



EuroMemo Group Conference 2017

Suggested topics for the workshops

1. Macroeconomic policies: debt overhang and sustainable growth & development

The global financial crisis led to an increase in both public and private debt in most EU member states. However, the austere fiscal policy that is embedded in the Stability and Growth Pact – further strengthened since the onset of the euro area debt crisis - places great emphasis on the process of deleveraging by the public sector. Given that a deleveraging process has been ongoing in the private sector at the same time, the predicament most EU member states face is one of prolonged stagnation and in certain instances recession. Hence the implications of the current EU policy framework in view of the present economic and social conjuncture need to be highlighted and an alternative institutional and policy framework discussed.

2. Dynamizing productive development in the EU: structural reforms or industrial policies?

Besides fiscal austerity, the central policy response of EU institutions to the profound economic crisis has consisted in advancing structural reforms in order to promote the competitiveness of economies. Typically this focussed on increasing the 'flexibility' of labour markets, which basically meant cutting back on labour standards and workers' rights. Given large-scale de-industrialisation, very high levels of unemployment and the need to address the ecological crisis, progressive forces have recently called for strengthening the productive capacities and capabilities of EU economies so as to foster socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development, particularly in the crisis-ridden EU peripheries. Against this background, non-mainstream analyses are encouraged that make policy proposals on the specific objectives, contents and financial as well as institutional prerequisites for a new Europe-wide approach to productive development.

3. Financial policies: Dollar hegemony and the subordination of European finance

Brexit has intensified the problems of the financial sphere in the EU. Does the Capital Markets Union project still make sense if the City of London is outside the EU? How do we explain the massive disturbance to European credit markets last December? What will Trump's deregulation of US finance mean for the EU regulatory structure? How can the big increase in activity needed in the euro area be financed? How can the political block on finance from the public sector be overcome? We should welcome contributions on these or other financial issues.

4. Inequality and social crisis

The unity of the EU has been seriously weakened by the social and economic impact of the financial crisis; a unity that has been further challenged by the Brexit, nationalist and anti-migrant politics across the EU. But these challenges have long been in the making. The orthodox economic foundations of the Single Market, the democratic deficit of the EU institutions and a lack of proper regulatory frameworks to deal with the increasing financialisation of the global economy all contributed to the crisis that after ten years is still affecting millions of people across the EU and especially in the Southern and Eastern EU countries. High unemployment and especially high youth unemployment, stagnating living standards compared with those before the financial crisis have contributed to widespread disenchantment with the EU, giving rise to the right-wing populism in the region which offers seemingly easy, nationalist solutions; this has all taken place in the midst of growing inequality within and across EU member states.

Against this background contributions are welcomed on alternative and radical analyses of the growing inequality and the social crisis affecting the EU with a view to developing alternative policies, based on the principles of democratic solidarity.

5. The EU in a fragmenting international order

Twenty-five years separate us from the collapse of the USSR and from the beginning of the European monetary unification process. During this period the world balance of power and the international order have undergone profound transformations. The exclusive US global dominance is being undermined by the emergence of new powers, especially in Asia. Strategic alliances are taking place between them towards which the attitudes of Western countries appear to diverge. The balance of power has also significantly changed within the Western world and within the EU, for the benefit of Germany. The collapse of the USSR is calling into question the *raison d'être* of the Atlantic alliance and is weakening the Western world's unity. Finally, the European Community, becoming the European Union, generously enlarged, seems to have reached the limits of its contradictions. The decline of the undisputed dominance of the United States is creating tensions within the American ruling class and is favouring strategic revisions, the coherence and implications of which, particularly for the EU, give rise to questions and debates.

Analyses of Europe's perspectives in the new emerging international order are encouraged. Emphasis should be placed on reform proposals currently under discussion concerning the functioning of the EU and on the future of transatlantic relations (TTIP, CETA, etc.).

6. Alternative visions for socio-ecological transformation and the good life for all

Current efforts in Europe - both domestically and with a wider international dimension - are far short of what is needed to stay within the planet's boundaries or stem the urgent threat of global warming. Together with contemporary forms of socio-economic exploitation, accentuated during the economic crisis, it becomes ever more urgent to re-imagine the current economic model. We welcome contributions offering different visions of the economy that aim at socio-ecological transformation, such as - but by no means limited to - commons, care economy, good life economy, local economies, basic income, job guarantee, etc.; questions of power relations and different geographical scales are of interest as well, and the issue of growth itself. We also strongly encourage authors to consider how the transformation might be achieved from current conditions.