

Repubblica:

### **1) How and why has DiEM been founded? Is it a party?**

The idea for DiEM25 was born last summer, immediately after the crushing of the Athens Spring and Europe's spectacular failure to respond in a united and humane way to the refugee crisis. In this context, DiEM25 was the collective response of thousands of Europeans to the realisation that the European Union is at an advanced stage of disintegration, that this disintegration will only benefit misanthropy, xenophobia and toxic nationalism, and, finally, that the only way of preventing such frightful developments is by democratising the EU's institutions through the formation of a pan-European, cross-border movement that inspires into collective action democrats independently of whether they come from the Green, radical left, liberal or progressive conservative traditions.

Is DiEM25 a party? No, it is not. DiEM25 is a cross-border movement providing the political infrastructure to Europe's committed democrats to come together, independently of party affiliation or nationality, to have the conversation we need on how jointly and systematically to confront Europe's systemic crisis. If and when a pan-European consensus emerges, I am sure it will find a way of expressing itself electorally in our different countries.

### **2) What makes DiEM a movement different from the other European movements and parties? Don't we already have the European left of Syriza, Podemos, Sinn Feinn and so on?**

National and regional political parties are and will remain important. However, we consider the model of national parties which form flimsy alliances at the level of the European Parliament to be incapable of dealing with Europe's systemic crisis and its five manifestations: (private and public) debt crisis, banking crisis, the crisis caused by rock-bottom investment, the crisis caused by rising poverty & inequality and, finally, the xenophobia that the first four crises channel into a moral panic about migration and refugees. These are the crises that are deconstructing Europe today and which national parties addressing national electorates cannot and will not manage to overcome. DiEM25 was founded to offer the missing internationalist, pan-European dimension that can bring all European democrats together within a unified program for democratising, stabilising and, indeed, civilising the European Union.

### **3) What type of political action do you intend to put in place, concretely?**

DiEM25 is organising as a grassroots movement around six major themes, each of which will result in a DiEM25 Assembly. The six Assemblies will take place within 18 to 24 months and each will result in a DiEM25 Policy Paper. Together, these six Policy Papers will constitute DiEM's *Program for Europe*. To ensure maximum participation in its creation, before each Assembly there will be many smaller meetings across Europe to discuss the Assembly's themes, there will be petitions, interventions in the media, cultural events etc.

The first Assembly is taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March, in Rome, focusing on DiEM25's ***Transparency in Europe, Now!*** campaign. Besides the launching of **DiEM25-Italia**, our Rome Assembly will kick start a petition demanding that all EU-level decision-making be exposed to European citizens' gaze, that meetings of the European Council, ECOFIN, Eurogroup, FTT, ESM etc. become accessible to Europeans, that all documents and protocols related to the crucial TTIP negotiations (between the US and the EU) be uploaded on the Internet etc.

The other five DiEM25 Assemblies, that will follow after Rome, will focus on the themes that are already outlined in our Manifesto: (1) Imagining a democratic European Union Constitution, (2) Open Europe – Overcoming the fear of migrants and refugees, (3) Labour, its value and the distribution of income, (4) The European Green New Deal & Europe's monetary system, (5) Green transition and Europe's technological sovereignty.

#### **4) Now that the movement is about to be launched in Italy, who are your referents in our country? The Italian Left? Landini?**

A movement does not choose its activists, its members. They choose it! We are not interested in co-opting political parties or factions of political parties into DiEM25. Instead, we forge relations with citizens and grassroots internationalist organisations. For instance, DiEM25 established a close working relation with Lorenzo Marsili of *European Alternatives* and others with whom we share this inclusive and participatory approach to making change happen in Europe.

As for DiEM25's ideological orientation in Italy and throughout Europe, it is important to draw a distinction: Most of those who inaugurated DiEM25 in Berlin, on 9<sup>th</sup> February, are left-leaning. But as our Manifesto says, our aim is to attract to DiEM25 all democrats who are united (despite great differences in political ideology) by the idea of democratising the EU in order to save it.

Just like European democrats in 1930 had a duty to band together (whether liberal, leftwing or conservative) in order to stop Europe's slide into an abyss, today too Greens, left-wingers, liberals and progressive conservatives have a similar duty. In this sense, I would love to see all sorts of democrats join DiEM25, bringing to it many different ideological perspectives in a common struggle against Europe's slide into a postmodern 1930s.

#### **5) What is DiEM's position with regards to the refugee crisis that is shacking the countries of the European Union?**

The moral panic, the fear, the 'not in my backyard' attitude, the free loading tactics that we have been witnessing over the past few months, with the exception of Angela Merkel's courageous stance, all these kneejerk reactions will be remembered in the future as symptoms of Europe's loss of integrity. When someone knocks on our door in the middle of the night, frightened, injured, hungry, with screaming kids in tow, we must simply open our doors, without any cost-benefit analysis, without trying to push them off to our neighbours. The fact that we have failed to do this reflects, in my view, a deeper malaise: Europe is an

edifice whose foundations have been eaten up from within by a terrible economic crisis that, over the past decade, has turned one proud European nation against another. When, later, the refugees arrived, the foundations had already become too brittle. We need to reinforce them through a surge of democratisation and European internationalism.

**6) Is the common currency, according to you, an unbreakable taboo for the left?**

Currencies are instruments. They are means to an end. If they ever become taboos, fetishes, ends-in-themselves, then they have turned from a servant of humans into their master. My view on the euro is that it was terribly designed and that we would have been better off had we not introduced it, given that design. But, at the same time, it is one thing to say we should not have created it and quite another to say that we should abandon it once we are inside the Eurozone. Today, the disintegration of the Eurozone would bring immense hardship to the whole of the continent. This is why I have been saying for a number of years that those of us who are most critical of the euro have a political and moral duty to try to fix it.

**7) Are you still in touch with Tsipras?**

No. I do not believe that he would have much to say to me while maintaining a path that he knows leads to a dead end. Still, I am glad to report that he and I have never fallen out, never had a cross word between us. It is very important to me that comrades maintain a civil and human relation even at times of fierce disagreement.

**8) If Tsipras were to ask you to return to be a minister would you accept?**

You realise, of course, that such a request by Tsipras would constitute a signal that the Greek government is tearing up the terms of surrender that Tsipras signed on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015, and which he then passed through Parliament with the support of the pro-troika political establishment...

**9) Talking about Greece, do you think the storm is over? Is the softened austerity of Tsipras working?**

You are, I am afraid, misinformed. There is nothing 'soft' or 'softened' in the austerity program imposed by the troika upon both Tsipras and the Greek social economy. The increase in VAT on most goods, the rise in business taxes, the demand that small firms pay all their business tax a year in advance, the cuts in supplementary pensions, the reduction in the tax free level of income tax, the fire sales of regional airports, all these terrible measures guarantee an acceleration of the debt-deflationary crisis.

**10) Varoufakis, Assange, Brian Eno, Ada Colau. Mediatically you seem very strong. But perhaps the "people" of the Left are missing...**

All movements begin with a handful of people who issue an invitation to everyone else to join in. DiEM25 has just begun. Already, however, we have been inundated with people volunteering across Europe to help organise the movement. Even on the day of our Berlin launch, people spontaneously (without even telling us) booked theatres and town halls, and got together to watch the event's live-stream. This participatory process is what will give DiEM25 its substance. I hope our Rome event will energise many Italians who have not joined yet to get on [diem25.org](http://diem25.org) and do so.

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in the remaining private savings.