



the round table

Key issues for European Socialists and Social Democrats

Volume II Issue 2

February 2000

Spanish Soundbites

**'I declare myself a
citizen of the world.'**

*Felipe Gonzalez,
former Prime Minister of
Spain*

**'Immigration is not a
political problem.
Immigration is a
human problem first
of all.'**

*Sami Nair
MEP*

**'Immigrants usually
take up jobs that
Europeans have
turned their backs on
... so-called 3D jobs,
demanding, danger-
ous, dirty.'**

*Anna Karamanou
MEP*

**'It is not the immi-
grants who create
fear. It is the lack of
policies and lack of
legislation that
creates fear. It is this
vacuum that creates
fear.'**

*Luis Marinho
Vice President of the
European Parliament*

Talks aim for knowledge economy opportunities

Meeting the Challenge

Fears that the knowledge economy will create new divisions in the EU and its enlargement countries are to be explored at an international Round Table conference in Athens on 23 and 24 February.

The conference will focus on positive measures to create opportunities for EU citizens in the new economic environment — and examine the specific challenge for Southern Europe.

EU government ministers and senior politicians will be joined by business leaders and university professors for talks on "The Knowledge Economy, Education and Employment in Europe."

Greek Premier Costas Simitis and the former French and Italian Prime Ministers Michel Rocard and Massimo d'Alema will be among keynote speakers at the Round Table in the Zappion Megaron.

A press conference will take place at 13h15 on 24 February.

Greek Socialist Party PASOK's general secretary Costas Skandalidis and the vice-president of the Party of European Socialists, Akis Tsohatzopoulos, the Greek defence minister, will open the discussions at 14h30 on 23 February.

Microsoft's Director General in Greece, John Rontiris, and Athens Univer-



Computer skills: key to success in the new economy

sity Informatics Professor George Kouroupetoglou will be among speakers in the first discussion on 'The Challenge of the Knowledge Economy and Globalisation' from 15h15 to 17h15.

European Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou, Greek employment minister Anastassios Giannitsis and education minister Petros Efthimiou will lead a second discussion on 'Education and employment in a globalised economy' from 17h30 to 19h30.

Massimo d'Alema will lead the final discussion on 'The Southern European Economy and the Knowledge Economy'. Participants will include Serbian deputy Prime Minister Zarko Korac, Greek development minister Nikos Christoloulakis and economic adviser to Premier Simitis, Gikas Hardouvelis; economics and finance professor at Piraeus University.

Premier Simitis will deliver a keynote address at 11h30.

contd p2

Meeting the Press

The Athens Round Table press conference at 13h15 on 24 February in the Zappion Megaron will be taken by PES Vice-President Akis Tsohatzopoulos, Socialist leader in the EP Enrique Baron, PASOK Secretary General Costas Skandalidis and PASOK delegation leader in the EP Giorgios Katiforis.

Interactive Socialists To Link Antwerp And Mons

A high-tech link will allow European Socialists and Social Democrats to hold the last of the Round Tables in two Belgian cities that are 115 kilometres apart.

The Round Table theme is 'New Economy, New Social Challenges'.

So one panel will focus on one interpretation of the theme in Flemish Antwerp while the other meets in the Wallonia city of Mons to discuss other aspects.

Antwerp will discuss lifelong learning and social challenges in the knowledge society, in particular the danger of exclusion and life in big cities. Talks in Mons, meanwhile, will focus on quality of employment in the new economy and the quality of modernised public services.

Sound and pictures from both panels will allow participants to follow the opening and closing speeches in both venues.

The aims of the Belgian Round Table are to discuss new technological developments advocated by the Lisbon Summit, whilst emphasising the positive as well as negative social challenges arising from them.



SP leader Janssens, above, will join PS leader di Rupo

Participants will include the two Belgian Socialist Party leaders – Elio di Rupo of the PS and Patrick Janssens of the SP – as well as European Government ministers, academics, representatives of trade unions and NGOs and senior members of the European Parliament.

The Round Table opens at 13h30 in the Auditorium, Telepolis, Generaal Armstrongweg, 1, 2020 Antwerp and simultaneously in the Hôtel de Ville,

Grand'Place, 22, 7000 Mons. Closing speeches will be made at 17h30.

Briefing

Journalists are invited to a press briefing by the two Belgian party leaders in advance of the Belgian Round Table – to take place at 11h00 on Tuesday 6 March in Mons Town Hall.

Appeal To Women On Tolerance

A special effort to mobilise women in fighting discrimination against immigrants was urged by Greek Euro MP Anna Karamanou at the Zaragoza Round Table.

Ms Karamanou criticised the lack of research or campaigns on the positive effects of immigrants in Europe. And she predicted that economic interests, combined with demographic changes, will force the EU to open its doors.

Said Ms Karamanou: 'It is important that all citizens, NGOs, political parties, local authorities and especially women's organisations are mobilised. Women, who have historically been subjects of racial-like discrimination, could have a special contribution to the combating of all kinds of prejudice.

'After all, it is not by chance that women's presence in far-right organisations and violent incidents is rare.'

Ms Karamanou criticised the opportunism of EU countries that allowed immigration because of economic need. 'These policies are always pursuing selfish gains and are rarely consistent, let alone respectful to immigrants. Europe may resist the idea that it is a continent of immigrants but in order to thrive it has no choice but to become one.'

Meeting the Challenge

ctd from p1

EP Socialist Group leader Enrique Baron and PASOK international secretary Paraskevas Avgerinos will present the Round Table conclusions at 12h45.

Senior Euro MPs taking part in the talks include: Socialist Group leader Enrique Baron of Spain; Greek delegation leader Georgios Katiforis; Rolf Linkohr of Germany; Group spokesman on social affairs Stephen Hughes of the UK; Group spokeswoman on women's rights Lissy Groener of Germany; Marie-Helene Gillig of France; Myrsini Zorba of Greece; and Greek labour law professor Ioannis Koukiadis.

Knowledge Means Jobs

By Michel Rocard
Chairman
EP Social Affairs Committee

The issue at the heart of our work – ‘The Knowledge Society, Education and Employment in Europe’ – will have a determining influence on the future of our economies and of what we collectively call our European social model.

Never before, indeed, have technical developments led so quickly to such a far-reaching cultural revolution.

The rapid transformations that we have witnessed – computerised offices, automated industry and above all the meteoric rise of new information technologies – have changed the very nature of work as well as the organisation and operation of enterprises.

I will not here broach the considerable advances in scientific research that are nonetheless in the news with the de-coding of the human genome.

These changes – that, in most cases, are not the result of extraordinary discoveries but of new use of existing technologies – have given birth to the knowledge society.

Thus information is becoming one of the essential ingredients of economic activity and its rapid exchange is opening new fields of activity and job creation.

Sketching the outline of the new economy, but at the same time clearly marking its limits, allows us to have faith in the growth targets we have set ourselves.

The boost in productivity, just like the stimulation of the markets, gives us a foretaste of the potential for massive creation of highly-qualified jobs or jobs deriving from demand for new services.

In this domain, the EU has a wide margin for manoeuvre compared

with the United States where new economy enterprises account for 27 per cent of market capitalisation against 13 per cent in our countries and devote 52 per cent of their investment to information technologies against our 28 per cent.

Training of competent staff – computer staff, specialist engineers and production line workers, should be an absolute priority for us. We must all adapt to these new needs and prepare society to live on good terms in a new framework. For many economic, political and even legal concepts must evolve to make room for a distinctly new human activity.

Meeting to deal with the consequences of real technological advances, politicians must set themselves the crucial task of mediation and support for learning.

This is the price we must pay to curb worsening inequalities between those who have access to the new economy and others: it is the price for putting an end to the drift caused by the digital divide.

More appropriate basic and professional training, life-long learning and promotion of teleworking are some of the routes to be strengthened in order to improve the quality and



Rocard: "We must all adapt to new needs"

efficiency of jobs.

We must contemplate new forms of work organisation, underlining the importance of negotiated security and flexibility.

Co-operation and co-ordination between social partners and the actors concerned is therefore essential.

This was clearly understood by the economic and social Councils of the Ministers and the Economic and Social Committee when on 8 November 2000 they adopted the ‘Paris Declaration’ which stresses the potential of the knowledge society.

This potential, among other points, can be exploited ‘in an efficient and socially acceptable manner only through a common effort by all the actors, aimed at improving and widening the knowledge base and qualifications of everyone.’

I fully support this approach.

Spanish soundbites

‘There are methods and instruments for security that have to be used in close coordination with the social and cultural policy instruments.’ Antonio Vitorino, Home Affairs Commissioner of the EU.

A Common Immigration Policy For A Common Market

European countries were accused at the Zaragoza Round Table of pursuing outdated policies on immigration.

The conference on 'Migration and Cultural Identity' heard how the hard-line stance of zero immigration had been counterproductive – leading to an increase in illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings whilst denying Europe the economic benefits migrants can bring.

Socialist leader in the European Parliament Enrique Baron urged ministers to lead a campaign aimed at awakening public opinion to the positive gains to be made from a new attitude to immigration.

He said: 'We need a modern and realistic approach to the impact of labour migration and the needs of our labour market. We cannot continue blindly to pursue the policies of 25 years ago.'

He added: 'A new attitude to immigration must be accompanied by new policies established at European rather than national level. We need common procedures for admission, for example, including a common visa policy and we must apply the same criteria across Europe when decisions are taken about detention, deportation or expulsion.'

'The economic benefits of a positive approach to immigration are clear. Europe has an ageing population whose growing demands for welfare services cannot be supplied



by the present workforce. We have a desperate skills shortage in such areas as new technology. By accepting immigrants to meet the shortfalls in our labour market, we can create jobs and economic benefits for all.'

Mr Baron stressed: 'I am not calling for an open borders policy. But if we achieve a modern framework for le-

gal immigration, we can crack down much harder on the illegal immigrants and the traffickers who profit from their misery. At the same

time, we will be able to work more effectively with the countries of origin of migrants to promote the kind of co-development that will remove the poverty and desperation which are the main causes of illegal migration.'

Spanish soundbites

'We need some immigration – but we also need to manage that immigration.' Gunn-Britt Andersson, Swedish Secretary of State for Home Affairs

Rights and duties set out in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights should be binding on all people who move to the EU.

'Europe must develop more inclusive policies for people from non-EU countries who are living legally in one of our 15 countries,' said Mr Baron. 'We must protect their rights and take positive measures to fight social exclusion as well as promoting tolerance of diversity in our societies and taking a hard line on racism and xenophobia.'

'Legal immigrants should enjoy the same rights and obligations as all EU citizens and have freedom of movement within the EU,' said Mr Baron.

'In achieving these goals, we must work closely with the countries from which people move to the EU.'

How to obtain a regular copy of 'The Round Table'

'The Round Table' is a newsletter published jointly by the Party of European Socialists and the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists in the European Parliament.

The newsletter will provide advance information about upcoming discussions and summarise the key points of those that have taken place.

To obtain a regular copy of 'The Round Table' please fax Brussels +322-2849026 or e-mail the editor Tony Robinson – TRobinson@europarl.eu.int