

Charter of the European Greens

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European Green Party Guiding Principles Adopted at the 2nd EGP Congress
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Who we are

The European Greens proudly stand for the sustainable development of humanity on planet Earth, a mode of development respectful of human rights and built upon the values of environmental responsibility, freedom, justice, diversity and non-violence.

Green political movements emerged in Europe while the continent was divided by the Cold War and amidst the energy crises of the mid-seventies. At that time, it became clear that the pattern of economic development was unsustainable and was putting the planet and its inhabitants in grave environmental, social and economic dangers. Existing political parties were incapable of dealing with this challenge.

Our origins lie in many social movements : environmentalists and anti-nuclear activists concerned with the growing damages to our planet; non-violent peace activists promoting alternative ways to resolve conflicts; feminists, struggling for real equality between women and men; freedom and human rights movements fighting against dictatorial and authoritarian regimes; third-world solidarity movements supporting the end of colonization and more economically balanced relations between the North and the South of our planet; activists campaigning against poverty and for social justice within our own societies.

From these origins, European Greens have come together to form our own political family. We stand for a free, democratic and social Europe in a peaceful, equitable and environmentally sustainable world. We defend values like justice, human and citizen's rights, solidarity, sustainability and the right of each individual to lead their own lives, free from fear.

From the beginning, Greens have advocated thinking globally and acting locally. To develop cooperation at European level, a coordination body was founded in 1984, transforming itself in 1993 into the European Federation of Green Parties. In 2004, underlining the objective of a deeper cooperation, the Federation was transformed again into the European Green Party. European Greens are part of a thriving global Green movement.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles which provide the framework to the political actions by the member parties of the European Green Party can be defined as follows :

Environmental Responsibility

Taking responsibility for our biosphere is a central tenet of Green values. Society depends on the ecological resources and the health and resilience of the planet, and we bear an over-riding obligation to future generations to protect this inheritance.

We advocate strongly the need to live within our ecological means. We must maintain biological diversity and combat global warming through sustainable use of renewable resources and the careful husbandry of non-renewable resources. The responsible use of bio-diversity is of critical importance for meeting the food, health and other needs of the growing world population. But

beyond any notion of utility, Greens believe that each of the diverse species of life on our planet has an intrinsic value and beauty and therefore deserves to be protected.

Our European pattern of production, consumption and commerce are contributing to the continued poverty of the majority of the planet's inhabitants and causing severe environmental degradation and climatic instability. Industrialised and industrialising countries can no longer postpone action to respond to these challenges. The urgent need to change these patterns necessarily means a profound adjustment process if we are to reverse this damaging exploitation of our common home.

The political challenge facing us is the task to restructure the global agenda so that economic and trade policies serve social and environmental objectives and not just economic indices. Our answer is sustainable development, which integrates environmental, social and economic objectives for the benefit of all. Sustainable development can only be achieved through global cooperation to overcome the economic contradictions between the developing countries, the emerging economies and the industrialised world. Every citizen of the world has the same right to a fair share of the world's resources and also bears the same obligation to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same benefits.

Greens always seek to apply the precautionary principle. We will not support measures which present potential threats to human health or environmental well-being. But neither will we accept delay in implementation of new precautionary measures solely on the ground that scientific studies are not sufficiently numerous. Whatever the domain, - peace, energy, food and agriculture, life sciences, transport, technology, medicine, -decisions and action must systematically follow the least harmful option.

Specifically as regards nuclear energy, Greens stand for a nuclear-free Europe, because of the civil and military threats it poses, because of the burden it puts onto the future generations and because of the security apparatus it needs. For Greens, the priority is to develop decentralized and renewable alternative energies.

Freedom through Self-Determination:

- Individual autonomy

We Greens believe all human beings - regardless of sex, age, sexual orientation or identity, ethnic origin or disability- have the right to make their own choices, to express themselves freely and to shape their own lives. This freedom is not exclusively about material possessions; it includes the social, cultural, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of human life.

These inalienable rights should be guaranteed by law and taught in schools as basic foundations of our societies. They should be fulfilled by empowerment of the people, by the opportunity for all women and men to make a living for themselves and their families and, where necessary, by social and material support, sufficient to lead a dignified life and to fully participate in society. Where these rights are lacking, we Greens will fight for them, proposing solidarity, education, development cooperation and protection from violence, oppression, and discrimination.

- Inclusive democracy

Our belief in democracy is founded upon the mutual recognition of all individuals as equals. To encourage a maximum level of commitment, the political and decision-making

processes have to be democratic, inclusive, transparent and fully accessible in a way comprehensible to ordinary citizens. The radical changes needed for sustainable development require that all take a common responsibility and a fair share of the burden. Elected representatives have the duty to consult and fully inform their constituents throughout the whole decision making process.

We must always think globally, even whilst acting locally. To ensure the highest level of citizens' involvement and benefit, the authority to decide should be vested in the lowest effective level. Conversely, whenever a problem requires action on a higher level, the consequences for the lower levels should be taken into account and differences respected. Minority interests must be given adequate attention and protection.

We are committed to strengthening democracy throughout Europe, at local, regional, national and supra-national levels. We want to strengthen the democratic responsibility and accountability of multi-lateral institutions.

Extending Justice

Green policies are based on the principle of justice. This demands a fair distribution of society's goods and this, in turn, requires special attention to the needs of the weakest. Attention to the weakest is especially of importance at the global level, where Europe has a specific responsibility to stimulate economic growth in the developing countries. Because we have to address the problems of a changing world, our notion of justice goes far beyond traditional redistribution policies. Greens stand for social justice, for gender equity, for justice between generations, and for justice at the global level. Despite the practical conflicts arising between them, these dimensions of justice must not be played off against each other.

- Social justice ensures that everyone has access to vital societal resources: education, work and democratic participation. Fair access must be defended in the face of existing social imbalances, and needs to be institutionally safeguarded. Education is a decisive factor in the ability to shape one's own life. Using our labour skills enables us to bear the fruits of our abilities and thus defines a key part of our identity. Democratic participation is a basic requirement for becoming involved in society and helping to shape it.
- Gender equity. Justice is also gender equity. Women and men should enjoy the same power to define how society will develop. Moreover, they should be able to live their lives free from violence. We Greens want to develop the institutional framework which guarantees women equality at home, at work, in public office and in other positions of influence. We want to facilitate the harmonisation of family and professional life for both genders.
- Justice between the generations. The motto "We have only borrowed the world from our children" is more appropriate today than ever before. Today, our children's future is at risk. Justice between generations means an obligation for the older generation to hand down our environmental, social and cultural heritage to the younger ones in a sustainable way. It also includes an obligation for the younger generations to care for the elder population. It should be ensured that all generations can participate fully in society.
- Global justice. Justice is also our yardstick on the international level. As the global economy connects people and increases our interdependence, this moral obligation also becomes a practical imperative. Worldwide sustainable development and universal human rights are at the core of our concept of global justice. These must be underpinned by an independent institutional monitoring framework for corporate social responsibility and fair trade.

Justice requires solidarity, non-discrimination and citizens' involvement. Solidarity helps create self-confident individuals - it strengthens citizens instead of patronising them. All public authorities should work in partnership with citizens to create and defend institutions that enhance

solidarity. For this reason we also want to invest in networks and communities, which, with state encouragement, practice mutual support.

Diversity, an Indispensable Condition

The richness of civilisations, societies, and cultures has developed through diversification. We Greens are ourselves the result of the merging of a host of social movements, and we believe diversity is a condition for success, survival even, in almost every field of activity. Diversity increases the resilience of organisations and groups whenever they are confronted with unexpected changes. It is a safeguard against intolerance, extremism and totalitarianism. And it is an indispensable source of inspiration and renewal.

Human diversity has many dimensions : gender, social, cultural, spiritual, philosophical, religious, linguistic, economic, ethnic, sexual, regional. These may be expressed by individuals or by social groups. We cherish this diversity. It should however never be used as a pretext for questioning universal rights.

Where people share the same limited space, differences may easily be perceived as threats. Even in the smallest community, the strong tend to make use of their dominant role whereas the weak often find themselves pushed to conform. Safeguarding diversity therefore requires recognition, mutual understanding and respect – and, only too often, active protection.

Non-Violence

Non-violence forms a key part of the philosophical background of Green theories and conditions our approach to all problems. No lasting solution to any conflict between individuals, social groups or States can be imposed by force. A basic green principle is that the means used to achieve an objective must be compatible with the objective itself. So the political search for justice and peace cannot be achieved by violent means.

Violence is not just physical. Human actions and global economic structures can deprive people of their human rights and exacerbate social injustice. Poverty is perhaps the most insidious form of violence. To eliminate poverty, we promote international bodies that aim at economic equity and put people's livelihoods and security first, as well as binding global rules for the protection of human rights.

Insofar as armed conflicts are concerned, we are convinced that the use of army or police forces as an isolated strategy cannot be successful in the long run. Greens want to see less military intervention and the implementation of the concept of a civil foreign and security policy. This requires the development of powerful tools for conflict prevention and civil conflict management.

Nevertheless Greens recognise that military means may be called upon by the international community as a last resort. Where there is a threat of mass violence against civilians, deployment of peace-keeping military forces may be justified as a deterrent. When preventative measures have failed, armed intervention may be necessary. Recourse to military means will be subject to the rule of international law and is only legitimate if the following conditions are met:

- the existence of an explicit mandate of the UN Security Council;
- the agreement to the primary objective of intervening in order to save and protect lives through preventing violence;
- the existence of a political strategy defining how such military intervention should end and a peaceful and stable situation be established.

To sum it up, Sustainable Development

Greens recognize that the values of environmental responsibility, freedom, justice, diversity and

non-violence can be – and are to some extent – shared by other political families. What defines Greens is that we consider these values as interdependent and inseparable. As a whole, they determine all our actions directed towards the sustainable social, cultural, environmental and economic development of our societies on planet Earth. We apply them not only to our external policies but to our own political conduct as well as to the organization of our own party.

Europeans were the pioneers of the process of industrialization which is at the heart of some of our worst global problems. As citizens of one of the wealthiest continents on Earth, we Europeans carry a major responsibility for the reversal of the destructive trends it has generated and for initiating an alternative and sustainable development model. The scope of the issues at stake is such that it is beyond the powers of any single state to achieve this aim. Therefore we need cooperation in which all of Europe - from Dublin to Tbilisi, from Helsinki to Lisbon, from Ankara to Reykjavik - will be able to participate.

The European Union is well placed to facilitate this cooperation, providing that

- it remains open for further enlargements;
- it restructures itself into a truly democratic institution,
- it reorients its priorities towards an environmentally and socially sustainable model of development and
- it assumes its global responsibilities, under the United Nations, and in cooperation with other valuable institutions such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, for a peaceful and sustainable world.