

# **YES WORKPLAN**

**2017-2019**

## **Introduction**

YES - Young European Socialists embodies many of the values that we all commonly share and can relate to. We all can relate to and uphold the values of solidarity, equality, justice and internationalism. Together, as part of this organization, we all fight for a society that does not discriminate, that promotes inclusion and fairness, that is capable of guaranteeing that no one is left behind.

Over the course of the next two years, YES is facing many difficult challenges that are the result of the context in which we are inserted but that go beyond it. The EU is trying to face the consequences of, for the first time, a member state leaving its union, with all the convulsions that this has brought to the European integration project. Moreover, the growing disengagement with the EU, which has led to continuous doubts about its essence, drove the Commission to present five scenarios for the reform of the EU. However, these five scenarios failed to understand the core problem of this disenchantment, as none of these proposals address the growing inequalities caused by a neoliberal economic approach by the Commission and other European institutions and governments over the last decades. Additionally, after the creation of the EU with Maastricht and its biggest enlargement in 2004, the Union has yet failed to provide the mechanisms for a full democratic participation of its citizens, including in the selection of its officials. Finally, the Union's position regarding the respect of fundamental human rights has been, over the last years, completely disregarded, with Europe losing its leading role in defending human rights. The situation with refugees, the continuous raising of borders to the outside of the EU, the overlooking of the disrespect of EU principles in Hungary, the continued support for austerity policies that impose the costs of economic crises on those least able to afford them, and the lack of capacity to be a bridge builder force in the non-EU neighboring region, all points to a failure of the core values under which the EU was also built.

As an umbrella organization, YES has to have the capacity to be the driving force of its member organizations, providing the mechanisms to empower its members and to campaign and organise on a European level, but also to push for new and creative ideas inside of our movement. This means that YES needs to be able to fulfil its MOs expectations, but also to serve as a bridge between them, contributing for a better and closer cooperation within our family. For this purpose, we need to develop a strategy that ensures that communication with MOs is done in a permanent and recurrent way, aiming at reaching out to our members and activists, as well as to young people.

All of these proposals go in line with the ideas adopted at the 13th YES Congress, and the official position of YES will always be in respect of the adopted Position Paper and Resolutions. This work plan aims at providing a guideline for what course of action can be adopted for the next two years, supported by the actions of the Presidium members, the Network Coordinators and, naturally, the role and proposals of the Member Organizations.

### **European Elections**

The European Elections of 2019 will be a decisive moment for our family all over Europe. We acknowledge the hard situation that some of our Member Organizations are currently facing and how much the right wing populist parties have taken over part of the traditional electorate of the left. The rhetoric of nationalism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, racism and anti-EU feelings has gained ground and has threatened the aspirations of internationalism, solidarity and cooperation that we have always defended.

Our family has a clear opportunity to lead the debate on the road to the 2019 elections. Today, more than ever, we know where to stand: rejecting right-wing populism, rejecting nationalistic discourses and standing for European integration. We stand clear on defending some of the actions that we have been promoting over the last months, including the proposals of the Youth Action Plan:

- Deepening and strengthening **the Youth Guarantee**, reinforcing its mechanisms in order to really tackle the problems of unemployment and of the NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) population.
- Creating a strong **Child Guarantee**, protecting every child of the EU and making sure that none is forced to live in poverty.
- Improve the Erasmus programme, under the premise of **Erasmus4All**. As YES, we cannot accept that such an important programme is constantly under threat and that its resources do not allow for the programme to be a truly inclusive one, being too many times directed only to a certain economic elite. Moreover, we believe that the Erasmus programme should be extended to other levels of education and training.
- Promote a true European cultural policy and increase the possibilities of young people to benefit from cultural activities. For that, we propose a **Cultural Voucher** for the European Youth, to be used in museums, monuments, or any other cultural sites.

These are just some of the topics that we have been strongly supporting and advocating over the last months. However, they are far from being the only ones.

### **YES, Social Democracy and the Left**

The 13th YES Congress decided in a very clear way to point a direction for our alliances and partners. For a very long time, our family has engaged in ways that have diverted us from our core values and principles. By embracing models of society that were in clear opposition to the model we aim at building, by adopting policies that contradict our goals for this Union, we have often distanced ourselves from our electorate.

We know that every reality is different and that there cannot be a one size fit all solution. We embrace diversity and the different contexts of every country, without seeking to impose a concrete solution. The sign given by the President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament, announcing the end of the time of the Grand Coalitions was a powerful inspiration for the path that we seek to follow. Recent elections show us that a clear left wing agenda

gathers the growing support of more and more young people. Thus, we shall not overlook very concrete principles that we must respect and seek to implement:

- The defense of socialist, social democratic and labour policies, rejecting neoliberalism and austerity;
- Defend and promote policies that maintain the Welfare State and principles of economic democracy and seek to build a more socially just society;
- The rejection of alliances with clear right-wing, far-right, neoliberal or nationalistic parties;
- The seeking of alliances and political alliances with the parties in our left, embracing the different initiatives already in course, such as the Progressive Caucus in the European Parliament.

### **Reform and enlargement of the EU**

For a very long time, the EU has been somehow in a limbo, trying to balance itself between maintaining the political framework that it currently has and the adoption of a bolder vision of integration. Over the last years, the EU decision making model has, seldomly, been overlooked in favour of a more centralized process of decision. EU decisions emerging of bilateral meetings between some countries - namely Germany and France -, the unscrutinized decisions of European Commission bureaucrats, or the lack of democratic accountability of Eurogroup decisions are just a few examples of lack of transparency in the EU and accounts for some of the reasons for the growing disengagement of the European Union by its citizens. The EU was created as a political project of peace, democracy, freedom and prosperity. After more than 60 years, this project has contributed to implement many of its original goals; but where do we stand now?

After the announcement of the first ever exit of a member State, the United Kingdom, Europe is in a crossroad, without a clear path forward. The proposal by the Commission, presenting five different scenarios is far from offering clear leadership or even a vision of where should we aim to go. The lack of commitment to social rights, the lack of concrete solutions regarding the

the membership in the EU comes both rights and obligations. If you don't follow your obligations you should lose your rights.

YES has been on the vanguard of defending fundamental human rights. Our position paper has extensive proposals and ideas regarding this topic and this has to remain on the top priorities of our organization. Therefore, and referring to what we have long developed in the field of human fundamental rights, we will keep our focus on:

- ✓ LGBTQIA\* Rights
- ✓ Feminism
- ✓ Migration and Refugees
- ✓ People with disabilities
- ✓ Ethnic minorities
- ✓ Protection of the environment
- ✓ Fight populism and the far-right

For that, the cooperation that we have been able to establish with some of our partner organizations assume a particular relevance in the work we wish to develop. It must be highlighted that it is fundamental to maintain the close cooperation with Rainbow Rose, PES Women or Solidar as strategic partners to implement a progressive agenda for all of these areas. It is also of great importance to maintain the close cooperation with the PES and the S&D, which both have been strongly providing the platform of intervention on a high level, reaching out to the decision makers that actually have the opportunity to implement the reforms we so strongly been advocating for.

### **Communication and Campaigns**

In order to improve the external outreach of YES, we need to focus on developing a comprehensive strategy that manages to stretch our traditional levels of action and communication. As a political organisation of the youth, YES has many layers to which it must dedicate its action:

- **Lobby the institutions**, namely the European Parliament and the European Commission. We also must extend our action to the Committee of Regions and the national parliaments and governments, as well as to the Council of Europe.
- **Influence our political family**, pushing for the adoption of progressive ideas and policies, which can go in line with the aspirations and struggle to which we stand for. The PES, PES Women, S&D Group, FEPS or Solidar are only a few examples of internal political work that we must be engaged on, so as to successfully aim at shifting the ideas and discussions being held inside our family.
- **Engage with civil society in all of its different aspects**, seeking to be an active voice and partner to the different movements that can share the same vision of society as YES.

To achieve these goals and increase our visibility, we will work on a broad communication and campaign strategy, looking to change and modernize our traditional communication channels. This mean more coordination, more directed and targeted communication and an improvement in the impact of our means. Without prejudice of further developing this strategy, it is important to highlight:

- Seek a bigger and broader **outreach of our communication**, by changing and improving our website and existing social media channels;
- Developing a **targeted communication** through thorough data analysis and insightful information;
- To continue and improve the focus on **ground campaigns**, designed to engage our members and activists and to engage with the actions of our Member Organisations;
- Engagement and cooperation with a **wider range of progressive audiences and organisations**.

### YES and its Members

YES gathers almost all of the socialist, social democratic and labour youth organisations of Europe. The presence in all of the EU countries and continuously expanding our presence in th

European countries gives YES the possibility, but also the capacity, to be in contact with hundreds of thousands of members, activists or non-engaged young people. This is an opportunity as much as it is a challenge, given that need to be creative in the way that we manage to get in touch with all of these groups.

- The **contact with our Member Organisations** must be permanent and regular. As our primary target and the aim of our organisational activity, we must make sure that the Member Organisations are in line with the activity that is being developed in YES.
- **Networks and Working Groups, Seminars and Campaigns:** A crucial functions of YES is the organisation and facilitation of seminars and campaigns, including through its networks and working groups, that directly include the contributions and participation of ordinary members from around Europe.
- To engage the MOs, it also means to engage with its leadership. This means that we shall continue with the practice of the **Leaders' Meeting**, once a year, in order to make sure that we maintain the focus and the coordination with our members on its highest level.
- The role of our activists is, without a doubt, extremely important. We want to continue the cooperation with our Member Organisations in order to allow for an every time **increasing participation of young activists from all over Europe**, continuing the successes of the past.
- **Training** is also another very important feature of YES activities, as it is part of its core essence. YES must continue its efforts in promoting training sessions for its activists and to continue to be a leading organisation in coming up with new and innovating sessions. For that, we would like to bring back the model of a **Training event**, having at least one per year.