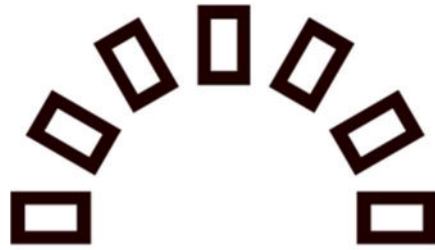


European Forum Annual Report 2019



European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity

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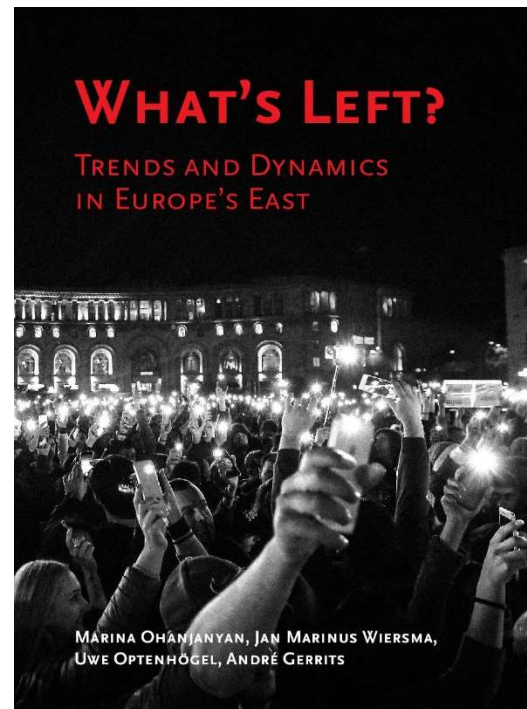
Research: Social Democracy and Transformation in Eastern Europe

Partner: Party of European Socialists (PES)

In 2019 we continued our research project into Eastern Partnership countries, which began in 2018. The research can be seen as a follow-up to a study we conducted in 2012, into the state of social democracy in Eastern Europe. In 2018-2019 we revisited this question and region, by organising a series of study visits/fact-findings to the countries in Eastern Europe, to look into their transformation. To achieve this, we have organised fact-finding missions to five countries: Georgia and Moldova (2018), Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine (2019). The fact-finding missions are conducted by a delegation that consists of a core group of experts, with additional (changing) interested members of European social democratic parties and foundations. The findings of the missions were put into a publication, which was presented in January 2020. The project is supported by the Party of European Socialists (PES).

Activities

In 2019 we organized fact-finding missions to **Armenia** (28-29 March), **Belarus** (6-7 June) and **Ukraine** (6-8 November). During the visits we met with representatives of political parties, the civil society, independent experts and international organisations present on the ground. The focus of our research, and hence our meetings during the missions, was threefold: 1) To analyse the developments in each country pertaining to democracy, rule of law, corruption and other economic/financial influences on politics etc., 2) To analyse the geopolitical field that these countries are operating in, and look into the roles that EU, Russia and other major powers play in the region, and 3) To analyse specifically the situation surround social democratic/progressive parties and movements, looking into their development in recent years and the roles they have played in their countries' political processes. We brought our findings together in the publication "[What's Left: Trends and Dynamics in Europe's East](#)", which was presented on 27 January 2020 in Brussels.



Findings and recommendations

Among other things, we have concluded that political developments in the region, especially relating to the building of democracy and rule of law, have been far from linear in the past 30 years. The countries in question have seen periods of progress, but also stagnation, or even backsliding. Although in general progress can be perceived over the longer time-frame, we should accept that the process is a long-term one. We have also concluded that it is a mistake to consider the region as simply a playing field, or a sphere of influence, between major global powers like Russia and the EU. The countries in question have shown again and again that they are sovereign actors capable of making their own decisions on the course of their development.

Our recommendations for a new approach towards the region begin with diversification. The countries of the Eastern Partnership have gone in increasingly differing directions, making their own choices at every historical crossroads, and so it only makes sense to apply a more diversified approach to them, based on their individual situations regarding geopolitical conditions, but also internal political, social even demographic dimensions. It is also important to not only push for the creation of democratic institutions, but to make sure that democracy delivers. Ordinary citizens should be able to see a result in their own lives, in the form of functioning state institutions, but also functioning public services, socio-economic development etc. In terms of geopolitics, it is important to try and make the EU-EEU dichotomy more workable for the countries “in-between”. Perhaps more communication between the two major blocs could make the choice of either-or less binary. Finally, to European social democrats we recommend a new approach to existing and potential partners and sister-parties on the ground. We should be more rigid and strict when it comes to questions of ideology, but more creative and open-minded when it comes to the form and format. For instance, loose political movements that strongly espouses and fight for core social democratic values should get more of our attention, even if they are not well-organised (yet), while established, professional and well-organised – or even powerful - political parties that nevertheless exhibit questionable morals should not receive preferential treatment.

South East Europe

LGBTI in Western Balkans

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

The rights of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders and Intersex people (LGBTI) are still not guaranteed in the Western Balkans. In the SEE region, many people have a traditional perspective on sexuality and the influence of religion is substantial. The last couple of years we have taken action to promote the rights of the LGBTI-community by organizing conferences as fringe events to pride marches in Belgrade (2015), London (2016) and Madrid (2017). As a follow up of these conferences we as European Forum, together with the UK Labour Party, the Foundation Max van der Stoel and the Center of Modern Skills (CMV), have started a new project about LGBTI and Human Rights on the Western Balkans.

Last year, we organized several activities in the framework of the new LGBTI project, such as LGBTI trainings in North Macedonia and in Bosnia Herzegovina. These trainings were facilitated by experts from CMV. The training in Bosnia was also attended by Ian Thomas, the Vice-President of Rainbow Rose, the European Social Democratic LGBTI Network. Experiencing these trainings has been very positive for the participants and has raised their awareness about the issue. Because of this, the project will be renewed for 2020 with an even greater number and variety of activities such as an LGBTI ToT training, a regional conference and fringe meetings to the pride marches in Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Montenegro.

The training took place on: February 1-3
 February 15-17

Eastern Europe

Summer Academy 2019

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

On July 24 – 28 we organized the annual Summer Academy Eastern Europe together with the UK Labour Party. This year we had young social democratic participants from Armenia (Armenian Revolutionary Federation – Dasnaktsutyun & Forum for 21st Century Leaders), Belarus (Belarus Women’s League, Tell the Truth & Young Hramada), Georgia (Social Democrats for the Development of Georgia, Women for Justice & Georgian Dream), Moldova (Democratic Party) and Ukraine (Social Democratic Platform).



The training was, as always, quite extensive, with subjects ranging from social democratic ideology to campaigning, communication strategies, interviewing and debating. The training also included a ‘train-the-trainers’ element. During all parts of the training we tried to prepare the participants to eventually being able to conduct a similar training themselves.

Another important element were the local trainers of the SD Platform, in addition to the traditional training team from Foundation Max van der Stoel (the Netherlands) and the UK Labour Party.

Progressive Women’s Summit

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

On August 2-4 we organized the Progressive Women’s Summit, together with the UK Labour Party. The summit was a conference of progressive, politically active women from four Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia), who came together in Ukraine to exchange experiences, discuss common challenges and look into possible cooperation. The idea behind the summit was the notion that while many active women in these countries face very similar obstacles and challenges, and oftentimes work on similar issues, there is little to no contact between them. Thus, we organized the conference to test the veracity of this notion, and to see whether there was a need for more contacts and cross-border cooperation.

The participants were highly appreciative of the opportunity, and discovered, sometimes to their own surprise, how similar their situations, but also obstacles and challenges were. Throughout the conference they shared different approaches to these similar problems and issues, exchanged experiences and even talked about possibilities to set up joint campaigns and programs. During the evaluation it was clear that there is a need for such a forum, and that such meetings should not be as unique as this one has been. The participants expressed hoped that such events would take place more often, and we are very much in favour of doing that as well.

Middle East & North Africa

Future Leaders 2019

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

This year we organised the first edition of a new three-year cycle of the Future Leaders Training, Middle East and North Africa, together with the UK Labour Party. Participants included young social democrats from our sister parties and partners in five MENA region countries: JSDP & Al Sindyan, Jordan; USFP & PSU, Morocco; Ettakatol, Tunisia; Fatah, Palestine; PYO, Lebanon. The team of trainers from the Netherlands (FMS), the UK (UK Labour), Morocco (PSU) and Tunisia (Ettakatol) conducted the extensive trainings, which included subjects like ideology, campaigning, communication, leadership skills, negotiating and debating.

From the discussion amongst participants it became clear that there are quite many overlapping issues in the different countries: Corruption, a lack of trust in the political system / political parties and a worsening economic situation. Overall, the participants found the training very useful and recommended to extend the length of the programme. For the first time we asked alumni of the Future Leaders project to facilitate a number of workshops. This was a great success, especially because the trainers had a lot of good examples from the MENA region.

The training took place from 25 – 28 April, in Amman, Jordan.

MENA Academy

Partner: Olof Palme International Center

In cooperation with the Olof Palme International Center and the Foundation Max van der Stoel we have set up a new training academy for young social democratic activists from the Middle East and North Africa. This new academy bring together seven partners of OPC, FMS and the European Forum: Ujsario, Western Sahara; Ettakatol, Tunisia; Egyptian Social Democratic Party, Egypt; Jordanian Social Democratic Party, Jordan; Progressive Youth Organization, Lebanon; Fatah, Palestine; Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and People's Democratic Party (HDP), Turkey.

The aim of this academy is to increase the confidence, knowledge and competences of young (female) activists, and by doing so, enable them to participate more actively in their respective parties and to rise the ranks of their party structures and gain formal positions in regional and /or national youth boards. With this project we also create an informal network of exchange for young politicians in the MENA region.



Part of this two year project are four training activities. Three of these trainings focus on campaigning, (political) communication, leadership skills, policy development and internal party democracy mechanisms. The last and fourth activity will be a follow and a Training of Trainers (ToT) training.

On October 10-13 we organized the first training activity in Amman, Jordan with the local support of the Jordanian Commission for Democratic Culture, an NGO close to the JSDP. The participants updated each other about the political situation in their respective countries, the functioning of their parties and acquired new skills through the above mentioned modules. Feedback from participants was positive, they especially liked the interactiveness of the training. In the upcoming trainings we will focus even more on the exchange of experiences between participants. We have created a MENA Academy Facebook group for participants to stay in touch.

European Forum News Service

Partner: Olof Palme International Center

As in previous years, we have continued to provide people working in the field of democracy support relevant information about the political context of the countries we are active in. This project delivers high level and unique information through the use of different tools:

1. **Monitoring:** the staff of the European Forum does actual day-to-day monitoring of the political situation in our target countries. We do this by following international and local media sources, as well as regular contacts with our partners on the ground.
2. **Reporting short term:** on a day-to-day basis reporting on the developments in our target countries through our website, Facebook and twitter.
3. **Reporting mid-term:** every two weeks we provide our network with a so-called Newsflash, which contains all relevant political news on our target countries.
4. **News alerts:** we provide our network with News Alerts – short memos/briefings - whenever something extraordinary happens in our target countries or with our partners in the target countries. 2019 was a very fruitful year. There were 12 alerts. The political crisis in Moldova and the elections in Tunisia were the main focus of this year. We provided unique information.
5. **Country updates:** the staff of the European Forum publishes country updates on the website. These country updates are refreshed after collapses of governments, elections, revolutions or other fundamental political changes.

2019 Financial report

The European Forum is not a legal entity in itself. The Foundation Max van der Stoel is the legal entity under which the projects are carried out. With accountants is responsible for the annual FMS audit and this includes the check of the European Forum finances.

Income

SPD Germany	25.000
SAP Sweden	27.000
SDP Denmark	6.000
Labour Party Norway	6.000
SPOE Austria	6.000
Olof Palme International Center	36.540
PvdA Netherlands	2.500
Labour Party	92.054
Total	201.094

Expenditure projects (except salaries)

LGBTI Project (support Labour)	11.399
Fact Finding Georgia (support PES)	5.788
Eastern Europe Women's Summit (support Labour)	15.312
Political Youth Academy Eastern Europe (support Labour)	28.897
Future Leaders MENA Region (support Labour)	23.723
25 years European Forum: meeting Ljubljana (support Labour)	11.167
News Service* (support Olof Palm International Center)	6.542
Other costs	223
Total	103.051

Salaries, rent, ICT, office costs **98.043**

Total expenditures

* The expenditures are mainly salaries. The actual costs for the website and other technical costs are projected here.