



Università degli Studi di
Genova



Dipartimento di Scienze
Politiche (DISPO)



Scuola di
Scienze Sociali



Aston University
Aston Centre for Europe

Political Studies Association Italian Politics

Call for Papers

The crisis of European social democracy: causes and consequences in an age of political uncertainty

PSA Italian Politics Specialist Group Conference, Genoa 14-15 June 2019

Over the last ten years almost all European social democratic parties have experienced major setbacks (one may even call them 'shocks') in a context of economic, social and political uncertainty. Whereas the 1980s and 1990s were seen as a phase of transition, transformation and renewal of European social democracy, the current decade has been marked by the dramatic – perhaps irreversible – decline in the fortunes of one of the oldest and most resilient political families in the European democratic tradition.

The debate on the 'crisis' of social democracy is not a recent one and some scholars already reflected on the ideological and organisational transformations of centre-left parties after the so-called *Trente Glorieuses* (1945-1975). However, the challenges that social democracy had to face in the 1980s and 1990s seem less serious when compared to the current ones, which may deal a fatal blow to established reformist parties. The electoral defeats that social democratic parties have recently suffered in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and almost all other European countries have no precedent in the history of Europe after WW2. The recovery in the late 1990s, with the emergence of Tony Blair's Third Way and the formation of renewed centre-left governments in most European countries, was rather short-lived and first signs of reversal were already evident in the first decade of the 21st century. However, it is after the beginning of the financial, and then economic, crisis in 2007-8 that the vulnerabilities of the reformist Left became increasingly evident.

The aim of this conference is to shed light not only on the circumstances that have contributed to the crisis of social-democratic parties over the last ten years but also on the impact that such crisis has on democratic processes and public policy. We welcome contributions in three key areas. The first area focuses on internal characteristics of social democratic parties, that is, their organisation/membership, leadership and their political platforms/ideologies. The second one looks at the social and political environment in which social democratic parties compete. One may consider transformations in socio-economic conditions and voters' attitudes and preferences (demand-side) or changing patterns of inter-party competition, with the emerge of new challengers (supply-side). Lastly the third area focuses on the implications of the social democratic crisis for Western European democracies and for relevant policy areas. Of course, the three areas identified here should not necessarily be analysed in isolation and we also welcome contributions that aim to establish links between them.

Paper proposals should be emailed to Davide Vampa (d.vampa@aston.ac.uk) by 17th March 2019