

Together for Change in Europe!

21st Century Europe Needs Peace, Democracy, Social Justice and Solidarity

Platform of the Party of the European Left for the elections to the European Parliament 2009



I.

The elections to the European Parliament in June 2009 will be an opportunity to change the foundations of the European Union (EU), and to open a new perspective for Europe.

We are facing financial, economic and social crises, a crisis of the whole system, which continues to propagate day by day. This crisis only further amplifies the problems the world community is experiencing in reference to the food, energy and ecological issues. It deepens the gender gap. In fact, this crisis affects the lives of all people in Europe and in the world.

Everywhere in the European Union the shock is tremendous. The crisis is caused by the globalisation of hazardous neo-liberal capitalism, which is namely being pushed ahead by irresponsible elites in charge of politics and economics. The price for this irresponsibility will have to be paid by the people. These actions endanger peace, international security and coexistence. The world has been plunged into this global crisis by the hegemonic policy of the United States, in particular of the Bush administration.

The crisis is once more demonstrating the failure of neo-liberal globalisation, which has, on a global scale, maximised the profits of the financial market's main players without any state control and intervention. Politics, states and entire societies are subordinated to uncontrolled financial markets. The result is clear: a lack of democracy and the end of the welfare state. Policies of low wages and precarious labour, as consequences of the deflationary measures applied by the governments of the developed countries, have put the financial and credit system at risk.

Governments, EU institutions, and world economic bodies such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO have imposed privatisation and deregulation. As a result, the neo-liberal foundations of the EU treaties are called into question, particularly in reference to the idea of an "open market economy with free competition": the unchecked free circulation of capital, the liberalisation and privatisation of public services, and the status and mission of the European Central Bank.

This historic crisis, which strikes the heart of capitalism is challenging us to contribute to the people's resistance, and to open a perspective for change in Europe. The Party of the European Left believes that the only way out of this crisis is to fight for a democratic and social Europe: a Europe of the people, not of the banks.

This is also a political crisis. The Irish, French, and Dutch "No" to the Lisbon and the European Constitutional Treaties have shown that an increasing number of people in Europe disagree with the undemocratic and unsocial policies of the European Union. They believe that the EU is a far-off and incomprehensible construction that does not concern them, that ignores their hopes and their actual situation.

We reaffirm our "No" to the Lisbon treaty. The democratic expression of the people's will must be respected within a new democratic process, based on active participation by the people and the national and European parliaments. Democratic participation and parliaments' powers must be

strengthened through norms on popular petitions, co-decision enlargement and the relations between national parliaments and the European Parliament. The EU citizens must discuss and decide on an alternative to the Lisbon Treaty.

The European Union is interfering in the lives of the people of Europe. 15 years after the Maastricht Treaty, neo-liberal orientations prevail: The living and working conditions of the majority of Europe's population have rapidly deteriorated, featuring longer working hours, longer working lives, insufficient wages, growing long-term and youth unemployment, mini jobs, temporary employment and unpaid internships as scandalous realities. By and large, public services are solely used for profits. Accompanying these problems are also psychological and physical pressures, diseases, fear, loss of solidarity, and violence against the weaker elements in society. The EU migration policy and the situation of migrants in the European Union and its member countries reflect this dramatically. On the other hand, profits have increased tremendously: managers receive astronomic salaries, even when their actions have negative consequences. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

With regard to the recent events in Europe, such as the Caucasus conflict, the developments in Kosovo, the bilateral treaties with the United States on the construction of US military bases in Eastern Europe, and the ongoing arms race, it is important for the EU to respect international law and strive for political solutions to all conflicts. The militarization of EU foreign policy linked to NATO must be replaced by an alternative concept of security based on peace, dialogue, and international cooperation.

Many people are disappointed with, frustrated about or turning away from European politics. However, others are struggling for their jobs and social security, and for public services and the right to participate in the political decision-making process. They fight for their political, social and individual rights, and for the respect of the human rights of all people living in the EU. Migration and asylum have become an urgent issue in the political struggle. People strive for gender equality, democracy, justice and the right of all people to live together in dignity and solidarity.

More than ever the EU is at a crossroads:

- Either the EU continues its current capitalist policy, which is deepening its financial, security, food and energy crisis;
- Or the EU becomes an area of sustainable development and social justice, of peace and mutual cooperation, of the equality of women and men; of democratic participation and solidarity, where antifascism, antiracism, civil liberties and human rights are common practice.

The choice is in the hands of the people. To overcome resignation or abstention we say: Alternatives exist. Policies both at the national and the European levels must and can be changed.

The European Left demands that this Europe is a peaceful and civil Europe, whose economies are socially and ecologically sustainable, that is feminist and develops on the basis of democracy and solidarity. This needs a new synergy between social and political forces. It requires ideas, initiatives and the hard work of political actors and democratic forces, of trade unions and social movements, and of representatives of civil society. Alternatives are possible – through common struggle both in the streets and in the parliaments.

We are joining the struggle of the peace and anti-war movements, of the anti-globalisation movement, of all those resisting precarity of living, the struggles of workers, of women, and of the youth.

Together with the representatives of other socialist, communist, and Nordic left-green parties we have successfully cooperated within the GUE/NGL group at the European Parliament. The pluralistic character of this group has enriched the creative power of the left opposition between 2004 and 2009. We want to further develop this experience in the newly elected European Parliament.

In light of the current crisis, the European Left is all the more called upon to play an effective role in bringing about common political action against the political and cultural hegemony of the Right.

The neo-liberal policies in the EU were possible, among other reasons, because of a kind of great coalition between the parties of the European conservative forces and the European socialists. This

consensus is one of the reasons for the political crisis in the way Europe functions. It creates big contradictions inside the social-democratic parties.

The EL competes against conservative and liberal, social democratic and green parties in the member countries and with the corresponding European political parties, which are sticking to the logic of current European policies. The EL is striving for change and regaining the political space in Europe. The EL confirms its consequent struggle against any attempt by the extreme right and right populist parties to broaden their influence in Europe.

II. Overcome the Crisis: People before Profits For a Social and Ecological Economy in Europe

The crisis demands a coordinated answer at the international and European level.

The European Left stands for a policy that is based on economic and social development, and the protection of the environment. It aims at the defence and development of social achievements. Contrary to the Lisbon strategy, we strive for a strategy based on the values of solidarity and cooperation, full employment, and a rational relationship with nature. This is possible only by changing the existing rules of the international economic and financial system.

It is necessary to refound the European Union on the basis of new parameters, able to focus on people and rights before profits. We stress that the workers should not have to pay for the crisis while banks and finances are saved. The logic of the G7's plans, with regard to the European Union means, privatising the profits and socializing the losses. However, even the current legislation is allowing expenditure for an investment plan able to sustain employment, and to support the ecological restructuring of the economy.

In matters of financing, the crisis clearly showed the determinant part taken by credit. Credit must be redirected to the productive sectors of the economy and collectivity, to employment, social and environmental priorities, from the cities and the regions to the European Central Bank System. To realize this reorientation of credit and money, we stand for public and social control over the banking and financial system. We stand for the right of the working people and their organisations, as well as the local elected people, to control the use of credits and subsidies.

We criticise the aims and the current policies of the European Central Bank (ECB), its absolute independence from any form of political address, and the lack of transparency in its decisions and actions. We underline the urgent necessity that its monetary policy must respond to the goals of new economic and employment growth, which are a priority with regards to inflation maintenance.

Therefore the role of the European Central Bank must be changed, in line with the criteria of employment and social and ecological development, by a selective decrease of its interest rates. The ECB must be submitted to public and democratic control, its statutes must be changed. The Growth and Stability Pact must be replaced by a new pact of solidarity, focussing on growth, full employment, social and environmental protection.

We need to tax financial transactions and income in Europe and to abolish tax havens. It is also necessary to introduce taxation for speculative capital, in order to feed the creation of a European fund. Capital movements, in particular profits that are not directly linked with investment and trade, must be subject to control and taxation.

The Tobin tax can be the tool to finance innovative industrial initiatives in the sectors indicated by international UN agencies and aimed at reducing global emissions and increasing the number of jobs. This European fund would have to be submitted to the European Parliament's guidelines and programmes: a sort of "new green deal" of the Parliament.

The common goods and economic strategic sectors, including the credit and financial system, must be socialised (nationalised) while there is the need to rebuild a general welfare system on a European scale. The privatisation of public services must be reversed. We need to raise workers' wages and incomes. We need to harmonize the European financial system, based on the principle of tax progressiveness.

As for new rights and powers of the employees and citizens, they should enable them to break with the monopoly of strategic information and decisions by the main players of the market, and claim them for themselves, to achieve a real transformation of political power. Democracy must begin with the involvement of the citizens themselves and must be extended to every sphere of social life.

Sustainable European standards preventing poverty should replace the current policy of wage, social, and environmental dumping. As the rulings of the European Court of Justice represent strong attacks on collective agreements and labour regulations, we stress the necessity to strengthen collective agreements and reinforce workers' rights. We reject the EU directive that extends working time up to 65 hours per week, which allows total flexibility and boosting the individualization of work. For us, maximum weekly working hours permitted by law, on average, must not exceed 40 hours. All EU regulations and national laws on working hours must be changed accordingly. We struggle for 35 hours per week on a Europe-wide level. Existing better national regulations should be preserved. We demand a European minimum wage that represents at least 60% of the national average wage and does not put at risk the collective agreements.

A minimum income for unemployed people, as well as a minimum pension linked to the minimum wage, and automatically adjusted to the price evolution, is necessary to guarantee a life with dignity. Flexible retirement ages should be guaranteed, taking into account existing regulations in the EU member countries.

We demand a reinforcement of migrants' rights to work wherever they live in the EU. A migration law should focus on migrants' interests and not on the interests of companies that are looking for cheap labour, which forces millions of migrants to work in the black market. We reject any regulation or directive in the EU and its member countries imposing expulsion. What is needed is a regulation and a work permit for employment research.

We reject the Lisbon strategy concept of "flexicurity". Our priorities are steps against poverty, social marginalization and precariousness, for full employment in regular jobs, increasing wages, pensions and social allowances. Taxes must be raised both on income and capital, allowing redistribution from the top to the bottom.

Education, child care, and adolescent care, illness and old age, health, water supply, sewage disposal, energy supply, public transport, postal services, culture and mass sport are not commercial goods but public services belonging to state responsibility. Therefore, they must not be subject to competition for the lowest costs and highest profits. We want no more privatisation of public services and goods but a reversal or conversion into public property. We are for strong public services, publicly controlled companies and more investment in education, nursing and health care, public transport, culture, and sport.

For us climate and social questions are linked. Therefore the current financial and economic crisis cannot be separated from the challenges of climate change and a reorientation of our ways of production and consumption. We are in favour of the immediate and consistent development of a new international treaty according to the 4th report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and of sticking to the EU action plan 2007-2009. We demand the full implementation of the signed and promised obligations of the EU in all fields of climate and energy policies. The following compromises represent the minimum requirements for the implementation of all climate protection commitments already signed:

- Reduce global emissions by 30% by 2020 on the exit level of 1990 and by at least 80% by 2050;
- Increase the use of renewable energy by at least 25% by 2020;
- Reduce total primary energy consumption by 25% by 2020 and increase energy efficiency by 2% per year, including a limit of per capita consumption;
- An efficiency obligation must be introduced for industry and producers of energy-intensive goods;
- The EU framework subsidies must be limited consequently to the sector of energy efficiency and renewable energies.

We are against the reduction of the Kyoto Protocol to a market system of quota emissions. It is necessary, in order to conclude the Kyoto 2 Treaty, to have a new comprehensive strategy that allows

the reduction of emissions making development far more agreeable. A new paradigm based on cooperation instead of competition is needed, starting with technology transfer to developing countries, the funding of clean technologies and policies of adjustment to climate change. Water is a universal good and the access to it must be guaranteed as human right.

The protection of nature and the development of renewable resources, the transformation of our landscapes, as well as secure food supply are existential challenges. We demand agreement on the highest environmental standards within the EU, and contributions to saving biodiversity for future generations. (Active steps for waste reduction, water protection, for replanting and desertification prevention policies, etc. must be included into strategies and policies, in particular in the fields of agriculture, energy and climate protection.)

We strive for a substantial review of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It must be directed at the right of people everywhere in the world to decide on their agricultural policy themselves by fully respecting the environment.

We oppose any reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy that challenges public agricultural policies. We demand that agriculture must not be a matter of WTO negotiations, and oppose agriculture becoming more and more a playing ground for neo-liberal actors and liberalisation measures worldwide. We support the request for food sovereignty. This means giving priority to local agricultural production, quality food and no constraints on submitting the products to the world market. The access to land, seeds, water and credits must be regulated in a real land reform in Europe and the other continents.

We demand a comprehensive rural development policy: The development of agricultural production and employment opportunities should constitute the central criteria of the development of the countryside, with the application of sector based policies, support of agricultural biodiversity and rural employment, particularly for young people and women. Subsidies should be given with economically social and environmental criteria and not for the profit of big producers in certain sectors. Starting from that point the distribution of the CAP budget must be reoriented in particular to the needs of rural areas, small-scale producers, disadvantaged and mountainous areas.

Agriculture in the 21st century must correspond to a multifunctional aspect: protection of plant multiplicative material, guaranteeing the right of farmers to have their own seeds, applying programs of development of organic agriculture and livestock farming and prohibiting the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in the production of foods and foodstuffs, defending and valorising the denomination origin also in the non-European markets.

III. A peaceful and cooperative Europe

No war should ever start from Europe's soil again. We do not consider war and militarization to be political instruments and want a strategy where security for all is granted.

Disarmament and conversion of military industries are pivotal tasks. We campaign against the rearmament provision of the Lisbon Treaty, not only because of the lethal and ecologically destructive weapons, but also because it detracts funds from economic, social and ecological development. The EU Defence Agency should be replaced by a disarmament agency designed to stop the arms race, the proliferation and possession of weapons of mass destruction, and the militarization of outer space and the oceans on the basis of disarmament agreements.

Emerging conflicts on the European continent – in particular after the refusal by governments to rethink the cooperation of all European states on a just and equal basis since 1990 – are pointing out the necessity of creating a new collective security system on the European continent. From a regional crisis to a war situation, the Caucasus conflict in August 2008 eventually became an international crisis that involved the United States. We call for civil society in Europe and for the European Union to strive for a political solution. The danger of such conflicts spreading out into other European regions remains extremely relevant. At the same time, the deployment of NATO forces in Afghanistan and growing demands from the US administration to increase the European participation show the failure of the military intervention strategy followed by the Bush administration. It demonstrates the growing

contradiction between the European interest in security and the military intervention strategy and NATO expansion.

The European Left reaffirms its demand for the dissolution of NATO. We oppose the logic of military blocs, including attempts and policies for creating European military structures.

More than ever, security in Europe must be based on the principles of peace and security, disarmament and structural assault incapacity, conflict solution by political and civil means within the OSCE system, conforming to international law and to the principles of a reformed and democratised UN system. Such a collective and cooperative European system must guarantee security and unconditioned access to energy supply, environment, human rights issues, etc.

We need to stress the negative political and not only military role that NATO plays according to US interests in Europe. Even after the end of the East-West bloc confrontation NATO remained, and was developed into an even more functional tool of the US administrations for their hegemonic strategies. The NATO enlargement to the East corresponds to this logic. The bilateral agreements of the US with various European countries, like the one with Italy for the US military base in Vicenza, with Poland and the Czech Republic for deploying US missile defence systems, and those with Bulgaria and Romania for new bases, not only represent a threat to Europe's sovereignty, but create the real risk of a new confrontation in Europe.

The withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan of NATO troops and the Western coalition led by the United States is necessary. The international community as well as the EU must support Afghanistan's population in finding a political solution through non military ways on the basis of the respect of international law and human rights. As further measures we demand the closing of all NATO and US bases in Europe. We are against the US (and any European) Satellite Defence Installations with European and non European deployments, and fully support the Czech, Polish, Bulgarian, and Romanian citizens who fight against them. We reject any military misuse of the European Galileo System.

The development and trade policies of the EU must meet the Millennium Development Goals in reality, and must realign to the principle of equality of all countries. The bilateral European Partnership Agreements are the wrong way. The international trade policy of the EU is to be measured by giving adequate answers for solving global social and ecological problems. The fight against still growing global poverty and imbalances must be put at the focus of development cooperation – the misuse of development cooperation for continuing a kind of colonial relation for the one-sided support of export industries in favour of European enterprises, or as a geopolitical instrument must be stopped. We want a ban on the transformation of food into fuel. We demand debt redemption for the poorest countries of the world and the revision of the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank and the IMF.

We support a further development of the Mediterranean cooperation. It is the key for achieving peace and security in the Middle East. We need the active participation of all political forces and civil societies in the countries involved. The democratic and transparent process must bridge the gap between countries to the North and South of the Mediterranean. This is the only way to avoid turning the ambitious political project of the Mediterranean Union into a political structure of inequality.

A Mediterranean of lasting and stable peace is impossible without solving the conflict in the Middle East. The essential precondition for that is recognizing and realizing the right of the Palestinian people to have an independent, viable state side by side with the state of Israel – with equal rights and coexistence in a peaceful neighbourhood. The European Left will do its utmost to demand and to push the EU and its member countries to act consistently in that direction. Europe needs to emancipate itself from the US "Greater Middle East" plan, to engage itself actively for an end of the military occupation of the Palestinian territories, for the removal of the "Wall" according to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, and for the strict fulfilment of all corresponding UN resolutions. The EU must take more political steps to request the support of the Arab countries in the region and to stimulate the growing awareness of civil society working towards an active conflict solving policy. The European Left refuses the course of US and EU confrontation policies towards Iran, in particular regarding the solution of the nuclear energy use conflict, and demands strict political negotiations. The EL expresses its solidarity with political and social forces striving for the consistent implementation and guarantee of human rights in Iran.

The European Left stresses its commitment to a process of security and cooperation of all states in the Mediterranean and Middle East regions, including the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination on the basis of the existing UN resolutions 1754 and 1783.

Turkey must respect in a legally binding way the political and human rights for all people living in the country, including all minorities. It must carry out social and legal reforms in accordance with the rule of law to pave a democratic and peaceful way for all Kurdish citizens in Turkey. This will also contribute to a political solution for the Kurdish people in other countries of the Middle East.

The significant mobility on the Cyprus issue, and the change of climate after the election of Dimitris Christofias as president of the Republic, open up new hopeful prospects regarding the efforts for the reunification of the island. The conduct of official negotiations between the leaders of the two communities under UN auspices should lead to a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal solution with political equality, as stated in the relevant UN resolutions, and on the basis of the High Level Agreements, international and European law.

The European Left favours the creation of all political and economic conditions for a peaceful coexistence of the European peoples and states. Europe needs an economic and social space, which does not exclude any European country and which is based on a varied bi- and multilateral system of agreements. The EL stands for the further enlargement of the European Union and for a stable all-European structure to overcome still existing political and economic divisions in Europe. Thus, the EL supports in particular the preservations of democratic governance, of guaranteeing and realizing human rights for all people in daily practice, of respecting and protecting minorities and the state of law as important preconditions for negotiating with countries applying for EU membership. The EU itself must be made politically and economically ready for further enlargement steps as well.

The European Left demands the consistent implementation of the new EU neighbourhood policy on the basis of equality, in particular regarding the CIS countries and the Western Balkan states.

IV. A democratic and equal Europe

The democratic reconstruction of Europe remains an urgent task of today.

All human beings living in EU member states have the right to participate in the shaping of the EU and its future development, whether born there or not. The European Union must open up to the democratic participation of all people, or it will have no future.

We stand for the strengthening of individual rights and freedom rights as well as the fundamental social and political rights of all people living in the EU. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights must become legally binding and be further developed. The EU should join the European Convention on Human Rights. The EL stands for guaranteeing full equality of women and men in all aspects of life. We strive for a European regulation guaranteeing the right of women to decide on their bodies, free contraception and abortion within the public health system. We promote European regulations criminalizing any gender violence. Sufficient material and personal resources are to be provided to all victims of such violence.

The European Union must protect and promote the rights of those who are discriminated because of their ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, ideology, disability and age. We demand the respect of all minority rights and consistent action against racism, xenophobia, ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, fascism, anticommunism, homophobia and any other form of discrimination. We are in favour of a secular Europe in the sense that all the states' policies be secular.

The Europe we want needs a democratisation of the economy. Coalition, co-determination and strike rights must apply across borders. We reject the subordination of social and trade union standards to the basic freedoms of the single market, as ruled by the European Court of Justice. On the contrary: the rights and opportunities for workers to participate in management decisions, for example on investments or production regulation, must be enlarged and fixed by law.

The EL stands for an EU cultural policy based on intercultural dialogue and education. It resists the unlimited liberalisation of cultural services. We want the dialogue of the cultures to become a pacifist policy at local and European levels. We support the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in which the preservation and promotion of the diversity of regional cultures is binding under international law.

We also demand a transparent media policy. The sources of economic productivity, cultural hegemony and political as well as military power are increasingly dependent on the production, storage and conversion of information and knowledge. Therefore the access to communication and information, and their acquisition, are essential issues of democratic participation both at national and European levels. Furthermore, the democratisation of production, treatment and appropriation of information and knowledge is inevitably needed to challenge digital capitalism. We are in favour of democratic structures of public media service, with cheap and easy access to modern cultural arenas such as the internet, free codes and programming without the unlawful use of social networks and personal data.

It is necessary to reverse the Bologna Process, the subordination of the school, university and research needs to the interests of private industries, the profit-makers of the free market. Education is a human right. We support all movements of students, parents and teachers in Europe who oppose the Bologna reforms and defend, regardless of the country, a public and free education. European public education needs be rooted in the principles and values defining the essential features of European culture. Schools must be, in all member states, a place of meeting and free confrontation among cultures coexisting in an ever more multicultural and multireligious society, as necessary premise of the authentic development of an education in peace and with gender equality. At the same time universities need to be put in the condition to develop their prominent role of cultural and scientific training unlinked to the logic of market.

To reclaim the political space in the European Union for all people living here, the European Parliament must be given the power of legislative initiative. Direct participation in the European decision-making process, like the Citizen-Agora introduced by the EP, including referenda at EU and national levels on EU landmark decisions, must be possible. The EU institutions (Council, Commission and Parliament) must open up to the participation of civil society that should have the possibility to control their decisions. The EU-wide anti-terror measures and laws are to be abandoned. We want the abolition of the EU list of "terrorist organisations" that jeopardises our freedom.

We want a cosmopolitan Europe open to migration, not a fortress Europe that repels people in need. A common EU refugee and migration policy in accordance with the Geneva Convention is needed. People who flee from persecution because of their political commitment, ideology, religion, or sexual orientation must find protection and asylum in Europe. We demand the recognition of gender-related and non-governmental persecution as grounds for asylum and call for the specific protection of child refugees. Therefore, we reject the already existing FRONTEX system of border controlling and demand the rejection of all plans on the implementation of the "Pact on Migration and Asylum" and the "Return Directive". Detention prisons must be closed.

We oppose the choices of the EU and European governments that impose mechanisms of "preventive repression" and "preventive filing of personal data" (Prym Treaty), which create suspects and offer the judicial and police forces, private companies, every interested state, even the secret services, the right to use personal data through the biggest existing data base, under the pretext of the defence of public safety.

We, the parties of the European Left, campaign together and in our countries for these goals in the run-up to the 2009 elections to the European Parliament. We want a strong left parliamentary group in order to be able to change Europe. Each vote for a candidate of the European Left is a vote for a peaceful, social, ecological, democratic and feminist Europe living in solidarity!

Take your chance, change Europe now!

Berlin, 29 November 2008