



NEXT LEFT: CONSTRUCTING WELFARE SOCIETY
8 AND 9 DECEMBER 2013 – RIGA, LATVIA

Monday, 9th December 2013

FEPS Next Left National Roundtable debate

Location: **Centra Rajons, Bruņinieku iela 29/31**

09.30 – 10.00

Registration

10.00 – 10.20

Welcome

The theme of “Welfare Society”, its ideological underpinning, political plausibility and electoral appeal is the theme that is being at heart of the research of this year’s FEPS Next Left Programme. The Round Table, which is already third that FEPS and BSF will hold together creates therefore a great opportunity to on one hand discuss the findings so far and on the other cross-check it vis-à-vis political, social and economic reality of the Baltic States.

Speakers

Ervins LABANOVSKIS, Vice-Chairperson of Freedom and Solidarity Foundation, Latvia

Dr. Ania SKRZYPEK, Senior Research Fellow at FEPS in charge of the “Next Left” Research Programme, Poland

10.20 – 12.30

Aiming at a New Social Deal: Progressives in a search for a credible welfare agenda

The modern concept of welfare state is rooted in a post-war understanding that a socially just consensus must be reached between the worlds of capital and labour. Put in place in the times of Europe’s reconstruction, it served as a transformative tool of building more equal societies, which would collectively develop through joint efforts of all and which would ensure that all its members benefit from jointly reached peace, prosperity and wealth. In the last two decades the welfare states have been challenged within at least three dimensions. Firstly, they did not sufficiently equip people for the times of globalization. Secondly, they have begun losing their feature as a gear of progress and instead have gained an image of burdens. Thirdly, neoliberal logic that led to the crisis imprinted a comprehension that they are in fact the cause of excessive expenses. All across EU that served as an explanation of cuts that in the name of austerity were put in place. In some places even more rigorously than others – and the Baltic States are one of those negative examples. The transition phase during which they had been



aspiring to put in place their own version of ESM (European Social Model) had been interrupted – and the states joined the pattern that the literature describes nowadays as “REBBL” alliance.

The panel will focus therefore on the three main questions. First, it will look if it is politically plausible to still talk in terms of “welfare society” – knowing that these are the times called “after the crash” or “after the era of plenty”. Secondly, it will look in what ways “welfare society” could be a future-associated project that could be at the heart of social democratic mission and would serve as an explanation of its mission at the service of the contemporary society. Thirdly, it will look closer at the experiences of Baltic States trying to find paths out of “REBBL” and towards “Social Europe”.

Experts

Ronny MAZZOCCHI, Assistant professor at the University of Trento and Member of the FEPS Next Left Focus Group, Italy

Veiko SPOLITIS, Doctor of political science. Riga P. Stradins University, Latvia

Gints TURLAIS, Lecturer in Economics at the Riga Technical University, Latvia

Moderation

Dr. Ania SKRZYPEK, Senior Research Fellow at FEPS in charge of the “Next Left” Research Programme, Poland

12.30 – 13.00

Lunch

13.00 – 15.00

Finding the balance between predistribution and redistribution: social democracy restoring confidence in educational systems

Generations of social democrats have been arguing that there is no better social insurance policy than investment in education. It has been seen as a mechanism to empower individuals, as a way to emancipate groups and finally as a path to ensure growing human potential of the societies. The agenda has been growing throughout the years, encompassing formal, non-formal and informal education, as also linking it up with the question of knowledge and skills. In the 1990s, it was education that was supposed to be the key in equipping our societies to be able to face the challenges of the new century and herewith of the rapidly changing, globalised world. And even if those were the years of a growing division within the progressive family regarding the renewal agenda of the Third Way – on both sides of the conflict, the point regarding primacy of education was shared.

Despite that, in the time of the crisis test the commitment to education was challenged on a number of levels. To begin with, the disaster of youth unemployment in Europe seems to be read by many as a proof that education is no longer an “insurance policy”. The mismatch between jobs available and skills offered grows, especially with polarization of the labour market. Many people are pushed to work in fields that have little or nothing to do with their educational background. The answer of “offering retraining” seems also hardly sufficient – and looking at the growing generation of NEET, it seems that it



fails even in as much as involving individuals. To top it up, there is an ongoing debate that in the times of austerity, it is impossible to afford the system – and choices, even if drastic, need to be made. Pre-school education is already one of the targets, which can hinder the opportunities for many.

This panel will look therefore at three main questions. First of all, it will look at the relation of education as a policy and modern concept of welfare society as ideological underpinning. It will try to reframe the argument that would be able to bounce back the criticism enlisted above. Secondly, it will look at education as a method of predistribution. Herewith it will review policies that can make education again re-emerge as a promise especially for the new generations. In that context, education will also be examine as a way of bringing individuals and divides societies (herewith also with growing number of migrants) together. Thirdly, it will focus on the Baltic States experience. Looking at the last decade of the EU membership, it will try to answer the question how improved educational policies can serve to avoid further brain drain on one hand, and on the other ensure chances for more sustainable societal development for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Experts

Lorenza ANTONUCCI, Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of the West of Scotland and member of the FEPS Young Academics Network (FEPS YAN), Italy

Algirdas DAVIDAVIČIUS, Demos Institute, Lithuania

Mārtiņš KAPRĀNS, Research Fellow Institute of Government and Politics, University of Tartu, board members of Council of Latvia's young scientists, Latvia

Peteris KRIGERS, President of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS), Latvia

Moderation

Ervins LABANOVSKIS, Vice-Chairperson of Freedom and Solidarity Foundation, Latvia

15.00 – 15.30

Closing