

EPP Election Manifesto 1999

A EUROPE OF OPPORTUNITIES

Europe on the threshold of the 21st century is ready for the huge new challenges which now confront it. The most urgent - the crisis in the Balkans - is a test of our capacity and of our will to act together.

Our engagement in Kosovo indicates the need to build a true European defence community with its own identity capable of ensuring a future of peace and security for all. As the EPP declared at its recent congress: "We are all part of one world".

We have already taken a great step forward towards European integration by introducing the Single Currency. But the euro is not the final objective, nor a mere technical improvement. For the EPP it is the foundation stone of what we intend to be a new era, one which will bring Europe closer to its citizens in a bewildering time.

Globalisation has revolutionised our lives and our relations with each other. It has liberated powerful new energies in our societies. At the same time, it risks bringing in its train organised crime and social exclusion, with significant minorities pushed to the margins of society.

The challenge is a large one: to secure a future of enhanced liberty, solid prosperity, and peace for everyone. The European People's Party is committed to a free and dynamic Europe. A Europe open to the world. A Europe living in solidarity with its neighbours. A Europe that gives everyone a chance.

Opportunities for the Citizens of Europe

We believe in an open society which respects the individual as just that - an individual, a member of a family, and of a wider community. And we believe that family life is the essence of human happiness, providing not just security but the transmission of essential values from one generation to the next. We will give families all the support they need.

We believe that no-one should be deprived of the privileges that come with having a good education, and we support education as a lifelong process and right. Only in that way can people cope with a constantly changing world. Promotion of language-learning will encourage students' and teachers' mobility in the Europe of knowledge.

We particularly support the study of science and technology. We need more people dedicated to research to develop a European scientific community. This is relevant to government and business sectors alike. Promoting innovation and technology means creating future employment.

We want to ensure full employment. Europe shares a stable currency and a single market which offer business stability and opportunities, especially to small and medium-sized enterprises. We support increased liberalisation to boost competition throughout Europe. The European Union must avoid generating forests of regulations which discourage personal initiative. We favour grand projects without the grand administration that usually goes with them.

We believe in self-reliance and oppose regulation and intervention where it is not clearly necessary. More often than not the state reinforces social ills rather than resolving them.

We favour dialogue and negotiation between the social partners at European level. We also believe that parents should never be forced into making a choice between their children and their careers. And that women should be

given every encouragement to play a full part in public and professional life.

We are committed to greater social integration. The kind of society we believe in encourages equal opportunities and fights poverty and social exclusion. The role of the welfare state is above all to help those in real need.

We support a welfare system which guarantees basic social rights for all citizens. Solidarity within and between generations is a necessary precondition for real security in the 21st century.

We firmly support the creation of a European Environmental Union, which implies similarly high levels of protection throughout Europe. Caring for the environment is a matter of concern for all Europeans. Protecting the quality of our environment means improving the quality of life.

Opportunities for Europe

We believe that economic and social cohesion are indispensable if we are to include all countries in a general wave of prosperity and opportunities. What our citizens want is cooperation, not strife - cooperation based on mutual loyalty and a sense of responsibility.

We back an independent European Central Bank and monetary policy which encourage stability and low interest rates. Support for the Stability Pact is a precondition for growth and increased employment. We believe tax levels are too high for Europe to be globally competitive.

We want as soon as possible to welcome in the countries currently knocking on the Union's door. Enlargement will end the historical division of our continent. It will set in stone a Europe of values, a Europe which is united and prosperous. This will promote the democratisation of South-Eastern Europe.

We seek radical institutional reform to ensure a transparent and democratic European Union which functions properly. We should only do at European level that which is not better done at local, regional or national level. Members of the European Commission should in future have clear, individual responsibility for their different competences.

We must act as one on the international scene. Together we carry more weight in our relations with other countries. Europe needs a Common Foreign and Security Policy to enable it to defend our values and interests. We hope that this united Europe will bring peace and progress to the citizens of other continents, particularly the poorest.

We want to reinforce judicial cooperation to create a genuine area of freedom, security, and justice. Only an effective European police is in a position to fight the scourge of international crime. Often invisible, controlled by highly organised and well-capitalised criminals, this new, global underworld risks corrupting not only commerce but, if we are not vigilant, whole societies.

We call for the harmonisation of European legislation in the areas of asylum and immigration, with uniform criteria at all European borders. The right to asylum within the European Union must be based on reciprocal confidence between Member States and full respect for human rights. Victims of poverty, war, and natural disasters, deserve generous European aid.

We believe in an open, pluralist, and diverse Europe, and we are committed to safeguarding it. We regard our different languages, cultures, and histories as enriching. All of them must be allowed free expression. Our vision of Europe is one which respects, protects, and promotes its diversity of identities and cultures.

Opportunities for the European People's Party

On June 10 - 13 we will be electing the European Parliament with which we will enter the 21st century. A newly-empowered Parliament which will decisively shape the Europe of the future. We enter these elections determined to become the strongest group, and to ensure a return to balance in European institutions.

A balanced Europe means less bureaucracy. It means supporting the individual and the social market economy.

High tax-levels kill off jobs and opportunities. They encourage a culture of fraud and cronyism.

We will tell the truth about what is really possible and what is not. We will make clear, concrete proposals and not flowery, empty phrases.

We will not try to win your vote by saying different things in different places. We will present the same ideas to everyone everywhere. Our candidates will vary, but not the policies they represent.

Belonging to the EPP means commitment to supporting and promoting the same ideas and projects everywhere in Europe.

Because we know that being part of a common project will make it easier to solve our common problems.

Because, on the eve of the new century, the great reforms which Europe needs require big, strong European parties.

Because the EPP has the experience, and the record of competence, to see those reforms through.

The EPP is further advanced than any other in integrating like-minded parties from the accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe. We are ready for the enlargement of the Union. Parties which share our vision of Europe are in government in most of the candidate States, and the EPP will always remain open to parties which support our programme. The reforms which Europe needs also need the support of all Europeans.

Europe was built based on our values. The European People's Party is the only European party to have drawn up a common programme of political action. Ours is the party which really practices democracy.

We are the force of moderation and dialogue in European politics. We believe that our energy and commitment can best shape the new Europe - the Europe of Opportunities.