

Report

## **Social Democracy in a Diversified Left – A Social Democratic Vision for Europe?**

Brussels, 2 February 2018

Across Europe, with a few notable exceptions, social democratic parties are losing ground. Declining elections results in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands or the Czech Republic (to name only a few) are cause of legitimate concern. The aim of this event was, however, not only to ponder on possible causes of such a development but also to formulate new directions and visions.



Uwe Optenhögel, Johanna Uekermann and Kati Piri

The panel consisting of **Kati Piri**, Dutch MEP, **Jernej Pikalo**, former Slovenian Minister of Education, **Johanna Uekermann**, German politician and member of the SPD executive committee, chaired by **Uwe Optenhögel**, former director FES Brussels, discussed such

European perspectives on social democracy by highlighting experiences from their respective countries.



Jernej Pikalo and Uwe Optenhögel

While negative processes are to be taken seriously, the panellists emphasized not to bury one's head in the sand. It is fundamental that social democracy rebuilds trust among its constituents and regains terrain in the public debate. Kati Piri underscored that social democratic values need to be reintroduced, reframed, and put into context of modern society. Furthermore, it was argued that the rise of right-wing populist parties demonstrates that delivering concrete policy

outcomes is insufficient and that insecurities of different natures must be addressed.



Udo Bullmann, acting President of S&D Group

As a final wrap-up, **Udo Bullmann**, acting President of S&D Group, delivered an inspiring speech about the necessity to rethink our economic model that maintains the notion of GDP growth as an indicator to measure subjective well-being. Instead, he advocated for a more holistic approach to politics embracing sustainability in a political, social, and environmental dimension.

Lastly, Udo Bullmann stressed that the EU is a unifying force for social democracy as he summarised “either Europe or we all fail”.



Renate Tenbusch, Director, FES Brussels

Within the scope of this event, we bid farewell to **Uwe Optenhögel** and welcomed **Renate Tenbusch** as the new director of FES Brussels. We thank Uwe for his extraordinary commitment and work for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung here in Brussels, and are looking forward to be working with Renate in the upcoming years.