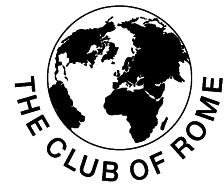


Brussels/EU
Chapter

World Social Forum



European Support
Centre

155.000 participants from 138 countries met from January 26th to 31st in Porto Alegre at the World Social Forum (WSF), the world-wide largest event that deals with the social problematique. The Brussels/EU Chapter of the Club of Rome and the European Support Centre were present in Porto Alegre both with an event and with a stand and Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker introduced the new Report to the Club of Rome: Limits to Privatization.



The WSF is a space of groups and movements of civil society with a critical view on the neoliberal ideology. The WSF discusses alternative means to build a globalization in solidarity, which respects the universal human rights of all men and women of all nations and the protection of the environment. It forms a counterpart to Davos.

The title of the event organised by the Brussels/EU Chapter and the European Support Centre was "Harnessing the Potential of ICTs & Satellites to Build Inclusive Knowledge Societies". Background was the ongoing work on the topic of the world wide-digital divide. The use of ICTs and satellites enables the acceleration of capacity building and non-formal education. Non-formal education focuses on skills development programs and special needs of marginalized



groups. Particular attention has to be paid to those groups in rural and remote areas only accessible by satellite technologies.

At the event, there were presentations by Raoul Weiler, President of the Brussels/EU Chapter of the Club of Rome and Thomas Schauer, Director of the European Support Centre.



Raoul Weiler first introduced the history, structure and the aims of the Club of Rome in general and outlined then the work of the Club in the area of information technology. He focussed finally on the World Conference which will be organized in May 2005 in co-operation with UNESCO.

Thomas Schauer discussed the problematique of the digital divide as a facet of the general divide between the rich and the poor. Even though there is a correlation between the wealth of countries and the share of the population using the new media, it would not be justified to assume causality in a way that investment in information technology would be sufficient to generate wealth and economic growth.

Apart from the event, the ESC and the Brussels Chapter were also present by a stand. It was localised at a central position of the Forum and many participants were involved in discussions. It became obvious that the holistic approach of the Club of Rome generated a lot of interest because most other organisations focus either on social, environmental, economic or cultural aspects alone.



A special highlight in Porto Alegre was an event organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker introduced the new Report to the Club of Rome: "Limits to Privatization" is the first thorough audit of privatizations from around the world. It outlines the historical emergence of globalization and liberalization, and analyses over 50 case studies of best-



and worst-case experiences of privatization. It provides guidance for policy and action that will restore and maintain the right balance between the powers and responsibilities of the state, the private sector and civil society.

With more than 2500 activities and 2800 volunteers that supported the organization the World Social Forum 2005 was the largest Forum ever held. It was organised fully bottom-up. Apart from the opening and closing there were no mass events, any organisation could express their opinion and start an activity. It has been decided that in 2006 the World Social Forum will be decentralized and will happen in many different places in the world and in 2007 it will take place in Africa.

Further Information:

- Website of the World Social Forum: <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>
- Website of the European Support Centre of the Club of Rome: <http://esc.clubofrome.org>
- Website of the Club of Rome: <http://www.clubofrome.org>
- Website of the Brussels/EU Chapter of the Club of Rome: <http://www.clubofrome-bc.org>
- Website of World Conference on the use of ICT for Capacity Building: please follow the link on <http://esc.clubofrome.org> in the "activities" section
- Website for the Report "Limits to Privatization": <http://www.limits-to-privatization.net>
- Statement of the Club of Rome for the World Summit on Information Technology: for download on <http://esc.clubofrome.org> in the "archive" section
- Equality and Diversity in the Information Age", by Thomas Schauer and Franz Josef Radermacher: for download on <http://www.global-society-dialogue.org> ("background" section)