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**WITH
COURAGE**
FOR EUROPE
LEADING EUROPE THROUGH CHANGE

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Europe is in the midst of a horrific war that we thought we would never see again on our continent. We have expressed solidarity with the people of Ukraine, as have millions of European citizens, and we will continue to oppose the Russian aggression in every way possible. **Solidarity with the people of Ukraine is the expression of the love of freedom, democracy, and fundamental rights.** The Party of European Socialists condemns without reservation this illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked aggression. It is clearer than ever before that the world of freedom and equality can only be defended and promoted with a strong, fair and united European Union that works for all. It is also clear that the war is impacting everyday life through higher food and energy prices, disrupted supply chains and many other aspects. We must ensure that we stop inequalities, and that the poorest people are not those who pay the highest price. **Europe must seize this momentum to become a Union that offers prosperity to its people and is fit for the challenges of our times, including through more integration and more cooperation.** Times of changes and challenges are times for unity and resolute action.



When Covid-19 hit, we redoubled our efforts to protect the most vulnerable, invest in services of general interest and strong public services and push for a strong and inclusive recovery. In the face of the climate crisis, we put forward the Green Deal to ensure that the ecological transition happens without delay, in a way that benefits all. When women's rights are being harmed, we stand up for full gender equality. When the rule of law is undermined by radical right-wing and populist governments and politicians, we stand up to defend democracy and human rights. When young people's futures are being taken away from them, we fight for a Youth Guarantee and quality youth employment. Today, when Putin's Russia attacks Ukraine, we stand for the respect of international law and the rules-based international order, and for Ukraine's right to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We advocate for a stronger role for the EU in international efforts to stop Russia's war of aggression and invasion of Ukraine, and for the protection of those fleeing war, including through a gender-sensitive response, as well as those staying in the country to fight, protest or report on the war, through art, other cultural expressions or journalism. **In all the major challenges of recent years, socialists and democrats have been the engine of progressive momentum for change and must continue to play this role.** Our conservative and liberal opponents have already taken aim at our achievements of the recent past, arguing that a commitment to ambitious climate policies paired with a concern for societal well-being would overburden our Union in these times of war. We must stand firm in the face of such short-sighted political analyses.

Only a fully sustainable and socially just Europe can achieve the strategic autonomy that is required in the current geopolitical context. In the current energy prices crisis, and to avert its dire social impact, we want a **European Pact for Affordable Energy and Social Cohesion** in order to protect

European citizens and their purchasing power, along these axes:

- **Ensure energy security** through reliable and affordable suppliers, including through the use of joint procurement.
- **Adapt energy policies and state aid rules** to ensure that countries can directly support their citizens and industries through this crisis while allowing for the appropriate fiscal flexibility to promote necessary green and digital investments, and at the same time ensuring the sustainability of public finances.
- **Revise and regulate the energy market**, so that volatility and speculation are tamed and gas prices no longer set the price for electricity, so that energy bills can be effectively reduced as we increase the share of green energy sources over the coming years.
- Implement as soon as possible this year the **European framework to recuperate windfall profits** on the energy market and allow for price capping to ensure social justice and promote fiscal sustainability.
- Building on the proven success of the employment support fund SURE and adapting it to **continue supporting millions of European workers and households** while preserving the European Social Model.
- **Enhance our strategic independence through massive investments in sustainable energy alternatives**, in interconnections and other infrastructure, and in innovation, notably in LNG and hydrogen as laid out in the REPowerEU Plan. Create a comprehensive European grid and storage infrastructure, providing cheap and dependable energy to all corners of the EU.

- Set a coordinated strategy to promote energy savings and creation of an EU coordination Task Force for Energy Security, promoting solidarity between Member States.
- Fight against energy poverty and guarantee uninterrupted access to energy for the most vulnerable households.

One of the most worrying challenges in the EU is the consistent degradation of the rule of law and democracy in some Member States, and the rise of the far right. **Nationalists, extremists and populists are fanning the flames of division. They play with people's fears and anxieties for their future in order to exist.** Their ascent to government was made possible by the active support of EPP and RENEW political parties. It is a political and historical mistake that can undermine democracy, and only reinforces our resolve to fight for a Europe where everyone is respected and a Europe that keep its historical memories alive. Nationalism and populism offer no real solutions to the complex challenges facing our societies. **As socialists, we fight nationalism and populism in the field of principles, but we also fight them in the field of policies.** We will always be staunch defenders of an EU of democracy and the rule of law. We are witnessing an increasing influence of transnational, well-funded fundamentalist and right-wing organisations, which is clearly linked to the efforts to divide societies and damage the quality of democratic life and to the backlash against women's and LGBTI rights globally and within the EU. We will not accept backsliding on women's rights, as gender equality and women's rights are indispensable and indivisible parts of human rights. As such, they represent the very basis and purpose of the rule of law at national, European and international levels, as well as the most adequate indicators of the health and resilience of our democracies.

Our actions are clear, as demonstrated by the trust citizens continue to give us in towns, cities, regions, countries, and at European level. **We have proved that our response based on more solidarity and sustainability is the real alternative to the failed austerity response given to the 2008 financial crisis.**

With all our Prime Ministers and participation in 13 EU governments, the momentum to implement policies that improve the lives of millions of Europeans is with our political family. We are striving for full equality, more sustainability, strengthened social protection and rights. PES parties, organisations and leaders are the ones behind the Green Deal, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Next Generation EU recovery plan, the employment support fund SURE, a New Pact on Migration, the Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration, the Gender Equality Strategy, the LGBTI Equality Strategy, the European Child Guarantee, the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Just Transition Fund. We are the political family ensuring that change is accompanied by greater fairness. We are the political family that anticipates change and comes up with solutions. We are the political family that brings solidarity and stability and that leaves no one behind. **Through our action we made sure that Europe acted swiftly for the wellbeing of its citizens. But we must proactively review its institutional framework to ensure that the EU is not only acting in reaction to crises, but structurally ready to prevent them or react to them decisively and quickly.** We want to give citizens confidence that a better future is possible. That the next generation will enjoy the same rights and better living conditions. We will continue the work to improve the lives of every European, continue winning elections and come out of the 2024 European elections as the largest party.

PESSOCIALISTS &
DEMOCRATS**WITH
COURAGE** 
FOR EUROPE

The PES is building a European Union for the people. A Europe that is equipped with the appropriate institutional architecture and tools to realize our common ambition: A **Social Union** of quality jobs and inclusion, a **Union of Equality** that challenges structural discrimination and barriers, an **Economic Union** of shared prosperity, justice and cohesion, a **Sustainable Union** that leaves no one behind, an Energy Union for affordable and climate-friendly power, an Industrial Union of innovation and cohesion, a **Health Union** for all, a **Democratic Union** of rights, equality and inclusive citizenship, that promotes human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide, and a **Defence Union** for peace and stability. We are determined to take all the decisions needed and seize this European momentum.

I. RESPECT IN THE WORLD

CHANGE FOR A RULES-BASED MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is not only an attack against the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also against the European peace order and European values. As Europeans and as social democrats, we must lead the response to this threat to the very foundations our European Union is built upon. Our answer will be solid, and it will be firmly anchored in values. We express our support to the Ukrainian people. Our commitment to supporting Ukraine's right to full sovereignty within the borders recognized by international law is a given. We will continue to support them in every way we can, by supporting their defence capabilities and by supporting the Ukrainian people who have stayed at home or have been forced to flee as a consequence of this war and of the resulting humanitarian crisis. **The PES calls on the international community to prepare an assistance and recovery plan for Ukraine to support Ukraine's economy, its institutions and public services, and the reconstruction of its destroyed infrastructure.** The European Union must lead this reconstruction effort to help redress and rebuild what has been destroyed. A basic tenet of the global balance has been that borders do not change through war or violence. Putin's reactionary denial of that principle is trying to bring the world many decades back. **We will continue to support tough sanctions until Russian forces withdraw completely from Ukraine and a just peace is re-established.** We underline EU unity in addressing the war and its consequences. Beyond Ukraine, we are also deeply concerned by the all-out authoritarian turn in Russia, and the

attacks against democratic forces, human rights defenders and media in the country and abroad. Furthermore, we denounce the harsh repression against the democratic opposition in Belarus, and the support provided by the dictatorship to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. **We also stand ready to support other regions of the world against the fallout of this war, notably when it comes to ensuring global food security, especially for the most vulnerable in the Global South.** We need to continue working to increase public and strategic communication efforts to counter Russian disinformation and anti-EU propaganda. Not only is the current food crisis not caused by the EU or the sanctions imposed on Russia – which do not ban imports of Russian agricultural goods or fertilizers, nor the payment for such products – but, on the contrary, the food crisis has been caused by the war started and waged by Russia against Ukraine. The EU is doing more than anyone in the world to help those countries affected by Russia's invasion address its consequences. For food security alone, the EU has set aside EUR 7.7 billion until 2024 and we, the social democrats, will support the extension of this aid, as needed. The crisis in Ukraine shows how necessary it is to sustainably change our food system. An effective way to tackle this emergency is to invest in climate-resilient food systems in collaboration with small-scale farmers and fishers. We pay special attention to those areas in the world that are sensitive to famine. As Europeans, we are proud of being among the staunchest supporters of the International Criminal Court as an independent body that impartially investigates and prosecutes war crimes committed by individuals, driven by the rule of law and not by the rule of arms, and of an ad hoc international tribunal to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the Russian aggression against Ukraine.



Europe has taken bold action to do away with the reliance on energy supplies from Russia and to find alternative sources. **The EU must ensure our strategic autonomy, less dependence on other countries, and at the same time guarantee energy that is clean and affordable for all.** This is a radical shift with broad consequences, but one that is both urgent and necessary. **The Green Deal is central in the effort to achieve Europe's green strategic autonomy.** Furthermore, the Strategic Compass presented and supported by our political family provides the framework to strengthen the EU's role in the world, as a more reliable partner and security provider, enhance the EU's autonomy and thereby our ability to defend and promote our fundamental values of democracy and human rights. **We support a more robust Common Security and Defence Policy that complements NATO.** This includes concrete actions such as collaborative development and procurement, **coordinated defence spending, countering hybrid threats, cyberattacks and disinformation, boosting EU intelligence cooperation,** as well as the **EU defence industrial sector.** European cooperation and integration to develop jointly a **European framework for an air defence system** is particularly critical. We want to see **the creation of a real European Headquarter and the development of Rapid Deployment Capacity by 2025, as well as the establishment of a separate Council of EU defence ministers,** while respecting the specific security and defence policies of each EU Member State. We support Finland and Sweden's NATO membership, and welcome Denmark's decision to lift its opt-out from the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

Together with our international partners, **we must create a strong momentum to restore and reinforce the multilateral system.** This is the best framework that humanity has created to promote peace and collaboration between nations. We want to strengthen the cooperation between the EU and the UN, and to make use of and strengthen the Global Gateway resources to enhance relations with partners who are committed to democracy, peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. **We support the granting of candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, and the readiness to grant it to Georgia.** Their future lies inside the European Union, and we want that to happen as soon as possible, once they have met all the accession criteria,

including those on the rule of law and democracy. The PES welcomes all the effort and dedication of the UN Secretary-General towards a solution to the conflict.

With regard to the Balkans, **we welcome the opening of negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia** and urge for all necessary reforms and processes to be concluded as swiftly as possible in view of their future accession to the EU. At the same time, **we must continue the accession negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia, insisting on the respect of fundamental values. We stand ready to grant candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina,** insisting on the implementation of all political commitments and necessary reforms. As for Kosovo, we insist that the visa liberalisation be implemented without delay. All preconditions are met, as has been stated by the European Commission and the European Parliament for several years. Moreover, we are ready to support a rapid deepening of Switzerland's integration into the EU family on the basis of a mutually beneficial institutional framework agreement and wish to extend cooperation to new areas.

The EU must strengthen its sovereignty in the key areas of industry and digitalisation, health, defence, food, financial services and energy. It is crucial to ensure European sovereignty by having the means to choose our own destiny. Europe will continue to be a reliable international partner and to promote our values in development and in trade, as we know that no country can thrive on its own on the modern world. Multilateral cooperation is the foundation of our international action. We must lead by example by adopting mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence rules and corporate accountability, including a ban on products made with forced labour, which should apply to the entire value chain of companies, for operations inside and outside the Union, based on international standards adopted by the UN and the OECD. **In all multilateral fora, we must continue to work for the advancement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the respect of the Paris Climate Agreement.** We will continue to support constructive and equal partnerships, stability, security, human rights, the rule of law and democracy in all regions of the world, including Asia, Africa, the Middle East, countries of the Eastern Partnership



and Latin America and the Caribbean. **The Covid-19 pandemic is not over, and the EU must redouble its efforts for international vaccine solidarity with the Global South,** continue its support to the COVAX Facility and to strengthening the health systems of developing countries. The International Treaty on Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness being negotiated at the World Health Organisation must be a driver for sustained worldwide investment in public health. At the same time, **the EU must have a strong and resilient vaccine and pharmaceutical industry.** To this end, the European Commission must facilitate voluntary joint procurement of treatments, materials and equipment outside of crisis situations. These two objectives must not be hindered by competition rules. **We want to set up an effective long term EU global health strategy.** Following the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, we need more than ever a comprehensive and integrated global health response to future health crises, to build resilient and equal societies.

We want strong and constructive transatlantic relations with the United States, and to continue our dialogue on trade matters towards a common progressive agenda on social and environmental standards. We will continue efforts to engage

with our international partners to promote the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, fair global trade rules and the respect of international commitments, including on social rights, gender equality and climate change. We condemn any action or occupation that violates the integrity and sovereignty of nations anywhere in the world, including in Cyprus in our continent. We will continue to maintain and strengthen our relations with our partners in Latin America, with an ambitious trade and investment agenda. When it comes to our neighbourhood, we want to enhance EU relations with the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, the Middle East and North Africa and to promote economic ties through the NDICI-Global Europe Instrument, including to improve living standards in these regions and therefore contributing to tackling the long-term root causes of forced migration. We also want to strengthen the EU-Africa partnership to address common challenges, and seek a common path, accelerating sustainable growth and the green and digital transitions, and tackling common challenges including on health, migration, food security and security. In that respect, we consider of utmost importance the urgent conclusion of the post-Cotonou agreement.



CHANGE FOR THE PROTECTION OF PEOPLE IN NEED

The war in Ukraine has displaced millions to the EU and other neighbouring countries of Ukraine. **We are proud of the continued commitment of Europeans to offering asylum and protection to those who need it.** This is not the first time in recent years that the EU has seen massive arrivals of people fleeing war and persecution. **The right to protection and asylum needs to be universal, irrespective of origin or any other consideration.** European nations and the EU have a particularly strong, shared obligation towards refugees from our own European region, which was demonstrated by the EU's response toward Ukrainian refugees. However, this must never lead to the application of double standards when it comes to offering asylum, protection and humane treatment to people fleeing conflicts and persecution, no matter their origins. The unity with which EU countries and citizens have responded to the Ukrainian crisis, and the quick activation of the Temporary Protection Mechanism, prove our point that with policies based on solidarity, we can deal even with the biggest of crises. Particular attention must be paid to the protection of children and women, who constitute the majority of displaced refugees from Ukraine. As hundreds of thousands of displaced families in vulnerable situations search for way to support themselves far from home, the risks of trafficking, sexual exploitation,

gender-based violence, and conflict related sexual violence is very high. It is also critical to ensure access to mainstream education as well as vocational education and training to those still in learning environments to help them overcome the trauma experienced and regain a semblance of normal lives.

This crisis must be a turning point in Europe, towards a progressive narrative on asylum and migration that applies to all refugees, people with a migration background and the welcoming society, and the adoption and implementation of all the relevant policies put forward by our family. Now is the time for a swift agreement of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the fight against smugglers and traffickers through the Anti-Trafficking Directive, strengthening the responsibilities, role and transparency of Frontex, and a coordinated and properly funded EU approach on Search and Rescue to save lives. We also support the establishment of humanitarian legal avenues as well as effective avenues for labour migration. Cooperation on equal footing with third countries is essential, especially in Africa and Latin America. A progressive asylum and migration policy looks beyond the arrival of people or their country of origin. **We must therefore implement the EU Action Plan on Inclusion and Integration** with particular attention to unaccompanied minors, people from disadvantaged groups and women. Integration and inclusion happen mostly at the local level, so we must support regional and local authorities in addressing change and promoting empowering and inclusive integration measures.

II.

RESPECT FOR THE PLANET

CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES

Action to stop the climate crisis is urgent. It was urgent before the war and is increasingly urgent even more so now. The need to transition to greener and fairer societies and to mitigate climate change is a given. However, the way in which we do this, and the impact that the transformation will have on our daily lives is a matter of political choice. Our choice as PES is that **the European Green Deal should move us as rapidly as possible to new economic, industrial and agricultural systems leaving no one behind, and ensuring that the working class and the most vulnerable do not end up paying the bill and suffering the consequences.** By framing the sustainable transition with the Green Deal, we can reconcile achieving dynamic economies, environmental protection and quality of life, and a true Social Europe. The Green Deal empowers consumers to be the actors and beneficiaries of the green transition. Consumer habits and choices play a significant role in tackling climate change and environmental problems. Instruments such as the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition or the Right to Repair Initiatives can help us move towards a more sustainable consumption and production.

Climate and ecological crisis could unleash a whole new source of social injustice. If this growing injustice is not addressed, more inequalities will arise and deepen our social crisis, in a never-ending vicious circle. **Progressives are committed to building an alliance between ecological and social progress.**

With instruments and initiatives such as the Renovation Wave, the Just Transition Fund and the Social Climate Fund, but also the good implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds and the incorporation of investment and reforms in energy into the Recovery and Resilience Facility through the REPowerEU programme and Next Generation EU, we can support all those who would be otherwise negatively impacted by the transition. The use of multiple instruments should work in a coherent manner and be managed in a way that does not lead to increasing complexity on the ground for managing authorities. The EU shall support regions, cities, coastal and rural areas in the drive to strengthen and further **develop sustainable and affordable public transport, exploring free travel for target groups** such as the young, the elderly and low-income families, renovate and build new affordable and sustainable housing, insulate older buildings and social housing, and ensure that everyone in Europe has access to affordable energy.



This is all the more important in the current geopolitical context, with the increase in energy prices caused by the war in Ukraine. **We are fighting energy poverty and ensuring that all citizens have access to affordable energy.** We therefore applaud the concrete measures that our governments have taken to support citizens through this energy crisis. As the energy crisis continues, it is, however, imperative that short term fixes do not create perverse incentives that lock in the continued use of fossil fuels and reward operators of fossil fuel infrastructure with subsidies. As the current crisis makes clear that inflationary dynamics can be attributed to the cost and volatility of fossil energy rather than to measures to transition to a system of renewable and equitable system of energy provision, we stress the need for structural reforms to address prevailing inequalities and energy poverty. As international energy prices reach new heights, **we must recuperate the windfall profits of energy companies to ensure a fair burden-sharing in our societies. We will support the purchasing power of Europeans. We are taking action for a stronger Energy Union** and the energy autonomy of the EU, reducing our reliance on Russia with REPowerEU, accelerating the rollout of renewable sources and investing in interconnections, increasing energy efficiency and promoting structural changes to reduce energy demand to ensure our preparedness in the face of the current crisis as well as future price shocks. Europe needs to invest in comprehensive grid and storage infrastructure, in an integrated internal energy market, providing cheap and dependable energy to all corners of the EU by harnessing the different potentials and energy sources of all member states.

The Green Deal will rapidly put the EU on the path to ecological sustainability, underpinned by a fair and just transition. It ensures this transition with policies from our political family such as the Climate Law and the Fit For 55 Package, policies promoting the circular economy, more sustainable agriculture and green taxation of emissions, kerosene and plastic taxes, and by addressing carbon leakage through the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The Green Deal will bring fundamental and positive societal changes. Europe's investment strategy must be a strategy that fast-tracks the transition, ensuring measures to counterbalance the costs and compensate the efforts in order to make this transition a socially fair transition. With the right framework and implementation, the green transition will also be the transition towards greater equality. It requires us to support the regions and territories that are struggling from the impact of transitions and to promote long-term solutions for those places suffering from industrial decline, rural desertification and urban segregation. The question of territorial justice is inseparable from that of a fair social and ecological transition. It will also bring more and better jobs by harnessing change, conditions for better physical and mental health and wellbeing for citizens with better biodiversity, the protection of Europe's forests, air, water and soils, oceans and seas, and a green, social and fair Common Agricultural Policy. **We consider access to clean air and clean water as human rights. Social, economic and environmental priorities must all work together, on an equal footing.** This is what the Sustainable Development Goals stand for. In this respect, a shift in perspective is needed to better integrate growing challenges to the sustainability of the food system. The CAP should ensure full policy coherence, covering agricultural, food, biodiversity and climate policies.

III.

RESPECT FOR PEOPLE



CHANGE TOWARDS SOCIETIES OF WELLBEING

The eradication of all inequalities will always be the central goal of our political movement. We have achieved much throughout our history and since the last European elections. We now want to redouble our efforts to bring even more positive change, even faster, to even more people. **We are determined to bring wellbeing and greater fairness.** We are working for a rewarding and human-centred work-life balance

for all. We must address the profound changes in the nature of work based on a rewarding, inclusive and human-centred approach. Social and income inequality, gender inequality, labour market inequalities, inequalities in accessing quality healthcare, education or housing, or discrimination on any ground have no place in our societies. After the Covid-19 pandemic that badly affected our economies, the war in Ukraine has even broader consequences that must be addressed. **It is time for action.**



Our commitment to full employment and a job guarantee remains at the heart of our progressive pledge and political action. As socialists and democrats, **we put people's welfare and social justice at the centre of our political action** in the EU and in our countries as proven by the Gothenburg and Porto Social Summits. We therefore support the biannual high-level Porto Social Forum to take stock of social progress in the EU. It is time to further build the Social and Health Union. We must continue on the path started in May 2021 with the Porto Summit to provide the EU with the tools to support welfare and health systems. With the European Pillar of Social Rights and the social targets established in the recently approved Action Plan, we are not just bettering the lives of people today, we are also preparing for the changes of tomorrow. This is why

the Treaties must include a Social Progress Protocol: without fundamental social rights there is no real freedom. We remain committed to the objective of zero fatal accidents at work and call for an EU action plan to reach this goal. **Public procurement must promote high social standards and good collective bargaining** practices in public contracts. Fighting all forms of poverty and rebuilding social safety nets that protect citizens against suffering and deprivation is a task we take most seriously in this regard. Given persistently high poverty rates in Europe and the current cost of living crisis that is caused by high inflation, **we advocate for the introduction of a European Anti-Poverty Law** that obliges the EU and its Member States to work towards the full eradication of poverty in Europe by 2050.

Every day **we fight for quality and sustainable jobs, decent working conditions, higher wages, equal pay for work of equal value, fair and decent minimum wages**, with respect for national specificities, and fair labour mobility. **We fight for pay transparency and the reassessment of the social-economic value of work** in highly female-dominated sectors. We defend all workers, and fight to ensure that platform workers have the same rights as other workers. The increase of telework and the use of information and communication technologies has further blurred the line between rest and working time. **We defend workers' right to disconnect. We support a reduction of working time** enabling workers to better combine their professional and private obligations. Unemployment is a human tragedy that we must fight, including with innovative proposals such as zero long term unemployment zones. Our aim is to reach a job guarantee and full employment, taking advantage of the huge potential of the green and digital transitions. Concrete actions and good results of our governments in those fields speak for themselves. **Our family was behind the SURE** instrument which allowed governments to fight the economic and social impact of the coronavirus crisis, to mitigate unemployment and protect citizens. Building on the success of this initiative, **developing it as a permanent tool would permit countries to address current and future emergencies**. We advocate for well-funded and inclusive schools, early childhood education and care, long-term care infrastructures, hospitals, and other people-centred public services such as home-based care. We fight against health inequalities, for every European to have access to excellent healthcare. **We need an EU Mental Health Strategy** to help identify resources and needs, fight stigma and improve standards and practices. Likewise, we fight against care inequalities, for every European to have access to the daily support they need and to provide care without it being considered a burden but rather a core value. We have made future generations a priority: **our political family launched the European Youth Guarantee** and the European Child Guarantee. We support the younger generations through the many challenges they are facing. Young people across Europe have suffered massively and disproportionately from the impact of the successive crises, losing opportunities for education, employment and self-development, leading to financial pressures, a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion and worsening mental health. In this European Year of Youth, we

are putting their needs at the centre of our agenda by joining forces with the Young European Socialists in our "Up To Youth" campaign, in collaboration with the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions, young local politicians and young activists. **We will continue to fight for free, quality education at all levels** (including extensive support for students facing financial or social difficulties), the automatic mutual recognition of degrees, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences, strengthened youth work structures, quality jobs with decent wages and stable contracts, paid traineeships, as well as equal access to physical, mental, sexual and reproductive healthcare. **We work for intergenerational solidarity**, ensuring that **we create age-friendly communities with affordable care services for people of all ages**, and fair and gender-responsive pensions for men and women alike, rebalancing the disadvantages incurred by women such as through maternity adds-on inspired by the example of Spain. We work for safe living and working environments, for inclusive societies where everyone has a role to play and can thrive without oppression, discrimination and violence. **We work for the right to housing, with a European Plan for Affordable Housing that reforms the state aid rules** to allow national and local authorities to invest more in public housing. In those fights we count on social dialogue and stress the central role of trade unions to support workers, including in the transition to new forms of work. Strong welfare states, well-funded public services and workers who enjoy a good standard of living in a quality job are the best ways to prepare our societies for the unpredictable.

All this must be underpinned by a strong economic policy that works for all. The recent crises have proven us right when **we insisted that public investments are the key to a solid, sustainable and fairer economy.** Liberal and conservative austerity policies ripped resilience out of health and care infrastructures before the pandemic hit. Furthermore, the current energy crisis confirms, as did the Covid-19 crisis, that we need to act united. We can neither leave our future to the markets, nor can we approach it each as Member State in isolation from one another, else we risk a dramatic fragmentation of our internal market and our societies. **For us, economic issues cannot take precedence over social issues and citizens' wellbeing – economic responsibility and social justice go hand in hand.** Economic growth is not just quantitative, it needs to be qualitative to reflect wellbeing. If we do not invest in education and childcare, elderly and long-term care, in affordable and quality healthcare, mental healthcare and care for all, our societies will never become more equal. Since many challenges exceed national borders, bold new European answers are needed to invest in the green transition and to put Europe at the helm of the digital transition and to ensure public profits. The prosperity that this will generate has to be fairly distributed among all groups in society. **The success of Next Generation EU, the biggest investment plan Europe has ever had, of which we are proud, is a case in point. We continue to stand for a permanent long-term EU investment capacity with real European solidarity** taking into account the success of Next Generation EU funding, and a truly ambitious EU budget consistent with gender-responsive budgeting principles and fit to answer the challenges of today and tomorrow with enhanced own resources. We want the deepening of the Capital Markets Union, the completion of the Banking Union to protect citizen's deposits and to reform the fiscal rules. **We want a progressive reform of the Stability and Growth Pact** to bring it up to date with the realities and necessities of today and to give Member States more flexibility, accountability and ownership of their debt management. To be able to invest in education to the extent needed for it to be the backbone of a fair twin transition, we reiterate our call on Member States to invest more consistently into education. **Europe needs both to support SMEs and social economy initiatives** and at the same time to invest in large-scale green, digital and industrial policies that can bring better quality of life for all, higher wages and shared prosperity. Recent crises have made clear

that **we cannot rely entirely on external trade for many strategic products**, be they medical masks, computer chips and semiconductors, car batteries, medical products and equipment, energy, cyber security and space. **Europe needs a "Made in Europe" strategy by 2030.** In the current context, we must be ready to intervene with a European rescue framework to protect our industries, business and SMEs that are the foundation of our economic structure. **We must enhance our strategic independence through massive investments in sustainable energy alternatives, in innovation, and in the promotion of a circular and green economy.** Competition policy should be put in service of these goals. We must invest in research and development in the EU, and deepening capital markets as well as ensuring a resilient, inclusive and future-oriented banking system for greater private long-term investments in the green and digital transitions. We must always protecting SMEs against the abuse of monopolies and dominant market position of a few large corporations that create unfair competition in the single market, while at the same time taking measures against destructive speculation and the over-financialisation of the economy. We must put a stop to the race to the bottom that has been the main driver for transferring production of these strategic goods out of the EU. Europe must also protect its businesses against extraterritorial laws and sanctions.

After the financial crisis, thanks to the efforts of our political family, we have managed to address shortcoming in the regulation of the financial sector. In times of crisis and cross-border challenges, we should protect these achievements while making sure that our economic and financial policies are there to serve the objectives of social justice, the green transition, gender equality, and progress. They are geared towards building resilience and wellbeing, and that serve social justice and sustainability. We fight for fair, redistributive and progressive tax policies, for expansionary fiscal policies and sustainable debt management. **We fight for a well-regulated financial sector, for more harmonisation of taxation policies to avoid harmful tax competition**, the implementation of common minimum corporate taxes in line with the OECD/G20 agreement, and for increased financial transparency to fight tax evasion, tax avoidance, money laundering and tax havens **and moving towards the extension of qualified majority voting in specific tax matters.** We fight for an economy where the power of corporations is kept in check and businesses

contribute to the achievement of social and ecological goals, especially through accountable and regulated forms of corporate responsibility and extensive due diligence provisions. All these are needed to fund the welfare state and ensure equality and prosperity. We cannot allow current inflationary pressures to be a burden on our societies, nor should their cost be shared unfairly. Our answer is always sustainability and solidarity, never austerity and regression. A progressive programme of investment, public action and tax justice is the best way to gear our economies for the future. This also means that the rules in place, notably around the European Semester and the organisation of the European economy must be fit for the green and digital transitions. We must integrate the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Semester to transform the outdated European Semester into a driver for change to build a sustainable, social and inclusive recovery, adapted to the world of today and tomorrow. We also need a strong and sustainable CAP, and to adapt competition and state aid rules to be able to build European sovereignty in strategic sectors. We need to develop our resilience and be prepared to face new crises and protect people.

CHANGE TOWARDS MORE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

The strengthening of democracy is one of the most fundamental fights that the EU faces today, and we will continue to support and reinforce it as we have always done.

Every citizen must have a real and equal say on our collective future. We fight for societies that are open, inclusive, feminist, intersectional, diverse, that foster social cohesion and are free of all form of discrimination, be it on the basis of gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, age, disability or the interaction thereof. Societies where trust in democratic institutions prevails and where equal opportunities, prosperity and security for everyone is achieved without harming individual rights. We stand with civil society and promote their further involvement in the shaping of our society's future. Populist national governments have threatened the rule of law in the EU.



The rule of law is at the heart of our European democracy, and we will continue to protect it as we have done in the past by supporting the conditionality mechanism, tying European funding with respect for these fundamental values. We want to build a more democratic Union, capable of using all the tools at our disposal to act effectively against governments that threaten the rule of law, by strengthening the role of the European Parliament and empowering the European Commission with new effective tools to protect our fundamental values.

The digital transition has a real and complex impact on almost every level of our society. It also creates new dynamics and realities across our globe. The EU can and should be a leader, promoting a digital revolution that is in line with our fundamental values and principles and leaves no people and no territories behind. We want to promote not just massive investments in European digital infrastructures, research and development and innovation projects, but also a digital sphere where the protection of privacy, children's safety, media freedom, pluralism and independence are guaranteed. A world in which we frame the development of human-centred artificial intelligence so that it is at the service of societies and citizens without reproducing and exacerbating existing stereotypes and biases. The Digital Markets Act will finally tame the power of "Big Tech" platforms, which provide essential services for the functioning of the society, through the establishment of fair market conditions. It will provide citizens with a true choice of digital services and protect better their rights, for instance by banning "dark patterns" or by introducing deterrent fines. As we enter a new digital age, we want a safe digital sphere where everyone is fully protected from cybercrime, including women, children, the elderly, journalists and whistle-blowers, while simultaneously ensuring that security online is fully aligned with the protection of our fundamental rights. We need to ensure that social media platforms are properly regulated, and the right to access is guaranteed for all, while non-digital alternatives for basic and essential services are available for everyone, notably for elderly citizens and people with disabilities. **To bridge the digital divide, we must invest in ensuring that everyone has the means and knowledge to access digital services** while continuing to protect and value the importance of human social interaction for a strong and equal society. We want to promote digital cohesion in a

changing world, recognising that access to decent digital infrastructures is a fundamental right.

We want to promote democracy and active citizenship at every level, from the local and the regional to the national and European elections. The EU embarked on a broad consultation of its citizens with the Conference on the Future of Europe. This exercise marked the beginning of a transformation process that puts citizens at the centre. **The new geopolitical realities make the perspective of an enlarged, more united, and stronger EU a necessity. This requires changes for a good functioning of the EU, including more majority rules in certain policies, and a stronger role for the European Parliament, moving towards the right of initiative.** We must therefore engage in a debate and assess whether the treaties and the functioning of our institutions are well-adapted, and what changes are necessary, to achieve real European sovereignty, to promote social justice and our European values, to make Europe more sustainable and more equal, and to promote the role of the EU in the world, through the opening of a Convention that should seek the necessary support and potentially leading to changes in the Treaties. **It is time to engage in a real debate on the modernisation of the EU's architecture and decision-making processes,** to strengthen democracy, social justice, and the ability of the EU and its Member States to thrive in the world. At the same time, we want to protect and promote **the Schengen Agreement which one of the greatest achievements of the European Union, and see Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia join it without further delay.** The war has made it clear that Europe must have the tools to act quickly, decisively, transparently, which includes a gradual transition towards more efficient decision-making processes, including moving towards majority vote in certain common foreign security policy areas. We are proud of the positive change we are bringing in this European mandate, through our commissioners, our elected representatives in the S&D Group, and our governments in the Council. In all the challenges of recent years, socialists and democrats were there to push for the decisions that put the citizens first. We are ready to continue this work and engage in **an active campaign for the next European elections, with a Spitzenkandidat, and continue the discussion towards European transnational lists** that ensure a fair representation of all 27 member states, in view of achieving better representation of EU citizens, to



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become the largest political group in the European Parliament and nominate a progressive President of the Commission and more progressives to the leadership of EU institutions.

There is no true democracy if there is no true gender equality. The feminist fight is at the core of our political movement, and we are proud that the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the EU Care Strategy were put forward by our political family, and that we defended the Women on Boards Directive and are **pushing for the adoption of a strong Pay Transparency Directive.** We continue to fight for parity democracy, with equal and meaningful representation and participation at all levels of economic and political decision-making, including through the establishment of a formal Council configuration for gender equality, diversity and anti-discrimination. Especially in times of crisis, women have to be part of every solution and sit at the negotiation table, which is why we want also a feminist foreign policy. We fight against patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender stereotypes and biases, and to **eradicate all forms of gender-based violence including through the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.** We continue to call for the fulfilment of the goals set up in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and to add gender-based violence to the list of EU crimes. The Europe we build is one where everyone can fully enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights without sexual exploitation, with **the right to sexual and relationship education, legal, safe and affordable**

access to contraception, abortion care, and menstrual hygiene to end period poverty. Due to the growing backlash against women's right to choose, we join the European Parliament's strong call to include the right to abortion to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Likewise, discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity has no place in a democratic society. We will continue to fight for full rights for the LGBTI community. We work towards a feminist economy, for a system of equality that works for both women and men and that puts people before profit. We need a strong Care Deal for Europe, building on the European Care Strategy, rooted in progressive principles and that recognizes care as a right and backbone of our society. This care economy must address the acute feminisation of informal care. It should aim to establish a fair work-life-balance for all and close the gender pay- and pension gaps. It must also acknowledge the centrality of care in everyone's life by guaranteeing sustainable and quality care infrastructures as well as public services accessible to all. Without care, there could be no economy, no society, no politics and no culture. A feminist Europe also means working towards a gender sensitive recovery, gender budgeting at all levels of governance and gender mainstreaming of all policies including the digital and green transitions. It also means addressing the different ways in which crises affect women and men.

IV.

A EUROPEAN MOMENTUM FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Throughout our history, we have never shied away from bringing about the changes necessary to make those ideals a reality. Contrary to others, we do not play with people's fears. Nor do we leave the fate and wellbeing of citizens up to the markets. **The PES is the party of progressive solutions and reforms, the motor of positive changes that accompany citizens.** The foundations on which we build our action are the principles on which our political movement rests: solidarity, social policies, sustainability, wellbeing, feminism, democracy and justice. **A central role of politics is to frame changes, plan ahead, and act to ensure that they benefit everyone.** This is our position as socialists and democrats.

There is a real European momentum for a strong Europe that works for all its citizens. The Conference on the future of Europe has triggered a debate about the future of our union. We are ready to lead those discussions and global challenges, to promote our vision of an **EU that is always more social, more democratic, more feminist, more sustainable and closer to its citizens.** We must ensure in that process that the EU has all the powers and tools necessary to respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Together, as members of the PES, we built a true European party, based on our shared values, that is more than the sum of its parts. In the PES, **we have created a European space where social democracy can thrive, bringing together our parties in government or in opposition, our parliamentarians, our commissioners, ministers and heads of state and government, our local and regional representatives, our friends in the trade unions and civil society and all the activists who work for social democracy across Europe.** In recent year, if there is something that this pandemic and this war has shown us is that unity, coordination and solidarity within our family have made us stronger and able to deliver many successes to improve the life of European citizens. Citizens trust us on the basis of our progressive and European agenda, with real solutions and hope, not the false promises of populists. As the leading progressive force in Europe, our political family must engage with progressive, social and ecological forces, with our partners, with our activists, with trade unions, civil society and citizens to drive the change in a pro-European perspective. We have been

able to put our policies into action thanks to the many electoral successes, locally, nationally, and in Europe. **We are building a better present and a better future for everyone in Europe.** We will continue to strengthen social democracy in every corner of our continent in the same spirit of collaboration and activism.

The times are difficult, which is why we take action to protect and empower every European. We will continue the positive work we are doing for millions of Europeans through the remainder of this European mandate, accompanying all Europeans through the different challenges we face. Together and united, **we are preparing to engage in the next European elections in 2024, and to come out as the leading political family in Europe,** so that we can **guarantee more protection, more respect and more equality to citizens, in a social, sustainable and fair Europe.**







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