



**Manifesto
of PES Local | Socialist Local Representatives in Europe
for the European Elections 2019**

**We are all Europe:
For a free and fair Europe in solidarity with strong local authorities**

Vienna, 25th of April 2019

The Socialist Local Representatives are committed to a social Europe based on the principles of freedom and democracy, social justice and solidarity. The citizens of Europe have to be at the heart of the European political project. Our main objective of our policy is to bring about decent and equal living conditions in all parts of Europe. No woman, man or child should be left behind. That is what we socialists are fighting for in all EU member states.

We live in turbulent times. Great-Britain, the third largest EU country, is about to leave the EU, trade disputes are looming and armed conflicts are taking place in the Ukraine, only three hours away by plane from Brussels. Many people have lost faith in politics and in the EU and are being seduced by populists and nationalists with seemingly simple solutions to complex challenges.

However, there can be no place for selfish, populist and backward-looking policies in Europe! Especially now, we need to stand strong and fight for our common Europe. We have to confront populism, nationalism and crude anti-European smear campaigns just as firmly as racism, discrimination of minorities and social exclusion.

Europe is not the problem; Europe is and remains the answer to the challenges we are facing. Because there are many issues that we cannot solve only at national or local level, ranging from climate protection to economic and asylum policies and, not least, security and peace policies.

Europe remains, first and foremost, the great peace project. It has guaranteed peace, freedom, stability and prosperity for decades. This is such a given for so many people that we must remind them more insistently of what our continent looked like before 1945, what suffering war, dictatorship and racial fanaticism inflicted on people.

The European elections of 2019 are also extremely important for the local authorities in Europe. This is because the European Union has competences in numerous areas that impact policies and actions at local level in many different ways.

Therefore we need a deep-reaching policy change in Europe. Europe has to become socially fairer, closer to citizens and more democratic. The European elections of 2019 are thus about deciding on a change of course. We, the Socialist Local Representatives of Europe, welcome the PES' programme for the European elections of 2019. The fruits of growth must be distributed fairly; prosperity and social security must be encouraged. With our lead candidate, Frans Timmermans, we want a socialist to head the European Commission and for him to shape European Union policies towards a social Europe.

Socialism continues to be a force at the local level. In many cities and municipalities numerous socialist mayors and local representatives shape local policies based on the needs of our citizens every day. People know that socialism always focuses on social and societal cohesion. We are most competent to find solutions when it comes to fighting poverty and unemployment, creating affordable housing and ensuring social participation and integration. We stand for social and sustainable urban solutions with respect to the major issues of the future such as climate change, the energy turnaround and digitalisation.

The Socialist Local Representatives in Europe reaffirm in the context of the great challenges that we are facing in Europe and the rise of anti-European populist and extreme-right movements:

- Strengthening social cohesion within society is and remains a key objective of socialist policies.
- We, socialists, stand for solidarity between richer and poorer regions so as to create equal living conditions in Europe.
- Solidarity also involves more tax justice. All large companies must contribute fairly and comply with their tax obligations. Profits must be taxed where they are generated.
- Our Europe stands for the values of democracy and for solidarity, openness towards the world, tolerance and dialogue. We stand for a Europe free from discrimination, prejudices and sexism.
- The local authorities and regions of Europe have a prominent role to play in strengthening social and territorial cohesion.
- Sustainable and fair growth in a social Europe can only be achieved with strong municipalities, cities and regions.
- The right to local self-government in Europe must – as provided for by the Lisbon Treaty and by the European Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe – be respected and strengthened. Europe's strength lies in the diversity of its cities and municipalities.
- We stand for a Europe of subsidiarity and closeness to citizens: what can be achieved locally, should be decided and implemented locally.
- A social Europe requires strong local authorities able to act. The cities, municipalities and regions in Europe thus require funding that is appropriate for their tasks and stable over the long-term.
- Participation of local authorities in EU decision-making processes must be further strengthened. Thanks to its knowledge of local conditions and issues and to its expertise, the local level can make a significant contribution to shaping policies that are close to citizens. In this respect, the establishment of the Urban Agenda is a step in the right direction. With the Committee of the Regions, local authorities already have a strong voice in the European legislative process.
- To bring about a necessary renewal of Socialism in Europe, we must take more account of local government when formulating our policies. We have to involve our local representatives even more closely in the governing bodies and programmatic work and the local political organisations in our parties should be strengthened.

Our priorities for a Strong and Social Europe

For a social and progressive Europe, we, the Socialist Local Representatives of Europe, campaign specifically for the following priorities:

1. To ensure high-quality public services

Our policies are always people and not market-centered! We, Socialists, stand for services of general interest to remain a fundamental part of the European social model. Such services range from water supply to energy and waste disposal, from public transport to health care, social services and digital infrastructure. We aim to improve the living conditions of all citizens and to overcome social exclusion by modernising and increasing the efficiency of services of general interest. It is essential to secure basic service provision to the population particularly in structurally weaker rural areas, i.e. equip them with the minimum infrastructure and offer basic goods and services.

2. Affordable Housing for All

A socialist urban and housing policy aims to promote social cohesion and social mixing. Affordable housing is essential for the social and economic stability of our cities and municipalities. Building needs to be strengthened in regions with housing shortages. We advocate that all obstacles in EU competition law to promoting the construction of social housing be removed, the EU make available more funding and new financial instruments for housing construction, and measures be taken to get to grips with the phenomenon of private touristic short-term lets in our cities.

3. For a Social Europe with strong Cities and Municipalities

In many places in Europe the gap between rich and poor has further widened over the last decade. The level of youth unemployment and the number of people, who live in poverty is totally unacceptable for one of the richest parts of the world. We advocate fair wages and good working conditions everywhere in Europe. A social Europe involves all people in Europe having an income which allows them to live in dignity. In a social Europe, we also

need minimum social protection to guard against poverty. To fight unemployment, it is important that flanking measures be taken at local level, in parallel to policies at national and European level. We thus appeal to the member states and the EU to provide cities and municipalities with the relevant legal framework conditions and financial means.

4. For sustainable and solidarity-based EU funding of structurally weak city districts and rural areas

The poorer and more disadvantaged regions and cities need the solidarity of the European family. Through cohesion policy funds, the EU supports, for example, infrastructure expansion, structural change in former industrial regions, new job creation and qualifications for the unemployed, the refurbishment of city districts or projects in rural areas. We will continue to campaign for sustainable EU financing for structurally weak cities, urban districts and rural areas! We advocate a cohesion policy under which basically all EU regions continue to be eligible and an adequately funded, less bureaucratic and more flexible cohesion policy, which involves local and regional partners more closely.

5. For a fair common immigration, migration and asylum policy in Europe

The need for labour is going to increase over the coming years due to demographic change. The successful integration of immigrants provides the opportunity of enriching our societies and securing our long-term economic development. Taking in refugees in need of protection is an imperative of humanity and solidarity. Local authorities play a significant role when it comes to caring for and housing refugees locally and to integrating refugees and immigrants who stay permanently in the EU. We campaign for the EU to support the integration policies and humanitarian commitment of cities and municipalities.

6. To advance gender equality

Gender equality must be taken into account when defining local policies, when it comes to the concrete aspects of daily life, like the labour market, housing, security or public transport. In addition, gender equality should be further promoted in local administrations and in the management of council-owned companies. We also commit ourselves to making sure that more women take part in politics in the local and regional parliaments across Europe.

7. To promote climate protection and energy transition in local authorities

Local authorities are important players when it comes to climate protection and energy transition. We will continue to push for energy-efficient building refurbishments, the generation and use of renewable energies, as well as sustainable housing and transport concepts in our cities and municipalities. When defining policies and measures to fight climate change, the cooperation and coordination between the EU and national, regional and local levels are of paramount importance. The Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, which over 7,500 local authorities in the EU have already joined, is an excellent initiative in the fight against climate change.

8. Dialogue and communication through local partnerships

Town twinnings bring citizens from different countries together through cross-border encounters and exchange measures and thus promote dialogue and Europe growing together. We, socialists, campaign for municipal cooperation and partnerships receiving more support.

9. To strengthen local development cooperation

As socialists we commit ourselves to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. The living conditions of people in developing countries and the environmental, economic and social resources should be preserved and improved for all people and generations. Local partnerships can be a huge contribution in this sense.

10. To stand up for our common Europe

The Socialist Local Representatives are committed to European integration and the European Union. We want to actively contribute to maintaining and strengthening our common Europe and a lively local democracy. We will, also in future, promote European thinking, active union citizenship and dialogue, and inform our fellow citizens about the European Union and point out its existential importance for peace, freedom, stability and prosperity.