



ANNUAL REPORT 2008

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

EUROPEAN FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOLIDARITY

DEMOCRACY BUILDING PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTIES AND FOUNDATIONS IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE
& THE CAUCASUS.

“The social democrats were the main actors of unification in Europe following the cold war period, after which democracy was spread, as well as values for market economy and social economy. The European Forum played a crucial role in spreading such values and should continue its work.”

Vilmos Szabo, member of Parliament for MSzP



Contents

Foreword	5
General information	9
Financial situation	11
Activities in chronological order	12
• Georgian Youth Forum: Strengthening Social Democracy in Georgia	15
• Future of the Left in Belarus	17
• Belarus in the Run Up to the September 28 Parliamentary Elections	19
• ENP at Work in Jordan	23
• Post-election Mission to Moscow	29
• Transparency and Openness in Society and the Role of Political Parties	35
• Turkey on the Road to EU Membership	41
• A Green Agenda for South East Europe	45
• Piran 2008: Green, how I want you Green	52
• 15 years European Forum: Social democracy and the consequences of the enlargement	54
Course for Promising Politicians Romania/Moldova 2007-2008	61
• Seminar I - "Social democratic parties; Ideology and organisation"	62
• Seminar II - "Social democratic parties; Political campaigning and mass media"	62
• Seminar III - "Negotiation Strategies and European integration"	62
Course for Promising Politicians Former Yugoslavia 2008	65
• Seminar I - "Social democratic parties; Ideology and Organisation"	66
• Seminar II - "Media and communication skills"	67
• Seminar III - "European integration"	68
CEE Network for Gender Issues; Final 2007 Narrative Report	69
Information service; News Service Report 2008	85
European Forum Work Plan 2008	91
European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity	3

Abbreviations

AMS	Alfred Mozer Stichting
DS	Democratic Party of Serbia
EC	European Commission
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EF	European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FEPS	Foundation for European Progressive Studies
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
PES	Party of European Socialists
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SDP-H	Social democratic party of Croatia
SDSM/SDUM	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
SI	Socialist International

Foreword

Herewith we are presenting to you the Annual Report 2008 of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. We are proud to present you the report on our activities supporting democracy in general and social democracy in particular. In December we celebrated our 15th anniversary with a successful conference in Budapest with the Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány as special guest.

In total seven conferences/ larger events were organised by the European Forum, attended by representatives of the PES, the Socialist Group in the EP, European Commission and representatives from different national parliaments and governments.

In Velenje, Slovenia, where after their election victory Borut Pahor had just been appointed Prime Minister of our sister party SD, the European Forum took the initiative to address environmental issues. Political parties representatives and non-governmental organisations were offered the possibility to meet and to discuss the necessary steps to establish a green agenda for the Western Balkans.

In Tirana, the European Forum organised a conference on transparency and openness in society and the role of political parties. Party leader of the SPA, Rama, showed his commitment to reform by stating that in order to achieve real and total change, which will transform Albania into an EU country, it is necessary to change the political process which can only be successful if the political parties change.

In Istanbul we organised a conference on EU enlargement. This conference achieved bringing together major political players and experts both from the EU as well as Turkey. The dialogue during the conference touched upon a wide variety



of topics, including the most sensitive ones. In this way the conference fulfilled the aim of defining a social democratic agenda that meets the challenges ahead.

The conference in Amman, Jordan was a historic step for the European Forum as it was our first event in the Middle East. As a follow up to our 2007 'ENP at work conference' in Morocco we can say the European Forum established a widened view, including now also the Southern dimension of the European neighbourhood. As this conference has shown, there is a great need for more dialogue between political and civil actors from the EU and the region, when it comes to topics that are sensitive for the region such as democracy and reforms.

The CEE Gender Network Task Force concluded its ambitious work plan for 2008, thanks to the great commitment and dedication of Sonja Lokar, Reet Laja, Zita Gurmaj and Dasa Silovic. The activities of the Gender Network have encouraged women to expand their participation in politics. They really show with their invaluable work that women can do it!

Our successful Promising Politicians Course in 2008 gathered young and promising social democrats from Western Balkan countries, who met in Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia. We have witnessed growing attention of the parties in the region as the Course has become very known among the parties and their youth organisations. We managed also to duplicate the success of this course with a series of three seminars for promising politicians in Romania and Moldova and a course for young social democrats in Georgia.

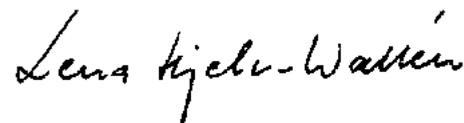
Special attention is still needed for Belarus and we continue to support the democratic forces in this country. Support was given by those comrades in prison, being harassed and prosecuted. Two events were organised in Brussels and in Kiev to continue the ongoing dialogue with the different branches of the opposition including left wing parties. Unfortunately the lack of unity and cooperation still remains a big issue.

The Russian Federation remains a political enigma. In order to understand the ways of Russian politics and political parties a high level fact finding mission was organised in which a record number of interested

parties and foundations took part. The meeting were of the highest level and the conclusions of the participants had a real impact on the decisions taken at the Socialist International Congress later that year.

We have concluded a fruitful year. The support to our sister parties was made possible through organisational and financial contribution by the member foundations of the European Forum. In addition, our close cooperation with the PES, FEPS and the Socialist Group, has added much to the quality of the conferences and active participation of our sister parties representatives. Our activities have encouraged social democrats to address actual issues and by means of this, they have contributed to strengthening social democracy.

Once more, I would like to thank those who have been involved in our projects and specifically the European Forum staff, which was dedicated to make 2008 a rewarding year again.



Lena Hjelm-Wallén
Chairperson of the European Forum

General information

In January 1993, the social democratic parties and political foundations from EU countries founded the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity in order to support the transformation and democratisation processes in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Serving as a platform for co-operation between social democratic parties, organisations and personalities, the European Forum aims to contribute to the development of social democracy in these regions. The European Forum unites 12 social democratic foundations and 19 social democratic parties within its supervision body; the Steering Committee. The Dutch Alfred Mozer Stichting is currently responsible for the implementation of the European Forum's working programme.

Staff in 2008

Arjen Berkvens – secretary general
Kirsten Meijer – senior project manager
Alma Balesic – project manager (to 01/09)
Marina Ohanjanyan – project manager (from 01/09)
Danijel Tadić – project manager (from 01/08)
Margriet van Dijken (intern)
Marina Ohanjanyan (intern)
Marianna Tsirelson (intern)

The Steering Committee

Lena Hjelm Wallén, former Swedish vice-prime minister, Chairperson
Jan Marinus Wiersma, MEP, vice-president Socialist Group

In 2008 the steering committee met on:

- 6th of February in Brussels, Belgium
- 4th of June in Brussels, Belgium
- 8th of October in Brussels, Belgium
- 12th of December in Budapest, Hungary

Members of the European Forum are 19 parties and 12 social democratic foundations

Parties: CSSD (Czech Republic), DNA (Norway), DS (Italy), Labour Party (Great Britain), MSzP (Hungary), PS (France), PvdA (The Netherlands), SAP (Sweden), SDL (Poland), SDP (Denmark), SDP (Estonia), SDP (Finland), SPD (Germany), SPÖ (Austria), PES, Unia Pracy (Poland), SD (Slovenia), PASOK (Greece), Democratici Di Sinistra (Italy)

Social democratic foundations: Alfred Mozer Stichting (The Netherlands), Dr. Karl Renner Institut (Austria), Fondation Jean Jaurès (France), Foundation for European Education (Poland), FES (Germany), ISTANCE A. Papandreou (Greece), Johannes Mihkelson Foundation (Estonia), Kalander Foundation (Slovenia), Olof Palme International Centre (Sweden), Westminster Foundation for Democracy / Labour Party (Great Britain) and Ovidiu Sincai Institute Foundation (Romania), Tancsics Foundation (Hungary)

Financial situation

Result of the European Forum	Result 2008
Contributions	
Czech Republic; CSSD	5.200
Finland; SDP	5.200
Hungary; MSZP	5.200
Austria; SPO	5.200
Norway; DNA	5.200
Sweden; SAP	25.000
Germany; SPD	25.000
Denmark; SDP	5.200
Projects covered by sister foundations	
Olof Palme international center	37.500
Fondation Jean Jaurès	5.000
Labour Party through Westminster funds	122.000
FEPS	34.000
Renner Institut	11.500
Total	<u>291.200</u>
Expenditure	
Projects European Forum	220.025
Organisational costs	77.027
Salaries	26.374
	<u>323.140</u>
Strategic Reserve EF	
On 31-12-2007	69.713
2008 withdrawn from reserve for expenditure	31.940
Write-off 2007	5.200
total on 31-12-2008	<u>32.573</u>

Activities in chronological order

Jan-Dec	Belarus Solidarity Fund 2008
January 25-27	Promising Politicians Romania/Moldova 2007-2008: Seminar II - "Social Democratic parties; Political Campaigning and Mass media"
February 15-17	Georgian Youth Forum: Strengthening Social Democracy in Georgia
22-24	Promising Politicians Romania/Moldova 2007-2008: Seminar III - "Negotiation Strategies and European integration",
28	"Future of the Left in Belarus" Meeting, Kyiv, Ukraine
April 5	ENP at Work in Jordan, Amman, Jordan
May 17-20	Promising Politicians Former Yugoslavia 2008: Seminar I - "Social Democratic Parties; Ideology and Organisation", Medulin, Croatia
June 24-26	Post-election Mission to Moscow, Moscow, The Russian Federation
July 15	Belarus in the Run up to the September 28 Parliamentary Elections, Brussels, Belgium

September 27-28	Transparency and Openness in Society and the Role of Political Parties, Tirana, Albania
October 17-20	Promising Politicians Former Yugoslavia 2008: Seminar II - "Media and Communication Skills", Skopje, Macedonia
18	Turkey on the Road to EU membership, Istanbul, Turkey
November 8	A Green Agenda for Southeast Europe, Velenje, Slovenia
December 5-8	Promising Politicians Former Yugoslavia 2008: Seminar III - "European Integration", Ljubljana, Slovenia
5-7	Piran 2008: Green, how I want you Green, Velenje, Slovenia
9	Social Democracy and the Consequences of the Enlargement, Budapest, Hungary

Reports

Georgian Youth Forum: Strengthening Social Democracy in Georgia

Financed by : Labour Party through Westminster Foundation
Local partner : Center for Solidarity
Date and venue : 15-17 February, Bakuriani, Georgia
Trainers : Ivo van Duijneveldt, Tijmen Rooseboom (AMS), Estelle Hart, Rohini Simbodyal (Labour Students)

Political context

After 11 years of leadership by President Shevardnadze, the Rose Revolution brought an end to his era. Georgia's politics is now dominated by the broad National Movement – Democrats, led by the successor of Eduard Shevardnadze, the pro-Western Mikhail Saakashvili. Significant opposition is lacking, and analysts fear Georgia has entered another era of one-party politics. The present political situation in Georgia reaffirms the importance of strengthening a pluralist political party landscape, including a strong social democratic alternative. Youth activists of parties and NGOs need our support to build a social democratic future for Georgia. The project goal is to strengthen the role of youth in promoting social democratic values in Georgia. To this end, the European Forum in co-operation with the Center for Solidarity organised a two day Youth Forum in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Report

On invitation of the Centre for Solidarity, the Dutch and British trainers presented a seminar for a group of 50 young Georgians. The programme covered the issue of building a political campaign. The seminar was attended by 50 participants. The gender balance was equal. Most



participants were in their early twenties. The group consisted of several subgroups. There were participants from trade unions, form NGO's and from several opposition parties. For most of the participants, it was their first experience with political campaigning. The organisation of the seminar was excellent. The choice to organize the seminar in Bakuriani, far away from the big city in an snow-covered mountain resort, gave the participants the opportunity to focus on the seminar completely.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Centre for solidarity is trying to build a new political movement based on support of trade unions, NGO's and other oppositional and democratic political forces. The trade unions have more than 300.000 members (on a population of little more than 4 million people) and are therefore a strong powerbase in society. The ambition of the Centre for Solidarity is interesting, because it works bottom-up instead of top-down and puts peoples needs first. It wants to focus on issues and solutions instead of the kind of negative campaigning, that the Georgian people are used to. We consider the ambition and intentions of the Centre both realistic and necessary. Therefore, we suggest to continue working with the Centre for solidarity. It might be an idea to focus in future projects on topics like organization-building or training of trainers.

Future of the Left in Belarus

In cooperation with : PES, NDI (Kyiv Office)
Date and venue : 28 February, Kyiv, Ukraine
Managed by : Kirsten Meijer, Senior Project Manager
European Forum/AMS

Political context

Belarus is an authoritarian presidential republic, where the president dominates political life and no real opposition is allowed. President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, who is in power since 1994, managed to strengthen his power by changing the constitution, and by the conduct of parliamentary elections in September 2008, which were far from free and fair. This despite the hopeful expectations triggered by a seeming thaw in Belarus politics. In particular, in the run-up to the elections it appeared the opposition had more freedom to campaign compared to past elections. The last political prisoner, Alyaksandr Kazulin, was also released. The positive signs of thaw had been marked from EU's side by a positive reaction: a six-month suspension of several sanctions, such as the visa ban on some Belarus officials. The positive signs of political thaw in Belarus are, however, intertwined with negative ones. Despite the hopeful campaigning period, not a single opposition politician made it into the parliament. A wide-spread saying by some analysts was thus proven true: in the end it is about who counts the votes. The European Parliament adopted a resolution that has welcomed the recent releases but condemns new measures taken against opposition activists, some of whom have been jailed or expelled from university in recent weeks.

Developments on the left political scene; At the moment there are six parties in Belarus:

- Narodnaya Hramada (Nikolay Statkevich)
- Belarusian Social Democratic Party Hramada (Alyaksandr Kozulin / Anatol Levkovich)
- Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada (Stanislav Shushkevich)
- Belarusian Party of Communists (Sergey Kalyakin)
- Belarusian Party of Labour (Alyaksandar Bukhvostaw)
- Women's Party Nadzeya (Elena Eskova)



All parties are very weak and the fights between the leftist leaders are far from new. Unfortunately they are not able to unite or create one list for the elections. During the meeting in Kyiv, Socialist Group MEP's Adrian Severin and Jan Marinus Wiersma stressed the importance of a unified opposition and unified leftist forces in Belarus and said this the only way to stand a chance against the regime. Moreover, unification of the left would also enable the social democrats in Belarus to develop strong relations with the international social democratic family. This was mentioned to be a necessary condition when Belarus would like to enter the European Union in the future. Social democratic foundations and parties in the European Union were asked to better co-ordinate their activities and stop supporting all the leftist parties separately.

It should be noted that the problems of disunity are mainly present between the national leaders of the parties. On the regional and local level, co-operation is easier. AMS projects focusing on supporting the broad opposition are effective in reaching candidates and their teams for the parliamentary elections. Training sessions reach young and promising activists of several leftist and rightist parties and movements. The lack of direct involvement of national leaders is seen by the local managers as a precondition for success of the project.

Most Belarusians we spoke mistrust the attempts of Lukashenko to reform and develop a relation with the European Union. Nobody expects any real changes soon.

Belarus in the run up to the September 28 parliamentary elections

In cooperation with	: PES
Date and venue	: 15 July, Brussels, Belgium
Participants	: Jan Marinus Wiersma, MEP, vice-president Socialist
Group	: Stanislau Shushkevich, leader BSDP-H; Olga Kazulina, daughter of political prisoner Aleksandr Kazulin; Mikola Statkevich, leader of the BSDP-NH and ex-political prisoner in Belarus; Kirsten Meijer & Marina Ohanjanyan, European Forum/AMS

Report

The opposition is facing extreme difficulties in getting their message across, let alone compete in the elections fairly. With president Lukashenko's new Media Law having been passed on June 17, the situation is bound to deteriorate further. The law is expected to introduce a number of changes with respect to Belarus media, that will restrict the opposition even further from running an effective campaign. An overwhelming amount of individual harassment by the authorities has been reported. People lose employment, students are kicked out of universities, people are physically and emotionally harassed and intimidated as well as put in jail for simply wishing to exercise their civic rights. Oppositional leaders Kazulin and Statkevich have been subject to imprisonment. This is why during the July 15 round table with Members of European Parliament in Brussels Shushkevich, Statkevich and Kazulina urged the European Union to continue supporting the opposition activists and to show them that there is support for them outside their country.

Unified opposition?

In the run-up towards the elections, the only issue that seems to unite the entire spectrum of the opposition concerns the repressive policies of president Lukashenko. According to most Western advisors the best policy in the face of such a rigid authoritarian regime would be max-



imal unification. In response, opposition leaders like Statkevich and Shushkevich declare that they are, indeed, in total agreement when it comes to their one uniting cause, i.e. opposing the regime. However, their views differ on other subjects. For instance, Statkevich is ready to discuss unification under the condition of European integration becoming one of the major campaign focal points. This is unacceptable to the UDF because, according to Statkevich, some members of the coalition (and especially the Communist Party) have pro-Russian inclinations. Taking into consideration the already mentioned past personal conflicts between the opposition leaders, complete unification remains a very questionable prospect for now.

Another divisional issue concerns the question of whether or not to boycott the upcoming elections. As most opposition forces are in agreement concerning their low expectations from the upcoming elections, some argue that it is better not to legitimize the elections by partaking in them. Others suggest that it is only by participating in the elections that they can show the international community how repressive the regime really is. A suggested middle way is to actively participate in the entire campaigning period and convince as many people as possible to join the democratic opposition, and then withdraw from the race on the eve of the elections. The benefit would be that it still leaves the entire campaigning period for conveying the opposition's message to the masses (as well as possible under current conditions) while making a strong statement of protest by withdrawing from the race at the last minute. The downfall is that the situation can be 'spinned' by the authorities very easily in depicting the opposition's withdrawal as a realisation that they cannot win, and do not want to make a bad impression on their foreign investors (i.e. the West).

The campaign

All things considered, the opposition leaders seem very disillusioned. None of them expect or work towards winning the elections, as that is considered simply unrealistic in the current political climate. Omnipresent government propaganda declares democrats to be sell-outs to the West (and especially the US) who receive Western funds to stage a revolution in the likeness of Ukraine and Georgia. This is why the democratic opposition's main goal now is to use the campaigning period to disperse the government propaganda image of them, inform the

public of the benefits of democracy and to try and convince them that it is, indeed, a worthy alternative. This approach is criticised by, for example, by the NDI and the IRI, who stress the importance of a message that is relevant to the people and their daily concerns (e.g. jobs, health care etc.). This was also put forward during the working dinner on July 15, when Jan Marinus Wiersma stressed the need to use more concrete campaigning issues, such as solving health problems related to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. Jan Marinus Wiersma accepted the invitation of the Belarusian delegation to attend the oppositional campaigning period in Belarus and filled out a Belarus visa application for that purpose.

Report Belarus Solidarity Fund

In response to the repression the European Forum decided in 2005 to set up a Belarus Solidarity Fund. The aim of the fund is to support social democratic activists (political parties, NGO's and trade unions) and their families in Belarus that fall victim to prosecution by the Belarus authorities, because of their political activities or beliefs.

In order to make an assessment of the applications for financial assistance, a Belarus Solidarity Fund Committee was established, consisting of representatives of the Labour Party/ Westminster Foundation, the German SPD and the Swedish SAP.

Evaluation

The procedure as decided by the European Forum Steering Committee proved to function well. Through existing contact persons applications were sent to the responsible project manager of the European Forum. The project manager informed the Steering Committee of the Belarus Solidarity Fund, which reviewed the applications and approved or rejected them. Some applications were rejected, as the concerned activists had no social democratic background.

In 2008, there were slightly fewer applications than before. This may have something to do with the thaw during the parliamentary elections. It is yet to be seen how the political situation in Belarus will develop from now on, and how the



possible developments will affect the number of applications in 2009. During the “Future of the Left in Belarus” meeting in Kiev (28 February 2008, organised by the European Forum in co-operation with the PES and the NDI) the leftist leaders mentioned the importance of a fund that is able to support individuals since there are not many organisations providing this specific kind of support to democracy in Belarus. In this regard, the European Forum Belarus Solidarity Fund does fulfil an urgent demand.

The support of Fondation Jean-Jaurès was crucial. We would like to thank you and your board for being so generous.

ENP at Work in Jordan

In cooperation with : AMS, FES (Amman office)
Date and venue : 5 April, Amman, Jordan
Managed by : Kirsten Meijer, Senior Project Manager
European Forum/AMS

Political context

Jordan is one of the main beneficiaries of the European Commission's support in the region. In March 2007, Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner presented in Amman a 265 million € package for the next four years in order to help Jordan to implement the Action Plan and Jordan's reform agenda. In December, more money was allocated for the provision of basic health and education services for Iraqi refugees Jordan. Jordan is an island of stability in a volatile region. The King has initiated a slow modernisation process. At the same time, concerns about lack of political reforms and democratisation are widespread, especially regarding the election law and law on political parties. Real democracy could bring to power the strongest and most conservative Islamic party in the country, the Islamic Action Front (IAF). The political landscape needs to further develop. This process has just started, considering the fact that political parties (except the IAF) were forbidden until 1992. Europe has great strategic interests in a stable and peaceful Jordan. Carefully supporting the step-by-step democratisation process in Jordan is one way of making a contribution to this process.

Goals

The European Forum organised a one-day conference in Amman:

- To discuss the latest results of the ENP Action Plan for Jordan;
- To look for windows of opportunity to further deepen the relationship between the EU and Jordan and to solve shared problems;
- To strengthen contacts between social democratic parties from the EU and parties and groups with leftist and socialist or social democratic platforms in Jordan;
- To assess the political situation in Jordan and Jordan's place in the Middle East.



Report

The conference was opened by André Gerrits (Chair of the Day, Senior Lecturer University of Amsterdam, Chairman of the AMS) and Michael Bröning (Resident Representative of the FES, Amman office). Bröning pointed out the new progress report of the European Commission on Jordan which had been published just before the conference and outlined few of the pressing questions in relation to the ENP and Jordan. He questioned how much importance Jordan attached to the relationship with the European Union and wondered whether the ENP has lost appeal.

Reforms, stability & democracy in Jordan

The morning programme dealing with the political situation in Jordan and the region was opened by Bisher al Khasawneh (Director of the European and American Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jordan). He explained that several laws expanded the freedom of the people in Jordan, but that further reforms are hindered by the political situation in the region. Jordan is burdened by a large flow of refugees coming from the Palestine Territories and Iraq. According to Bisher al Khasawneh stability is needed before democracy and reforms can further develop.

Roula Attar (Country Director National Democratic Institute Amman office) argued that political parties in Jordan are the key to political development and further democratization. Political parties are weak and international support is needed, according to Roula Attar. Still many people fear joining a party as it was an underground activity from the 1950s to 1992. In addition, she noted that apathy has taken over and that nothing will change as long as the parliament has no power. She welcomes the new political party law, but underlines it should be accompanied by changes to the election law and a strengthening of the parliament.

Jamil Nimri (Columnist Al Ghad Newspaper, Secretary of the Jordanian Commission for Democratic Culture JCDC - close to the Jordanian Democratic Party of the Left) presented the activities of the JCDC aimed at supporting democratic consolidation in Jordan.

The last speaker in the morning panel was Samira Bouchibti (Member of Parliament for the Labour Party, PvdA, Netherlands). This conference

came just one week after the launch of the controversial film "Fitna" made by Dutch MP Geert Wilders. Following the launch, Jordan MPs called for breaking of diplomatic relations with the Netherlands and some journalists called for a boycott of Dutch products. Because of the emotions the organisers decided to address this sensitive topic. She explained that Fitna does not represent the view of the whole Dutch population, but explained from a personal point of view the situation of one million Muslims living in the Netherlands. Moreover, she underlined the importance of freedom of expression and the participation of Muslims in the discussion.

Jordan in a volatile region

The second part of the morning focused on the position of Jordan in the region. The focus was mainly on Palestine refugees. Roger Davies (Deputy of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNWRA) spoke in detail about the status of Palestine refugees, which amount to as much as 1,9 million out of a 5,5 million population in Jordan. Of these 1,9 million 300.000 people live in camps. All Palestine refugees automatically got Jordan citizenship, except those coming from the Gaza strip. That is why these refugees are underprivileged and are living in camps.

European Neighbourhood Policy at work

The afternoon session focused on EU-Jordan relations, the results of the Action Plan and challenges ahead. The session was opened by Angelina Eichhorst (Deputy Head of Mission of the European Commission to Jordan), who started by stressing how timely the conference was considering that the progress report for Jordan was just published. She described Jordan as a model in the region and praised the government for the mature dialogue, including the dialogue on human rights. The majority of actions take place in the field of economy and trade, which are, together with increasing the mobility of people, also the priorities of the Jordan government. Meetings like this conference do not take place that often, that is why in 2008 the co-operation between parliaments will be strengthened.

Riad Al-Khouri (Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center) raised the question why Jordan did not get the advanced status in the



ENP as was given to Morocco, Ukraine, Israel and Moldova, while reports in the media about Jordan and the ENP have been positive. According to Riad Al-Khouri this has to do with the fact that the EU has a security interest in the other countries mentioned. May Al-TaHER (Deputy Director, Al-Urdun al-Jadid Research Center) presented the findings of a recent report on public opinion on the EU in Jordan. The level of knowledge about the EU is very low. For example, the fact that the EU is the main sponsor of the refugee camps is generally not known. Riad Al-Khouri said that a problem of the EU is the weak foreign policy, caused by the lack of a strong leadership in the EU, comparable to the calibre of Jacques Délor. He hoped that Tony Blair would not be appointed as president to the EU. Angelina Eichhorst explained that Jordan did not get the advanced status as Morocco got, because Jordan is less eager to promote itself and because Jordan already has the advanced status in the area of free trade. Also the strong link between EU countries and Morocco as a result of the migration flows plays a role. Priorities of the European Commission are set by the governments of the respective countries.

The ENP from a social democratic or socialist perspective: what should be done?

The last panel of the day focused on the ENP from a leftist perspective and started with a contribution of Musa Ma'aytah (SG of the Jordanian Democratic Party of the Left). He noted that as a result of globalization there is a growing polarization between rich and poor, within states and between states. He argued for a cultural dialogue instead of a religious dialogue, because religions have been manipulated through the ages. According to Musa Ma'aytah the five priorities for the ENP should be: - the establishment of a Palestinian state; - end of the bloodshed in Iraq and a withdrawal of foreign troops; - more attention for democracy and human rights; - economic assistance; - facilitating dialogue in order to close the gap between the elite and the ordinary citizens

Bilal Malkawi (International Affairs Officer of the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions) further explained the role of the trade unions in Jordan. Jordan is 1 out of 30 countries that did not ratify all ILO conventions. Only 10% of the population is a member of a trade union, government employees and teachers are not allowed to be a member. International co-operation should focus on: - education; - migration; -

mobilizing the people who are not a member; - women and youth; - ratification of convention 87.

Mehdi Lahlou (International Secretary of the Parti Socialiste Union, Morocco) said that the ENP is of much greater importance than relations with the US. However, the ENP did not contribute to a reduction of poverty and decrease of unemployment in Morocco. At the same time, more openness and the development of political parties and civil societies can be observed. However, Arab countries and Muslims should also take responsibility and recognise the problems and backwardness in some areas, such as honour killings. Mehdi Lahlou called for radical changes in the Arab world, starting with a separation of powers, state and religion, and state and the media.

Vassilis Mylonas (Political Advisor Mediterranean and Middle East Policy Unit, Socialist Group in the EP) pledged for more ambition to establish a closer relationship between the EU and its Southern neighbours. The ENP has shown unsatisfactory results, according to Vassilis Mylonas. The Israel-Palestine conflict and 9/11 led to a crisis of confidence, the social economic expectations are not fulfilled and the cultural dialogue did not have any tangible results.

Yonnec Polet (Foreign Policy Adviser of the PES) presented the PES and praised Jordan especially for hosting the many refugees coming from the region. In the Euromed relation, the multilateral approach of the Barcelona process is seen as the most important element. The PES tries to push the leftwing agenda in the EU currently dominated by right wing parties. For the PES the first aim of the ENP is to support progressive forces in the region. There should be a social, not religious discussion and the EU should stay away from promoting regime change by means of force. In the economic field the PES would prefer a regional free trade agreement, instead of bilateral ones. In the social area the EU should pressure Arab countries to take responsibility. The visa issue is problematic and probably will remain so, because the public opinion in the EU is turning against opening of the borders. Yonnec Polet furthermore argued for more money coming from the EU and US for the



region and a strengthening of the EU foreign policy, especially in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Conclusion and recommendations

The conference in Jordan was a historic step for the European Forum as it was the first conference in the Middle East. As a follow up of the ENP at work conference in Morocco we can say the European Forum established a widened view, including now also the Southern dimension of the European neighbourhood. As this conference has shown, there is a great need for more dialogue between political and civil actors from the EU and the region, especially when it comes to for the region sensitive topics such as democracy and reforms. Feedback from the participants was very positive and often was said that these types of informal meetings with that much room for discussion do not take place that often. It is clear that there is a need to further strengthen the relationship between the EU and the countries part of the Southern dimension of the ENP. The EU could have quite some leverage as it is seen as an entity with relative clean hands compared to the US, however is not visible at all. The enduring violence between Israel and the Palestine Territories, the bloodshed in Iraq, lack of democratic reforms in the region, and poverty call for a strong EU foreign policy and a stronger role of prominent EU politicians in the processes. Social democrats and socialists should strengthen their relation with progressive forces in the region and support them in their struggle for freedom and democracy. At the same time, pressure should be exerted on those countries that neglect their responsibilities towards their citizens. The discussion should not be about religious issues, but should focus on the social dimension.

Post-election mission to Moscow

In cooperation with : PES
Date and venue : 24-26 June, Moscow, The Russian Federation
Participants : Kirsten Meijer, Senior Project Manager, European Forum/AMS; Peter Schieder (head of delegation), Chair of the PES EEN WG, Former President of PACE, SPO, Austria; Alexandra Dobolyi, MSZP Hungary, PES Presidency, Chair of the Committee on CIS of the SI, MEP; Katrin Saks, Member of the PES Presidency in charge of the PES WG EEN, MEP; Yonnec Polet, Political Adviser, PES.
Further representatives of: SAP Sweden, AMS, Labour Party UK, PS France, SPD Finland, DNA Norway, SDE Estonia, PASOK, Greece; PSD, Romania

Political context

On 2 March 2008, presidential elections were held in Russia. As widely expected, deputy prime minister Dmitry Medvedev won the elections with an overwhelming majority of the votes. During the 2 December 2007 State Duma elections, United Russia, with Putin's name topping the ballot, also won an overwhelming majority. Both elections were not monitored by the OSCE, which abstained from sending observer missions after encountering restrictions by the Russian authorities. In their absence, Permanent Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) observers noted both times that the elections were neither free nor fair and failed to meet the OSCE and Council of Europe standards. The latest elections, which showed the extreme influence of Putin on Russia's politics, give a gloomy picture. In this political climate opposition parties and groups fail to make a difference. The main opposition coalition "Other Russia" headed by charismatic chess player Garry Kasparov lacks cohesion and credibility because of the many different groups inside, among them radicals from the National Bolshevik Party headed by



Eduard Limonov. Yabloko is being marginalised, for example by exclusion from participation the St. Petersburg elections, traditionally a place with a strong support base of the party. The Social Democratic Party of Russia was refused registration in October 2006 and afterwards ceased to exist.

Goal of the mission

On June 24-26 the Party of European Socialists in cooperation with the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity organised a fact finding mission to Moscow. The aim of the mission was to learn about the current political climate in Russia, especially with regard to the recent presidential elections and the state of social democratic parties by means of bilateral meetings with public figures from political parties, NGOs, journalism, academics, and international organisations.

Report

Meetings were held with:

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Reinhard Krumm, the head of office of the FES. Krumm explained there are two different Russia's. On the one hand there is standstill and lack of democracy. On the other hand there is progress and economic growth. Russians fear for too much reforms. The memory of the chaos during the Yeltsin years is still very much alive, according to Krumm. The word opposition has a bad connotation in Russia as most Russians think it is something radical. Russians want to be a world power and associate well with a strong government. Stability is the most important thing for Russia at the moment. During the second half of the meeting with the FES the delegation was joined by some representatives of NGOs: Valentina Melnikova (Russian Union of Soldiers' Mothers), Yuri Jibladze (Centre of Development of Democracy and Human Rights) and Ida Kuklina (Member Civil Society Development and Human Rights Council under the President of Russia). It was stressed that the Russian power structures are closed to everyone except those who are already inside them, and that no human rights movement is possible in Russia without European support because of a lack of resources. The EU was mentioned to be the only body that has some leverage in Russia. All organisations in Russia were described as either Congo, -Mango or -Bingo, i.e. initiated by the government, mafia and business respectively.

Mr Kishenin, leader of the (currently non-registered) Social Democratic Party of Russia (SDPR) presented the current situation of the SDPR, which was denied registration for the last elections due to lack of members. However, he does not agree with that reasoning, and presented his own information as to the amount of party members. He has thus filed a suit against the Russian authorities in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, which has been accepted there, and is just waiting to receive the date of the hearing. He criticised the Socialist International for not inviting him, but A Just Russia instead to the congress in Greece. He said he has two conditions before he can join A Just Russia, which are preservation of the regional structures and he should be awarded the position of deputy leader. He expects some democratic developments with Medvedev coming to power.

Delegation of the European Commission in Russia. The meeting was attended by Deputy Head of Delegation Mr Paul Vandoren and his associate. Mr Vandoren started by sketching an impression of the post-election political situation in Russia. With respect to the upcoming European Summit in Khantemansiysk, Mr Vandoren noted that this summit's perspective is more upbeat than the last's. Negotiations are expected concerning the prolonging of the bilateral cooperation agreement between Russia and the EU. The EU side is aiming at a legal, comprehensive text. The Free Trade agreement and its provisions in the energy field will be discussed. An important issue with regard to the latter, is the possible delay of Russia's accession to the WTO, which, if not decided by the end of this year to occur early next year, may be delayed for several years.

Leadership of Yabloko, namely Mr. Mitrokhin (new party leader), Mr Yavlinski (previous party leader), Mr Golov, Mr Kuznecov, Mr Arbatov (members of the party's social-democratic fraction and the party bureau). It so happened that a day before we left for Moscow, Grigori Yavlinski resigned his position as Yabloko party leader, which was then assumed by Sergey Mitrokhin. Mr Mitrokhin explained that Yabloko has a social liberal orientation. The cornerstones of the party programme are freedom and justice. The party has no intention to launch a revolution in Russia. Mr Yavlinski mentioned as the main issues in



Russian-European relations oil, gas and meat. He regretted that the serious human rights problems in Russia are not discussed and accused the EU of not having a strategy on Russia. He said Russia is an authoritarian state, while incomes increased 2,5 times. In such times it is difficult to convince people of the need of respect for human rights.

A 'Just Russia' in the Duma lead by Nikolai Levichev who explained the fraction consists of 38 highly experienced members and said the party is the most active in the parliament. The party focuses on the interests of the people. The labour code and housing code are two particular areas of interest for the party. It was explained the party proposed legislation concerning the rights of disabled persons, that is expected to make the interaction between the state and those benefiting from disability subsidies easier in a practical way. Regarding EU relations, the party representatives considered the latter to be a positive thing, but said strategic industries need to be protected. In addition it was said that Russia should be considered to be something more than just a supplier of natural resources and double standards should be avoided. In this context a reference was made to the human rights violations against ethnic Russians in Estonia. The party is against NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine and the US anti-missiles system.

Boris Nemtsov, stressed the gap between rich and poor and Russian attitude towards the West as towards an enemy, to China as a friend, and most neighbours (except Armenia) as enemies as well. He explained that the word monopoly describes everything in Russia in the political, economical and media field. He also referred to the unlimited power of the Russian secret services, the FSB and the censorship on television. Problems are inflation and rising food prices as well as the pressure of the bureaucracy on small businesses. As to the current president Dimitri Medvedev he stated it as improvement that the current president is not ex KGB, that he is younger, thus, in a way, 'post-soviet', and that he seems to have a softer approach towards the West. However, he was selected, and not elected. Turning to the opposition, Mr Nemtsov named their biggest problems to be their ego. He mentioned Yabloko is the only existing social democratic party in Russia, while the communists are only there to protect Gazprom and A Just Russia as a creation of the Kremlin that can be liquidated in one day.

NDI explained they were forced to stop their political work due to repression. Their core activity now is to support GOLOS in their work to organise election monitoring, and to support the civil society. A main problem in Russia is that citizens are disengaged.

Frank Schauff from the Association of European Businesses sketched the booming Russian economy with growth rates between 6 and 8 percent caused by the high oil and gas prices. He noted there are extreme differences between the upper and lower class and between Moscow and other cities. Other problems are the lack of liquidity of Russian banks, corruption and bureaucracy. Important is the accession of Russia to the WTO, which can be blocked by Ukraine and Georgia and the aged capital stock.

Mikhail Gorbachev and Social Democratic Union of Youth. Mr Gorbachev discussed his views on the current Russian politics, and stated that he supported the current president Dimitri Medvedev, as he expected the current stability to continue under him as well. He stressed the need for co-operation between Russia and Europe to modernise the country. A main problem of Russia is that half of the population lives in poverty, according to Mr Gorbachev. He stated that all people in Russia are social democrats in their heart and he criticised the current leadership of the SDPR, who turned the party in a business project. However, he disagreed with the decision not to register the party anymore.

Sergey Mironov, party leader of A Just Russia said the programme of A Just Russia is social democratic and stressed they are in opposition to United Russia. He mentioned Putin is not a member of United Russia, but only leading it. He explained they signed a memorandum of co-operation with the government, which is crucial for their existence. During the lunch Mr. Mironov explained membership of the Socialist International is crucial for A Just Russia for two reasons. First of all it gives the party prestige in Russia and they can use it in their campaigns. Secondly, the experience of the other SI member parties is valuable for A Just Russia.

Denis Bilunov, executive director of Civil Front discussed the history and establishment of the Civil Front, which occurred three years ago.



When in 2003 the liberal parties failed to enter the Duma they attempted to organise a unification. This resulted in Garry Kasparov's 2005 manifesto of the United Civil Front whose goal was to build a coalition with the left. The movement has been active ever since, holding a big conference in 2006 and organising several marches of dissenters in 2007. In the autumn of 2007 the Civil Front held its primaries in 57 regions, working up to the elections and discussing candidacies for the upcoming Duma and presidential elections. However, they were eventually not allowed to participate as they were not a registered political party. Registering as such was never really an option as the process has become extremely hard for those without a long past as a political party (i.e. a potential new political party). In this regard Mr Bilunov stated that Russian politics is completely controlled from the Kremlin, and now maybe the parliament as well. An alternative that the movement is attempting to set up currently is an Alternative Parliament. Following a famous statement by Gryzlov that 'the Duma is no place for discussions', it was decided to create such a place in that case.

Concluding remarks

The co-operation between the PES and the European Forum was very effective and pleasant, guaranteeing a diverse delegation taking part in the mission and opening the possibility to meet a variety of people in Russia. The main recurring thread of the discussions seemed to concern the role of A Just Russia in Russian politics and whether or not it would be advisable to give it a status in the Socialists International at the Congress in Greece. A Just Russia was given observer status during the SI congress taking place the weekend after our mission. As for other social democratic oriented forces in Russia, it is clear the SDPR is not really existent anymore. Several people we met described the opposition party Yabloko as the only social democratic party in Russia. Indeed Yabloko continues to fight for democracy and human rights and pushes for social issues as well. Several foundations continue to work with the party and it's youth branch. The coming time it will be interesting to see how the situation develops with Medvedev as president of the Russian Federation. Opinions were clearly split on the prospects of change under the new leadership. Some expect a thaw, while others say it is just business as usual.

Transparency and openness in society and the role of political parties

In cooperation with : Olof Palme Centre, Qemal Stafa Foundation
 Date and venue : 27-28 September, Tirana, Albania
 Participants : Saimir Tahiri, Executive Director of Qemal Stafa Foundation; Edi Rama, Party Leader Socialist Party of Albania and mayor of Tirana; Lisa McLean, Senior Resident Director NDI (Montenegro office); Kristian Vigenin, Vice-President PES, MEP; Peter Bohinec, Director Kalander Foundation, Slovenia; Niesco Dubbelboer, Secretary General Dutch Labour Party (PvdA); Gregor Niessen, Director One Europe Foundation/Political Consultant, the Netherlands; Leila Naraghi, Member of International Policy Review Group, Swedish Social Democratic Party; André Gerrits, Chairman of AMS and Senior lecturer East European Studies at the University of Amsterdam; Kirsten Meijer, European Forum/AMS; Danijel Tadic, European Forum/AMS

Political Context

On 27th and 28th of September, the European Forum, in cooperation with Qemal Stafa Foundation and the Olof Palme Centre, organised a conference in Tirana on transparency and openness in society and the role of political parties, which play a crucial role in consolidating democratic regimes. They are responsible for management of government institutions, establishment of rule of law and regulations that enable economic prosperity. Political parties however, do not necessarily behave accordingly to what they proclaim. Party behaviour, externally and internally, is of crucial importance to reach strong democratic gover-



nance. Political parties should actively undertake necessary measures to establish strong political organizations which will be able to implement their party programmes after gaining governance. Political parties will need to come to terms with the fact that responsible behaviour will contribute to their own success as political actors and to further democratic development of their country. The main aim of the conference was, therefore, to discuss the role of political parties in societies and their own democratic functioning. As the Western Balkan countries face similar problems regarding this issue, our sister parties in the region and the EU have been invited to send their representatives to the conference. Another important aim of the conference is to bring the social democratic parties from the region and from the EU together in order to share experience and ideas about the topic of the conference.

Report

The conference was attended by our sister parties from Macedonia, Croatia, Kosovo, Slovenia, Serbia, United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands and of course Albania. Furthermore, representatives from other social democratic parties from Albania and Kosovo, National Democratic Institute, European Parliament, Albanian NGO's, Olof Palme Centre, Qemal Stafa Foundation and regional and topic experts participated at the conference (a total of 45 people). Edi Rama, the Party Leader of the Socialist Party of Albania and the mayor of Tirana addressed the participants. The main message of Rama was that in order to achieve real and total change, which will transform Albania into a EU country, it is necessary to change the political process. This process can only be changed if the political parties change. There is a lot of work that has to be done in this prospect, but the SP is putting a lot of good effort to achieve this. The party has transformed from a party on whose door the people had to knock in order to tell their problems to the politicians, into a party which knocks on the doors of people and really listens to their issues. This is very important in order to stimulate the dialogue between the party and the society and to become a party of all citizens. After all, the participation of citizens in the society and the political process is crucial for a successful transformation process. Furthermore, Rama added that the leader of the SP is elected by the members of the party, which is unique in the region.

The next speaker was Lisa McLean, Senior Resident Director of NDI. McLean presented an important theoretical framework, as she explained why it is crucial that political parties support openness and transparency in the society. Political parties could and should play an important role in this as they are a cornerstone of any representative democracy which fulfil several functions that no other national institution fulfils. They, for example, offer alternative public policy proposals that reflect citizens' interests and preferences, they compete in elections in a bid to manage the institution of government and they mobilise voters behind a certain vision of national interests. Furthermore, McLean used a metaphor to describe transparency and openness as she compared it with letting the light in (transparency) and turning the light on (openness).

(Internal) Party democracy

Kristian Vigenin, MEP and vice-president of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, spoke on the importance of internal party democracy. Vigenin argued that the party structure and the way party policy is being developed and approved determine the internal party democracy. In addition, he noted that the leader of a party, participation of minorities, interaction of the party with the civil society and the ability of a party to involve sympathisers of the party is very important. André Gerrits, discussed the paradox of the importance of political parties to support transparency and openness of the society on one hand, and on the other hand the fact that political parties can be an obstacle to the democratisation process as they are not transparent and open enough. Furthermore, Gerrits asked the participants to which extent they think international organisations can be helpful in supporting openness and transparency of political parties? After these speeches the floor was open for comments, discussions and questions.

Party financing

After the lunch the second panel discussion, financing parties and campaigns, started. The financing of a party is important for the political development, party organization and local network. Peter Bohinec, executive director of the Slovenian education centre Kalander Foundation of the Social Democratic Party discussed



problems SD had been facing concerning the financing of the party and stressed the importance of heaving a clear-cut separation between political parties and their foundations in order to make the financing more transparent. Niesco Dubbelboer, Secretary General from the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), presented the framework of party financing in the Netherlands. He explained where and from who the Dutch parties get their finances, the flaws in Dutch legislation and the development of the new law for the regulation of party financing in the Netherlands. These presentations were followed by a discussion in which the representatives of the parties deliberated on the situation in their parties and countries concerning party financing. In Croatia, for example, there are no clear regulations regarding party financing. In the hope, in vain in the end, that other parties would follow the example, SDP had to say no to some individual denotations as they have decided to make all their sources of donations available for the public. Igor Jojkic, DS councillor in Belgrade, argued that in Serbia the parties control themselves when it comes to party financing which is not transparent at all. In Macedonia the country is in a constant election campaign as the government misuses public funds to promote themselves constantly. In Albania there is no law nor an institution which controls the public funding of political parties, let go the private funding, whilst in Kosovo laws on financing of political parties are UNMIK regulations.

Responsibilities of parties in government and opposition

Laila Naraghi, Member of the International Review Group of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, argued that there are three important words for political parties in the political jungle. These are aim, goal and groups. Political parties need to know what they want to reach, which is generally to change the society (aim), all their strive for, such as improvement in employment, equality, human and civil rights is their goal, whilst the groups they should focus on are members of the party, voters and all other citizens. It is the responsibility of political parties to bear these three things in mind and to be a reflection of the society they consider as ideal. The second speaker of the third panel was Gregor Niessen, Director of the One Europe Foundation and political consultant. Niessen deliberated on the importance of an ethical code of conduct for political parties and organizations. This code of conduct should consist of rules which will prescribe how to deal with gifts, invitations for dinners and candy trips politicians are offered and,

in the end, fight nepotism and corruption within the political parties and the whole society. Most participants argued that in theory this is a good idea but in practice it would be difficult to implement the ethical code of conduct. Marija Stambolieva argued that politicians in Macedonia do not even obey laws, let go a code of conduct. On the other hand it was claimed that in Montenegro the politicians started to behave more 'ethically responsible', as the awareness has raised that political leaders and parties should set an example. This will create a sphere in which the democratization process will speed up as people would feel more free to speak up. Finally, the discussion ended with the comment that EU integration prospect for South-East European countries is very important for the development of the region and the democratization process. The EU should put the Balkans high on its political agenda.

Media coverage

The conference in Tirana has been broadly covered by several media in Albania. The introduction speech of Edi Rama was covered on the Albanian television and several Albanian newspapers wrote articles about the conference. Furthermore, a national Bulgarian newspaper published a short article and a photograph of the conference.

Conclusions and recommendations

Political parties play a crucial role in the democratization and transformation process in South Eastern Europe. Therefore it is of vital importance that parties set an example when it comes to their internal and external behaviour. Our social democratic partners in the region are well aware of this role and they show great commitment towards transparency and openness. However, the political environment in which they have to manoeuvre does definitely not make things easier for them. For example, Edi Rama argued during the conference that by being fully transparent about the party finances, there is a risk of losing a great share of finances as people providing these funds would be in danger if their name would be connected to an opposition party. Despite this, social democratic parties should set an example towards people and other political parties by putting transparency and open-



ness high on their political agenda and, with that, improving the quality of democracy. Furthermore, such conferences play an important role when it comes to exchanging information and sharing experiences between social democratic parties in the region and the EU and international organizations. In this regard it is important that such conferences contain a fruitful discussion which was the case in Tirana.

Turkey on the road to EU membership

In cooperation with : Olof Palme Centre, FES (Istanbul)
Date and venue : 18 October, Istanbul, Turkey
Participants : Doğu Ergil, Chairman of the Pol. Behaviour Dept. Faculty of Political Science, Ankara University and President of the Center for the Research of Societal Problems; Emine Bozkurt, MEP, Socialist Group; Onur Öymen, Deputy Chairman Republican People's Party; Egemen Bağış, Vice-chairman Justice and Development Party (AKP); Luise Rürup, Resident Representative FES, Turkey; Murat Karayağçın, Chairman Social Democratic People's Party (SHP); Sebahat Tuncel, MP and Foreign Affairs Deputy of the Democratic Society Party (DTP); Şahin Alpay, political scientist at Bahcesehir University, and journalist, Turkey; Murat Mercan, Chair of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Grand National Assembly of Turkey; Hamuk Kabaalioglu, Dean of Law Faculty of Yeditepe University, Turkey; Süleyman Çelebi, leader Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions; Cengiz Aktar, Director EU Centre at Bahcesehir University; André Gerrits, Senior lecturer University of Amsterdam, Chair of AMS; Kirsten Meijer, Senior Project Manager European Forum/AMS; Marina Ohanjanyan, Project Manager European Forum/AMS

Political Context

Membership talks were opened in October 2005 but a number of stumbling blocks remain on the road to Turkey's EU accession, in particular concerning links with Cyprus, freedom of expression and the rights of the Kurdish minority. In December 2006 the EU threatened Turkey to stop the accession talks, if Turkey didn't open its



ports to ships and airplanes from Southern Cyprus. Eventually Turkey opened one harbour and one airport, but the European Commission wasn't satisfied with that offer and decided that 8 chapters will not be opened as long as this problem is not resolved.

The EU-accession was one of the most important issues in the 2007 parliamentary elections. With the landslide victory of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey now has a government strongly in favour of EU accession. The country was in political turmoil recently since the AKP faced a major court trial with accusations of anti-secularism and threats of party closure as well as a ban of its high-ranking officials from politics altogether. The trial, brought on by the public prosecutor, was triggered by the AKP's proposal to revoke the ban on headscarves in universities. The party was saved from closure although fined, as the court found it to be a focal point for anti-secular activities. The main party with a status in the Socialist International is the Republican People's Party (CHP). Despite their social democratic name the party has a rather conservative, rightist outlook on political issues. Leftist parties in Turkey are weak and divided. The opposition is focused on attacking the AKP and lacks ideological profile. Their main issue is to safeguard the secular state. As a result, reforms and progress on EU accession are slowed down.

Report

The aim of the European Forum conference was to identify the challenges ahead and set a social democratic agenda for EU accession of Turkey. The programme was divided into three parts:

- Democratic Reforms And The Role of Political Parties in Turkey (focus on the internal political processes, pace of reforms)
- Priorities for Social Democracy in Turkey (focus on the role of leftist political parties in bringing about the reforms)
- The Enlargement Agenda in Turkey and the EU (focus on the state of play in the negotiations, public support and the responsibilities of countries/ parties in the EU)

The above mentioned agenda was discussed among a distinguished audience including high level representatives of the main political parties AKP and CHP, as well as other leftist political parties from Turkey (SHP, DTP and DSP) and the EU (social democrats from: Greece, United

Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Austria), including representatives of the PES, as well as representatives from the trade union, academic community and NGO sector.

Conclusions and recommendations

Turkish accession to the EU, and all the reforms that are needed to proceed, is a sensitive topic, not only in Turkey, but also in the EU. This conference achieved bringing together major political players and experts on the topic both from the EU as well as Turkey. The dialogue during the conference touched upon a wide variety of topics, including the most sensitive ones. In this way the conference fulfilled the aim of defining a social democratic agenda that meets the challenges ahead.

Several recommendations were voiced to strengthen democracy in Turkey and make progress on the accession process:

- lower the election threshold
- install a womens committee in the parliament
- prevent parties/ organizations to be closed down by the Constitutional Court
- make a proper plan for solving the Kurdish issue
- protect freedom of expression
- fight against poverty and for equality

Recommendations to the social democrats in the EU:

- strong response against the anti-Turkey statements of conservatives
- overcome the enlargement fatigue in the EU
- abolishment of double standards regarding Turkey's EU membership
- more non-selective reaction concerning Turkish human rights violations
- a decision concerning a definite accession date
- inclusion of Turkey in Common Customs negotiation processes.

There is an urgent need for a broad based dialogue about the EU accession process. The polarization in Turkey with the opposition CHP on the one hand and the governing AKP on the other, is a serious impediment for further progress. In addition, the divisions among the



leftists parties prevent the development of a strong and social democratic force in Turkey. Bringing together all these parties, together with constructive and critical experts, facilitates the often non-existing dialogue and a search for common solutions.

Turkish accession to the EU is an important topic for social democratic parties in the EU as they are defending the pro-accession agenda and have respect for human rights high on the agenda in most countries. Because of the great importance for all of us and the current lack of dialogue we propose to organise a follow up of the conference next year. The Party of European Socialists indicated to be very interested in such an event.

A green agenda for South East Europe

Date and venue : 8 November, Velenje, Slovenia
Participants : Peter Bohinec, Secretary General Kalandar Foundation, Slovenia; Srečko Meh; mayor Velenje; Egbert de Vries, Chairman Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) delegation to the PES; Metodija Szdov, president Macedonian Green Centre; Ben Johnson, policy officer, British Labour Party; Janja Klinčar, Environmental Research Institute, Slovenia; Simon Alcock, political advisor to Minister for Energy and Climate change, British Labour Party; Mirela Holy, former Head of the Cabinet of the Minister at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Croatia; Paul Kosterink, programme manager, Dutch Environmental NGO; Giannos Livanos, Secretary of the Department of PASOK for the environment, Greece; Aleksandra Knez-Milojkovic, Secretary General of NGO Environmental Ambassadors, Deputy of the Sustainable Committee of DS, Serbia; Arjen Berkvens, Secretary General European Forum and Executive Director AMS; Marianna Tsirelson, intern European Forum/AMS

Political context

Climate change represents one of the most serious problems of the 21st Century. Environmental consequences caused by human action are severe and global warming urges the governments to react to the devastating consequences. Global temperature and accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are increasing, causing extreme weather circumstances and consequently poor agricultural outputs, spread of diseases and geopolitical instability. In view of these developments, environmental protection should become a priority on the political agenda of local



communities, national governments and international politics. In countries of South Eastern Europe, ecology and environment policies have not been a matter of priority. Although much progress has been made in the area of environment protection, “establishment of appropriate institutional infrastructure remains a challenge”. Most progress has taken place in the framework of EU accession of those countries. However, implementation of environmental agreements remains problematic because countries face a lack of resources and effective administrative capacity. The ecological condition of the region is quite good but in order to preserve this level “the concept of sustainable development” needs to become a prominent role in economic and social policy development. Obstacles to successful ecology and environment protection policies have been hindered by corruption, poor coordination between government institutions, a lack of transparency and public discussion and participation.

Report

The main objective of the European Forum conference was to address climate change and environmental issues in the region and find solutions to problems that go beyond national boundaries. The conference was divided in three panel discussions:

- Panel I: Identifying major environmental priorities and issues: opportunities of sustainable policies
- Panel II: Environmental friendly policies and economic growth
- Panel III: Relationship between politics and environmental-oriented NGO's

Representation at the conference consisted of social democratic parties from the region: Czech Republic (CSSD), Serbia (DS, SDU), Kosovo (PDK), Macedonia (SDSM), Albania (SP), Slovenia (SD, SDM), Croatia (SDP) and the EU (social democrats from the UK, the Netherlands and Greece), from the NGOs sector (Serbia, the Netherlands and Macedonia) and research foundations (Slovenia).

Identifying major environmental priorities and issues: opportunities of sustainable policies

Chairman of the PvdA delegation to the PES, Egbert de Vries said that the PES has been involved in environmental work. He stressed the need for the local government to create environmental policies and called upon the local governments to work together. Also there should be interaction

between the private sector and the public sector, he noticed. As the main environmental issue at the moment he mentioned climate change. Current environmental policies of the PES are aiming to reach the EU goal of reducing Co2 emissions by 20% by 2020, as stated by de Vries.

Metodija Sazdov, president of the Macedonian Green Centre presented his organisation, which goal it is to create a green lobby group within the Macedonia Parliament, with everyone who is connected to the environment. Its activities mainly consist of research, advocacy and lobby work. During its last meeting participants defined several topics as priorities for lobbying, which included climate change, energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable urban development and water resources. Sazdov underlined that to achieve results it is important to have good and friendly relations with parliament members and meet with political parties.

Ben Johnson, policy officer at the British Labour Party, made clear that the British green party is a limited force compared to those in other Western countries. In 2007 the so-called “climate change bill” was introduced, which is a framework for the reduction of Co2 greenhouse gas emissions between now and 2050. It became law in 2008. Johnson said that UK's priorities include, building a low-carbon economy, energy efficiency, domestic energy and deforestation.

Janja Klinčar from the Environmental Research Institute of Slovenia, stressed the main environmental problem faced by Slovenia is waste management. In Slovenia there is no single system for waste collection. Its main system is the collection of waste fractions through ecological islands which is, however, not effective. Land filling is the main option for disposal of municipal waste.

Main environmental priorities in the region

Albania

A representative from Albania outlined that the country's main priorities are waste management, waste treatment and law enforcement. The problem concerning waste management is the lack of financial resources to invest more in education on this issue. As to the law enforce-



ment it was said that despite the adoption of EU legislation effective implementation is needed. Therefore it is necessary to pressure for taxes. Furthermore, Albania is facing problems related to infrastructure as there is an enormous number of cars in the country. Besides that the fuel quality is very low, so the amount of fine particles is rising.

Macedonia

As SD is in the opposition and the dialogue with the ruling coalition is at a very low level the party has a limited influence on policy making. Besides that there is no green party in parliament. Main priorities in the country are air quality and waste management. As to the air quality it was said that the population is rising, which causes more pollution. Another issue is the problem to protect water from pollution.

Croatia

Main problems in Croatia are waste water, waste management, air pollution caused by transportation and the legal framework.

Kosovo

In Kosovo the Democrati Party is in government and the environment is one of the biggest issues faced by the government. A major problem in the country is the electric power station situated near the capital, which is the main air polluter. Other priorities for the government are energy supply, air quality, recycling and water management.

Montenegro

The electricity deficit that was faced by Montenegro caused a reduce of the economic development. As to other energy sources, Macedonia does not have nuclear energy. The country was said to be an ecological republic, with a strong ecological NGO system. However, Montenegro needs mini-hydric resources and waste collecting centres should be build. This year the country has introduced some ecological taxes.

Serbia

The environment is not high on the agenda in Serbian politics and doubts were raised if the minister can handle the issue. The three priorities of Serbia are waste management –the country has not one sanitary landfill site – air quality and air pollution – there is a lack of strategy to face gas outlets – and renewable energy sources – the country sees no

future in nuclear energy, hydro alternative energy should be found. Serbia needs more private initiatives and there should be more capacity building between e.g. public institutions and NGOs.

Greece

The main problem in Greece is energy efficiency during the summer period, as there is a lot of tourism in the high season. Waste management and forest fires are the other big issues. Although the country supports the ecological system and there exist severe legislation for this, it is not well implemented.

Slovenia

Beside the main problem of Slovenia, i.e. waste management, the country also faces problems with cement and too much transportation that causes a huge amount of fine particles in the air.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic protection of the agriculture is needed. Concerning climate change the Czech representative stressed that the situation will deteriorate.

Environmental friendly policies and economic growth

The first speaker, Simon Alcock, political advisor to Ed Milliband, the newly appointed minister for Energy and Climate change of the British Labour Party, stressed the need for strong stable long-term policies, as we find ourselves in the middle of a serious economic situation. Eventually the benefits of such policies will exceed the costs. At the same time by delaying the creation and effective implementation of good polices this will increase the costs. Also more green collar jobs should be created. Common sense is another valuable aspect. It is important to to create awareness that the problem affects them in different ways and therefore the right signal should be sent to people by explaining the eventual benefits for them.

Mirela Holy, former Head of the Cabinet of the Minister at the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Croatia, stressed that environmental protection is the key for long-term sustainable



economic growth in the 21st century. She explained that social responsibility of multinational companies is very important as they are often more influential on political and economic level than many countries. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in multinationals should focus on several aspects, among other things, on environmental protection and sustainable growth and progress. CSR should be encouraged by the state. In Croatia there is a high need to enable long-term development.

Relationship between politics and environmental-oriented NGOs

Paul Kosterink, programme manager at the Dutch Environmental NGO Milieukontakt International, presented the main activities of the NGO; building capacities, involving citizens and solving environmental problems. With regard to the relation between NGOs and politics he said that there should be an agreement on the division of roles between politicians and stakeholders. Therefore they should have a joint agenda to improve relations. They should lead a discussion on long-term solutions and on values in the community. Furthermore, Kosterink said it is important that NGOs are invited by politicians as specialists, to consult them on e.g. proposals for law amendments.

Giannos Livanos, Secretary of the Department of PASOK for the environment, said that at national level in Greece there is a growing number of NGOs. They differ, however, in aims, legal status and recognition. NGOs are significant because they put pressure on key industries, raise public awareness and lobby for specific problems with politicians. It is important that they do not lose their neutral character. During the last three years the influence of NGOs in Greece has significantly increased after they bundled their powers. Following the deadly forest fire they are considered to be more trustworthy than the state.

Aleksandra Knez-Milojkovic, Secretary General of NGO Environmental Ambassadors and Deputy of the Sustainable Committee of DS, said that in Serbia cooperation with politicians is sometimes impossible as Serbia's decision-making process is very closed. Besides that in some regions political parties have not much trust in NGOs. However, Knez-Milojkovic stressed that it is important to have "soft diplomacy" and good partnerships. The sustainable development committees have already established partnerships with the EU integration office in

Serbia, the Serbian ministry for environment and spatial planning and a provincial ombudsman concerning environmental problems.

Conclusion

Environmental policies are needed also on a local level. The different environmental issues are important for the entire region to tackle, from local, national, regional and European level. Political parties cannot solve the issues on their own and therefore need help from each other, the NGOs and the civil society. There should also be a common sense when it comes to favouring green policies. Besides that, in the current global crisis it is important to not suddenly forget about the climate. The environment should be kept high on the agenda and environmental policies should be maintained.



Piran 2008: Green, how I want you Green

In cooperation with : Kalander Foundation, Olof Palme
International Center, Renner Institut
Date and venue : 5-7 December, Velenje, Slovenia

Political context

Cooperation among the countries of Former Yugoslavia, especially among young people, is the only way to achieve long-lasting peace, economic and social development of human rights and democratisation in the region. For that purpose the Slovenian Kalander Foundation, the Youth Organisation (Mladi Forum) of the Social Democratic Party in Slovenia and the Alfred Mozer Stichting have co-organised a number of Piran Conferences that gather young participants from Social Democratic and other progressive youth organisations from Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Slovenia.

Report

The annual Piran Conference was held in Velenje from 5th till 7th of December. The topic this year was environment and development of sustainable ecological policies and had the title 'Green, how I want you Green'. The conference was attended by 27 participants from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia. The conference was initiated by participants' presentations on the situation in their countries regarding environmental challenges. All countries from the region faced similar problems, in particular waste management, pollution of air, sea and lakes and the devastation of the bio-diversity. The conference continued with a discussion on human rights, especially human rights of the third generation, which are the right to water and food, cultural heritage, health and the right to peace. It has proved to be difficult to define these rights as they have a collective character, that is, they relate to a community and to all humans beings, which makes it difficult for an individual to exercise these rights. Furthermore, the jurisprudence for third generation of human rights has not developed yet which makes it difficult to sanction the violation.

After the break the participants were divided in small working groups in which they had to tackle the following questions:

- Which political parties and non-governmental organizations exist in the countries of Southeast Europe and how do they cooperate with each other?
- To which extent are the citizens in the region aware of environmental issues and how can this awareness be raised?
- How to put ecological and environmental issues higher on the agenda of your organizations and political parties in the region?

After the discussion within the groups, each group presented their answers from which it can be concluded that a lot can be improved. For example, environmental oriented organizations should cooperate more, awareness should be raised and political parties should put environment and development of sustainable ecological policies on their agenda's.

Conclusions and recommendations

The 10th Piran conference proved to be of great interest to young (social) democrats in countries of South East Europe as these countries face similar environmental problems. It is therefore of great importance to bring the participants and future decision-makers of South East Europe together. Furthermore, the participants were able to exchange knowledge and experiences and to brainstorm about future cooperation, which is crucial in order to tackle regional environmental challenges. Moreover, many of the environmental problems can only be solved by regional cooperation. The interactive approach of workshops, which were facilitated by experts on the specific issues, resulted in extensive input from the participants. The organisers of the conference have agreed to make efforts to organise the 11th Piran conference in 2009.



15 years European Forum: Social democracy and the consequences of the enlargement

In cooperation with : FEPS, Táncsics Foundation
Date and venue : 13 December, Budapest, Hungary
Guest speakers : Vilmos Szabo, MP for MSzP; Lena Hjelm Wallén, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, president European Forum; Attila Ágh, professor at the Budapest University of Economics; Dasa Silovic, chair of the CEE Gender Network; Erich Fröschl, Renner Institute; Gyula Hegyi, MEP, Hungarian Socialist Party; Zita Gurmai, MEP for PES; Marko Makovec, advisor to Slovenian Prime Minister, SD; Antun Vujic, MP, President of the national policy council, Croatia; André Gerrits, professor at the University of Amsterdam, president AMS; Arjen Berkvens, Secretary General European Forum/AMS; Danijel Tadic, Project Manager European Forum/AMS; Marina Ohanjanyan, European Forum/AMS; Marianna Tsirelson, Intern European Forum/AMS

Report

The main objective of conference was to explore the historical development and the future of social democratic parties and their role in the socio-economic changes in the new member states. The conference was divided in three panel discussions:

- Panel 1: The development of social democracy in Europe after 1989: lessons learned
- Panel 2: The current challenges of social democracy in Europe
- Panel 3: Social democracy in Europe; our mission for the future

Representation at the conference consisted of social democratic parties from the region: Hungary (MSzP), Serbia (SDU), Slovenia (SD), Albania (SPA), Kosovo (PDK, PSD), Montenegro (DPS), Croatia (SDP) and the EU (social democrats from the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia

and the Czech Republic). Attendants also included experts from political foundations, academic institutions, think tanks and the civil society from the EU, candidate countries, and Europe at large, that deal with the international developments of social democracy.

The development of social democracy in Europe after 1989: lessons learned

Ferenc Gyurcsány, the Hungarian Prime Minister and leader of the Hungarian Socialist party MSzP held the opening speech. He stressed that the current economic crisis serves as an opportunity for the social democrats. This is caused by the fact that currently two things no longer apply. Namely the fact that the American unilateralism has come to an end; the most influential country in the world has become incapable to response to the main political and economic problems on its own. Therefore cooperation between the U.S. and the EU is the basis to find solutions for the current problems, as was explained by Gyurcsány. Another reason is that the unregulated capitalism has come to an end, and the new idea for a new world order has been created. In this new world order there should be a global leading role for Europe. Gyurcsány continued that this will be a major challenge as Europe does not find itself in the most favourable situation.

He also stressed that the process of enlargement should go further and it should not be possible to think that Europe can stop welcoming new countries. There should be an honest roadmap for the countries in the Western Balkans, in order to prevent that these countries will live in strategic uncertainty. Gyurcsány said that Hungary's EU-presidency welcomes Croatia as a member country, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia should not have accession problems caused by Hungary. He also stressed that Macedonia's road to EU accession should be elaborated soon. He underlined that the cooperation on issues such as justice and social policies should be as wide as possible.

The chair of the first panel, Vilmos Szabo, member of Parliament for MSzP, said that the social democrats were the main actors of unification in Europe following the cold war period, after which democracy was spread, as well as values for mar-



ket economy and social economy. The European Forum played a crucial role in spreading such values and should continue its work.

Lena Hjelm Wallén, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden and president of the European Forum, said that the beginning of the 1990's marked a time of hope in Europe. The European Forum was created to support the democratic change, starting in Central and Eastern Europe. As the change went on very fast hard work was needed to be done, such as the process of reform and regarding the enlargement to welcome new member countries. She stressed that economic problems are present and so in this framework the report on "Put Europe back to work" was very important. Wallén also said that it is important to stick to values of social democracy such as solidarity.

André Gerrits, professor at the University of Amsterdam and president of the Alfred Mozer Stichting, called the development of social democracy very positive. He explained that social democracy in Europe is being divided between the West and Central and Eastern Europe, and that it stops with the EU and the member countries. He also noticed that in countries where there is no democracy there is also no social democracy. Gerrits continued that the general picture between the old and the new member countries is not that different, as the West converged with the Central European countries. He explained that there has been an imperative reform change and now the social democrats in the new and old member countries cope with the same problems. He said that the Western types are becoming more vague, and social democracy is no longer a representation of marginalisation and the poor.

Afterwards he talked about the international dimension of social democracy in the new member countries. He argued that the social democrats in the new member states are more flexible to adapt to the international environment than any other political party. Besides that he said that the social democrats in Eastern Europe are the most accessible when it comes to Europeanization. He argued that one of the reasons for this is because a lot of initiatives are taken by foundations, such as the European Forum and the Socialist International, to promote this. Moreover, social democrats in the region are very enthusiastic about Europeanization and internationalisation because they need the external influences. Gerrits mentioned several reasons for this. Firstly they need

it for their legitimacy. Also because of the fact that poor performances of political competitors failed to present a reform agenda, and eventually opened the doors for social democrats. Finally because of their receptiveness and their sense of responsibility. Gerrits said the outline is positive given the fact that we have observed an impressive record of social democratic performance in this part of Europe.

Attila Ágh, professor and head of the Political Science department at the Budapest University of Economics, said that the external Europeanization – the establishment of contacts with other SD parties – has been stronger than the internal Europeanization. One of the reasons for the weak internal forming process is due to the party-society relationship. Ágh explained that the mobilising chain is missing to a great extent. The Hungarian SD party, for instance, holds much congresses. This, according to Ágh, would be unnecessary if there would be more institutions in the middle. He noted, however, that the good news is that there are high expectations for the European countries. With their central European allies they will have more success, considering the fact that transnational parties are more influential.

The Current Challenges of Social Democracy in Europe

Arjen Berkvens chairing this panel noted the important times in which we live and the seeming end of the neo-liberal era that can be currently observed. He stated to believe that we are well-equipped now to take the initiative with our values of helping those that are not well-off, at a time when we are faced with not only the global financial crisis, but also with a food crisis, an energy crisis and others. He then gave the word to Dasa Silovic, chair of the CEE Gender Network.

Mrs Silovic reiterated the point that we are currently faced with an array of challenges, including financial, economic, food, and fuel. She noted that the transition that began with the end of the Cold War is finally over, and that it had been dominated by an ideology that we, as social democrats, did not stand for: neo-liberalism. East and Central Europe is being hit by the financial crisis, and there will be more to come, as a deepening of the crisis has been argued to come next year. According to Mrs



Silovic the crisis has sharpened our focus on currency-related problems, cash flow problems and others. 'This is not a question of a 'bailout', but of structural changes, a new political order, and it's about addressing those changes', she noted. She then went on to mention some issues relevant to those changes, including a more regulatory role for the state and the legislature in the perspective of employment and social protection (i.e. universal healthcare, pensions, etc.); the question of how the crisis will affect ordinary people and how it will affect gender issues and relations. Ms Silovic also noted a certain return to ideological discussions in Western Europe, which can be seen as a strong point for the social democrats.

Erich Fröschl from the Renner Institute then discussed the current situation in Austria, with the newly established governing coalition of Social Democrats and the conservative People's Party. He is relatively positive about the coalition, and stated that 'it might work'. He noted that Austria has experience with strong coalitions and a particularly strong experience with coalition between the social democrats and the conservatives after 1945, when a consensus came about in Austria that they did not want one party to have all the power again. That coalition, accompanied by the Austrian system of cooperation – the so-called social partnership – helped the country through the 50s crisis. Mr Fröschl, however, noted that these coalitions have positive and negative aspects. The positive ones include a guarantee of the welfare state, high living standards, low unemployment. The negative include the necessity to compromise to the smallest common denominator, to the point when ordinary people start to wonder where the difference between the parties lies. It is also more difficult to put through new developments in the society. Nevertheless, Mr Fröschl stated that these coalitions have proven to be good tools in tough times. Now, also, people are looking for security, which such a coalition might be able to provide.

MEP Gyula Hegyi noted that EU enlargement is not finished in our hearts and minds, as when Western Europeans speak of Europe they generally mean the old EU members, or otherwise say 'we with the new member states'. But, as he put it, 'if you're married to a woman for 5 years, you don't refer to her as your new wife!'. The same happens in the Eastern/Central European states ('they in the West'). Mr Hegyi argued that we should see the EU as one Europe; after all, the difference between

Austria and Slovenia is smaller than that between Austria and Greece, while Greece is an old member and Slovenia a new one. Concerning the crisis, Mr Hegyi referred to it as a challenge and a chance for the social democrats to create a new agenda with social values but also environmental issues. He does not agree with the statement that 'the environment is a problem for the rich' (i.e. once a country's rich it can look towards environmental development). Mr Hegyi noted that it is precisely the poor that are always the first to be affected by environmental problems; which is why we, as social democrats, should have a very clear environmental program. Environmental policies could also play a role in social issues. For instance, a green technology revolution would result in job creation. As another challenge, Mr Hegyi noted the major presence of nationalist/extremist movements in Hungary, and that Hungary hopes for European solidarity in this problem.

Social-democracy in Europe: our mission for the future

The third panel discussion started with a speech by Zita Gurmani, member of the European Parliament for the Socialist Group. In her powerful speech Gurmani argued that in the near future, by looking at the challenges the economic crisis will bring us, the social democrats need to reaffirm their values and to have a strong leader. The current situation is offering opportunity to the social democrats to create a society driven by and for people, rather than a society driven by market mechanisms. In order to use this opportunity and to achieve change we have to be strong and to get everybody on board. After the speech, Alexandra Dobolyi, who is also a member of the European Parliament for the Socialist Group, chaired the third panel discussion. Before giving the floor to other panel members, Dobolyi stressed the importance of European Forum in promoting democracy and democratic values. She added that when the 'new' member states joined the EU we had less and less social democracy, but now the things are changing.

Marko Makovec, advisor to the Slovenian newly elected social democratic Prime Minister Borut Pahor, shortly discussed what the mission of the EU and the social democrats will be for the future and left some questions open for the discussion. Among other things, Makovec, argued that the EU structures and the decision-making



process in the EU must improve if the Union wants to become a world player. It is important, in order to achieve this, to integrate Western Balkans into the Union.

The final speaker was Antun Vujic, MP in Croatia and President of the national policy council. Vujic, just like the previous speaker Makovec, mainly focused on the future enlargement of the EU. According to Vujic, by looking at the future there is one main question: "is there only one mission, or are there more missions, which depend on the political environment of a certain region or country. Vujic referred to the criteria related to the Croatian shipping industry, which is traditionally very important for the Croatian economy. The EU is pressuring Croatia to modernise the industry which can lead to a loss of jobs. According to Vujic, the EU should keep in mind the diversity of countries in Europe, the characteristics of their politics and economy. Finally he added, that the social democrats need authentic vision when it comes to EU enlargement and that the slowing down of the European integration process will negatively influence the development of social democracy in the EU in a time when space is created to reform the neo-liberal world order.

Course for Promising Politicians Romania/Moldova 2007 - 2008

Political context

On 1 January 2007, Romania joined the EU. The accession drew a new border between the two historical allies of Romania and Moldova. Moldova has already signed the Action Plan with the European Commission, and the EU encourages Moldova's further integration into European economic and social structures. Still, Moldova is one of Europe's poorest countries and the political landscape remains volatile. There are several parties of leftist orientation: the Democratic Party of Moldova, the Social Democratic Party of Moldova, the Party of Social Democracy, the Social Liberal Party, and the Communist Party. Romania has made enormous progress during the past years, but still today faces some problems of its own. Contacts between the Romanian Social Democratic Party and other European social democratic parties and foundations could still use a boost. In order to maximise benefits of the Romanian accession to the EU for young leftist politicians, and prevent the creation of new gaps in Europe, the European Forum initiates a series of seminars for young and promising politicians from Moldova and Romania. The formula of the promising politicians seminars has proven to be very successful. Since 2003, the European Forum, in co-operation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has been organising this type of seminars in former Yugoslavia (plus Albania in the past two years).

Counterparts

The youth movements of social democratic parties in Moldova and Romania: the Democratic Party of Moldova, the Party of Social Democracy, the Social Democratic Party of Moldova, the Social Liberal Party - became two by the training in Chisinau. The Party of Social Democracy (led by Dumitru Braghis) and the Social Democratic Party of Moldova (led by Eduard Musuc) have merged into one – the Social Democratic Party.



And the Democratic Party of Moldova (led by Dumitru Diacov) got united with the Social Liberal Party (led by Oleg Serebrian), the Social Democratic Party of Romania.

Primary aim & strategy

To offer systematic training and formation of leadership capacities for leftists parties. To facilitate networking and cooperation. To exchange knowledge and experience. To improve knowledge about the EU and the ENP.

Target group

Young and promising politicians of leftist parties from Moldova and Romania.

Coordinator: Kirsten Meijer (European Forum/ AMS)

Seminar I – “Social democratic parties; Ideology and organisation”

In cooperation with : FES (Bucharest Office)
Date and venue : 14-16 December 2007, Iasi, Romania
Trainers : Emmet Regan and Rob Henderson (Labour Party)

Seminar II – “Social democratic parties; Political campaigning and mass media”

In cooperation with : FES (Chisinau Office)
Date and venue : 25-27 January, Chisinau, Moldova
Trainers : Tim Nuthall and Lynn Glaister (Labour Party)

Seminar III - “Negotiation strategies and European Integration”

In cooperation with : FES (Bucharest Office)
Date and venue : 22-24 February, Brasov, Romania
Trainers : Matthias Verhelst (Political advisor to MEP Jan Marinus Wiersma) and Kirsten Meijer
Guest speakers : Cornel Curia (Institute of International Relations of Moldova), Victor Chirila (Association for Foreign Policy), Victor Negrescu (PES activist PSD)

Report seminar 1

The first seminar for the promising politicians took place in Iasi in December. The seminar had as topic social democracy and party organisation and was attended by 19 participants. The first day participants discussed the meaning of social democracy and it became clear that social democracy can have different meanings for individuals and parties around Europe. The participants were also interested in the difference between social liberalism and social democracy. The second day the training focused on the work inside a political party, and consequently in workgroups the participants designed membership recruitment flyers which they presented to the group.

Report seminar 2

The topic of the second training was “Political Campaigning and Mass Media”. A visit through Chisinau was organised, and on Saturday morning the participants visited the Democratic Party of Moldova, the Chisinau town hall and the parliament of the Republic of Moldova. Afterwards, the participants met with the leader of the Democratic Youth Oleg Tulea, and he discussed the latest developments in the party, the activities developed by the party youth organisation and the cooperation of the DPM with the PDS from Romania. There were also meetings with the recently elected mayor of Chisinau Dorin Chirtoaca, and the president of the Social Democratic Party Dumitru Braghis who talked about, among other things, the recent changes in the party and the political situation in Moldova in general. At the end of the day participants were instructed to work out a political media strategy for their party and the trainers from the Labour party –which had arrived in the meantime– assessed the presentations.

Report seminar 3

The third seminar started with discussion on European integration of Romania and Moldova. Two experts from Moldova presented their view on the ENP and the challenges ahead in Moldova. Participants were given the opportunity to bring into practice the theory –explained by the trainers– on negotiation strategies and how to chair a meeting, by means of several workshops. The day was concluded with a short pres-



entation on the European Union in general and EU decision-making procedures. The next day simulation games were prepared in order for the participants to practice negotiation and chairing skills as well as to learn about EU decision-making in the area of the common foreign and security policy of the EU. All participants were assigned roles as foreign ministers and had to find an agreement on the question whether to open negotiations on EU membership with Turkey.

Course for Promising Politicians Former Yugoslavia

Political context

Since the end of the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, the resolution of the conflict in Macedonia and the democratic changes in Serbia, a situation has emerged in which all countries of former Yugoslavia share more or less the same basic principles of stability and democracy. In all of these countries social democratic parties are active. They can benefit tremendously from mutual experiences and discussions on issues such as modern social democratic ideology, the harsh realities of governing and coalition forming, party building, election campaigns and other challenges that political parties face. Since 2003 the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity in cooperation with the Alfred Mozer Stichting and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung have been organising annually a series of seminars for young and promising politicians, members of social democratic parties, from the former Yugoslav republics (later Albania was included as well). The positive evaluation of the course through the years, led to the decision to organise a Promising Politicians Course in 2008 as well. The course includes seminars on ideology, organisation, political campaigning, mass media, national sovereignty, and joining Europe.

The invited parties are SDSM and DUI (FYROM), DS, SDU and LSV (Serbia), PDK and ORA (Kosovo), SDP, DPS and PzP (Montenegro), SDP (Croatia), SD (Slovenia), SDP and SNSD (Bosnia-Herzegovina), SP and SMI (Albania).

Counterparts

The youth movements of social democratic parties in South-eastern Europe. See for more detailed descriptions of our partners the previous parts on bi-lateral projects in countries in South-eastern Europe.



Primary aim & strategy

To train a group of promising politicians in South-eastern Europe in order to build on their capacity. To introduce them to the various aspects of political leadership, governing and the dynamics and structures of party policies. To strengthen their network and to improve the relations between the political elites in the mentioned countries. Training the selected talents of the above mentioned parties.

Target group

Young members of social democratic parties in former Yugoslav countries and Albania.

Seminar I - "Social democratic parties; Ideology and organisation"

In cooperation with : AMS, FES
Date and venue : 17-20 May, Medulin, Croatia
Trainer : Berend Jan van den Boomen
Guest Speakers : Sebastjan Jeretic (SD of Slovenia), Vedrana Baricevic (Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb) and Davor Vuletic (SDP Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Report

The first seminar of this year's program took place in Medulin in May, and was attended by 28 participants. Considering the theme of the first seminar "Social democratic parties, ideology and organisation", trainer Berend Jan van den Boomen prepared an introduction on the history and the values of social democracy. Sebastjan Jeretic spoke about social democracy and its challenges in current times and the future of social democracy in Slovenia. The second part of the seminar dealt with the organisation of social democratic parties. On the second day Berend Jan van den Boomen focused on policy development within political parties. He also described the structures of a political party, and discussed in detail all the necessary elements for successful functioning of a party. Finally, Davor Vuletic talked about policy development, party structures and practice and about internal party democracy.

Seminar II - "Media and communication skills", Skopje, Macedonia

In cooperation with : AMS, FES (Belgrade and Skopje Offices)
Date and venue : 17-20 October, Skopje, Macedonia
Trainers : Žiga Čebulj, Public Relations consultant, Socialni Demokrati (SD), Slovenia and Dig Itsha, media & communication consultant
Guest Speakers : Damjan Mancevski, member of the executive board of SDUM; Gjorgji Spasov, dean of the faculty of law at the European University of Macedonia Biljana Bejkova, Executive Manager of NGO Info Centre Gëzim Ostreni, Secretary General of DUI

Report

The introduction to the seminar on media and communication skills was prepared by Damjan Mancevski. According to Mancevski, these seminars have proven their value as many participants in previous series of seminars have become very active in politics nowadays. Žiga Čebulj continued the seminar with a presentation on the power of communications, and stressed the importance for politicians and political parties to have a smooth relationship with journalist and media in order to communicate their message to the citizens the way they would like to and, with that, to deliver an accurate and right message. In this light, he stressed, it is vital for a political party to develop a PR strategy. On the final day Gjorgji Spasov discussed the importance of media independence for social democracy and for a country in general. Spasov also discussed the influence the Macedonian ruling elite has on the media and, with that, on the public opinion. He stressed the danger of powerful businessmen and politicians owning media in Macedonia and throughout the media, fear is spread among citizens of Macedonia and some political issues (name row with Greece) are framed in a certain way in order to put the 'real' socio-economic issues on the background. Biljana Bejkova argued that the political influence on media in Macedonia is worrying, as politicians are not allowed to own media outlets by law, they simply put the ownership under the



names of their family members. Finally, Gjorgi Spasov showed how a campaign should not be conducted.

Seminar III - “European integration”

- In cooperation with : AMS, FES (Belgrade office)
Date and venue : 5-8 December, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Trainers : Thijs Reuten, Political Assistant to the Dutch minister for European Affairs, Suzanne Jansen, The Hague Academy For Local Governance and Mojca Kleva, Legal Policy Advisor, SD Slovenia
Guest Speakers : Marko Makovec, advisor for foreign affairs of the Slovenian Prime Minister, András Inotai, director of the Institute for World Economics in Budapest

Report

After the introduction Suzanne Jansen explained how the EU works by giving a historical overview, shortly discussing the enlargement rounds and the consequences of this by focusing on some key aspects of the EU, and by looking at the institutional triangle of the EU. Thijs Reuten, among other things, discussed some important challenges the EU has been facing in the past and talked about the present and future EU challenges, especially relating to the EU integration of Western Balkan countries. The second day of the seminar started with a presentation on the theory of negotiations by the AMS trainers in which, among other things, negotiation strategies based on argumentation, power and exchange were presented. The final part of the second day was conducted by Mojca Kleva, who shared her experience of working in Brussels and emphasised the importance of informal meetings, next to the formal and political will to achieve a certain goal. The last day of the seminar focused on EU enlargement to the Western Balkans. Marko Makovec discussed the EU prospects of the Western Balkans. The seminar ended with a presentation in which András Inotai stressed that future politicians should not create expectations that joining the EU will solve all problems of a country. Future politicians should keep in mind that after EU accession still many things have to be done, such as regional catching-up, which refers to the several less developed regions in an EU country.

CEE Network for Gender Issues

Final narrative report

Background

The CEE Network for Gender Issues came into being in 1994 in Bratislava, as a small group of 7 SD women volunteers working within the framework of the European Forum in order to investigate the status of women, and offer the recommendation for social democratic action for its improvement in transition countries.

In 1998, it was transformed into a formally organised project, named CEE Network for Gender Issues, supported by Olof Palme Centre for the core funding, with a small office in Budapest Hungary. This office connected the women from practically all SD parties, women TU activists and feministic NGO-s in 21 transition countries with the SD women of the PES and Europe based SI sister parties, and organized their systematic capacity building with the growing support of several SD foundations. It started a Women Can Do It movement first within SD parties in transition countries, and from 1999, when it was between the most important initiators and lobbyist for the establishment of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, also in cooperation with all sorts of women activists in the SEE region.

In 2001, the project was reorganized - three small regional offices under the auspices of respective national SD parties were started – in Budapest, Ljubljana and Tallinn. CEE Network started to grow into more and more institutionalized link between SD parties and their women organizations all over Europe from one side, and SD foundations, SI, PES (it got the status of an associated member of the PES W in 2005), big European women’s networks in TU and in civil society, and even became a source of expertise for some governmental gender equality actors (World Bank, UN ECE, CSW, UNIFEM, Council of Europe, Committee of the Regions, EC).



From 2000 on, CEE Network is more and more often asked to offer its expertise in the projects implemented by the OSCE, NDI, Norwegian People's Aid, International Idea Institute from Sweden, and to share its knowledge and spread its networking capacities also to the women in CIS countries (such as Armenia, Georgia, Moldova), as well as to Turkey, Africa - Maghreb countries and Pakistan.

In all this time, CEE Network for Gender Issues worked mostly on the voluntary bases, with no permanent employees, lining upon enthusiasm of its 5 Executive Board members and project by project financing from the SD foundations working together within the Forum. Stable cooperation, support and core funding from the S-Kvinnor and Olof Palme Centre (from 1998 approximately 50.000 EURO per year), made all this work possible.

In 2008, CEE Network for Gender Issues strengthened its role as the main mechanism for exchange of the SD W best practices, transforming itself little by little into the only clearing house for the initiatives of the SD women activists outside Europe and women activists from the PES member parties. It continued with the trainer programs and served as an information and advocacy centre for the SP/SDP women in the SEE region for Croatia, B&H, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, for Turkey and EU neighbouring countries - Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and North Western Russia. It also continued its close cooperation with women in the SD parties from the CEE region, especially from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

In 2008, the focus was:

- On organisation of the joint SD Child Care campaign in the SEE and EU neighbouring countries. – see attached report on this campaign
- On the evaluation of the women's pacifism and implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 7 countries, born from the dissolution of the former socialist Yugoslavia (Based on the joint financial support of the Olof Palme Centre and LP Westminster Foundation). – see attached report about the international conference;
- On active inclusion of SD W all over Europe in the preparations of the PES Manifesto for 2009 and the preparations of the NGO support for

the SD W pre-electoral campaign in 2009 (CEE Network for Gender Issues Parity campaign initiative was accepted not only by the PES W, but also in the EWL, by the European Students' Association, and seriously discussed in the new EC Expert Group on women in decision making). This work will be continued in the form of coordination of the gender aspects of the national electoral campaigns in 10 new EU member states;

- On global promotion of the SD approach to gender budgeting in NY at the occasion of the 52 session of the UN CSW;
- On promotion of SD gender equality approach on all relevant gender equality connected events of the Slovene European Presidency;
- On transfer of the CEE Network experiences to the European Commission newly established expert group on women in decision making (Sonja Lokar was invited to become its member in personal capacity but on the bases of international visibility and clout of the CEE Network);
- On transfer of our experiences to the women activists in Hong Kong – based on the invitation from the National Democratic Institute there;
- On transfer of our experiences to the women NGO leaders and members of WIDE, to the experts and users of the I Know Politics (global interactive web page established by International Idea, Institute, NDI, UNIFEM, UNDP with millions of users/women activists world wide), to members and EU partners of the Choisir la Cause des Femmes; to UNDP NGO and governmental partners and officials from Turkey, CEE and CIS regions, and to the collective of several hundreds of PES activists, which gathered in Vienna and in Madrid.

CEE Network continued its close cooperation with the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity and the SD foundations. In 2008, we have realised cooperation with Olof Palme International Center, LP Westminster Foundation, Alfred Mozer Foundation, NDI and FES. In June 2008 CEE Network became an observer-member of the FEPS – new SD European Foundation for Progressive Studies.

CEE Network also continued its close cooperation with the Gender Task Force, which became a



formal gender mainstreaming mechanism of the new Regional Cooperation Council. In 2008, this new body has replaced the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. In this moment GTF is running three regional projects in 10 SEE countries which also include (cross party approach is a principle) the most active SD W MPs, women activists in Trade Unions and all SD parliamentary party women organisations in this region. Sonja Lokar, CEE Network coordinator for the SEE, continues to serve as a Chair of the GTF.

In 2008, CEE Network for Gender Issues Board members directly reached out and met more than 5,000 highly profiled –mostly but not only social democratic– NGO leaders, TU women leaders and activists, gender equality experts, male and female party leaders, MPs, ministers, and directly cooperated also with two European Commissioners (Spidla, Wallstrom), and practically with all SD Women MEPs.

List of the CEE Network for Gender Issues activities by date, place and subject

- January 12, Zagreb, Croatia: Short strategy meeting with the SDP WF of Croatia in Zagreb – 12 Croatia SD women leaders.
- January 21, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Lecture to the women social entrepreneurs in Slovenia, on how to cooperate with political actors – 15 participants.
- January 23.-24, Prague, Czech Republic: presentation of the Slovene women's movement for parity to the national conference of the Czech NGO 50/50 – 150 participants, activists from NGOs, TU, political parties and academia.
- January 29-30, Brdo pri Kranju: Slovenian ministerial conference on Gender Stereotypes, in the framework of the Slovene EU Presidency, active participation – 150 participants.
- January 31, Bled, Slovenia: Fringe meeting with PES W leader Dr. Zita Gurmai and SD ministers for labour and gender equality and EU Commissioner Vladimir Spidla, discussing EU policy on gender equality and the preparations for the EU elections in 2009 – 8 participants.
- February 6, Brussels, Belgium: Active participation on the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Forum for Democracy and Solidarity – 25 participants.
- February 24-March 9, New York: CEE Network distributed 100 copies of our publication from 2007 Women in Politics – Stocktaking in SEE. Sonja Lokar, serving as an expert member of the Slovenian governmental delegation which led the EU coordination at the 52nd session of the Commission for the Status of Women, worked as a liaison officer for the NGOs, and informed them at two briefings (300 participants) on the state of art of diplomatic negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions, concerning the issue of gender budgeting. She also spoke at the SIW fringe event (80 participants) and on the EWL fringe event (90 participants), and lectured to the professors at the New York University, on the Euro-Mediterranean Studies (7 participants).
- March 15, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Lecture about CEE Network work and Stability Pact Gender



Task Force work in the SEE region to the Women's Forum of the European Parliament and Asia Caribbean Parliamentary Assembly – 150 participants.

- May 16, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Lecture to the women members of the leaderships of the national students associations in the European Students Association on the issue of the need for special women's organisations within different forms of general political organisation like parties, trade unions, professional associations and even NGOs – 31 participants.
- March 17, Chisinau, Moldova: Strategy meeting with the leadership of the newly established women's organisation within the SDP of Moldova – 3 participants.
- March 18, Bucharest, Romania: Lecture on women's parallel electoral campaigns to the women leaders of regional branches of the women's organisation of the SDP of Romania – 43 participants.
- April 9, Zagreb, Croatia: Dasa Silovic, CEE Network Board Chairwoman and Sonja Lokar held a strategy meeting with the leadership of the Croatian SDW – 10 participants.
- April 16-22, Hong Kong: In cooperation with the NDI, Sonja Lokar lectured at the Hong Kong University – 20 participants, trained women NGO leaders – 23 participants, took active part at the national women's summit – 69 participants, and trained women from different political parties – 23 participants.
- April 28, Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia: Sonja Lokar got the position of the reporter from one working group of the EU governmental conference on intergenerational solidarity and succeeded to form social democratic conclusions from this group, later accepted at the conference – 200 participants.
- May 16, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Sonja Lokar took active part at the PES Executive Bureau Meeting – 29 participants. She presented CEE Network for Gender Issue comments on the PES Manifesto 2009 on New Social Europe, and moderated a public conference on Economic Independence of Women – 55 participants.
- May 17-20, Skopje, Macedonia: Ljubljana Office of the CEE Network and the biggest Macedonian NGO UOWM jointly organised the first sub-regional training seminar of SD parties from the SEE on joint child care campaign. – training 24 participants. Sonja Lokar also spoke in favour of SD women at the big pre-electoral SD rally in Skopje – to some 1500 people.

- May 25, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Sonja Lokar presented to the European Women's Lobby Executive Bureau CEE Network for Gender Issues a proposal on how to lead Parity in the Law Pan – European Coalition and campaign – 45 participants.
- May 27, Tirana, Albania: In the framework of the new GTF project on mainstreaming in political parties, Sonja Lokar led the meetings with the leader of the SDP, and with the women leaders from the SP and succeeded to get them into this project – 7 participants.
- May 30- June 1, Kotor, Montenegro: In the framework of the GTF project on mainstreaming gender in the work of the parliaments, Sonja Lokar, as a chair of the GTF, trained the women parliamentarians from 10 SEE countries on the issue of gender aspects of active employment policies – 20 participants.
- June 2, Brussels, Belgium: Sonja Lokar in her capacity of the SEE coordinator of the CEE Network for Gender Issues became a full member and took active part in the first meeting of the new EC Expert group on women in decision making – 20 participants.
- June 6-8, Tartu, Estonia: Tallinn Office of the CEE Network for Gender Issues organised the second sub-regional SD seminar on joint SD Child Care campaign – 24 participants.
- June 9-13, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Serbia: In the framework of the GTF new project on mainstreaming gender in political parties, Sonja Lokar spoke to the male and female party leaders of DP, G17+, LDP, League of the SD of Vojvodina, and SPS, and persuaded them to decide to take active part in this project – 10 participants.
- June 21-22, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Thanks to the support coming from LP Westminster Foundation, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Olof Palme Center, and Slovene Ministry for Defence, CEE Network for Gender Issues Ljubljana Office, and the Institute for Humanities Studies organised an international conference on Women in conflict resolution, bringing together women peace activists from all over the former Yugoslavia countries, and discussing also the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The opening speech was given by the former President of Slovenia, Milan Kucan – 45 participants
- June 24 - 25, Brussels, Belgium: Sonja Lokar represented CEE Network for Gender Issues



at the meeting of ENSOF – European Network of SD Foundations - 12 participants and at the first Ordinary Assembly of the FEPS (European Foundation for Progressive Studies) – 46 participants

- July 4-6, Vienna: Taking active part in the first PES Activists' meeting – advocating that PES sister parties should specially target women voters in the forthcoming EU elections. 270 social democratic activists from all EU member states.
- July 8-9, Cetinje, Montenegro: In cooperation with UNIFEM, Gender Equality Office of Montenegro organized a SEE regional conference on gender aspects of the improving of labour legislation. CEE Network was asked to present experiences with the changes which were needed in the adjustment of the Slovene labour law, before Slovenia entered EU in 2004. We reached out to 57 participants – femocrats, women legislators, NGO leaders and trade union activists from all Western Balkan countries.
- July 16, V.Novgorod, Russia: Tallinn office of the CEE Network for Gender Issues organized the seminar for Women's NGO's activists in V. Novgorod on joint SD child care campaign and exchanging experiences about child care policies and reconciliation of work and family life in EU and in non EU countries (Russia). Reet Laja led the roundtable – 15 participants.
- July 29-31, Carpentras, France, ECOSY Summer school. I presented CEE Network views on EU Democracy without women to 85 young social democrats from all over Europe.
- August 19.-24: Sonja Lokar took part in all activities of the national SD child care campaign in Macedonia, which was co-organised by UOWM and SDSM in Resen, Kruševo and Sopište. 85 social democratic activists, including the mayors of these three towns, took part in this campaign. At the end of the campaign Sonja Lokar also met with the state president, Branko Crvenkovski, and with the than president of the SDSM, Radmila Šekerinska.
- August 27.-31, Trogir, Croatia: Sonja Lokar in her capacity of the GTF Chair, tailored and led Gender Task Force train the trainer seminar for the national facilitators of the project: "Gender mainstreaming in parliamentary parties of the SEE region. Participants: 12 facilitators and experts.
- September 14, Ljubljana: A week before the national elections in Slovenia, CEE Network Ljubljana Office, in cooperation with the Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Jankovič, organized a public round table,

advocating for the National plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Slovenia. Only 9 people came, but all of them were women MEPs or Slovene MPs or candidates for MP.

- September 17–19, Chisinau, Moldova: Sonja Lokar in her capacity of the GTF Chair, organised training for 21 activists from 5 political parties which would later organise party meetings on the highest party level in order to try to improve these parties gender equality policies.
- September 22, Tallinn, Estonia: Tallinn office of the CEE Network for Gender issues organized the roundtable discussion on the state of art of the childcare in Belarus- the overview was given by the head of the "Women's Independent Democratic Movement" Ludmila Petina and discussion was led about affordable high quality child care policies in Estonia – 31 participants.
- September 22, Ljubljana: Slovene Peace Institute invited Sonja Lokar to speak about capacity building of trainers for political empowerment of women, in front of 56 participants from all over EU on the conference dealing with the professional standards for the trainers on the issues of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- September 23-24, Ljubljana: EC in cooperation with a range of NGOs from different countries of the EU held a seminar on exchange of best EU practices with regard gender equality impacts of well organized child care. The text prepared by Sonja Lokar and Božena Devčić as an overview of the Slovene case served as an initial text for the reports from all other EU member states. There were 45 femocrats and experts present, from all EU member states, including the leadership of the Directorate for gender equality from the European Commission. (Belinda Pyke, Fay Devonic)
- September 27-28, Tallinn, Estonia: SDP Women's participation at the fair "Child and Family", Katrin Saks -SD MEP was present.. We distributed her book on childcare and 1250 copies of the newspaper "Sotsiaaldemokraat", 400 Child Care hand-outs, SDP balloons.
- October 6-9, Skopje, Macedonia: In her capacity of the Chair of the GTF, Sonja Lokar led the sub-regional seminar for the male and female members of the ideologically diverse parliamentary parties from Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia. There were 35 high level party leadership representatives.



- October 9-12, The Hague, The Netherlands: The world famous international NGO Women in Development Europe invited Sonja Lokar to its yearly conference to speak on the issue of connection between development strategies in post transition countries and political representation and empowerment of women there. There were 160 leaders of the women NGOs from all over the world.
- October 13, Brussels: European Parliament Committee on Women Human Rights and Gender Equality prepared a session on the situation of women in the Western Balkans. Zita Gurmai, CEE Network Board member and vice chair of this European Parliament body, has succeeded that Sonja Lokar, on behalf of the CEE Network for Gender Issues and GTF, presented her assessment of the Balkan situation and trends to 35 women MEPs.
- October 13, Brussels, Belgium: Sonja Lokar, as a member of the EC Expert group for women in decision-making was invited to moderate the discussion of the sub-group of this body on the topic of mentoring and empowerment of women. There were 35 people taking part at this discussion.
- October 16, Viljandi, Estonia: Reet Laja presented the CEE network child care project at the Viljandi regional meeting of the SDP Women's. The state of art of child care in Viljandi region was analysed and the proposals for the improvements were prepared – 12 participants.
- October 17-19, Istanbul, Turkey: PES and Forum invited CEE network to the discussion about the Turkey's Roadmap to EU accession with the representatives of progressive intellectuals, NGO leaders and representatives of progressive political parties. 58 strong political personalities from all walks of Turkish public life were present.
- October 20.-21, Sarajevo, in her capacity of the GTF Chair, Sonja Lokar led second sub-regional seminar for male and female leaders from the parliamentary parties of the following SEE countries: Croatia, BiH, Serbia and Montenegro. 52 high male and female politicians from some 20 parliamentary parties were present.
- October 22-25, Geneva, Switzerland: Slovenian government was defending its fifth periodic report to CEDAW. CEE Network Ljubljana Office was coordinating and editing Slovene NGOs Shadow report and Sonja Lokar, the author of the critical comments on political representation of women in Slovenia, presented its results to the members of the CEDAW Committee. Our lobbying for the findings in the

Shadow report directly reached 18 CEDAW committee members and is well reflected in the CEDAW Committee recommendations to the Slovene government.

- October 24, Rakvere, Estonia: SDP Women's NGO "Kadri" Lääne-Virumaa region conference on women and power, Katrin Saks presented EP child care policy and Katrin Saks child care brochures were disseminated to the participants.
- October 30-31, Kotor, Montenegro: CEE Network was supporting SDP of Montenegro in its women's campaign for early election in the town Kotor. 40 activists and the male local party leadership were present.
- November 3.-6, Oslo, Norway: IKnow Politics electronic interactive web site, started by Swedish International Idea Institute, IPU, UNIFEM and UNDP and Norwegian Foreign Ministry. They co-organised the first meeting of experts who cooperate in the work of IKnow Politics, and to discuss the issue of slow progress in representation of women in decision-making worldwide. Sonja Lokar was invited to present the experiences of CEE Network and Gender Task Force from their work on gender mainstreaming with political parties – 45 participants.
- November 8, Velenje, Slovenia: CEE Network took part in the Forum initiated seminar on Smart Green Growth in SEE countries, where social democratic experts from EU member states and green activists from SD parties of the SEE countries discussed main ecological challenges in the SEE region – 13 participants.
- November 9-10, Zagreb, Croatia: Sonja Lokar in her capacity of the GTF Chair was coaching through the GTF Regional seminar with the group of parliamentarians from different parties from 10 SEE countries in an attempt to make an insight in the preschool child care policies of these countries in comparison with the best EU member states' practices – 25 participants, mostly MPs.
- November 12, Brussels, Belgium: Forum invited CEE Network representative to take part in the meeting of SD foundations (15 members of this coordination, named ENSOF) in order to better coordinate our participation in the newly founded European Political Foundation (named ENOP). The



same day CEE Network also participated at the Steering Committee meeting of the ENOP – 23 participants.

- November 14, Ljubljana, Slovenia: Sonja Lokar started CEE Network for Gender Issues close cooperation with the Norwegian women Ambassador to Slovenia, in order to help Women's Lobby in Slovenia to set up a parallel electoral campaign for the EU elections in 2009. On December 8, the first grant of the Norwegian Embassy to the CEE Network was given for the preparation of the electoral supplement of the Women's Lobby of Slovenia. This supplement, hopefully published in the biggest daily newspaper Delo (90 000 copies) will make decisive public pressure on all political parties in Slovenia to get due attention to the issues important for the women voters and eligible places on the lists to their women candidates.
- November 17, On the initiative of the CEE Network for Gender Issues and in close cooperation with Free Trade Unions, Institute for Peace, National Students' Association and Union of pensioners' associations, the first exchange of information and ideas of social partners which might be the strongest hit by the global recession, was held in the Home of Free Trade Unions in Ljubljana. It was agreed that we will establish formal coordination of all social stakeholders in order to be able to proactively cooperate with the new left wing government in the issues important for solving of the recession in the process of consensus building rather than in the process of open class confrontation. New SD Prime Minister is showing big interest for this type of cooperation. 45 representatives of these stakeholders and the media were present.
- November 22, Vilnius, Lithuania: Reet Laja hold the meeting with the SDP Women's representative from Ukraine and spoke about joint SD child care campaign and studied the state of art of child care in Ukraine.
- November 24, Zagreb: in her capacity of the Chair of the GTF Sonja Lokar was invited to the formal presentation of the new Regional Cooperation Council which has replaced the Stability Pact for South east Europe in February 2008. At this meeting there were the most important people from the RCC leadership (the institution is based in Sarajevo) and 150 officials from all ministries of the Croatian government. In the afternoon of the same day, Sonja Lokar led the meeting with the deputy secretary General of the RCC, Jelica Minić, and it was agreed that the RCC will serve as a political umbrella to all

regional activities of the GTF in a similar way as this was done with in the Stability Pact. For 2009 GTF proposes grass root work regional project for awareness raising and capacity building in the Western Balkans, neighbouring EU member states and Moldova, systematic work with women and male leaders of Trade Unions, continuation of the work with parliamentary political parties on gender mainstreaming, and policy building on specific gender equality issues with the parliaments, as well as a new regional project dealing with gender aspects of ecology. The same day, Sonja Lokar also met with Dr. Vesna Pusić, vice president of the ELDR and chair of the European Liberal Women's Network. They agreed on the ELDR women MEP-s cooperation in the EWL parity campaign as well as on further work (in the framework of the GTF ongoing regional project) on gender mainstreaming with the ELDR sister parties in the region.

- November 27-28, Paris, France: CEE Network was invited by Choisir, the most important French women's NGO, to take part in their launching of the proposal for the Best European Clause for Women. In this project, Choisir singled out five fields of concern where EU citizens, men and women should work together in order to bring enjoyment of women human rights all over the EU at the highest level existing in respective EU member states. They cited Sweden for the best legislation and practice in sexual education and abortion, Spain for their most comprehensive law against family violence, Belgium for the best regulations concerning women's representation in politics... Sonja Lokar presented systematic work on the regional level of the SEE women in the field of political representation of women. The conference was attended by some 150 international representatives, including several women MEPs, and French Foreign Minister, Bernard Coucher.
- November 29, Madrid, Spain: CEE Network took active part in the yearly conference of the PES Women. The discussion focused on the forthcoming EU elections. More than 100 participants were attending from the women's organisations of the left wing parties from all EU member states.
- November 30: CEE Network took active part in the second PES Activists' training event and focused their attention on the necessity



to develop joint parallel electoral women's campaigns, especially in the new EU member states where the motivation to work on equal representation of women in decision-making diminished critically after the formal inclusion of these countries in the EU. There were 250 PES activists from all EU member states as well as the leadership of PES and PES W.

- December 1, Madrid: CEE Network took part at the launching of the PES Manifesto by the PES Council. A lot of the work of the CEE Network is build in the wording of this Manifesto, especially in the special chapter dealing with gender equality for the first time in such an extent. More than 200 participants.
- December 1-3, Istanbul, Turkey: CEE Network was invited by UNDP and TIKA (Turkish Governmental Development Cooperation Agency) to help to prepare a UNDP regional strategy for their work on women human rights and gender mainstreaming in CEE and CIS in the future. There were 126 participants: high level staff from all UNDP filed offices in these regions, representatives of the NGOs dealing with these issues from all these countries, as well as representatives from UNIFEM, IKnow Politics and IPU. Sonja Lokar requested sincere and strategically structured regional cooperation of the UN agencies with all existing regional actors on gender equality in these regions: CEE Network for Gender Issues, TU Women's regional network (led by Jasna A. Petrović from Croatia), and Regional Cooperation Council and its Gender Task Force. She also suggested to the UNDP to encourage CIS women activists to establish a special institution for regional cooperation of women in CIS sub-region, similar to the GTF, as the experience shows that cross cutting regional cooperation of women gives the best results.
- December 8, Sonja Lokar was invited to the working lunch with four Nordic women ambassadors serving their term in Slovenia (from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland). At this lunch the agreements was made to continue the cooperation in the year to come, especially in trying to bring together highly placed women in politics from all political sides in order to help them to start to better work together on the issues of mutual interest.
- December 9, Brussels: Sonja Lokar was invited by FEPS to present the concerns of SD women in the framework of the FEPS' conference Renewing social democracy in Europe. At this conference there were left wing thinkers and activists from all EU member states – 150 par-

ticipants. Before this meeting, Sonja Lokar -this time in her capacity of the GTF Chair- met with Doris Pack, EPP MEP responsible for the Balkans and discussed with her potential modalities of the future cooperation of EPP as well as its foundations in gender mainstreaming in the EPP sister parties in the SEE region.

- December 10-11, Sarajevo: FES invited Sonja Lokar from the CEE network Ljubljana Office to present women's experiences in regional cooperation in the post war Balkans, and how to deal with it in the changing global, European and regional circumstances. The conference was attended by high level figures – 40 participants
- December 12-14, Budapest: CEE network Board members were invited to be present at the Steering Committee of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. Dasa Silović presented our views on the possible ways of the most effective future of the gender equality work of social democrats within the enlarging EU – 15 participants
- December 13, Budapest: CEE Network International Board accepted preliminary narrative and financial report for 2008, made an activity plan for 2009 and confirmed the application to the Olof Palme Centre for 2010, and set a strategic approach for its participation in EU elections 2009. At the same day, all members of the Board also took part at the Forum's 15th Anniversary and in the public debate on the future of the social democracy in the CEE. Dasa Silovic was a key note speaker of one of the sessions – 60 participants.
- December 14, Budapest: Budapest Office of the CEE Network organised the last event of the Joint SD Child Care campaign – seminar for the 10 best campaigners, as well as the discussion on how to work in the campaigning for the forthcoming EU elections in the new member states. The participants were coming from Hungary, Slovenia, Estonia, Croatia, Macedonia, Belarus, Russia and Kosovo, as well as Lena Hjelm Wallen, the chair of the Forum's Steering Committee – 10 participants
- December 20, Zagreb: Sonja Lokar took part in the train the trainer session for the facilitators of the new GTF project on "TU Women in Social Dialogue" – 8 participants, and made a consultation with SD women in preparations for the forthcoming local elections.
- December 21-24, Skopje: Sonja Lokar as a Chair of the GTF held separate consultations



on gender aspects of party approach to local elections with the highest level of party officials from three parliamentary parties in Macedonia: SDUM, DUI and DPA – 19 participants

In 2008, CEE Network coordinators and Board members personally communicated with 5431 activists coming from political parties, NGOs, Trade Unions, academia, media, elected politics, national and international policy makers and administrators on all levels of power – from local communities to the European Commissioners from all over the world.

Publications, media Presence, visibility

- March 18, 2008, Bucharest, Romania: Sonja Lokar gave a short interview on Romanian national TV.
- March 15-March 21: Sonja Lokar was writing and reading public diary for the Radio Free Europe based in Prague.
- November 20, 2008, Zagreb, Croatia: Sonja Lokar was a guest on the most popular political progressive TV show on Croatian public TV named Latinica, where the discussion was led about the political, cultural and social processes in former Socialist Yugoslavia in the eighties, before the outbreak of the wars. The show is watched all over the Balkans as well as in Slovenia.
- December 5: The Article about the CEE Network for Gender Issues Child care campaign was published in the SD newspaper in Estonia (5000 copies).
- December 2008: The Budapest Office of the CEE Network published a second, updated edition of the booklet: “From Quota to Parity”.
- CEE Network for Gender Issues’ web site as a part of the Forum’s home page has been regularly updated with new information. This report will be published there till the end of February 2009.

Reporting: Sonja Lokar, Reet Laja and Zita Gurmai, CEE Network for Gender Issues, Coordinators for the Ljubljana, Tallinn and Budapest CEE Network sub-regional Offices.

The Information Service in 2008

The Information Service of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity consists of a bi-monthly Newsflash and the (revision of the) Country Updates. Until September 2008, the so-called Information Officers of the Alfred Mozer Stichting were fully in charge of the revision of the Country Updates and of editing the newsflashes. As of September 2008, these tasks have become the responsibility of the project managers working on the respective countries of which they monitor the news from the office in Amsterdam. Furthermore, each year three interns work for the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. They are tasked with writing a new Country Update, and monitoring several countries for the Newsflash.

Aims for 2008

In the Information Service proposal of 2008, several aims were outlined:

Country Updates

1. To update all the dynamic country updates, whenever it is needed, especially after elections, changes in party leadership and developments in society with a big impact on the political developments.
2. To add new Country Updates on Libya, Syria and Tunisia.
3. To make available eleven country updates on the countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe in PDF-format, in an easy to read full colour lay-out.

Newsflash and Calendar

4. To invest in the dynamics of the Central Asian country updates by adding the Central Asian countries to the Newsflash.
5. To continue the Newsflash and the Calendar for the foundations and political parties in our network

Electionblog

6. To improve the functioning of the ‘electionblog’ into an important part of the European Forum website.

Annual reports

7. To publish 400 European Forum Annual Reports.

Below we will outline the developments in our work according to the aims set out for 2008.

Country Updates

At this moment, there is a total of 29 Country Updates. Of these, 26 country updates were written in the period before 2008. Three new country updates have been added. Two old country updates, of new European Union member states Romania and Bulgaria, have been taken off line. In the scheme below, you can find an overview of all the present country updates and the most important events that have been revised or added to these country updates. In the second column the status of changes of 2008 is given. We have chosen to distinguish between 'partly revised' and 'fully revised'. In the case of partly revised country updates, the most recent events have been added. In the case of fully revised updates, the whole text has been checked to test whether it is still accurate and complete, and a considerable amount of changes has been made. In the third column, you find an overview of the most important events added to the country updates.

Selection of events

The country updates aim to give a clear and concise overview of the political developments in a country. In order to get such an overview, information is given on the most recent (presidential and parliamentary) elections, and on important political issues in the concerning country. Only news which has, or is strongly expected to have, an impact on the political landscape of a country makes it into the country update. Political news of a more temporary nature can be found in the newsflash, which is published every two weeks.

When selecting political events which make it into the country updates, there are two main points of consideration. News will be added to the country update when we can speak of:

a) a separate event, which is highly important for the (political landscape of the) country.

Examples of such events are elections, the death of a politician, a change in party leadership, or a sudden economic crisis.

b) an event that is part of an ongoing process in politics, economy or society. Examples of issues are ongoing poverty or corruption, political instability, growing authoritarianism, international contacts and border-disputes.

New Country Updates in 2008

In 2008, three new country updates have been added to the website up until now, written by the interns of the European Forum. Margriet van Dijken wrote the country update on the Syrian Arab Republic. Marina Ohanjanyan wrote the country update on the Republic of Tunisia. Marianna Tsirelson produced the country update on Libya.

Country Updates in PDF-format

We have set ourselves the goal of publishing 11 country updates on the countries of (South-) Eastern Europe in a PDF-format this year. The layout was prepared, after which the country updates were published as downloadable PDF-files on the website.

Overview changes in Country Updates January – July 2008

Albania	Partly revised	Declaration of independence Kosovo
Algeria	-	-
Armenia	Partly revised	Presidential elections 19 February 2008, followed by mass protests and state of emergency
Azerbaijan	Partly revised	Presidential elections
Belarus	Partly revised	Parliamentary elections, bomb attack 4 July 2008 and government shake-up
Bosnia Herzegovina	-	-
Croatia	Partly revised	Parliamentary elections November 2007 and formation government
Egypt	-	-
FYR Macedonia	-	Fully revised Parliamentary elections 1 June 2008, name dispute with Greece, Euro-Atlantic integration
Georgia	Fully revised	State of emergency November 2007, presidential election 5 January 2008,

		parliamentary elections 21 May 2008
		War with The Russian Federation in August
Jordan	Partly revised	New election law
Kazakhstan	Partly revised	Upcoming chairmanship OSCE 2010
Kosovo	Fully revised	Declaration of independence 15 February 2008, upcoming EULEX mission, new constitution (under construction)
Kyrgyzstan	Partly revised	Parliamentary elections December 2007, new election law
Lebanon		-
Libya		New in 2008
Moldova	Partly revised	Party mergers PDM and PSDM
Montenegro	Partly revised	Presidential election 6 April 2008
Morocco		-
Palestinian Territories		-
Republic of Tunisia		New in 2008
Russia	Partly revised	Presidential election 2 March 2008, opposition protests, power Putin – Medvedev, new leader Yabloko
Serbia	Fully revised	Presidential election 20 January and 3 February 2008, Kosovo declaration of independence, parliamentary elections 11 May 2008
Syrian Arab Republic		New in 2008
Tajikistan	Partly revised	Corruption; repayment loans to IMF
Turkey	Partly revised	AK Party & DT Party faced with charges
Turkmenistan		-
Ukraine	Partly revised	Governmental crisis
Uzbekistan		-

Newsflash

In 2008, the five Central Asian republics have been added to the newsflash. This was done in connection to the introduction of Country Updates on the Central Asian republics in 2007. Including these countries in the newsflash ensures that the political developments in these countries are monitored, making it easier to keep the country updates dynamic as well.

Romania and Bulgaria have been deleted from the newsflash, as these countries became EU member states in 2007. The number of subscriptions to the newsflash has risen from 622 people in November 2007 to 663 people in June 2008, to 860 in December! Which means our network of readers is still expanding.

Electionblog

During the first half of 2008, we have tried to keep up the election blog, by adding contributions from Kosovo and Armenia. Unfortunately, it appeared difficult to get people to write pieces in the hectic times of elections. We have decided to dissolve the election blog in 2009.

Annual Reports

The Annual Report for 2007 has been published in 400 copies.

Appendix

Country Updates: Syrian Arab Republic, Republic of Tunisia, Libya Newsflash #12-23 (1 – 111 have been send already with the interim report.)

European Forum Work Plan 2008

The European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity is dedicated to support the transformation and democratisation processes in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. By serving as a platform for co-operation between social democratic parties, organisations and personalities it aims to contribute to the development of (social-) democracy. Within the European Forum 12 social democratic foundations and 18 social democratic parties play an active role.

Relevant developments

In 2007 the new PES foundation (FEPS) was created. For the near future FEPS does not seem have the ambition to do the same work as the European Forum, but it is not excluded in the statutes: "The object of the FEPS is to undertake research, information and training in the fields of political, social, legal & economic science, more specifically in their European and international dimension. More specifically, it may: undertake studies on specific political issues, organise conferences, seminars and workshops, publish and circulate publications promoting the works of the FEPS, organise training sessions." The European Forum has to closely monitor the development of FEPS and start consultations with the PES and FEPS about the best way to cooperate in the future, without excluding any possible outcome beforehand. Moving back the European Forum to Brussels in 2008 is not possible for financial reasons and because of the fact that the above mentioned developments are still in their early stage. Taking into consideration the fact that the election period in the first half of 2009 will keep all parties busy. Realistically moving the European Forum will be possible only after the European elections in June 2009. This means that the European Forum will remain with the AMS for two more years.

Decision by the Steering Committee: the European Forum will remain with the AMS for two more years.

The European Forum has the following focus, following the enlargement agenda

1. Candidate countries: Turkey and Croatia, FYR of Macedonia
2. Potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244
3. ENP: Eastern Dimension: Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan
4. The Russian Federation
5. The ENP Southern dimension

What did we do?

- In the past four years the European Forum has focussed on the ENP in a series of Wider Europe in perspective conferences in: Ukraine (2003), Moldova (2004) and Caucasus; Georgia (2005), The Russian Federation (2006), Morocco (2007).
- We have organised a number of topical conferences: the role of political foundations (2003), European enlargement and the Roma issue (2003 and 2004), Economy in transition (2003), sexual minorities (2004), Human Rights (2005), Resistance movements (2005), Economy & Employment (2006), Public opinion and the EU; the image of the EU & how to involve our citizens (2006), Fair Trade: the consequences of WTO policies for the Western Balkans (2006), Human trafficking (2007), The Macedonian road to EU accession (2007), Energy and environment policy (2007), All equal, all different; the rights of minorities in the Western Balkans (2007).
- Paid attention to specific developments in the following countries: Latvia (2003), Slovakia (2003), The Russian Federation (2004), Belarus (2004), Ukraine (2005), Turkey (2005), Belarus (2006.)
- Initiated assessment visits: Georgia (2004), Turkey (2004), Kosovo (2004), Albania (2006), Armenia (2007).
- Coordinated efforts: Romania (2003), Ukraine (2004), Promising politicians in Former Yugoslavia and Albania (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), Belarus (2006, 2007), Promising politicians in Moldova and Romania (2007).
- Gender equality through the Gender Network (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007).
- Information Service: country updates, newsflash, website (1993-2007).
- We will organise five conferences:

Slovenia; A Green Agenda for Southeast Europe. What are the opportunities of sustainable green policies? How can environmentally friendly policies affect economic growth? What is the relationship between politics and environmental-oriented NGOs? This conference aims to address climate change and environmental issues in the region, and find solutions to problems that go beyond national boundaries.

Hungary; 15 years European Forum: Social Democracy and the Consequences of the Enlargement. Achievements and challenges. What lessons can be learned from the role of the international social democratic movement in the development of social-democracy in the new European democracies? What is the mission for the future?

Piran; Environment and development of sustainable ecological policies. The annual Piran aims to identify mutual challenges and discuss policies that will help young people to extend their chances of finding employment, to offer the possibility to exchange knowledge and experience between parties that encounter similar socio-economic problems and to strengthen cooperation between social democratic parties in the region.

Albania; Transparency & Openness; the role of political parties in society. Political parties play a crucial role in our societies. Their behaviour should be exemplary, given their position as main broker between the population and the countries executive. However, the trust people have in politicians is at an all time low. How can we improve this? This conference will start to look at the way political parties deal with issues as internal democracy, recruitment of party officials and candidates, policy making procedures and finances.

Turkey; EU enlargement regional conference. Turkey is an EU candidate country. How far has it progressed on the road to EU Enlargement? What is the current state of play after three years of negotiations on the *acquis communautaire* and which challenges lay ahead. A conference in Istanbul.

Jordan; ENP- southern dimension. The European Commissions effort to create a ring of friends around the European Union has an eastern and a southern dimension. In this conference we will tackle the role of the EU in the Middle East and address the issue of strengthening democracy in these countries.

- Initiate assessment visit to: The Russian Federation; 3 days post election mission in June
- Coordinated efforts:
 - Belarus Solidarity Fund: a continuation of the activities in 2005-2006 & 2007-2008. The Fund will support social-democrats.
 - Promising politicians in Former Yugoslavia and Albania; year six.
 - Promising politicians Moldova/ Romania
 - Georgian Youth Forum
 - Gender equality through the Gender Network
- Information Service: country updates, newsflash, website.

New country updates on Tunisia, Libya, Syria.

Include the five Central Asian countries in the Newsflash

In 2008, eleven Country Updates (South-Eastern Europe and Eastern-Europe) will be also available in PDF-format. These Updates in PDF will be easier to read through an improved full colour lay-out.

Office

Currently four staff members are employed at the European Forum office:

Arjen Berkvens – secretary general; aberkvens@pvda.nl

Kirsten Meijer – senior project manager; kmeijer@pvda.nl

Marina Ohanjanyan – project manager; mohanjanyan@pvda.nl

Danijel Tadić – project manager; dtadic@pvda.nl

Contacts

Website : www.europeanforum.net

Postal address : PO BOX 1310
1000 BH Amsterdam
The Netherlands

E-mail address : info@europeanforum.net

Phone number : 0031 (0)20 5512 170

Fax number : 0031 (0)20 5512 250