



**Manifesto  
of PES Local | Socialist Local Representatives in Europe  
for the 2024 European elections**

**Protection through the transition – For strong municipalities in a strong Europe**

The European Union is confronted with many crises these days. We, Socialist local representatives in Europe, stand for a social, democratic, and sustainable Europe. We are committed to the European Union and its fundamental values and we intend to continue and play a constructive and active role in shaping and improving Europe, our common good.

The European Union is navigating through turbulent waters. Following the financial crisis in 2007/2008 and the sovereign debt crisis in 2010, we have had to withstand numerous other emergencies over the last decade: the Russian aggression in Ukraine with the occupation of Crimea and the Donbas oblast in 2014, the influx to Europe of refugees fleeing armed conflicts, the Brexit process (the United Kingdom's exit from the EU) from 2016 to 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. The brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, in total violation of the international law, shook Europe's security paradigm and triggered an energy cost crisis as well as a subsequent inflation rate hike. In addition, the migrants keep on flocking to Europe, prompted by wars, climate change and a lack of prospects in their home countries.

The crises, developments and events of the past decade have set off existential fears among many people in Europe. The Covid-19 crisis and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine have wrought suffering and death. Their impact has also brought a heavy economic and financial burden to bear on Europeans. Many citizens feel that their prosperity, security, and freedom are under threat.

This anxiety is further stirred by disinformation on the internet and social networks, whose aims are to undermine our democracy, divide our society and weaken our European Union. It is primarily extremists and populists who are attacking our democracy and our fundamental values, without themselves being able to offer solutions to the challenges of our time.

There is definitely still room for improvement. But one thing is for sure: our democracy is strong and our economy is resilient. Despite the many pressures and challenges, there are **two pieces of good news**. The first piece of good news is that **the European Union has risen to these challenges** and, together with its member states, has taken measures to ensure health, democracy, and security for its 450 million citizens. Thanks to the targeted and resolute handling of the situation by the European Union and its member states, it has also been possible to keep the economy stable and cushion the social impact of these crises through concerted efforts. This is a major joint achievement. The European Union and the joint action of its member states generated added value for the citizens. The complexity of these crises and challenges would have overwhelmed individual states. A strong European Union with strong municipalities is the best insurance against multiple crises.

All good achievements can be further improved. We must therefore keep on sharpening our common policies and the decision-making processes of the European Union in order to further optimize the implementation of EU policies and bridge gaps. Let us continue to defend democracy and the rule of law unflinchingly and vigorously in Europe.

The second piece of good news is that **the municipal level is a guarantor of stability in times of crisis. Europe's municipalities form the bedrock of the European democracy and society**. They organise many aspects of people's immediate living environment and thus make an important contribution to ensuring economic prosperity, cultural diversity, and social cohesion in Europe. Even in the worst situations recently, they have steadfastly carried out all existential tasks for the good functioning of public life. These notably include the supply of energy and water as well as essential tasks in the health sector and the social services, not forgetting the reception, accommodation, and care of refugees. The municipal level also makes a significant contribution to understanding through municipal partnerships. By granting foreign EU citizens the right to vote at municipal elections, they can provide them with the possibility to exert a direct influence on the organisation of their immediate living environment. This bolsters local democracy and European integration.

Local authorities also largely contribute to the European integration process by implementing a great number of European policies at local level. With their expertise, Europe's cities and municipalities are important stakeholders for tackling the major issues of the future such as climate protection, energy and mobility transition, and digitalisation, as well as for the management of demographic change. Municipalities can adjust flexibly to local and regional characteristics. They design a variety of possible solutions to a variety of challenges. In doing so, they draw on local strengths and people's creativity. Europe needs these decentralised structures. They are valuable drivers of innovation and boost Europe's resilience.

The European Union and nation states must therefore respect local self-government and secure and strengthen the performance of municipalities and their services, administrations, and municipal institutions. Strong and effective municipalities are key to the success of transformative processes; without their help, no bright future nor resilience in Europe can be secured.

The European Committee of the Regions gives local and regional authorities a resounding voice in Europe. Its opportunities for participation must be further strengthened so that the concerns of local and regional authorities are more effectively reflected in the European legislative process. The EU's Urban Agenda (Pact of Amsterdam) with its objectives of "better legislation", "better funding conditions" and "better exchange and development of expertise" is a promising approach to involving cities more closely in the design of EU policies. This path must be consistently pursued. The objectives and principles of the EU's New Leipzig Charter and the EU's Territorial Agenda must also be systematically implemented.

### **The 2024 European elections will be a momentous ballot!**

The European Parliament plays a central part in shaping European policy. The 2024 European elections are also extremely meaningful for local authorities. The majority of the European Union's legal acts have a direct or indirect influence on the organisation of action at municipal level.

The choice is yours! If you want progressive and social policies in Europe, the moment has come for you to vote for social democracy! **The Socialist Local Representatives in Europe support the Party of European Socialist's joint lead candidate Nicolas Schmit. We reaffirm the following positions and political priorities:**

#### **1. For a social Europe – Fair wages, equal opportunities, and affordable housing**

**We are in favour of a social Europe with minimum social standards, good working conditions, and job security, decent minimum wages in all EU member states, and adequate social security for all people living in poverty.** The aim must be to ensure greater social protection for people in Europe and social justice in the internal market. Improving social standards in EU member states with less well-developed social security systems promotes the harmonisation of living conditions within the EU and thus strengthens social and economic cohesion.

Early childhood education must be further expanded if we are to improve equal opportunities. We reassert our goal of ensuring a child-friendly society, a sound work-life balance, better educational opportunities for all, and the recognition of human dignity and personality in old age through education-, family-, and senior citizens-oriented policies. We want to eradicate child poverty in Europe, strengthen child protection and fully implement the European Child Guarantee.

**We, Socialist Local Representatives in Europe, want to create liveable cities and communities. Affordable housing is essential for the social and economic stability of our municipalities.** Obstacles in EU competition law to the promotion of social housing must be removed and more EU funding and new financing instruments made available for housing construction.

#### **2. Adding a social dimension to the transition towards climate-neutral cities and municipalities**

**A climate change policy that ensures sustainable mobility and the restructuring of the energy supply based on renewable energy sources are two priorities.** Local authorities are key players in the fair implementation of the Green Deal. The measures taken by local authorities include, above all, the generation and use of renewable energies, the energy-efficient refurbishment of buildings, and the promotion of green vehicles. This entails mobility concepts that promote traffic avoidance and the shift to more environmentally friendly means of transport, such as local public transport. Climate protection requires cooperation and coordination between the EU and the national, regional, and municipal levels. **We, Socialist Local Representatives in Europe, stand for ensuring that these transition processes remain socially responsible.**

### **3. Harnessing the opportunities of digitalisation for the people**

**We must use the opportunities and potential of digitalisation for progress and prosperity in Europe.** Digitalisation is a decisive factor for the successful modernisation of the economy and administration and a basic prerequisite for a successful socio-ecological transition. Local authorities play an important part in this transformative process. **We must ensure that citizens' data is protected, that the expansion of infrastructure progresses swiftly and that it is made crisis-proof. No one should be left behind in this process, that is why we promote digital literacy among citizens.**

### **4. Good, efficient services of general interest for the people and for a resilient Europe**

**We, Socialist Local Representatives in Europe, are in favour of an equal, non-discriminatory, comprehensive, and cost-effective range of high-quality services of general interest for citizens.** These services, which are mostly provided by local authorities, range from basic water and energy supplies to waste disposal, local public transport, healthcare, social services, and digital infrastructure. Services of general interest are a must if we want to support people's social participation and ensure the proper functioning of public life and the competitiveness of the economy. They represent an essential breeding ground for the social and territorial cohesion of the EU and the creation of jobs. Particular attention must be paid to guaranteeing basic supply to the population, i.e. a minimum level of infrastructure and a minimum supply of goods and services. **Safeguarding and improving services of general interest as well as maintaining and improving infrastructure form part of the bedrock of a resilient Europe based on the principles of solidarity, proximity to citizens and subsidiarity. We will continue to resolutely oppose projects that involve forcing the privatisation of services of general interest!** The outstanding role of services of general interest must therefore always be taken into account when shaping the policies of the European Union.

### **5. Showing solidarity with disadvantaged regions, cities, and municipalities**

Through its cohesion policy, the European Union is responding to the very different regional economic and demographic developments in Europe and the resulting social inequalities. Solidarity-based and sustainable EU support for structurally weak urban neighbourhoods and rural areas bolsters Europe's territorial and social cohesion and showcases the added value of our European Union to its people. With cohesion policy funds, the EU supports, for example, the expansion of infrastructure, facilitates structural change in old industrial regions, the creation of new jobs and training for the unemployed, the redevelopment of urban neighbourhoods or projects in rural areas. In the future, there will still be a need for sustainable EU funding to flow towards structurally weak cities, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. **We are committed to ensuring for Cohesion Policy to remain a fundamental pillar of the EU development model and the core long-term, decentralised investment policy within the post-2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework and to be strengthened. All regions in the EU must remain eligible for funding in the future. To this end, cohesion policy must always be adequately funded, made less bureaucratic and more flexible and involve local and regional partners to a greater extent.**

### **6. Promoting equality for women**

**Equal pay as well as good and fair pensions are important steps towards greater social justice and equality. When designing policies in our cities and municipalities, gender equality must be given greater consideration as relates to specific aspects of everyday life: workplace, housing, urban planning, safety, and public transport, to name but a few.** We continue to campaign for more women involvement in the design of policies in local parliaments. The European Commission and the Council must work towards EU-wide ratification of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which will stand as binding legal norms to combat violence against women.

### **7. For a humanitarian and fair asylum policy and a coordinated immigration policy**

The reception of refugees in need of protection is and remains an imperative of humanity and solidarity. We are in favour of a humanitarian and solidarity-based asylum and refugee policy in the European Union that delivers in practice. The new Common European Asylum System that has just been launched is an important step in this direction. **European cities, municipalities and regions must be supported by the EU in their humanitarian and integration efforts. Local authorities that are prepared to make a special commitment in this area should be granted additional funding. Furthermore, we need a common and coordinated immigration policy that enables a targeted immigration of workers and that is in synch with the needs and demands of our time.**

### **8. Strengthening freedom and democracy - against right-wing extremism and populism**

**We champion an open-minded and tolerant Europe built on values such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities.** Our Europe is characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men - as enshrined in the EU Treaty. Any form of discrimination against minorities, social marginalisation and xenophobia is unacceptable in our community of values. Together, we will oppose hatred and hate speech as well as anti-Semitism and

racism on the internet and on the streets. **Social democrats will never work together with right-wing extremists or form coalitions with them.**

We will work to **promote the European thought**, active European citizenship, and dialogue. We will inform our fellow citizens about the European Union and demonstrate to them its existential importance for peace, freedom, stability, and prosperity. **We unequivocally argue against any reversal of the European unification process or a regression into ultra-nationalism. Together, we must resolutely oppose the ultra-nationalists.**

#### **9. Promoting understanding and European cohesion through encounters and dialogue**

**We are staunch advocates of a greater support lent to municipal partnerships and cross-border and transnational cooperation.** They can indeed provide better support for school exchanges, citizens' meetings, and many other forms of partnership work in Europe and make a very tangible contribution to a better understanding of living conditions in other parts of Europe and to more togetherness in Europe.

#### **10 Showing solidarity with Ukraine**

**We reaffirm that the European Union must continue, with all its might, to stand in solidarity with Ukraine.** It is also important to take concrete measures to support the reconstruction of Ukraine at this point in time. To sustain in time the solidarity shown by our cities and municipalities and their aid to Ukrainian cities (in the form of humanitarian and technical goods and expertise as well as with the reception, accommodation, care, and integration of refugee), it is crucial that the local authorities should receive adequate support from the EU and the Member States for these achievements.

#### **11. Strengthening local development cooperation**

Municipal development cooperation can support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thus make an important European contribution to international solidarity. Development cooperation is also an effective instrument for combating these root causes that force people to leave everything behind. Numerous European municipalities are engaged in development cooperation and thus contribute to improving the livelihoods of people in developing countries. **In order to make an even better use of the potential of local authorities for development cooperation, the European Union and the member states should take greater account of municipalities as actors in effective development cooperation and make further programmes and funds available.**

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