

Political Theses

The European Left: Building Alternatives

The second congress of the European Left takes place in a moment of crucial challenge for the European people, their social, economic, cultural and political life. The challenge is to provide new and concrete answers for the future of the European Union, the whole continent and the world. In our countries and in the European Union we are confronted day by day with policies which are unable to show a convincing, alternative way out of the dead end where the neo-liberal choices have led humanity.

Every human being wants to live in dignity and to decide about her/his destiny. Instead, the ruling refuse to grant the citizens of Europe their right to decide on the future of the continent. A political change of direction is our strategic aim. The European elections of 2009 are an important opportunity for the European Left to politicize the challenge on European issues and to introduce a change of direction in Europe.

I. European Left: Another Policy for Another Society

A Where we are

The contradiction between capitalism and the emancipation of the individual, armament and war, climate change and environmental disasters, and the privatisation of all spheres of life lead us to ask once again “socialism or barbarism”?

The strategy of war, in the name of prevention, non-proliferation, and of the struggle against terrorism has deepened a crisis, but Europe and its governments seem unable to break with this logic. New strategies and a capable balance of power, leading to the settlement of international controversies by political means, have not yet emerged. This is confirmed by the tragic scenario in the Middle East, and particularly in Palestine. Such incapability could cause a new escalation, further exacerbating the vicious circle of war and terrorism. This logic also leads to an arms race and the militarization of European politics under US hegemony

At the same time, in the midst of this chaotic and turbulent transition, a new form of "neo-liberal organism" is prevailing, undermining the very roots of politics. The fundamental foundation of capitalism in its present phase is the presumption that free enterprise represents a paradigm, a model to be followed: not only in organising production, as an economic agent, but in organising the whole economy and society. The alleged "neutrality" of the business paradigm intends to replace politics or subjugate it to its own ends. Politics would thus be doomed to futility.

It is increasingly clear that the attempts to dismantle the public sector and the vicious attacks against trade union organisations, currently under way in Western European countries, reflect the notion that all those sectors which are no longer considered "productive", or that may impede the direct exercise of power by these new political actors, are to be eliminated once and for all.

Consequently, major economic issues should be left to the major bourgeoisie, such as banks and financial institutions, while charity should take care of the poor and the excluded: i.e., it should address only what the economy does not, and at a minimal level.

The neo-liberal choices outlined by Maastricht have caused an erosion of the material living conditions of broad sectors of the population, leading to a crisis of rejection of European integration. This crisis is due to the unsustainability of an economic, ecological, patriarchal and social model that produces unbearable inequalities, environmental disaster, precariousness in work and life. It is unable to untie the political knots that lay at the bottom of the crisis of social and political cohesion on the Old Continent. The old political powers cannot solve these problems, because they continue to practise the politics of Maastricht. This is creating a political vacuum.

This vacuum and the absence of prospects for change could generate the victory of neo-populist projects based on a blend of xenophobic and racist elements with neo-liberalism. Their instigators use fears and insecurity as levers for reactionary mass populism, for chauvinistic tendencies, threatening civil rights, democratic equality, defence of social conquests and the welfare state itself with lethal consequences.

In order to face these challenges we have to develop social, cultural and unified action together with the people, able to lead the struggle for social transformation within the present conditions and to give political engagement sense again. The condition for more acceptance of the EU by its citizens is more opportunities to participate. The European Left stands for the democratisation of the European Union and of its institutional structure.

The crisis affecting the whole social body, even under the varying conditions of the different countries, is a crisis of social cohesion as Europe used to know it. This spawns conflicts, divisions and tension. It sharpens class-struggle. These conflicts take on new forms and modalities, compared with traditional political categories, being right or left. In this framework, the geography for the European left is changing profoundly, creating a series of paradoxical effects. Firstly, national policies are regaining importance within the political forces. The process of European integration is becoming slower and more contradictory. State intervention in economy, the goal of welfare for all, and the establishment of social compromise through the actions of trade unions are questioned. Instead, the ideology of capitalist globalisation and an open market with free competition dominates current political thinking. It is deplorable that some leftist and social-democratic parties follow this line, in the name of "leftist liberalism".

The crisis of politics is one of the most dangerous and non-explored effects of the neo-liberal model, a model which has been imposed on our continent for twenty years now.

This crisis of the relationship between politics, institutions and society has created a vacuum through the absence of perspective, giving the impression that politics is not able to face the big issues of our time.

The moment has come to present a new perspective starting from this reality.

Our congress has to tackle this task. It has to profile the EL in face of that challenge.

The Party of the European Left has been created through the will of political parties that propose social and democratic transformation, and alternatives to neo-liberal policies, through our active engagement in the institutional arena and in various alternative movements. We want to help create a new political force in Europe, and build alliances which make a difference, so that real alternatives may emerge.

B. Struggles, social movements and the role of the EL

The popular struggles, the social and citizens' movements on a global scale have put the headline: "Another world is possible!" on the agenda. The anti-globalisation movement has been able to challenge not only the big international and trans-national institutions, but even the economic powers. In spite of its discontinuous development this movement still is a precious resource for the renovation of left politics.

The French and Dutch "No" to the Constitutional Treaty has had its impact in all the countries of the European Union and shown also a deep crisis in the people's confidence towards the neo-liberal orientations of European policies. Europe has continued to be crossed by significant conflicts of a social, civil and cultural nature. The Trade Union movement is facing new challenges. The «old» easily understood contradiction between Capital and Labour is swept across by new aspirations and contradictions between genders, generations, cultures, ethnic groups and above all by a new awareness of the tangle in the relationship between humankind and the environment.

But most of these struggles do not automatically unite (themselves) or establish connections with forms of political representation. Many demands arising from the new generations and concerning working life, life in general, interpersonal relationships as influenced by the gender issue, cannot automatically transform themselves into a hegemonic culture as Antonio Gramsci called it. This set of demands can only turn into an alternative project of society, if they interact with a culture of transformation and an adequate political structure capable of bringing together both protesters and promoters of social change.

This is the role of the EL.

We can meet those demands only through a deep transformation of the political culture. This means a big effort of theoretical and practical innovation work. If we are not able to do this, labour will be reduced to a mere economic factor, instead of being a paradigm of emancipation, of indi-

vidual and collective freedom. The crisis of the left and of democracy will become more and more acute.

We speak about a society which is swept across by many movements demanding a change; and by many forms of division, isolation, outbursts of violence, particularly against women; by individualism and «tribal» selfishness. Under this scenario, we must build a social and cultural system which promotes unity in the camp of the struggles for change, which helps a process of unification, socialisation and shared political involvement.

We shall see the transformation of society as a part of a big cultural transformation by introducing new ways of living together.

C. Europe and the Institutions

The legitimacy crisis of politics endangers the process of European integration. Confidence in the European institutions has never been so low.

Invariably, the recent Council presidencies limited themselves by orientating the interests of the EU to global competition in the labour markets, in energy policies, natural resources and other fields. The Berlin Declaration of 25 March 2007 and the EU Summit of June 2007 have persisted in applying the rationale of the internal market and the framework established by the Maastricht Treaty. That means no change in the neo-liberal orientation of European integration policies and, with it, in the political approach of the new treaty. Furthermore, the choice to entrust decision-making on this issue to an intergovernmental conference and to the European Council, with no scope for democratic debate or means to have a voice through a referendum, can only widen the gap which separates European citizens from the European project.

In this way, European governments are trying to by-pass – instead of untangling – the political knots at the root of the crisis of the European Union.

What is at stake today is not only the social achievements of the workers', women's, peace and ecological movements as produced by the victory over Nazi-fascism both in the countries of Eastern and Western Europe, but even more the right to work and to organise.

The subordination of the political system to the interests of the financial markets and the capitalist economic powers, the concentration of powers and the personalisation of politics reassess the traditional organisation of civil society.

The growing pressures on both the central State and local authorities to provide more security are the other side of the coin in this step-by-step depletion of democracy. If the exception becomes the rule, if the state of emergency becomes a permanent state of affairs, if the scope of freedom is being squeezed, the specific task of the *respublica* also (or above all, if not exclusively) becomes repression, advanced in the name of law and order.

NB: *respublica* is not a word in English and I don't know what one you mean

The European Left has to make a quality leap in political action. That depends on our ability to oppose the suggested, fateful, neo-liberal concept of society our the conviction that these circumstances can be changed.

This requires a permanent struggle against neo-liberal ideology, demanding solutions to specific problems deriving from the daily experience of the various movements. These struggles represent in their effect the way to the social and ecological transformation of Europe. There are clear inter-connections of the positions of the workers' movement, the trade unions, the anti-globalisation movement, the European Social Forum, the feminist, environmental and social movements, the science and art communities with the policies of the European Left.

This project requires closer links among our parties at the European level, new forms of communication and cooperation. It requires a more marked political profile in our parliamentary and non-parliamentary struggles. Our ambition is to smash the grand coalition of populists, conservatives and social-democrats, which has so far shaped the European project. Our ambition is to launch the idea of an effective left-wing alternative.

The social devastation produced by the reforms in the labour market and the rapid growth of what we have called “precarity” is the field against which we have to build our social policies. For this reason, we have to fight the Green paper on labour law, which is yet again an attempt to unhinge collective bargaining, aiming at an individualistic model of employment. Precariousness is not only the condition that young people and women are facing in the workplace; it is the description of a social, civic and cultural condition.

This is not just an economic problem. It is a question that concerns civilization as a whole, the crisis of human existence itself – like the open questions of the relationships between the sexes, the generations and communities, between individual and class, individual and society. At the heart of it this is a real civilization problem. And the enormous growth of inequality is becoming its most important feature.

In the same spirit, the transformation and development of capacities of education and basic life training for all, freed from the market logics, is one of the major issues of a progressive development project.

D. For a democratic reconstruction of Europe.

The party of the European Left has been the only political body on the continent to hold a unitary position towards the European constitutional treaty. Our opposition starts from the criticism of the undemocratic, neo-liberal, patriarchal and militaristic model of the European construction (a model which is institutionalised by that treaty itself).

We have said it before and we say it again: after being rejected by the French and Dutch referendums that treaty is dead. All of those who try institutional alchemic operations to resurrect it, ignoring the reasons for its refusal – as the European governments are trying to – will lead Europe into a new deadlock. The project of “a modified treaty”, recalling in fact the substance of the rejected treaty, will not solve the current crisis of consensus. Furthermore, any operations aiming to exclude the people from ratifying the treaty will not only be intolerable, but also dangerous for the European Union's future.

Now more than ever, there is the risk that the “obstacle”, constituted by the expression of the peoples’ will, shall be eliminated. That is why we demand a real debate on the content of the new treaty involving the people before any decision is taken, and its ratification by referendum in all the countries of the European Union.

With the orientations fixed at the European Council in June 2007, a period of negotiation has been opened leading to the elaboration of a new treaty which should be ratified before the French presidency of 2008 and the European elections of 2009. For the EL and the forces acting for another Europe, the stakes are high.

The European Left opposes the project of this treaty which, actually, aims at preserving the core and main contents of the currently valid treaties and the European Constitutional Treaty – a society regulated by free and undistorted competition – now included in an additional protocol. We see the need for a new European debate on further ways in the sense of “refounding Europe”. The only possible way to contribute to lasting peace, to peaceful co-existence and cooperation of the peoples and states of Europe, to a democratic, political and social perspective of the European continent, is to finish with neo-liberal logic and profoundly reshape the European process. This debate must lead to a new social contract at the European level, recognized by all people living and wanting to live in Europe.

This European public debate needs to be started, organized and be democratic. We demand a real popular participation in the elaboration of the policies and the European project. It is the only way out of the deep crisis which crosses the European construction. In these conditions, the European elections of 2009 have to constitute a political moment of intervention by all the forces committed to a new perspective in Europe, with the EL at the front, to make a new conception of Europe prevail, in connection with the social, political, and peoples’ struggles. We want the European Parliament – the only subject representing popular sovereignty in the current institutional order of the Union – and the national parliaments to really act regarding the decisions concerning the institutional and political future of Europe.

This “refoundation” must start at its base. Its heart must be a new social, environmental, feminist and democratic model which ensures peace, breaking with neo-liberal policies, and ensuring peoples’ participation in all the stages of its making.

II. Fields in which the European Left will actively contribute to change

A. Capitalist globalisation and Europe

Our time is one of capitalist globalisation, which shows its faults, its limits, and its unsustainable nature. It is also a time of irreversible new realities and potential effects linked to the development on worldwide scale of the exchange of knowledge. The exacerbation of the contradiction between, on the one hand, the devastating and unequal exigencies of this globalized, financialized, and milit-

arized capitalism, and on the other hand, the potential of human emancipation and sustainable societies, makes even more urgent the construction of a perspective of transformation.

Considerable power is more and more concentrated in few hands: the international finance funds, the transnational corporations and the supranational organisations of global capitalism – the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank etc. These organisations are shielded from any democratic control. This democratic dispossession depends on the will of the most powerful states' governments to assume, at the service of the dominant capitalistic financial forces, decisions which pretend to serve the fate of humanity.

To this material monopoly a non-material one is added. Knowledge becomes a commodity with high added value. The tools for understanding reality and for the production of the necessary goods are in the hands of a few people. The key elements of the capitalist phase nowadays are financialisation, which profoundly modifies social ties, labour, societies, the role of States, and the creation of more and more profit from capital investment in the production of intangible goods (knowledge, information, communication, training, entertainment, culture). However there is an essential difference in the nature of these goods and material ones. The basic feature of non-material goods is that their usage by one "consumer" does not prevent the usage by others.

Today the fundamental aim of the left must be to assert that knowledge is a public good and to fight for the implementation of this principle. This will be achieved not only through the adoption of adequate measures able to assure free access to it, but especially by saving the production of knowledge from the laws of the market .

Neo-liberal politics need to reduce the essence of democracy - that is to decrease the decision-making power of the people's representative institutions (parliaments, councils, etc.). European capitalism tries to answer the expansion of the capitalist market and global competition by the reduction of labour costs, the delocalisation of production, by wage control, by reducing rights and public intervention in the economy, by the devastating actions of these multinationals in the countries of the Southern hemisphere. We are still witnessing privatisations, an increase in profits and financial speculation, wealth concentration and rise of disparities, but without any social and political criticism able to invert these processes. The Maastricht criteria, which are still the basis of economic policy, continue to be a straightjacket restraining social and political conquests. This limiting function is also carried out by the stability pact and by the rigid monetarist criteria of the European Central Bank.

Our socio-economical-ecological proposal for Europe is based on five main principles:

- (1) the need to have full and qualified employment, against precariousness of employment,
- (2) a leading role for public financial intervention,
- (3) the need to overcome the predominant, environmentally harmful, economic model, that over-comes both the overexploitation of human beings and of the world's natural resources,
- (4) the need to keep the public sector in European countries and public services,
- (5) the urgency in guaranteeing an income and pension which is secure to live on and which guarantees all people a life with dignity.

By changing its internal and external policies towards the goals of a new model of development which is socially and ecologically sustainable, and peaceful, Europe can make a difference.

The European Left Party therefore is in favour of an integrated strategy for sustainability and solidarity. In our view this strategy should include economic, socio-cultural, ecological and institutional dimensions. Economic sustainability aims at the maintenance of the existing “capital stock” of society and its social wealth, the guarantee of economic efficiency, ecologically and socially sound productivity growth and innovative capacity, at economic stability, the strengthening of regional economic circuits, an equitable trade and payments balance, and a new kind of full employment. Employment policy beyond labour market policy has to include guaranteed security for the whole of life, social policy goals such as the quality of work, gender equality, and health-conducive organisation of the working environment. Socio-cultural sustainability includes the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, the implementation of gender equality, an equitable distribution of wealth and incomes, the strengthening of fundamental social rights and equal access to public goods, the provision of improved social security, public welfare and public services as well as a socio-ecological change in consumption patterns. The orientation of the EU Treaty and of the Lisbon Strategy at “global competitiveness” is in this light neither economically meaningful nor effective. Ecological sustainability aims at the protection of biodiversity, a drastic reduction in energy and material consumption, in the length of transport distances, in land use and environmental pollution by toxics substances etc. Finally, the institutional dimension of sustainability means more participation rights and chances for the people, the strengthening of networks and a closer cooperation among the institutions.

The integrated strategy can be put into practice by combining binding targets at EU level, action programs and measures, a common regulatory framework in all relevant policy areas such as scientific research or regional policies, interlinking by the EU and its member states.

Obviously, such a profound policy change will not happen by just counting on the “good will” of the current ruling elites in the EU and its member states. It needs mobilisation from below – from trade unions, social movements and the left. That is why the Party of the European Left wants to initiate a broader debate about an alternative and about fostering movements and coalitions for change. We want to join such concrete thematic debates within the ESF, other social and democratic initiatives, with Trade Unions or within the ongoing work about a Charter of principles for another Europe.

We propose a harmonization of the social and environmental standards at the highest existing European level, to fight against any kind of dumping and thereby to defend the global economy. The harmonization of taxes, particularly for manufacturing, is unavoidable in facing the free circulation of capital and the consequences for wages and conditions in the field of production. We want coordinated European tax and financial policies, for a solid and socially just financing of the policy tasks of the member countries, with the aim of introducing new criteria for an economic, ecological and socially sustainable development model. We propose to coordinate in the new budgetary policy more public investment in the social infrastructure and ecological regeneration, as well as coordinated monetary and budgetary policies for the strengthening of the internal economy, and an ecologically sound revival of domestic demand – all this is possible against this background and can lead to meaningful full employment with high quality employment and social rights. If there is no European regulation then internal economic competition, unfettered market forces and the un-

equal development of social, wage, tax and ecological standards will on the other hand drive the downward trend still further.

In order to achieve these aims we call for:

- (a) an active European industrial and research policy predominantly linked to a European public sector able to achieve synergies with the private sector;
- (b) a reform of the current Economic and Monetary Union system by placing the European Central Bank under democratic control and replacing the current growth and stability pact: i.e. the role of the European Central Bank should be not only to control inflation but also, in line with the political aim of employment for all, to increase the level of employment and ecological sustainability, and therefore the ECB statutes must be recomposed to guarantee that.
- (c) to shape all these trends with great respect for the environment, not only in a direct way but also in rationalising the need and use of energy sources; and in developing research on renewable energies;
- (d) Guaranteeing social protection and dignified living conditions, that is to say, to defend human rights for all who live and work in Europe and to promote solidarity as the binding principle of society.
- (e) The EU budget should be increased to tackle future challenges of socio-economic and ecological restructuring of the economic model, which needs in parallel a reform of the EU budget, guaranteeing regional and social cohesion.

The European Left wants to change the European taxation system from the current one (Value Added Taxation, VAT) based on the individual level of consumption, indirect, regressive, and on a national basis, to another one based on individual income, on a European level, progressive and with a redistribution effect. That is to say from the present one that reduces the taxation on the profits of capital and puts the main burden on the workers' salaries to a progressive one able to produce a redistribution of created wealth. We are for a taxation of financial returns and financial speculative movements (Tobin Tax).

We need to consider building universal European social protection, which guarantees inalienable and universal rights, as a different civilisation model.

In face of the hegemonic pretensions of the great powers and the international financial institutions, as well as the crisis of the unilateralism of the United States, the demand for a reassessment of the role and the responsibility of a reformed and democratised United Nations Organisation should be reaffirmed.

This is one of the reasons why the European Left is opposing the current project of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), foreseeing the development of commercial relations with Africa and the Mediterranean countries by the colonialist, unequal procedures and directives of the IMF and the World Bank. The Policy of European Neighbourhood (PEN) is following the same logic. It is not able to establish co-development relations at the risk of dangerously aggravating the disparities, the growth inequalities. If we want to answer the challenges of development, Europe has to imple-

ment a new model of cooperation free from neo-liberal criteria. This reorientation is even more necessary because of the challenges imposed by the EU enlargement.

B. European Left against war

Peace requires action and cooperation. Social initiatives and social forums, trade unions, left-wing parties and critics of globalisation are finding more and more common ground in their actions against war, violence, armament and militarisation. Those in Europe who say no to war could become the majority: this is an important insight, and starting point for the policies of the European Left.

Support for Wars waged by the US, assisted by Member States of the European Union, for increasing armament and for the stationing of US troops in Europe is dwindling among the European population. Fewer and fewer people believe that more involvement from the US and NATO means more security. Quite the opposite: the so-called 'War on Terror' has thrown whole regions into a vicious cycle of violence and increased the danger of terrorist attacks. New wars will not be waged, as claimed, for human rights, democracy and disarmament, but over the routes for pipelines, over economic markets, for a new partitioning of the world along imperialist lines. There is a real danger that Europe will get more and more involved in such conflicts and wars.

The strategy of solving conflicts by military means, put in place by the neo-conservative US administration after September 11th, has reached an impasse. It has failed on international level and is even losing support in the United States itself. Unilateralism has been pushed back, but has not been defeated yet. The real problems are the lack of a political alternative which can isolate the Bush administration, and the failure to start a political process to solve the world's conflicts, in order to give peace a chance. It is unacceptable that Europe is still unable to act on the international scene as a strong voice against war.

Our alternative to war is rule of law and of another international economic and trade regulations. This is a way to overcome war as a tool to solve contradictions in the current capitalist model of dominion. There is a growing gap between the will of the people, and governmental policies and actions. Governments have proven to be unable to meet the expectations voiced by the extraordinary mobilisations of the peace movement on our continent as well as in the world. This situation could worsen.

We call for the immediate end of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. We insist on the end of the foreign occupation of these countries and demand the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops. The European Union member countries must make progress by carrying out the political obligation to give back to the Afghan people the right to decide on their own future on democratic grounds and to end the destruction of the society by civil wars. We strongly oppose any military solution of the nuclear dispute with Iran. The Iran conflict seems to become a new core of destabilization of peace and international stability in a world-wide scale: we resist to any attempt of the United States and the European Union member countries – ahead of all France and Great Britain - to get tied up with the Bush-administration's politics - to use this as a pretext for realising their own plans for geopolit-

ical restructuring. At the same time the European Left is concerned about the ongoing attempts by the Iranian governing circles to oppress the efforts of forces striving for further democratization of the Iranian society. The new developments in the direct neighbourhood – along the Turkish-Iraq-border characterized by the international law violating attempts of the Turkish government to intervene into the Iraq Kurdish autonomous zone for a military solution of the Kurdish question can not but increase the danger of a explosion of the whole region. The European Union and all its Member countries are called to take an independent stance from (the) US policies, a course (for) contributing to stabilization, peace and disarmament in the whole region. The support and promotion of an OSCE like permanent conference of peace, cooperation and security in the Middle East could be such a European contribution.

The European Left commits itself to working for a preventative peace, and a mobilisation of the peace movement to this end.

We resist the militarisation of the foreign and security policy of the European Union and its Member States. We do not want Europe to act as a power of intervention or to build up military capabilities, which it is developing more and more. At the same we resist a continuation of such military policies carried out by its member countries. Europe does not need Rapid Reaction Forces, designed to carry out preventive war as set up by the European Security Strategy of 2003. Contrary to the proposed Lisbon EU-Treaty we insist on the reduction of military expenses and we oppose the European Arms Agency. Therefore we look for an alternative to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) excluding role of EU and European countries as an integrated arm of NATO. Especially now that the NATO is reassessing its strategic concept.

We have to challenge the European military industrial complex, producing military culture and defining industrial and development policies both on the European and on the national level. The European Left strictly stands for reconverting war industries. We continue to oppose all existing military bases of the United States in Europe and plans for building up new ones. We resist any attempt at rearmament, as it is expressed by such examples as the US-base in Vicenza or of the US anti-missiles bases in the Czech Republic and in Poland or, such bases of the United States in Bulgaria and Romania and other European countries – on a bilateral basis or even under the attempts of new constructions mixing US and NATO structures.

The European Left is willing to cooperate with all peace movements and other political forces which are putting the issue of disarmament and the striving for conversion at the core of the political agenda. It concerns particularly nuclear disarmament: We demand an end to any thinking in the development or use of nuclear weapons – even as means of nuclear deterrence or of political blackmailing. It is unacceptable that there are still hundreds of US atomic bombs in Europe!

We see this task not limited to Europe: we support the call for nuclear weapons free zones in the Middle-East and the Mediterranean as in all other regions of the world. And it is true also for other weapons of mass destruction. The European Left supports the keeping of existing, and the conclusion of new, arms control treaties and their strict implementation. This includes atomic, biological and chemical weapons as well as conventional weapons. All states possessing nuclear weapons must be compelled to disarm. An international accord on the abandonment of the nuclear first strike, and of any potential use of nuclear weapons against countries not possessing these weapons, is extremely necessary.

The fight for peace remains a core element of any alternative to the civilisation model invoked today by neo-liberal policies as a reaction to the global challenges. Europe and the EU can and must play a different role for a world order based on the principal recognition of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, carrying out democratic reforms with respect to the evolution of the last 60 years. The EL stands for an international policy and a world order based on the supremacy of international law against the arbitrary law of the strongest; against military force which is the catastrophic result of five years of pre-emptive and permanent war led by the USA. In this connection there is the need to call into question the strategic relation with NATO and the need to overcome it. We want Europe to be a place of dialogue between the civilizations. This function should not be determined by a policy of rearmament or power, but by an active role in the world to promote processes of peace and total disarmament.

The European Left declines the use of force for conflict solution. We advocate A CFSP based on a multi faceted non-military security concept. Equally necessary is an all-European security system on the base of the OSCE requiring a new relationship between the EU and the CIS, including the Russian Federation.

The European Union has a special obligation for contributing to the peace of the whole continent. This must include active steps to overcome the consequences of the first wars in Europe since WW II in former Yugoslavia, where European countries had been involved. The current development around Kosovo is linked to policies of the European Union is irresponsible under the influence of NATO against the former Yugoslavia. We reject any kind of unilateral negotiations on the future status of Kosovo.

Generally, The European Left insists that “deadlocked” conflicts in Europe should be solved only by political means, grounded in international law. We reject ad-hoc changes of international law and the tendency to shape the international law to a common law type as it is practiced by the US. Indeed, we want the European Union to be an active factor in a multilateral system of international relations, which recognises independence, self-determination and right of own socio-economic development of all countries and peoples in the world. This approach must be a basis for the EU’s relationship with countries in Latin America, in Africa, with China, India and other Asian countries. And of course it must be also the basis for future relations with Turkey, the countries of the Western Balkans and other countries in Europe not belonging to the EU.

The situation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean region is also of great importance for the European Left. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories turns this region into a permanent factor for destabilization and endangers peace world wide. A just solution of this conflict is an urgent need for the whole international community. A real political turnaround must be based on the resumption of new negotiations according to the UN Resolutions. It must be based on solving the major problems: the Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied since 1967, the fate of the refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the guaranteeing of the peaceful co-existence of Israel and an independent and economically viable Palestinian state.

A comprehensive political solution to the Palestinian and Middle-East issues must involve all the regional players concerned, e.g. Lebanon and Syria. The European Left commits to support all the efforts aiming at the unity of the Palestinian and Israeli left forces. Within this framework the need for reopening a dialogue strongly emerges on the Left, to define a common point of view, a common strategy, a common engagement.

For all too long, Europe has needed to overcome its inability to play an active role based on international law, giving a solid prospect of peace to this region. Therefore we as the European Left propose an international meeting which shall include the participation of the principal subjects of the Israeli and the Palestinian Left.

III. For a new social, democratic and ecological model

A. A social Europe

The Europe we want and which we are fighting for is a social Europe, a Europe with labour and rights. It is an alternative to the Europe of deregulation and reduced rights, of social dumping on foreign markets and horizontal conflict between workers and immigrants, East and West.

The European Left Party is fighting for the eradication of unemployment and for new full employment, for quality employment, for a Europe without precariousness. We are committing ourselves to a new European working standard aiming at a shorter working time for everybody, thus enabling women and men to better reconcile employment and personal life, and to a drastic reduction of the unemployment rate. They are imposing upon us a system of social relations completely subordinated to the market and deprived of rights, in the name of competitiveness and flexibility. In opposition to the Green paper of the European Commission, the European Left Party proposes legislation envisaging a convergence of equal rights for all, the full respect of trade-union rights, and collective bargaining.

All over Europe there is a huge wage problem. The difference between the rich and the poor increases everywhere, although in varying degrees per country.

The producers of wealth must be remunerated adequately, as a minimum in accordance with the growth of productivity.

The wage question is not only an economic issue, but a strategic political topic for the Left. The enormous rise of productivity must be redistributed among the workers, in particular those whose wages have lost purchasing power.

All over Europe, women are employed in tasks related to the care of people, the upbringing of children, etc. That allows governments to pass off their responsibility and to question the existing public services. The wages of women are lower than those of men for the same work; women are often under-employed and work part-time. The rate of unemployment is higher among them and at the same time the employment rate is much lower. Women benefit less than men in quantity and quality from the social protection systems: pensions and other allowances of social security.

We demand real equality of men and women concerning employment opportunities, promotions and wages. We demand employment laws, safety regulations in the workplace, real chances of instruction for all and measures enabling us to reconcile work, private and family life. With this in mind a new labour law should be passed, which significantly cuts weekly working hours and drastically limits overtime, so that the available work is shared between more people. Shorter working hours also better reflect modern gender roles, where men and women want to share work and domestic tasks, and should do so for their own benefit.

The European Left Party puts at the top of its action the defence of the public services and the promotion of the public sector. Open debate must be started on the de-privatisation of those public services which have already been privatized.

B. An Ecological Europe for peace and global justice.

Globalized capitalism intensifies the ecological crisis. Its economy is directed towards short-term transfers of stocks at the stock exchange. Environmental technologies are highly developed, but nowhere are the ecological re-organization of production and the ways of life approached in an energetic way. This is even more depressing as we have only some years to decide if it is possible to avoid a world climate disaster. Drastic changes to our way of life will be inevitable.

To prevent the most severe impacts of climate change, action needs to be taken within the next ten years. This is even more valid for Europe. There will be huge investments in the European energy sector in the years to come that will set the course until the middle of the century.

Human-induced climate change is already happening and a further increase of global temperature is already inevitable. Future generations will need to deal with and adjust to the impacts of anthropogenic climatic change. A major ecological issue is the chemical pollution of (that the earth), which drastically affects the biodiversity. The impact of pesticides on human health has now been demonstrated. The European Union has imposed a socially and ecologically non-sustainable agricultural model. Small farmers have been sacrificed in the name of profit of agri-business and food multi-nationals.

It becomes more and more obvious that the catastrophic consequences of the capitalist model of development cause growing threats to the environment. The new generations will have to deal with climatic changes resulting from direct human action in the biosphere. A model based on the obsessional and exclusive search for maximum profit at the lowest social and environmental costs in the shortest possible time can only destroy our planet. Before 2020, three billion women and men may have no access to water, an increasingly rare resource which many try to privatize.

Europe must play a central role in the approval of post-Kyoto, exceeding the given goals. The approval of the new protocol needs a radically alternative model to the capitalist productivist one. It needs equality, starting with the same amount of emissions per capita. It needs cooperation and technology transfer, finding resources for example through a carbon tax. It needs a new role for the

public sector starting with the property of the energy networks and with the promotion of saving and of alternative sources. It needs the construction of an ecological economy and society.

We need not only a policy for the reduction of greenhouse gases, not only a control of the current levels, but also an energy policy aiming at a radical change of energy consumption. This can only be carried out by using economic programming, by investment in renewable resources, and by a policy of economizing and reducing waste, by a production relocalisation and the consequent reduction of unnecessary transports of merchandises.

Water, energy, health, education, transport and communications, all that we define as common goods, rights consolidated by the struggles of the democratic and workers' movements, cornerstone of the European welfare state- must belong to the public domain and be defended from privatisation. We fully agree with the resolutions of the World Water Assembly for Elected Representatives and Citizens (WWACE), which took place last March in Brussels, and we entirely support its demands.

The European Left Party fights for a Europe capable of defending common goods, to start with water and energy from commercialisation and privatisation. One of the major stakes of the political action of the left, in order to change Europe, is to defend public services, to let them develop, to create the conditions for social and democratic control of the most important sectors that are essential to life, and environmental protection.

An economy of peace, with social and democratic rights, an economy that respects the environment – these are the fundamental characteristics of our alternative strategy.

C. A Europe of rights and freedoms

For the Europe we want, we have to create a strategy that introduces a harmonization towards the top, a virtuous dynamic able to open a completely new perspective for the future of social development and cohabitation.

We want to open a new era for fundamental rights.

The European Left Party is fully engaged in the defence of civil and human rights, of freedom of opinion and disagreement, of political and trade union organisation for everybody and in all forms, against emergency laws which were passed in almost all countries in Europe after September 11th.

The emergency laws have started a race for systems which can monitor people all over Europe. For years the governments of the EU member states have refused – despite the demands of the European Parliament - to adopt a framework agreement on data protection. They aim furthermore to collect and exchange personal information about every citizen. New technical possibilities are exchanged within Europe and with third party states, without consideration for data protection or for the consequences.

On the contrary, we demand a European-wide system for the preservation of critical infrastructures, which are directed at the needs of the citizens, as in cases of natural disasters.

The “war on terror” is used to justify the massive restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms. Cruel methods of domination are used with less and less reserve: Guantanamo, the return of torture or – concerning Europe – the case of the CIA flights are clear examples.

We demand the abolition of all the new emergency laws that have been introduced after September 11 in European countries.

We fight against the social segregation of the migrant population by proposing a program based on the recognition of equality as regards political and social rights.

The European Union, currently one of the main recipients of the migratory flows, has still no common policy guaranteeing freedom and equal rights for the migrants. On the contrary, the common immigration policy of the governments is characterized by opening the internal borders and taking more efforts for the reinforcement and shared control of the external borders.

In intergovernmental provisions, all the decisions and agreements were directed towards such an objective. In fact, it is the exclusive function characterizing all the three guiding principles of the immigration policy of the European Union: the Schengen agreement and the convention on the application of this agreement (acquis of Schengen), the Dublin convention “to harmonise” the restrictions concerning the right of asylum and the common regulations regarding visas. Basically, that means the establishment of a list, increasingly extensive, of countries whose citizens are obliged to present visas when entering the European Union. Reinforcement of bodies such as FRONTEX or the support for measures such as the externalization of detention centres for migrants and minors to be repatriated, or the “subcontracting” of repression for closing the ways leading towards Europe, have all the same results.

For this reason we campaign for the abolition of FRONTEX and the system of hunting down Asylum seekers and people in general which hides behind this agency. The EL demands the acceptance of the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and is against the ejection of refugees to third party states who do not recognise the international conventions relating to refugees and accept the deaths of refugees (for example, through abandonment in the desert or in the sea)

In the same way we consider the right to health as a fundamental right for a Europe which wants to be democratic and advanced. The continuous dismantling of the public health system is, on the contrary, proof of a neoliberal policy which tends to guarantee the right to health only to those who have the means to pay for what should be guaranteed to everybody. To reach this, the European Left fights to obtain in all of Europe an equitable financing of the public health structures, access to basic medicine, and the right to physical and mental health.

The right to work must be guaranteed through the abolition of all discrimination on the grounds of religion, sex, sexual orientation, opinion or country of origin.

All people have the right to choose their profession freely. The reduction in working hours will be one of our objectives in all of Europe. We pursue the objective of full employment in indefinite duration. We fight against any form of casualisation, as well as for a decent pension for everybody. Every worker must be protected against dismissal; any arbitrary dismissal must be punished.

The right to collective bargaining, the right to strike and to free trade unions must be again guaranteed in Europe.

The total casualisation of employment, in particular for the young generations, the recognition of a so called individual right allowing the development of one's own capacities for "getting rid of the laces of dependence as a social fate ", urge us to open a big debate among the left on the definition of an instrument which can shield the European people against the blackmail of second-rate, degrading or badly paid work. The continuous enlargement of the European Union has accelerated the spread of this phenomenon. In this sense, the basic income could be a just formula to guarantee a descent existence and protect a young person or a needy one from the blackmail of the market. There is no full citizenship if the family in which one is born defines the perimeter of the possible choices.

The defence of the public services must be inscribed in the heart of our concept of a new Europe.

The public services, in spite of the differences of organisation in the European countries, must not be subject to the rules of competition and search of profit. On the contrary, they have to satisfy fundamental needs. The public services have to be managed democratically and publicly. This concerns health, housing, transport, modern communications, and education. The merchandisation and impoverishment of knowledge, instruction and research has to stop. Instruction must be again considered as a fundamental right for all and accompany the cultural development of everybody. It is necessary to guarantee the complete independence of training and research for students, teachers and researchers. They have to escape the logic of short-term profit. Research has to receive sufficient public resources. This Europe has to assure the necessary public financing for primary and secondary education as well as university training. Research is at the heart of the civil and economic development of all European countries, it is the future of the new generations.

It is necessary to adopt a new conception of economic development, especially where the exploitation of natural resources is concerned. An economic model which respects the environment and is centred on the development of the human capacities is needed. In this regard, important the role Europe could play in the field of energy is very important, leading the world transition from the fossil to the renewable sources.

Natural resources must be considered as a common good of humanity and not be subjected to intellectual property rights and patents. They have to stay outside the field of privatisation and the market; and must be managed by public policies with citizens' participation.

Water is a common good. Access to drinkable water is a fundamental right for everyone. Water access must be guaranteed by public structures.

The soil must also be protected against the multinationals. It is necessary to introduce general rules of use discouraging their practices, because we are against polluting agricultural systems. The production of GMOs must be forbidden. At the same time we demand that the EU defends the moratoria in the other countries of the world.

Our Europe has to respect and guarantee in all domains the principle of equality of the people by respecting their differences and variety. For that reason we recognize as fundamental value the right to gender equality in partnership and free sexual orientation. This is not only to be recognised as an individual right in the private sphere, but also as a choice, guaranteed by the state.

All public institutions have to guarantee the freedom of women and act against all forms of patriarchy. Every woman in every country must be able to decide freely on her body, exercise the right to abortion, to contraception, to chosen maternity and to the techniques of artificial reproduction.

A democratic and open Europe is a Europe that declares the secularism of its public institutions, guarantees the dignity and the freedom of conscience of all citizens, the gender parity in the public institutions of every State, freedom of individual and collective religious practices, freedom to get organized and to express political beliefs freely. The EL recognizes the right to self-determination, and people's right to decide in democratic conditions, including the respect and equal conditions of all the citizens.

Our theses are outlining the main characteristics for another Europe. They recognize a different civilization. We are fighting for peace, democracy, social and political rights that are not separate parameters but components of an alternative development in its totality: of sustainable development.

An economy of peace, of social and democratic rights, of respect for the environment – these are the fundamental characteristics of our alternative strategy.

A deep democratic reconstruction of the European institutions is an indispensable component of our whole strategy. In this field the European Left Party, and our large social and political alliance, take the historical responsibility to change the political balance and the political orientations in Europe.