a newspaper article. More professional efforts ought to be put at our elected representatives disposals. Why not start an academy where young MEPs with potential can learn how to break into the media landscape? Furthermore, our leading MEPs ought to have more important roles in the leadership of our national parties. Some MEPs have more formal political power than a junior minister in a national government, some observers have noted. And some of our local and national politicians must turn an eye towards the EU more often than once every five years.

8. Voter turnout: As we all know, low turnout tend to hurt parties to the left of centre, since we rely on voting blocks less likely to turn up at the polls (working class voters, voters with immigrant background, young voters – for example). This became evident in European elections 2009, which had a record low turnout. However, voter turnout increased rather sharply in Sweden, from 37,9 percent to 45,5. This did not seem to benefit the Social Democratic party, which gained 156 550 votes compared to 2004, but still befall to a slight decrease overall (24,56 percent of the votes in 2004; 24,41 in 2009). One explanation might be that voter turnout increased heavily among middle class voters in general, so that the slight increase among working class voters, voters with immigrant background, and especially young voters did not benefit the Social Democratic party overall. But as we all know, with a higher turnout in general in all 27-member countries, the PES-share of the votes would most probably have been considerably bigger. Maybe it is time to study the combination of social media and GOTV-efforts made by the Obama-campaign in the Presidential election 2008?

9. Political message: It is impossible to make generalizations about campaigns in 27 countries, albeit with a common PES-manifesto as some sort of foundation. However, it can be argued that our sound and basic vision

of a "Social Europe" only pops on some of our national parties agenda every five years (i.e. during European elections). Accordingly, our core idea about "Social Europe" is not well understood and rooted in our own parties, let alone among our core voters. Moreover, when we present our vision of "Social Europe", we often end up in a policy document with ten very general guidelines that no one to the left of Attila the Hun can disagree with. Also, when we craft our messages, we often tend to end up on the defensive, defending rights and positions we have already achieved on the national level. One example in the elections 2009 was workers rights (Viking, Laval, Ruffert) – a fight we needed to take, but a fight that per definition put us on the defensive. And elections are about the future.

10. Political infrastructure: Many interesting books describe how the right in America invested heavily in the long term battle of ideas (from the election 1964 and onwards), and how the progressive response developed in a rather uncoordinated way after Al Gore's defeat in 2000. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's reform of the PES and the creation of FEPS are important steps for progressives in the Europe. But much more must follow. One basic idea that the present author has put forward several times, is the creation of a "Anna Lindh House" in Brussels that can host PES, ECOSY, FEPS, and other progressive organizations in Europe's political capital. It might sound simplistic, but such a house with pooled resources could become the first building stone when a stronger progressive movement is organized in European politics. In such a house, progressives would meet up and discuss what we can learn from each other, as well as from president Obama's campaign. We need to start thinking long-term and put out the strategies and ideas that will get us off the current road. Because the road we are on right now seems to transform us into just another party to the left of centre. Will we, in a not too distant future, be pleased when we are winning one of every five votes in a European election? The scenario above can and must be avoided. But then we must also be realistic about the challenges we have, and dare to look into our possibilities to think long-term and find a new path. Let the discussion start. Our ideas about solidarity and equality never go out of style. So there is, as always, a "campo di possibilita" out there.

^{xii} Anders Ehnmark uses the term "campo di possibilita" frequently in his book "Stad i ljus. Antonio Gramscis slutsater" (Norstedts 2005).

^{xiii} Magnus E. Marsdal writes angrily about how the Norwegian Social Democratic Party, "Arbeiderpartiet", lost parts of its base to the populist, xenophobic party Fremskrittspartiet in "Frp-koden. Hemmeligheten bak Fremskrittspartiets suksess" (Forl. Manifest 2008).

^{xiv} See for example Gerassimos Moschonas chapter "Reformism in a 'conservative' system: The European Union and social-democratic identity" in John Callaghan, Nina Fishman and Martin McIvor (eds) "In search of Social Democracy: Responses to Crisis and Modernisation in the Western European left" (Manchester University Press 2009).

^{xv} Simon Hix presents these ideas at length in his book "What is wrong with the European Union and how to fix it" (Polity Press 2008).

^{xvi} Suggested reading: "Yes we did! And inside look at how social media built the Obama brand" by Rahaf Harfoush (New Riders 2009) and "Campaign '08: A Turning Point For Digital Media" by Kate Kaye (2009).

^{xvii} One brilliant book on America's right turn is "The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America" by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge (Penguin Press 2004). For Democratic politics, see Matt Bai's entertaining "The argument: Inside the battle to remake Democratic politics" (Penguin Press 2007).

THE 2009 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: A TOUGH ROAD AHEAD

A paper by Dimitris TSAROUHAS

Key words:

minimum income, the good society, innovation, transparency, trade unions

Summary:

The 2009 European Parliament results force us to think deep about how to revive the fortune of progressive forces in Europe. I suggest we recognize that a) 'the politics of fear' has been put into effective use by the right; b) the centre-right has stolen our clothes on welfare issues, c) we have often appeared unfocused, unprincipled and uncertain about our purpose in politics. To revive its fortunes, European social democracy should coordinate its policy response on major issues such as welfare, immigration and climate change. Some policies (minimum income) should become part of all national parties. Most of all, European social democracy should become a movement, eine Bewegung, en rörelse, ένα κίνημα.



Introduction

Following the June elections, some have sought to explain the result by use of short-term factors and personality-driven arguments (Traynor 2009). Certainly, the expenses scandal in the UK has damaged the Labour Party, and the unwillingness of front-line politicians to carry the Dutch Labour Party's flag did little to enhance its chances of electoral success. But we would be diluting ourselves if we think that such factors are responsible for our electoral meltdown across the Union, exceptions notwithstanding. It cannot be a coincidence that it was the social democratic parties in office that suffered heavy (UK, Germany, and Austria) or less heavy (Spain) defeats in the elections, whilst the centre-right government parties fared a lot better (Germany, France, Sweden).

This is not to say that we should ascribe the results to popular apathy towards progressive policies: the example of the Greens in France is just one among many illustrating how organizational cohesion, a clear political message combined with pro-European positions can be successful.

In what follows, I will attempt to provide an explanation of the social democrats' bad showing and suggest ways of moving beyond the current stalemate. To do so, I will divide explanations and suggestions in short- and long-term ones, hopefully illustrating practical ways to rejuvenate the social democratic family.

Long-term factors of decline – or the salience of ideas

A slightly self-serving suggestion is in order to start with. Academics and researchers should invest more of their time and resources in studying the contemporary right. I suspect that should we do so we will come up with very interesting findings. My hunch is that:

1. The right has been using the '**politics of fear**' to establish its dominance in the battlefield of ideas. It seems that, in doing so, it has been fairly successful. What does this politics consist of? There are two main axes, both **centred on labour and cultural issues**. First, isolating progressives by conflating migration and unemployment, heightening the resentment of the working class towards the 'other'. Second, portraying often justified social democratic concerns with the rule of law and human rights as secondary to an allegedly ongoing 'cultural clash'.
2. The contemporary **centre-right** (personalized by leaders such as Merkel, Cameron and Reinfeldt) has learned from its neoliberal past on economic and welfare issues. It has ceased to espouse an unregulated capitalism **long before the crisis** and has reaped the electoral benefits accordingly. As the second strand of the politics of fear plays out, many have found electoral refuge in the conservative camp, which seeks to ensure the **maintenance of the European welfare state** (tinkering with it on the edges but not changing the main tenets of its functions) and a **strict 'law and order' agenda** that cannot and should not appeal to progressives.
3. Cool-headed analysts are right when pointing out that the above could not have been put into practice without the progressives' assistance. Time and again, on a local, regional, national and pan-European level, social democrats have appeared **unfocused** as to which issues they prioritize in terms of immediate solution and which ones can wait; **unprincipled** by seeking to steal the right's clothes on issues such as law and order that appear farcical at best and unethical at worst; **uncertain** as to which goals they pursue in modern society. For instance, how valid is the post-ideology argument that suggests 'left' and 'right' to be terms

obsolete at worst and only relevant on human rights issues at best? The crisis suggests that such arguments are deeply flawed. Social democrats, even in the midst of the crisis, do not behave as if they are.

Tactics and Strategy for a Sustainable Recovery

In the **short run**, progressives ought to:

1. Strengthen channels of communication among **national parties** and **institutionalize interaction** among the leadership as well as the rank and file. A lot more talking is necessary – talking to the public, but also to each other.
2. Focus on some widely acceptable policies – a form of **minimum income** for all citizens is one – and introduce it as part of governmental policy or manifesto commitment. Communicate this agreement and organize people – look at the Obama campaign for inspiration at local level (Straw and Browne 2009).
3. Use the crisis as an opportunity to present a **vision of the good society** (Cruddas and Nahles 2009), starting off with the deficiencies of the current financial architecture and taking the long-term view with proposals on the role of the state in today's society more generally.
4. Work on the organizational side of politics by introducing **transparency and accountability measures** in the parties' internal functioning and removing all suspicions of sleaze and corruption among functionaries. This is an issue of primary importance among voters, and politicians of all colours underestimate it to their peril.

In the **long run**, social democracy needs to become a movement again. I opine that the future of social democracy should be based on a broad working class-middle class coalition. In conditions of asphyxiating pressure from the centre-right, the recovering extreme left and a dangerous far right, the election dilemma of social democracy (Przeworski 1985) can be overcome only through such a strategy.

This can only happen if eternal attempts to please the "left" and/or "right" faction within the parties ceases, and instead a **new social democratic agenda** is formulated. This should entail:

1. **Environmental adaptation** through **state regulation**
2. Human rights' respect through **gender equality** and **equal opportunities**
3. EU coordination and cooperation – **Europe as our common home**
4. The **welfare state** as the foundation of **innovation** and **adaptation to change**
5. A **common foreign policy** that supports the "responsibility to protect" principle and condemns war-hungry adventurism.

Utilizing new ways of communication (blogging, twitter, facebook etc.) is ineffective unless the message that is being sent out changes too. People do not suffer from a lack of communication with progressives; they **disapprove of the lack of vision** and the articulation of tangible policies to overcome contemporary challenges.

The pillars of the social democratic movement, the **trade unions**, are today mostly distant to social democratic parties and only few of them continue to actively support social democracy at the organizational and financial level. The Swedish experience (Tsarouhas 2008) suggests that social democracy as a movement is only realistic if it a) **gets the unions on board** once more, b) **changes its relationship to them** on the basis of modern realities, c) gets a foothold in workplaces and **reflects the concerns of working people** in its political

commitments, d) **expands its operational basis** by finally looking beyond industry and forming new coalitions with the growing number of working poor, migrants and vulnerable groups (e.g. single mothers).

Conclusion

Social democracy cannot afford to remain self-absorbed and distant from a constantly changing reality. The recipe for success goes through differentiating itself clearly from the centre-right and rejuvenating its operation from the bottom-up. The recent triumph of the Greek social democrats in the ballot box, a victory based on a political and organizational platform separating them from the centre-right (USA Today 2009) is a vivid example of how rejuvenation and electoral success is well within the social democrats' grasp.

NEXT LEFT – EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: BETWEEN POSTPONED AND THE NEXT LEFT

A paper by Antun VUJIC

Key words:

postponed left, political demarcation, critics of neoliberalism, critics of (own) clientelism

Summary:

The author emphasizes a need for a stronger identification of the social democracy as the main and active European social and developmental political option. He believes that social democracy has been too close to the neoliberal economic and social ideas, and he insists on making space for the critics. The idea of "Next Left" is supported – the way to it is through the critical debate within the social democratic movement.

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Social Democrats have been defeated, or at least unsuccessful, in the last elections for the European Parliament. That was conceded by the leaders of European social democracy, and that is the point of “Ten Observations” by PES. However, in ten countries they won; Sweden may be no wonder, but the victory in Ireland shows that, after the isolationist voices, a more positive relation towards the unity of the Union has maybe just started to develop there. One may also say that 3 percent less votes is not such a huge loss, especially having in mind that, hopefully loyal, the Greens have significantly grown. Maintaining the position of the second strongest political group in Europe definitely confirms the continuation of the role of social democracy in the European politics. But the expectations have not been fulfilled. Defeats in some of the key countries are particularly bitter: in Germany, France, Great Britain, Spain, Italy (even in spite of the prime minister’s scandals)... It is difficult not to worry about threatening voters turnout decline, no matter if it shows their dissatisfaction, or their political indolence towards Europe, or just expresses their perplexity in front of the political choice in the moment of crisis.

Maybe we have to worry even more about the phenomenon of the growth of the radical options - particularly those on the right, mutually chauvinistic, like those in Hungary and Romania, or xenophobic, like in Netherlands, Austria, Denmark or elsewhere. Euro-scepticism and even the options of leaving the European house, have flourished as well.

There is, of course, abundance of usual explanations. They range from standard diagnosis of strengthening radicalism in the moment of crisis, to the remarks about poor turnout as an expression of indifference about the supra national European politics.

Nevertheless, such explanations will not be sufficient either for the analysis of the election result, which is less important, or for the most important: the need to find the way, the objectives and methods of the social democratic political struggle for a better, more prosperous, safer and - in one word - developmental Europe. (And definitely wider Europe, which now becomes even more questionable.)

In my opinion, wider recognition and identification of the European social democracy as the leading political force of modernity and general development has withered away. At the same time, in the field of social values, the right centre parties adopt the socially responsible programmes as well, adding the right doses of nationalism and xenophobia, very hard for the social democrats to cope with.

We should, therefore, reach for deeper roots of our today’s failures, for those which penetrate in the soil of the long-term action of the European social democracy and which ask about the very substance of today’s Europe in general. The question needs to be sharper to be understood: Europe, yes or no? And which Europe: left or right?

Those questions and answers need to overcome the level of complacency with Europe as Europe of already achieved freedoms, social and other rights, safety democracy and prosperity. Not because such Europe is not desirable and achievable, but because such Europe is not substantial for today’s neo-liberal concept of governance. On the contrary, those questions and answers will have to confront the picture of a less idealistic Europe: fragile equilibrium of interests and values whose connective tissue already shows considerable ruptures. The ruptures that need to be restored on the different political foundations. I think that social democracy must more strongly counteract against all elements of neo-liberal ideology, today dominant to the extent of being adopted within the younger population which once were - at least culturally - the grassroots of the social democracy.

Maybe we need to say the harsh truth first. Politically united Europe has not emerged independently from the ideals and high political thrills among the big and the small Europeans, but has been built on gathering of those economically most developed and their corporations around quite specific common interests: widening of the capitalistic market, defending from the farther competitors on the West and conquering the closer - communist East. And Europe has gone a long way in that direction. It has surpassed the US for around one third of gross domestic product and integrated the major part of the former Eastern Bloc into its industrial courtyard. Europe is a tremendous force. But such success opens fissures as well. Maybe such a Europe is completed; maybe there is need now for a different one.

Victory of euro-globalisation and the breakdown of the communist word inadaptable to it - combined with inner self-concussion of the general economic order - has come to the point where changes are needed to preserve and enhance what has already been accomplished. The aggressive neo-liberal economism in which a man is just a commodity and the society is just a market, has proved - to the pleasure of radical leftists - the most severe criticism, including the classic specter of “tendency of the rate of profit to fall” in capitalism. Even the still fresh rules from Maastricht confirm so; they have very little, or nothing in common with the protection of social rights, solidarity, complementary development, identity of people and countries and their needs, but they order submission to the postulates of neo-liberal economy.

The social democrats have sailed on the wave of the restrictive European program as well, even if with criticism. We needed the crisis to see what are now acknowledging even the promoters of the past “Third Way” of social democracy: incredible misplace between the state interventionism combined with the solidaristic ideology and antisolidaristic capitalism without any ideology. State solidarism has been granted to the rich and their redemption, and neo-liberalism is left to the poor and their perdition. Conservatives and neo-liberals have won not once, but twice: when they have used all resources of united capitalistic Europe for themselves and their clients, and, for the second time, now, when they withdraw to the position of their own national economies. They manage that new protectionism as the patrons of national interests. We think they are more corrupt than us, but to the majority they appear as more successful. Social democrats are better: by definition they cannot act in favor of just their own interests, but the problem is that they have not been acting enough in favor of others. They postponed the politicization of the social program, at times when there was European space for it, passing it on to the national levels, so it is no wonder that many now see such a program as not any more achievable on European level, but exclusively on the national ones. It is perhaps a number-one secret of the recent election failure of the social democrats, the wording which finds its instinctive channels to the public, to the tremendous abstinence of their voters, to the rise of euro-skepticism and confronted nationalisms, extreme right and - as a particular answer - the more radical left.

It has also been happening before, that social democrats clear land for the new paths, and the others walk through them without repairing them. Retreat of the social democrats from the (communist) critics of the ownership towards its socialization at the beginning of the 20th century, or their retreat from the social state to the society of “equal chances” at its end, is not just a revision, but a signifier of the new social standards which could not been ignored even by their political opponents when they have been inheriting those standards. In that sense, the neo-liberalism itself can be taken as a sort of footnote of the social democracy. But it is now dominant

(media magnates belong to it as well), and the body text is barely being read. It is time now for the social democracy to reintroduce some critical values, which have been relegated to the neo-liberal Euro-pragmatism. And that is possible only at the European level. The national sanctuaries could serve as a first aid to the global crisis, but the crisis cannot be resolved locally.

If workers in Opel are temporarily “saved” in Germany, while their colleagues in Opel factories in France (Calais) lose their jobs, and France is willing to undertake necessary measures to recover only its own car industry, it is not difficult - let us be a little bit sarcastic - to imagine these countries thinking about introducing the customs duties again. Even some conservative politicians think of this tendency as of “a step backwards” (Giscard d’Estaing).

Today when the conservatives retreat into a corral of provincial interests, they present themselves as protectors of their own nation. The point is, however, that they cannot defend the long-term development and social programmes on the national level. The next point is that the European level is now missing the social democrats as political agents of social development for all. In that sense, the defeat of social democrats is not only our defeat, but the defeat of Europe as well. It also reflects the current disorientation regarding the European perspective and responsibility, which is probably the fault of the party leadership, both on the national and European level. The social democrats are more needed now than they are used to be. But, they have to leave the position of “postponed Left.” Therefore, the term “Next Left” is meaningful, although it is far easier to project it, then to provide it with contents. European Commission has not taken sufficient measures to tackle the crisis, and there was not enough pressure by social democrats to do so either. As far as I know, the solidarist programmes, including PES ones (e.g. PES Leaders’ Declaration, November 2008), have only been put on paper. It is even more disturbing that they remained unknown on the national levels, and if some are acquainted with them, they seem abstract and distant. In reality, as some social democrats claim as well, the reaction of new US administration has been more brave than that of the old European one.

Following these processes from a rather outside position of Croatia, with our shipbuilding industry drama and industrial escapism in general, I was always quite astonished about the disbalance between understanding and sympathy of the European parliamentarians for our problems, discussed during our regular meetings, in relation with the privatization process, state financial support etc., and, on the other hand, lack of any kind of effective measures for mitigation of socio-economic difficulties by the European administration. That administration in the European house is less interested in the socio-economic developments in whole, but deals with them separately, mostly with economic (and financial), following the neoliberal line, while social policies are transferred on local level, with recommendations to follow “best practice” examples. It is quite a cynical expression for social policies that include education, healthcare as well as development in general, not only the insurance from the standard risks. Social democracy, of course, is to fight against national as well as against hidden social chauvinism – if these two are separate at all.

Social democrats have lagged behind for too long in the idolatry of neoliberal models. It is not the issue of more or less well-put declarations. We have had those, but they have not served as the coherent platforms of political unity and action. Is it really due to “traumatic lack of leadership” (Joschka Fischer) on both national and

European level? However, we can’t believe in miracles, that, for example, a happy coincidence of electing a strong individual leads to a strong leadership.

Various organizational ideas, such as a possibility of a direct membership in PES, regardless the level of organization on the national level, could be of importance only if PES identifies itself as politically and social-democratically virulent community. The fact is: some social democratic parties have become bureaucratic, clientelistic even, especially in Eastern Europe. Careers of many Party members depend upon obeying the leadership, regardless of its election success. If a direct membership in the PES could help in changing these tendencies, it is to be supported. We are not to believe in miracles, but we are to believe that results and leadership derives from facing up the challenges, even by disputes if necessary. Social democracy is lacking these disputes – last ones were on the intellectual margin, in connection with the “Third way”. For an ordinary citizen social democracy is, primarily, something that is certainly neither right nor radically left. Social democracy is not keeping him awake about his own destiny, but on the safe side. I am afraid it is not enough anymore.

More serious and radical thinking of a critical and politically more effective platform has started in the last couple of years when critics of neoliberal economy gathered within the Socialist International, Joseph Stiglitz among them. PES has also initiated more coherent and concrete analysis of economic and financial crisis, proposing anti-recession measures within economic policy, offering also the proposals for various other policies in the EU, “10 observations” included. With a short delay, it is now clear that the answer to the question “more or less Europe” has to be “more Europe”, but more social and politically organized Europe, more Left Europe, and “more PES”. I believe a clear demarcation between social democracy and centre-right is needed. That includes a relationship towards socioeconomic questions, critics of neoliberalism, clear relationship towards oligarchy, criptooligarchy as well as our own clientelism, which is not a specificum of the European East, but can be found in various party convergences in the West as well.

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AFTER THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS.
WHAT CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIALISTS

Andrew WATT,
senior researcher, European Trade Union Institute



Executive summary

The crisis of neo-liberal capitalism was widely supposed to be a huge opportunity for the mainstream Left, in Europe and elsewhere. Having been largely sidelined politically and on the defensive intellectually for much of the period since the neo-liberal revolution of the 1980s, the spectacular collapse of that paradigm would enable it to finally go back on the offensive. Given the obvious bankruptcy – literally! – of liberal policies, voters would trust mainstream Left parties to reduce inequality, rein in the markets, re-impose sensible regulation, channel investment towards social goals, and defend and rebuild welfare states and other institutions vital to the well-being of ordinary working people.

So far at least, that has not happened.

Most mainstream Left parties performed poorly, in some cases disastrously, in recent national elections and not least the elections to the European Parliament. Liberal and right-wing forces have managed to retain and have even strengthened their position – sometimes by stealing social-democratic clothes – and there is little sign of the Left recouping some of its former intellectual hegemony. It seems ironic, but surveys suggest that frightened voters have sought the solidity and supposed economic competence of centre Right parties. Worse, the knives are already being sharpened: regardless of the real causes of the crisis, the resultant high unemployment and fiscal deficits will be used, as in the early 1990s, to attack labour market institutions, unions and welfare states, which would imply a further weakening of European social democracy.

Rather than crying ‘foul’, we must analyse how this happened.

The picture varies between countries but some key common themes emerge. Social democrats seeking to associate themselves with ‘modernity’ had become enamoured with financial capitalism and liberal policies and values. Their post-crisis critiques of neo-liberalism were thus unconvincing. Linked with this, alliances with the broader labour movement and other progressive social movements had become strained or were neglected. Voters lost faith that social-democrats can manage capitalism in the interests of ordinary people better than the Right. The result was a crisis of identity and resulting abstention and/or votes for ‘hard’ Left (and to some extent also extreme Right) parties.

This note does not pretend to offer a full analysis of all the things that social democracy needs to set right. Rather it focuses on a limited number of policy areas, in particular economic, employment and social policy. For it is here, in these bread-and-butter issues, that the mainstream Left needs to show that it has answers, some new, others well-established, to ordinary people’s pressing needs and problems, that it can deliver policies that improve the well-being of its core electorate, and that are distinct from liberal-conservative, but also distinguishable from ‘hard’ Left and green, policies.

Social-democratic leaders, rank-and-file party members, and sympathetic academics and other opinion-formers must seek to win five key arguments. First the argument about the right lessons to be drawn from the crisis; second that social-democracy has a distinct and viable approach to economic policy; third that it has

welfare-state and other policies that underpin an egalitarian agenda for social justice, fourth that it has policies that deliver for working people in an increasingly globalised world; and fifth that its policies are viable in terms of sustainable development and the need to reduce carbon and other emissions. While it is hard to generalise across all the European countries, some broad-brush pointers regarding some of the key issues in each of these areas can be given.

Don’t waste a good crisis – winning the fight for the correct crisis interpretation

An obvious starting point for the renewal of social-democracy is the economic and financial crisis and its aftermath, which have revealed some old truths, widely forgotten also on the Left.

First, Keynes was right – in two ways. Market economies are inherently unstable and require government intervention at both the micro and macro levels (regulation, demand management). But it is also true that states have the means to do so, rejecting the crises-are-inevitable fatalism of both liberals and the extreme Left. Keynesian fiscal and monetary policies have once again saved capitalism from itself, while much of the recent deregulation and liberalisation of our economies (the financial sector, pension systems etc.) and the decline in public investment have been shown to increase the vulnerability of our systems to crises.

Second, labour market institutions and regulations and the welfare state are key stabilisers of economies and societies and promoters of social justice. Smart work-sharing and social insurance policies have substantially mitigated the effect of the crisis on the labour markets of many of the core EU countries (not least Germany), in contrast to the massive rise in unemployment in a number of ‘liberal’ and poorly institutionalised countries (such as Ireland and Spain). Moreover, they often increase economic efficiency in a world of market imperfections and dysfunctions.

Third, gross and widening social and economic inequalities are not only ethically objectionable, they are both endemic in an untrammelled capitalist system and, ultimately, inimical to economic development. Growing wealth at the top encouraged speculative excesses. Many working families took on more and more debt to maintain consumption in the face of stagnant or falling real incomes at the bottom of the distribution.

Fourth, much of the needed regulation and institutionalisation has to be located at supranational (European or even global) level, or it will be undermined by goods competition or capital mobility. What is true of banking regulation and supervision is true of many other policy areas: the crisis has given the Left a powerful argument for the need to put in floors limiting harmful competition on corporate taxation, environmental standards, working conditions etc. The role of inter-country imbalances, not least within the euro area, in the crisis clearly points to the need for a more coordinated approach to economic policymaking, as the Left has long argued.

In all these areas the experience of the crisis can be used to argue for existing social-democratic positions and policies.

Going forward, the key debates in the coming months will be how to get back as quickly as possible to stable, sustainable growth, bring unemployment down and address the issue of higher public debt and deficits. Social-democrats must make the case for continued stimulus in the short term, followed by a pragmatic fiscal consolidation strategy that puts the burden on those most able to bear it and on those with responsibility for the crisis and who have benefited most from government support. A financial transactions tax and a temporary surcharge on the top rate of income tax (best if coordinated across the EU) are the policies of choice. Monetary

policy must remain expansionary for as long as possible. Both to guard against speculative bubbles and to avoid the massive moral hazard issues that the bank bailouts have created, fundamental reform of the regulation of the financial sector is required.

There is such a thing as a social-democratic economic policy – and it's better than the alternative!

Contrary to claims that there is no such thing as a social-democratic economic policy (former Chancellor Schröder), it is vital that, beyond the immediate issues raised by the crisis, the Left regain a reputation as being the best steward of the economy.

The economy delivers the goods and services and the job opportunities that people need. Without a strong economy none of the broader social democratic goals can be achieved. The Left cannot just be a party of (re) distribution and 'the social': it must also be the party of production. Efficiency and productivity are important goals for social democrats, who should certainly avoid going back to demonising 'the market'. But a feature of the mainstream European Left in the recent past has been an uncritical and wholesale adoption of market-driven values and structures. Lionel Jospin was right to distinguish between a market economy and market society: important areas of life need to be shielded from the imperatives of competition, and a whole gamut of 'public goods' needs to be produced (or at least financed) by the public sector. But even in the economic sphere itself, markets can be and often are dysfunctional, as the crisis has well illustrated: effective market regulation is vital.

Let me pick out three areas for a distinctly social-democratic economic policy in Europe.

The key to high rates of employment and to rising living standards – and also, as we will see, to ecological modernisation – is investment. Investment is too important to be left entirely to 'the market'. Social-democratic economic policy should actively incentivise investment by the private sector and expand the role of publicly financed and/or delivered investment in key strategic areas. It is depressing that at present the champion of forward-looking public investment in Europe seems to be Nicolas Sarkozy.

The case needs to be made that many of our welfare state and labour market institutions not only promote equality and social justice but also economic efficiency, stabilising expectations, correcting market imperfections, reducing costly conflicts, promoting investment and long-term orientations, raising productivity. At the same time the Left must not shy away from reforming those institutions in some countries which genuinely do cost jobs or promote inefficiency: in the end it is workers (in some cases as taxpayers or consumers) who pay the price.

The macroeconomic policy regime in Europe – the ECB, the Stability and Growth pact, the lack of coordination of taxation, wage and other policies with massive cross-border spillover effects – is holding our economies back and must be a priority for reform. The crisis has weakened the legitimacy of some existing institutions and opens up opportunities. Wage-setting is key for stable and balanced economic growth and steps must be taken to improve the coordination of wage growth with macroeconomic policy-making across Europe.

A renewed struggle for social justice and greater equality

Our societies have become increasingly unequal in the neo-liberal epoch. Social mobility has fallen dramatically. It is not only in the financial sector that gross income disparities have come to prominence, but throughout the economy. Labour's share of national income has declined substantially in many countries. Social democrats must return to the struggle for a fairer, more equal society which many have tacitly or even explicitly abandoned in recent years in favour of an agenda of supposed 'opportunity'. This means, quite simply, improving the material situation of the currently disfavoured while reducing the privileges of the wealthy.

Important measures for the first aspect include minimum wages, support for unionising and collective bargaining for currently unorganised workers, decent provision for the needy, effective, affordable and universal public services, and more investment in education opportunities in depressed areas.

The solution at the top is in principle simple: higher taxes on high incomes, property and, especially, inheritances. There is ample scope for innovative measures. The revenue from substantially higher inheritance taxes, for instance, could be used to provide every citizen with a share of the nation's capital on leaving school – an inheritance that would open up life chances for ordinary people, rather than closing them down as the current system of largely costless within-family bequests does. Because high incomes and some forms of property are mobile across borders, social-democrats must campaign for greater tax-policy coordination within Europe.

Making globalisation work for working people

Globalisation potentially offers scope for raising living standards as well as fostering interaction and understanding between the peoples of the world. At the same time the increased openness of our economies creates pressures and uncertainties for increasing numbers of workers. Moreover, globalisation has changed the policy-making rules of the game. Some interventionist policies of the past are no longer viable. Others are constantly being eroded by the threat of 'exit' by companies and capital owners. Social-democrats need to bear three key points in mind when designing and implementing both specific policies to manage globalisation and more general policies that need to be made 'globalisation-proof'.

First, the most successful European economies and societies are very open to trade – but they offer high levels of protection and support to workers. They are also egalitarian. In most cases they have been under social-democratic hegemony for much of the post-war period. These countries – the Nordics, Austria, to some extent the Netherlands – show not only that social-democratic, egalitarian politics is possible in a globalised world, but that such policies deliver the best results, superior to liberal market economies.

Second, much of the international exposure of individual countries is to other members of the European Union: social democrats must campaign for a greater EU role in a whole range of policy areas so as to avoid competitive pressures undermining policy initiatives and to re-gain policy traction.

Third, globalisation produces winners and losers. Yet these are not immutable groups in society, but rather change over time. The fact that almost anyone can be affected should be used to promote social solidarity. The key principle must be: acceptance of liberal trading and other market-opening rules requires both compensation (through redistributive tax and benefit policies) and support (through active labour market and social policies) for those groups that are losing out at any given moment. This also makes sense electorally: to regain power

social-democratic parties must have a globalisation narrative and a range of policies that benefit both winners and losers.

Wanted: a strategy to achieve traditional social-democratic goals on a resource-constrained planet

Economic growth has always been a cornerstone of social-democratic politics, a pre-condition for rising living standards, full employment, welfare-provision and redistribution without costly social conflict. We have known for some time, however, that unlimited growth is impossible. The planet's resources are finite. More recently it has become increasingly clear that, barring some miracle technological fix, drastic action is needed to counter the greenhouse effect so as to prevent the earth becoming uninhabitable. Worse still, this must be achieved in the context of a still growing global population, especially in countries which are rapidly increasing – from very low levels – their material consumption and carbon emissions. Global justice demands that such development take place, and so material throughput and carbon emissions must be severely reduced in the already rich countries.

We lack a blue-print for how to achieve this. Designing one that permits traditional policy goals on the Left (full employment, reducing inequality, decent living standards for all) to be realised in a liberal political system while maintaining basic freedoms is arguably the central challenge for European social-democracy.

Two things are immediately clear: neither 'the markets' nor individual countries can be left to resolve the problem. Only an approach based on market correction and international cooperation – classical social-democratic philosophy – offers a way forward. Six key areas need to be addressed in order to develop a social democratic sustainable development blueprint.

- First and foremost we have to get prices right. That means lasting, substantial and stable increases in the price of carbon. (In my view this is best achieved with a carbon tax, if necessary bolstered by an import duty to prevent so-called 'carbon leakage', and a parallel reduction in taxes on labour.) This is the single most important policy change as it will induce behavioural adaptation by every single firm and consumer to reduce resource (rather than labour) input.
- We need a massive public investment program in green technologies and in public infrastructure (housing, transport).
 - Regulations on the emissions standards of transport vehicles, buildings etc. must be tightened.
 - Active labour market and other social policies are needed to support the necessary restructuring of production, reduce resistance to change, reduce hardship and promote a fair burden-sharing.
 - Ways must be found to take at least part of the productivity growth in the form of increased leisure: average working hours need to come down.
- Last but not least, emissions reduction activities (including limiting further population growth) need to be supported in poorer countries.

Conclusion

Social democracy in Europe needs a period of intellectual renewal. It must find new answers to the old

question of how to manage capitalism so as to maximise the well-being of ordinary citizens. It must do so in the face of new challenges, in particular the globalisation of economic relations, and the need to shift our production and consumption models to respect the ecological constraints of our planet and the demands of global justice.

The crisis has shown that the neo-liberal model is a failure. Depending on national political constellations there may be scope for a fruitful interaction with parties to the left of the social-democrats and with green parties, possibly also some liberal centrists. At the same time the mainstream Left must distinguish itself from dogmatic liberals and reactionary conservatives on the one hand, and from nationalistic, inward-looking elements on the hard Left, on the other. But a point whose importance can scarcely be overstated is that many of the challenges facing humanity in the coming years call for international policy cooperation and market-correcting policies, while preserving open borders, which have traditionally been the locus of social-democratic politics. Social-democrats across Europe must critically re-examine the approaches of recent years. By drawing on what is good and still relevant in past approaches and designing new policies to meet new challenges in a rapidly changing world, social-democracy can reinvent itself and make itself relevant for the globalised and resource-constrained world characteristic of the 21st century.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS



Foreword

Poul Nyrup RASMUSSEN – Poul Nyrup Rasmussen is one of the most prominent centre-left figures in European politics. He was first elected to the Folketinget (Danish Parliament) in 1988 for the Social Democratic Party, which he went on to chair; before becoming Prime Minister in 1993. After nine years of progressive government and a narrow election defeat in 2001 he continues to maintain a high profile in Danish politics, whilst having taken on new commitments on the international stage. He was elected to the European Parliament in 2004, where he sat on the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. Since 2004, he has been President of the Party of European Socialists. This involves coordinating the overall political line and vision of the PES, and representing the party across Europe. In December 2008 he oversaw the unanimous ratification of the PES manifesto ‘People First: A New Direction for Europe’ and then travelled across Europe representing the party in the 2009 European election campaign. He is also Co-Chair of the Global Progressive Forum. As President of the PES, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen has been active in calling for better regulation and supervision of financial markets. In 2007 he co-wrote *Hedge Funds and Private Equity, a Critical Analysis*, a landmark study that included concrete recommendations for reforming Europe’s financial markets. This was the basis for the ‘Rasmussen report’ of May 2008. He has since played a leading role in ensuring that the European Commission gives a satisfactory response to the report. In 2009 Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was placed fifth on *Financial News’* annual list of the 100 most influential people in European capital markets.

Alfred Gusenbauer – Studied Law, Philosophy, Political Science and Economy at the University of Vienna and there obtained Ph.D. in Political Science (1987). He was Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria and member of the European Council (2007/2008), Leader of the opposition (2000-2007), Member of Parliament (1993-2007), Member of the Austrian Senate (1991-1993), Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1991-2007), Chairman of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe (1995-1998) and President of the Austrian Social-democratic Party (2000-2008). He was actively engaged in the Party of European Socialists (Vice-president, since 2000) and Socialist-International (Vice-president, since 1989). Dr. Gusenbauer is Professor-at-Large at the Brown University Providence/Rhode Island and James Leitner Fellow for Global Affairs at the Columbia University N.Y.C. Furthermore, he is President of the Dr. Karl Renner Institute, President of the Austrian Institute for International Studies, President of the Austrian-Spanish Chamber of Commerce, Member of the supervisory board of F.C.C. (Construction) – Spain and Alpine Construction (Austria) and CEO of Gusenbauer Projektentwicklung und Beteiligung GmbH. Dr. Gusenbauer holds an honorary doctorate of the Hertzliah University (Israel) and is Senator of the European Academy of Sciences.

Editorial Team

Ernst STETTER – Is a Secretary General of FEPS since the creation of the Foundation on January 30th 2008. He is also a regular commentator on EU affairs in the media. In 1976 Ernst Stetter started his professional career as a lecturer in economics at the DGB Trade Union Centre for Vocational Training in

Heidelberg. From 1980 till 2008 he has been working for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in various positions especially as Director of the Paris office (1997-2003) and the Brussels office (2003-2008). Ernst Stetter is an economist and political scientist. He studied in Tübingen and Heidelberg (Germany) focusing on international trade, finance, economic and social policy as well as development issues. He obtained in 1980 his PhD in political sciences for his dissertation entitled *The Association of ACP countries (Lome I and II)* to the European Community and the STABEX-System. In 2003 he received the French decoration of Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Mérite.

Karl DUFFEK – Finished his Studies of German Language and Literature, English and American Language and Literature, Political and Social Sciences at the University of Vienna and at the University of Hagen, Germany. In 1986 he graduated as Mag. phil. In 1985 – 1987 Elected member of the Representative Body of the Department of Humanities of the University of Vienna, 1985 - 1986 Chairman. In 1988 – 1992 he was fellow of the Renner-Institute (the Political Academy of the Socialdemocratic Party of Austria) for education policy and social sciences, 1992 – 1998 Deputy-Director of the Renner-Institute; 1997 – 1998 Secretary of the Programme Committee and Co-ordinator for the new Party Platform of the Socialdemocratic Party of Austria, SPÖ; 1998 – 2001 Federal Secretary for Education of the SPÖ. Mr Duffek is since 1999 Director of the Renner-Institute; Special Adviser to the Party Leadership on Programmatic Issues. He published several articles and books.

Ania SKRZYPEK – Policy Adviser at FEPS. She holds a PhD, which she obtained cum laude at Warsaw University in 2009, for the thesis “Cooperation of socialist and social democratic parties in uniting Europe 1957 – 2007. As a researcher in comparative politics she specializes in the political history of the European Union, party political systems across Europe and social and labour market policies within the Union. Ms Skrzypek has been lecturing at the University of Warsaw on sociology, sociology of organisations and recently on the consequences of Polish accession to the European Union. Prior to that she had studied political sciences at Warsaw University and at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Before joining FEPS in 2009, Ms Skrzypek was a secretary general of ECOSY – Young European Socialists, for which position she was elected twice in 2005 and 2007. Ms Skrzypek published several Polish and international works, including books, articles and comments.

Authors of the articles:

Mercedes BRESSO – Mercedes Bresso was born in Sanremo (Liguria, Italy) on 12 July 1944. On completing her doctoral degree in economics, she taught at the Universities of Turin, Pavia and Udine and at the Turin Politecnico. As an expert in environmental economics, she has lectured in Italy and abroad. Mercedes Bresso has been President of the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) since February 2006. She was elected Member of the European Parliament in June 2004, a position she left in July 2005, after being elected President of the Piedmont Region. As President of the Piedmont Region, Mercedes Bresso is responsible for institutional policies, international relations, coordination of Community policies, international cooperation and peace policies, communication, coordination and oversight of regional government authorities, agencies and joint enterprises. Mercedes Bresso is the author of scientific publications, books and

papers including “Per un’economia ecologica” (In favour of an environmentally sound economy) and “Pensiero economico e ambiente” (Thoughts on the economy and the environment). She has shown a lifelong commitment to environment causes, and in recognition of that she was awarded the “Airone d’oro” (Golden Heron) prize in 2005. On 2 June 1996, the President of the Italian Republic awarded her the title of Grand Officer of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

Florin ABRAHAM – Holds a PhD Degree in Contemporary History, which title he obtained at the “Babeş-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He works as Director of Prognosis & Analysis Department from the “Ovidiu Şincai” Institute, Bucharest, Romania and as a Senior Researcher, National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (NIST), Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania. His scientific interests are: contemporary political doctrines, issues of transformation from communism to capitalism on the example of Romania.

Atilla ÁGH. – Is a Full Professor of Political Science at the Budapest Corvinus University and the Director of the Together for Europe Research Centre at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He has published several books in European Studies in English and Hungarian, and he is editor of the book series Together for Europe with six items so far.

George BAKATSIANOS – Holds a PhD degree in international relations and European Policy, obtained after accelerated studies at Universities in Athens and Paris. He has diverse political experiences, having worked as an Expert-Minister Counselor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of George Papandreu and as the National Coordinator for the European Institution Building programs (Twinning and TAIEX). Currently, he tutors at several universities. Same time since 2008 he has been the Secretary General of the Directors Board of the Institute of Strategic and Development Studies-Andreas Papandreu (ISTAME), the think tank affiliated to PASOK, Greece’s governing Socialist Party.

Paolo BORIONI - Is a PhD historian from Rome La Sapienza and KUA Copenhagen University. His main interests are social-democracy, the Nordic countries, welfare state and economic history; he has written or edited 9 books and very many papers and articles on these subjects. He does research both for University and center-left think tanks. He is member of the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci’s scientific advisory board, and works currently for the center-left in Italy.

René CUPERUS – Is director for International Relations and Senior Research Fellow at the Wiardi Beckman Foundation. He is a member of the international team ‘Adjusting the Profile of Social Democracy’ of the FES, member of the Scientific Committee of the Paris-based thinktank Terra Nova and active within British Policy Network and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in Brussels. His current research interests are the rise of right- and left wing populism in Europe; the malaise of the European Project and the multiethnic transformation of societies. He co-founded the Berlin-based Forum Scholars for European Social Democracy. He was also a member of the Basic Values Commission and the European Policy Review Commission of the PvdA and served as senior policy adviser to the Chairman of the PvdA, as well as to the Party’s Parliamentary Group. He holds degrees in political and cultural history and cultural anthropology from the Universities of Groningen and Lisbon, and still lectures at the University of Rotterdam and Tilburg.

Monika SIE DHIAN HO – Is general director of the Wiardi Beckman Foundation, thinktank of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), and member of the Advisory Council on International Affairs (an advisory body for the Dutch government and parliament). Her main fields of research are the EU’s legitimacy deficit, EU institutional reform, democratic renewal, and the adjustment of national state policies to globalization. She co-authored the most recent PvdA Manifesto, and several PvdA election programmes. Before she joined the WBS, she was a senior researcher at the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, senior lecturer in International Political Economy at the Leyden University, and lecturer in Political Science at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Monika Sie enjoyed fellowships at the Max Planck Institute in Koln, the Sussex European Institute in Brighton, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Frans BECKER – Is deputy director of the Wiardi Beckman Foundation, and editor in chief of the yearbook of the Foundation. In 2008 he was co-editor with Michael Kazin and Menno Hurenkamp of *In Search of Progressive America*. He has published about democracy, parties and the diffusion of politics, about economic and labour policies and cultural issues as well as the history of the Dutch social-democratic movement. He has been director of the educational department of the Dutch Labour Party and has worked as a political scientist at the University of Amsterdam before joining the WBS. He has also been a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Drury University, Missouri.

Jan Niklas ENGELS – Is a project manager at FES – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin’s Office.

Gere MAAß – Holds a doctor degree. He is Head of International Policy Analyses Unit at FES – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin’s Office. He is an author of several publications, among them focused on issues of global economy, monetary systems, but also the institutional challenges of the EU.

Karina MROß – N/A

Peter FILZMAIER – Is Professor for Political Science and Head of Department for Political Communication at the Danube-University in Krems, Austria, as well as managing partner of the Institute for Strategic Analysis (ISA) in Vienna.

Gérard FUCHS – Is a former MEP, former MP, former International Secretary of the Parti Socialiste. Today he is a Chair of the Département international of the Fondation Jean-Jaurès. His last book “Dépasser le capitalisme”, which was published before the crisis, today constitutes an excellent point of reference to help understand the mechanisms of the crash.

Andras INOTAI – Director general of the Institute for World Economics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (from 1991). He started working in the same institute in 1967. His longer activities abroad include the Institute for World Economy in Kiel (1971), research and teaching at the San Marcos University in Lima, Peru (1972-73), and the Trade Policy Division of the World Bank, Washington D.C. (1989-1991). Visiting professor at the College of Europe Bruges and Warsaw from the early nineties. Head of the Strategic Task Force on preparing Hungary for negotiations with the EU (1995-1998). Main research areas include globalization, European integration and comparative analysis of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe. Member of advisory boards of several economic research institutes in Europe and member of the editorial board of several professional journals.

Maria JOAO RODRIGUES – Is a professor in European Economic Policies, holding several degrees from both Sorbonne-Paris and Lisbon University, and lecturing at the Institute for European Studies at ULB Brussels and at the Lisbon University Institute. Professor Rodrigues is a special advisor to the EU Presidencies and the European Commission, and to the PES and FEPS. She is a board member of: European Policy Centre, Notre Europe (created by Jacques Delors) and Council of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (Lisbon). Among many functions, Professor Rodrigues was a Minister for Employment and Training of Portugal (1995 – 97), special advisor to the Prime Minister (1998 – 2002), Coordinator of the Lisbon European Council (2000), President of the Interministerial Commission for the Follow-up of the Lisbon Strategy (2001-03) and President of the High Level Group on Mobility in Europe (2008) – to name just a few. She has been awarded with several prizes, among them Legion d'Honneur – Chevalier of the French Republic (promoted to the degree of officer) and Ordem do Infante Dom Henrique of Luxembourg. She is an author of more than one hundred publications: books, articles, comments.

Anne JUGĂNARU – Is Executive Director, "Ovidiu Sincai" Institute. She has specialized in Public Relations and Project Management and she graduated the National Defence College in 2003, being presently a PhD candidate in Communication and Public Relations at the Academy of High Military Studies. Mrs. Jugănaru has worked as editor-reporter of several media: at the Romanian Broadcasting Station the Jurnalul Național daily newspaper, of political shows at Antena 1 TV station, Jurnalul Național. Since 2005 she is a member of the Managing Board of the Romanian Society of Television. Mrs. Jugănaru is member of the National Council of the Social Democratic Party.

Sonja LOKAR – Is a free lance sociologist and a well known social democratic feminist. Among several functions, Mrs Lokar is a member of the SD Party of Slovenia, having been a member of its executive leadership and MP in the first Slovene pluriparty parliament. She is a Balkan peace activist, and has been: establisher and president of the first women's party organization in transition country (1990-2000), one of the leaders of the CEE Network for Gender Issues, one of the initiators and Chair of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, member of the EC Expert group on women in economic and political decision making. Mrs Lokar is a author of several manuals and of more than 300 articles and studies on social, peace and gender issues

Henning MEYER – Holds a PhD. He is Head of the European Programme at the Global Policy Institute (London Metropolitan University) and Editor of Social Europe Journal (www.social-europe.eu). Apart from academic publications he also regularly writes opinion editorials for newspapers such as The Guardian, Handelsblatt and DIE ZEIT and is a frequent political commentator on international TV News channels.

Tomáš PETŘÍČEK – Is PhD candidate at the Institute of International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences at the Charles University in Prague. He specialise in research in the fields of international political economy, development and sustainable development. He has been member of the Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) since 2002. He has been involved in the Czech and European Socialist Youth Movement over the last nine years. He held a position of the Head of International Department of the CSSD in 2006 and later on of assistant to the Member of the European Parliament until June 2009.

Maciej RAŚ – Holds a Doctor degree in international relations. Ras works as an assistant professor at University of Warsaw (Institute of International Relations, Faculty of Journalism and Political Science), as also is the head of National Security Study and Marketing of Culture Study at Warsaw University. He is politically active, as a member of Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and has been an elected member of the local council in Warsaw since 1998.

Eric SUNDSTRÖM – Is editor in chief of the Swedish Social Democratic party's three weekly newspapers "Aktuellt i Politiken", "Stockholms-Tidningen" and "Ny Tid". He holds a Masters degree in international economics and European studies from The Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and spent his hay day student years in Stockholm, Glasgow, Montpellier, Bologna and Washington DC.

Dimitris TSAROUHAS – Is Assistant Professor in European Politics at Bilkent University, Research Associate at ELIAMEP and Research Group Member of FEPS. He is the author of "Social democracy in Sweden" (London and New York: IB Tauris 2008). Dimitris' website: <http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~dimitris/>

Anton VUJIC – Holds PhD in philosophy of science, University of Zagreb (1985). He is lexicographer, founder and editor-in-chief of Croatian lexicon (1996-97), General and national encyclopaedia (2005-07) and (online) Proleksis encyclopaedia (2009). He has been active in politics: in Croatian spring movement 1971 and later in the democratic processes in early nineties. From 1989 he was president of (first) Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDSH), he was a founder and president of Organization for development of Social Democracy Novo društvo (1991). Since 1994 he has been a President of National Policy Commission of SDP, Member of Parliament (since 1995), Minister of Culture (2000-03).

Andrew WATT – Is senior researcher at the European Trade Union Institute, where he has worked since 2000. Born in the UK he studied at universities in England, Germany and Switzerland. Prior to joining the ETUI he worked for the Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin. He coordinates the Research area Economic, employment and social policies at the ETUI, with a focus on issues of economic governance and policy coordination, employment policies and comparative analysis of labour market trends in Europe. Recent work has concentrated on the causes and implications of the economic crisis and the role of finance in the economy. He edits the ETUI Policy Brief on Economic and employment policy, coordinates the European Labour Network for Economic Policy, and writes a column for the Social Europe Journal. He has worked as a consultant/adviser to the European Commission, Eurofound, and the European Economic and Social Committee..

MEMBERS AND PARTICIPANTS
OF THE “NEXT LEFT” FOCUS GROUP
MEETINGS IN 2009

Dr Florin ABRAHAM	Ovidiu Sincai Institute	Romania
Professor Attila AGH	Budapest Corvinus University; FEPS Research Group	Hungary
Miss Janna BESAMUSCA	Secretary General of ECOSY – Young European Socialists	The Netherlands
Mr Antony BEUMER	Head of unit Reflection and Cooperation S&D Group European Parliament	Belgium
Mr Paolo BORIONI	Giancarlo Schirru Fondazione Istituto Gramsci	Italy
Mrs Mercedes BRESSO	President of PES Group in Committee of Regions	Italy
Mrs Paula Clancy	Director of TASC	Ireland
Mr Philip CORDERY	PES Secretary General	France
Dr Rene CUPERUS	Wiardi-Beckmann-Stichting, FEPS Research Group	The Netherlands
Mr Karl DUFFEK	Director of Karl Renner Institute	Austria
Mr Jan Niklas ENGELS	Friedrich Ebert Foundation	Germany
Mr Aaron FARRUGIA	Director of IDEAT Fundation - Malta	Germany
Mr Konstantinos FOUTZOPOULOS	Re-Public	Greece
Mr Gerard FUCHS	Jean Jaures Foundation	France
Professor Peter FILZMAIER	Danube-University in Krems	Austria
Professor Jacques-Pierre GOUGEON	Political scientist and professeur des universités; FEPS Research Group	France
Mr Roberto GUALTERI	MEP	Italy
Dr Alfred GUSENBAUER	Former Chancellor of Austria Chair of the Focus Group	Austria
Professor Maria JOAO RODRIGUES	Special Advisor to PES and FEPS, Free University of Brussels and University of Lisbon	Portugal
Professor Andras INOTAI	World Economic Institute Budapest Hungary; FEPS Research Group	Hungary
Dr Anne JUGANARU	Ovidiu Sincai Institute	Romania
Mr Sunder KATWALA	Secretary General of Fabians Society	UK
Mrs Sonja LOKAR	CEE Newtork for Gender Issues	Slovenia
Dr Klaus Mehrens	senior fellow at the Global Policy Institute, board member of Social Europe Journal	UK
Dr Henning MEYER	Head of European Programme, London Metropolitan University; FEPS Research Group	UK
Mr Jens Joel NIELSEN	Secretary General of the Danish SD Party electoral campaign 2009, SAMAK	Denmark

Mr Poul NYRUP RASMUSSEN	President of the PES – Party of European Socialists	EU
Mr Jim O'DONNELL	Member of the Board of Directors of TASC	Ireland
Mrs Julie PAPANIKOLAOU	Research Fellow, ISTANCE	Greece
Mrs Alexandra PARDAL	Head of EU Policy Unit and Office of the President, PES	Belgium
Mr Tomas PETRICEK	Charles University of Prague, FEPS Research Group	Czech Republic
Dr Maciej RAS	International Relations Institute, University of Warsaw; FEPS Research Group	Poland
Mr Philippos SAVVIDES	Head of International Relations of Re-Public	Greece
Mrs Monika SIE	Director Wiardi-Beckman Foundation	The Netherlands
Dr Ania SKRZYPEK	Policy Advisor in FEPS	Belgium
Dr Ernst STETTER	Secretary General of FEPS	Belgium
Mr Eric SUNDSTROM	Editor in Chief, AiP, ST & Ny Tid; FEPS Research	Sweden
Mr Stephan THALHOFFER	FES Office in Brussels	Germany
Dr Dimitris TSAUROHAS	Assistant Professor, Bilkent University, Department of International Relations; FEPS Research Group	Turkey
Dr Anton VUJIC	University of Zagreb, Nove Drustvo Foundation	Croatia
Mr Andrew WATT	Senior Researcher, ETUI; FEPS Research Group	Belgium
Mr Wim WERMEERSCH	Coordinator at Stichting Gerrit Kreveld	Belgium
Mr Milan F. ZIVKOVIC	Director of Nove Drustvo Foundation	Croatia

