



ALTER SUMMIT

Alter Summit process

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More information see at:

www.european-left.org www.transform-network.net

www.altersummit.eu

ALTER SUMMIT

Roadmap July 2012-2013
(Meeting on June 29, 2012)

1. What is the Alter summit?

It is a process of theoretical and practical convergence of all the forces that refuse EU's orientations and want to impose a democratic, ecological and social Europe.

A number of social movements, unions and networks of academics have signed an appeal "for an alter summit" ; other networks or platform launched appeals that converge de facto (cf. www.altersummit.eu)

All these movements and organizations put their strengths together to contribute to the emergence of a European social movement calling for "Another Europe Now" according to the roadmap below.

2. What shall we do?

We will organize a meeting of convergence for all movements (old and new) who are in the call "Alter Summit". The framework should help create a balance of power, both at national and European level, to effectively change the essential elements of European policies (austerity, fiscal impact, ecological dead-end, undermined democracy, debt, role of the ECB , ...) We regard the different calls issued in the recent months which express a clear opposition towards the austerity programs and the antidemocratic trend in EU politics as well as they demand a democratic change of the European construction as important contributions to our process.

For this, we must appeal to a **broad** convergence, but on **clear** contents, and we must develop stable and efficient coordination bodies.

Two important dates will the pace of this process:

- On **11/11/2012** in Florence, based on the work of a large gathering and joint analyzes, we publicly launch the program of the Alter Summit
- In the first half-year 2013, in Athens, the Alter Summit will be a major political and social event for all those who want to build "Another Europe Now! "

In between, we have "100 days to enforce a U-Turn" 100 days between mid-November and March, from Florence to Athens through the streets of 15 or 30 European cities, to disseminate our findings, organize and synchronize national convergent mobilizations and prepare a massive and participatory Alter Summit.

Attendents of the meeting:

Felipe Van Keirsbilck (CSC), Franco Carminati (ATTAC-Belgique), Michel Rousseau (Euromarches), Marc Delepouve (FSU), Antonio Morandi (CGIL), Sergio Bassoli (CGIL), Elisabeth Gauthier (Transform Europe !), Olivier Hoedeman (CEO), Raffaella Bollini (Arci), Susan George (TNI), Peter Damo (AD-FSR), Judith Dellheim (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung), Myriam Bourgy (CADTM), Mireille Bruyère (Economistes atterrés –EA), Frédéric Boccara (EA), Pierre Khalifa (Fondation Copernic), Asbjörn Wahl (Campaign for the Welfare State), Simon Lincelles (Ars industrialis), Ramon Gonzalez Boan (CIG Galicie), Laura Gonzalez de Txabarri (ELA), Francine Mestrum (Global Social Justice), Walter Baier (Transform Europe!), Nicoletta Pirotta (Féministes pour une autre Europe), Toni Prug (Subversive Forum), Tommaso Fattori (Firenze 10+10), Vassiliki Skoumbi (Appel grec), Orsan Senalp (Réseau L&G), Andrea Della Vecchia (FGTB), Thierry Aerts (FGTB), Judith Kirlton-Darling (CES), Elena Papadopoulou (Institut Nikos Poulantzas), Mario Pianta (Sbilanciamoci !), Jason Nardi (Firenze 10+10), Brid Brennan (TNI), Thomas Coutrot (ATTAC France), Amana Ferro (EAPN), Ate Novikaw (Biélorussie), Nadia Shevchenko (Ukraine), Matyas Benyik (ATTAC Hongrie), Miroslav Prokes (Czech Social Forum), Florian Lascroux (FSU), Yvette Rome Chastanet (Féministes pour une autre Europe), Nancy Pauwels (LBC), François Gobbe (TJN), Michel Genet (Greenpeace), Fintan Farrell (EAPN), Mariya Ivancheva (European Alternatives-Bulgarie), Santiago Gonzalez (USO), Etienne Lebeau (CSC)

INVITATION March 30 –31, 2012

Dear friends,

Never since its creation has the European Union experienced such a crisis. The policies that are being implemented — unconditional support for the financial markets, austerity and serious violations of popular sovereignty — are ineffective and unbearable, aggravate the burden of the debt which it claims to be reducing; each day makes any escape from the crisis more remote. The situation in Greece shows us the chaos to which they inevitably lead.

These policies are imposed in an increasingly authoritarian manner. A system of humiliating surveillance of countries is set up together with the installation of governments of unelected technicians, peoples' sovereignties are affected and parliaments ignored.

Either these choices persist and divisions between the peoples will increase until they endanger the very idea of a Union and allow the far Right to gain ground; or those who, like us, demand for social development, real democracy, solidarity, are able to unite and create hope. Inventing new ways out of the crisis, connecting our social and political struggles at national and European levels, and rethinking the European Union have become one and the same challenge.

It has become urgent to open a dialogue and the search for convergence between all forces which are fighting against austerity and which want to build another kind of European Union. That is why

the Party of European Left and the European network *transform !*

invite you to participate in building a first

ALTERNATIVE EUROPEAN SUMMIT

Against austerity, for a social, democratic and ecologic Europe

Friday 30 (18:00– 22:00) & Saturday 31 march 2012 (9:00-17:00)

Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, Brussel

Hope to see you there, Sincerely

Walter BAIER and Elisabeth GAUTHIER
Transform!Europe

Pierre LAURENT,
President of the European Left Party

2012-02-16

PROGRAMME AND PARTICIPANTS

Friday, March 30

Opening

Presentation by various organizations and individuals of the reasons for their presence, their demands and proposals

Saturday, March 31

1 / Debates

Vis-a-vis austerity, what economic and social policies?
How to free from the grip of financial markets?
How to deal with the need for ecological transition?
Faced with authoritarianism, what democracy in Europe?

2 / Which common actions by the forces that are resisting in Europe?

3 / Conclusions

by Pierre Laurent, President of the EL

The following have already announced their participation:

Representatives of European networks: Soziales Forum Europa (Trade unionists network), Joint Social Conference (trade unionists and movements network), EuroMémorandum (economists), Dynamo (researchers), REALPE (progressive local elected representatives), Euromarches

Representatives of observers and members parties of the Party of European Left

See the list: <http://www.european-left.org/>

Representatives of Transform! Europe and of its member organizations

See the list: <http://www.transform-network.net/>

National and European parliamentarians : Members of the GUE-NGL Group in the European Parliament -Parliamentarians of the National Assembly (France – Front de gauche), Bundestag (Germany - Die Linke), Vouli (Greece – Syriza) ...

**Personalities and organizations (unions, networks, associations)
from the various member countries of the EU**

Alter-Summit Brussels, March 30 – 31, 2012

Minutes of the sessions

23 countries represented, with about 300 participants.

1. FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 30

Pierre Laurent (president of the European Left Party - EL) FR recalled that the term alter-summit had been used for several months by the EL, which wanted to contribute to bringing together forces available for an alternative in Europe. He analysed the situation in Europe and saw the European “firewall” (Pact + the European Stability Mechanism - ESM) as one of the guarantees for finance. Two projects confront each other. The liberals, all of them, are aiming at saving the system. The “firewall” implies the permanent intervention of the troika. But the cure will kill the patient. The liberal consensus obstacle impedes the changing of Europe. It is necessary to break with government choices and propose a counter-project. It is urgent to jump over this obstacle by offering other choices. What we need, therefore, is a firewall for the populations and to counter the rise of the right and of the extreme right. The Joint Social Conference (JSC) also aims at bringing together in an alter-summit all the social forces, with the political parties.

He proposed three priorities:

- Work for an exit from the crisis through development and ecological transition
- free ourselves from finance
- reinvent democracy.

And a concrete project: assemble a million signatures in the framework of a European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI, a new possibility opened by the treaties) so as to open a discussion on the role of the ECB and create a European solidary public development bank that would permit investments for social development and ecological conversion and serve as an aid to indebted countries.

Horst Schmitthenner (European Social Forum) DE reported on the initiatives launched by German unions. He stressed the necessity of developing the struggles for changing European policy. Top trade-unionists launched an appeal with intellectuals advocating a radical change of policy in order to refound Europe. This presupposes a citizens’ movement, along with social movements, unions and parties who support it – which in turn requires the creation of a European space for discussion, debate and decision-making.

European policy is counter-productive; it creates tension between countries and within countries. It focuses on three aspects:

In Greece, the governments have committed grave errors, but solidarity is needed to correct them;

The budget pact (which also touches on wage negotiations ! – without any democratic legitimisation) must be rejected. There would have to be the ability publicly and democratically to discuss budgets, to refound Europe to put into motion a process of economic and social development (solidarity of France and Germany vis-à-vis Greece, Spain ...)

The EU has to be a space for coordination. It is necessary for citizens, left political forces and the social movement to unite.

Gabi Zimmer (president of the GUE/NGL) DE emphasised that a part of the practice of the GUE/NGL is to act as a partner to the social movements and to put means at their disposal. The question arises: Are the left parties ready to conceive a left alternative? It would be a mistake to wait for everything to collapse. The left has been weakened by defeats in several countries. It is necessary to work on building alliances, and the GE/NGL is ready to do so. Greece is an extreme case, but impoverishment is spreading throughout all European populations. Greece can never repay its debts. Therefore, another solution has to be found. This is an emergency, and political decisions have to take account of it. There is no short-term solution. To build alliances, perseverance is needed. She also pointed out that one should not forget the most deprived populations (Roma, immigrants in

Greece – one million of them), as approaches that are too exclusively conceived in a very general manner only at the national level risk doing.

Élisabeth Gauthier (Transform ! Europe) FR presented the network Transform ! gathering together 23 member organisations from 17 countries and fulfills the function of a European foundation of the EL.

We are in a new stage of class confrontation and confrontation with neoliberal fundamentalism and its disastrous logic. We are witnessing a headlong rush toward austerity and increasingly authoritarian forms. Neoliberalism is putting in place a strategy of de-democratisation to accompany austerity. There is a crisis of the mode of accumulation. The EU's very nature aggravates the crisis, but leaving it in the current context is not a solution. Despite the importance of the movements, they have had little success. This state of affairs, as well as the fragmented quality of the struggles and protagonists, produces a sense of impotence. The dominant forces are everywhere trying to divide the subaltern classes. A reconquest of multi-dimensional democracy (economic, social, ecological and political) is needed. A new dynamic on the left is indispensable to counter the discouragement and the progression of the extreme right, in order to aim at a new cultural hegemony. We are in the course of building new European processes, with the JSC and the Alter-Summit, which we have to develop in the best way possible.

Gus Massiah (member of the International Council of the World Social Forum, IPAM (Initiatives pour un autre monde)) FR. A rupture with capitalism and its current mafioso drift is needed. This break has to be ecological. There is a contradiction between the idea of a world economy and the current economic order. This is not only a crisis of capitalism in its neoliberal phase but a crisis of capitalism tout court.

The rupture also has to be geopolitical: The SA-EU hegemony is undergoing a decline. A second phase of decolonisation in the face of current oppressions is visible, as one can observe in the struggles for raw materials, wars, etc. A part of the front of the class struggles is found in Europe with its austerity policies.

The rupture has to be democratic. The formula of Occupy (1% / 99%) is a beautiful one. But there is only 1 % in the streets. We have to avoid behaving like a vanguard. 1% is not enough to make a majority; we need the remaining 98 %, which assumes that we find the political forms with which to win. Reinventing democracy is reinventing politics.

Ann Lenouail (CGT / member of the Economic and Social Council) FR. For a delegate of the CGT to the European Economic and Social Council the priority is to preserve the European social model. It has to be transformed *by* sustainable development and not *for* sustainable development. Green jobs are in part an illusion.

Jan Kavan (former Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, former President of the UN General Assembly) CZ evoked the experiences of Eastern European countries. Communism failed due to its own contradictions. The economic system was inefficient. But this did not mean that the population wanted a return to capitalism. The new power passed to Western financial experts, Western banks, etc. – through shock therapy. In fact, what's involved is the introduction of 19th-century capitalism. The social-democratic government (1998) was successful to a certain extent, but it failed in the fight against widespread corruption. Money exerts a great deal of influence on politics. The current situation can be characterised in the following way: a democracy without democrats, with the fusion of political corruption and financial corruption. There has been no democratic political culture for 60 years. However, civil society exists. But it tends to condemn all politics in a general way, left as well as right. The left has to take up concrete objectives: eradicating poverty, etc.

Klaus Ernst (Co-President, Die LINKE) DE noted that there are four points of agreement:

The crisis is profound in Europe; the Euro is in danger. There is a financial crisis and not a crisis of debt. The countries have saved the banks by lending money to them. The ECB therefore must finance the countries.

The increase in debt began before 2007, before the crisis due to insufficient taxation, with a lowering of the marginal tax rates.

The Merkel-Sarkozy policy aims at breaking the European social model in southern Europe, by marginalising trade unions and dismantling democracy.

Concerning disequilibria in Europe: There are German surpluses because salaries have been lowered (they have become *Markt-konform*).

He insisted on the importance of alliances; nowhere are left parties in a condition to govern alone.

Marisa Matias (member of the European Parliament group GUE/NGL, Vice-President of EL, Left Bloc) PT

The principal worry of governments is how to regain the confidence of the markets. Taxation of financial transactions was the subject of a long discussion. Even though the proposal finally accepted was very watered down, the right is opposing it, and this tax is in danger of never seeing the light of day. As for us, "we have to regain the trust of the populations". The problem is not the lack of struggles but their ineffectiveness and the ineffectiveness of our proposals.

Gianni Rinaldini (former General Secretary of the FIOM-CGIL (Italian Federation of Metal Workers) IT

What answer can be given in the face of the crisis? It is necessary to create a political and social force at the European level. There is social dumping in Europe, but no social protest movement on a European level (for example, to support the Greeks). We need to create an oppositional and alternative front. We are witnessing an implosion of Europe from the point of view of democracy.

Ricardo Sixto (Izquierda Unida) ES. Spain, with a budget in surplus, has been the good pupil of Europe. The government has thus anticipated measures which today have become general in Europe, including constitutional amendments. At the time of the recent elections, the campaign was "empty", with only one slogan: "change" the government. The new government introduced by decree a reform of the labor market. Izquierda Unida framed the elections in Andalusia and in Asturias as a referendum against the government. A general strike took place on March 29; it was a great success. Despite this, the government adopted the budget planned for 2012. What is really occurring is a recession (GDP dropping by 1.7 %, unemployment rate at 22 %). As for the *indignados*, they reject the dominant culture.

Nicoletta Dosio (no-TAV (high-speed train) movement) IT spoke to us at length of the Susa Valley and the struggle against the high-speed train construction occurring there and the debates on large-scale projects of this kind being imposed on the region.

Verveine Angeli (Attac) FR The relations between movements and political parties are the subject of debates in Attac and elsewhere. Today, there is some new thinking on this. Mobilisations are at a low now in the altermondialist movement. Other dynamics have to be found. The general strikes have remained within the national frameworks. But there are new movements in Europe after the Arab revolutions. These movements have been able to find an international audience when the old instruments no longer worked. But these movements remained partial. It is very difficult to bring the 99 % together and to get them to participate in this movement. It is not enough to say that we need to come together to create agreements. In terms of ecology, positions are very diverse. The question of democracy is also that of the role of elected representatives. Why aren't we winning with the important movements (on pensions in France, etc.)? "The parties don't represent us", the social movements occasionally claim. Nevertheless they are searching for an appropriate politics. This has been tried with the campaign against the European Constitutional Treaty. It will not be enough for the JSC and the EL to meet in an alter-summit to get to that point! In fact, many other things are happening elsewhere".

Kate Hudson (Coalition of Resistance) UK. With our conservative government we have the same problems as elsewhere. The Greek situation could spread. In Great Britain there was a general strike in 1926, and it was a resounding failure. Since then there have been no more such strikes. Even coordinated strikes are difficult. For example, at the time of the recent strike of the public services there was a progressive diminution of participation, and at the end only higher-education workers remained. Kate therefore find it difficult to believe in the possibility of a general strike in Europe. In Great Britain the left is fragmented. Certain parts of it do not even want to act on the European level. There is no large left party, no parliamentary representation. Galloway recently beat the Labour candidate. The slogan "British jobs for British workers" attests to a narrow-minded but dominant vision. She expressed her support for the organisation of a movement of solidarity with Greece. We need unity, she said, but also to know where we are going.

Raffaella Bolini (ARCI) IT recalled what happened 10 years ago (February 15, 2002 against the War in Iraq and the preparation for the European Social Forum in Italy). We could not predict what is happening today with the retreat from democracy (which is a necessary condition for social gains). "They" are destroying democracy in order to destroy the social model. We are confronted everywhere by the same European policy. It is necessary to interconnect the networks, as a new and strong alliance is needed. She pointed to the importance of the European meeting in Florence + 10 ("It is a challenge") in November. The goal is to articulate the political actors and the movements for a new departure.

Greek trade-unionist GR. There is no more growth in Greece; rather there is a severe recession for five years now. At the time of the next elections in Greece, the right-wing union could win. In Greece we are witnessing the end of democracy. The social explosion will be uncontrollable. We must be ready and strong. After a dark night, the dawn will come.

Francisco Louça (parliamentary deputy, coordinator of the Left Bloc) PT. The Blocco wanted to see this type of alternative European summit for a long time now and salutes this event. A broad alliance against austerity in Europe is urgently necessary. The general strikes in Spain and Portugal are good news. Portugal is voting for the new tax treaty. We have to have a common strategy to destroy neoliberalism in the European Union. To fight for democracy is also to say that credit is a common good. We have to hold to these objectives of mass meetings in the whole of Europe.

Paul Lootens (General Secretary FGTB – General Federation of Belgian Labour) BE. Politically, one's heart is on the left. It is necessary that trade-union and political forces speak. We need to pursue the Joint Social Conference. The European budgetary treaty is anti-democratic. The European Commission wants to reduce the right to strike through a European directive. The reduction of democracy has been stepped up in all European countries. We are on the defensive. In the eyes of ultra-liberal Europe the only way to cope is to reduce public debt. Against this the European populations are struggling. But the problem with which we are confronted is that of the dominant ideology. We have to combat this vision of the world. Marx rightly spoke of the "critique of political economy".

2. SATURDAY, MARCH 31

Pierre Khalfa (Copernic Foundation) FR

There is a paradox: The EU was built to satisfy the financial markets, but it is the financial markets which are attacking it today. Khalfa described the crisis in Europe. We have to free ourselves from the neoliberal EU. But how do we do it, and what do we put in its place? The solution is European, even if there is a margin for national manoeuvre. In addition, the countries are rivaling each other as regards a dangerous rise of nationalisms. There again, a common and solidaristic response is necessary. As a consequence, the EU needs to be refounded on a social, democratic and ecological level.

Elena Papadopoulou (Nicos Poulantzas Institute) GR. Creating new alliances is a challenge because it is difficult to unite parties, unions and movements. There are many subjects to deal with, and internal democracy has its own constraints. Greece is a laboratory for what can happen elsewhere. She reminded us of the origins of the Greek debt, which is impossible to pay. Today there are non-elected technocrats governing the country. The purpose of the new loans is, in fact, to save the banks. After the "bailout", the debt has remained unsustainable (in 2012 Greek debt will reach 120 % of GDP). It is necessary to correct the disequilibria and asymmetries and move toward an ecological transition. We need to struggle against these austerity plans. Papadopoulou hoped for a successful counter-offensive.

Christine Vanden Dealen (CADTM – Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt) BE presented CADTM's proposals. Europe is at the beck and call of the holders of capital. She listed the measures and treaties which demonstrate this. The present objective is to get rid of whatever paltry vestige of budgetary sovereignty that remains in each country. She proposed some tracks: an audit of public debt to cancel the illegitimate part. It is not an end in itself but an educational and mobilising tool. Insufficient tax revenues have led countries to borrow. She listed the causes of the illegitimacy of the debt. The countries have been trapped between payment default and austerity for at least a decade. Her conclusion: intensify audits and coordinate them on the European level. To this end a meeting is planned for April 7. Other proposed goals: stop austerity, establish tax justice, redistribute wealth, rein in the financial markets, reduce working time, etc. A possible concrete measure: create a public European rating agency .

Frédéric Boccara (Economists Appalled) FR presented the group "Economists Appalled". They think that there is an alternative and reject the idea of economic "necessity". The measures adopted assume an economic war in Europe (as the European Stability Mechanism, etc.). There is solidarity among the financial markets. He evoked the enormous popular anger toward the banks. People want to understand; they distrust the experts. The situation is serious. The essential cause: the submission of policies and enterprises to the financial markets. Debt reduction is only part of the solution. There are good and bad debts.

His proposals: Reduce the dependency of enterprises on the markets by creating a public credit institution; a buy back on the part of the ECB of the old country debts and new financing with the support of the ECB; create a public fund to finance investment.

The ECB stands at the centre of possible solutions. These solutions must involve buying back country debt and eliminating the interest.

Martin García (Public Health Defence Federation – FADSPU) ES spoke of the health professions in Spain. There is a crisis due to the privatisation of healthcare. It is necessary to resist the pressure of the private healthcare multinationals that would like to create a health market, and return to reducing national expenditures on health. An alliance of healthcare professionals, trade unions, patients and parties has been set up. Its activities: supply information, stimulate debates and social mobilisations. There is awareness that one cannot oppose only privatisation. In effect, there is a European problem. Alliances therefore have to be broadened to the European level, and more generally it is necessary to refound the EU by including the right to healthcare in the agreements. He proposed an alliance of trade unions, parties and movements. A meeting is being organised in Brussels to develop a platform for public health.

Martine Billard (Co-President, Parti de Gauche) FR confirmed that with the crisis the question of ecological transition tends to be demoted to a secondary level. However, there is Rio + 20 on sustainable development and green economy, with a counter-summit. The preparatory report recognised a dangerous deterioration (2 degrees temperature increase is being surpassed). Among the causes, the absence of reoriented policies, even in Europe. There is a process of financialisation with the carbon market opening the way to a speculative bubble. Arcelor, for example, is getting money, via pollution rights, by closing its factories in Europe. We can speak of post-carbon colonialism, with solar farms in the Sahara, plant fuels and monopolies over the lands involved. We need to complete the constitutions with a “golden green rule” (don’t go beyond what the planet can sustain). Among the means: relocate, with shorter circuits (to not inundate the planet with European products), prevent the import of products made in unacceptable social or environmental conditions. The question of the effect of pesticides on bees seems minor, but it shows that a global approach is needed to escape from our productivist society.

Steffen Lehndorff (researcher, “Refound Europe” Appeal) DE presented the results of the research project Dynamo on the changes in capitalist models and notably in the area of labour markets in Europe, documented in a book (studies on 10 European countries) published by ETUI (European Trade Union Institute). In the crisis there is a blackmail of countries: “Italy cannot ask for aid from Europe without having done what is required of it”. Germany plays a central role due to its position. Currently, however, it is playing a very harmful role. It exerts pressure on other countries. One of the causes is the blocking of salary raises in Germany. The weakness of collective negotiations following the government reforms explains the appearance of a large low-wage sector (23 %, like in Great Britain). Whence the pressures on median salaries. The message: don’t follow the “German model”.

Felipe Van Keirsblick (Joint Social Conference and CSC – Confederation of Christian Trade Unions) BE

The idea of the JSC emerged in Malmö in 2008, the purpose being to continue the dynamic of the European Social Forums. It is a semi-open structure (which is growing little by little) with unions and movements, 40 organisations in all. There is an East-West balance and one between trade unions and other movements. Its conviction: The surest way to fail is to work only on the national level neglecting the European level, or the converse. The goal is to bring about a political turn. There are gains: the experience of the European Social Forum, the discontent in the face of the economic and political failure of neoliberalism, an agreement on the analysis of the crisis, common proposals, even if some of the differences are not insignificant. What is lacking: more unity in the modes of struggle in Europe, with European demos on the one side and national ones on the other. The result: The populations have fought separately and been beaten separately. Also lacking is a visible and desirable alternative, and thus a common space for discussion. For this we would need a European movement, with three criteria: being able to say “we” (the peoples of Europe), being able to say “them” (ultra-liberal Europe) and being able to say what we want. It is important not to reproduce the European Social Forum, which has arrived at an impasse for lack of trust building among its protagonists. We are now working in the direction of an “alter-summit”, which for now is an unidentified object; we have to act in such a way as to transform it into a political event that brings together the whole of the movements in Europe and makes it possible to change the relations of force. There is an appeal, a site – www.altersummit.eu – and a calendar project. The issue cannot be to want to achieve hegemony within the left, but to assemble forces to struggle together against our adversaries and in favour of a new hegemony.

Gertraud Lunzer (Metalworkers Federation of Wallonia-Brussels – MWB-FGTB) BE. There has been the closing of a blast furnace in Charleroi. For the metalworkers, Europe is changing regime, going from an industrial and services regime to a financial regime, while doing without democracy. The term of ECB loans has gone to three years, which will impoverish all of Europe. Lunzer

pointed to the “financial” history of Belgium, having to do with taxes, social contributions, etc. As has occurred elsewhere, there has been distribution to owners without getting anything in return. Labour conflicts are increasing. ETUC should return to its mission: facilitating convergences in all areas of labour. But Europe will not exist if there is no industry. An industrial vision of Europe has therefore to be proposed, which assumes contacts between the unions. Proposals exist for example for recycling metals, making it possible to economise on processes considered to be very polluting. In the case of Arcelor-Mittal it is necessary to deal with the problem of property. Mittal has become a financier and is no longer an industrial enterprise. Unfortunately, there are contradictions with northern Europe and Germany on the trade-union level.

Roberta Fantozzi (labour spokesperson for Rifondazione comunista) IT pointed to the Italian constitution, based on the right to work. There has been a change with the liberal counter-offensive of the 1970s. The Monti 2 Law, for example, is an attack in general against the right to work through challenging democratic mechanisms. She spoke of a “populism of technocracy”, referring to the Monti government. A debate is under way on the attempt to turn back a provision of labour law regarding firings. She hoped that the French elections would make it possible to stall the budgetary Pact. For her it would be necessary to turn Europe into a democratic republic based on labour.

Yves Ledoux (CGT-Energy) FR thought there is no need to counterpose the relation of forces to the national and international levels. Two billion people in the world are without electricity. He proposed drawing up a balance sheet of deregulation in his sector and European directives regarding it, by the populations, in commissions, with users and trade unions. Some proposals: Take energy out of the market, with the right to energy for all; give power to the wage earners and users; create a European energy agency and an energy centre on the national level.

A doctor against nuclear war (an association which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985) proposed a nuclear-free Middle East, for example. He was also worried about nuclear energy plants.

The Moldavian Communist Party MD was represented by 5 persons. It criticizes the recent presidential election in Moldavia as a “crime of the liberal alliance”.

Marc Delepouve (FSU – Unitary Trade-Union Federation) FR confirmed the paradox of the 1 % and 99 %, the 1 % continuing to govern. He showed the strategic character of knowledge, of science and of culture. The liberals deal with it, but the left does so inadequately. In Greece there exists a strong resistance by students and personnel of higher education and research. Research is an economic and societal issue. Today there is a takeover by the big corporations. He brought up the hijacking of research in the economy (via mathematisation) but also in other sectors (political science, new democracy, renewable energies). He proposed the creation of democratic structures to orient research and referred to the Manifesto of Rome for cooperation between European trade unions.

Dimitris Tsoukalas (former trade unionist, bank workers) GR introduced himself as a trade unionist who moved into politics. He pointed out that two years ago the Italians and Spaniards told him: what is happening in Greece cannot happen in our country. They were wrong because all European populations have been attacked. Everyone knows that Greece cannot repay its debt. Yet “they” want to take everything. Jobs are deteriorating with salaries starting at 300 Euros. Overnight people are becoming not just poor but wretched, for lack of capacity to pay their debts. Many people have left Pasok and have created the Movement for Unity, with the objective of uniting all left opposition, including the communists. This could have made it possible to **win the elections**, but unfortunately this was not possible. To see the left in government we therefore have to wait until the next elections.

Christiane Marty (Copernic Foundation) FR. Austerity has consequences still more negative for the most precarious people, of whom the majority are women. This is a broadly shared assessment. Women’s oppression is first of all economic. Marty described the general situation: at work, in the family (unpaid and invisible work, patriarchal domination). This needs to be integrated as a priority in any European alternative. Proposals exist: move toward equality between men and women, relaunch an ecological transition, relaunch public services, both state and non-profit, crèches ... In 2005 there was a referendum in France on the European Constitutional Treaty. Those on the “no” side advocated a “democratic, social, ecological and feminist Europe”. Afterwards the adjective “feminist” was dropped. It has to be included again.

Vassalos Yiorgos (Corporate Europe Observatory) BE introduced his organisation. It tracks Business Europe (European employers) and its influence on European decisions, which is very clear (notably in relation to the pension age, the increase in

indirect taxes, the tying of wages to productivity and competitiveness but without indexing them). All of this is found in the Pacts. An old dream became reality: controlling national budgets at the European level. He pointed to the importance of the Eurobarometer and noted a strong convergence with the work of the Commission. The general aim is to destroy the post-war compromises. The goal of these policies is to reduce the unit cost of labour and salaries as a share of the GDP. One of the means: limit union rights.

An Italian participant IT. The social model is being challenged. He gave details on what is happening in Italy (privatisation of local public services, water, healthcare, etc.), the reform of labour contracts (this was Berlusconi's final act!). The result: Firings and precarious contracts have been facilitated. There is a high level of "spontaneous" conflictuality. The Democratic Party (PD) supports Monti, but has distanced itself on these points. The ECB is the only central bank in the world which cannot lend to governments.

An Austrian individual member of the EL AT celebrated the fact that the left has once again become able to discuss. It is necessary to "identify" those who profit from the situation and denounce them. The 5,000 lobbyist in Brussels are warriors of capitalism. The bonuses constitute a modality of corruption within the system. Left unity is a weapon in this social war against capital.

A Belgian participant BE asked that we not speak of Europe as if it were something nebulous. It is made up of persons and governments. Power has to be taken, or adequate relations of force have to be created, without being content only to speak and write. There is the financial 1 % and the 1 % that protests, but it's unequal combat. He pleaded for enlarged working exchanges. For this we can rely on the network of the social forums. He proposed stressing the Declaration of the Rights of Man. He suggested asking for public financing for associations, without opposing them to parties.

Chantal Delmas (Transform !) FR noted that there are many movements in Europe but difficulties in enacting real change. The JSC has called for an alter-summit. What can we add to it? We need to make proposals and constitute a front at the European level. She would like to focus debate on this.

Élisabeth Gauthier (Transform !) FR noted that there are many contributions of great richness, diversity and complementarity, which it is now necessary make bear fruit. There is no lack of topics to go into more deeply: national struggles and European realities; key issues for alternatives ; research to undertake; articulation between contents and political strategy, between national and European levels. It is necessary to find forms with which we can work in the long term on alternatives and convergences, the issue being to create a lasting common European space for this work.

Fabio Amato (EL, Rifondazione comunista) IT

What is our capacity for public intervention? This debate is a moment of unification and democracy. We have to refound ourselves from the anti-liberal, social, ecological and feminist point of view.

Francis Wurtz (Honorary President of the European Parliament group GUE/NGL, French Communist Party) FR

How can we change Europe? What is involved is to act against austerity, for democracy, rights, for emancipation and protection from the financial markets by changing the ECB's mission and by giving it the power to create money for projects having to do with ecological transition, etc. A proposal to launch a European Citizens Initiative has been made by the EL: the creation of a fund for ecological and social development (a public bank independent of the financial markets) having as its sole mission to finance specific public projects at low rates, in a perspective of solidarity. Objective: get support through a million signatories from many countries. The launching is planned for September. It is necessary to bring together multiple organisations to create a broad dynamic.

Pierre Barge (European Association for the Defence of the Rights of Man – ADEH) FR

Barge presented ADEH. It brings together 27 organisations from 20 countries, volunteers and individual members. It dialogues with others, including political parties and a network of parliamentarians. ADEH wants to be a citizens movement, a counter-power that breaks with a conception of the citizen "who is to be protected rather than made into an actor". There is no European democracy when decision-making power has been taken back into the hands of the chiefs of state to the detriment of the European Parliament. Diktats are imposed on certain states (Greece, Hungary). ADEH denounces these attempts on social rights, pitting workers against each other, the retreat from the rights of asylum, the absence of struggle against violence done to women, police files (biometrics), discrimination (against Roma but not only). For him, the answer is a European citizen, with a

European citizenship of residence. It is necessary to strengthen the European Parliament, which must have the “last word”. We need to construct a Europe of rights, with an independent authority to issue reports on directives. Europe has to be open and generous. Barge points to the phrase borrowed from Junker: “And we, we know what to do but not what has to be done to get us re-elected when we’ve done it”.

Walter Baier (Transform!) AT commented on the text adopted by the JSC and the wish to create a new European space, which will be the role of the alter-summit. It is a matter of an open process. We are living in a historic moment. The 1920s gave us fascisms but also in what followed the social state after 1945. There is a strong danger of historical regression. “They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing”. Europe would have to be an inclusive process, not leaving others (women, immigrants, precarious workers) out. Now it is developing in the opposite direction: violence in the streets and the rise of the extreme right. What is therefore needed is to resist and mobilise, but also to develop alternatives. There is a political construction that has to be put forward, around the EL. Kate posed the question of leadership. Wouldn’t it be better to think in terms of cultural hegemony to aim at – this conceived as a common good of all the components of the movement? The social forums have played this role. We need such a space. A window of opportunity has opened with the general strikes and the elections in Spain and France. Another Europe is possible but it has to be built with patience and passion.

Paco Figuerola (CC.OO – Comisiones Obreras) ES. A just Europe is the only hope for all of us. The present Europe has development at two speeds. We need a left with its diversity. Europe is not socially just. He denounced Sarkozy-Merkel who are doing the opposite of what would be needed to exit the crisis. The Spanish situation is comparable to Greece and Italy – the highest unemployment rates in Europe, with recession, drop in consumption, inflation, etc. We need a political accompaniment to social action. However, he pointed out that Spanish unions voted for the Maastricht treaties and other accords but stressed their change in perspective in recent years.

Taja Kramberger (researcher) SI participated in the struggles in Slovenia. She stressed the neoliberal hegemony in the university (purges of certain research project; she herself was pushed out). She cited a document from her dean asserting that 46 % of university employees should be laid off. Neoliberal partisans have lost any sense of reality. University professors have been put on trial, accused of being out of control. The trials are becoming a tool to apply political pressure. Everything is in the play of appearances: no one calls themselves communist or socialist anymore. She criticised the weight of clerical conservatism. There has been a negotiation with the Vatican since 1990. The church has a particular status, a more favourable one. In 1992 non-Slovenian people were excluded from certain jobs. There is general demoralization despite the existence of a cultural left.

Brid Brennen (Transnational Institute – TNI) NL found that there is resistance and anger but also that European intervention in the world is weak, and exhibits a lack of determination (the multiplication of free-trade agreements without a change of logic, without any reference to rights) but also as regards the world *in* Europe (immigration). There is anger, but the language is a bit watered down, notably on the “criminal” aspects of enterprises and of bankers (economic and ecological crimes). She proposed a better targeting of the troika. There are alternative proposals but they have to be converted into programmes of action: on the budgetary pact, on the Irish referendum, etc. “We need victories”. The will to mobilise is there, but the differences are obstacles: There have not been enough attempts to get out of one’s own frame of reference. How do we bridge the gap with the past? We need to revisit (re-interpret) for young people, to make it accessible in its good and bad aspects. She proposed to make the end of the year 2012 into a symbolic renaissance moment, with a million people in Florence. We would also need better to integrate visions and perspectives originating abroad (Latin America, with a process of integration from below). We can and want to build a feminist Europe free of racism.

Philippe Marlière (political scientist) UK noted the following points:

Strategy; we need to be concrete and develop together to put forward a left for social change. The period is full of opportunities but also dangers. The neoliberals are going to try and use the crisis they have created to attack the heritage of the labour movement.

A potential: The political right is in disorder, but there is a rise of fascist and racist parties.

There is a discredit of social-democracy (electoral decline); it carries out practically the same policies as the right.

There is a radical, pluralist left that is rising, with some electoral successes too.

What is lacking: a utopia, an ideology. If this lack is not so noticeable now, in the historical moment when the system has to be critiqued, it can become a problem later.

What strategy: act in Europe or return to the national box? Certain people on the left believe in the latter, but we need to invent a language that is effective at the European level and used words appropriate for this: like reformism and radical reformism.

The means: to have some members elected to the European Parliament; we have to occupy the terrain, but it's only a small aspect of the combat, for the European institutions are not made for the left. And for this it is necessary to develop EL and Transform ! And to go in search of left forces that are presently without followers.

One should also be lucid and realistic and therefore it is not useful to oppose everything; for example, it would be effective to clog the wheels. In France, the campaign around the European Constitutional Treaty has, for example, made it possible to politicise the debate on Europe.

In sum, have confidence, be realistic, determined and critical.

Jean-Pierre Brard (Deputy to the Assemblée Nationale) FR did not agree that the European Parliament should have the last word, in contrast to Pierre Barge. It's the people who have to have it and not those who speak in their name (for example, à propos the European Constitutional Treaty in France: political personnel were 90 % for it, while a clear majority of the population voted against). Don't we speak too little among ourselves, while the employers and other protagonists do so ceaselessly? There are good examples: The common position in the French parliament and in the Bundestag on the European Social Fund is one. Brard proposed using suitable words: what is involved is a class struggle. There is need of special work done by parliamentarians at the core of the EL to intervene in a coordinated way in the national parliaments.

A British teacher UK agreed on acting with Ireland at the time of their referendum. He proposed that everyone go to Ireland for a campaign for a social Europe, against austerity. In Great Britain, schools are becoming enterprises, with commodification on a large scale. Austerity is the perfect tool for introducing neoliberalism. On the economic level he proposed transferring national government bonds to the European level in order to pre-empt dependency on the financial markets for funding.

Jean-François Gau (EL, French Communist Party) FR presented the project of a European Citizens Initiative in favour of a European economic, social and solidary development fund. This initiative relies on a a dispositive law provided by the institutions. Furthermore, it is a common act of conscience and responsibility. It makes it possible to resist but also to propose a concrete alternative (see the exact wording of the project: "to combat austerity and the financial markets, to reorient money toward social progress, to permit citizens to make their demands heard through democracy, we demand the creation of a European fund for social, ecological and solidary development exclusively directed toward facilitating public investments in favour of social and ecological development and promotion of public services"). The proposal can be shared and carried by the greatest number of people. The EL does not have ownership of it.

A Greek participant GR pointed out that to be involved in elections does not mean forgetting the social terrain, the unions and the unemployed organisations. He suggested a pan-European discussion to define the programmatic elements of our action. We need common demands for a common action. This should bring together unions and social movements, without it necessarily meaning a strike.

Tommaso Fattori (Referendum on Water, Transform! Italia) IT recalled that in a popular referendum there were 27 million voters against privatisation of water and other public services. If we are united we can win against the markets. A democratic process is needed to unite the movement for the commons (indignados, unions, etc.). Direct democracy allows us to recapture sovereignty. The form is just as important as the content. In Italy, the form was a popular referendum. He proposed doing the same thing at the European level against the budgetary Pact, by creating a European public space. It is not only a matter of defence but also of rethinking Europe. Democracy is not reducible to the institutional sphere. Citizen participation has to be central.

Pierre Laurent (President, EL) FR recalled the decision taken on January 15 in the Executive Office of the EL to hold an alter-summit in summer. Its success shows that a space exists. There are convergences but also differences, and the general intention is to continue to work. The initial objective was an alternative European summit. It was ambitious, but it's our responsibility to be involved in this path, for we are the only ones able to do it on a political level.

He took up several assessments on which there was agreement:

The gravity of the moment (situation of rupture beyond the crisis): destruction of the social model, of democracy;

There will be no return to the preceding situation with only some peripheral damage. If reaction wins the day, there will be a regression lasting several decades. The alternative solution is a new mode of functioning and of development of the EU.

Numerous forces feel the need to work together, everyone feeling their strengths but also their limits.

How to continue?

Affirm the common rejection of austerity and of the pacts in the process of being adopted. On this point there are convergences between the EL, the ETUC and the social movements. This is new.

There is a need to detoxify European systems and models from finance.

Restore democracy in several respects. The present governments are non-elected. What is involved is the reconquest of democracy, not just its defence.

How to go forward?

Three possible axes:

Broaden social struggles. It is urgent to politicise them and make them converge. We need better to tie together all the levels of struggle (national, European Parliament, national parliaments). A possible objective for the EL: unite national parliaments to extend reciprocal political support and identify the most important issues.

On the democratic level: act against the adoption of the ESM (European Stability Mechanism) and the treaties by demanding referendums. This will be the occasion to promote new democratic forms and to explore new forms of engagement. After the victory against Sarkozy in France, what scenario can we image (seeing as the demands of the Parti Socialiste do not go very far)?

Pursue the process of putting together forces working for alternatives in Europe. We need a broad space, built through a process, which assumes a respect for the process, an articulation of national struggles and broader struggles.

New actors and parties are working together, without seeking to establish their own hegemony but just to conquer this hegemony together around ideas and solution. It is a matter of reconquering politics, which was confiscated from us in the very way that Europe was constructed.

*Report edited by Chantal Delmas and Louis Weber (transform!),
translated from the French by Eric Canepa*

Brussels, March 2012: Towards an Alternative European Summit

Working towards the Social and Democratic Refoundation of Europe

By Walter Baier and Elisabeth Gauthier, *transform! europe*

As a European network linked to other movements and networks as well as to the European Left Party, *transform! europe* has decided during its General Meeting in Prague, in September 2011, to strengthen its contribution to the drawing up of an alternative in Europe.

This is why *transform!* fully participated in the annual conference of the *Joint Social Conference* (JSC) held in Brussels on 29-30 March. Simultaneously the European Left Party and *transform! europe* invited to take part in the setting up of a first *Alternative European Summit* on 30 and 31 March, to which many representatives and activists as well as networks, movements and trade unions contributed.

Thus the JSC represents, at this moment, a valuable area for cooperation between European trade unionists and movements. Its annual conference in March 2012 was a great success with regard to attendance and drawing up of common stands (see the Final Declaration at www.jointsocialconference.eu). The discussion led, amongst other things, to the broadly shared conclusion that it is necessary to create a “common political area” at European level, so as to renew a working process that could lead to events such as a “European and Citizen Alternative Summit”.

The tragic and dramatic character of the situation confronts us with the necessity of not only reacting more strongly but also of seeking a greater effectiveness of social and political struggles. This requires new alliances which connect national and European

struggles. This also requires “politicising the issues”, that is to link more closely social struggles with the objective of changing the balance of power.

The results of the various encounters at the end of March seem to open the way to an unprecedented process in which trade union organisations, movements and political forces and committed intellectuals could cooperate. Speaking now of “alternative summits” instead of “counter-summits” is the expression of this new ambition. This was the proposal that *transform! europe* had put forward at the end of 2011. The potentials for such a dynamic exist. Various areas of European cooperation exist, like the *Forum Social Europe*, a network of trade unionists, the *EuroMemorandum* that brings together more than 200 economists, but also ATTAC-Europe, the *Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt* (CADTM), the *European Association for Human Rights*, the *EuroMarches*, the *Prague Spring II* network which brings together networks mainly from EEC etc. Additionally the cooperation of the Left is increasing on the level of institutions, which is demonstrated by parallel initiatives of *Die Linke* in Germany and the *Left Front* in France in the respective parliaments as well as within the REALPE (progressive local elected representatives).

Furthermore public appeals have recently been launched by experts and trade union leaders which address their home audience as well as the European public opinion demanding a political change in Europe (appeals see in this Newsletter).

Towards an Alternative European Summit

Today, important struggles are coming up in all parts of Europe. However, despite their strength and determination, there has been a lack of success and progress so far. Everywhere, at national and European level, the main demands are clashing with the mainstream. The alternative has to be conceived in terms of rupture with this mainstream, at all levels, enterprise, locally, nationally and European.

During the conference staged by the European Left Party and *transform! europe* on 30 and 31 March many people agreed that the “direction of the wind” can be turned, provided we jointly embark on taking up the enormous challenges of the crisis. It is necessary to fight the new “Merkozy” treaty and the Troika for preventing a democratic implosion of Europe. In addition to the mobilisations against austerity, the renegotiation of treaties and the defence of democracy, it is necessary to struggle, in the various countries, for new political majorities expressing the will to bring about political change. According to Felipe Van Keirsbilck, facilitator of the JSC, this is the context in which “all will work, not to achieve hegemony for themselves but to build hegemony against neoliberalism”. For his part, Pierre Laurent, President of the European Left Party, stated that “we need such an area, built by a process that allows us to work together for an alternative whose objective is a political swing in the European Union”, a process to which he committed himself.

The first milestones of this route have been laid in a new convergence, not only in terms of content but also of action. The terms of the “building process”, of the “creation of a new area of joint work” show new concrete possibilities of overcoming the contradictions that, hitherto, have weighed down the progressive movement in Europe: the

dichotomy between the national and European level; the separation between the spheres of social and political mobilisation; the still existing boundaries between actors with different characters and histories.

Concretely, this open-ended process towards an *Alternative European Summit* could meet the needs for

expressing a new ambition, aiming at rebuilding Europe on new foundations. Such a process would also encourage convergence and cooperation between many forces in all their diversity both within each country and in the European area.