



**Transcript of the speech of Maria João Rodrigues, FEPS President
On the occasion of FEPS 10th Anniversary,
29th January 2018**

Let me use my message for you to address the future, the next phase for our joint creation of a European Foundation. This is something new, in the European life, to count with on the European Political Foundations and to build up a progressive one. This is our common task.

I believe that FEPs must be a kind of a center-hub of a very large network, involving many partners, across Europe and beyond; and our network should work together in such a way that we inspire progressive forces all over.

This is a very challenging task. I am assuming that we have basically 3 key missions:

One is to development a long-term vision for the future, a progressive and inspiring one; the second is to translate these into concrete policy solutions to address our citizens concerns and then, at the same time, this our third mission, we need to renew social democracy, socialism but also progressive approaches. And in fact we know that these missions are completely intertwined, we need to undertake them at the same time.

Let me start by asking, when it comes the renewal of social democracy, socialism, progressive approach; let me ask you: Is there a problem with our fundamental values? And let me tell you, I don't think so. Our DNA remains completely relevant, if you think about the completely basic values: freedom, equality, fairness; this unique combination remains a central reference for, I believe, human kind. And how do we articulate this? Because we are saying that in order to have real freedom, we need to have real equality, in order to have real equality, we need to have fairness. And we should elaborate on the values in their particular historical context. This is what is specific to the progressive approach.

So this remains valid. Therefore we can ask, where is the problem? I believe the problem is not in the values, the problem is about our capacity to update our political agenda and to turn these into real action, to change reality. And for this we need to make a lot of hard work to update our agenda and to build new European and political tools.

But starting with a Progressive Foundation, with European dimension can make a difference, working when with all other national foundations. And we must be able to make this difference when addressing the new challenges and updating our agenda. Frans (Timmermans) and Sergei (Stanishev) already mentioned some of them. Let me start, of course, with sustainability. And for us, progressives, sustainability is not only a problem of dealing with the scarcity of resources or climate change; it is basically a problem of social fairness, between countries in the planet and between generations. And we are aware that in order to really cope with these, we will need to undertake a paradigm shift, move to a new development model based on these new concepts of



circular economy, low-carbon economy and a big change in the way we consume, we produce and we move ourselves. This is the first appeal to move our imagination.

But then we have a second challenge which is the new phase of the digital revolution, and this time, this is really deep because this is not only about the way we communicate it is about changing the nature of our way of life; when it comes, very soon, we will be surrounded by objects and services, all of them smart, connected and driven by artificial intelligence. These will make a big difference but this is not all the story because the current digital revolution is changing completely the way markets work; whatever the market, financial but also the labour market; (and) the way supply and demand meet. And this will become a big driver for change in all sectors.

For us progressives, we can see several implications of this.

The first one is about social inequalities because, yes-new social inequalities are emerging because of this digital revolution and we need to cope with this by reinventing the Welfare State. With a big concern for education, life long learning all over (the) life cycle but also reinventing social protection all over the life cycle. And I really believe that the European Social Pillar was a good start for this, but this is just a start.

The second implication for us progressives is tax policy. Because we need to tax added value where added value is being created. And now we are dealing with a new shape of capitalism, which is, let's say a digital capitalism, and new added value is created there. It is digital, it is virtual but it is as real as the all other realities we know about. So we need to update the way we use tax policy to provide common public goods. And this is again a great transformation in the sense of Polanyi, very famous author, a great transformation is the period with the first Industrial Revolution when people have lost, here in Europe, the main reference which was land, a connection to a particular plot of land. Now we are loosing the connection to a central reference which is a stable, lifelong and located job; this is vanishing- and we need to rebuild new references for people to keep a sense of belonging. So all the anxiety we can feel is because of that, but we can build a new sense of belonging, yes we must.

And then we have a third challenge, which we should be able to discuss without taboos, is migration. Because look, and I am assuming that and at (the) whole history of the planet shows that at the end of the day migration proved to be something with a final positive input for societies; but this time again it will be different because we are dealing with much larger scale migration. And so this means that we need to have a much more comprehensive strategy to deal with this, going to the root of the problem, working with the origin countries, managing our own space, most of all, finding a real solution on how can we combine social integration which should respect the diversity but also enforce our concept of citizenship; citizens with rights and duties. I believe this should be over heading the concern with respecting the cultural diversity. But I know what I am just saying now is controversial, that is why we need to have a proper, open and without taboos, discussion. And this is very important, as we know, for the future of European societies.



Then we have a another challenge I will underline of course which is the new globalization with the multi-polar world, with the possible role for Europe to become a central pillar of cooperation, openness and to underpin a new future of the multilateral system; I will not elaborate on this because it will be the central topic of our next panel.

And last but not least, the other challenge I will identify is, of course, democracy. This is a key word because democracy as we know is being challenged by the way the digital revolution is taking place, the role of the fake news, and the de-fragmentation of the European public sphere but also need to combine in news ways representative democracy and participatory democracy. But I would argue (that) for us progressives, the main task is to build up a multi-level democracy. If you want to take control of our lives, we know that the local/national levels of democracy are no longer enough. We know that we need to go beyond and to build up a powerful European level and, of course, the international one. This one of the defining marks of progressives. And that is why European projects, European integration is such a central task for us. We need to regain the capacity to lead the next phase of European integration.

Right now we know that even before elections, key decisions are about to be taken, which can reshape Europe. Think about this sequence we are in right now: Social pillar, Eurozone reform coming up or not, with the European Asylum system, dealing with the new trade agreements which are being negotiated by the European Union, and last but not least, equipping the European Union with a Defense and Security capacity; and (to) translate all these into a EU budget for the future. All these I just mentioned are part of an EU roadmap for the future and these decisions might be taken even before European elections. So we progressives need to be active about this, shaping these decisions.

That is why, I would say, FEPS, we play a role. I should announce today that FEPs is now inviting all the national foundations and partners, from civil society but also experts around the world and policy makers, to work together on the seven priorities which you could see in the first video clip that we used to open this conference. So all of you, you are invited to come, we will launch these initiatives to shape the key decisions being taken now but to also to pave the way of a new phase of European integration; and a very much hope that we, progressives, we are able and we organize ourselves, to take the lead of this next phase of the European project; so I count on all of you for this.

Thank you very much.