

Building a world community

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Ventotene International Seminar: 35th edition

by Yasmina Gourchane

In early September, young world federalists assembled on the Italian island of Ventotene for the 35th edition of the Ventotene International Seminar. From Mombasa to Montreal, Islamabad to Buenos Aires, WFM's delegation of 12 took part in the week-long event, participating in panels as speakers, leading working groups, and networking with other young federalists from Europe and beyond. While the main draw of the Seminar is its packed agenda, with sessions on topics ranging from economy to history to defence policy, it also provides unparalleled opportunities for young activists to engage with one another and grow their networks. The sunny island with a federalist history, as the place where Altiero Spinelli drafted his Federalist Manifesto, serves as an ideal setting for equipping a new generation of young federalist activists with the tools, knowledge and networks they need for an ever-changing world.

WFM participants gathered for a two-day pre-seminar that serves as a crash-course in federalism, giving an overview of WFM's history, goals and projects, as well as a chance for the participants to get acquainted before convening on the island. Aiming for an interactive format, each participant presented on a topic of their choice ranging from federalist solutions to post-conflict situations, to influential female leaders of Pakistan, all of which sparked strong discussions and a flow of ideas from the diverse group.

The island of Ventotene may be small, but the welcome is big. After an opening session, participants and speakers met in the town square, along with residents of Ventotene for a welcome dinner. Each of the ten restaurants on the island provided a different dish, and everyone dined at large communal tables in the shape of E, for Europe. Bringing together locals, tourists and federalists alike, the dinner broke the ice and lay the groundwork for a productive week of work.

This year, WFM took a particularly active role. Nick Christie, WFM EC member and Chair of the Policy Committee, Lucio Levi, WFM Councillor, and Yasmina Gourchane,

WFM Membership and Outreach Associate briefed participants on WFM programs, such as the Campaign for a UN Parliamentary Assembly and the Coalition for the ICC.

Later in the week, Florencia Gor, WFM Congress Chair, touched on other WFM projects, including the COPLA campaign and the UN2020 initiative. Having active and engaging WFM speakers has always been a key feature of the Ventotene Seminar, bringing a world perspective to complement a focus on the European Union, which many European participants work on regularly. One feature of WFM that attracted the JEF (Young European Federalists) and UEF (Union of European Federalists) participants were the newly launched Transnational Working Groups, established to encourage regular and robust communication between Member Organizations and experts in the field.

Ventotene is truly a melting pot for federalists who come from different countries, generations and disciplines.

Participants kept the spirit of discussion alive even outside of the seminar meeting room by continuing the day's debates in their free time, whether over dinner overlooking the Mediterranean, grabbing a Spritz in the square, or on a boat tour around the island. Interactions like these solidified collaboration efforts across JEF chapters, between JEF and WFM, not to mention countless friendships. Nearly four decades on, new generations of federalists continue to return to Ventotene, determined to continue on the legacy of Altiero Spinelli and work towards a more federal world.

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