

European Union: Anti-capitalist left faces elections

Saturday 20 June 2015, by [VERCAMMEN François](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2004).

The parties and movements of the European anti-capitalist left met again on April 29, 2004 in Brussels. This one day meeting had a special character, because it was held in the context of a European Union (EU) summit and there are elections to the European parliament in June 2004 that will exert significantly more influence on the political framework than was the case at the last elections in 1999.

The national parties had to take account of this strengthened European political framework. Lacking significant legitimacy, the EU intends to massively subsidise "European parties" which meet certain criteria (including having at least one parliamentarian in seven member countries). And although it is perhaps not sufficiently recognized, we have made a massive step forward through the huge anti-war mobilizations, the revival of workers' struggles with mass strikes and the birth of the European Social Forum (ESF). Thus there is not simply a negative struggle against the EU that is being built; there is a positive factor, the "movement" which necessitates a redefinition and reformulation of the political programme of the radical left.

Some of the parties from the Communist tradition are trying to create a European party corresponding to the framework of the EU, the European Left Party or ELP. The ELP organized its founding meeting in Rome on May 8-9, with Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation, the French Communist Party, Spain's United Left, the German Party of Socialist Democracy and Synaspismos from Greece participating. All this did not take place without difficulties, given the growing heterogeneity in this tradition which is undergoing a centrifugal process of fragmentation. The leading group of the ELP has not been particularly noticeable for its transparency or its clarity of political platform or working methods.

In this fairly erratic situation, the anti-capitalist left had every reason to affirm first and foremost its existence as an independent anti-capitalist current, as well as its political-programmatic cohesion. This will be seen in the European elections because the organizations of the Conference of the European Anti-capitalist Left have succeeded over the years in winning parliamentary representation, despite increasingly anti-democratic electoral reforms. That does not rule out dialogue and collaboration, notably with the organizations of the ELP. However, this implies avoiding any political confusion.

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