

Congress of Villeurbanne

Activists from Europe

"France is our homeland, Europe is our future." (François MITTERRAND)

"We, Socialists, are Europeans of heart and reason" (orientation text for the European elections of 2019)

And yet...

And yet, activists, repelled by the complexity of community functioning and the low local visibility of its achievements, feel little concern for what they consider to be a matter for specialists,

And yet, activists have heard little about the PES (Party of European Socialists) and rarely participate in the events it organizes,

And yet, activists are very rarely called upon, by their sections, to mobilize on European issues, with the exception, once every 5 years, of elections to the European Parliament,

Bringing Europe closer to the heart of activists is the ambition of this contribution, which proposes a set of concrete initiatives at different levels.

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Bringing to life a real socialist and social democratic political entity at the European level

Initially conceived essentially as a forum for discussion between its member national parties, the PES has gradually built up a network of activists, a youth network (YES - Young European Socialists), an organization dedicated to women's rights and gender equality (PES Women) and a political foundation (FEPS, Foundation for European Progressive Studies). To be fully effective, these structures must interfere much more strongly with national socialist and social democratic parties than is the case today. This requires a thorough reflection on the very functioning of the PES, which is sometimes perceived as working in isolation.

We want to work to give the PES a real party stature. Without denying the differences in national approaches, nor disregarding the difficulties of setting up a supranational political structure, we must ensure that the PES :

- Adopts a more transparent operation,
- Reflects the transformation of the European social-democratic political family, its new struggles and renews itself as many adherent parties have done at the national level,
- Is organized to allow member parties, who so desire, to consult their activists on the fundamental texts it adopts. In this sense, special attention must be paid to the organization of the next PES Congress scheduled to take place in Berlin in June 2021.
- Seizes some key subjects on which it becomes a recognized political interlocutor, at the European level, of the trade union, associative, cultural forces, NGOs and civil society entities.

To carry this difficult struggle, the French Socialist Party must, on the one hand, increase its influence within the PES, whether in its political bodies or in its administrative organization, and on the other hand, organize itself internally to release sufficient means to promote and follow this project.

The PES Congress in June 2021 must be the Congress of Political Renewal. This is why the PS will elaborate, in the wake of its own congress, a contribution of the French socialists centered around 8 principles:

- The European gathering of the left and ecology,
- A PES transnational militant force, supported by activities and citygroups, capable of leading citizen campaigns and mobilizing to win its struggles,
- A reformulation of the European socialist project around the welfare combining rights social and fundamental issues, equality, especially between women and men, quality of life and ecology, emancipation through equality and culture,
- A European agenda for cooperation, focused on the green deal, solidarity, and investment in human development, financed by own resources, and made possible by a new approach to the Union's economic governance,
- Climate justice, to make the ecological transition a path of reduction inequalities,
- Human and territorial solidarities to strengthen the convergence process within the EU,
- Citizen control of digital uses, a subject on which we ask the PES to quickly structure a transversal reflection.
- Europe's contribution to the construction of another globalization and to peace.

Make the PES and affiliated parties visible and attractive to activists

We recommend that PES referents be designated at the national level. This or these peers will constitute the interface with the PES on a permanent basis. They can be entered or consulted by the federations and sections. These referents will be part of the French delegation to the PES congresses.

The Socialist Party must encourage its activists to become PES activists, highlight the events it organizes, for example those of the Citygroups, the FEPS colloquia, and work to generate new ones. The PES and the socialist groups of the European institutions encourage, finance and strongly value these initiatives, so it is up to us to take advantage of them to animate our federations and our territories.

Living Europe also means getting to know militants from sister parties and being able to dialogue with them. Several federations have twinning arrangements with their peers in other European countries. We recommend that chapters located in cities with active official twinning arrangements contact the chapters of the socialist parties in those cities. Departments and regions governed by the left could propose twinning groupings to give them a critical size that would allow them to go beyond the simple annual meeting trip.

Just as we have a French federation abroad and PS sections in various cities around the world, the parties affiliated to the PES, including the PSOE, SPD, the Italian Democratic Party and the Portuguese Socialist Party have sections in several cities in France. Not only can their activists act alongside us in local activities and struggles, but joint reflections on European issues will enrich our vision and contribute to a common approach of the parties represented. Maintaining, strengthening or creating links with French Labour entities should not be neglected either.

Some PES articles or newsletters could also be translated into French and distributed by the party. We also propose to set up a translation platform to make available to activists the political debates that cross Europe and the publications of the socialist and social-democratic family.

For the Socialist Party, making visible Social Democratic Europe

Today, those who want to be informed or act on European issues can do so. The letter published weekly by the French delegation to the European Parliament is excellent. There are training kits, some federations have twinning arrangements or participate in cross-border actions.

We must start by valuing and amplifying what exists:

- The European Federal Secretary at the level of each federation,
- The existence of a European Commission in each federation open to all activists and focused on European issues,

- A "Europe network", constituted around the national secretary for Europe, open to the militants, which facilitates the exchange of good practices between the different federations, proposes tools or national actions and participates in the definition of the European orientations of the party,
- The great availability of the members of the French delegation to the European Parliament and members of the European Committee of the Regions to intervene in sections or federations.

But limiting oneself to dedicated European structures and channels of communication contributes to suggesting that European issues are a matter for specialists and thus to excluding them from the fundamental concerns of activists.

However, we must instill the European angle in all the work carried out by the SP. Taking into account European policies, their perspectives, and the struggles being waged in Brussels are totally intertwined with our national actions. For example, we strongly reject a renationalization, even partial, of the CAP, because it would amount to creating harmful competition between Member States. We also have much to learn by comparing the experiences of our sister parties in their countries with our own.

For European militancy to live within the SP, Europe must be much more intimately linked to the internal workings of the party.

First of all, we would like to network the elected representatives of Europe's regions and cities with the French members of the European Committee of the Regions and better relay the events organized by the Committee.

We ask that the means of communication of the party (newsletter, social networks, interviews, ...) give a more important place to European issues. This should be done through several types of actions:

- Raise awareness of the situation in other European countries:
 - Relaying - strongly - some national campaigns of sister parties (for example on abortion or LGBT rights in Poland)
 - Inform about the elections taking place in European countries. Obviously not everything is equally important, but it is impossible to ignore such key elections for the European left as the recent Italian regional elections (in which the extreme right almost conquered key regions), or the municipal elections in Vienna (Austria) which saw the rout of the extreme right.
- Set up a European section in our digital tools, open to activists. of the other PES parties. It is not the same to have a European section in the PS platform and to have a dedicated European structure depending on a think tank or specialized groups,

- Reposition, when possible and relevant, the struggles in France in the European context (for example, on European environmental and ecological regulations and the "accommodations" made by the French government),
- To highlight the "European" initiatives of the sections and federations and their feedback from experience,
- To publish and put online a guide of resources for the organization of European events in the federations in order to facilitate and encourage moments of militant debate around major European issues.

Finally, the party would benefit from welcoming members or permanent members of sister parties into the permanent national team for significant periods of time. This is an effective way to create long-term ties. A special effort for the parties of the former Soviet bloc countries would be desirable.

Have activists lead European struggles using the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

We are convinced that some battles can only be fought effectively at the European level, and yet these battles are either fought without militant force or we concentrate on their purely national part.

Created by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Citizens' Initiative gives a direct right of political initiative to European citizens provided that they are at least one million from 7 European countries. It is with the support of an ECI that the subject of glyphosate has been addressed by the European Commission. However, this instrument of direct democracy remains little known and difficult to implement. Only six initiatives have succeeded since 2012. The last one, in September 2020, concerns caged animals.

With the support of its European partners and national associative actors, the Socialist Party can bring, thanks to an ECI, major ecological or social themes, such as European consumer protection, compensation for victims of fraud, or the survival of bees.

At the same time, our elected representatives in the European Parliament can ask for a simplification of the process and an extension of the scope of the European Citizens' Initiative.

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The European idea came out of abstraction. A European civic consciousness is emerging, especially among young people. Some of them are already in an international network, but this feeling should not only be the work of the elites. We must ensure that it is shared and accessible to all. The means of the party must be used

so that each activist can make the construction of Europe his or her own, with its struggles, failures and advances, and be willing to make a personal commitment, at his or her own level, to build a Europe that strengthens democratic and human rights, develops a social economy and fights for the preservation of the planet.

Signatories :

Christophe Clergeau, National Secretary for Europe, Regional Councillor for Pays de la Loire, member of the European Committee of the Regions ;

Sylvie Guillaume, Member of the European Parliament, President of the Delegation of the Social and Ecological Left in the European Parliament ;

Éric Andrieu, Member of the

European Parliament; Nora

Mebarek, Member of the European

Parliament ;

Christophe Rouillon, President of the Socialist Group in the European Committee of the Regions, Mayor of Coulaines ;

Karine Gloanec Maurin, President of the Community of Communes of Perche, Federal Secretary for Europe and Rural Affairs (41) ;

Rémi Féraud, Senator of Paris, First Federal Secretary ;

François Comet, Federal Secretary for Europe and International Affairs (75) ;

Cécilia Gondard, First Federal Secretary FFE, National Secretary for Equality between Women and Men ;

Isabelle Boudineau, Vice-President of the New Aquitaine Region, member of the European Committee of the Regions ;

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Yannick Trigance, National Secretary for Education and Higher Education; Maxime

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Fabrice de Comarmond, National Secretary for Digital Transition.