



**GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION**

Class of 2014

New Green Voices in the
European Parliament



**HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
EUROPEAN UNION**

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I. FOREWORD

Back in 2009, when the Green European Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation gathered for the first time the ambitions of newly elected Green Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in a yearbook, the European Union was a different type of affair. The effects of the financial and economic crises were not yet in full swing, austerity measures had not yet become the buzz-word of the political agenda, and the climate summit in Copenhagen was still preserving the hope that the European Union would deliver on its promises to be the world's climate champion. Although clouds were on the horizon, the general mood in European circles was still very much business as usual.

Five years later, we are faced with a different scenario. The effects of the economic and financial crises, as well as the social impact of the austerity-driven response to these crises, had raised existential questions about the future of the European Union. Euro-scepticism reached unprecedented levels, and parties campaigning on explicitly anti-European platforms made gains across the Union. Citizens' movements reacting to austerity measures imposed by "Brussels" made clear the popular disenchantment with a political establishment that seemed keener on bailing out banks than safeguarding jobs and welfare. There were times as recent as two years ago when the European Union seemed to be facing "make it or break it" types of challenges.

Even though this urgency has passed for now, the crisis is far from over. This is the background in which the newly-elected Green MEPs will be working over the next years.

For the Greens, the electoral results were a mixed picture. There were gains in traditional Green strongholds such as Austria

and Sweden, as well as breakthroughs in Hungary and Croatia, bringing the first Central and Eastern Europeans representatives to the Green Group in the European Parliament. There were however losses in Germany and France, while representation in Southern Europe remains limited. Overall, the Greens remained relatively stable; however the Parliament at large became further skewed to the extremes, with both Eurosceptic right and left-wing parties strongly represented.

In a context where anti-European debates are likely to be placed in the spot-light, the challenge for the new Green Group will be to articulate their criticisms to the various EU policy approaches that venture off the paths of sustainability, equity, democracy and respect for fundamental rights, while keeping an overall pro-European narrative. Among this new Green group there are many new, first-time parliamentarians. They will need dedication, imagination and an understanding of the need to reach out to civil society and grassroots movements to come up with successful policy approaches to the difficult tasks ahead: setting ambitious climate targets; tackling energy security and energy poverty; bringing prosperity back to the EU; ensuring a humane migration policy, and responding to new geopolitical realities.

The articles that make up this collection detail on the new MEPs' ambitions, expectations and analyses of the opportunities and challenges lying ahead in their specific policy fields. The articles discuss both the visions of the EU that they are bringing to Brussels, by reflecting on the messages picked up during the elections' campaigns, as well as how these visions translate in a green working project in the European Parliament. The contributions describe the biggest

challenges for the upcoming years on topics such as greening the economy, transforming energy policy, building a democratic EU, creating a human-rights based migration policy, positioning the EU as a strong and fair global player in areas of trade, agriculture, foreign affairs to mention but a few. Finally, the authors reflect on their ambitions from the various policies they'll be focusing on and note their expectations for their parliamentary mandate.

The major challenge ahead for the European Union is bringing back the belief that the Union is the best chance of prosperity and of a better life for the young and the old on this continent. If we are to discuss of a sustainable future for the

European Union, it will need to rekindle the European dream of a Union that safeguards fundamental rights, that guarantees social rights, that offers everyone a fair chance of economic prosperity, and that protects our environment. This is the Europe that the newly elected Green parliamentarians will be working for over the upcoming five years. Read more about it in the following pages, discuss the ideas explored and get active to make them happen!

Pierre Jonckheer

Co-President Green European Foundation

Bastian Hermisson

Director Heinrich Böll Stiftung EU Office

Brussels, October 2014

II. SETTING THE BACKGROUND

European Greens after the 2014 elections. New game, changing rules

Reinhard Bütikofer

After the European Elections of May 2014, the EU is still on the one hand where it was prior to the campaign: at a crossroads. However, the election results have also made sure that business as usual will not be an option. The EU has started to change. The political struggle over which forces will dominate that change will pose particular challenges to European Greens.

Anti-European populist gains throughout Europe

Anti-Europeans, chauvinists and right-wing extremists have been gaining in the elections. In countries like France or the UK this camp won first place among the different political forces. It increased its visibility and its impact overall. There have also been setbacks for populists such as in the Netherlands or in Italy. Where the dominant traditional parties avoided attacking them, or even borrowed from them, or had lost their own credibility almost beyond repair, anti-European and anti-democratic populists managed to fill the political void. They have shown their capability of exploiting popular anger over any lack of European democracy, over the failed austerity policies represented by the Troika and over technocratic overreach.

The European Green Party and national Green parties have fought against anti-European populists and right-wing extremists. On the other hand the populists' success must mobilise us to analyse the situation even more thoroughly and to come up

with better answers that will resonate more broadly throughout our societies.

The biggest loser in the European Elections has been the European People's Party (EPP) that campaigned for the defense of the European status quo. They lost about 60 seats in the European Parliament. Their insistence on austerity policies, their inability to offer the European public any new vision, and their refusal to find just and sustainable solutions to problems ranging from climate change to youth unemployment – from the plight of refugees to the infringement of human rights in a growing number of member states – have not served them well with European voters. This notwithstanding, they were able to retain the first place among political families, thus making any real change in the orientation of EU policies difficult over the next term. We have already seen that in their staunch defense of unqualified commissioners in the EP hearings. EPP politicians hold strong positions in the Council as well as in the new European Commission. In the new European Parliament Greens will not seek a coalition with them, but will formulate a clear alternative.

Socialists had hoped before the Election Day to advance in strength and to move into first place. But their result was as stagnant as their policy was. Liberals lost strongly in populist member states and they lost their third rank in the European Parliament. Socialists and Liberals will try to form a permanent Grand Coalition with EPP in the European Parliament and the Council. That will leave us Greens in an often rather lonely position. We can also say it forces us to emphasise Green strategies and solutions to the problems Europe is facing.

Parties belonging to the GUE (European United Left parliamentary group) profited from the deep crisis and from exploiting resentment in some member countries. They remained however more the expression of a protest vote than of a clear and innovative proposal for Europe. Some new members from civic and social movements have joined GUE. Greens must work towards becoming more attractive for these new forces.

Mixed results for the Greens

The Green electoral result was a mixed bag: in absolute numbers our strength in the European Parliament decreased by eight seats, but the result was better than any poll had indicated. Overall, in the end European Green Party member parties managed to mobilise better than expected. In more detail, the picture shows a mixture of defeats, setbacks, turnarounds, advances and successes.

Setbacks as compared to the 2009 numbers were suffered for instance by EELV (Europe Ecologie Les Verts – France), Ecolo (French speaking Green party in Belgium) and Oikologoi Prasinoi (Greece). Turnarounds were achieved in countries like Denmark and the Netherlands, where Greens successfully overcame stinging previous defeats and managed to win new strength, and in Germany, where Bündnis 90/Die Grünen managed to overcome the weak showing in the previous national election. Advances were made in Ireland and the Czech Republic. In the former, Greens only narrowly missed a seat that even optimists had not expected them to gain, and managed to re-establish themselves on the political radar of their country. Some parties stayed strong like the Luxembourg Greens, or weak – like the Polish, the Baltic and the Balkan Greens. As regards success, five countries stand out: Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Sweden and the UK. We should all learn from these successes.

As we should learn from defeats. We should also analyse the situation in the countries where member parties did not even get close to getting elected.

The fact that Green political representation in the European Parliament now also includes Central and Eastern European countries is a great motivation for the whole European Green family. A disappointing situation is still dominant in the South of Europe, even if in Spain EQUO obtained a partially positive result. It is very clear that the Green family will have to develop a specific strategy directed to increase Green presence and representation in the East and South of Europe. We must work with our member parties to that end, but we should also take into account what is moving in our political vicinity. If we do that well, and if we develop a good strategy of outreach and opening up and alliance building, we will have a great chance of becoming the third political force in the next European Parliament in 2019.

Advocating radical change in a pro-European manner

It is not hard to predict that Greens over the coming five years will continue to work on the Green New Deal, the future of European democracy, digital rights, energy and climate, trade, refugees and the protection of minorities. I would expect that foreign and security policy, as well as industrial policy, might play a more important part than they have so far. The election Manifesto, which had been translated into all the official languages of the European Union plus Catalan during the campaign, could serve as a solid basis for a common political course. Part of our success with our campaign came from the fact that we did not get bogged down in an abstract pro-EU/anti-EU conversation, but were able to position ourselves as the one party among the pro-Europeans that

clearly insists on major change, and the one party among change advocates that reliably defends the European project. We should stick to that.

Much will depend for Greens over the next five years on whether we will give enough emphasis to taking our policies,

our arguments and our proposals directly to the people more actively than we have done so far. Not accepting business as usual thus implies opening ourselves up for as intense conversations with the electorate as possible. We have to spread our message much broader, but we also must listen much better.



Reinhard Bütikofer is Co-Chair of the European Green Party and Member of the European Parliament for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the German Green Party). Between 2002 and 2008 he was party leader of the German Greens. In the European Parliament, he is the Green industrial policy spokesman.

III. NEW GREEN VOICES IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: 2014-2019

1. Decentralising and strengthening European democracy

Max Andersson

The euro crisis will soon be entering its sixth year, and it is still far from over. Unemployment remains high, the European economy is still fragile, and in case of a new economic downturn, things could become much worse. Discontent with the European Union is on the rise, and rightly so. Several countries whose economies do not fit in well with the Eurozone have been hit hard by severe cuts and unemployment. The EU has stumbled forward from one crisis package to the next, while right-wing extremists and populists have grown stronger in the shadow of the problems.

The economic crisis was sparked by the banking crash of 2008, but the fact that it is still ongoing is very much due to the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). When a country in the Eurozone gets hit by an economic downturn it can neither devalue its currency nor lower interest rates, and as a result unemployment has taken a firm hold. The politics of austerity used as a response to the crisis are not a solution, and have made things worse. An underlying problem is that countries with significant industry improve their competitiveness faster than countries with more agriculture and services based economies, and this builds up economic imbalances inside the Eurozone that are hurting those countries that cannot keep up the pace with for instance Germany. The problem is not that some governments have been irresponsible – some have, some haven't – but that the euro makes it difficult for economies to heal.

The euro-crisis clearly shows that there is something wrong with the EU today. But ultimately the crisis is not about a poorly functioning currency union, but about a lack of democracy. The idea that power should be centralised in a system in which mistakes are very difficult to correct is not sustainable. The euro is just one way that the centralisation of the EU has gone too far. The policy of cuts and bailouts has failed, but people have not been able to change it. When people vote for change, and then are told that change won't come because decisions have been moved to somewhere else, they are not going to be happy.

High time to rethink what we want the EU to be

In recent years, the EU has taken over more and more power from its member states. According to the Swedish parliamentary journal "Riksdag och Departement" in 2012 as many as 43% of the Swedish government's proposals originated in Brussels. When power shifts to the EU it becomes harder for people to influence decisions. As long as the EU concentrated on issues which most people consider technical or uninteresting, such as agricultural policy or product standardisation, people were prepared to accept the democratic shortcomings. However, with the latest treaties the EU has got too much power over issues that are closer to the hearts of citizens, and discontent is on the rise.

This is most visible in the UK, where the government has been forced to promise a referendum on its EU membership and call for renegotiation. The referendum may not happen in 2017 as originally planned, but it is very likely that in the coming years the

British people will get to choose between leaving or staying within a reformed EU. The outcome is uncertain. If the British leave the balance of power within the EU will be radically changed, and generally for the worse. The EU would become more closed and protectionist, and the outlook for those countries who do not wish to join the euro will be bleak. If we want Britain to stay we need do our best to offer real treaty changes that make a difference. The goal should be to improve the EU for everybody, not to give certain member states special exemptions.

The euro-crisis – which sooner or later is going to require a treaty change – and the situation in the UK means that we are likely approaching a historic opportunity to democratise and decentralise the EU. Some governments are already preparing for the renegotiations. We Greens need to secure important gains, such as the principle that the EU can force member states to tighten environmental laws, but we should also use this opportunity to push for other improvements.

There are limits to what can be realistically achieved. For example, the next EU treaty is going to require the support of 28 governments and there is simply no way they are ever going to agree to give away most of their power. Especially since such a decision would have to be taken by unanimity. The idea that the treaties should be openly broken and that countries that do not agree with a proposed change are going to be cast out is also unlikely in the extreme. It is very easy to dream up ideas about constitutional changes, but the reality is that all ideas for treaty changes will require the acceptance of 28 national governments as part of a package deal.

So we need to think small and be creative. An important task over the coming years in the European Parliament is laying the groundwork for realistic changes that can improve the democratic functioning of the EU.

Introduce more sunset clauses

To start with it must become easier to amend bad decisions. When citizens want a different policy, a democratic system must be able to deliver change. But the EU requires a qualified majority (and sometimes unanimity) in the Council to enact legislation. The advantage of this is that decisions are taken after proper discussions, and that countries' interests are not set aside for no good reason. However, it also makes the decisions hard to amend. In most democracies you can change a law if you have a new government, but in the EU for this it is necessary to convince both the Commission, the European Parliament and a qualified majority of the Council of Ministers. That means that decisions which turn out to have been unwise or downright wrong can remain in force for a very long time.

There is a solution to this dilemma. New laws can be written to include sunset clauses, in which case the law will have to be confirmed or renegotiated after a certain number of years. Sunset clauses are sometimes used in the USA for controversial legislation, and indeed the multiannual financial framework of the EU-budget is also a form of sunseting. It works. The point of sunset clauses is to enable politicians of the future to change things instead of being bound by mistakes of the past. The EU should introduce this across the board. In some areas it is reasonable to review policy every five years; in other areas longer periods are more appropriate.

Counteract lobbying

A democratic reform programme must do something about lobbying. The EU's decision-making structure is so complex that anyone who wants to influence legislation effectively needs to hire lobbyists, and this distorts politics in favour of economic interests. A root cause of the problem is that the EU is trying to do too much with too few administrators, and that means that both the Commission and the legislators are dependent on lobbyists for ideas and information. If we want to limit the influence of lobbying we are going to have tougher rules and genuine transparency, but we also need to do less and strengthen the institutional capacities of the EU (i.e. hire more public administrators so that they will be able to do their job properly). In the long run, that will be money well-spent.

Develop the “yellow card” system

One big issue in the negotiations will be how to counteract the EU's tendency to exceed its powers. The current system, whereby the national parliaments can show a “yellow card” to proposals for new EU legislation in case they feel the principle of subsidiarity is not respected, is simply not working. Putting it simply, when the European Commission presents a new proposal the national parliaments have eight weeks to respond. If a third of them declare that a proposal conflicts with the principle of subsidiarity, the Commission must either withdraw the proposal or supply further reasons for it. Some parliaments have tried using this system, but most parliaments have not bothered to take it seriously. The yellow card system has been in existence since 2009 and has only been triggered twice.

There are many ways to strengthen the yellow card system. The number of parliaments which need to protest should be lowered, and if a smaller number of parliaments, say three, showed the yellow card, the other parliaments would be informed and given another few weeks to review the proposal thoroughly. Other proposals worth considering are creating a system for parliaments to initiate a review of existing legislation, or to give parliaments the ability to comment more on the substance of proposals.

Give national parliaments a proper role

In order for democracy to function well, it needs to be in the public eye. People need high quality information so that they can hold politicians accountable. But the media are not able to report well on EU-politics. And that is not really the fault of the media. The political process in Brussels with its culture of compromise and negotiations is very difficult to report on in a way that sells newspapers. As a result, there are too few Brussels-correspondents, EU reporting is dominated by trivialities, and the elections to the European Parliament are not mainly about policies but are used as an opportunity for the electorate to express discontent with the sitting government. It is not surprising that turnout in European elections is low.

The best way to bring home the debate to the member states is to give national parliaments a direct influence on EU legislation. When a matter is debated and fought in the national parliament, it is a lot easier for the media to cover. This is partly because the political actors are more familiar to the public, but also due to ease of access. In Sweden there have been a number of cases when there has been vigorous debate when the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) is about to implement a directive – in the case of the data retention the implementation was even halted for several years. However, there is usually not much media attention

when a directive is decided and there is still time to really do something about it.

A simple way to deal with this would be to give national parliaments a vote on new directives and regulations when they are actually being made, and require that new laws have the active support of national parliaments. We don't want to disturb the balance of power between member states needlessly, so parliaments' votes should be weighted in the same way as those of their governments in the Council. In most cases the parliaments are going to vote the same way as their governments, so the direct effects at EU level would be small. But governments, and in particular minority governments, would have a strong incentive to talk about EU matters to their parliaments, and to listen to what they had to say before voting. And when conflict lines on EU matters become visible at national level the media will be much better placed to inform the voters. This might seem like a very small change, but in the long run, the improvement could be immense.

Returning power to the member states: not all solutions come from Brussels

The reforms mentioned above would enhance transparency and improve democracy in the EU, and they are only part of what can be done. However, the fundamental problem is still that the EU is a very big organisation with power to decide over too many issues. Power should be as close as possible to the people, and that sits uncomfortably with a supranational union of 500 million citizens. This will not be easy to deal with in a treaty change, but is worth a try.

One of the Greens' main demands should be to introduce a right for member states to enact stricter environmental requirements for products. Unlike the EU countries, the states of the USA have this right, and environmentally friendly states such as

California make good use of it to push environmental developments forward. There is no good reason that it is banned in the EU. We also need to push for the repeal of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty which require member states to strengthen their military resources. The EU is the only state-type body in the world whose fundamental document forbids disarmament. Another issue that will be very difficult to solve is what to do with member states that are in severe breach of human rights and governments that undermine democracy. The EU needs better tools to deal with countries such as Hungary, but it will be difficult to get such tools through a treaty change.

The most important issue for the next renegotiation of EU treaties is the EMU. There are things that can be done to patch the faults of the Eurozone but in the long run they are not likely to be successful. Denmark and the UK already have a permanent exemption, and other members states should be given the same right not to join. We must also open a way out of the EMU for those that need it. Six years of cuts, crisis packages and mass unemployment have shown that the currency union is not working.

The Eurozone is too large and the constituent countries are too different. Countries which need to do so should be helped to return to their own currencies. That is not going to be cheap, but the status quo is going to be a lot more expensive. The EU is at a crossroads. It has become far too centralised, and popular discontent is growing. I hope that greens, socialists, liberals and conservatives who are able to see the problems will be able to channel the discontent in a constructive way in the interests of transparency, democratisation and decentralisation. The EU needs to become more flexible, and flexibility can no longer be just a one-way street. Flexibility must go in both directions. The EU has become too big for "one size fits

all” politics to work. It is high time that the Union learned to accept these differences

and to realise that not all solutions are to be found in Brussels.



Max Andersson is a Member of the European Parliament for the Swedish Green Party, Miljöpartiet De Gröna. He is a biologist by training, and plans to focus on EU democracy, climate change, privacy, and tech policy during his tenure in Parliament.

2. A voice for climate change, migration and human rights

Bodil Ceballos

The Swedish Green Party did fantastically well in the 2014 elections. So well that we are now the second biggest party after the Social Democratic Party. It was already clear at an early stage that the winds were blowing in our favour. Voters in Sweden are adamant that the EU tackles the climate question. They want the EU to develop a model for reducing the number of drownings in the Mediterranean Sea. They want the EU to demand that all EU countries respect human rights and put an end to the discrimination against their own citizens that forces them to leave their country and end up begging on the streets in e.g. Sweden.

The climate question is important in Sweden. The climate is crucial to the future of the human race and it is a gross injustice that those who contribute the least to global warming are the worst affected by it. This is why people are demanding that both Sweden and the EU stand up for the climate. If we don't stand up for the climate, for the poor and the future of our children, who will?

Support for a humane immigration policy has also remained strong, despite the fact that a xenophobic Swedish party has for the first time made it into the European Parliament. The tragic drownings in the Mediterranean are deeply upsetting and it is not a situation that can be resolved in the Swedish Riksdag [Parliament]. Having beggars on the streets is a new phenomenon in Sweden, but poverty and discrimination (in e.g. Romania) must be tackled on a European level. Freedom of mobility is a positive thing and applies to everyone, including people who are poor. Outlawing begging, which was suggested

by some in the Swedish debate, does not have wide support among the public.

In the campaign for the European Parliament elections, the Swedish Green Party spoke about how the EU should address the issues of environment, immigration and human rights, unlike the other parties who largely only discussed Swedish politics. My campaign focused on: an open Europe; a voice for climate justice; respect for human rights and putting a stop to racism and xenophobia. Additionally, I spoke a lot about the rights of minorities.

During my eight years of working in foreign policy I have travelled a great deal and seen a great deal of misery. I have visited people living in slums in relatively well-off countries, impoverished people who have been driven off their fields because of climate change, people who are stigmatised for a disease, people who are persecuted for their political beliefs and so on. I have visited refugee camps in the Sahara and seen the terrible conditions facing asylum seekers in Greece. I have been there to witness refugees from Africa arriving in the Canary Islands in ramshackle boats. At the same time I have also seen the rise of xenophobia in Sweden and other EU countries even though the need for protection from war, poverty and oppression has never been higher. The fundamental European values regarding human rights and respect for international agreements are completely flouted when poverty in one's home country is a fact of life for many EU citizens.

Youth unemployment in several EU member states is over 50 per cent. At the same time it can be impossible for many older people who have lost their jobs to get back into the job market. The youth of Europe need confidence in the future. The elderly need to be able to finish their careers with dignity. It is incumbent on us, the established parties, to offer an inclusive

political programme that gains the confidence of the young – our future. In the Swedish Green Party, we stand united for social justice and against racism and xenophobia. We are working together towards a green restructuring of society, away from dependence on fossil fuels. This will lead to a fresher world, a better economy and future for all – young and old. But we cannot do it all alone. We need to convince the other parties of our objectives, which of course is not easy. Personally, though, I think that nothing is impossible.

Living up to the European values

I am convinced that we can contribute to a fairer EU and a fairer world, but the EU must start to take as its starting point what is good in the long term for people – instead of what is just good in the short term for the European economy. The EU must strive towards a world where poor people living in poor countries are able to increase their wellbeing without having to resort to the shortcut of using fossil fuels. The EU must work towards creating legal, safe ways to enter its states so that people can take the ferry to Europe instead of risking their lives on the Mediterranean in fleeing their home countries. One way could be to start using a humanitarian visa. Another way could be to increase the refugee quota. A third could be that all EU countries receive asylum seekers. Trying to shut out people who are fleeing for their lives is beneath us and we must not let fear of the unknown get the better of us and take the place of empathy for our fellow human beings. We have to show that Europe is bigger than this and that we uphold the core values of the EU.

These are the questions I will continue to devote myself to for the next five years. My main committees will be the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and the Subcommittee for Security

and Defence (SEDE). In addition to this, I will sit on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Petitions.

Focus on combating climate change

The question of climate change will naturally arise in all of the parliamentary committees, as one of the biggest security threats to humankind. Climate justice and energy issues affect our relations with other countries, and are a driving force behind migration and asylum seeking.

The large majority of migrants do not come to Europe because they want to. They come because they have to. The reasons vary: poverty, oppression, consequences of climate change or war. Our actions towards the third world can contribute to an influx of refugees or can help those who want to stay in their own countries. Through development work we can reduce poverty, the effects of climate change and help build democratic societies. Through pro-active conflict prevention and/or various peace efforts we can potentially “cool down” a heated conflict before it breaks out into war or civil war. The keywords for me as a Green are to prevent conflict and help the parties involved to resolve conflicts peacefully. This is favourable from both a humanitarian and economic perspective. It might be time to dust off the proposal to establish an EU peace corps.

Unfortunately such preventative work is not the EU's main priority. Member states rarely meet the 0.7 per cent overseas development assistance target. Much of the aid money is tied up and goes straight back to the donor country; coordination between donor countries is also lacking. Similarly, conflict prevention work is not prioritised. Instead we export an increasing number of weapons to dictators and dubious democratic states. Limiting the

export of weapons from EU countries to countries currently involved in ongoing conflicts, whether directly or indirectly, is something I want to work towards. The failures of current policies are no more in evidence than in the fallout of the Arab Spring and in the fact that every fresh outbreak of conflict has thrown the EU into baffled paralysis. We seem to be able to cope with only one conflict at a time. At the moment our attention is focused primarily on Ukraine although we know at the same time that people are being murdered by the IS in Iraq.

Conflicts in the European neighbourhood: swifter EU responses needed

We have watched for years as the war in Syria has spread to neighbouring countries. The Kurds in Rojava (Western Kurdistan) have managed to maintain relative peace in their area and offer sanctuary to internally displaced people from all over Syria. The Kurds in Iraq are now doing the same and the world has suddenly realised that they are the only ones who can effectively defeat the IS on the ground. Now they are receiving support. Before, they were regarded as terrorists. The Kurds in Rojava have declared their independence; in Iraq they will be holding a referendum on independence. And that is where the support ends. Territorial integrity is a sacred cow that no one dares to question. Enforced marriages do not usually pave the way for a happy marriage, however. This is why I believe that we must be open to changes being made in the near future.

I am convinced that the conflicts in Ukraine/Russia, the Middle East and North Africa, and our relationships to these places, will feature largely in the work of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee for Security and Defence during the coming European parliamentary term. No conflicts are resolved quickly and

they will have an impact on our work even if the purely military operations involved are completed within the nearer future. In the case of Ukraine, this has a lot to do with the relationships that individual countries have with Russia – trade and dependence on gas and oil imports, arms exports and so on. Oil and gas are also a key factor in the Middle East. Offending Russia may have serious economic consequences for individual countries. International law applies equally to everyone, however, and should inform our relationships with other countries. Unfortunately the EU does not always act in accordance with it, for example in its relations with Israel and Morocco, both of which have constituted occupying powers for several decades. Both have formed deep partnerships with the EU and sell goods from occupied territories, just to take one example.

A human-rights based, responsible asylum system

Conflicts nearby are making more and more people seek refuge abroad and that is where the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs comes in. With a parliament including increasing numbers of far-right extremists and xenophobic MEPs, we will have a tough job ahead of us trying to bring in more humane asylum legislation. But regardless of whether we succeed in bringing in this legislation we must already now show solidarity with and welcome anyone who has managed to escape to an EU country, as well as show our support for Lebanon, Jordan etc. who take in the most refugees. It is unacceptable that only a few countries take in refugees from Syria. It is unacceptable that only a few countries take in quota refugees. It is unacceptable that refugees are forcibly sent back to countries that are at war, e.g. Iraq. It is unacceptable for asylum seekers to be treated like animals in cages. It is unacceptable for people to

be detained for months on end. It is not ok to shoot rubber bullets at people trying to swim to shore on EU territory. It is not ok to employ Frontex or the national police to stop people seeking refuge before they reach European waters.

I will do what can be done throughout the coming term to contribute to an open and humane Europe where all countries take responsibility for those who turn to them for help whether they are fleeing war, conflicts, oppression, poverty or climate change. I want to take part in creating legal ways of entering the EU in order to prevent more tragic drowning incidents in the Mediterranean. I want people to be able to become residents in the country of their choice – not necessarily just the first country of asylum – and I want to create better conditions of life for people so that they do not have to flee their home. I want everyone to be able to move but not be forced to flee.

Another issue that will take priority in my work is that of the EU's inadequate respect for human rights. Not least with regard to minority groups. In order for a country to become a member of the EU they must uphold the European Convention on Human Rights. We now also have the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. There is, however, no mechanism in place for ensuring that EU countries that break these rules actually uphold them. This of course must be changed.

There is much to do. This is why it is great that there are so many Greens in various Committees and that we have a good number of Greens in parliament and in regions and municipalities across Europe. Together we can realise our goal of a greener, more humane, supportive and responsible EU.



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3. From the Allgäu to Europe

Maria Heubuch

I come from a dairy farm in the Allgäu, a region of Southern Germany that is predominantly characterised by agriculture and tourism. I am a member of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the German Green Party) in Baden-Württemberg, a state in which the Greens currently put forward the State Prime-Minister. I have now been campaigning for over 30 years for sustainable, small scale agriculture, in the sense of socially and environmentally acceptable forms of cultivation and management, in Germany, in Europe and worldwide. At first, I promoted this approach regionally, and for the past 15 years as the Federal Chairperson of the German "Association for Family Farming".

Baden-Württemberg is also one of the industrial heartlands of Germany, where two large automotive corporations as well as numerous mechanical engineering companies have their headquarters. At the same time, however, Baden-Württemberg is very much characterised by rural areas, with a third of its 10 million inhabitants living in the countryside.

Getting the European message through in a multiple elections context

One of the great challenges for the Baden-Württemberg Greens in the European election campaign was undoubtedly that the local elections were held at the same time. Traditionally, the Greens in Baden-Württemberg have been strongly rooted in local communities. This is also reflected in the local election results. In Baden-Württemberg, the list of candidates for the Greens and those close to the Greens won over 1,660 seats in municipal and county councils; previously, this number was barely 1,400. In doing so, the Greens

have won a total of 19.1% of the additional seats. The Conservatives, as well as the Social Democrats and the Liberals had to come to terms with at times significant vote losses. On average, the proportion of the Green vote was over 12% at the Baden-Württemberg regional elections. In many districts, the proportion of votes won by the Greens and parties close to the Greens exceeded 20%; in four districts that are more likely to be categorised as rural, this proportion even rose to above 30%. The highest increase in votes for the Greens came from rural areas.

The Baden-Württemberg Greens had developed a campaign for the local election that centred on the slogan "shape it here". The campaign posters mainly focused on local topics, such as nature conservation, local traffic issues, or support for regional products. Obviously, the campaign for the European elections was only ever going to be successful if a thematic connection to the local elections could be established.

"Farming out of Passion"

Consequently, and in parallel to the federal level of the Green Party, the Baden-Württemberg Greens developed a campaign that was designed around my candidature and its key topics of agricultural policies and the countryside. The "Farming out of Passion" campaign targeted quality of life in rural areas and made the Common Agricultural Policy the subject of discussion; it concerned being free from GMOs, sustaining small and mid-sized farms, as well as animal welfare – here at home, in Europe, and worldwide.

We had discussions with voters on such topics as "the dangers of agro-genetic engineering" or "how can we maintain as many farms as possible, as a basis of being able to address social requirements regarding animals and the environment". These discussions took place during numerous

campaign events, which on occasion were held at farms. We also used the events to highlight the ramifications of the misguided, export-orientated Common Agricultural Policy for the rest of the world, as well as the background issues of the pending free-trade agreements with the USA (TTIP) and Canada (CETA).

At the European elections, the Greens in Baden-Württemberg won 13.2% of the votes, which placed them above the national average. Nonetheless, as was the case throughout Germany, they had to accept a loss of 1.8% of the vote. What is interesting here, however, is that the losses in rural areas were clearly much lower and therefore appear to reflect the trends observed in the local elections.

Europe requires a sensitive approach

During the elections campaign I noticed that many people have a growing distrust of European politics. In many cases, this suspicion is not well defined. Europe appears remote, overly bureaucratic and non-transparent. Yet, by engaging in conversation and asking questions, it is possible to highlight the connections between Europe and day-to-day life and the advantages that the European Union has created for its citizens. Others, however, disagree with the policies of the European Commission and the politics of the Member States in the European Council. Our duty as Greens should be to critically appraise political decisions that are wrong and offer clear alternatives. We should not allow European-level political decisions to appear as if there is “no alternative”. If we do not all work very hard to re-establish the confidence that has been lost in the European Union, we are in danger of this suspicion turning into an open rejection of the European Union as such. As a Member of the European Parliament, I see it as my job to regain the confidence that has been lost.

This is not an easy task. It requires being in touch with the public by listening to their concerns and championing their requests. We have to ensure that the political units of member states and regions within Europe are respected and that the subsidiarity that has been promised and guaranteed in the European Treaties are indeed honoured.

2015 – The European Year for Development: Europe in an unsettled world

As a Member of the Development Committee in the European Parliament, I will be looking after the European Union’s development policies and disaster relief. Overall, support from the European Union and its member states accounts for approximately 50% of the worldwide expenditure on development policies. In 2012, the EU invested over 55 billion Euros in development aid.

A UN summit in September 2015 is scheduled to generate a successor agreement to the UN’s current development policies. With the “Post-2015 Development Agenda”, heads of state and government leaders will agree on the targets and guidelines for a global development policy. The Cotonou Agreement, a trade- and development policy agreement with 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific States, will expire in 2020. The agenda for a successor agreement will be set during this legislative period, making this a decisive legislative period for the EU’s development policy. At the same time, we are currently confronted with a plethora of humanitarian crises of an unimagined magnitude, starting with the Ebola crisis in West Africa and spanning the armed conflicts in the Middle East, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

In my view, our key task is to improve food sovereignty as well as food security.

Worldwide, extreme poverty and starvation continue to be a daily reality for close to a billion people. Among those affected, more than 70% belong to rural communities and are farmers, farm hands or landless peasants. Even the UN's ambitious development goals have not changed this. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the proportion of humanity suffering from malnutrition has dropped from 24% in the period 1992-1994 to 14% in the period 2011-2013. However, these figures are based on a daily calorie requirement of 1,800 Kcal, which is not enough for a person undertaking physical labour to live a self-determined life. These numbers not only ignore the problem of nutritional deficiencies caused by one-sided diets.

The German charity Welthungerhilfe estimates that the current number of people suffering from starvation and malnutrition is closer to 2 billion. The situation is particularly critical in Sub-Saharan countries, where almost one-third of the population is starving. In terms of absolute figures, the largest numbers of those affected by starvation are still found in Asia – 552 million people. And the situation is in danger of becoming worse. Current figures do not yet reflect the ramifications of the latest humanitarian crises, such as the Ebola outbreak or the dreadful armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Environmental catastrophes that have been triggered by global climate change, including extreme droughts or flooding, will wipe out more and more harvests in the future and exacerbate the problem. The situation is further inflamed by food speculation, which makes the famines even worse.

Strengthening the structures of small-scale farming – at home, in Europe and worldwide

Stabilising and promoting a varied family farming structure in developing countries

is the best guarantee to ensure food security. European development aid has to strengthen these structures through its developmental policies and relevant programmes, and must not thwart them. The fundamental principle must be to produce food in the area where it is needed. This is the only way to provide sufficient and fresh produce that is also aligned with the local traditions and conditions. Every country must have the right to safeguard its own food sovereignty. In this area, however, too many mistakes have been made and the monoculture of agricultural crops for export has been given priority too often. We must not repeat these mistakes. The global agricultural and development policy must not be allowed to become an accomplice to the establishment of agro-industrial monocultures and structures in developing countries under the slogan of “food security”.

When food security, or even more so food sovereignty, is to be attributed such great significance, this approach must also come to bear on other EU policies, the EU trade agreements, and the way in which the European Commission engages with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), in order to ensure political coherence. For this reason, measures that aim at price stability to support food security must not be defined as a trade-distorting tool. This applies both to establishing food reserves and to the opportunity for developing countries to protect their internal food markets, in terms of food sovereignty, from the volatility of the markets by regulating import volumes and prices. This is an important pre-condition to protecting one's own farmers from the dumping of imports and would also contribute to containing the food speculation that has added significantly to the food crises of the past years.

A further building block of food sovereignty is the right to access land, water

and seeds, as well as other production aids. In many countries, this is not obvious for farmers. A lack of legal certainty when it comes to registered property/land rights substantially limits access of traditional users. A scarcity of wells and waterholes as well as of locally adapted seed supplies pose further difficulties to small-scale farmers. Lacking education and training, and insufficient consultation and research that take local knowledge into account hamper the development of regionally suitable methods of cultivation and increases in yield. If you add to this the effects of “land grabbing” – the systematic purchase of land – then the entire basis for the population’s livelihood becomes a pawn in the game of large investors.

The impact of the EU’s trade policy on global food sovereignty

Export-oriented European agriculture is another contributing factor, especially in terms of intensive livestock farming, which uses additional areas of land in other parts of the world. Many developing countries cultivate protein-rich feedstuff for export, instead of food to feed their own population. The cultivation of feedstuff does not take place on small scale farms or traditional smallholdings, but on large industrial farms. This has not been changed by the latest CAP reform. This policy still exacerbates the global famine crisis and contributes to “land grabbing” and deforestation of the rain forests.

This situation is further aggravated by the EU’s trade policy, which is working towards an opening of the markets for European food and agricultural products. The European food industry is pushing onto the markets of developing countries with dairy and meat products and, increasingly, also with highly processed products such as sweet pastries and packet soups, placing additional pres-

sure on traditional eating habits and small scale farming structures. Yet it is precisely the preservation of these small scale farming structures, which are often organised in tight-knit village communities, that presents a guarantee in many developing countries for a stable supply of food that is adapted to regional and cultural needs. In addition, their preservation prevents rural migration, which is one of the main reasons for the growing slum dwellings found in the big cities of the developing world.

Particularly in the trade agreements with developing countries, we have to push for social and ecological standards in relation to agricultural products. These products, which are offloaded cheaply onto the European market as a consequence of social and ecological dumping, should no longer be allowed to find a soft target. In turn, the Common Agricultural Policy should also not be allowed to endanger any small scale farming structures in developing countries through dumping.

The Common Agricultural Policy: making use of the possibilities and keeping 2020 in mind

As already described above, the Common Agricultural Policy creates massive global problems when it is focused exclusively on export. In Europe, we also have to continue to work on a sustainable model of agriculture, instead of further promoting the “grow or go” model through the Common Agricultural Policy, as we have done so far. Although some foundation stones were laid for an agricultural turnaround in the new version of the Common Agricultural Policy, they are either too weak, as in the case of the greening measures, or have been made optional for the member states, as in the case of the direct payments and rural development. The CAP reform did ease administrative burdens on small farmers. But that is all it is. There is

a need for an integrated approach of Rural Development measures targeted at small farmers, linked to short food chains, direct marketing, working cooperately. Some of these options do exist in rural development measures but member states do not fully take advantage of these. Changes are kept to an absolute minimum.

The global market strategy of the EU has not been put into question by the reform, therefore the further liberalisation of markets will continue. In Europe, dairy farms will definitely come to feel this when the milk quotas are lifted on 30 March 2015. Within the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Parliament, I will be dealing with the development of the milk market. Many farms are trying to protect themselves by expanding their milk production. The amount of milk reaching the market is increasing steadily and there have been several price drops since the spring of 2014, even before Russia's import ban on milk products. The milk market is therefore under pressure.

A similar development was observed in Switzerland, where the milk quota was lifted earlier, in 2009. In Switzerland, the deregulation of the milk market led to a fall in milk prices and to a further market concentration on the side of the milk-processing industry; many farmers moved out of milk production. The safety net of the European Union is too weak to sustain varied milk production in the EU. In this context, fighting for an alignment of milk production to suit the European market is an important issue for me.

For a GMO free European agriculture

Another task I will focus on is creating an updated regulatory framework for the approval of genetically modified plants. Although the plan is for national member states to issue cultivation bans, there

are also concerns that the wording of the planned opt-out rules is in no way legally binding. In case of any doubt, member states could be sued by biotech companies and taken to the European Court of Justice. In addition, the plans for simplifying approvals are creating more problems than they are solving. Seeds do not respect borders. The coexistence between GMO free and GM-farming is an illusion. The EU has the duty to implement approval processes that satisfy the requirements of GMO free farms to the same extent as they must satisfy health requirements and all other environmentally relevant issues. Together with colleagues in the Green parliamentary group, I will work to oppose the simplified approvals procedure, and argue in favour of agriculture free of GMOs. To this end, we will cooperate closely with NGOs from the sector of environment and agriculture.

In 1997, the EU officially described its target for a Common Agricultural Policy as a European agricultural model for a multifunctional type of agriculture, claiming *"To both acknowledge as equal and take into consideration the different locations, farm structures and variations of farming within European agriculture, and also maintain the varied positive effects that are associated with a family-farming way of operating and/or minimise the negative effects that are associated with other agricultural ways of farming."*

However, the CAP reform was not successful compared to what it aimed to achieve for climate, environment and small scale farmers. Nonetheless, these goals still remain valid and are gaining in importance in the light of climate change and environmental problems, increasing poverty levels and crises-ridden regions.

The global agricultural report commissioned by the United Nations concludes this very clearly: "Business as Usual is not an Option!" We have to find new ways,

because only multifunctional agriculture in all its different variations can stand up to the enormous problems and challenges we face. To supply sufficient and healthy food

for all people, today and for future generations, is one of our most important tasks. Over the next five years, I will be working on moving closer to achieving this goal.



Maria Heubuch is a Member of the European Parliament for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the German Green Party). Maria is active on agricultural issues; she has previously worked for farmers' organisations, and she has her own farm in the Allgäu.

4. Five years, five areas to press for European sustainability

Benedek Jávor

Let me start by expressing my gratitude for the invitation to state my views and plans in GEF's yearbook as a newly elected Green Member of the European Parliament. I realise that I am one of the first Green politicians from the Central and Eastern European region who has been given this opportunity, which is a reason to be even more thankful. I am new to the Green Group, but as an NGO activist, and later as a Hungarian MP, I had many occasions to cooperate with the European Greens in the last decade or so, and drawing on this experience I am absolutely confident in saying that we are driven by the same beliefs and work for the same cause.

From national to European politics: different contexts, the same goals

In 2010 I entered politics, in the narrower sense, after quite a number of years I spent in politics more broadly as an NGO activist in the larger green movement. I started off as an MP with a credo based on the three-fold principle of sustainability, social justice and democratic participation. This credo was derived from the diagnosis that the course of the development of my country, Hungary, was unsustainable, not only from an environmental point of view, but also socially and with regard to the moral foundations of democracy. Our society was torn by unbearable injustice, and liberal democracy was on the brink of moral collapse. The latter was partly the consequence of a lack of political participation, and the inaccessible, insider and corrupt ways the political elite was dealing with matters that affected everyone.

Much has changed since then in Hungary, and for the worse. Most notably, the insti-

tutional principles of liberal democracy, with its checks and balances, have largely been abandoned to give way to an authoritarian state that even the prime minister calls "illiberal". There is, however, no need to revise my credo, nor its implicit goals. The present abyss of my country was made possible by the comprehensive crisis it has reached by 2010. There is only one way out, and that is the narrow and difficult way towards a just, inclusive and sustainable society. Shifting from the national to the European level of politics may add a new perspective, but it doesn't change the basics. It is sustainability, social justice, citizen engagement and participation that we need in Europe, too.

In August when me and my team we were preparing and planning for the five year mandate in the European Parliament, we came to the conclusion that the goals and motives that drove us to politics in the first place are unchanged and as relevant as ever. The fact that our government seeks to restrain democracy and abolish the share of power and balance between the different democratic institutions requires that we put more emphasis on the common European values, and the role of the European institutions exercising some control and enforcing some norms that follow from these values. After all, the value system from which we are currently drifting away is the one that 80 per cent of the voters endorsed when we had a referendum on EU accession.

A focus on sustainability

I believe in European political cooperation, as does my team and the alliance of political parties I represent. It does not mean, however, that I endorse all the political mechanisms and institutional practices that I observe at the EU level uncritically. We share a crucial set of shared values, but the problems of the member states are often very different, and if uniform

solutions are imposed, it often makes problems worse, as it was clearly demonstrated by the handling of the Greek crisis. I want to work for a much more cohesive, transparent and accessible Europe, which is also a lot greener, meaning that it stops providing for the high living standards of the present generations by destroying the ecological systems that sustain us all, sacrificing the living conditions of those who will come after us. This is hardest to achieve in the countries of the CEE region, which lag behind in competitiveness and are stricken by severe social tensions. We have to find a way to protect our natural heritage while boosting the local economy, and to close the wage-gap relative to rest of Europe while maintaining sustainable jobs and decreasing social inequality. If there is a course for development in these countries deserving the name “green”, it has to be sustainable in the broadest sense: environmentally, socially and economically.

My activity as an MEP will be centred on five areas which I think are crucial for the future of both Hungary and Europe.

More ambitious EU environmental policies

The main focus of my policy-related work will be the one I will do in the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee (ENVI). Environmental policy is an area in which the competence of the European level is among the strongest and the positive effect of harmonised legislation is among the most significant. It is also closest to my heart and fits my background perfectly (as a biologist, a former activist in the green movement and university lecturer in environmental ethics, and as a former national MP whose primary focus was environmental policy). I will be bound to focus my attention to this area also by my appointment by the Greens/EFA group

as the first vice-chair of the ENVI committee. Beyond the regulatory issues that will appear on the committee's agenda, I plan to put forward a number of initiatives of my own, related e.g. to the use of cyanide based technologies in mining (or more broadly the environmental issues of mining waste management) or the representation of the rights of the future generation by a European ombudsman – an analogue of a similar national institution that was in operation in Hungary between 2008 and 2012.

Currently the EU is the only large economic area in which there is a realistic chance for prosperity alongside a sustainable decrease of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this goal, however, we need more ambitious and uniformly binding climate goals at the European level and also at level of the member states, with goal-oriented conditional support schemes and stringent sanctions that prevent also the outsourcing of large carbon-footprint industrial production to other parts of the world. The success or failure of the 2015 climate summit in Paris depends to a significant extent on the efforts and determination of the EU to be fair, impartial and innovative in this matter. Any significant progress that the summit might achieve is dependent on Europe's ability to produce a clear vision and set an example that world may follow.

Energy security, renewables and energy poverty

With this, we are already in the second of my focus areas, climate and energy. My interest in these topics also stems from what I have done so far, and they are also hot issues in the current development. I represent a country in which not a single wind farm project has been granted permission since 2006. Hungary's renewable energy target is among the lowest in the

EU, at just 14.6%. The long term plans of the country to secure its energy supply include building new nuclear and coal plants, re-introducing mineworker education, potentially starting lignite-based energy production, accompanied with an unchanged import-rate of Russian oil and gas. This is why I asked to become shadow rapporteur for the Green Group of the parliamentary report on energy security strategy as a first challenge.

This will allow me to strive for the security of supply of the Central European region, which currently is the most dependent on the Russian import, and also for raising the share of renewables in the overall EU energy mix as a response to energy security questions. European and Hungarian interests are perfectly aligned in these matters: self-sufficiency and sustainability, reduction of the carbon-footprint, breaking free of external energy dependency, the integration of European energy systems, smart grids and efficiency, and boosting green economy through an energy reform along these lines.

In the CEE region, these issues are accompanied by the extensive problem of energy poverty. Poverty prevents most of the existing energy modernisation programmes from reaching beyond the upper classes. We clearly need programmes that do not require personal contributions from less well-off households, building on the fact that the savings that they will be able to achieve will cover for the pay-back of the loan. We also need low-cost micro projects targeted at the poorest allowing them to insulate and improve the heating efficiency of their homes.

One of the major risks that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict could foster in my view is giving an extra push for some to seek “immediate” ways out of energy dependency that seem shorter and easier than

building on energy efficiency and renewable energies. LNG and shale gas might have such an appeal to many. I will counter these short-sighted approaches. Old fossil sources may be replaceable by other fossil sources on the short term, but we would run out of them eventually anyway, and in the meantime we would emit as much CO₂ as we did before. Surely, we cannot afford that.

On the other hand, the need for nuclear fuel, and the problem of getting rid of nuclear waste would create just another sort of external dependence if we fail to keep the role of nuclear energy at the minimum in the European energy reform. Subsidies for nuclear energy production, either at the European or member state level, should be terminated. I am fully convinced that energy efficiency in combination with a nuclear free supply with a rapidly growing share of renewables is the way we should walk. It must be admitted, however, that at some points such an alternative needs a more solid intellectual foundation than it currently has. Political work towards such an alternative is urgent, but it must be preceded by more intellectual effort – scientific, technical, and economic – which is therefore even more urgent.

Building a comprehensive EU anti-corruption strategy

The third area, and possibly the largest chunk, is anti-corruption. Already, as a national, MP, I noticed that the interest the member states’ governments show in reducing corruption related to the use of European funds is next to none, whereas they are very keen to prevent EU institutions from any potentially efficient move that they might make to stand up against it, often appealing to the principle of subsidiarity. Such an appeal from the Hungarian government’s part, hav-

ing regard to its insatiate appetite for centralization domestically, is not only hypocritical but also ridiculous.

I have bombarded OLAF with a considerable number of well-documented cases of shamelessly overpriced European-funded projects carried out by the cronies of the governing party. We have set in Hungary a European record for the unit cost of motorway construction, and likewise accomplished the most expensive railway reconstruction ever heard of in Europe. The construction of an Audi industrial plant on a Natura 2000 site is another example worth mentioning to illustrate the manner in which business is usually made between the government and industrial players. I have complained about these cases with no substantial result whatsoever.

On the other hand, I am quite aware that the integrity of the EU institutions isn't impeccable either. As a recent report from Transparency International's European Office pointed out, the regulation of lobbying is weak and incomplete, there are important loopholes in the transparency of legislative procedures, the accountability of some of the European institutions (e.g. of OLAF itself, or of EFSA, whose function is ostensibly to oversee food safety, but appears to be the lobbying platform for large businesses in the food industry) barely exists, and the regulations on conflicts of interest are insufficient to prevent the revolving door phenomenon.

My impression is that anti-corruption has so far not been very high on the list of priorities of the European Parliament, nor has the Green Group been able to dedicate the topic the attention that it deserves. I come from a country that could be cited as the example of "state capture" within the EU, suffocated by corruption, (related to the European funds or otherwise), and I belong to the political group that represents

the family of parties that are traditionally very sensitive to issues of transparency, fairness, and accountability in the use of public resources. It is, therefore, natural for me to try to take the initiative in proposing a comprehensive anti-corruption programme within my own group, and also in creating an intergroup on the subject inside the parliament. I would like to see anti-corruption among the chief items on the European political agenda. A European anti-corruption strategy is needed consisting of both legislative and institutional elements, the former addressing the regulatory loopholes just mentioned, alongside with whistleblower protection, the latter addressing, inter alia, OLAF's controversial status as a Commission service, in the context of the proposed establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

We should also aim at the adoption of some basic common norms on the financing of political parties and election campaigns, and the establishment of an efficient financial tool to support investigative journalism throughout Europe – a journalistic genre proven vital in breaking corruption cases endangered by the decline of traditional journalism. In this sense, I have already tabled an amendment to the proposed 2015 budget of the EU to retain the budget line, now omitted from the draft budget, which in previous years was allocated to support such a grant programme. The programme has so far failed to come off the ground due to administrative obstacles which I am convinced are easy to overcome if there is honest political will to do so.

At home, I will create a website that will serve as a safe and easy to use platform for Hungarian whistleblowers to report cases of fraud and corruption they witness in relation to the use of EU funds. As far as my own dealings are concerned, I am prepared to make my calendar transparent. The public will know who

I meet and what I discuss with them as an MEP, and I am also prepared to record the legislative footprint of any discussion I enter bearing on any legislation on which I will report.

Fostering inclusive Roma policies and programmes

Another crucial issue on my list of priorities is an inclusive Roma policy. Between six and eight hundred thousand Roma live in my country, most of them in conditions characterised by long-term unemployment, exclusion, striking poverty and prejudice, while having access to welfare and health services that are much worse than those available to the majority. Our previous governments, irrespective of their colour, performed very poorly in providing Roma with either schooling or work opportunities. The solutions offered to them are segregated schools and public works paid at half of the legal minimum wage. In their ghettos cut-off from the rest of the town or village they usually live without running water, electricity or sewage, exposed to the animosity of the local governments, far-right paramilitary groups and usurers. This alone would hinder a country's development severely even if everything else was in order.

The problem is not ours alone. We share it with the new member states of the region, and to some extent, mostly in the form of a migration problem, with the Western countries too. On the other hand, there are programmes that have been proven to open up ways out of poverty and hopelessness, alongside with easing ethnic tensions. Gábor Daróczi, who I am proud to have among the members of my team, has long been among the designers and providers of such programmes. One of his current efforts is to help Roma families living in deprived areas to develop an autonomous community and a way of life that is much less dependent on the large

systems, e.g. in energy supply, than it was before. It is part of our mission to try to generate support for such programmes, alleviating defencelessness and furthering sustainability, in the European Parliament.

A stronger Green presence in Central and Eastern Europe

Last but not least, I will also be engaged in strengthening the presence of Green politics in the CEE region. While the last EP elections gave the opportunity to some of the Green parties in the region to send representatives to the European Parliament, which is a great success, the same elections pushed the Green Group back from the fourth to the sixth place in the order of political groups by relative weight in the Parliament. This is disappointing because it reflects that a significant part of those who are dissatisfied with the way the traditional large parties handled the recent economic crisis turned to the extremes rather than to Green politics, and may even be dismissive of European political cooperation altogether. It is probably in our region where chances are the most realistic for the Greens to resist this tendency in the short run.

We should aim at winning eight to ten new Green seats at the next European elections, which won't be possible unless we dedicate effort to assist other Greens in the region through sharing our experience. It is the sort of assistance we have received earlier from others. The term "green" should perhaps cover a slightly different political content in the CEE region than it does in Western countries, or carry with itself an extra emphasis on some issues.

On the European semi-periphery we have our own specific socio-economic hardships to deal with, and our democratic traditions are also wanting in many respects. Citizen engagement is low, and there is lit-

tle concern for the commons, natural and environmental ones included, and not only among the many who struggle for survival from one day to the next. We have to attack these problems standing up for social justice and inclusion, inventing and promoting ways for social participation and defending the core values of democracy against the immense disillusionment that has emerged since the fall of the communist regimes. That is the only way we can win credit for Green politics.

Five years, five areas, five sets of goals to strive for sustainability (environmental, social, and moral) – this is how I would summarise my plans for the mandate ahead of me. Taken in itself, none of the five seems unrealistic. If we are to be successful in all of them, it would mean that Europe, and in it Hungary, has changed, to some extent, for the better. It is a goal worth working for.



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5. A new Europe: socially just and democratic

Terry Reintke

I belong to the first generation of young Europeans that grew up with the European Union being a completely normal part of their lives. I have never lived through war or dictatorship, and the fall of the iron curtain is only a childhood memory.

But even though we have more freedom than ever before to travel, study and work in Europe, we are also the generation that has lived in crisis mode for seven long years. Today we face the highest numbers of youth unemployment for as long as our parents can remember. And we are hit by this crisis without having had a say in the creation of the system which created it.¹

Even though youth unemployment is spread all over Europe and the lives of young people are different from each other, we all face the same problems: the dismantling of the social contract and of the welfare state, the insecurity on the labour market and all the risks the working poor are exposed to. The crisis keeps us from an independent life and leaves us at risk of social exclusion.

The peace project of Europe was and still is a good idea. But it is not enough anymore. Young people do not believe anymore that they will have better lives than their parents, and no longer expect prosperity. The social union, the promise that no European will be left behind, never came into existence, while the neoliberal agenda took over – despite assertions to the contrary. Participation and democratisation are often only words used to give decisions that have already been taken a nicer appearance.

What can we tell Greek pensioners facing severe cuts in the social system while the European Union hazards such consequences as impoverishment of already vulnerable groups in order to save banks? How do we explain to Spanish families that they are evicted from their houses because “Brussels” dictates single-sided austerity policies? And these questions do not only arise in the so-called “crisis-countries”. In Germany there also are citizens asking themselves how Europe can bring more justice to a society where every fifth child has to grow up in poverty while the very rich continue to get richer at the same time. We have to address these imbalances and we have to develop alternative answers, European answers.

Distorted images of rich and poor

One in four young people in Germany are employed in the low wage sector which creates a new layer of German society: the working poor. Sweden – the textbook example when it comes to comparative social policies within the EU – is facing a youth unemployment rate four times higher than the overall unemployment rate. Still the story of the European crisis has been written and continues to be told as the story of the divide between North and South, between the sick crisis Member States and the healthy, highly competitive ones. This image is clearly distorted.

This picture is based on numbers that we all know too well: unemployment statistics, GDP, and average income ratios. Sure, these numbers give us an insight about the stark misbalance between the North and South of Europe, the alarmingly diverging developments in socioeconomic terms within the European Union. Nevertheless, there is more to the story:

¹ Young people fighting crisis, see: www.youthincrisis.eu

We need to explore the bigger picture in order to understand how much a more social European Union is needed to preserve peace, democracy and understanding on the continent.

The need for new visions

The European Union project is far from being completed. We are right in the middle of its construction process and it is now on us to continue building the European Union as we want it. The last few years have been dominated by a strong crisis discourse, often focusing on the negative impacts and drawbacks of the European Union.

But not all is bleak. I strongly believe that the following years bear the chance to act upon experiences of the crisis. Democratic and social change can happen. This has been proven in the past when people fought for social rights, for women's rights, and even the globalisation-critical movement had some successes. Social and grassroots movements, often carried by young people, are striving for change. In Spain, Italy and Greece young people have taken the lead towards change.

No freedom without equality, no equality without emancipation

In the last years we have seen a dangerous shift in European countries but also between the Member States of the European Union: societies are getting more and more unequal. Poverty is rising while the number of extremely rich people is also growing. Liberal democracies – as most countries in Europe would refer to themselves – function on the basis of universal participation. They give the inherent promise that, if citizens wish to do so, they will be given the opportunity to take part in the political system as free and equal citizens.

However, this promise is now being challenged. Not only by discriminatory structures towards women, LGBT* people, migrants or people with disabilities, but increasingly by the growing problem of poverty and social exclusion in large parts of European societies. Young people are disproportionately affected as well as women that are facing strong social consequences not only through the crisis itself, but primarily through the austerity measures that were employed as a response to the crisis. These are destroying welfare state services and employment opportunities, especially in the public service sector.

Why do we need a social Europe?

The inevitability of capitalism and liberalisation is taught at every university. Yet the policy of market liberalisation and de-regulation has given us poverty levels of 30% in Southern European countries, 50% youth unemployment and an increasing number of poor people in work. In the Eurozone the lack of a shared treasury and budget, and a monetary policy that only focuses on controlling inflation and on restrictions of national fiscal policies, has made it impossible to implement countercyclical policies to generate green jobs and sustainable investment for our future. This model needs to change. We need a democratic Europe that is built on social and environmental justice in order to safeguard our future.

What the European Union needs is a drastic reconsideration of how to ensure that a certain level of equality is being achieved for its citizens. It is crucial that the European Union does not only function as the agenda setter for economic and competition policies but also to develop a common European social policy. We need common minimal standards when it comes to social and fiscal policies in order to avoid unfair competition inside the European internal market.

We need a social guarantee. It can be a guaranteed basic income or a negative income tax for low earners, but whatever we call it; our social systems need to get rid of repressive structures and need to correspond to people's lives. Without a basic, guaranteed security, the current generation of young people, the most overworked yet underemployed generation, will not be able to exercise their rights, organise their existence according to their needs, or even live their youth in dignity.

A non-discriminatory Europe

A more social Europe also means a more open Europe: a Europe where everybody is free to choose how to live their lives. That also includes the protection of minorities, the empowerment of women and the full access to rights for the LGBT* population. Thus, a strong representation of minorities and not their exclusion is needed. We need women's empowerment, for example through quota schemes and we finally need a just legislation regarding family, fiscal and non-discriminatory law regarding LGBT*. The motto "United in Diversity" is the leading guide in this question.

I will fight in the European Parliament for a radical democratisation of the European society in order to empower people, especially young people, to participate in society. In this demand I agree with many social and democratic movements and organisations all over Europe. Without the real participation of citizens in its democratic processes the European Union will not fully realise its vision. That is why the European Parliament as the direct representative body of the European people needs to be strengthened *vis-à-vis* other European institutions. A first and urgent step on this path will be to give the European Parliament the right to initiative. Moreover, the European Commission needs to be democratised and made more transparent.

Young people also need to have a say in the European Parliament. At the moment, there are hardly any young people elected here. Around 30% of all Europeans are under 30 years old; this number should also be reached for parliamentary representation.

Freedom of movement for everyone

One of the greatest achievements of the European Union is the internal freedom of movement. Even though, for many people, especially young people with low incomes, this freedom remains theoretical as travelling is expensive, it has nevertheless opened the doors for many to travel, learn or work abroad and develop a sense of European citizenship. This basic freedom must not be hampered by those who want to exclude certain groups such as asylum seekers, Roma or citizens from new EU Member States.

For many people of the young generation freedom of movement is not affordable. When we want to use our freedom to work elsewhere, we encounter problems of language, bureaucracy, and the non-importability of social rights and services. This adds to the impression of Europe being "a project of the elites": for those who can afford to travel around. We need to change this by strengthening programmes such as Erasmus and other mobility initiatives, especially for people from non-academic backgrounds.

To bring about change, pressure from social movements and initiatives is needed, but also parliamentary majorities. Political changes can be made if pressure "from the streets" is massive. But it also needs political will and the hope for success for people to take to the streets. Movements inform the mainstream debate, but are also informed by it. Parliamentary majorities can be kept to their word by questioning your representatives, at whatever level, and making sure that promises are kept. Change must

involve all levels and everybody. It is not governments, politicians, student leaders or whoever else alone. We will not wait for a hero to come: we will do it ourselves.

What kind of Europe do I want to live in?

I want to live in a European Union where young people have the chance to build both long term plans, but also live prosperous, immediate realities; where the promise of a good life is also for “now”, not only for “later”. I want to live in a European Union where work is decently paid. I want to live in a European Union where investments are made to ensure our future without harming the environment. I want to live in a European Union where the different regions come closer together. I want

to live in a European Union of solidarity. I want to live in a European Union with real participation of citizens in the democratic process. I want to live in a European Union where citizen’s rights to housing are being respected, because Europe is not just an unfinished project that we are only allowed to gaze at from the outside. Europe is not just a collection of endless treaties and commemoration days. We are Europe. This is the mission I am bringing with me to the European Parliament.

As Greens we have the task to push for all these demands: for the social security of people, for an ecological transformation and for more democracy at the European level. Only then we can truly position ourselves as the real European alternative.



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6. Greening the EU's economic agenda in challenging times

Molly Scott Cato

Green grows the West Country

There were many highs and lows during 18 months of campaigning that led ultimately to the Green Party of England and Wales winning its first seat ever in the South West of England. That investment of time is what it took to win a Green seat in the UK given the extremely high thresholds we face. The Greens received 11.2% across the region but this by no means guaranteed a seat and other candidates were only 5,000-6,000 votes behind after the five D'Hondt recounts. During those 18 months I travelled to every corner of the region except Gibraltar; though following my election I managed to spend part of my summer break there after a lengthy over-land journey.

The South West is a rich and varied region, taking in the dramatic Cornish coastline and the Jurassic Coast that stretches between Devon and Dorset. It also includes the unique bioregion of the Somerset Levels that showed itself so vulnerable to climate change this past winter. The region also has more than its fair share of historic monuments including cathedrals in Exeter, Gloucester, Truro and Bristol and the world heritage site of Stonehenge. I have spent most of my life in this region of stunning natural beauty and flourishing communities and am hugely proud to have been elected as its first Green parliamentary representative.

The South West also has much to delight the heart of a green economist, including impressive renewable energy resources in the form of wave and wind power as well as the second highest tidal range in the world in the River Severn. It also

has rich farmland and more than its share of innovative agriculturalists and organic farmers, many of whom are green supporters.

The South West is home to several of England's major cities. Most prominently we have Bristol, historically a port town but now a multicultural community of some 400,000 people, 20% of whose voters chose the Green Party in May. On the same day as the European Election we saw our council representation there increase by 50%. Other major population centres include Bournemouth, a large coastal town with a university and strong financial service employment; Plymouth, traditionally a naval town but now evolving into a centre of marine conservation and marine energy expertise; and Swindon, a classic railway town that draws employment out of London along the M4 corridor and the parallel railway line to Wales.

Although cities like Bristol and nearby Bath are the Green political base, the South West is predominantly a rural region and to achieve such a high vote share in such communities is a very encouraging sign for Green politics in our region. I am excited about the idea that the enthusiasm for the Green Party in South West England may tell us that we are seeing a genuine shift towards the kind of green values that a sustainable society requires for its foundation.

Globalisation and the alienation from politics

The headlines from the European Elections in the UK were around the surge in support for UKIP (UK Independence Party) and the gains they made in terms of number of MEPs. This is a Party that stood on a totally negative and in many aspects fictional manifesto which perpetuated and manipulated people's fears. The Party is also channeling and

fostering disillusionment with politics, the European Union and the society of caring and tolerant communities that we have all worked so hard to build over the past decades. While I have nothing but contempt for the politics of hate that is UKIP's stock-in-trade I do think that, as Greens, we have something to learn from their electoral success.

There is a sense in the electorate of having been abandoned by their politicians who are now perceived as working in their own self-interest or for corporations rather than representing the people who elected them. As a Green economist I have argued for several decades that the alienation brought by globalisation, with its race to the bottom in social and environmental standards and the loss of community and identity in work, would lead to the return of identity-based and nationalist politics. It neither surprises me nor brings me any satisfaction that my predictions are coming true.

A perfect example is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). It will threaten the livelihoods of farmers in the South West, undermine the high standards of food production we value, and challenge our workplace conditions. Like globalisation as a whole, and the growth-through-trade agenda that the EU has been propagating, more trade means a further loss of jobs for many hard-working people in my region, as corporations divide the world between high-wage consumers and low-paid producers and profit from both. Given that the overwhelming majority of UK MEPs are supporting this toxic deal I cannot blame voters for losing faith in them. UKIP too appear to support TTIP dispelling any ideas that they are anything other than another Party of the establishment defending corporate power rather than working to protect people's rights.

Green economy dream team

As a Professor of Economics prior to my election I was welcomed into the Green Group's economics team and have become a member of the Economics Committee (ECON) in the European Parliament. Sven Giegold, Philippe Lamberts and Eva Joly have already established a strong reputation for constraining the excesses of bankers and encouraging genuine competition rather than corporate consolidation. Ernest Urtasun, an economist and diplomat from Catalonia, has joined the team with me, with Eva becoming a substitute member. This has really broadened the reach of our economics work, with Ernest bringing the perspective of a country on the sharp end of the Eurozone crisis and me representing a country that has always opposed adopting the Euro as a single currency (a campaign I was involved in myself a decade ago).

The first challenge of working on Economics in the EU is understanding the extraordinary and counter-intuitive jargon that abounds in policy documents. I am still trying to find the part of our agenda that relates to decisions on conditions around levels of public spending; decisions which are driving the destructive austerity policies across the Union, causing human suffering and increasing revulsion towards the Union itself. I think it comes under the heading "European Semester"; so it looks like my first target is to challenge the way that debt is being used to extract value for the benefit of a tiny minority while unemployment soars and lives are ruined. The rules that limit national government borrowing will be fixed in the next couple of years and we need to challenge the destructive consensus that cuts are the answer to over-indebted economies.

More fundamentally, we need to find ways to shift the agenda towards one that is

closer to a sustainable green future, which feels a very long way from where we are now when you read Jean-Claude Juncker's priorities for his Commission Presidency. Jobs-and-Growth have become a single noun, while the oft-repeated phrase "structural reform" is never unpacked and is used more like a weapon than a concept to be discussed.

The wall-to-wall repetition of the need to return to growth means that it requires courage to challenge whether growth is socially beneficial. In a continent where many now struggle even to put food on the table this also requires skill. The wealth of Europe is enough to meet everyone's needs but the greed of the elites, who dominate our economy in terms of ownership and control, are preventing this from being shared fairly. This leads to the simultaneous problems of over-consumption and deprivation. The challenge for us Greens in the ECON committee is to introduce this sort of discussion onto the agenda of institutions and bureaucrats who have their own, closed agendas, driven by a powerful but misguided economic ideology.

We also need to come forward with strong practical proposals, in the tradition of Green politics. An obvious one is to provide incentives for community-owned energy. Denmark and Germany have led the way but the European Parliament should seek to build in favourable treatment for co-operatively owned community energy generating capacity alongside the mandatory renewable energy target we so urgently need. I also hope to ensure that, when the European Central Bank begins its own quantitative easing programme – as now seems inevitable – a proportion of the money created is issued via Green infrastructure bonds, ensuring that our emergence from the crisis will be in the direction of sustainability.

City of London or off-shore tax haven?

A hot political issue of particular interest to me as a British economist is the role of the City of London as the EU banking union develops and expands. George Osborne, the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, has already spent thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money trying to enable his financial friends to avoid EU regulation and there is little doubt that prime-minister David Cameron will seek to make opt-outs from such legislation part of his price for accepting the terms of a renegotiation. I was able to raise this as a question to Jean-Claude Juncker when he attended the Green group's meeting to ask for support for his Commission presidency bid, but I was not entirely reassured by his response.

One of the policies that Osborne is seeking to avoid is the Financial Transaction Tax. With such a large and wealthy economy it is simply shameful that we are avoiding a tiny tax that could help the world's poor. There is also a long history of foot-dragging and overt opposition to policies designed to clean up Europe's financial sectors. Osborne's reluctance to become part of the clean future for finance makes Britain look like one massive tax haven, offshore from the continent of Europe rather than a part of a single market.

There was disbelief and bewilderment in the European Parliament when it was announced that the Eurosceptic UK Commissioner Lord Hill was to be given the portfolio for financial services. Hill, a founding director of Quiller, who are lobbyists working on behalf of financial interests, will now be responsible for implementing supervisory rules for banks. This is a classic case of poacher turned gamekeeper and he represents a country and a government that has been a huge obstacle to financial markets reform in Europe. So his appointment

represents another boost for the City of London, and those who work in the financial sector must be laughing all the way to their next pay cheque.

Challenging, but exciting times ahead

For a pro-EU party like the Greens, these are dark days indeed. Although we are a critical friend and offer plenty of proposals for improvement, we acknowledge the EU has done much to protect our environment and support workers' rights as well as keep the peace between nations for more than sixty years.

We have not felt this close to the exit door since we first joined the EEC in 1973. The frenzy of hostility towards the European Union has grown month by month. The UK media is following the UKIP press office like a lapdog waiting for its next treat. With wealthy donors, UKIP has plenty of time to create bizarre and tendentious "stories" and journalists are lacking either

the time or the imagination to follow the real policy issues. Obviously the nature of media ownership in Britain has an important impact here too, again demonstrated by the extreme difficulty we have faced in spreading news about TTIP, whereas a story about the maximum wattage of vacuum cleaners spreads like wildfire. It is fairly easy to judge which will have more impact on the lives of UK citizens in the long term.

As a newly elected MEP I am excited rather than daunted by the challenges that lie ahead. After 25 years of doing my politics in my spare time I have finally become a professional politician and the resources to fund the work of an MEP are incredible and very welcome. I feel well supported by those in the South West who voted for me and are so excited that their vote made a difference. I hope that I will not disappoint them and will be the sort of representative they were wishing for when they put their cross next to "Green Party" back in May.



Molly Scott Cato is a Member of the European Parliament for the Green Party of England & Wales (GPEW), elected in South West England. Until her election she was Professor of Green Economics, Strategy and Sustainability at the University of Roehampton. Molly currently speaks for GPEW on finance issues.

7. Green experiences and ambitions from the EU's newest Member State

Davor Škrlec

Green experiences from the European election campaign

The first elections for the European Parliament in Croatia were held in May 2013, just before Croatia became a member of the European Union. However, weak public interest in these elections was a result of poor awareness of the citizens about the role and importance of the European Parliament, and only 21% of eligible voters exercised their right to vote.

The Croatian political scene changed drastically in the year following the first elections for the European Parliament. In the fall of 2013, the party ORaH – Sustainable Development of Croatia – was established, led by Mirela Holy, a member of the Croatian Parliament and former Minister of Environmental Protection. The party presented itself to the citizens as a political option of progressive attitude and way of thinking that is committed to sustainable development of the country. The personal political credibility of the party's president was a great initial political capital, which people recognised, as well as it was demonstrated in the research done on the popularity of political parties right from the beginning of ORaH. During the campaign we tried to inform as many Croatian citizens as possible about the importance of participating in the elections, the importance of the European Parliament in the decision-making process in the European Union, and the impact of those decisions on the daily lives of citizens in Croatia.

Bringing the EU closer to Croatian citizens

The content of the campaign was aimed at direct communication with citizens. We held public forums where we presented common EU policies, but adapted them to the problems of local and regional communities in order to help citizens to better understand the policies and how they affect their daily lives. In doing so, we showed good practices from other EU Member States, in such essential areas as green jobs' creation, and we thus promoted the Green New Deal as a means of sustainable economic growth and the solution to the difficult economic situation in Croatia. A travelling photography exhibition using panels with pictures and text in public places such as city squares, tried to bring closer to the citizens the concepts of green economy, green jobs, environmental protection and human rights. It was for Croatia, and I assume for the EU, an innovative way of leading a positive oriented campaign.

The campaign was positively directed towards presenting alternative solutions based on sustainable development, and not on negative attitudes towards political opponents. Through this, the campaign was well received by the citizens, and we are therefore planning to repeat the exhibitions this winter in all major Croatian cities. We believe that in such an informal way people will become most familiar with the concept of sustainable development, as well as the political, economic and social agenda of the party.

The popularity of ORaH grew exponentially from month to month since its establishment, and right before the elections for the European Parliament the polls indicated support was at 12%. The final result of the elections – 9.42% – provided ORaH with one seat in the European Parliament. This

success is even more notable when taking into account that ORaH presented itself at the elections independently, while all other seats went to two large coalition lists.

First days at the European Parliament

Since the founding of the party, good communication with the European Green Party was established and it was logical that if a parliamentary mandate would be won, the representative of ORaH would become a member of the Greens/EFA Group. In early June, when I came to the Parliament for the first time after the elections, I was pleasantly surprised by the manner I was welcomed to the Greens/EFA. The news of ORaH's success at the elections spread to Brussels and sincere enthusiasm on behalf of Greens about the four new MEPs from Eastern and Southern EU Member States, as well as friendly advice from colleagues, helped me successfully get through that initial period in which I kept receiving vast amount of information.

Circular economy as a driver of change

My work in the European Parliament is the continuation of the program areas that are of primary interest to ORaH. I will focus on policy areas that we consider can positively influence the development of the economy in both Croatia and the European Union.

It is common belief in Croatia that the concept of sustainable development is only another name for ecology, which in turn is perceived to be directed against economic development. I selected the parliamentary committees I will be member of, in order to refute these beliefs.

In the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the focus of my activities will be centered on the circular economy as a new economic

model derived from the policy of efficient management of resources. Besides the basic raw material from which EU industry manufactures devices and equipment, high technology is also imported in the EU to a very large extent. For this reason, it is important to develop an effective system of collection and recycling in order to reduce dependence on imported raw materials.

Effective waste management systems should in the run-up to 2030 introduce a high percentage of recycling materials. By adopting "zero waste" technologies dumping of waste should be completely phased out. Progress needs to be attained also in the field of thermal waste treatment. Instead of thermal treatment of waste incineration, new technologies should be given priority that do not produce harmful emissions, and allow the production of synthetic fuel.

Renewable energy and energy efficiency

Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency are important parts of the circular economy. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the mitigation of the consequences of climate change require imperative and urgent action at a global scale. The European Union should become the leader in political and social initiatives as well as in the technological field of innovation. The European Union currently imports more than 50% of its energy needs, and statistically every EU citizen consumes € 2 daily for energy imports. By importing energy, especially fossil fuels, economies of the countries outside the EU are being financed, countries whose governments often do not respect basic human rights and are exposed to greater geopolitical risks.

The security of the energy supply is also important for the stability of the European Union and the reliance on energy production from its own renewable energy sources, as well as the encouragement

for the reduction of energy consumption through means of energy efficiency measures in the long-term contributes to reducing dependence on energy imports. The Emissions Trading System (ETS) has a key role in the implementation of policies to combat climate change. The financial means raised through the system should be brought back into the economy through backing eco-innovation and other sectors that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

It is important to highlight the circular economy as the main driver of change as well as renewable energy sources and energy efficiency contribute to the direct and indirect employment at the local level. I find the Climate and Energy package 2030 extremely important for the economy of the entire EU, and I will advocate for more and binding targets of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, not only at EU level but also individually for each Member State.

Food safety and consumer protection

Food safety in the sense of protection of indigenous species, prohibition of GMOs and the production of healthy food is key for the sustainable development of agriculture. Croatia is a major importer of food, despite the fact that large areas of agricultural land are not used. At the same time small organic farmers are constantly under threat and pressure to transform to intensive forms of agriculture.

That is why among my priorities I will strive for consumer protection in order for citizens to have quality information concerning the origin and content of food. It is especially important for children and young people to make a habit of eating healthily, and this is possible only by a manner that promotes sustainable ways of food production.

Greening transport and mobility

In the last twenty years, Croatia has invested solely in its motorway network. At the same time, rail transport has been completely neglected. As substitute member of the Committee on Transport and Tourism in the European Parliament I will advocate the electrification, development and promotion of European railways..

I will particularly focus on sustainable mobility in cities, as well as the use of alternative fuels in transportation. The use and spread of electric vehicles for instance I consider as one of the possible drivers of the economy in the direction of sustainability.

Croatia is a tourist destination, but also a country where the concept of sustainable tourism is completely unknown. During summer and winter holidays there is significant migration of foreign and local tourists, who predominantly use personal vehicles as means of transport. Electrification of the railways may offer alternative transport of cars over long distances, reaching a double effect – reducing emissions from traffic and increasing road traffic safety (lower risk of accidents caused by driver's fatigue). At the same time, through promotional activities, tourists should be encouraged to come to Croatia by rail or by boat, and at the destination they should be provided with affordable rental hybrid and electric vehicles and bicycles, while making sure tourists enjoy comfortable holidays.

National and regional activities

Better use of EU funds for sustainable development of the region will be my main activity in the Committee on Regional Development. Assuming that this should be a goal of all of us, I will take the examples of good practice from successful EU Member States and try to apply them to

those that are less successful. Through such ongoing efforts, the European Union has a greater chance for uniform development of its regions by 2050, each according to the potentials of its economic resources and socio-cultural characteristics.

In order for the Green political option to become better represented and more influential in the political life of Member States from the Eastern and Southern parts of Europe, I will advocate with other colleagues from the 8th legislature of the European Parliament the informing of citizens about the concepts of sustainable development, circular economy, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency as drivers for economic development and job creation. A measurable goal of these

activities should be an increased number of MEPs in Greens/EFA Group in the next legislature, particularly from the Central, Eastern and Southern Member States. This is also essential in view of the discussion on the security of energy supplies, which is gaining an increasing importance in geopolitical terms. In the context of the European Energy Union I will argue against the construction of new thermal power plants on coal and encourage the closure of existing thermal power plants on coal in the region. The region is rich in resources for renewable energy sources and improved regional cooperation is required to help better use these potentials while meeting the requirements of security of energy supply.



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8. What about Greens in Southern Europe?

Ernest Urtasun and Laia Ortiz

During the last European elections in Catalonia and Spain, we faced a completely different political context compared to what we had previously witnessed in 2004 and 2009. The effects of the political and economic crises, and their catastrophic management by European elites, have completely shifted the perception of voters regarding the EU. The uncritical and massive support for European integration that we have seen in Spain since the country joined the EU in 1986 has vanished.

It is often mentioned that the main reason for this to happen is the constant blaming of “Europe” for the different policies developed by National Governments. This is partially true, as the Spanish, the Portuguese or the Greek Governments are as much responsible of what happened as the EU institutions. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing that the decisions taken at EU level (both by the Council and the Commission) have also affected this perception. The so called “Troika” and the policies imposed in southern Europe (in Spain through the Memorandum signed with the MEDE to clean up the financial mess in the banks) are well known and were key factors of the campaign.

The Euro-insubordinates: a pro, but critical Green discourse on Europe

We need to be aware of what European decisions mean today to citizens in a certain number of countries: wage cuts, tough labour market reforms, health and pension cuts, etc. The policies of “internal devaluation” are a key factor in understanding the political context of the last European elections.

Taking that into consideration, it would have been suicidal for parties such as ICV (Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds – the Catalan Green Party) to emerge as a naive voice that defends Europe no matter what happens in Brussels. It would have been suicidal for two main reasons: firstly, because the mood of progressive voters would probably have rejected such a political choice. And secondly, because arguing in favour of “Brussels” at all costs would create the necessary room for anti-European parties to emerge.

That is the reason why ICV successfully developed a campaign profiling ourselves as “Eurocritics”, or “Euroinsubordinates”. That translated into a pro-European voice which rejects the current state of play and policy line of the European institutions.

It is important to understand the strategic choice made. If we want to build on the future of Europe, we cannot let anti-Europeans alone be the only critical voice to the state of play in Europe. Europe needs a voice that believes in European integration but rejects the current state of affairs.

That is the reason why we are worried about the current dynamics in the European Parliament. It would be a catastrophe to let the extreme right and the Eurosceptics be the only opposing voice to the current state of EU affairs. If that is the case we would be sowing the seeds for them to continue growing in the coming years. If there is a role for the Greens to play, that role is in between the Eurosceptics and the big coalition of the mainstream (centre-right European People’s Party, Socialist & Democrats and Liberals).

Unfortunately, I am the only Green elected Member of the European Parliament in Southern Europe (together with Florent Marcellesi from EQUO, who will join me in the midterm). It is important to have an

in-depth analysis of what happened, but an immediate question can already be answered: are the Greens perceived as a voice for change in Southern Europe? Or are they perceived as a party that makes too many compromises?

We often say in the European Green Party meetings that the Greens at European level are a pan-European political force. Unfortunately, today we are not. There are too many countries where Greens today do not exist, and we have to face the reality that the countries where we do not exist are largely those most hit by the economic downturn.

Greens from the North, Greens from the South

We have to face the reality that the growing gap between the political contexts in the South and the North of Europe poses a serious challenge for Greens. In the majority of central, western and northern European countries (France is to be analysed separately in my opinion), the economic downturn hasn't led to a constitutional crash. The political party system remains more or less stable, social indicators have worsened but not at the levels of the South, and governments are stable.

That is absolutely not the case in Spain, Italy or Greece. The political framework is collapsing, and the party political system is transforming. Social-democrats do not exist anymore in Greece, and the 5 Stars Movement is the leading opposition party in Italy, as Podemos will also be after the next Spanish elections. The rotating system between the centre-left and the centre-right is coming to an end. We are entering an unknown political zone. In ten years' time, the party system in those countries will have nothing to do with what we know today.

What is most relevant for us in this new context is that the politics of consensus and agreement are over for progressive forces. This is now the case for parties such as ICV, and we are slowly adapting to it. ICV has historically played a very concrete role in Catalan politics: to get the most radical parts of Catalan society to agreements and compromises with centre-left majorities. That is why and how we were in government in the city of Barcelona for 23 years. That is the political culture that led us into the Catalan Government from 2003 to 2010, taking on very difficult responsibilities such as the Ministry for Home Affairs (as the first Green Party to ever be in charge of policing).

That was also a factor of convergence with other Green parties. The political will of materialising change, of being useful for citizens, of reaching compromises with other parties to have a real influence on real policies that can have an influence on people's life. We shared this view with many other Green parties. ICV, as with many other Green parties, was a party of Government.

Game over: the politics of compromise and coalitions in the South

What's important to understand for Greens in Central and Northern Europe is that those times are over in the South. There is, in the current political context (although time will tell), no room for agreement and compromise. The political context and the general mood of our electoral base are looking for offers of radical change. If we do not adapt ourselves to that, others will occupy our political arena. Greens need to be part of the new landscape of emerging forces in the South, with Syriza, the 5 Stars Movement, Podemos and others. Our future lies hand in hand with these kinds of parties.

This new political context in Spain and other countries will create important differences within the Greens. That lies beneath the different positions inside the Green Group in the European Parliament on the vote for Jean-Claude Juncker as Commission President. Green parties from the Northern and Central Europe are still in the position of delivering compromises. That situation is over for us.

How to handle this fundamental political matter is one of the key issues for Greens in Europe in the future. Specifically, the question is whether to continue with the politics of compromise and agreements at European level – making it difficult for the Greens to grow in the South and obliging parties such as ICV to openly take different stances – or to moderate this traditional Green impulse in order to boost chances in current weak green countries. To put it bluntly, there are two options: support Juncker's Commission and forget about Greens existing in the South – or try something different.

This is an essential political dilemma, and it is not easy to resolve, for anybody. We will need a lot of dialogue and trust-building within the European Green Party members. ICV is ready to engage in such an exercise, and we are confident that we can handle the challenge, as we were able to handle the Common manifesto challenge for the European Parliament elections, which we worked on together.

Greens have traditionally been recognised for advocating radical change in some particular fields; democracy and transparency, for instance. How to build a new voice for radical change in the European integration process will be our next challenge.

Is ecology off the agenda in Southern Europe?

Yes, it is. Or at least it is off the agenda in the form we knew some years ago. That of course doesn't mean that the Greens will have to abandon their defining political profile, but the way we have been addressing our ecological profile in recent years will have to be adapted. Pure ecological flags such as the fight against nuclear or climate change are not in the debate. Nevertheless, there have been new forms of ecological movements emerging in the South related to the consequences of the internal devaluation.

The politics of internal devaluation created new ecological concerns: energy policies affecting poverty, water privatisation, oil drilling, etc. The South is witnessing a new wave of emerging social movements related to the consequences of the economic response to the crisis that represent an opportunity for Green political forces.

There are also the new forms of territorial and land aggression, directly linked to the will to maximise the use of fossil fuels at any cost, such as the use of fracking. This new reality is also in need of a strong political response, and Greens are well placed for this.

Economy matters

One of the top priorities for the Greens in the coming years, and something that was extremely important in our last campaign for the European Parliament elections, was to be perceived as competent in economic matters. Until 2007, nobody dealt with economic policies within our party. We are very satisfied that the Greens have started to take those issues seriously, and we are starting to become credible on that. The work of Reinhard Bütikofer on industrial policies, or the "prestige"

obtained by Sven Giegold and Philippe Lamberts in the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON) of the EP, are important steps to defining a competent Green economic voice for Europe.

Now, again, we have relevant differences regarding fundamental economic matters between Greens. From the positive vote of the German Greens to the Fiscal Compact in the Bundestag (which put Greens in the South in serious difficulties), to this year's common manifesto agreement during the last elections within the European Green Party, progress has been made. As I will join in the European Parliament the ECON

Committee, we are very much looking to our work within this Green parliamentary team to continue the work of uniting the Green voice on economic matters.

Conclusion

A common shared objective has been identified for 2019. We want to be the third political family at the European level. To do that, Greens need to be present in the areas where we do not exist at all. The South is a priority, we are all aware. The Catalanian Greens are ready to engage in a medium and long-term strategy to make this possible.



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Laia Ortiz is spokesperson for Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds (ICV) and a Member of the Spanish Congress since 2012. Laia studied political sciences and she previously coordinated the Catalan Young Greens (Joves d'Esquerra Verda) and the Gender Policy Group of ICV (Dones amb Iniciativa).

9. Green visions from the local to the European level

Monika Vana

The 2014 EP elections in Austria were very encouraging for the Greens – scoring 14.5% of the popular vote, the best nationwide result in the Green Party's history. Together with Miljöpartiet de Gröna from Sweden and Déi Gréng from Luxembourg, this was also one of the Greens' top results in Europe.

The Green result was particularly remarkable in Austrian cities:

- Nearly 21% and second-strongest party after the Social Democrats in the capital Vienna, my home town (the party was number one in 10 out of 23 urban districts in Vienna).

- Number one in Graz, the second-largest city in Austria and capital of Styria (over 25%). Also, in Innsbruck, the capital of Tyrol (nearly 26%).

- Number one in "urbanised areas" like the Rhine valley in Vorarlberg (Western Austria).

According to an analysis of the SORA Institute, the Greens also became the strongest party among young voters under 30 years (with 26%).

This result – an increase from two to three EP seats – allowed me to bring my Green activities to the level of the European Parliament.

In the EP, I am a member of the Committees REGI (Committee on Regional Development) and BUDG (Committee on Budgets), and a substitute member of EMPL (Committee on Employment and Social Affairs) and FEMM (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality). Those Committees cover topics that were part of my efforts in Vienna – where I have been Member of the City Assembly (Gemeinderat) for 13 years, and

on the level of the European Green Party, where I was member of the EGP Committee from 2009 till 2012.

The visions and values I bring with me to Brussels are a Europe of solidarity, of openness, of equality and diversity – shaped by the people and by civil society rather than by companies and lobbyists.

These Green visions and the positive – although not un-critical – approach towards Europe and the EU were one of the main reasons for voters' support for the Greens in the EP election of 2014 in Austria.

Regional policy – cities are the future!

In the cities, the maintenance of public services is one of the most important issues that had been addressed by voters. They strongly oppose privatisation of the water supply (an idea that was put forward by the liberal party in Austria), of health services, public transport, and so on.

Taking into account these expectations of voters, one of my political tasks – amongst others – as a Member of the European Parliament is opposing TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) and TiSA (Trade in Services Agreement), since these agreements would have negative consequences for the quality of and the access to public services and labour and social rights.

Another task is to support proposals for a reform of regional policy and EU funds – away from oligarchs and government-related business people, towards investments that counter poverty and meet the needs of civil society and small and medium enterprises.

In debates on the financial crisis and international solidarity, those voters who do NOT see the solution in "nationalistic isolation" demand that financial aid for

countries in deep crises and EU cohesion funds should be directed not towards banks, but in a way that ordinary people gain some sort of “added value” from it. The situation of course differs from one member state to another; but let’s take one example: Hungary. Members of Hungarian NGO’s that I frequently met told me about corruption, tax fraud and other scandals that are less and less exposed by the (mostly government-controlled) mass media. The role of the EU is seen by them as too passive.

Since 2013, the allocation of EU funds (approx. 24 billion EUR for Hungary up to 2020) has been directly controlled by the Head of the Department of the Prime Minister. This in fact means that it will be very difficult if not impossible to allocate EU funds for projects developed by local governments, NGO’s, associations or small enterprises that are not affiliated to the ruling right-wing conservative FIDESZ party of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Of course, this problem does not only apply to Hungary!

One of the ways out are stronger efforts for more transparency. It is unacceptable that data on recipients of and on the appropriate use of about 80% of all EU funds is to be provided exclusively by the member states. In some cases, this is like “putting the fox in charge of the henhouse”. One reform proposal is to involve EU Commission departments in this process. Transparency is maybe one of the biggest challenges – taking into account the role of corrupt governments in some member countries and their influence on EU politics, not least in the European Council.

I am very much interested in “best practices” – be it innovative cross-border EU projects, or successes that have been achieved by Greens that are part of

governments on the state or municipal level. Therefore, I have been involved in most of the “Greens in Big Cities” meetings, and will continue to organise events such as the annual “Central European Round Table of Green Local Councillors” (CERT) in Vienna, in order to provide places for networking and exchange of experience. The next (the 10th since 2005) CERT will be held in December 2014 and focus on discussing reform proposals for the EU funds. Participants from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia will be invited.²

My passion for this kind of networking and for learning from each other is the reason why I will join the “urban” intergroup and the intergroup on public services in the European Parliament. I also want to be an advocate for the interests of cities when they oppose tendencies towards deregulation and liberalisation – thus carrying on efforts made together with social democrats in Vienna over the past few years.

In global as well as in regional politics, business interests should not be allowed to oust ecology – so for instance in the “EU Danube Strategy” the focus should be rather laid on the development of the eco-system Danube instead of the expansion of navigation – a position that has also been emphasised in the red-green coalition agreement of the City of Vienna in November 2010.

Gender equality – a basic principle for Greens

My party, Die Grünen Austria, has been a pioneer in pursuing the representation of women in politics. On all candidate lists and for all bodies that are elected, there have to be at least 50% women – which,

2 For more information, see <http://greeningthecities.wordpress.com/central-european-round-table/>

in theory, might even lead to lists with exclusively female candidates. This regulation motivated women to take leading positions: today (summer 2014), both the spokesperson of the Party and of the Parliamentary Group are female, as well as five out of eight members of Regional Governments and two out of three MEPs.

I was positively surprised when, after long discussions in which I actively took part in my role as European Green Party (EGP) Committee Member, the EGP finally abolished the 40% “male protection clause” and took over the “Austrian model”.

In the Vienna City Assembly, I successfully put forward a motion to accept Gender Mainstreaming as a basic principle in the Viennese public administration, to promote measures to avoid the phenomenon of the “working poor,” and to connect public procurement to gender criteria. This is something I will strive for in the European Parliament, as well- although, in my opinion, the EU has hitherto played a crucial and extremely positive role in gender policy.

However, from time to time we face discussions about equal representation – one striking example is the “tug-of-war” over the composition of the current EU Commission!

Pushing forward the Social Union

The first month of my European Parliament mandate was marked by intensive work; both in the Committee on women’s rights and gender equality, as well as in the Committee of employment and social affairs. I was the shadow rapporteur of the maternity leave directive and I also co-signed the youth employment resolution. Both topics are of highest importance on the Greens’ political agenda.

The maternity leave directive is a key factor in the development of social policies

– be it European labour law regarding pregnant female workers, European-wide minimum standards for parental leave, or the introduction of paternity leave. Therefore, I find it very much disturbing that the European Commission decided to withdraw the directive. We finally need a social Europe, including minimum social standards for everyone, e.g. minimum wage, maximum working time and access to social services.

Youth employment – a priority for the Greens

Tackling youth unemployment was on the political agenda of most parties during the election campaigns – unfortunately it appeared to be pure lip service, with the lack of specific as well as concrete measures to tackle the disastrous structural problem of youth unemployment displayed in their actions. Greens, however, are actively fighting for young people’s right to paid work and social security, which need to be protected and guaranteed. Hence, the Greens brought forward the youth resolution, which aims to make the fight against youth unemployment mandatory.

Personally, I suggest excluding those investments which support the labour market and the social system from the excessive deficit procedure. For a well-functioning youth guarantee, as we have implemented it for example in Austria, we need effective monitoring and control strategies concerning the country specific recommendations to ensure member states are taking it seriously and also offer better support for countries trying to get funding from the European Social Fund.

Another problem is the precaritisation of working conditions and the gender pay gap amongst young people. In reality, the majority of young people only get jobs with poor working conditions. The picture is even worse for young women;

wage discrimination starts as soon as they enter the labour market. This form of discrimination not only affects the future of woman negatively but also the economic and social cohesion of Europe. This is an alarming development, which needs to be tackled as soon as possible. The only realistic solution is to end the unfair, discriminating cuts and, simultaneously, to subsidise investments concerning job creation and social security. The Commission must also come forward with proposals on an EU unemployment insurance scheme. Europe needs to change and to tackle its great challenges like youth employment, the need for equal and fair employment conditions, and impending climate change. We in the Greens/EFA are convinced that challenges can also be opportunities and that there are synergies by dealing with these challenges. Therefore we developed the Green New Deal.

Green jobs are decent jobs!

The Green New Deal is a comprehensive response to the current economic, social and environmental crises. It is more than just another “eco-friendly” policy – it is a plan for a complete rethink of priorities, from the way we live and work to what we value most. A chance to reconcile our lifestyles – the way we live, produce and consume – with the physical limits of our planet.

The Green New Deal is indeed a unique concept. Although the focus of the discussion is mainly on technical and environmental aspects, I want to highlight that green jobs must be decent jobs – both from a qualitative and a social perspective. It is of highest importance to emphasise the social and labour market component in this context.

One of its many aspects is a massive investment programme in clean energy projects, mobility, research and education. The Green New Deal is not pie in the sky thinking – there are examples of some of these projects already being applied and functioning. My Austrian Green colleague Rudi Anschober, the Environmental Secretary of the Upper Austrian government, has already showed how it could work. The investment in renewables and green jobs not only boosted the economy and made Upper Austria a key player in renewable energy technology, but also created a huge number of sustainable high quality jobs which will also contribute positively to the country’s labour market.

Perspectives as new MEP

My aim as MEP is to work on a more ecological, social and democratic European Union, in which business lobbies have less influence, the gap between the rich and the poor is diminished, solidarity is a basic value and right-wing nationalists are marginalised. Let’s make Europe greener together.



Monika Vana is a Member of the European Parliament for Die Grünen in Austria. From 2010-2014 she was a member of the Vienna regional government, and she has been active on issues of gender and labour issues. Monika has served as committee member of the European Green Party between 2009 and 2012.

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The European Union is at a crossroads. It will take enthusiasm, dedication and a clear vision to put it on the path of sustainability and prosperity. This collection of articles looks at the ambitions, expectations and plans of the newly elected Green Members of the European Parliament and highlights the various aspects of the Green transformation they will be working on during the next five years. Their contributions describe the biggest challenges for the coming years on topics such as greening the economy, transforming energy policy, building a democratic EU, creating a human-rights based migration policy, and positioning the EU as a strong and fair global player in areas of trade, agriculture, and foreign affairs to mention but a few. Via their work, the Green Class of 2014 will attempt to rekindle the promise of a European Union that guarantees fundamental rights, as well as social, economic and environmental well-being on the continent. Read more about their plans, discuss their ideas and get active to make them happen!



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