

EUROPEANISING OUR NATIONAL PARTIES

Working group*

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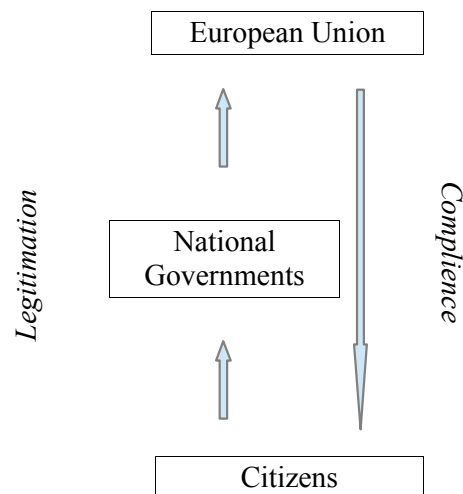
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Our socialist and social democratic parties present a paradox in that they are the first to proclaim their desire to see a political Europe – yet Europe is conspicuously absent from their internal operations and their political platforms. National parties are political Europe's missing link.

The goal of this text is to describe the current extremely low level of Europeanisation in our political parties so that more concrete measures for change can later be elaborated.

The politicisation of Europe, that is to say the stabilisation of a European public space and of the electorate, has become an answer repeatedly brandished by pro-European forces over the last decade, notably on the Left but also by academics, as the means through which to respond to the democratic deficit of the European Union (EU). The European election in 2014 is an interesting step forward in this regard as European political parties, in a move towards the parliamentarisation of the EU, nominated specific candidates for the presidency of the European Commission. That being said, European elections remain overshadowed by national elections and often see extremist groups obtaining particularly high scores.

Moreover, the EU's presence in the daily lives of its citizens, notably in light of the crisis, is made increasingly visible and tangible for them and thus directly links them to Brussels. The inverse relationship, that of the legitimisation of the EU by the people, is not direct but instead filtered through the national level. Indeed, citizens continue to understand and invest in important political issues through the prism of national politics – during presidential or legislative elections for example – whereas several essential political mandates stem from the European level. This fundamental asymmetry between, on the one hand, the *indirect* and bottom-up democratic legitimisation of the EU, based on national governments which themselves have to be elected and, on the other hand, a *direct* top-down relationship whereby citizens respect European laws, has disturbed the classic democratic cycle of legitimisation between the governors and the governed and between the election and the accountability of political leaders.



How do we escape this democratic impasse? We maintain that an essential part of the answer involves national political parties. Within the EU, political parties represent one of the least integrated aspects of the system and are the most susceptible to being influenced by national and local interests. European political parties resemble more confederations of national parties than anything else. They still lack the power to nominate candidates in European elections and their platforms are the fruit of difficult compromises – often ending up at the lowest common denominator – between national parties with heterogeneous political cultures.

National political parties themselves are not very Europeanised in their rhetoric or in their internal organisation. Yet, the absence of truly Europeanised national parties makes it difficult for members, and the electorate of national political parties more generally, to hold European MEPs and governments accountable when they are in power. For reasons of internal and/or electoral stability, but also due to statutory and organisational unsuitability, national parties tend to depoliticise the European question internally as well as in their platform, thus contributing to the marginalisation of European elections and preventing any real politicisation of Europe. The problem of the democratic legitimacy of European questions is equally found within national parties.¹ But it is only national political parties that are capable of giving Europe – by acting as a bridge between the European party and local chapters of national parties, or between those elected and the party faithful – local

1. For more on this subject, see the works of the American political scientist, Robert Ladrech. Cf. “National political parties and European governance: the consequences of ‘missing in action,’” *West European Politics*, 30 (5), 2007, p. 945-960; “Party Change and Europeanisation: Elements of an Integrated Approach,” *West European Politics*, 35 (3), 2012, 574-588.

and citizen level representation. In a nutshell, by no longer being a glass ceiling between national and European politics.

The Europeanisation of national political parties is essential for the European Left for two reasons. Firstly, as a pro-European force that will render the European project, whose democratic deficit is unsustainable in the long run and fuels Euroscepticism, more durable. But also because it will act as a force for progress, one that requires a political Europe to implement its programme of social transformation.

The liberals and the conservatives can adapt to a largely depoliticized Europe as this is synonymous with an ordoliberal Europe. On the other hand, the socialists and social democrats need a political Europe to be able to realise their vision of society at a European level and to establish a common European programme championed by the Party of European Socialists (PES) as well as the national socialist and social democratic parties. For this to happen they need to build a political European space, first within the European Left before later expanding it to all of the public sphere, in order to contrast the liberal-conservative vision with that of the social democratic one. Building and championing a political alternative at a European level, essentially to “reorient Europe,” necessitates the mobilisation and the integration of the different levels of the European Left – from the continental to the local by way of the national. The Europeanisation of the socialist and social democratic parties is, in this respect, a necessary step in realising this bigger picture.

Europe is not inherently neoliberal by nature, but the expanded political battlefield it offers means that progressive parties will need to integrate a European dimension in order to succeed in their goal of social transformation.

Summary of propositions

- Make the PES a more engaged and representative party.
 - ◆ Allow PES members to participate in the drafting of texts for the PES Congresses.
 - ◆ Directly elect PES members as delegates to the PES Congress and to the bodies of the PES.
 - ◆ Campaign at all levels for a PES primary to elect the next candidate for the presidency of the European Commission.

- Reinforce the means of action of the PES and improve the coordination of political stances and campaigns at a European level:
 - ◆ Reinforce the resources available to the PES on thematic issues.

- ◆ Reinforce coordination to facilitate the elaboration of common stances.
- ◆ Identify possible pan-European campaigns that have the potential to mobilize large numbers of voters across Europe.
- ◆ Organise exchanges between member parties of the PES.

- Improve cooperation at a local level:
 - ◆ Promote the concept of federal and regional commissions for Europe.
 - ◆ Create transnational working groups in cities where sister parties are present and link these groups in a larger network.
 - ◆ Further engage sister parties in local and national elections.
 - ◆ Conversely, use the resources of “local” parties to help sister parties during their national campaigns.

- Reinforce exchanges and information sharing between parties and activists.
 - ◆ Add a section on Europe in official party newsletters and on their websites, as well an “election watch” with updates from other member parties of the PES.
 - ◆ Mobilise foreign residents when there’s an election occurring in their country of origin.
 - ◆ Create a directory of the permanent staff members from each national party and of the PES.

This study will first outline a table comparing the various levels of Europeanisation of the socialist and social democratic parties of the EU and, secondly, it will elaborate a series of statutory, organisational and communication propositions aimed at significantly strengthening this process of Europeanisation.

The (very) low level of Europeanisation of socialist and social democratic parties

In order to get an approximate overview of the level of Europeanisation of socialist and social democratic parties in the EU, we asked the representatives of 9 parties to fill out a table of 16 criteria grouped in 4 large categories (annexe 2): 1) the institutional and political resources dedicated to Europe, 2) ties with the PES, 3) the membership system and 4) the availability of information on Europe, the PES and sister parties.

This table makes it very clear that the degree of Europeanisation of the partisan system in Europe is low or very low. Nevertheless, this varies between parties – especially concerning the political weight of European deputies within the party, the presence of PES City

Groups and the existence of a national secretary or other staff member responsible for Europe. As for the rest, the quasi-absence of Europeanisation is striking, notably when it comes to organisational elements (the absence of an independent division/department for Europe, the dearth of active national commissions for Europe and the lack of a territorial network of European experts), membership (no possibility to join the PES or sister parties while signing up to a national party) and communication (the almost total lack of information from the PES). National parties accord little importance to the European dimension: there is very little in-depth debate on European issues and very few organisational or informational resources earmarked for building and maintaining relationships with the PES or sister parties.

This low level of Europeanisation among national parties stands in contrast with the increasing Europeanisation of central and local administrations – even given the general lack of a full-fledged Minister of European Affairs. This confirms our initial argument that national parties are the missing link for a political Europe. In addition to the political weakness of the European parties, it is the absence of a direct link between the local and the European, by way of the national, that seems to be the problem. There will not be a political Europe, that is to say a Europe that allows the implementation of a leftist reform programme, without a truly integrated partisan European system.

Towards a structural reform of the relationship between national parties and the Party of European Socialists

What are the difficulties of consolidating a 'European party' today?

A political party normally organizes itself around three different pillars: 1) the elaboration of a political platform, or an agenda for social change for progressive parties, 2) elections and 3) governance. At the European level these three objectives are difficult to nail down, or at least more difficult than at the national level.

First of all, in terms of a political platform, it must be noted that the mission of constructing a pan-European consensus, even within a political group, remains a complicated task that requires teams with comparative skills and that are capable of mobilising a European experience – a combination that is especially rare. This is a task that all too often ends up at the lowest common denominator, as illustrated by the manifestos of European parties that remain mere declarations of intent. This is counterproductive as it gives the voters the impression that they are merely non-binding rhetorical documents and are therefore not applicable.

Next is the question of elections: the European elections remain overshadowed by national ones and the media frenzy on domestic issues that accompanies them. The absence of a pan-European electoral system, and constituencies that simply reproduce national territories, favours an amalgam between a 'national vote', 'national parties' and a 'European

vote'. If the format of the election were uniform, then the psychological rational, the issues debated and the candidates would certainly be very similar.

Finally, the issue of political offices at the European level: a process that is still in its nascent stages, 2014 was the first year during which European political parties presented a common candidate for the European elections. Though it only represents a minor structural change, it is an innovative initiative nonetheless: Schulz, Juncker, Verhofstadt, Keller and Tsipras were accompanied by neither a 'list' nor a 'team' capable of acting together within Community institutions. The dominant rational that prevailed for 60 years in Europe was that of the distribution of posts in accordance with quotas, multi-representativeness and legitimacy through expertise. A rational that is radically different from what is normally found at the national level, based as it is on the idea of electoral victories being the key to political renewal. A change of this magnitude will not happen in the near future in the EU.

These three examples illustrate a unique specificity of today's top-down European parties, anchored as they are in a rationale that is more institutional and less grounded in daily realities. An analysis of these limits could also provide an interesting point of view for national parties – especially considering the question of resources. Why would national parties share their resources when they themselves struggle to maintain financial stability? Questions could equally be asked in relation to the symbolic loss of autonomy of national parties or concerning the proximity to local issues required for political parties to be most useful and efficient in serving their constituents.

Towards a change of paradigm?

The evolution of Europe needs to be accompanied by the political evolution of national political parties. The line of thought that calls for a decline in intergovernmental decision-making, and instead paves the way for politicisation, is perfectly applicable to national political parties. Either they accept a progressive integration and affiliation within a continental structure, where decisions are made more and more through the construction of majorities, or they remain national actors anchored in a system of consensus among 28 states that breaks down as soon as there are significant differences. In this sense, national political parties find themselves today at a crossroads.

On the one hand, they find themselves faced with the danger of exercising power within boundaries that are no longer sufficient for defending socialist and social democratic interests. Employment, for example, in certain southern European Member States is now indissociable from public policies put in place in other Member States, in particular those in the north, that are likely to increase demand. An example can be produced for each one of the priorities on the progressive agenda: public health (and the new challenge posed by 'medical tourism'), universal public education (and the myriad different visions within

each socialist party of which skills to focus on in a digitalised and mechanized world), equality (and the different levels of representation of women in national parliaments), etc.

This structural change will occur when national parties accept a diminution of their institutional and communicational power in exchange for an increased capacity for action. To restate an old adage from one of the fathers of European social democracy, Jacques Delors, to move towards Europe is a way to regain the sovereignty that states lost through globalisation. National socialist and social democratic parties are no exception and will, in all likelihood, be confronted with the dilemma posed by J. Delors.

On the other hand, national parties and the PES need to evaluate the advantages of integration on its own merits. For example, the question of resources could be analysed from a rationalist economic perspective, in an environment of scarce resources – finances in particular. What economies of scale could be achieved with European political parties? For small and medium sized countries, membership in a continental political group would improve lucidity, prestige and the political capacity for action. Finally, concerning the need for proximity, it could be useful to share jurisdiction in accordance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity, as is done today in the EU. What public policies need to be decided and discussed at the national level by national parties? What other public policies could prove interesting to address in a comprehensive and comparative approach at the European level?

Proposals

What the PES can do:

- Extend the practise of the non-binding vote (a vote with no legal or statutory power) currently used by the Young European Socialists (YES) to find consensus and common positions between the different party members.
- Put forward the idea of electing European MEPs in a single Europe-wide constituency with one electoral register per political group.
- Create new ways to affiliate with the PES (without passing through the ‘national framework’) and consolidate existing structures so that they can be managed and mobilized directly by leaders on a pan-European level.

What national parties can do:

- Get a hold of PES texts earlier in the drafting process in order to cross-reference them with changes being made in different national parties.
- Elect or choose candidates for the electoral ticket to lead each national party, composed of a leader and a vice president in charge of Europe – whose responsibility would be to coordinate with other socialist and social democratic parties as well as the PES.

These recommendations are aimed at addressing three challenges: 1) making Europe an autonomous and separate subject within national party structures; 2) developing and consolidating ties between the PES and national parties and; finally, 3) creating transnational links between members who are currently grouped by nation.

Progressive parties in Europe have succeeded in establishing *contact*, they are now trying to *understand* the roles they each play, and they will eventually have to reflect on how to *integrate* their respective structures. Contact, comprehension and integration, is this the cycle hiding behind the Europeanisation of political parties in Europe?

Working towards better supranational coordination

The European dimension needs to be present in national political parties at all levels. Europe is not superimposed on top of national issues but is instead a salient socialist issue onto itself.

Unfortunately there are very few comparative studies undertaken between European countries and even fewer done between different European parties – and far too little cooperation between the latter. Nevertheless, the combined intellectual capacity of the entire PES group in Europe largely surpasses what could be mustered individually. Moreover, with the progressive political and economic integration of Europe, especially since the beginning of the economic crisis, many questions are now posed at a European as opposed to a national level. . Youth employment is both an obvious example and a question that we, as parties and party members on the centre-left, must urgently tackle at the European level and not individually.

Beyond the moments of European democracy embodied in the European elections, the constituent parties of the PES need to help one another and improve cooperation on all the questions, elections and issues they are facing. It is therefore necessary to organise pan-European campaigns on questions such as the transatlantic trade agreement, to help sister parties with their local and national electoral campaigns and to foster more avenues of communication through which common positions can be developed.

Sister parties of the PES here in Paris have decided to elaborate a certain number of proposals that target coordination at the European level and that support the PES in all of our territories, and on all levels:

- **Make the PES a more engaged and representative party.** To support the socialist and social democratic groups at the European level, and in order to facilitate cooperation between our different parties, it is necessary to develop a sense of belonging to the PES This cannot be achieved unless members are actually represented in the decision-making process of the PES and can vote for the party's candidate for the presidency of the Commission:

- ◆ **Allow PES members to participate in the drafting of texts for the PES Congress.**
 - ◆ **Directly elect delegates to the PES Congress and representatives to PES bodies from among party members.**
 - ◆ **Campaign at all levels for a PES primary to be held in order to elect the next candidate for the presidency of the European Commission.** Having a single candidate in 2014 was useful but we could have mobilized even more people had we held a Europe-wide primary.
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- **Reinforce the capacity to act of the PES in order to better coordinate political positions and campaigns at the European level.** The PES also needs more resources to coordinate the development of common positions and the organisation of pan-European campaigns so that it can present a real alternative at the European level:
 - ◆ **A reinforcement of the means available to the PES on thematic questions.** The PES, the “secretariat” of the centre-Left in Europe, has very few permanent staff members who work on thematic questions which, in turn, prevents it from being a driving force or a medium of coordination. The PES has a secretariat composed of 33 permanent staff with a budget of 4.6 million euros. This stands in stark contrast with the S&D group which has approximately 250 permanent staff members. The PES needs to make use of these assets as well as those of their think-tank, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), which has 11 permanent staff. It is clear, however, that national parties need to make more resources available for the PES – for example, by lending them staff.
 - ◆ **A stronger collaboration during the development of common political positions.** Be it through the PES or another body, there needs to be not only a coordination of general policies in terms of European politics, but also PES thematic commissions that allow national thematic secretaries (energy, agriculture, social policies, etc.) to meet regularly in order to find points of consensus and to share best practices.
 - ◆ **The identification of potential pan-European campaigns with the potential to mobilize large numbers of voters across Europe.** This point flows naturally from the others. By carefully studying the points of convergence and divergence, we can find areas of agreement where we can mobilize the entirety of our members and supporters – examples being the issues of youth unemployment or the transatlantic trade agreement. There will be a need for significant moments of European mobilisation in order to foster the spirit of European social democracy. The campaign for a tax on financial transactions, in which over 1,000 national and European parliamentarians participated, met with relative success.
 - ◆ **The exchange of permanent staff between the member parties of the PES.** It is obvious that exchanges of permanent staff between, for

example, the PS and the SPD, would create new informal links but also shape the way in which politics is conceived at the national level.

- **Improve cooperation at the local level.** Politics is first and foremost at the local. The European project is extremely salient at the *local* level – and this is especially true for the European socialists and social democrats. While there are already positive developments worth noting, such as the creation of the PES City Groups, we need to both widen and deepen our work in communities across Europe. This is achieved through a closer cooperation between members of local socialist or social democratic parties and members of sister parties elsewhere in Europe (for example, between the Parisian PS and the Parisian chapters of the SPD, Labour, *Partito Democratico*, etc.):
 - ♦ **Promote the concept of federal and regional commissions for Europe at the federal and departmental levels.** Some of the regional or federal sections of our parties already benefit from a European secretary. We need to systematize this practice. It is in doing so that we can encourage debate on European issues among local members.
 - ♦ **Create transnational working groups in cities where sister parties are present and link these groups in a larger network.** Conceptualizing the European Left cannot be accomplished by citizens of just one Member State. On the contrary, everything depends on being able to conceptualize the European Left among all left-leaning Europeans
 - ♦ **Get sister parties more engaged in local and national elections.** During local elections, such as the municipal elections in France, the support of sister parties (the Portuguese PS, SPD, Labour) can be decisive if they manage to mobilise their local communities. This would require integrating representatives from sister parties in local campaign committees so that a link can be established between the French PS (for example) and Portuguese, Italian and Swedish citizens residing in France. Their actions can take the form of distributing flyers within communities, writing columns, etc.²
 - ♦ **Use the resources of ‘local’ parties to help sister parties during their national campaigns.** Voters living abroad are often an important faction during national elections. Thanks to the already existing ties between the European parties, this would entail using financial and logistical resources, within the limit of the law, to mobilise (for example) Italians living in France during the Italian legislative elections. This could be done through targeted media campaigns or logistical support *inter alia* – the European centre-left could even campaign in national elections together.

2. The Italian *Partito Democratico* is an example. During the municipal elections of 2014 in Paris, the Parisian division of the Italian centre-left party mobilised its voters in key neighbourhoods of the city. A meeting was thus organised for the beginning of March 2014 between the candidate for the mayoral race in the 17th *arrondissement* (Mrs. Baratti-Elbaz, of Italian descent) and Italians living in that neighbourhood. Italian candidates were also present, some of whom were on Anne Hidalgo’s electoral register – “*Paris qui ose*” – and in other communities of Ile-de-France.

To help sister parties is to help oneself

Different voting systems for those living abroad

Europe is not just the European elections. Europe decides and takes shape at all levels. Yet the right to vote is not the same for all citizens of the EU. While expatriates in certain European states are represented in their national parliaments, others do not enjoy this right to vote.

Traditionally, centre-left parties have been reticent to tackle this problem as they believed that citizens living outside of their host country were often wealthier and more likely to vote for the Right. Today however, in an era of increasing European mobility fueled by the crisis, more and more young people are living outside of their country of origin. These young people tend to gravitate towards the Left and thus are a natural demographic to focus on. Therefore it falls to us to encourage, as much as possible, the expansion of the right to vote to all Europeans, and to develop foreign branches of the PES everywhere in Europe.

We took inventory of the procedures and laws surrounding the right to vote in European and national elections. Here are the results:

The smaller countries of the EU (with a population of less than 10 million)

Expatriates are allowed to vote in 12 of the 16 small countries of the EU (Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland and Malta being the exceptions). In the 12 countries where it is allowed, expatriates can vote in the last constituency in which they lived, their parliaments not having reserved a seat for those living abroad (unlike the French and Italian parliaments).

It is therefore difficult to track the number of expatriates who are voting and it is only recently, given the recurrent fragility of the latest parliamentary elections, that there has been any interest in compiling these statistics. For example, one in ten Swedes lives abroad. Sweden only having 9.5 million inhabitants, the total number of people concerned remains small; however, given the slim majorities in the last elections, a small number of voters can mean the difference between who is elected and who is not. This could also be the case in other countries.

Moreover, for these countries that only represent a small percentage of the MEPs sitting in the European Parliament, the difficulty of obtaining results on the European

level is even more complex than in larger countries as, despite the increasing success of socialist and social democratic parties in these countries, they cannot change the direction of European politics all by themselves. It is for this reason that parties must work together and share their resources. The Nordic countries are an excellent example, provided that this leads to a real consensus on the principle issues at stake and to concrete agreements on the proposals presented by PES deputies elected to the European Parliament.

The larger countries of the EU (with a population of over 10 million people)

The question of democracy in Europe extends to the diverse voting procedures of European citizens as they exercise their freedom of movement within the EU. Some countries even have seats specifically dedicated to their diaspora, others have their votes tied to the last constituency where they voted (such as Germany and the United Kingdom where they even further limit the right to vote within a certain time period) whereas others do not allow their expatriates to vote at all. The right to vote in the European elections is equally as unequal. We have analysed the large European countries one by one in order to demonstrate how not all Europeans are represented in the same way (please see the Annexes).

Reinforce exchanges and information sharing between parties and party members

If the construction of an economic Europe ended with the creation of the euro and the European Central Bank (ECB), the construction of a political Europe requires, on the one hand, institutions with more democratic legitimacy and, on the other, European political parties that, in aggregating the information and contributions provided by members and member parties across Europe, know how to elaborate a truly European project that takes into account the political, economic and social situation in Europe. Recent developments demonstrate the enormous political differences between the positions of northern and southern European member parties of the PES vis-à-vis austerity measures. This is why it is absolutely essential to exchange information and to advocate for the exchange of ideas and experiences within the same political camp – that of the European socialists and social democrats.

For this to happen, it is first necessary to **improve the circulation of information and updates on what is happening in Europe and on the progress made by other socialist and social democratic parties in different countries in the EU**. This is an essential starting point.

The information found in the news today is principally that of “mass media” (newspapers, television and websites) that look strictly at what is happening and do not provide a true political analysis of these events or offer any solutions. Additionally, priority is given to information concerning the larger countries which results in a neglect of what is happening in the ‘small countries’.

For us, it is not sufficient to permit the creation and the political participation of members in a European political party, such as the PES: it is recommended that we first increase the knowledge of the issues facing other national parties and, at the same time, share previous experiences in order to facilitate the elaboration of centralised political propositions at the level of the EU. The struggles of the socialists in Hungary for freedom of the press; for example, need to be known everywhere in Europe so that we can support and formulate common proposals based on their experience.

The repercussions of the political and economic decisions made by the European Parliament and Commission on the lives of citizens, especially during this time of crisis, are striking: these decisions are often difficult to understand, and the frequency of summits and meetings in Brussels is such that citizens struggle to understand what is at stake, paving the way towards a total rejection of Europe.

It is therefore necessary to talk about Europe in a much more consistent manner, and not only during European elections, in order to explain both the political mechanisms and the issues at hand. It is important to promote discussion on Europe and the interaction between different national political realities, not only during campaigns for the European Parliament, but continuously so that political proposals can be elaborated and so that members are engaged in the political activities of the PES, and of the S&D parliamentary group, all throughout the decision-making and voting process in the Parliament.

For this to happen there needs to be a source of information on Europe that is centered on the political reforms proposed by the progressive European Left and conveyed via national parties in order to facilitate comprehension, by both the general public and our members, of the institutional mechanisms, political decisions and the formulation of proposals and tools needed for the political reorientation we seek.

The measures we propose:

- It would be beneficial to organise commissions for Europe in the federations and regions of all the constituent national parties of the PES as well as meetings, information sessions, debates, updates on the work of the S&D parliamentary group and discussions on the choices made by the Commission.
- To get members more engaged in European subjects, national parties need to include **a section on Europe on their official websites and in their newsletters** (like the *Hebdo* of the French Socialist Party), that talks about both the activities of the PES and the S&D group at the level of the EU, and **an election watch on the national elections of other member parties of the PES**.
- One way members of national parties should be engaged at the European level is by encouraging them to **mobilise expatriates during voting in their country of origin**, not only to try and win their vote, but also to highlight the European issues at stake in each country.
- **A directory of permanent staff members in each national political party and the PES** should be established, the goal being to facilitate access to all relevant parties' members in each country. Thus, for example, the expert on the economy in the Portuguese PS could advise others on the consequences of austerity on their country.

It is possible that the measures proposed above (especially the last one) would require more resources. Nevertheless, we consider that this network of expertise and information

What are the informational tools used by your party to talk about Europe?

In order to achieve this, we began by looking at two large European social democratic parties: the Italian PD and the German SPD.

For the PD, there is no purpose-built tool to spread information about Europe within the party. The information comes either directly from websites and/or personal profiles of MEPs (notably Gianni Pittella, President of the S&D group in the European Parliament), or press reviews, but there is no information sent directly to members or a section of the website specifically dedicated to this. Nonetheless there are small exceptions, such as the Facebook page of the delegation of European Parliamentarians of the PD (it does not have a huge following) and the European Summer School organised by the chapter of the PD in Brussels before the European elections (although it was not officially sanctioned and was organized on an ad hoc basis). It must also be noted that the PD only joined the PES relatively recently, and that the network of City Groups in Italian cities is still under construction. Additionally, the continued absence of a journal affiliated with the party (the two journals, "Unit " and "Europa")

stopped publishing six months ago) makes it more difficult to exchange information. Nonetheless Europe, in particular due to the crisis, remains a very important economic and political question for Italy.

Regarding the SPD, they also do not have a dedicated means of distributing information. Like the PD, they do not have a Europe section on their website (unbelievable as it may seem). There is, naturally, a website for the parliamentary group of the SPD in the European Parliament that sends out newsletters, but you need to sign up for it separately and therefore must actively be sought. Information on Europe is only available if you ask for it. The Party's journal, published monthly, is very different from the *Hebdo* of the French Socialist Party. It is a real journal with numerous subjects, not necessarily related to the party, but with salient societal themes. There can be a European subject but it is by no means systematically present.

Conclusion: the SPD does not provide information on Europe unless its members actively seek it out. Issues of domestic policy often have a European dimension but this is almost accidental. The party is not trying to highlight the work of its Euro-deputies or the work of the Commission which, of course, is not always social democratic in nature. And, as the information for members is often more promotional than informative, the newsletters often deal with subjects that are flattering for the party, such as the passing of bills with a strong social democratic influence. Given the weakness of the informational tools concerning Europe available to members, there are several ways in which they can be improved. Firstly, the creation of a communication platform where, on the one hand, MEPs could post information and inform others on their work while, on the other, members could upload information on local issues specific to each country. Everyone who joins one of the constituent members of the PES should automatically be signed up to this tool without having to actively seek it out. This tool needs to be available in all languages of the EU. Moreover, parties should engage their audiences through the most popular tools available (party websites, Twitter accounts, but also through newspapers) and dedicate a space specifically for European news where the party can diffuse information on Europe and sister parties, notably in case of major events (for example a presidential or legislative election, a security crisis or a local issue with wider ramifications). Finally, the creation of groups that bring together members from different sister parties in major European cities would foster information exchanges and could play a fundamental role, both as part of the newly proposed communication tool, and by ensuring the quality of the information diffused by existing means.

will only enrich our reflections and our actions and would ultimately be a step in the right direction. It is now a question of how parties decide to reallocate their resources.

Currently, we are preparing an evaluation of the existing tools used to inform and mobilise in different national parties and, if need be, to create or develop them.

ANNEXE 1

The different rules surrounding the right to vote while living abroad

Belgium

All Belgians living abroad must vote (mandatory voting) in the legislative and European elections. Belgians are considered as being registered in the last commune where they lived. There are no seats reserved for Belgians abroad.

Czech Republic

Czechs living abroad have the right to vote in legislative elections but do not have separate representation.

France

All French citizens living abroad can vote in the presidential, legislative and European elections. Since 2012 there are 11 seats in the National Assembly reserved for expatriates. French citizens abroad are also represented in other ways in the Republic, through the 443 consular advisors elected in 130 constituencies, the 90 consular advisors who are members of the Assembly of French Citizens Abroad and the 12 Senators who are indirectly elected by them. Moreover, French citizens living overseas are represented in the European Parliament by the deputies from the constituencies of Ile-de-France and French citizens living outside of France.

Germany

All Germans who have been living abroad for less than 25 years have the right to vote in legislative and European elections as long as they have lived in Germany for at least 3 months after the age of 14. Any German who has lived for more than 25 years abroad can retain their right to vote on the condition that they can demonstrate personal links with Germany. There are no seats reserved for Germans living abroad in the Bundestag.

Greece

Greeks living abroad have the right to vote but must do so in Greece. There is no system allowing voting from Greek consulates abroad. The campaign “#icannotvote” was launched for the 2015 legislative elections.

Italy

Since 2001, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Senate have reserved 12 and 6 seats for Italians living abroad respectively. On the other hand, Italian expatriates will no longer have the right to vote in Italian constituencies for the European parliament from 2019 onwards.

Netherlands

Dutch citizens living abroad can vote in legislative and European elections. Given that the lower chamber of the Netherlands (the *Tweede Kamer*) elects 150 deputies across a single national constituency in a fully proportional system, there is no special representation for Dutch expats.

Poland

Polish expatriates can vote in legislative and European elections.

Portugal

The Assembly of the Republic reserves four seats for Portuguese citizens living abroad (two seats for those in Europe and two for the rest of the world).

Romania

The many votes cast by Romanians living overseas are often critical in deciding elections, as was the case with the presidential election in 2014 where the Right won due to votes from the diaspora.

Romania has seats reserved in their parliament for expatriates. Romanians can also choose to vote in the European elections in Romania instead of their country of residence.

Spain

Spaniards living abroad have the right to vote in legislative and European elections by mail or at their consulates. They have no overseas constituencies reserved for their expatriates.

United Kingdom

All British citizens who have resided in the United Kingdom within the last 15 years can vote in the legislative elections. This limited right to vote allows expatriates who left their country relatively recently to continue to engage actively with the politics in the country, all the while excluding those who have lived abroad for too long and who have no intention of returning to live in the United Kingdom. This right to vote is insufficient in the eyes of Labour International, a federation of Labour supporters abroad and the British equivalent of the Federation of French Living Overseas associated with the Socialist Party. The national Labour Party has not officially stated this position.

		Political and institutional resources dedicated to Europe					Ties with the PES			Membership			Availability of information on Europe, the PES and sister parties				
		National secretary for Europe	Seperate European division with one or more permanent staff	Active national commission for Europe	Active local/federal commissions	Political weight of European deputies within the party	Election of national delegates to the PES Congress	Permanent staff member in charge of relations with the PES	City groups PES	Possibility of becoming a PES member when becoming a member of the national party	Possibility of joining sister parties when joining the national party	Possibility of joining other sister parties	Possibility of subscribing to the PES newsletter when joining the national party	Possibility of subscribing to the newsletters of sister parties when joining the national party	References to EU news	References to news concerning the PES	References to news concerning sister parties
Germany	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	No	No	No	Yes in several large organisations	Significant	Yes	No	In some cities	Only if you actively look for it	Only if you actively look for it	Yes	Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely	Rarely
Belgium	Socialist Party (PSB/BSP)	No	No	No	No	Significant		No	Rare	No	It is offered but there is no prompt	Yes	No	No	Often	Rarely	Rarely
Denmark	The Social Democrats	Yes spokesperson for the EU	No	No	No	Significant	The secretariat proposes a list of delegates that are approved by the national council	No	No		No	No	No	No			
Finland	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	No	No	No		Significant			No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Socialist Party (PS)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Average	No	Oui Mais en charge également de tous les aspects européens	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No (but planned)	No (but planned)	No (but planned)
Italy	Democratic Party (PD)	No	No	No	No	Increasingly important	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Rarely	No
Ireland	Labour Party	Yes parliamentary spokesperson for European affairs	No	Working group on Europe within the Commission on International Affairs	No	Significant	No	No	One City Group	No	No	Yes	No	No	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely
Sweden	Social Democratic Party (SAP)	No	No	No	No	Average	No	Yes	Three active City Groups	No	No	No	No	No	Rarely	Rarely	No
United Kingdom	Labour Party	Yes the Shadow Minister for Europe	No	No	No	Significant	No	No	Four active City Groups	No	No	Yes	No	No	Rarely	No	No