

How To Combine Struggles And Join Forces For A Just And Social Europe?

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The Left-Green Parties of Central and Eastern Europe met in Bucharest, Romania, on 20-21 April to identify common economic and political challenges in the region and discuss future cooperation.

During a public debate, representatives of five parties - Budoucnost (Czech Republic), Social Movement (Ukraine), Szikra (Hungary), Razem (Poland) and Demos (Romania) - presented the main challenges facing the Eastern European Union, which overlap to create a distinctive profile of our region: Together, we are facing the results of three decades of austerity, dismantling of public services, authoritarian decline, nationalist-conservative mobilisation and environmental destruction.

The response to these trends must be decisive at national and EU level. The member organisations intend to formulate a response in each country and to stand in solidarity with each other, empowering citizens and workers to act in defence of democracy and to build a better and fairer economy.

The member organisations will continue to work together and open the initiative to other similar movements and parties from the region.

Participants' comments:

Yasmine Najime (Budoucnost, Czech Republic)

“It was with great excitement that Budoucnost joined our left colleagues in Bucharest to learn about the challenges we all face in our countries in Central and Eastern Europe. To share, to express our concerns and to discuss together how to address them. Our countries' political pasts are similar and turbulent in many ways. However, in addition to the commonality of our history, we are also united by a desire to separate ourselves from what our countries once were and instead look forward to what we can make them. Our name, Budoucnost, translates to the future, and this is the direction in which our goals and policies are directed. By opposing neoliberal capitalism, we stand for a sustainable, fair and just development of the region. The current system has long since run its course: it is showing its true colours in our countries through extreme conservatism, the loss of basic rights, the privatisation of public services and the refusal to engage with our neighbours on equal terms. But our economies and regions are forever connected, and we are very pleased to find groups around us with the same solutions, goals and values that support us as we support them. We want to see this partnership grow and expand in Central and Eastern Europe, so that together we can once again stand up for the rights of people to a system that serves them.”

Victoria Pigul (Social Movement, Ukraine)

“When the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, many political and economic problems were exacerbated. It became clear that the development of democratic politics had to reach a new, broader level. Previously, this process was largely the work of grassroots movements and civil society organisations. This year, the Social Movement has received tremendous support from our partners in the countries of the Central and Eastern region, as we are united by the fight against the neoliberal vector of state policy and common social problems. Russia’s full-scale invasion has also shown how vulnerable the countries of Eastern Europe are to the invasion of an external authoritarian imperialist power. We have seen a huge imbalance in the representation of Eastern and Central European interests in the EU. We cannot allow ourselves to be seen as a security buffer for Western Europe or as countries in Russia’s “sphere of influence“. We need a full-fledged political association that would represent the interests of Eastern and Central Europe in the field of politics, economics and security, both in Europe and on the international stage. We met in Bucharest to share the current state of affairs and policies in our countries. We discussed how we can work together to help build welfare states and continue to fight for the development and security of our region.”

Lili Vankó (Szikra, Hungary)

“We at Szikra firmly believe that by joining forces with progressive green left movements and parties in our region, we can reclaim Central and Eastern Europe as a space of hope and emancipation, ending decades of neoliberal state restructuring and the destruction of solidarity chains. The challenges we face in Hungary range from a deepening housing crisis and increasingly authoritarian pressure on democratic institutions to a lack of political will for the energy transition. We need to ensure that the energy transition does not leave vulnerable groups behind. These are by no means unique to our country - it is the exchange of experience and the development of a common vision for the region that can bring much benefit. Our meeting in Bucharest was a step towards this; we look forward to further communication, learning from each other and to other like-minded initiatives joining our ranks.”

Maciej Konieczny (Razem, Poland)

“The Bucharest meeting confirmed our belief in the need for closer cooperation between the parties of the Green Democratic Left in our region. We are united by the experience of the brutal neoliberal post-communist transformation and a common desire to open a new chapter in the history of the eastern part of Europe. This history will be based on the principles of social justice, cooperation and solidarity. Without the voice of the new green left, demanding a just energy transition, we will be doomed to a climate denier’s rule; only a strong voice of the left, demanding solidarity and social justice from Europeans, will save us from the nationalist right. We have a lot of work to do.”

Zofia Malisz (Razem, Poland)

“Left-wing forces in our region are growing in size and influence. Especially in the last decade, we have shown that we know how to organise and how to communicate leftist ideas in new ways. This growth has occurred despite the pressure of the vast majority of liberal and conservative forces. We have survived and professionalised, going from grassroots protest movements or single-issue movements to political organisations with solid support. We focus on rebuilding social ties and structures that have been destroyed by the transformation, for example through our strong stance in support of trade unions. The result is that a modern left has emerged in Central and Eastern Europe, offering concrete, socially and environmentally sustainable solutions to the housing crisis, the oligarchic structures that threaten our democracies, the energy transformation or the security threats in the region. This week we met in Bucharest to discuss our many shared values and goals,

and how we can strengthen each other by working together.”

Claudiu Krechun (Demos, Romania)

“I definitely believe that we have a set of problems and solutions specific to Central and Eastern Europe. On the one hand, EU membership has helped our democracies and economies, but with certain limitations and drawbacks. But we cannot ask the EU to solve all our problems, we have to take responsibility and act. Between the failed neoliberal economic order and nationalist-conservative authoritarian drifts, we must stand up for a truly social Europe and an economy that works for everyone, not just the lucky few. In the medium and long term, this will also help save our democracies.”

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