



EuroMemo Group conference 2015

Suggested topics for the workshops

1. Macroeconomic policies (coordinator: Achim Truger)

Official macroeconomic policies in the EU have recently seen some modifications. Monetary policy has been further loosened and with respect to fiscal policy the Juncker-Plan and a slightly less restrictive interpretation of the stability and growth pact aim at less fiscal restriction. Furthermore, according to a widespread belief, some former “crisis countries” from the periphery are now recovering and turning into new “growth champions” whereas other “core countries” are presented as “new sick men”. Against this background the session encourages non-mainstream macroeconomic analyses providing an alternative view of recent macroeconomic developments and policy proposals as well as alternative proposals for monetary, fiscal and wages policies in the EU in general and in individual member countries in particular.

2. A critical assessment of the project of European Monetary Union (coordinator: Trevor Evans)

The shift to flexible exchange rates in the early 1970s resulted in national macroeconomic policy being subjected to far stricter constraints. The threat that private financial capital might flee a country and cause a sudden collapse of the exchange rate imposed a tight discipline on governments’ policy choices. The EuroMemo Group argued that the introduction of a common European currency offered the possibility of achieving greater democratic control of economic policy by acting collectively at the European level. However, the Group was highly critical of the deeply regressive policies associated with the actual introduction of the euro and, since the onset of the euro crisis, a host of policy initiatives have further exacerbated the deflationary and undemocratic nature of the economic regime in the euro area. This workshop aims to promote a discussion between progressive economists with different views on whether, and under what conditions, a common European currency should be supported.

3. Labour markets, demographic change and migration (coordinator: Marcella Corsi and Mahmoud Messkoub)

The recent tragic events of the deaths of hundreds of migrants in the Mediterranean have turned, yet again, the spotlight on the question of migration and how to control it. Indeed, the European progressives should make it clear that multiculturalism and the flow of ideas have always been a source of enrichment: if we shut ourselves off from the outside world,

we will lose our vitality and fade away. The history of the 20th century is written in the ink of immigration. Current popular debate on migration also neglects the economic contribution of migrants from Turkey, North Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe to the postwar reconstruction of the Western Europe well before the creation of the EU and its expansion since the 1980s. The anti-immigration sentiments have reached a point that even the principle of free movement of labour within the EU is being questioned by some EU members. The importance of migration to the long term prosperity of the Europe should not be underestimated given its declining birth rates and population ageing, and the potential decline in labour force. It is in this context, and the broader humanitarian commitments of the EU, that the 2015 Euromemo conference would invite progressive economists and social scientists to contribute to the debate on the migration issues and policies of the EU and its member states.

4. Youth unemployment, precarity and poverty (coordinator: John Grahl)

We are looking for critical assessments of all aspects of social policy in the EU but would particularly welcome papers on youth unemployment and on the situation of young people in Europe because the acute problems of the young illustrate very clearly the actual neglect of the future of the EU by its current leaders. It would be very useful if critical assessments led into policy proposals – these would hopefully go beyond the provision of employment on a quantitative basis to suggest qualitative changes in the nature of employment and in the role and status of employees.

5. EU external relations and the new trade agenda (coordinator: Ronan O'Brien and Catherine Sifakis)

With the WTO multilateral negotiations reaching a deadlock, increased geoeconomic and geopolitical rivalries and ever greater influence of multinational companies looking for new markets, have favoured a new EU trade agenda for some years now. The EU economic crisis, reinforcing the search for external demand, has accelerated this. The new EU trade agenda emphasizes bilateral trade and investment deals of which the TTIP is the most ambitious by far. While building on changes under the WTO, these go far beyond traditional trade deals to reach into many areas of domestic collective choices previously considered sovereign such as social, health and environmental practices, policies and protective standards, and in the case of the TTIP are to establish new institutions to control these where they are judged to affect international trade and investment. Papers are invited which critically assess these developments and their potential consequences, especially in the TTIP, for example for democracy, geopolitics, public services, local development, the possible links to the domestic deregulatory agenda (e.g. REFIT), or other issues.