



# the round table

Key issues for European Socialists and Social Democrats

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## Eurofacts

**'The Socialist International is the biggest NGO in the world. Member parties are in more than 50 governments around the world.'**

*Enrique Barón  
Paris Round Table  
1 July 2000*

**'Eighty-four per cent of students in the world find that globalisation is a good thing – but a majority also want to preserve their identity.'**

*Summary of a Le Monde  
survey quoted at the  
Paris Round Table.*

**'Only four per cent of students take part in the Erasmus exchange programme. The Commission's ambition is only to increase this figure to 10 per cent.'**

*French delegate  
Paris Round Table*

**'More than one billion people have to live on less than a dollar a day.'**

*Alexandra Kramm  
German Bureau Member  
of ECOSY  
Paris Round Table*

Socialists and Social Democrats resume key issue debates

## VALUES IN VIENNA

Government ministers and party leaders will launch the autumn season of Round Table discussions on 21 October in Vienna with talks on 'Rights and Values in 21st century Europe'.

The discussions coincide with the expected adoption of an EU-wide Charter of Fundamental Rights by the end of this year and growing concern among democratic forces over the activities of right wing populists.

Leading figures in the arts will set the stage for the Vienna Round Table with a public meeting in the Auersperg Palace the night before. Salzburg Festival director Gerard Mortier will join Bonn art museum director Dieter Ronte and Frankfurt theatre director Elisabeth Schweeger for a discussion with members of the public on 'Integration and Difference: the cultural identity of Europe.'

Austrian social democratic leader Alfred Gusenbauer will host both the public meeting, from 19h30 to 21h30 on Friday 20 October, and the Round Table. The President of the Party of European Socialists, Rudolf Scharping, will open the Round Table in the Kreisky Hall of the Gartenhotel Altmannsдорf,



*PES President Scharping is to lead the 'rights and values' debate*

Hoffingergasse 26-28, 1120 Vienna, at 10h00 on Saturday 21 October.

Participants include: German Bundestag President Wolfgang Thierse; Czech deputy prime minister Vladimir Spidla; Bosnian Social Democratic leader Zlatko Lagumdžija;

the Speaker of Austria's parliament and PES vice-president Heinz Fischer; PES vice-president Trinidad Jimenez (PSOE); and French Socialist Party national secretary for communication Alain Bergounioux.

*contd p3*

## Media and Democracy

The Round Table spotlight will fall on journalists at the Milan Round Table on 27 and 28 October when four themes concerning the media and democracy are to be explored.

The discussions open at 15h30 on 27 October in the Palazzo dell'Informazione with a session on a right to freedom of information, revision of the Amsterdam Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

A second session on pluralism and competition will hear contributions from the European Federation of Journalists, the European Newspaper Publishers' Association

*contd p4*

# Europe's Currency Is Also Its Values

*Edited version of an article by  
Bundestag President Wolfgang Thierse*

Half a century after its launch, Project Europe may be facing its greatest challenge ever. In contrast with the EC's founding period — when the Cold War aided unification of a free Europe and America needed the old Continent as a partner — Europe must now push forward its own aims by itself.

The EC's success was impressively confirmed when the 1989 Central and Eastern European freedom movement mobilised the peoples of the East under the slogan 'Return to Europe'. This historic demand — and political challenge — was not only about access to a strong currency but about belonging to the European Community of values.

Since then much has changed. The EU completed the internal market and created the euro. In the past ten years it has dealt only with what was already on the table in 1989 — economic globalisation and the functional adaptation of Europe to the needs of global competition. The level of power that Jacques Delors constantly called for could not be delivered when it came to shaping the social side of the basic, new economic conditions.

Without the power to create and without a political response to the requirements of economic development, we will at best achieve only what others impose on us. Those who settle for adaptation will end up running behind global developments.

Assessment of East Germany's comparatively easy path into the EU through German unification offers some idea of how ineffective an adaptation strategy is for achieving political and social integration within a wider European framework.

In Germany, we are economically half way — despite massive support — but social and cultural integration is a growing problem.

The East lost too much of its creativity and self-confidence — capital that it held for what might have been a new form of society arising from two different systems. And the West defended its



*Socialist Euro MPs were the first Europeans to cross the Brandenburg Gate after the collapse of the Berlin Wall*

standards and the status quo instead of seizing the chance for innovation.

The size of the task of EU enlargement is more like a new foundation: the term 'enlargement' blurs the scale.

A philosophy for the whole of Europe is needed to establish the necessary new instruments and rules. Stable institutions do not necessarily mean standardisation. Europe has to foster the wealth of democratic traditions in individual countries so that

democratic participation can evolve. European

legitimacy does not come about on its own but is based on locally, regionally or nationally rooted authorities and their participation in European decision-making.

Without a European identity, Europe will neither be a creative power in global competition nor be able to handle diversity. Accepting diversity requires a basis of common values.

European values include the experience of civil emancipation, the socialist labour movement and Christian social teachings.

Liberty, equality and solidarity form a canon of values shared by all democratic parties in Europe.

The social state will not disappear as a characteristic of European civilisation. But neither will it remain the sole guarantor of political and social cohesion.

New forms of division of labour and power will become necessary and will have to be based on the principles of subsidiarity and federalism.

Representation of particular interests and common European needs will require relevant levels of action. Without common constitution-building norms Europe's growing together will not be possible.

A first step has been taken. The European Charter on Fundamental Rights is the core of a future European Constitution. Human dignity is the basis of freedom; individual and social rights will derive from equality and solidarity. The Charter will create binding rules against which to measure human rights infringements or curbs on civil liberties. The current debate about criteria for dealing with extreme right-wing parties will thus be strongly supported.

One thing is clear: a common currency is not enough for foundation of a common European civilisation. What is essential are a framework of fundamental values along with fundamental rights that are firm and binding for all.

## soundbite

'Education is the social security of the future.'  
Kathleen Van Brempt,  
Flemish MEP at the Paris  
round table

*Full text available at [www.pes.org](http://www.pes.org)*

# The Challenge of Freedom of Information

*By Aidan White, Secretary General of the European Federation of Journalists*

POLITICIANS and journalists have always had a love-hate relationship, but there are some things about which we must always agree – democracy and human rights, for instance. That is why concentration of media ownership, commercialisation of information and plunging standards of journalism, which compromise public access to reliable information should set alarm bells ringing around the newsrooms and parliaments of Europe.

The opening of a dialogue between Socialist MEPs and journalists in Milan in October is a welcome step towards identifying issues – such as public broadcasting and media globalisation – where we need to work effectively together. We also need to co-operate to make politics more accessible and accountable, particularly through more freedom of information laws.

Most politicians agree that public access to information is a key to pluralism and democracy and many fine words and promises followed the amendment of the Amsterdam Treaty with its famous Article 255, which guarantees Europeans more open Government.

However, too many people inside the charmed circle of political power in Brussels talk transparency but still act secretly, particularly when there is bad news on the agenda.

In the twilight days of the Santer Commission, for instance, as public disquiet about corruption and incompetence was rising, the instinct of political leaders and officials was to stifle

debate, penalise informants and to find ways of undermining the journalistic process of investigation and reporting.

Recently came more evidence of political bad faith. While Parliament and Commission officials were discussing the fine detail of a legal regulation, a meeting of top-level representatives of the Council of Ministers in July summarily adopted new rules that dramatically increase the amount of secrecy, particularly over security and defence issues.

This action was inspired by NATO and initiated by Javier Solana, the former NATO secretary general who less than a year ago took over the European Union foreign policy and security portfolio. Solana's action bypassed the Parliament and Commission and showed contempt for the Amsterdam commitment to openness by using the "written procedure" to introduce changes without further debate. It was a classic summertime coup, at the height of the holiday season when much of the Brussels political and media com-



*Journalists and politicians need to work together says White*

munity was absent on the beaches.

By any standards the action is disgraceful. It challenges EU commitments to openness and undermines co-decision arrangements between Parliament and Council. Nor was it necessary. Existing rules on access and exceptions proposed under a draft Code now being discussed in the Parliament are more than adequate to meet security needs.

If the action by the Council is allowed to stand it will bring more secrecy into public life in Europe, not less.

We strongly support efforts within the Parliament to repeal the decision taken by the Council, which was confirmed on 14 August. It is essential that MEPs speak with a united voice. At stake is the credibility of the political co-decision process, not to mention public confidence that treaty commitments count for something in Brussels.

*Aidan White is General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists, the regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists. It represents more than 200,000 journalists in 38 European countries.*

## soundbite

'Let all children be taught three languages – starting in primary school.' Pervenche Beres, Leader of the French Socialist MEPs.

## Values in Vienna: Round Tables Resume

*contd from p1*

Euro MPs taking part include Socialist Group leader Enrique Baron, his deputies Pervenche Beres of France and Hannes Swoboda of Austria and Joke Swiebel of the European Parliament's women's rights committee.

Mr Thierse will deliver a keynote address at 14h00 and Mr Baron will present the conclusions of the day's talks at 16h30.



## Media and Democracy

*contd from p1*

tion, the European Broadcasting Union and the Italian Telecomms Authority.

Debates on 28 October open at 09h30 with a session on 'Opportunities and challenges in the Digital Age'. Speakers will include Italian culture minister Giovanna Melandri, OSCE Representative for Freedom of Media Freimut Duve, Italian State Secretary for Communication Vincenzo Vita and academic expert Dina Iordanova.

Italian DS leader Walter Veltroni will open the concluding discussion on 'Media and Democracy in the Information Age'. European Parliament Socialist Group chairman Enrique Baron will present the Round Table conclusions at 13h00.

## On The Table

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Dutch Premier Wim Kok are to co-host talks in Amsterdam on modernity in the economy, in the welfare state and in social democracy. The Amsterdam Round Table is scheduled for 17 and 18 November and will bring together politicians, entrepreneurs, trade unions and scientists.

The last Round Table of 2000 takes place in Stockholm on 2 December when the theme will be 'Welfare in a time of Globalisation.'

The Round Table programme will continue in 2001 with three further themes. Details of the 2001 programme will be announced later this year in 'The Round Table.' The discussions are intended to prepare for next May's Congress of the Party of European Socialists in Berlin.

# A Paper To Talk About

The need to create a European Communications Authority is among issues addressed in a discussion paper prepared for the Milan Round Table on 'Media and Democracy' by the Italian DS party.

The discussion paper – available on the Internet at [www.pes.org](http://www.pes.org) – also deals with freedom of information, enhancement of cultural diversity, safeguarding pluralism of ideas and their roots and modern democracy.

'The development of new information technologies and the activities of global corporations offer extraordinary opportunities,' says the paper, 'but that at the same time gives rise to risks and concerns.'

The need to ensure democracy in information, it adds, 'must increasingly refer to supranational – and in our opinion, European – institutions and instruments.'

Measures proposed at EU level in the paper include:

INCORPORATING a right to freedom of information from a plurality of sources as a constitutive right of the Union into the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which should become the introduction to the Treaty;

BUILDING the new technologies into the education system across Europe;

GOING beyond competition law in ensuring pluralism to examine the possibility of concluding a draft directive on media ownership;

EXAMINING the need to create a European Communications Authority and to identify a specific role for the European Union that goes beyond mere market regulation;

ESTABLISHING new and flexible rules that guarantee universal service,



*PES paper headlines democracy issues*

facilitate access, fix charging policies for users, protect privacy, fight illegal use of the Internet, safeguard children, ensure fairness in electronic commerce and protect copyright and related rights;

PROVIDING guarantees for media workers whose careers and training needs are affected by technological change;

REVISING the 'Television Without Frontiers' directive to promote European productions and introducing a directive specifically to promote European cinema;

MEETING new challenges for public service broadcasting and broadening the debate from issues of finance to include programme quality, joint ventures and civic communication.

## PES Congress 2001

The Fifth Congress of the Party of European Socialists will be held on 7 and 8 May 2001 in Berlin. About 1,500 European Socialists and Social Democrats are expected to attend, among them all PES party leaders, prime ministers, commissioners and members of the European Parliament.

The results of the 11 round table discussions held in the year 2000 and the beginning of 2001 will be presented.

### 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)