

Appeal of the Progressive Family presented at the Conference

“No territory and no people left behind”

Brussels, 7 February 2019

Conference co-organised by the S&D Group in the European Parliament and the PES Group of the European Committee of Regions in the frame of the “Progressive Society” initiative

NO TERRITORY AND NO PEOPLE LEFT BEHIND IN THE EU

***EU COHESION POLICY: A KEY TOOL TO MAKE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BECOME REALITY
THROUGHOUT EU'S REGIONS***

Our planet is in the midst of political, economic, social and ecological crisis, which permanently feed into each other. Mounting inequalities across Europe further fuel all of these crises. Some territories and some people in Europe are “left behind” while economic dynamism is increasingly concentrated in a few hands and in a few places, mainly in big cities.

We know what the challenges are: increasing inequality between rich and poor; lack of opportunities for the many; digitalization that enslave many workers, industries leaving Europe; damage to our air, our water, our soil; climate disaster ; a widespread feeling that citizens are silently disempowered, only to the benefit of the greedy few.

We, progressives of Europe, call for action for a radically different Europe.

We stand for a political agenda to save the people and the planet, inspired by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) signed by all EU member states in 2015. We call to replace the current European economic strategy (Europe 2020) based on a prevailing growth paradigm with a sustainable development paradigm.

Many local and regional authorities have already put in place policies to translate the quest for sustainable equality into reality, involving citizens and improving their daily lives. These authorities play a major role on the path towards genuinely sustainable development. Europe must support these places, be they urban or rural, central or peripheral, mountainous or maritime.

The European budget as a whole, and the European cohesion policy in particular, is a powerful catalyst for change and social innovation. They can provide strong incentives and support to local and regional actions, if they are properly framed and implemented in order to mobilize and empower citizens on the way towards sustainable development.

We need new "space-aware" and "bottom-up" approaches to EU policies, including a reformed and reinforced European cohesion policy with improved and strategic interaction with other EU financial programmes. All these instruments should be part of a new broad European Sustainable Development Pact.

That is why we are determined to ensure that the next EU Cohesion Policy for the years 2021-27:

- shall remain accessible to all EU regions. Its overall financial allocation for the years 2021-27 should be maintained at least at the same level as for the current period (2014 -2020);

- shall promote the participation of all citizens. We need a renewed and strengthened partnership principle whereby broad societal mobilization, with workers and their trade unions, employers and business, civil society; NGOs and local citizens' groups is encouraged and protected. We need genuine public discussion at the most relevant level, allowing for a common elaboration of public choices. To achieve this, we need a legally binding European Code of Conduct on partnership;

- shall set as core objectives the pursuit of equality between our citizens and the place they live in as well as a just transition towards a carbon neutral economy;

- shall ensure enough financial support for the implementation of these core objectives and stop any financial support to those projects that undermine them , such as support to fossil fuels ; European budgetary rules and European macroeconomic surveillance rules should in no way prevent the implementation of these core objectives;

- shall ensure that differentiated development approaches, notably in the industrial sector are deployed according to each territory's specific context;

- shall encourage regions and cities to mainstream sustainable development objectives throughout the programming of European Structural and Investment Funds of cohesion policy.

A fair and effective EU cohesion policy that leaves no people and no places behind is possible. The long-term credibility of the European project depends on it, and we are determined to do our utmost to defend it.