

**PES Paper
ECOSY Presidium Members in Charge**

**Europe in diversity and democracy
Estelle Göger
Hristo Hristev
Brian Booth
Marianne Muona**

I. Context and challenges:

Topic, political context and relevance:

At the beginning of 2007 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties and by the end of the year the reflection period opened by the two negative referenda on the constitutional treaty was closed by the signing of the Lisbon Treaty. This new treaty undoubtedly represents an institutional step ahead towards more democracy, but it fails in giving an appropriate answer to the challenges Europe faces today in terms of climate change, creating new solidarities, tackling the demographic challenge and involving the European citizen in the political decision making process. The British and Polish government's behaviour throughout the IGC have shown how small the common ambition for Europe currently is. The first casualties of exacerbated national interest are the European symbols and the Charter of fundamental rights, but more generally it's the European project and its citizen

This crisis of politics is reflected on the national level by the defeat of our family in several elections in the last years: the PS in France and in Belgium, Pasok in Greece, the social democratic party in Sweden... We are also witnessing a worrying rise of the extreme right in several countries and the banalisation of far right ideas in our societies and in the political discourse.

All of these elements urge us to start a comprehensive reflexion around the issue of democracy, so as to embrace the forthcoming European elections in June 2009 with clear cut proposals but also with new campaigning methods.

This document is meant to launch the reflexion process in this spirit and will hopefully trigger debates, ideas and proposals for us to present to the PES.

II. Ideas for a progressive vision

1. Citizens need to be actively involved through:

- The common European Identity of all Europe's citizens has to be strengthened. This is why ECOSY strongly demands that the EU develops policies enabling every European citizen to personally experience the EU. There should be more emphasis on strengthening the rights of the EU citizens and informing them about them. This requires a strong legal status and full implementation of the Charter on Fundamental Rights of the EU citizens.

Additionally, to increase the citizen's participation ECOSY promotes the idea of European debates across continent, the legal tools like the right of "citizens initiative" for one million citizens to initiate the legislative process and the establishment of real European media.

- We want to give the European Elections a true European dimension. ECOSY fully supports the idea of common electoral manifestos and campaigns. We want Members of European Parliamentary Groups to be accountable to the European parties and their programs. This is why we call as the first step all the candidates in the 2009 EP elections to state which political group they intend to join in the assembly and which party electoral manifesto they run in elections with. European political parties have to name their candidates for Commission President in the electoral campaign.

Therefore ECOSY strongly welcomes the creation of a European political party statute that enables European political parties to lead campaign and that recognises the role of party political youth organisations. This statute creates the necessary framework for action we had been calling for, but doesn't mean that the political debate and politicians have Europeanised yet.

- The principle of openness and public access to official records must be realised. All proceedings of the Council should be open to the public. For the sake of transparency, lobby at the European level should be regulated and information about all funding and donations - public as well as private - to the parties should be made easily accessible to the public.

- The civil society has to be engaged in the decision-making process. The involvement of the Economic and Social Committee needs to be increased. Citizen's activism throughout Europe should be protected and promoted, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedoms of association are threatened.

- The education system must support the concept of active citizenship by including a subject on citizen's skills in the curricula and by supporting self-organization, democratisation and co-decision of student representative bodies in all levels of education.

- The voting age in all elections should be lowered to 16. Third country nationals should be granted the right to vote.

2. Democratic and political EU institutions:

Longing for a democratic and federal Europe is for ECOSY both an ideal and ambitious agenda to reform the current institutional framework. For that the legitimacy and the capacity of European institutions have to be improved:

- The reform of the European Parliament is for ECOSY a necessary start. The European Parliament is the only institution directly elected by the citizens of the Union. ECOSY welcomes the reinforcement of the Parliament in the Lisbon Treaty, but emphasises the following claims for future reform:

The Parliament needs to have the power to co-decide on all Union legislation, full budgetary powers and the right of initiative. In order to increase its legitimate representation the seats should be gradually - proportionally to population - distributed. In that, adequate representation of all the Member States has to be ensured.

- The EP and the Council of the European Union together hold the legislative powers of the Union as a bicameral system. The European Council should limit itself to exclusively long term coordination and the Commission should be developed into the government of the EU, as the main executive power. The number of Commissioners has to be limited and correspond to fields of action, not to the number of member states. Every candidate for Commissioner should belong to a political fraction within the EP and be accountable to it. He/She should be elected on the bases of a concrete political portfolio. The EP should elect the President of the European Commission by qualified majority.

II. Questions for defining a progressive EU vision and policies for 2009-2014

- In which areas and according to which mechanisms do you think enhanced cooperation should be developed?

- Which place should the national Parliaments have in the European decision making process?

- Which place should the Committee of the regions have in the European decision making process?

- How should the European Commission be composed (number of members, portfolios...)?