

Evaluation/Evolution:
Analysis of the answers of the Questionnaire
for Member, Observer and Partner Parties
for 6th European Left (EL) Congress

A) The main issues for the EL congress to answer

Three are the main suggestions of the different parties who responded to the questionnaire.

The EL must:

1. Consider how to strengthen and unify the left in Europe, all whilst bringing together in a continuous dialogue other transforming and progressive forces.
2. Develop a clear vision and produce common political responses to the European project, consequently bringing about a new strategy for the future of Europe
3. Deeply improve its structures to make organization and communication more efficient

B) Assessment of the General politics of the EL

In the European space, the EL is not a point of reference. It misses its objective on this and even if it is known a little, it remains weak. To become a point of reference, it should try to make a positive synthesis of the different points of view.

Compared to the Green and Socialists, the EL is in withdrawal.

The participation of the EL in the European struggles and campaigns already in place at the European level is well received by the majority of the parties, even if the final impact is not really appreciated as positive. The real impact on the knowledge and actions of the public that we want to target should be improved: our work is invisible on the ground.

The EL's connection with social movements and trade unions are assessed as largely positive, but needs to be developed further. Connection with social movements is deemed important also to face the rise of the extreme right in Europe: together with the anti-racist movements, but especially by presenting strong social alternatives bringing concrete progress.

Proposals:

In order to become a point of reference in Europe the EL should:

- ➔ Work on its unity on the political aspects
- ➔ Further develop the European Forum, which is considered as a tool for unification and dialogue that makes the EL a useful "meeting point" for all the progressive forces

- Launch common European campaigns in order to have a greater impact
- Develop and present a more unified and organic political work, which addresses the people directly. This implies increasing its resources for internal work, therefore improving its internal and external communication and the working conditions of the Brussels office – please see on this regard the minutes of the Personnel Commission meeting with the staff.
- Seek a closer coordination with the parliamentary group
- In order to fight the extreme right, the EL should present throughout Europe through a clear discourse and agenda. The Working Group created few months ago could be a useful tool for the EL to propose detailed common solutions.

An open question remains, regarding the European campaigns, which are largely mentioned in the answers.

- ✚ The campaigns must be clearly defined, and last at least 6/12 months, or even 2 years.

The majority of parties agree that creating a group/commission for campaigns could be useful for them to be more effective and better developed.¹

Others think that the political head in charge of this should be for example the secretariat, accompanied by an organizational group for the strategy and the communication of each campaign, with a concrete involvement of the local parties.

In both cases, a strong commitment must be ensured regarding the communication.

C) Relations between the parties and the EL, and viceversa

The EL parties, through their answers, confirm that a majority of their own members know about the existence of the EL.

Parties inform the EL about their national situation in the Executive Board (less regularly by sending the translated information), or by participating in the working groups. The parties inform their members through the website concerning the information coming from the EL, as well as in meetings.

In general, the activities of the different parties are not in line with those of the EL, except when cooperating for European events. The possibility of networking during the events is appreciated.

On average the parties organise 2-3 events per year in their country in collaboration with the EL. The festivals are mentioned as important meeting places between the EL and the parties. Some parties in recent years have promoted a lot of events. Last year has been important in this regard, as many events related to European campaigns have been organised.

The material and symbols of the EL are used largely by all parties. Some also have them in the national logo, or in the name. Others indicate that they decide whether to show or not the logo on the basis of the concrete activity in place.

The answers are clearly divided on the following topics:

- ✚ The question of having the EL as a point of reference for the political party: practically half of the answers are positive and the other half are negative. On one side the EL is seen as an important instrument, among others, for the class struggle on a European level, on the other side there are parties that assert that this importance is decreasing.²
- ✚ Some parties believe that the performance of the EL in relation to their performance is not important. For some, the opposite is true. Consequently the satisfaction on the performance of the EL varies, but there is a general dissatisfaction. Some parties affirm that the EL poor performance is due to a lack of clear positions or of important resources and allocation thereof.³
- ✚ Most parties discuss the EL at their congresses and the majority refer to the EL documents in debates on European politics, but some to underline the weakness. In particular, some parties are not happy with the EL's documents because they are not very concrete and therefore not useful when discussing European issues.

Proposals:

- ➔ A way to be more effective would be the development of concrete campaigns, coordinated at European level but implemented at national level.
- ➔ The political areas on which parties want to focus can be summarized as:
 - Labour and social transformation
 - Peace
 - Feminism / Gender Equality
 - Fight against the climate crisis

On these recurring themes, all responses agree on the fact that the EL should develop truly European campaigns that involve everybody

- ➔ A focus on Central and Eastern Europe should be better developed.

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With the exception for the PCWB, that has gone through an internal crisis related to this particular issue.

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The singular case of Levica is worth noting since the EL had a direct impact on the Slovenian party at the moment of the European elections

D) The work and the structure of the EL

Parties claim to be rather satisfied with the **proximity of the EL**. They claim to be especially close to these structures: executive board and working groups. Some are in contact with the EL Office as well.

As for the **internal communication**, the decisions and activities of the EL are transmitted to the parties through the participation in the executive board and the secretariat, by e-mails from the Brussels office, some by the website or through social networks.

Party members are informed of EL events and activities in party meetings, via internal newsletters, in the Web, through social networks.

The parties were informed regarding the candidates of the EL for the Presidency of the European Commission in the Executive Board and by the comrades who attended internal meetings, and by the Brussels office after in the minutes of the meetings.

- The parties' members have asked in large majority to be more informed about the activities of the EL.

EL Bodies:

The parties' Presidents / Secretary Generals / National Party Coordinators participate in the Council of Presidents, sometimes and partially.

- The secretariat members should have this time specific functions (communication, international, working groups (x2 people perhaps, because it is heavy), office supervision, agenda, treasurer) and should be led by a coordinator.

On the **working groups (WGs)**, the majority of the parties said they have an organic function in the EL and their work is useful for the life of the EL – only a small minority does not think that. All the answers are between *good* and *very good* appreciating the structure of the working groups. Nobody proposes to replace the WGs, while some parties suggest reviewing the way they work⁴.

Some answers point out that the political elaboration and concrete proposals should go together. In fact, the majority say that the working groups should propose more concrete actions to the EL, maybe to the executive board or to the secretariat.

Parties nominate WGs where are more active as follows: Education, Latin America, Northern America, Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Migration, Public services, Fighting the Far right, Communication, Peace, Balkans, Youth

However, there are specific fields of disagreements:

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PCF believes that we must strengthen them. Levica does not participate because "they lack structure, goals and objectives, [...] so we have to restructure them".

✚ The majority of parties think that working groups can speak publicly on a topic, and only when it comes to a topic that is already debated and there is an EL position. Some ask for more production of notes and positions on the news by the WG. They should make it clear when it is a statement from the working group within a defined framework after obtaining an agreement from the EL bodies.

Others think that working groups should not speak publicly and only propose analyses, positions, ideas for common campaigns and a plan for their development to the EL main bodies. They should contribute to building a clear EL position on specific topics.

Proposals:

- Involve more party activists, also non-party members who are interested in the issue.
- Give them more importance, publish reports and yearly assessments on the topic on the EL website.
- Organize conferences by Skype or via a common platform which would allow several comrades of the parties to participate.
- Identify different tasks and share more work within the groups.
- Systematically hold public events at the same time as group meetings.
- Ask them for a publication on a topic, at least yearly.

The dissatisfaction regarding the communication strategy of the EL is huge. A minority of parties disagree on the relations with the European Union and on the efficiency of the activities vis-à-vis the European institutions. Some appreciate more the group in the European Parliament.

Complaints are expressed about the production of documents: their level of English, their length and their concrete usefulness.

The lack of efficiency of the actions of the EL, its low visibility and its low usefulness for the political debate are quite common in the answers.

✚ The positions of the EL are seen too consensual for some.

It is important that some European problems are debated more openly. A consensus among the member parties can be found on main issues (i.e. peace, equality, labour), but at the same time also all positions must be visible.

The problem stems from the lack of a common platform, a clear programme, which could unify the member parties and also guide the political positions and statements of the EL.

Few parties propose to vote on different positions – with clear explanation of positions, while another says that a consensual position could be found for each issue.

Proposals:

- More production of EL positions on current political developments.

- A different approach to different parties from different geographic areas.
- Inform more and better on the ongoing preparation of events, as the Forum.
- Work on local conflicts, with clear economic proposals
- More political discussions on specific subjects, with guests, are requested in the ExBoard, knowing it is not a place for seminars. Several subjects are proposed (see annex).

Priorities and interests in enlargement: The EL must first decide what it wants to be and what role it should play in the political arena, ensuring the general political line is shared. Before making a proposal for partnership / accession to the EL, the Enlargement Commission should continue to familiarize itself in detail with the program, the statutes, the political messages and the activities of the candidate party concerned, including visits of representatives of the Commission to the respective country.

The EL is getting bigger and it's a good sign. But it must have an offensive strategy of enlargement, meaning, to choose with whom it wants to work, and put in place clear measures to enter into relationship with these forces.

Proposals:

- The enlargement must always reinforce the coexistence of the Left, Left-Green and Communist parties and develop the political influence of the EL.
- The EL should open the door to feminist and animal rights-oriented political parties.
- The EL should get in touch with left parties especially in countries where the EL does not have a partner.
- The cooperation with Transform and other European leftist research institutes should be intensified.
- Our priorities should be: parties that have significant results nationally, parties represented in the GUE-NGL group, parties in countries where we have no members, and leftist environmental forces.

E) *Assessment of the main activities of the EL*

I. European Forum of Left, Ecological and Progressive Forces and Relations with Trade Unions, Movements and Foundations

The majority of the parties are satisfied or very satisfied with the Forum, only 2 neutral and 2 bad, and made the Forum public in their country, yet the 60% did not use the Forum as campaign material. The majority debated the participation and political content of the Forum, although only partially, only two did not (warned too late).

All parties that responded participated in the Forum. Some parties were very well represented (between 10 and 20 people). The majority sent maximum 5 people (participation depended on the

location of the Forum). The majority decide the participants in the main bodies of the party (federal / national), open to anybody in the party who wanted to go.

Of those who have a youth organization (not all do), the max number of participants from the youth is 3.

In some countries it is difficult to work with the unions, but where there are no problems, those unions were invited.

The Forum is very important for the vast majority (except for 1 answer), but:

→ An invitation to recalculate its overall cost as expressed.

The majority gives a good feedback, expressed internally to the EL bodies (secretariat, executive board, European Forum Committee).

The most **positive features** of the Forum that were mentioned are:

- The possibility of meeting, networking with, and having an open, permanent and inclusive dialogue with other progressive families and between political parties, movements, initiatives, unions and other actors, European and international, and between activists and politicians, mixing different languages
- The possibility to verify annually the common will to create convergences and to try to take joint initiatives, giving priority to common objectives and not to political positioning
- The number of topics discussed and possibility of visibility and support for local campaigns
- The good work of the assemblies

The **biggest weaknesses** of the Forum that were mentioned are:

- Low visibility on social and digital media.
- The lack of a common work plan between the meetings of the European Forum.
- Late information on the Forum programme.
- The impossibility of extending participation in organization and participation to parties and forces that are not members of the EL.
- A rather obscure organization with little involvement of the Executive Board.
- Tendency to have too many formal speakers and not enough public participation.
- Not enough breaks between sessions.
- Not enough attention to the countries / representatives of Central and Eastern Europe.
- Difficulty in achieving a true European dimension of participation.
- Difficulty in interacting with all the anti-liberal actors.

- Difficulty in consolidating relationships to open up struggles and mobilizations.
- High costs to send a delegation to the Forum.
- Lack of joint decision on how to spark the talking points of the Forum among the population.
- The not yet satisfactory participation of the different parties and personalities.
- The unsatisfactory contribution to the process of the organization of many parties.
- The interaction between the present representatives
- Not enough participation of actors from active citizen organizations.

Proposals:

➔ Each edition of the Forum should be accompanied by a "showcase" joint action outside the public conference, on the public space, in relation to current events threatening, for example, freedom and democracy, justice on citizens' rights and the quality of life of the population (i.e. the urban devastation caused by real estate speculation, the increase of public transport fares), and also to mark our support of potential social movements (i.e. action type yellow vests, strikes of workers).

🚩 There is an ongoing debate on the spirit of the Forum and 2 parties made it clear as follows:

Those who propose to open the Forum to social organizations (and less time for parties / politicians) and those who would like more room for parties and less for organizations.

II. The EL Summer University

The vast majority of responding parties think it is important.

The majority of responders came to the Summer University (except 3 out of 14).

Parties seem to participate in the preparatory process only when the university is organized in their country, and never with their youth organizations (when present).

Only the big parties (or those who organize) seem to send more than 15 people, otherwise the others do not exceed 10. The party members who wish to attend propose themselves to the bodies of their parties, which then take the final decision on whom to send especially if it involves financial participation - but the majority can only cover part of the costs, if any at all.

The most positive features of the Summer University that were mentioned are:

- Informal, open, supportive and cordial atmosphere for networking and face-to-face meetings of activists and youth
- Discussion on European and global issues
- Good theoretical training and sharing of experiences and information
- broadening the debate horizon at European and international level

- Involvement of middle party officials
- Collaboration with Transform
- Easy access for young people to European politics
- Continuity

The biggest weaknesses of the Summer University that were mentioned are:

- Not enough space for open communication.
- Difficulty in actually identifying the experts who bring additional knowledge
- Repetitiveness of topics between plenary and seminars
- The inadequacy and chaos of the debate.
- The lack and delay of information
- Absence of a clear political message explaining the importance of the Summer School
- Lack of well-defined objectives for each year
- Not enough time for an in-depth campaign, lack of results from the summer school.
- The period is difficult for many people because it coincides with the summer holidays and the cost of participation is high

F) EL Performance in the European elections (Platform and Candidates)

Only one among the parties responded to the question about the importance of presenting candidates in a negative way. The majority is in favour of this, as it is seen as an essential feature of the EL as European party, and in order to give visibility to the EL and to bring a different voice to the one conveyed by the other representatives. The others are neutral in relation to that. Parties have also included EL candidates in their campaigns for the European elections and the EL material has been widely used in national campaigns.

In general, the program has been translated into different languages, and membership of the EL is useful for the election campaign, and at the time of media meetings, all parties mentioned (albeit few times for some) the EL.

Using other documents was not so easy due to difficulties in understanding and not easy dissemination.

Proposals:

- More planning and strategy.
- More attention not to provoke problems for the parties directly involved in the nomination.

G) *International Relations*

At international level, the EL is a point of reference. We have relations with parties in North America, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa.

The EL has difficulties developing relationships in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Not many parties answered the question on how to expand, but highlighted the need to resume those contacts that were neglected for some time. Some parties note that there is a significant presence of people coming from these continents in Europe and some national parliamentary actions already in place to advocate for their rights.

Proposals:

- Form a leadership group that first deals with meeting with some personalities and organize the work and then expand to party members.
- Establish a common mapping of these continents where are forces to contact for each party
- Organize visits to countries where there are like-minded parties / forces.
- Strengthen geographic working groups for these continents
- Broaden the participation of national party members in international relations to include them more in the EL, through a more developed internal communication work and a meeting between the EL responsible person of international relations and the respective people in the EL parties.
- Do not exclude relations with Russia and Ex-Soviet countries.
- Approach some groups of migrants here in Europe.
- Leverage on some external parties we have already contacts with, in order to reach new potential interlocutors.

H) *Internal and external communication*

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION should be innovative and more immediate to convey the EL's positions in the media, which is the main objective. We must consider communication as a contribution to the battle of ideas; it is an essential space to fight against the undemocratic hegemony of the European institutions.

Proposals:

- A clear strategic plan for online communication with a “backbone” programme and efficient campaigns. It should be created at each congress of the EL, or even every six months (one party says), with priorities determined by the secretariat.
- Have political representatives who are responsible for the external communication and EL reactions to the news, working with the relevant person in the Brussels office.

- Regular meetings of the communication working group (if possible with the chief communication officers of the member parties) and stimulate its members to go to EL events.
- Better use of the website.

Some concrete steps proposed:

- News monitoring and position statements: thematic WGs and a person in charge in the secretariat.
- Validation by the secretariat (or the secretariat coordinator) of press-releases, slogans, logos and visuals.
- Forwarding of press-releases and providing spokespeople: having a press-officer who maintains a network of journalists in Brussels and mobilizes spokespeople for interviews in Brussels.
- On the events: priorities defined by the secretariat after adoption of the annual agenda by the executive board.

From the report of the Personnel Commission meeting with the Brussels office:

Workers expressed the need to improve the role of the media and online communication work in the official languages. Some stated that "there should be at least one full-time media worker at the EL". The politics is about to convey a message. There is therefore no doubt about the importance of the issue of media work for the future of the EL politics and the growth of its member parties. We need to encourage the EL member parties to better communicate their policies and events to the EL office and the EL media work.

Perhaps the balance between the number of organized events and efforts to communicate them should be re-evaluated. Everything must be in accordance with a global communication strategy to be agreed at both political and communication levels.

A communication and media political strategy for the EL must be prepared. Having the tools to implement it would be fundamental to have more impact. This requires at least one full-time person in Brussels dedicated to communication.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION must be more immediate, with production of leadership positions and party newsletters on specific info.

On how leaders should speak publicly on issues, there is a minority of respondents who think they should do so on their behalf, and the majority who think that if elected, they should be entitled to pronounce on behalf of the EL, on the basis of their function/ position, knowing that one must always take into account the general line of the party.

Proposals:

- Transmit the information as quickly as possible;
- Diversify the means of communication;
- Amplify the subjects treated;
- Enable technical tools for quick decision-making.

1) Budget

This is the concrete issue that the leadership has to discuss.

The ExBoard should discuss the budget on an annual base considering the party's interests and the priorities of the planned activities.

This must be done on the basis of European campaigns (and not on national activities, says one party): it has to reflect the political debate on which countries or issues should be influenced further.

The EL should allocate more resources to its overall communication-related strategy. Also having more staff in the Brussels Office is part of the EL strategy to be more incisive and effective.

The Secretariat sub-group on the calendar and allocation of funds is considered positive especially as a help in formulating requests, but it should be more open and transparent. However, the problem of a good calendar rely on the whole EL party.

There is a general opinion on the overload of the EL Office. Some think that the Office has to reflect the targets and the direction of the EL. The organisation of the work, effectiveness, the coordination shall be revised in order to well understand how many workers are needed for which tasks. This leads to some proposals as follows:

- Political Officer from the Secretariat
- Advisor to the Presidency
- Internal communication
- External communication
- Coordination of the common actions of the parties
- Follow-up of the working groups
- 2 on financial and administrative issues
- Interns

From the report of the Personnel Commission meeting with the Brussels office:

All the workers expressed the current contradiction that "there is not enough time to perform all the tasks in the best possible way, which could sometimes lead to errors in the work". This is a proof of the seriousness and ambitiousness that all EL office staff have regarding their work

In order to respect the legal obligations and especially the values of the EL, the Brussels office should be enlarged in order to increase the efficiency of its staff in the face of the numerous and varied tasks.

J) EL Relations with GUE-NGL group

The parties propose that representatives of the GUE.NGL group should more often attend our meetings (e.g., Executive Board or working group meetings). GUE-NGL Presidents should be invited to the ExBoard. A plan to meet regularly with the group presidency and its delegations would be an asset.

This coordination could be improved by sharing internal information (parliamentary debates, proposals, resolutions, etc.)

We could publish articles that have been written by GUE-NGL group or members on our website and make a better use of links with them on social networks.

K) EL Relations with Transform

The parties propose that representatives of Transform should attend our meetings.

The EL should use more the different intellectual capacities existing in Transform and its member organizations, and feed on Transform's reflections. Transform! material should be used fully for the formulation of party discussion papers and the work of the different Working Groups

In addition, the EL should be able ask Transform for content/analyses/reports – with respect to Transform's working plan and financial capacities.

There should be a continuous dialogue for the co-organization of events and regarding the respective priorities and actions planned.

ANNEXE POINT C :

Proposed topics for political discussion, possibly with an external expert, during ExBoard meetings

The most urgent and current political issues need to be addressed. Topics should be decided by the ExBoard or the political secretariat

- Peace - Socorro Gomes from the World Peace Council
- Equality - A left-wing speaker from Iceland with experience in the Equal Pay Act, Feminism and the fight on violence against women
- Labour - A Marxist speaker to open the Marxist concept of work as a tool to change the world, Multinationals and the *uberisation* of labour
- The housing situation
- the management of power beyond the state-nation model (municipalities)
- concrete proposals for trade union strategies at European level – invite trade unionists
- concrete proposals on climate crisis and ecological alternatives – invite ecologist representatives
- the positions of other European political parties on a specific subject in order to be able to position ourselves in relation to them

- European Union
 - a) European alliance policies
 - b) the EU and its possible redefinition, etc.
 - c) EU economic policies (economic and monetary governance, the Euro and the ECB's policy, fiscal policy, industrial policy, etc.)
 - d) EU regional and social policies
 - e) Government participations of the left-wing forces at the national, regional and municipal levels

- International relations:
 - a) Brexit
 - b) relations with specific regions (Russia and the post-Soviet space, China, the United States)
 - c) a new, leftist paradigm of the International Relations in the European framework