

CONFERENCE
ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE
CONSIDERATIONS FROM THE LEFT PERSPECTIVE



RESET EUROPE
GO LEFT!



PREAMBLE

The “**Conference on the Future of Europe**” is a joint initiative of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission. It started on the 9th of May with a joint declaration and should be concluded by spring 2022. According to the declaration the conference “will open a new space for debate with citizens to address Europe’s challenges and priorities.” It is intended as a bottom-up approach focusing on the citizens. The success of the conference depends on how it will be organized. The citizens’ participation is crucial, as is the involvement of social movements, trade unions and the parties.

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the failure of the neoliberal policy model. We have to overcome this socio-economic model. The conference has to be taken as an opportunity for a profound and broad debate about the future European development including also the Treaties. The European Left is committed to this debate.

With the following text we present the position of the **European Left**. We understand it as a basis and starting point for more specific considerations.



LEFT PERSPECTIVES FOR EUROPE

The European Union has been in a deep crisis for many years – economically, socially and politically due to its neoliberal principles, rules, treaties and policies. Europe is more than the EU, but the development of the EU is crucial for the entire Europe. In economic terms, the crisis is expressed in a weak growth and growing macroeconomic imbalances, strengthened by neoliberal policies and single market. Germany, for example, has big trade surpluses caused by strong exports, while other European countries have considerable debts. These imbalances cause considerable problems for the European economic development. From a social point of view the crisis results in high unemployment, in low wages and in an extensive precarization of working and living conditions.

Social inequalities increased a lot in all countries within the EU. The democratic crisis is deepening. The Brexit and abstention are the most evident expressions of the political crisis. The rise of the far-right in the last years is also an alarming sign for the political crisis we are facing in Europe. These deficits are on the one hand consequences of the contradictions of a capitalist development, on the other hand, however, they are also the result of the neoliberal austerity policy. The current pandemic deepens this crisis which consequences are so dramatic because of the neoliberal policy with its cuts and

privatization of public services. The social infrastructures and especially the health care sector are systematically neglected. Then there are the ecological challenges like the climate change and the digital transition that fundamentally call our way to produce into question. We are facing deep economic, social and political upheavals.

In the pandemic it became evident that capitalism and the predominant neoliberal policy are not able to address the crisis in a proper way. If this policy is going to continue the already existing tendencies of disintegration will increase and Europe's future is at stake. We need a fundamental change in European politics and a new vision of the European development.

Our objective is the creation of a social, ecological, democratic and peaceful Europe.

Such a European development can't be based on the Treaties of Maastricht and Lisbon because they impose neoliberal politics on Europe. They have to be changed. The challenges for the left in Europe are to launch the needed political processes in order to shift European politics in the direction we want.

What do we stand for, what do we fight for?



COMBATING THE PANDEMIC PROTECTING THE PEOPLE

The pandemic largely determines our working and living conditions. The economic and social effects of the crisis caused by the coronavirus are dramatic, affecting in particular the poor and the people working and living under precarious conditions. Unemployment will increase considerably and poverty as well. Every effort has to be made to protect the people.

The EL strongly supports the European Citizens Initiative "Right2Cure" for free and universal access to vaccines and for making the vaccine a common good. The operational capacities of the health care sector have to be expanded and improved. We request a European Public Health and Drugs Pole.

Measures must be taken to protect all those affected by the pandemic: workers, small and middle-sized companies, self-employed, artists. We need a rescue plan for the workers and their families. In case of income losses, financial compensation is needed.

We oppose any attempt to worsen working conditions, such as the suspension of collective agreements and the reduction of workers' rights. We support the trade unions in their endeavors to reach agreements to secure jobs.



SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION OR A GREEN NEW DEAL

But we are not only confronted with the pandemic. We are facing profound economic, social and political upheavals caused in particular by the ecological challenges like the climate change. The way we produce is in question. We need a drastic reduction of the CO₂ emission. A production based on fossil energies has no longer a future. We need a new European industrial policy focusing on a green industry ensuring industrial sovereignty. This includes a new energy policy based on renewable energies and also a new mobility policy with focus on collective mobility concepts. **The socio-ecological transformation, or the Green New Deal, is a key component of the European Left's political strategy.**

It's obvious that the neoliberal austerity policy has to be abandoned. Another economic policy is needed. First steps have been made with the suspension of the Growth and Stability Pact and with the Recovery Fund "Next Generation" which represents a remarkable change of the European financial policy. The changes open new contradictions to be pushed in order to pave the way of radical changes in European policies. The Growth and Stability Pact has to be abolished and not only suspended. And it has to be prevented that the Recovery Fund is linked to the European Semester and the financial means for the different countries are bound by restrictive, antidemocratic conditions. These plans need not be transformed into new memorandums. Public investment programs focused on the environment, public services and job creation are required. Democratic control is crucial in order to prevent a purely capitalist modernisation that is barely green at all. A left-wing Green New Deal must be a comprehensive concept geared towards the common good. **We need public investment in infrastructure, social services such as health care, affordable housing, education and culture.**

For the left, the combination of ecological and social needs is essential. There is no doubt that a green industrial revolution, as the Labour Manifesto calls it, is necessary. But equally, workers affected by these changes must be protected. "Just Transition", as promoted by the ITUC, is a concept that combines ecological transformation with social protection and aims to ensure that a green economy can provide decent work. Workers

must not only see their rights strengthened in this transformation process; they must also be directly involved. Their direct involvement is indispensable for a left-wing Green New Deal. **From a leftist perspective, therefore, the connection of the Green New Deal with economic democracy is paramount.** This also distinguishes it from other concepts.

A Left Green New Deal must be understood as a comprehensive transformation concept that combines ecological and social requirements and ensures the direct involvement of the workers themselves. It breaks with neoliberal European policy and also goes beyond the limits of capitalist development.



SOCIAL RIGHTS

A left-wing Green New Deal must go hand in hand with the expansion of workers' rights. This can be linked to the pillar of social rights as adopted by the European Commission. It contains 20 principles regarding equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion. With an action plan these principles should be turned into concrete actions to benefit citizens. However, the Pillar of Social Rights must not remain a non-binding intention. Rather, these social rights must be binding in form of a Social Protocol in the EU Treaties. This has to include equality of rights of women in terms of wages, working conditions, professional progression, social participation at all levels. Neither economic freedoms nor competition rules shall have priority over fundamental social rights and in case of conflict the fundamental social rights shall take precedence. This is a clear demand by ETUC and also the Trade Unionists Network Europe (TUNE) campaigned for it.

The Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Protocol are a starting point. It's necessary, however, that European-wide campaigns are set in motion. We need strong trade unions with a strong collective bargaining power. This is the basic condition for getting decent working conditions and wages that you can live on. Gender equality has to be taken into account. In this context also high minimum wages in Europe are required. The new European Directive is a step forward but has still to be improved. We oppose the neoliberal labour market reforms which intend more flexibility, less protection against dismissal and in particular the priority of company agreements instead of collective agreements negotiated by the trade unions. Thus, collective bargaining power, the main trade union activity, is weakened. **But we need strong unions collaborating with social movements, women's organizations, citizens initiatives and left parties.**

We have immediately to act, without waiting for 2030, and take immediate, emergency

measures to protect workers: - banning dismissals during the crisis – protecting and extending collective agreements – fighting against poverty immediately – protecting all the stages of life (income for students, security for job and training) – making open-ended jobs the standard in Europe. **The social rights, and systems of social security have to be aligned on the best level in Europe.**

The current crisis is highly dangerous for women's rights, which are faced with high regressions. The EL is engaged for a Framework Directive for implementing the most favoured European clauses for women and banning inequalities on wages.

Financial means have to be used for the peoples' needs:

- **refunding ECB:** relocating the funds from ECB into social needs, putting ECB under democratic control, allowing ECB to loan directly to member states;
- **strengthening taxations on big companies;**
- **taking concrete measures against fiscal avoidance.**



DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

The health crisis is being transformed into a crisis of democracy. The pandemic is emerging as a testing ground for the resilience of the rule of law and the challenge to individual rights and democratic freedoms. The effort to confront order and security with freedom and rights is ongoing. **The dangers to democracy are obvious and for this a comprehensive response and confrontation by the progressive left forces is needed, with initiatives and joint action.**



PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

The EL is a strongly committed to peace and disarmament. Without peace there is no future for humankind. Peace and disarmament should be put to the center of policy making. Military spending must be reduced considerably in favour of healthcare and meeting social needs. It is time for an initiative for a new policy of détente.

We are against the militarization of the EU and reject PESCO. European solidarity is not expressed by military means but by strengthening common civilian structures. We disagree with the politics of NATO and oppose the war manoeuvre "Defender". We must continue and intensify our resistance against those dangerous military exercises. NATO is not an organization defending the interest of the Europeans. With its aggressive activities, it is a dangerous organization. NATO has to be dissolved in favour of a new

collective security system, which also includes Russia.

A European peace order on the basis of common security is the alternative to war and confrontation. In this context also the role of OSCE must also be strengthened.

The EL calls European states to ratify TPNW treaty, entered into force in January 2021.

Fighting for peace and fighting the climate change are linked to each other. It's necessary that the peace movement, the climate and environmental movements like "Fridays for Future" and also social movement come together more strongly.

Faced with those who have proposed a format for the European Conference that cuts democratic participation in favour of the elites and political leaders who seek personal promotion, we, from the Left, propose a broad participatory process, with national Parliaments, open to citizens in which all types of social, trade union and political organisations are involved.

A process for finding out common points to discuss our ideas at the European Forum. We invite all thinking about an alternative European development to participate. We invite all to join the European Forum organized by the left, progressive and ecological forces which will take place in November – hopefully in Athens or online.

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