



European Forum

for Democracy and Solidarity

Annual Report 2017

European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity

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Index

In memoriam Jens Nilsson	2
Foreword	3
Financial Report	4
Eastern Europe	5
South-eastern Europe	6
MENA Region	8
The Monitoring Service	9

In Memoriam Jens Nilsson

At our council meeting on October 18th. 2017 we welcomed Jens Nilsson as new president of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. Jens had already been participating in our activities. He was a member of our delegation to Belarus in October 2016 and had been supporting our work since then. We were shocked by the news of Jens passing away on March 13th. 2018 at age 69. Although Jens was our President for a short period we remember him as a very committed social democrat and above all a friendly, social and humorous person. As a Member of European parliament and a former mayor of Östersund het was able to connect local challenges and European policy. We will sorely miss him and want to wish his family, colleagues and friends strength in coping with this tremendous loss.



Foreword

Herewith we would like to present the 2017 Annual Report of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. We are proud to introduce to you our activities supporting democracy in general and social democracy in particular this past year. A year during which social democrats in Macedonia managed to turn the negative trend of growing authoritarianism in the region. The new progressive government has set important steps in the EU and NATO integration, strengthening the rule of law and freedom of the press. In East Europe, South Caucasus and the MENA region we have mostly seen a status quo. A positive development was the first local election ever held in Jordan with progressive candidates from our partners obtaining a number of seats.

Monitoring political developments and engaging with our political partners in these regions remains crucial for the European social democratic movement. The European Forum is an important link in this chain. In the 2017 Work Plan we have divided our activities in structural work (information and monitoring services; advisory and advocacy; training and topical seminars) and non-structural work: guided by political developments in countries of our interests and demands from our local partners, we shall engage in ad hoc projects and activities. The post-elections assessment visits to Albania and Kosovo are an example of the last mentioned. The reports of such visits are of great value for the European Forum and its network.

In 2017 we organised together with the UK Labour Party the alumni meeting of the successful regional project, called the “Future Leaders Training”. This project brings together young, promising social democratic and leftist politicians from six countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA): Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Territories and Tunisia. In East Europe we continued our close cooperation with UK Labour Party by organising the annual Summer Academy and Summer Academy Alumni for young progressives from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Furthermore, we completed the two-year research project “Mapping the Western Balkans and the State of Democracies in Transition: A Social Democratic Perspective”. After visiting all countries in the region with an expert group and literature research we proudly presented the end result in Ljubljana and Brussels: a comprehensive publication that analyses the transformation of the Western Balkans in recent years, state of social democracy and role of external actors. Furthermore, with support from UK Labour Party we organised a follow-up on the role of progressive parties in enhancing LGBTI rights in Western Balkans, this time during the Madrid World Pride.

We can look back on a very fruitful year with many projects. Our work was made possible through organizational and financial contribution by the members of the European Forum. In addition, our close cooperation with the PES, FEPS and the S&D-group and active participation of our sister parties’ representatives have added much to the quality of the conferences and assessment visits, for which we are also grateful. Our work has encouraged social democrats to address topical issues important to many ordinary people that live in the countries to which our activities take us, and by such means they have contributed to strengthening democracy and social democracy.

Arjen Berkvens, Secretary General European Forum

2017 Financial report

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	36.280
FEPS	0
PES	8.200
PvdA Netherlands	4.000
Labour Party	73.086
Total	191.566

Expenditure projects (except salaries)

Fact Finding Albania and Kosovo	6.778
Multi-Annual Project on Social Democracy in South East Europe	6.125
LGBTI Conference	13.921
MENA Future leaders	14.667
Political Youth Academy Eastern Europe	44.250
New website/ News Service*	3.778
Promising Politicians Western Balkans**	3.384
Other costs	2.595
Total	95.498

Salaries, rent, ICT, office costs **96.068**

Total expenditures

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

** This FES is the main financier of this project, but these expenses do not go through our account. A small part is covered by the European Forum.

Eastern Europe

Summer Academy 2017

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

In 2017 the European Forum organized our annual Summer Academy Eastern Europe together with the UK Labour Party. This year we had young social democratic participants from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The training was, as always, quite extensive, with subjects ranging from ideology to campaigning, communication 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 Social Democratic Platform Ukraine, in addition to the traditional training team from Foundation Max van der Stoel (the Netherlands) and the UK Labour Party.

The training took place on 19-23 July, in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Summer Academy Alumni Meeting 2017

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

In 2017 we organised an alumni meeting of the Summer Academy sessions of 2015-2017. We selected 16 alumni overall, from all participating countries, whom we invited to The Netherlands for an evaluation session of the Summer Academy program. We also organised study visits and guest lectures during their stay in the Netherlands. The evaluation by the participants was overall very positive, urging to continue the program and even suggesting to expand it or facilitate more interaction and meetings among alumni.

South-eastern Europe

LGBTI Fringe Meeting at the World Pride Conference, Madrid, Spain

30 June 2017

Partner: Westminster Foundation for Democracy

On 30 June we organized a fringe meeting “Establishing LGBTI Networks within progressive parties in South East Europe” in the framework of the Rainbow Rose and PES Pride Forum at the World Pride in Madrid. It was concluded amongst other that the EU enlargement and regional cooperation are excellent tools in enhancing LGBTI rights in the EU neighbouring countries. Political leaders have to set an example, our Macedonian partner argued, in order to create space and a framework under which grass roots activism can flourish. Our sister parties have been searching for a way to deal with LGBTI issues, and some of them are actively trying to come up with solutions. This fringe meeting was a follow-up of our 2015 LGBTI conference in Belgrade ‘Protecting and Strengthening LGBTI-Rights in South-East Europe: A cornerstone for Progressive Societies’ and the 2016 seminar in London with a select group of party activist to work on concrete steps progressives in the region can take in order to protect and strengthen LGBTI-rights. In recent years, several countries in the SEE region have taken measures to protect LGBTI-rights. We aim to continue working on this topic on bilateral basis with sister parties and foundations in South East Europe.

Multi-Annual Project on Social Democracy in South East Europe

Partners: Party of European Socialist (PES), S&D Group in the EP, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

In 2017 we concluded our project “Mapping the Western Balkans”. After research and assessment visits to all countries in SEE region, the projects concluded with a presentation of the [publication](#) in Ljubljana on 27 January 2017 and in the European Parliament in Brussels on 17 October 2017. An expert group, existing of (former politicians) and various experts, assisted in all stages of the project. The project had three aims. An analysis of the transformation of SEE region in recent years, an analysis of social democracy and social democratic parties, and an analysis of the role of external actors in the SEE region

Course for Promising Politicians 2017: Future Women Leaders

Partner: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

Since 2003 the Promising Politicians Course (CPP) has been organized three times annually. It included seminars on ideology and policy development, regional cooperation and integration, and EU integration. At the same time (political) communication is part of all three seminars. The aim of the course is to introduce young politicians to the various aspects of political leadership, governance and the dynamics and structures of party policies. In 2017, however, the focus of the project shifted on future women leaders from the region who have participated in CPP before. In 2018 we will continue the course for Promising Politicians in cooperation with Westminster Foundation for Democracy. One of the aims will be to create a network among young and politically active persons and to improve their knowledge on the political developments of countries in the region. The following seminars have been organised in 2017:

- 1) 12-15 October, training for future Women Leaders, Belgrade – Serbia
- 2) 23-26 November, training for future Women Leaders, Budva – Montenegro

Assessment Visit Kosovo and Albania

Partners: Westminster Foundation for Democracy and the Olof Palme International Center

Between 7 – 10 October we organized an assessment visit to Albania and Kosovo. The aim was to assess the political situation on the ground after general election: June 2017 Albania and May 2017 Kosovo. Amongst other, focus was on EU integration; position, role and policies of progressive parties; rule of law and fundamental rights; position of youth and women in politics and society; inter-ethnic relations. Our delegation held bilateral meetings with politicians, roundtable discussions with civil society, journalist and academia and discussion with students. It was concluded amongst other that the European Forum should engage in Kosovo with activities with and for progressive actors. In Albania there are worrying developments with regard to internal party democracy. At the same time our sister party SPA has managed to bring positive change to Albania with a clear prospect for opening EU accession negotiations.

North Africa and the Middle East

Future Leaders Alumni Meeting 2017

Partner: UK Labour Party through Westminster Foundation funds

This year we organised an alumni meeting of the Future Leaders training project: Middle East and North Africa, together with the UK Labour Party. From 2013 to 2016 we organised multiple regional training academies for young social democrats and a selection of the best and most active participants were invited to come to Amman. Participants from Egypt (3), Jordan (4), Lebanon (3), Morocco (6), Palestinian Territories (4), and Tunisia (4) evaluated the programme, discussed the challenges they face in their countries, and made plans for future cooperation.

Rushanara Ali, Member of Parliament for the UK Labour Party and Vice-Chair of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy facilitated one of the evaluation sessions on programme recommendations and support for political activists.

The alumni meeting took place from 5 – 7 November in Amman, Jordan.

Conference ‘Rebuilding the political landscape in Tunisia’

Partner: Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) and the Global Progressive Forum (GPF)

On September 23rd the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity organized in Tunis a panel discussion on “gender equality in Tunisia and the challenges and ways to achieve equality in politics”. This lunch session was part of the conference “Rebuilding the political landscape in Tunisia – What kind of platform for dialogue for progressive forces?” organized by the Global Progressive Forum, the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) parliamentary group, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). Simultaneously a lunch session was organized by Solidar Tunisie on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

The main seminar of the conference was about the “State of the political situation in Tunisia: Challenges and perspectives of the progressive forces”. This roundtable with political representatives was moderated by MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri, chair of the sub commission on Human Rights. The leaders of four political parties, including the newly elected Ettaktol president Khalil Zaouia, stressed the importance of cooperation but did not make it concrete how to move forward.

The European Forum panel discussion was moderated by Daša Šilović, chair of the CEE Gender Network. The panel was chaired in TV style and was very interactive with around ten interventions from the floor. The panelists were asked to share their view on how to reach gender equality in Tunisian politics. Several MEP’s and representatives of both local political parties and civil society organizations contributed to the discussion which mainly focused on new legislation, the new Tunisian constitution (2014), the use of quota to raise women’s participation, and the challenges laying ahead.

The Monitoring Service

Main partner: The Olof Palme International Center

Our main objective is to provide a monitoring service for our network in order to inform them on the countries and regions we are active in. This is highly important given the fact that democracy support can only be effective when actors understand the context of their activities. Our activities have indeed contributed to that. The monitoring service consists of the following activities: 1) Country Updates 2) News Alert 3) Website 4) Newsflash

1. Country Updates

On the website there is a total of 28 Country Updates. In 2017 we updated most Country Updates. We have updated them especially after elections, changes in party leadership and developments in society with a big impact on political developments.

2. News Alert

We have continued to invest in the exclusive News Alert for the European Forum's network, not accessible to the general public. The service focuses on elections and political crisis situations. In 2017 we sent out 8 News Alerts, on Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Belarus, Armenia and Russia. The news alerts remain very popular among our network of readers.

3. Website

In 2017 we monitored news in 28 countries. On a daily basis we have published articles on the website. In total we have published 69 news items. We have continued actively making use of Facebook. Every news item that we post on the website we also post on Facebook. This contributes to the fact that a wider public receives our news items. Our network of readers is still expanding. In 2017 our Facebook page had around 2.800 followers.

4. Newsflash

In 2017 we sent out 21 issues of the newsflash to foundations and political parties in our network. The newsflash is a news bulletin covering relevant political developments in accession/candidate countries (Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey), EU aspirant countries (Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo), Eastern Europe/South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine), Middle East and North African countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Territories and Tunisia) and Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan). Until beginning of 2016 we also monitored developments in the Central Asian countries Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In February we decided to focus only on Kyrgyzstan. In terms of democracy and politics Kyrgyzstan is the most open and free country in Central Asia and therefore easier and more accessible when it comes to monitor political developments.

In line with the new website of the European Forum, the newsflash mailing has also been improved. We have updated our mailing list and removed many email addresses that were non-existing or inactive. After this update we have approximately 1000 active subscribers.