

**Pierre Laurent**  
**President of the ELP**  
**Closing Speech**  
**ELP Congress**  
**La Défense, 5 December 2010**

Dear Comrades,

It is with great pleasure and emotion that I conclude our work here. I think that we are having a most important congress. This was our party's third and we all have the feeling that it can set the seal on a most important stage.

I wish, first of all to thank you showing such confidence in me by electing to the presidency of the European Left, and through me in the French CP and the three organisations that make up the French Left Front. I will do all I can to be worthy of your confidence and to make the term of office you have given our party, a term of political advance for our common struggles.

I wish again, in your name, to thank those, in the front rank of whom is Lothar, who have so well lead the second term that has just ended.

Finally, I wish to thank all the outgoing members of the Executive Committee and Secretariats, who, jointly with the activist teams of the French CP, have enabled the preparation and success of this Congress. Thank you all.

As we knew from the start of our work here, we are going through a historic moment, a decisive moment for the future of Europe.

The developments in the capitalist crisis on an International scale — a systemic crisis of the globalised financial model — are plunging Europe into a tragic and regressive spiral.

**The dominant ultra-liberal logics of the present way of building Europe have sanctified the financial markets. Moreover, these crisis stricken markets are seeking, today, to make all the wage earners of the European Union pay for the crisis they created.**

This is not only a financial crisis. It is a great global crisis. All the financial, economic, social, ecological, political and democratic models of development are under attack.

We all are fully aware of this. The situation has become alarming.

Unbelievable sacrifices are being imposed on the Greek people. The setting up of a so-called “financial stability” fund, in association with the IMF and the World Bank was to have ensured the salvaging of the euro zone. It only needed a few months for this house of cards to collapse. Ireland, Portugal Spain, Italy, France and Greece — all the peoples are being targeted.

What lesson can we learn from this resounding failure, which is being paid for, at a high price, by the pauperisation of millions of Europeans, by the privatisation of public property, economic recession and the placing of several officially sovereign States under a form of trusteeship. First and above all, that it is vital and urgent to free the European Union and its member States from overdependence on the financial markets. In fact, the European Union today is faced with a strategic challenge: either to risk breaking up or to accept its transformation.

This is the truth that those who promote the present European construction want to hide, because it tempts people to question the essential bases of all the European Treaties. It is we who are the “realists” in Europe, today. It is we who dare say that the present dominant logics must be challenged. Where will we end up, otherwise? Where will Europe end up? Going to repeated hyper-austerity plans, to new and even more serious financial crises, to the increasingly worrying

undermining of freedoms and democracy?

Let's take the case of Spain and the austerity plan started on Wednesday by José Luis Zapatero: the suppression of the 426 euro allowance for the long-term unemployed, which covers some 700,000 people, tax cuts, privatisation of airport operations ... There's no end to it!

Let's take the case of Hungary: an extreme Right organisation of those nostalgic for Europe's darkest hours is imposing restrictions of all forms of freedom whole the general public and the Union stand by indifferent.

This time bomb must be stopped. Only the rising of a deep-seated mass movement of the people for another view of their cooperation can inverse the situation.

Our hope lies precisely there. Exceptionally great mobilisations have been taking place over the last few months. Everyone here has testified to this. In Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Ireland and Greece ... a fresh climate of struggle is sweeping through the people, the Trade Unions. Impressive popular rallies expressing a rejection of the swing to austerity and the withdrawing of hard won rights, calling for justice, democracy and dignity. This return of ordinary people to the front of the stage is, potentially, a decisive asset for the success of a real Left-wing policy.

Yet, alas, we have also seen, in the recent past, there is frustration caused by the absence of forms of organisation that enable people to act upon the content of the policies they wish to see carried out, by the absence of credible perspectives for a real change to the Left. Not only are many of the governments they oppose being run by leaders of the European Socialist Party, but the contested direction taken has been drawn up by conservatives, liberals and social democrats, working in concert, in the heart of European institutions. There's the rub. It is to change the enormity of this overall situation that all the Left forces in Europe have the duty of harnessing themselves. It is hard but possible — in any case it is indispensable.

Where are we?

Barely six years ago the different political families of the Right, the Socialists or the Greens had their European party. The forces of the "left of transformation" which, for this very reason, were in favour of a deep-seated progressive radical reform of the building of Europe, were dispersed. They had, indeed, succeeded in uniting their European elected representatives in a single, clearly identified group at Strasbourg and Brussels, but they did not have any political areas where all the political parties concerned could compare and confront their ideas, organise joint initiatives and work out the necessary alternatives. Since 2004, with the ELP, the gap has been filled. It is a great step forward.

This short period has already been turned to good account — the ELP is growing and broadening.

**But the issue before our Congress was different. We have all said it. It is not just a matter of continuing but of entering a fresh stage.**

I think that our Third Congress is going to make this possible. Allow me to make a few comments about the highlights of this Congress

- 1) The speeches here have shown, over and above the diversity of our situations and of the national balance of forces, a very great convergence of analyses on the nature of the crisis, its roots and its dangers and on the acute crisis Europe is going through.
- 2) Everyone has testified, each in their own manner, the urgent need, henceforth, to work together in step, on the forms of resistance and on the political alternatives. This is the issue before the ELP's new stage. It must set itself the task of becoming a political actor in the foreground of Europe, to bring into existence and help develop alternative political paths for the European Union' Left.

- 3) I believe that, to do this, one of our strengths will be our ability get the multitude of fronts existing and struggling to converge by showing their common interests.

It is clear to us that the struggle to free ourselves from the logics of capitalist exploitation of labour, from domination by the financial markets, and for a new mode of **ecological development** are all linked. Those who are plundering the peoples of the world are also those who are pillaging the planet's resources.

Similarly, the importance of struggles for **liberties**, against **xenophobia** must be stressed, as well as gender equality, which is a central issue in the struggle for emancipation and against all forms of domination. We must make this a permanent, essential and clearly visible line of our actions.

In these conditions of serious crisis, peace is also a challenge of prime Importance. Europe knows the price we can have to pay for too much weakness in the face of bellicose temptations when capitalism is a crisis. We reject NATO's present militarist spiral and Europe's involvement in Afghanistan. We want a Europe that acts everywhere in favour of the resolution of conflicts and for observance of people's rights in the interest of the people: Western Sahara, Palestine, Cyprus, where we support the struggle of our comrades of AKEL for reunification and a two zone, two community federation on the basis of UN Resolutions.

We want a Europe that acts for new forms of cooperation and for another world. I want here to welcome the delegations that have come from Latin America and those from Africa.

We have also adopted a whole series of resolutions that clearly express the road map of our future actions.

I want to stress the decision for political initiative we have made.

The heart of the conflicts, in the coming months, will be to fight the hyper-austerity policies, to fight against imposing external trusteeship over national parliament and budgets. Our campaign aims at creating a European Social Development Fund, financed by the European Central Bank and by the taxation financial transactions, as well as a new role for the ECB.

Along with this political initiative, we are launching an all-Europe petition. This is not just a resolution we have passed — it the greatest campaign of political action that the ELP has ever decided to undertake.

This campaign will be the first to use the of citizens' initiative Right. We want, with this initiative, to ensure that the European peoples again become the key and indispensable actors of European construction.

This will be done by mass mobilisation at all-European level, in each of our countries. The Executive Committee will have to set up this initiative. It will have to be a long-term campaign. Just imagine — one million Europeans for a radical re-orientation of Europe. It could change everything.

Our Congress's other important decision is that of giving a fresh impetus to our collective work, thanks to a new way of working and a fresh and more collegial composition of the leadership.

### **Two principles must guide us:**

- 1) Respect for all our member parties. We are working together as equals, in the image of the kind of Europe we want.
- 2) Transparency and solidarity. We can no longer have some parties that are "consulted" and others that are merely "informed".

Each party has the right to speak up, and **consensus** is, in our case, not a manner of jamming the

machine but rather of moving forward **together towards that which unites us most.**

We have chosen to strengthen our collective and collegial work by equipping ourselves with four Vice Presidents. The secretariat will also evolve in its way of working.

The geographic extent of our action encourages us to work jointly.

Finally, this new phase of the ELP seeks to encourage the involvement of the members of our respective organisations. This will strengthen the ELP's democratic base.

There you are, comrades,

We are going to set to work, strong in our convergences, and because we have social, political, and democratic emergencies to face. We must answer the need for an alternative by knocking at all the doors.

We have made decisions that unite us and decided on a strong political campaign.

We have provided ourselves with a new leadership, so now, all together — to work!

Cheer up and work well.

Long live the solidarity of all the peoples of Europe.