

Finland: Left Forum



Analyzing European Social Democracy: The Stance of the Left

Helsinki, 14-15 November

Venue: Paasitorni Conference Centre (Historical Center of Social Democracy)

Content

It is a common ground for politicians and political scientists as well, that European social democracy is currently undergoing the most serious crisis after the postwar era. The decline of the Social Democracy is not only a conclusion that comes up only from the elections' results and the breakdown of the votes, though this aspect is obviously crucial and reveals the current potentiality of the Social Democracy to be a governmental political power.

The social democratic defeat results from various factors with the most outstanding point to be the surrender to the neoliberal order. Social democracy used to be the political narrative which represents the interests of the working class within the post-war settlement. Social democratic parties were responsible to materialize the social contract between the capital and the working class and to establish peace, democracy, solidarity and social justice in Europe. However for the last 30 years a turn of social democratic strategy has been unfolded with significant consequences not only for the social democratic parties, but also for the political systems in Europe and the representative democracy in general. Social democratic parties in power implemented neoliberal policies and abandoned their principles claiming "there is no alternative" and declaring that the wealth produced through neoliberal capitalism would trickle down.

The economic crisis worsened the representation relations between the social democratic parties and their traditional audiences. Some social democratic parties were at the wheel while the crisis flared and their direct response was the –accordant to the EU's mind- implementation of austerity policies through bail-out programs, the mass privatizations of public enterprises and services, the pension cuts, the reduction of the legal minimum wage and tax increases. As for the social democrats that were in the opposition, their stance did not differ from the right-wing parties' position. Since social democracy has accepted the neoliberal doctrine in the EU, it was quite hard to juxtapose an alternative to austerity and authoritarianization.

Finland: Left Forum



In this particular context Radical Left appears in many European countries as the only credible alternative and the contender of traditional social alliances of social-democracy. The important electoral rise of the radical left in different countries launches the debate for the relations between radical left and social-democracy. Specifically, it creates perspective for possible convergences or divergences between the two political actors but also a discourse for the limits of their alliances.

Transform! finds itself in the vanguard of developments and wishes to inaugurate the dialogue by organizing a **workshop in Helsinki** in which the phenomenon of social democracy will be analyzed under the scope of the Radical Left in order to analyze the depth of rivalry or proximity of the two political actors (or trends).

Program

Sunday 13, Arrival

Monday 14, Day 1

09:30 - 12:00 Opening Session:

An Overview of the Historical, Ideological and Political Process of European Social Democracy and a mapping of the present situation – **Moderator:** *Martin Schirdewan*, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation - Brussels Office, Director

Richard Detje, Sozialismus Journal, Hamburg

Cornelia Hildebrandt, Institute of Social Analysis, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Berlin

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 16:30 **Case studies** – **Moderator:** *Veronika Sušová-Salminen*, Historian, Political Analyst, Czech Republic/Finland

Social Democracy in Italy

Marco Revelli, Historian and Sociologist

Social Democracy in Germany

Stefan Stache / Max Reinhardt, Publishers, Berlin

Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

Dieter Segert, Professor, University of Vienna

18:00 – 19:30 **The Political Situation in Finland** – **Moderator:** *Florian Horn*, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation – Brussels Office

Jukka Pietiläinen, Director of Left Forum, Helsinki



19:30 Dinner

Tuesday 15, Day 2

09:30 -12:00 **Social Democracy and the Crises in Europe – Moderator:** *Cornelia Hildebrandt*, Institute of Social Analysis, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Berlin

Gerassimos Moschonas, Associate Professor of Comparative Politics, Panteion University, Athens

Walter Baier, Political Coordinator of transform! europe, Vienna

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:30 **Case studies – Moderator:** *Angelina Giannopoulou*, transform! Europe, Athens

Social Democracy in Sweden

Petter Nilsson, Board Member of the Centre for Marxist Social Studies, Sweden

Social Democracy in Greece

Michalis Spourdalakis, Professor, Dean, School of Economics and Political Sciences, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Social Democracy in the UK (The Labour Party)

Richard Seymour, Writer, UK

15.30 - 16.00 Short Break

16.00 – 17:00 **Conclusions and Follow-Up – Moderator:** *Walter Baier*, Political Coordinator of transform! europe, Vienna

Finland: Left Forum



Haris Golemis, Scientific and Strategic Advisor of transform! europe,
Director of Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Athens

17:30 – 19:30

Roundtable:

Radical Left and Social Democracy: Far or Close? – Moderator:

Haris Golemis, Scientific and Strategic Advisor of transform! europe,
Director of Nicos Poulantzas Institute, Athens

Joonas Leppänen, Secretary of Left Alliance, Phd in Political Science,
Helsinki

Barbara Blaha, Linguist, Founder of the Momentum Conference,
Vienna

Victor Alonso Rocafort, Coordinator of the Parliamentarian Group of
Izquierda Unida, Phd in Political Theory, Madrid

Hilary Wainwright, Co-editor of Red Pepper Magazine, Fellow of the
Transnational Institute

20.00

Dinner

Wednesday 16: Departure