

## Decision of the Social Democratic Party of Germany on the future of the European Union (19–21 November 2001)

**Caption:** On 19, 20 and 21 November 2001, at its National Congress held in Nuremberg, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) reaffirms its support for the European policy of the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and outlines the future challenges for the European integration process.

**Source:** Verantwortung für Europa - Deutschland in Europa -Beschluss E 1 (Parteivorstand) (2001). [ONLINE]. [Berlin]: SPD Parteivorstand, [14.09.2005]. Disponible sur <http://2001.spd-parteitag.de/servlet/PB/menu/1084448/index.html>.

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## Decision E1: Responsibility for Europe — Germany in Europe (Federal Party Conference, 19 to 21 November 2001)

At the start of this new century, Europe is faced with choices of historic dimensions. Successful enlargement of the European Union, strengthening of the European Economic and Monetary Union and the further development of European integration are the great challenges of our time.

European integration is the most important and most successful political project in European history. It provides the basis for peace, security and stability among the countries involved and brings prosperity, growth and employment for Germany and the European Union. This is why, in the new century as in the one before, the Social Democratic Party will do everything it can to advance and further develop this process.

The appalling terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 which, with their contempt for human life and human values, were directed against all peace-loving people and nations, have brought home the point that terrorism can be fought effectively only in a European and global framework. The SPD therefore supports the measures taken by the European institutions to combat terrorism.

There is no alternative to further integration and Europeanisation. How this issue is addressed will again determine the future ability of political action to meet the real needs of our country.

This is why the SPD supports the successful European policy pursued by the Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and by his government, a policy which protects our country's interests. Our country's well-being is secured most effectively and most durably within a united Europe.

Europe is for us a societal model built on the ideals of the Enlightenment and of humanism. The European social-democratic model embodies for us the combination of freedom and solidarity, of the individual and society, of performance and responsibility.

The Social Democrats have the following aims:

- Preserve prosperity and raise the employment rate
- Promote innovation and education — modernise the European social model
- Increase environmental and consumer protection
- Ensure internal security
- Strengthen the rights of citizens
- Develop European foreign and security policy
- Meet the challenge of Europe's global responsibility
- Unite Europe
- Assign tasks in a clear manner
- Work for a more democratic Europe.

In so doing, we shall contribute to a pooling of resources and a better distribution of tasks in the age of globalisation.

In so doing, we shall contribute to the preservation and further development of the European Union's successes.

In so doing, we shall contribute to the reform and enlargement of the European Union.

In so doing, we shall contribute, here in Germany, to winning hearts and minds for Europe on a lasting basis.

[...]

## 9. Assigning tasks in a clear manner

The historically determined distribution of tasks between the European Union and its Member States is no longer appropriate to meet the demands of the 21st century. In the course of this historical process, the Member States — and in Germany this also applies to the *Länder* and the local authorities — have forfeited political room for manoeuvre, although in many areas sound decisions would be better taken at their level. At the same time, the European Union even today lacks the powers that it requires to safeguard its interests at international level and to preserve internal security.

The current system for distributing tasks is lacking in transparency and clarity. As a result it is often not apparent at what political level decisions which impinge directly on the day-to-day lives of citizens should be taken. This calls into question the legitimacy of political action at European level.

The SPD therefore welcomes the Federal Government's success at the Nice Conference in persuading its partners of the need, at a further EU reform conference to be held in 2004, to arrive at a more closely defined delimitation of the respective powers of the EU and of the Member States, based on the principle of subsidiarity. The individual citizen must be in a position to clearly identify who is responsible for what policy. Clear, transparent decision-making paths between the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament must also be established, paths which the citizen can follow and understand.

With due regard for the principles of proximity to the citizen and solidarity among the EU Member States, the SPD therefore demands

- that, by means of a clear distribution of tasks, political powers at the European and Member State levels be delimited in a manner that can be readily understood. The right to transfer new powers to the EU must remain with the Member States. The distribution of tasks between the Federal Government, the *Länder* and the local authorities is and remains a domestic political issue;
- that measures be taken to prevent a creeping transfer of powers to the European level. Cross-sector powers such as responsibility for the internal market or for competition rules must not lead to an erosion of the Member States' sphere of responsibility;
- that tasks which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, are more properly dealt with by the Member States be returned to the national level, where such transfer does not endanger the internal market. This applies in particular to the EU's powers with regard to agricultural and structural policies, where the aim should be to widen the scope for the Member States to pursue independent regional and structural policies;
- that the Member States' ability to determine public service provision continue to be guaranteed;

- that the EU's ability to act in the areas of foreign and security policy, internal security and immigration be strengthened by means of further communitarisation, since individual Member States are less and less able to defend their interests effectively at international level;
- that greater decision-making transparency at European level be achieved by expanding the Commission's role, so that it becomes a powerful European Executive, by further augmenting the powers of the European Parliament through an extension of the co-decision procedure and its endowment with full budgetary powers, and by developing the Council into a Chamber in which the European states are represented;
- that, with a view to achieving a European society of citizens, all decision-making procedures, from planning through to implementation, be accessible, transparent and comprehensible. Europe must come to the people. It follows that all relevant information must be available to all citizens in their professional and personal environments. To that end, all authorities, whether the European institutions, the Member States or the local authorities, must be available to answer any questions concerning the formulation of European policies;
- that the Committee of the Regions be strengthened as the representative of local and regional territorial bodies.

## **10. Work for a more democratic Europe**

Ten years ago, no one knew what Europe would look like today. No one knows today what Europe will look like ten years hence. But what was true then is still true today: Europe's future lies in the hands of its citizens. This is why we are determined to fight for a good future for Europe.

Better than any state acting alone, we in Europe can attain our political goals by working together; indeed, we are often doing so already through cross-border and neighbourly cooperation. We must, however, reflect further on the structures in which these future tasks would best be addressed and on the formulations that would be most appropriate.

This is not about technical issues; it is about democracy and participation.

And this is what Europe needs so urgently: for its citizens to participate, criticise, endorse and discuss.

The Social Democratic Party will press for a public debate in Germany and in Europe on the political aims of the European Union.

The Social Democratic Party will press for a public debate in Germany and in Europe on the structural and decision-making mechanisms of the European Union.

This is a debate to which all should contribute: citizens and governments, state and society, European Parliament and national parliaments, EU Commission and European Council, parties and associations, cities and municipalities.

In pursuing this debate on reinforcement and on redefined constitutional foundations — in which the national parliaments and the European Parliament must be fully involved in a genuine process of parliamentarisation — we seek:

- to incorporate the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Treaties, thereby taking a further step towards a

European Constitution;

- to establish a European scheme for the separation of powers between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, in keeping with the principles of democratic legitimacy, efficiency and transparency;
- to simplify and render more democratic the Treaties and the decision-making mechanisms;
- to have the President of the EU Commission selected by the directly elected European Parliament. The Social Democratic Party of Europe (SPE) would therefore nominate for the European elections a lead candidate who would stand for election to the office of Commission President;
- to have clarified the basis on which tasks are distributed between the European Union, the Member States, the *Länder* and the local authorities;
- to lay the foundations for an effective European Union foreign policy.

This debate, which will lead to an intergovernmental conference in 2004, is not to be seen as a further pre-condition for EU enlargement.

We are committed to the drafting of a European Constitution. If this is to come about, the drafting process must be constitutionalised, with substantial citizen involvement. This is why the SPD supports the establishment of a Convention, on which, above all, the peoples and states of Europe would be represented, to draft the European Constitution.

Citizens must in future feel that in Europe they are at home in an area of freedom, security and justice, as is already laid down in the Treaty on European Union.

The European Constitution would therefore be preceded by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which would be binding upon the organs of the European Union and those of the Member States, insofar as they are acting in the execution of Union law. The European Union would respect the legal orders of the Member States, as they have evolved over time and been enshrined in laws, as well as their traditions and their cultural specificities. It would create space for the autonomous development of the regions.

In addition to the tasks which the EU Heads of State and Government have, in their declaration on the future of the Union, entered on the agenda for the 2004 reform conference, the Convention must also draft proposals for an extension of majority voting in the Council. This could have a lasting impact on the ability of an enlarged Union to act effectively. The states and societies of the accession countries must be expressly included in this post-Nice process.

We are and remain confident as regards the future of Europe:

- We shall, in ten years' time, live in a Europe which is larger and more closely connected than today.
- We shall, in ten years' time, live in a Europe endowed with a Constitution.
- We shall, in ten years' time, live in a Europe which has a common currency.

- We shall, in ten years' time, live in a Europe which has shared values and many different languages and cultures.

We shall work to achieve this aim together with our European sister parties.

The SPD will continue to make its contribution to a strong and efficient Social Democratic Party of Europe.

If we are to resolve these key issues affecting the future, we shall need to make progress in building a European public opinion.

As the European Union grows in importance, the further development of the SPE will similarly acquire greater significance; in the longer term, its role as a party with mass membership and an agreed manifesto will also develop. The principle that 'democracy needs parties' is valid not only for individual Member States. It is valid also in respect of the deepening of European integration. The SPD will therefore intensify its efforts to achieve a greater measure of agreement within the European social-democratic community on fundamental values, on aims, on key projects of strategic importance and on political issues of current relevance. Only a strong European social-democratic movement will have the genuine power to establish and preserve a free and peaceful Europe, a Europe of prosperity and social justice.