

Reports on the Athen's April 2006 Fourth ESF

Thursday 2 November 2006, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2006).

Contents

- [Assessment of the Logistics](#)
- [Trade-Union Network's Report](#)
- [Enlargement Group Report](#)

Assessment of the Logistics Committee

For all of us who worked in the Logistics Committee it was a great challenge to organise the 4th European Social Forum. With a view to confirm our initial argument that a small country, "far away" from the centre of Europe, can and should try to organise successfully the European Forum, we worked for months with the aim to organise a hospitable, open, mass and radical Social Forum, that in terms of "social territory" will bear in all its aspects the constituents of the "other" world we fight for.

There were many difficulties which were due to our lack of experience in organizing events of such a great extent, the lack of knowledge transmission from the countries that organized the previous forums and to the new features we had decided to give to this social forum.

By working collectively through democratic, participatory processes and voluntary work we tried with a lot of effort to build an anti-commercial context that would result to an open Forum, without exclusions, accessible in terms of the cost (registration, transport, food), and facilitating attendance by offering free hospitality to as many participants as possible.

One very important axis for us was the effort to build a forum friendly to the environment by using recycling regarding to the litter management and by emphasizing fields such as the fair trade and the biological culture in the food sector.

Furthermore, in a country with several thousands of immigrants it was of great importance that the organisation of the social forum would not only bear antiracist features but it would facilitate in every possible way the essential attendance of immigrants and the putting forward of those subjects that the immigrants wanted to stress. Based on the same principles and having as a starting point the decision about the thematic spaces that we had taken altogether, we accomplished to put a great deal of emphasis on them. Essentially, the Social Forum of Athens gave a great deal of visibility to matters and spaces that up to now did not participate organically in our processes.

In every step of the preparation, we tried to collaborate with groups from all over Greece and abroad (Voluntary Work Thessaloniki, Athens Wireless Metropolitan Network, No Vox etc.) that up to now did not participate systematically in the Forum process and we created new groups that would be responsible for organizing aspects of the forum (group of architects, group of technical support, catering etc).

To sum up, one of the most important accomplishments of the 4th European Social Forum was the success of Babels Greece in providing translation and interpretation as well as the success of the ALIS group that overcoming even the last minute difficulties collaborated with us and managed to operate an original anti-commercial system of simultaneous translation, proving thus the positive value of such a step.

Last but not least, we estimate that the work and the effort of the Network of Culture, with which we collaborated closely throughout the process, played a major role in the free participation of artists from all the fields of art and gave new features in the process by showing that the culture is a field of equivalent priority in the European movements.

Tasos Koronakis

Trade-Union Network's Report for the 4th ESF

The trade-unionist network has the following to report for the 4th ESF:

- Thirty seminars took place regarding the implications of the neo-liberal policies in the field of employment (labour relations, employment, unemployment, labour insecurity, Bolkenstain directive etc.)
- A European network was built for providing an alternative response of the Trade Unions to the Lisboa criteria as far as employment and the working relations are concerned, which has already met.
- Twelve seminars took place regarding privatisations and civil services.
- A European network was built for the defence of civil services, which already met in Geniva on 26th -27th October 2006 and is currently preparing a European meeting for the defence of civil services that will be held in 2007 in Thessaloniki or in Newcastle.
- The European Trade-Union Confederation (ETUC) and forty more confederations and sectorary federations from Europe participated in the seminars or had a stand in the 4th ESF.
- One day before the beginning of the 4th ESF, ETUC carried out a meeting concerning the consequences of globalization for the workers and all the European Confederations that are its members participated in it.
- Two Greek Confederations (GSEE and ADEDY), federations of the public and private sector as well as a hundred primary associations.
- GSEE provided 150,000+50,000 euros to the Greek Organizing Committee of the 4th ESF and ADEDY provided 150,000 as well. Another 30,000 were granted by other Greek trade unions.
- GSEE provided all the necessary infrastructure for the accomodation and function of the Greek Organising Committee.

- The participation of workers and trade-unions in the Saturday demonstration was satisfactory.

Dimitris Stratoulis, ESF, Vice-President of GSEE/ADEDY Labour Institute

Enlargement Group Report

by Loukia Kotronaki, member of the Enlargement group (personal thoughts and assessment).

Some of the objectives that the European Assembly had put forward for the social and geographical enlargement of the forums were met in the 4th ESF. In more detail, the mass participation of —more than 2,000 — activists from the countries of the former Eastern Europe and from Turkey, the social profile of the participants from the above-mentioned countries (members of social and political organizations, ecological movements and workers' associations, feminists, unemployed, people who experienced the Forum for the first time), as well as the “average age” of the delegations prove that the Forum might not only concern westerners, “citizens of the world” with the financial means to travel and to intervene, but also socially, politically and culturally wider groups. This orientation was given great importance by the overall political framework, which was the axis of the forum —although its building process was not always “peaceful”—, a framework that functioned as a beacon for the planning of the Program group, the Logistics group and the Finance's group. To make a long story short, the decision to organize a Forum, that would be cheap, independent from state authorities, pluralist and open, with the aim to enlarge the participation in the movements formed the political point of the 4th ESF.

We would like to report the following:

1. **Solidarity Fund (S.F.).** The Solidarity fund motivated all those people who wished to participate but were unable to do so, either because they lacked the financial means or because they could not find the necessary funds. There were no criteria (political or of any other kind) for the financial support of delegations and individuals, who wished to be included in the solidarity fund. Every person who asked us to cover the expenses —either full or by half— of their transport, accommodation (in hotels or in other spaces) and free feeding within the Forum was included in the S.F. Furthermore, there was provision for free feeding and accommodation for those people who arrived at the forum and were not included in the delegations or in those who had already registered. The total amount that was allocated to these delegations was 69,280 euros (Eastern/Central European countries) and about 20,000 euros to the participants from the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the undertaking of the S.F. has a long way to go. It is crucial to investigate and to systematize the raising of resources, not only in view of a ESF; such a practice should be the constant concern of a movement, avoiding though the financial involvement of state. Moreover, it is worthwhile to find ways to make the S.F. widely known so that not only those who have participated in the Forum process know about it. Finally, through the process of exchange and mingling with our companions it would be advisable to transfer the message that the “western organizing committees” are not committees of the “financially robust”, but of ordinary activists against the neo-liberal globalization.

2. **Meetings in the countries of Eastern Europe, Turkey and Middle East.** The organizations of ESF meetings and events with the collaboration of the local forums or other movements in the above-mentioned countries, apart from the political and personal benefits that provided to those who

participated, are major and decisive steps towards the relative success of the following: a. The connection of the local resistances with the European mobilizations against neo-liberal globalization. b. The essential political dialogue and the effort to lay out common political initiatives among countries that have followed different paces and courses of integration in E.U. and among movements with different political traditions. Of course, such an effort of compatibility and accord in a political level seems extremely difficult even to the movements of “Western Europe”.

The experience of organizing the 4th ESF —and particularly our effort to issue visas for those coming from the above-mentioned countries— once more gave us the chance to underline that the policy against “illegal immigration” and the so-called “terrorism” is present in our everyday lives and gives a hard time to those who wish to participate in a Forum. Specifically, in many occasions the applicants were asked to: a. prove that they are members of societies, b. submit documents that proved that they do not intend to immigrate (especially to those who came from the countries of the former Eastern Europe), c. to persuade the consulates —by means of personal interviews— that they do not use their participation at the Forum as a pretext in order to immigrate or to ask for (in vain) political asylum. Moreover, there were cases that the authorities refused to issue group —and free— visas.

As the Enlargement group, but as every other group that contributed to the organization fo the 4th ESF, we tried to resolve the matters mentioned above in the best possible way (out of the 2,000 visa applications 50 were turned down) as well as for many other things. By exercising of political pressure, and through the “other policies” that in every occasion we plan together...

Note

These figures are based on the registrations and the number of people who received the support of the Solidarity Fund.

COUNTRY	PARTICIPATION
MOLDAVIA	37
RUSSIA (Moscow, Leningrad)	190
UKRAINE	51
POLAND (2 delegations)	81
CZECH REPUBLIC	44
BULGARY	98
SERBIA	6
HUNGARY (3 delegations), Attac, Protect Future, H.S.F	92
MACEDONIA, (Journalists for children and women rights)	11
ROMANIA (RSF, ROMAERO)	110
BOSNIA (Green Visions)	4
TURKEY	1.200

- Palestine, (50 people)- Lebanon (10 people), - Egypt (12 people)- Other countries of the Middle East (10).

- Participation from Africa: 20 people.

- Participation from Latin America: 15 people.
-

Temporary review from the financial committee of the 4th E.S.F

Introduction

The following budget is temporary because there are still some low budget invoices to be paid, while we are still trying to find ways to raise money in order to cover the deficit.

First of all, we have to underline that the main goal of the Financial committee of the 4th E.S.F was the organisation of the 4th E.S.F on a low budget, suitable for a small country like Greece. We estimated a total cost of 1.000.000 € and there was a deviation of about 10% as you will see in the following analysis. The starting point of our budget was to organise the 4th ESF with half of the money that was needed for the organisation of the previous Forums without accepting the financial support of the government and we succeeded in doing so.

The analysis of the expenses shows our inflexible priorities such as the expenses and those categories of expenses that in the future forums could be diminished, i.e. the expense for the rent which amounted to 172.000 €. Among the inflexible expenses is also the cost of interpretation and the cost of the solidarity fund (100.000 €) which came up to 40% of the budget. It has to be underlined that the initial intention of the Financial Committee was that ALIS (Alternative Interpretation System), whose total cost was 162.000 €, would be at the movement's disposal, thus lowering the budget of the future ESFs. Unfortunately, because of the deficit we are constrained to bargain away part of the ALIS system to the forum of Kenya against a "token" price, while we will keep the other part (about 25 booths) in order to use it for small events of the social movements, such as the preparatory assemblies.

The deficit of the 300,000 euros was the result of a number of expenses that were estimated in proportion of the equivalent expenses of the previous social forums and these estimates did not apply to the 4th ESF. It was also due to the bad weather, which meant less receipts from the outdoor concerts. We also overestimated the participation of the social organizations and we lacked experience in terms of foreseeing further expenses. However, we believe that the trade unions and the local authorities will respond to our call for financial support and by means of concerts and fund-raising events will cover the deficit in a few weeks' time.

In conclusion, we believe that it is feasible for a small country to organize a social forum on a low budget as long as there is an essential knowledge transmission effort from the countries that have already organised a forum, an effort that we did not benefit from. Last but not least, there is a need to create a "financial security" fund that would help in case of urgent needs or unfortunate results.

Christoforos Papadopoulos

Member of the financial committee