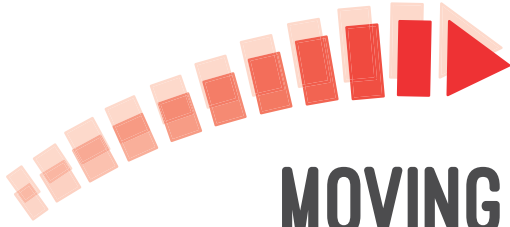


**PROGRESSIVE
YEARBOOK 2020**





MOVING FORWARD

2020: A Progressive restart for the European Union

Iratxe García Pérez

In 2020 we will commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Schuman Declaration. This Declaration was the start of the European Union and brought us permanent peace, freedom and democracy. We, Europeans, will be celebrating this anniversary with the launch of the Conference for the Future of Europe, which will be a valuable opportunity to relaunch our common European project. After 70 years, the Union is at a crossroads and it faces three choices: an anti-European choice that aims to dismantle the Union; a conservative choice that pretends to maintain the status quo; or a new progressive choice that aspires to bring a fairer Europe.

This year will unfortunately be marked by the departure of the United Kingdom, which leaves the EU after 47 years of contributing to our common European goals. I cannot hide my sadness and disappointment, and I continue to believe that the UK's place is within the Union. However, we have to accept that the House of Commons now has a Conservative majority with a mandate to pursue an orderly Brexit and ratify the Withdrawal Agreement as negotiated, avoiding any 'no deal' scenario. The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) will continue to take a constructive approach in building a future relationship that serves our common interests while safeguarding the integrity of the single market and protecting citizens' rights throughout the transition period and beyond.

This year, 2020, brings us other challenges, like the new EU Commission work programme, the new European Green Deal, the Just Transition Fund or the above-mentioned Conference on the Future of Europe. Unfortunately, 2020 will also bring threats to our democracies and the rule of law; actions aiming to strike at equality, women's rights or social justice; and turbulence for multilateralism in the international arena.

These last elements are rocking the European Union to its core, and the S&D Group must tackle them with determination and courage. What's more, I believe that we should treat both challenges and threats as an opportunity to be seized, and that we should make sure we deliver a new progressive starting point to Europe and its citizens. We must turn these weaknesses into a new opportunity to strengthen our views for a fairer future for the new generations.

After the 2019 EU elections, our social democratic family ended up as the second largest group in the European Parliament. Our political family managed to obtain key top positions in

the EU, including those of the president of the Parliament, the vice-president of the Commission with the mandate to lead its work on the European Green Deal, the High Representative, and commissioners in charge of our most emblematic flagships.

This new Commission will carry the S&D mark and it will deliver our agenda. Through our negotiations with President von der Leyen, we, Socialists and Democrats, managed to determine the agenda and portfolios of the next Commission. It was possible to achieve this thanks to the political credibility and arbitration of our Group during the negotiations. We prioritised the need to put forward political agreements with other political families, respecting the current Parliament's pluralism, to achieve our political goals and priorities. And we succeeded! The Parliament and the European Council are now more fragmented than ever. We are the only political family that can form a progressive and pro-European majority to stand up to far-right, nationalist and populist forces. These commitments will be our Group's roadmap in working constructively with the Commission.

New social and sustainable growth for Europe

For us, the future of Europe must lie in the economic, social and ecological transformation of Europe without leaving anyone behind. We are leading the green transformation of Europe with social justice at its core: the ecological transformation has to guarantee social equality and create new opportunities, and not generate additional exclusion and divergences between regions and groups of people.

The S&D Group did a very good job in the last mandate. It was thanks to us that the target of a 40% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 was set. However, we need to go further. If we continue to consume and live as we do now, the planet's resources will very soon be gone. That is why the S&D strongly defends the ambitious strategy to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

The S&D Group will therefore push hard for implementation of the European Green Deal and will make sure that this is translated into a Climate Law proposal. The European Green Deal must be the industrial revolution that combines social rights, workers' rights, sustainability and industrial competitiveness. Binding targets and measures should be in place, both at the EU and member state level. All sectors need to contribute. Fossil fuel subsidies should be phased out and stopped. Policies in favour of direct investments for cleaner technologies across the board and in all sectors should be implemented. We need at least 50% – and towards 55% – CO₂ reduction by 2030 to be able to reach the target of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Ensuring a just transition to a sustainable economic model is crucial for us, and we want to make sure that new indicators according to the SDGs are added to the European semester so that not only is macroeconomic growth taken into consideration, but also people's well-being and a respect for the environment. Having a commissioner from our political family coordinating this transformation reinforces our conviction that the new Commission will have the vision and determination to accomplish it. Our political family must ensure that key economic, social and ecological targets have the same importance in the policy process.

To ensure that the Green Deal becomes real and not just words on paper, we need a robust Sustainable Investment Plan. This plan will promote sustainable investment and quality job creation and a Just Transition Fund. We need to anticipate and provide for the effects of climate change and digitalisation on the workforce. This fund needs to be financed with 'fresh money' and not at the cost of the cohesion and agriculture policies. We cannot close our eyes to the impacts on certain sectors, regions or groups of people, and we need to fully address the social consequences of this transformation. We need to turn this transformation into an opportunity. It is understandable that people might react against change if that means losing their jobs and quality of life without the guarantee of a credible alternative.

We need to admit that the financing for the Green Deal proposed by the Commission is not enough to achieve a climate-neutral and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 without leaving anybody behind. Estimates show that Europe needs about €1.2 trillion of sustainable investments per year. I strongly believe that financing climate change should be a joint effort between both the EU and member state budgets.

This is why we need a more ambitious EU budget (multiannual financial framework – MFF) and to increase the financing earmarked for tackling climate change to at least 30% of the MFF. The EU budget needs to be combined with a new basket of own resources, such as a levy on non-recycled plastic-packaging waste, a strengthening of the EU Emissions Trading System, a digital tax, and a financial transaction tax, or own resources based on the common consolidated corporate tax base.

We also need to create more space in the national budgets in order for countries to be able to invest in their sustainable path. This is why we need to reform the fiscal rules to exempt sustainable investments from the calculations of deficit and debt within the Stability and Growth Pact.

However, it will only be possible to meet the investment needs with the joint efforts of all actors, both from the public and private sectors. The S&D Group welcomes the introduction of an EU classification system to ensure that financial institutions and private investors can better identify sustainable investments (EU taxonomy). We also support the efforts to turn the European Investment Bank into the European Union's green bank.

Sustainability and growth need to ensure social justice. This means better equipping our citizens with the right skills to cope better with the ecological and digital transitions. For us, no policy is complete if it does not ensure a better life for everyone, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. To strengthen the social dimension that we fight for we want full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. This means ensuring fair working conditions with fair wages for all European workers. It means implementing binding pay transparency measures to fight the gender pay gap. It means a credible plan to fight poverty and social exclusion through a Child Guarantee to be included already in the next EU budget for the 2021-2027 period. To ensure this social dimension, the S&D Group will continue to put pressure on the new Commission and the Council to take concrete measures.

The Conference on the Future of Europe: A new set-up for the EU

To strengthen our common democracy, we need to renew the trust of citizens in the European Union and to make it more transparent. The S&D Group will engage with the Conference on the Future of Europe, which will bring together civil society, leaders and representatives to discuss what needs to be done to regenerate the EU project.

In the 2019 European elections, citizens sent us a clear message that they wanted change. Europe needs to regain its strength to be able to act. We will start debating the future of Europe in May 2020, but we need to do it in a different way from before. The S&D Group has led the way in citizen engagement in recent years, with a bottom-up approach to regular debate and conversations with local people all over Europe. We must have citizens and civil society at the heart of the Conference on the Future of Europe. With citizens' agorae, which are representative of our diverse European society, we want to ensure input from people from every corner of Europe. The future belongs to young people, so the S&D Group has also pushed for dedicated youth agorae to participate in the conference. With a bottom-up approach and the European Parliament leading the way, we can start a real conversation with people on a future Europe that we all believe in and that provides sufficient solutions for current and future challenges.

Strengthened democracy for an equal Europe

For the S&D Group, the future of Europe is about equality, democracy and the rule of law. These have always been fundamental pillars of the EU.

The S&D Group will work with the Commission to mainstream the gender perspective in all proposals and to have a binding gender equality strategy. This strategy will need to ensure the economic independence of women, a balance between professional and personal life, equality in the decision-making processes, and the fight against violence against women. Regarding this last issue, I will continue to support the follow-up on the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women. We will also push to include sexual and reproductive health rights within the European Health Strategy. With regard to pay, women earning smaller salaries just because they are women is inadmissible. We will therefore work to adopt a pay transparency directive, which will aim to reduce the gender pay gap by 2% each year.

Any type of discrimination is unacceptable. To ensure equality and diversity, we will push to unblock the directive on anti-discrimination. We need to be united in our work to protect our democratic societies against hate speech, fake news, homophobia, transphobia and xenophobia.

When it comes to xenophobia, Europe cannot continue to watch news about people dying in the Mediterranean. We need to reform the Common European Asylum System package. Funding for search and rescue needs to be increased to prevent more tragic deaths at sea. We need new laws to define humanitarian visas and to develop legal channels for migration. We need to address this challenge in a rational and humanitarian way and not by destroying Schengen and bringing back internal borders in Europe.

Over recent years, we have seen populist governments and movements that have pushed the boundaries and undermined democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. On the future of democracy, the S&D Group will continue fighting against any type of violation of our democratic system, be it direct or indirect. We need to ensure total respect of its principles and the rule of law. To do this, the EU institutions need to use all the instruments at their disposal to defend democracy in Europe, including budgetary consequences for those governments that neither respect nor guarantee the democratic basis of the EU.

For a key global Europe in the international arena

The S&D Group needs to keep on promoting the values and the agenda I have mentioned above – not only within our borders, but also worldwide. We also need to contribute to making the EU a stronger geopolitical actor in 2020. We, progressives, are very much aware of the challenges facing the rules-based international order, and we strongly defend an effective multilateralism to address the current international challenges.

In a world increasingly dominated by US-Chinese geopolitical competition, the EU should reconsider its ‘silos’ approach. The stance of the current US administration emphasises the urgency for the EU to better align its foreign and economic policies to ensure the continued security and prosperity of its people – in a way that is consistent with our values. Principled pragmatism should guide all our external relations.

On trade, the S&D Group will fight for a trade policy based on values with sustainability, human rights and labour rights at its core. We will work closely with the High Representative to oversee the Enlargement and Neighbourhood policy, with a strong commitment to reaffirming the place of the Western Balkans in the European family.

To sum up, the S&D is ready to contribute to shaping European foreign policy. We are very much looking forward to joining forces with the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the European External Action Service, to promote Europe as a key global force for peace, justice and sustainable development.

For a courageous restart in 2020

It is our duty to bring new hope and a future for Europe. We already know that conservatives and populists will not. I am aware that this is indeed a very ambitious agenda, and we will need sufficient resources, agreements and negotiations to guarantee it. In addition, what we will need as the socialists and democrats of Europe is courage. We already have a brave, strong, united and committed S&D Group ready to fight for a fairer and better society. I am sure that in 2020 our political group will reinforce our political movement to expand our ideas for the future of our movement, but mostly for the future of Europe.

The history of our movement is linked to the EU, and it will continue to be so. As Schuman stated 70 years ago: “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”. These

concrete achievements for the future will be the result of our working tirelessly to implement our political agenda.

Indeed, we will have a smaller EU this year, new challenges and threats. However, we have our experience, our leadership, our ideas and, above all, the capacity to work fearlessly for a better society for future generations. We must turn the current weaknesses to new opportunities. As president of the S&D Group, I am sure that if we combine our efforts, our political movement will be able to put forward a new progressive restart for Europe.