



# the round table

Key issues for European Socialists and Social Democrats

Issue Number 2

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## Our New Europe

“The new populist and xenophobic right uses and abuses European integration and the enlargement of the Union to spread fear and discontent. European Social Democrats will counter this propaganda by directly addressing people's concerns, while proving that a strong and larger Union is the best guarantee for jobs and security in a free Europe where different peoples and cultures work together.”

*Rudolf Scharping  
PES President*

“Right wing populists are trying to whip up anti-European sentiment. We must expose the danger they represent and demonstrate the importance of the Union for the well-being and security of our people.”

*Enrique Baron  
EP Socialist Group leader*

## Probe Into Extreme Right Links To Eurosceptics

European Socialists will open a fightback against rightwing populism in Europe next month when they hold a policy Round Table conference in Bern, Switzerland.

The discussions – to be attended by government ministers, leading European politicians and anti racist organisations – will explore links between the extreme Right and Euroscepticism.

The Round Table will be the first major political conference on the challenge of the remodelled extreme Right since Jorg Haider's party came to power in Austria.

Frank assessment of past reactions by progressive, democratic parties to xenophobic and Eurosceptic groups will form a central part of the discussions. The Round Table is expected to produce recommendations for future action.



*Asylum seekers in Brussels: victims of the new Right*

Three discussion sessions, which are open to the media throughout, will address:

- Populism, xenophobia and nationalism throughout Europe;
- Migration and xenophobia – European responses; and

- The responsibility of European social democracy.

After an initial London meeting under the auspices of the British Labour Party, the Bern Round Table will be the second in a series organised by the Party of Eu-

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### Bern Round Table Programme

26 June 2000 at 'Up Town' Cultural Centre

- 13h00 Official welcome by Swiss Social Democratic Party's Bern section.
- 13h30 Opening remarks by Swiss Home Affairs minister Ruth Dreifuss, EP Socialist leader Enrique Baron and Austrian Parliament Speaker Heinz Fischer.
- 14h00 Discussion on 'Populism, Xenophobia and Nationalism Throughout Europe'
- 15h30 Press Briefing by Rudolf Scharping, Enrique Baron and Pierre Aeby
- 16h00 Discussion on 'Migration and Xenophobia: A Critique of European Responses'
- 17h30 Coffee break
- 17h45 Discussion on 'The Responsibility of European Social Democracy'
- 19h30 Presentation of conclusions by Pierre Aeby of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and Anna Terrón, MEP

# 'Eurosceptics Could Flourish'

Eurosceptic propaganda will flourish unless the EU tackles down-to-earth issues about enlargement including crime, social responsibility, youth opportunities and jobs.

That was the warning from PES President Rudolf Scharping to the opening session of the Prague Round Table on enlargement.

German defence minister Mr Scharping stressed the need for the PES to agree its message – that Europe has a common civilisation and values, which are more than just a common market. The concept that individual freedoms can be combined with social justice is specifically a European one, he said.

But, he added: 'The EU must combine a historic opportunity to unite a continent divided since 1945 with clear answers to precise questions.'

Mr Scharping also declared that the intergovernmental conference on treaty reform was necessary in itself, not just for enlargement. Any parties putting forward the view that ratification was needed only for enlargement would be 'taking a great risk', he said.

Ratification must begin next year,



*Listening to the people: Scharping calls for EU response to concerns*

added Mr Scharping, for if it is not completed in 2002 it will become an election issue in several countries.

'The EU is linked to globalisation but it must make itself the world's best continent,' he said. 'To do so, social cohesion is essential and moves to nationalism must be avoided.'

## Mafia Bedevil Reform

Czech Premier Milos Zeman admitted to the Prague Round Table that 'new forms of economic crime' had bedevilled privatisation.

His remarks followed demands by PES Vice-President Jan Marinus Wiersma, in an article published in the International Herald Tribune, for tough action against crime and corruption in EU candidate countries.

Mr Zeman told the conference of rapid improvements in his country's economic situation.

But, referring to the problem of tackling economic crime in the Czech Republic, he said: 'It is like fighting a modern Al Capone who is well-equipped and surrounded by good lawyers – and sometimes good journalists.'

## Counting Costs

Czech foreign minister Jan Kavan told a preparatory meeting in Prague: 'The EU and the candidate countries have to look at the advantages and disadvantages of enlargement. The price of non-enlargement also needs to be discussed. The cost will be higher the greater the delays.'

## Scaremongers Challenged Over EU Enlargement

Czech foreign minister Jan Kavan dismissed fears of a flood of cheap labour into the existing 15 EU member countries after enlargement to former communist states as 'not simply a myth but pure absurdity.'

He won support for his call for an open debate on public concerns in both the EU and the applicant countries. Describing the Czech workforce as 'not mobile even within the Czech Republic', Mr Kavan said: 'Problems will become less fearsome if we discuss them openly, rationally and without prejudice – not to increase them but to solve them.'

But he issued a stern warning about any delay to the enlargement process. 'You cannot go on asking people for self sacrifice ad infinitum. At some point, if you keep moving the

goalposts and changing the rules of the game, people will get angry and anti-European, xenophobic and nationalistic and everything that goes with that.'

Mr Kavan repeated his hope for Czech membership of the EU in 2003 but he added that the date was 'not written in concrete.'

Deputy leader of the EP Socialist Group Klaus Haensch of Germany sought to allay public fears over enlargement by releasing new figures on the EU trade surplus with applicant countries and the impact on jobs in the 15 member states. He said: 'Trade figures for 1999 show the 15 had a trade surplus with the applicant countries of 17.5 billion euros. This is a safeguard for some 65,000 to 70,000 jobs within the EU. This surplus will in-

crease when the new member countries are inside the internal market in favour of the 15.'

But he made clear that despite European Commission hopes he expects enlargement talks to end in transitional periods and measures after the new countries have joined the EU.

Areas involved 'inevitably' included agriculture and implementation of environmental law, he said. 'On free labour movement we will have and need transition,' he added, 'and on free capital movement, the right to buy real estate in some eastern countries.'

Mr Haensch stressed: 'If we make it clear to the electorate that these matters can and will be dealt with, we will calm down a lot of fears both in the EU countries and in the applicant countries.'

# Prague Takes Europe Past The Turning Point

Historians of social democracy will see a defining moment in the discussion that took place earlier this month in the central Prague headquarters of the Czech Social Democratic Party.

About 60 leading political figures from the wider Europe, including Norway and Turkey as well as Central and Eastern Europe, were present to generate a new debate on EU enlargement. We wanted to shift the focus from important technicalities to the practical effects that enlargement will have both on people in the 15 member states and in the candidate countries.

The dramatic outcome of this Round Table discussion, organised by the Party of European Socialists, my Group and our Czech sister party, will be felt as the enlargement process proceeds.

In all negotiations, there comes a point of no return. This is not the moment when all problems have been resolved. However it is the stage at which both sides perceive the challenges in the same way, a moment of understanding after which both sides are helping each other down the same road and towards a common goal.

The Prague Round Table felt like one of those moments. All of us who were there felt that a political breakthrough had been made – that the challenges to the process of enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe were now common challenges.

The line between EU representatives and those of the candidate States seemed

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**By Enrique Baron,  
Leader of the EP  
Socialist Group**

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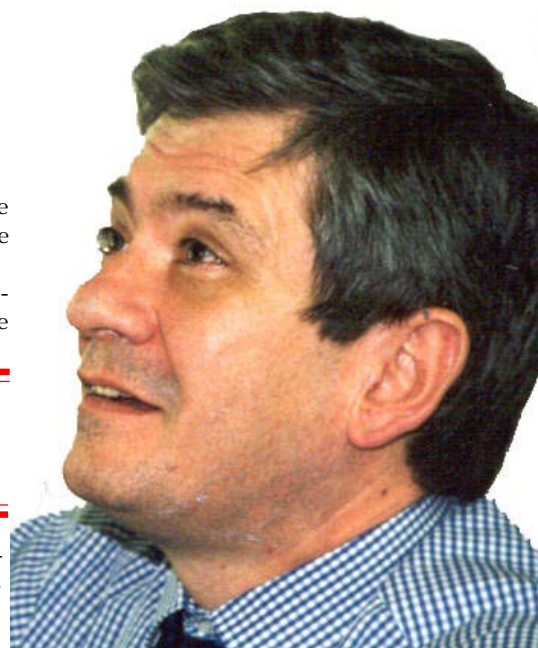
to melt away. Almost without realising it, all of us around the table had become Europeans working out what we all needed to do to ensure that this historic project, agreed over 10 years ago, would come to fruition as quickly as possible.

One moment when this happened was when Jerzy Jaskiernia of the Democratic Left Alliance in Poland, talking about the difficulties that enlargement would bring for farmers and for workers in uncompetitive state industries said: 'Now, it's the people that count'.

The remark resonated because it crossed the line that has divided us. For the EU members, as much as for the candidates, the success of enlargement fundamentally depends now on ensuring that our citizens continue to support it. If we fail, the Meciers and the Haiders will be successful in playing on the false fears of mass immigration and unemployment, those dangerous political tunes which have created so much suffering in Europe over the last century, and which continue to do so in the Balkans.

For Socialists and Social Democrats, enlargement is our highest priority because it is a project that can guarantee the political and economic security of our people for the foreseeable future and consign nationalism and xenophobia to the dustbin of history. It is our peoples' best hope for responding to the challenges of globalisation. Whether in the EU or in the candidate States, the time has come, as Jan Kavan, the Czech Foreign Minister put it, to "consider the costs of not enlarging".

This does not, of course, remove



*Looking up: Baron sees enlargement breakthrough*

the very real difficulties in completing the project. As Czech Prime Minister Zeman put it, "Any politician who says that enlargement does not involve serious problems is lying". Treaty reforms have to be completed before accession can take place. In the candidate countries, we are approaching the most difficult chapters of the negotiations: agriculture, environment, freedom of movement, to name just a few.

These problems were all raised in Prague and there is much to do if we are to find solutions. However, if the atmosphere remains as it was in this meeting, then the difficulties can be talked about without the suspicion that "we" inside the Union are looking for excuses to delay membership for "them" or that "we" are adding extra conditions. Together we can overcome the hurdles and get beyond otherwise sterile debates about timetables and accession dates. We can focus on turning real challenges into opportunities. This is a political process, not for the accountants, and in Prague we took an important step forward.

As a minister in the last years of Spain's negotiations to join the Community, I was on the other side of the table. Now, as an EU representative, I believe we have to use our experience of that time to help and advise our friends in Central and Eastern Europe. As with all previous enlargements of the Union, I believe that we will be successful and that it will benefit us all.

## Looking Ahead

Decisions on topics and venues for Round Tables later this year will be announced on 8 June after a meeting of the PES Bureau in Brussels.

PES President Rudolf Scharping and EP Socialist Group leader Enrique Baron invite journalists to meet them informally over a drink at 18h00 on 8 June in the Salons of the European Parliament.

Journalists wishing to attend are asked to obtain an official invitation from the Round Table Press Office – tel Brussels 284 2981.

# Euro Sceptics and Hard Right

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European Socialists and its member parties with the European Parliament Socialist Group and its national delegations in the run-up to next year's PES Congress in Berlin. The first Round Table, held in Prague earlier this month, addressed EU enlargement.

PES President Rudolf Scharping, European Parliament Socialist leader Enrique Baron and Swiss Social Democratic Party Leader Pierre Aeby will give a press conference at 15h30 at the Round Table venue – the 'Up Town' Cultural Centre, Gurten-Park, Bern, Switzerland.

The provisional list of participants in the Bern discussions includes:

Swiss Home Affairs minister Ruth Dreifuss; the leader of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Social Democratic Party Zlatko Lagumdžija; the Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Beate Winkler;

The President of the Swiss Jewish Community Rolf Bloch; Flemish Socialist Party leader Patrick Janssens; German Bundestag President Wolfgang Thierse; the President of the Pro Helvetia Foundation, Switzerland, Yvette Jaggi; and the President of the Socialist Group in the Swiss Federal Assembly Mr Franco Cavalli.

Members of the European Parliament who are to take part will include Socialist Group deputy leader Hannes Swoboda, Joke Swiebel of the Netherlands and Michael Cashman of the UK.

The conclusions of the Round Table will be presented at 19h30 on 26 June.

## Youth Message for Paris



*Taking the floor: young socialists set out their EU vision*

Five hundred young people from all over Europe, including the enlargement countries, are to mark the first day of the French Presidency of the EU Council, 1 July, with a major rally and debate in Paris.

The young people will deliver the message that 'Europe matters to Youth' – and tell senior politicians what their priorities are for the Union.

The Paris event will be the third in the series of Round Tables organised by the Party of European Socialists and its member parties with the European Parliament Socialist Group and its national delegations.

Details of the Paris event will be announced in the next issue of The Round Table.

## Assessment

European Socialists are to meet in November to take stock of progress on EU enlargement in advance of the EU's Nice Summit.

Socialist leader in the EP Enrique Baron disclosed plans for the follow-up talks when he presented the conclusions of the Prague meeting.

Mr Baron told the conference: 'PES parties have a common endeavour in peace, prosperity and a shared future. The EU was built by countries that have been enemies for centuries. Enlargement is the EU's best hope to respond to globalisation.'

## Web Links

Web sites related to the Bern Round Table include:

**Swiss Social Democrats:**  
<http://www.sp-ps.ch>

**European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia:**  
<http://www.eumc.at>

**European Council on Refugees and Exiles:**  
<http://www.ecre.org>

**United for Intercultural Action:**  
<http://www.united.non-profit.nl>

**Searchlight Magazine:**  
<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com>

**Roma National Congress:**  
<http://www.romnews.com>

**SOS Racism, Portugal:**  
<http://www.sosracismo.pt>

**Contact 2103 (Youth discussion on Europe and extremists):**  
<http://www.contact-2103.org/index.html>

**European Network Against Racism:**  
<http://www.enar-eu.org>

## 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](mailto:TRobinson@europarl.eu.int)