

Prague Spring 2

Network against Right-wing Extremism and Populism



Movements Challenging the European Crisis 2016

Popular movements all over Europe are faced with a multi dimensional crisis. To meet this challenge several new initiatives are presented here by the Prague Spring 2 network. In Central- and Eastern Europe Social Forum, peace, peasant and environmental movements gather strength of importance for all of Europe. In Western Europe new projects have been started by members of political parties of the left and Green spectrum with sometimes enthusiastic support from movements and new activists. In Athens against the euroregime, EU, imperialism and NATO. In Paris, Berlin and Madrid different shades of support for a more democratic federal social EU criticizing to varying degree the euroregime.

The limitation of Western European projects taking in the name of all Europe are several. One is a complete absence of speakers from Central and Eastern Europe at both Plan B conferences in Paris and Madrid and none of the politicians and movements representatives speaking at the final assembly launching the Democracy i Europe Movement 25 (DiEM) in Berlin came from the East, only two philosophers. In general rural and peasant issues are totally absent or strongly marginalized.

One can also make the critical remark that popular movements have so far failed to establish a coherent common strategy to address the multidimensional crisis. Thus the new Left an Green party initiatives are most welcome. One can say that the essence of Plan B and DiEM 25 can be summarized bluntly: What we now have to learn from Paris to Berlin and Madrid is that the uppermost convergence of all struggles are not social change but a reformed EU. Rather than being only critical it is of importance to see that the support of the values shared by all the initiatives whether pro EU or against as the call Down with the euro from the meeting in Athens is an expression of a will to unite in common action.

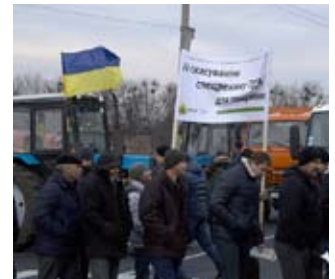
With a joint intervention from Central and Eastern Europe and the environmental and peasant movement it is possible to go beyond the Western limitations and to use 2016 to build together with other movements a general economical, ecological, social and political strategy against false solutions and for a just transition of our societies.

More info&analysis: <http://openfsm.net/projects/prague-spring-2-network-against-right-wing>

Read:

1. The Eastern Collapse of the EU model

EU policies turns Eastern periphery into economies that will never catch up benefitting the core Western countries. See more p 2-3.



Peasants 28 December 2015 organizing partly successful country-wide road blockades in Ukraine against IMF and EU imposed new taxes.

2. Plan B, DiEM 25 + Down with the Euro!



See more page 4.

BLOCKUPY	CEE SOCIAL FORUM	ALTER SUMMIT	CLIMATE JUSTICE:LEAP	WSF 2016 MONTREAL	PEACE	FOOD/RURAL STRUGGLE
February 5-6 the transnational movement Blockupy held a consultation meeting in Berlin calling for a social strike 1.3	A second CEE Social Forum is held in Wroclaw March 11-13 after the first held in Vienna 2013.	Alter Summit unites different movements to act April 7 for social security and at European Days of action in October.	LEAP trade union and movement cooperation in Canada inspires Europe. Climate justice direct action in May.	World Social Forum will be held in Montreal August 9-14. Participate in the extended WSF through the net.	European peace movement gathers strength at No to War - No to NATO gathering in Warsaw September at NATO Summit.	Environmental and peasant movement gathers strength at European food sovereignty forum in Romania in September.

The Eastern Collapse of the EU model

It would bring happiness and prosperity. The idea of European values with inherent cultural superiority. If only more and more countries adopted these European values claimed to underpin the EU's model of economic policy and the way to govern society would wealth, peace and democracy follow automatically. Corruption and authoritarianism would become a thing of the past through this European cultural model, the separation of powers doctrine and enlightened legislation. That did not happen.

Instead one can summarize the situation as follows: Forget about the transition identity in Europe, welcome the common interest among rural and urban periphery against the centre. We can now claim that the transition period for former planned economy countries is over. Only transition countries with some ten percent of the population have the chance to reach what was hoped for, a standard of living comparable to the West. Many still have not reached the level they had when the Soviet Union collapsed. But interestingly, they share their destiny after 2008 with several countries in the periphery of Western Europe.

It is especially the case of Finland that shows that since 2008 nothing helps if you belong to the periphery. Finland has one of the lowest levels of corruption in the world and well functioning democratic institutions and schools. Yet in spite of having these qualities said to be necessary and when achieved would grant transition countries the same wealth as Western Europe Finland have developed along the same negative path as the rest of the Eastern periphery after 2008 albeit from a higher level at the starting point. Your destiny as a nation in the periphery within the present EU model whether you are inside or belong to neighboring countries is the same, a widening gap compared to the core

countries of EU able to control the economic model in their favor.

The situation can be summarized in a chart showing the GNP development of all these countries showing how countries in the centre like Sweden and Germany leaves all periphery countries behind whether they are long time members of EU like Finland, Cyprus and Greece, newer members or seen as neighbours on their way to become members or getting a regulated neighbourhood agreement. It is my hope that by this show that so called Eastern periphery have an important role and can contribute by finding common interest among the periphery in all of Europe and also by making crossborder alliances between peripheries inside core EU countries. An alliance including the countryside and working class urban areas in the West against the economic and political power centres.

There has not been any doubts that the economical side of the model was the right one. Already in 1957, the market economy was inscribed in the Rome treaty as the basis for EU. One idea when implemented in full meant that increasingly functions in society would completely be controlled by who is the strongest on the market.

The EU continued to expand along this main trajectory. What was needed was ever closer cooperation and further enlargement. The EU summit held in Gothenburg 2001 had the eastward enlargement as a major theme. 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Cyprus became members, in 2007 Romania and Bulgaria.

Eastern Partnership

With growing economic problems it became clear that there was a certain fatigue in the EU regarding further enlargement. Thus a new model for extending EU influence was launched in 2004 called Euro-

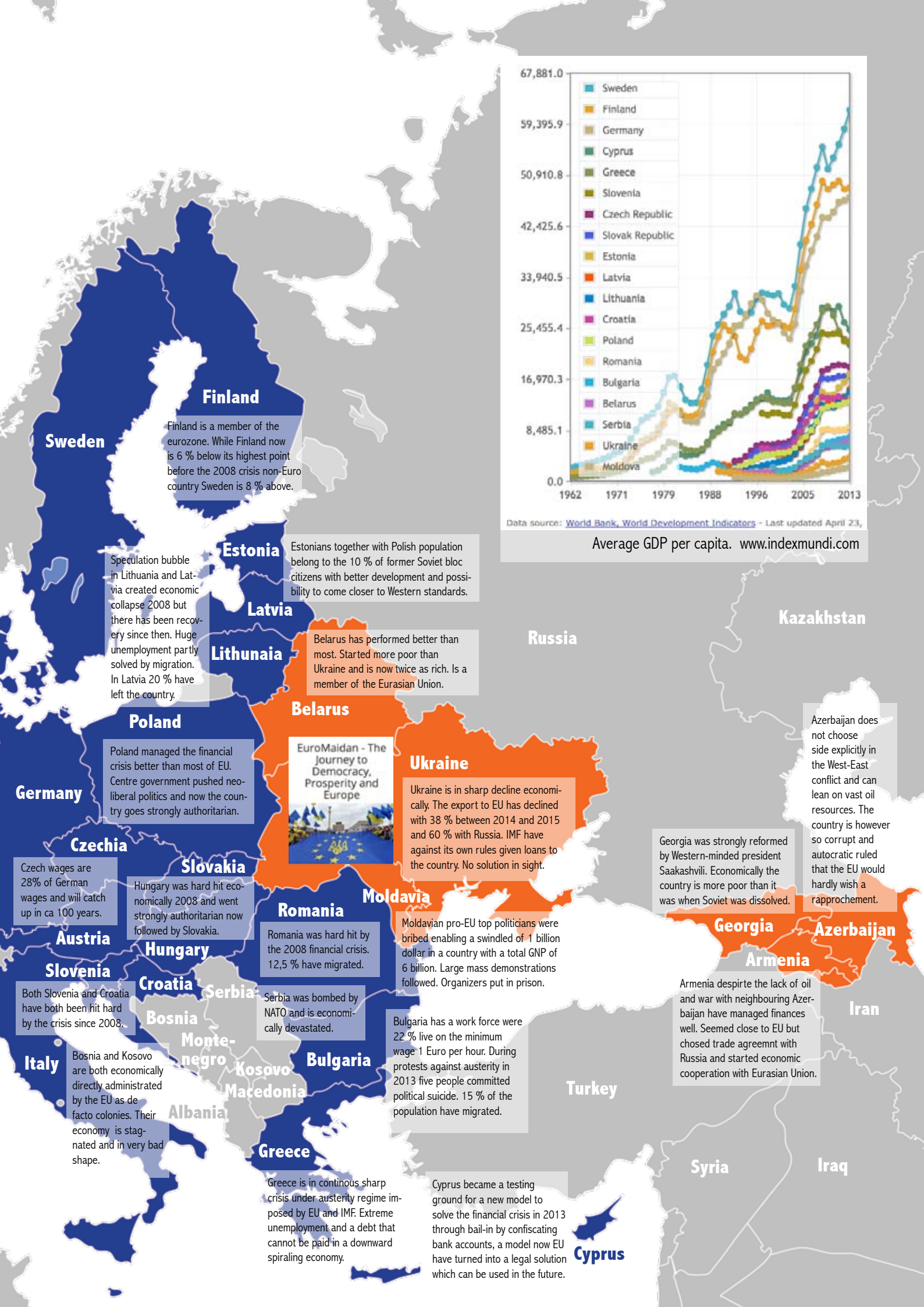
pean Neighbourhood Policy. Countries was invited to accept becoming part of the EU economic model but not have the right as a member state to influence EU decisions. In May 2008 Foreign ministers from Sweden and Poland brought such an initiative called the Eastern Partnership to the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council and later the same year to the European



Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt speaking to Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski.

Council. It aimed to promote European "common values", "collective norms" and "joint ownership". The countries that came to be included were Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The partnership was seen as part of efforts to establish association agreements with the EU, where particular adaptation of their economies to the EU model was central but without offering the countries membership. It would appear that it also included clauses about military cooperation with security complications and demands that the countries opted out economic cooperation to the benefit of just having free trade with the EU. Hopes were sometimes of countries on visa-free travel to the EU and the membership in the long term.

Today we can see the results of the Eastern Partnership policy with foreign ministers Bildt and Sikorski as its foremost promoters. In country after country this project often achieved the opposite of what it claimed would become the result.



Finland
 Finland is a member of the eurozone. While Finland now is 6 % below its highest point before the 2008 crisis non-Euro country Sweden is 8 % above.

Estonia
 Speculation bubble in Lithuania and Latvia created economic collapse 2008 but there has been recovery since then. Huge unemployment partly solved by migration. In Latvia 20 % have left the country.

Latvia
 Estonians together with Polish population belong to the 10 % of former Soviet bloc citizens with better development and possibility to come closer to Western standards.

Lithuania
 Belarus has performed better than most. Started more poor than Ukraine and is now twice as rich. Is a member of the Eurasian Union.

Poland
 Poland managed the financial crisis better than most of EU. Centre government pushed neo-liberal politics and now the country goes strongly authoritarian.



Ukraine
 Ukraine is in sharp decline economically. The export to EU has declined with 38 % between 2014 and 2015 and 60 % with Russia. IMF have against its own rules given loans to the country. No solution in sight.

Germany
 Czech wages are 28% of German wages and will catch up in ca 100 years.

Slovakia
 Hungary was hard hit economically 2008 and went strongly authoritarian now followed by Slovakia.

Romania
 Romania was hard hit by the 2008 financial crisis. 12,5 % have migrated.

Moldavia
 Moldavian pro-EU top politicians were bribed enabling a swindled of 1 billion dollar in a country with a total GNP of 6 billion. Large mass demonstrations followed. Organizers put in prison.

Georgia
 Georgia was strongly reformed by Western-minded president Saakashvili. Economically the country is more poor than it was when Soviet was dissolved.

Azerbaijan
 Azerbaijan does not choose side explicitly in the West-East conflict and can lean on vast oil resources. The country is however so corrupt and autocratic ruled that the EU would hardly wish a rapprochement.

Slovenia
 Both Slovenia and Croatia have both been hit hard by the crisis since 2008.

Serbia
 Serbia was bombed by NATO and is economically devastated.

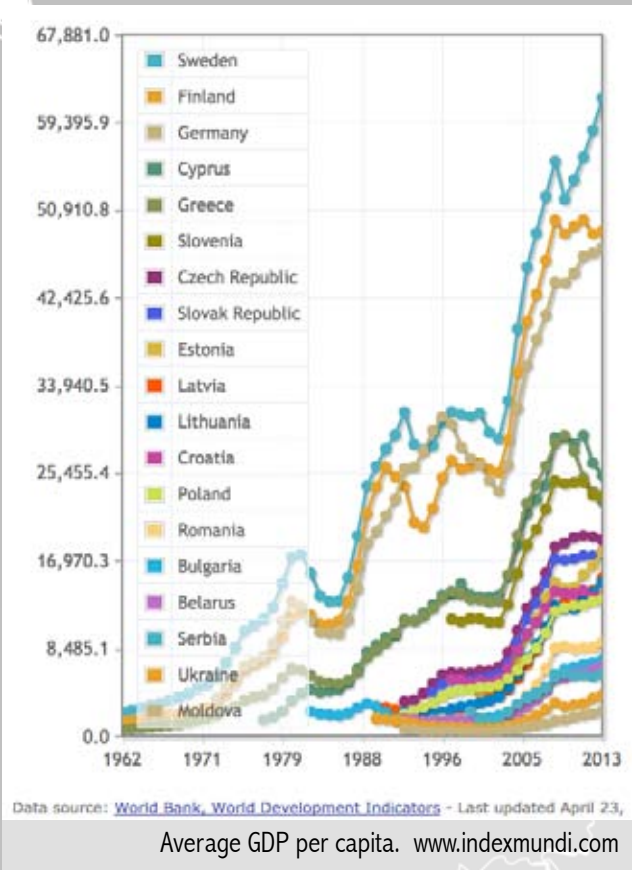
Bulgaria
 Bulgaria has a work force were 22 % live on the minimum wage 1 Euro per hour. During protests against austerity in 2013 five people committed political suicide. 15 % of the population have migrated.

Armenia
 Armenia despite the lack of oil and war with neighbouring Azerbaijan have managed finances well. Seemed close to EU but chosed trade agreement with Russia and started economic cooperation with Eurasian Union.

Italy
 Bosnia and Kosovo are both economically directly administrated by the EU as de facto colonies. Their economy is stagnated and in very bad shape.

Greece
 Greece is in continous sharp crisis under austerity regime imposed by EU and IMF. Extreme unemployment and a debt that cannot be paid in a downward spiraling economy.

Cyprus
 Cyprus became a testing ground for a new model to solve the financial crisis in 2013 through bail-in by confiscating bank accounts, a model now EU have turned into a legal solution which can be used in the future.



Left projects in Western Europe

With many times greater resources than their Eastern counterparts the Left in Western Europe mobilizes in the name of the whole of Europe or at least in the name of movements in all of EU. This is done through several initiatives. Two with the goal to work for a social Europe, or more precisely a social EU. One by being prepared for an exit from the euro as a way to push more strongly for a social Europe hopefully being thus able to avoid an euroexit. The second initiative is similar but for those who see preparation for an euroexit as too radical, but only want to work for a social Europe through the democratization of the EU. Several initiatives by economists or wider liberal circles and NGOs support to varying degrees support these two initiatives. The third project is an anti-imperialist initiative to abolish the euro regime as a step toward creating another way for cooperation between the peoples of Europe than the undemocratic EU.



Down with the euro!

A more clear message comes from the International Forum for the Left and popular forces held in Athens 26 to 28 June 2015. The slogan of the meeting was Euro is the problem, exit is the solution. The initiators of the forum claims that the EU Lisbon treaty is based on the interests of the ruling classes of the West, Eurocentrism, atlanticism, capitalism and authoritarian attitude.

The meeting proposed to form a coalition for a real, clear plan to end the euro regime, which is also directed against the neoliberal internal market and also against NATO.

Characteristic for both this and the other more reformist left initiatives is that peasant interests are ignored.

Contrary to the other initiatives speakers also from Eastern Europe outside EU as Ukraine had a central role.

Plan B Paris

January 23 to 24 a Plan B in Europe conference was held in Paris. This initiative works for a complete renegotiation of EU treaties. This renegotiation is described as “our plan A for a democratic Europe”, which is backed up with a plan B to get out of “the iron cage of the Eurozone’s governance “rules”.

Four former ministers and a leading parliamentarian are the persons who Plan B put at the front of their initiative - Stefano Fassina from Italy, Yanis Varoufakis from Greece, Jean-Luc Mélenchon from France, Zoe Konstantopoulou who has been President of the Greek Parliament and Oskar Lafontaine from Germany.

Oskar Lafontaine from Die Linke opened the conference with a clear statement: Southern Europe can not wait for a change in Germany with its wage dumping politics, because it would be to wait forever. Liquidation of the euro and a return to a system of politically influenced exchange rates is an absolute necessity. Instead of quantitative easing in favor of the banks direct public investments are required.

Telling for the Plan B initiative is the total absence of Central and Eastern Europe among the 30 panelists in as well as peasants and the environmental movement despite the fact that climate justice was one of the headlines in the program.

DiEM 25 Berlin

Democracy in Europe Movement 25, (DiEM), was launched on February 9 at a meeting in the Volksbühne in Berlin. The purpose was similar to that of Plan B, a project were the initiator of DiEM, Yanis Varoufakis initially participated. The difference is that DiEM do not want to take seriously the possibility to withdraw from the euro. The initiative also has broader political support than Plan B with many Green and independent politicians involved.

Diem describe themselves as a movement, even grassroots movement sometimes, based on a common manifesto for the democratization of Europe. It sees itself not as a party, think tank or even an organization but a movement.

The immediate task is described in the manifesto as to create full transparency in the decision-making of different EU bodies. Within two years, DiEM want a Constitutional Assembly to take place deciding on a future democratic constitution that will replace all existing European treaties in 2025.

Speakers in the closing session of the meeting included 12 politicians only from Western Europe and two social movement organizers from Germany, IG Metall and Blockupy. Also included were two philosophers from Slovenia and Croatia and a US and Australian citizen.

Plan B Madrid

A third larger conference was held in Madrid 19-21 February. This conference referred in its invitation to both the Plan B conference in Paris and DiEM 25 as well as other appeals in the same direction. The call stated that “Social movements, such as Blockupy, the current campaign against the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Agreement between the European Union and the United States), the Alter Summit, the European general strike in 2012, the Euro-marches, or the massive amount of work carried out by numerous citizen groups and NGO’s make up valuable human, intellectual, and ideological capital in the defense of human rights, the respect of The Earth, and of the dignity of people over and above political and economic interests. However, we believe that better coordination and cooperation is needed in order to mobilize at a European level.”

Compared to the slightly more promising invitation the final declaration became more focused on reforming EU and less on “all-inclusive and international”, less “to create a convergence of all the people, movements, and organizations that oppose the current model of the EU” and more of “redefine and re-establish political and European institutions and treaties” actually only meaning EU.

None of 100 speakers came from Central and Eastern Europe.