

EGP council Barcelona - Supporters' network fringe meeting

Participants: Hans-Beat Schaffner (Grünen Switzerland) hv.schaffner@gruene.ch, Tom van der Wal (GroenLinks) tomvdwal@planet.nl, Birgit Weiss (Verdes Spain) birgit.castellon@gmail.com, Madeleine Petrovic (Grünen Austria) madeleine.petrovic@gruene.at, Niels Fischer (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) niels.fischer@europarl.europa.eu, Inti Suarez (GroenLinks) inti.suarez@gmail.com, Dan Michels (Déi Gréng) dmichels@chd.lu, Nacho Lopez Bayon (Écolo) manda@skynet.be, Knut F. Ovigstad knut-ovigstad88@hotmail.com, Sindre Buchanan (Miljøpartiet de Grønne) sindrebuchanan@mdgo.no, Pieter van Abshoven (GroenLinks) pieter@vanabshoven.nl, Constantin Fedorovski (Les Verts Fr) internat@lesverts.fr, Lin Tabak (GroenLinks) lin@ision.nl, Marianne Saenen (Écolo) marianne.saenen@gmail.com

The EGP future working group has identified the *individual supportership* as one of the initiatives on which progress should be made. Which means the Network has all reason to boost the scheme. At the moment however, the support from parties and hence the numbers of supporters rather tend to go down. The Scottish Green Party withdrew its participation in 2008 because of confusion about the registration and the way the fees were used. Déi Gréng did the same earlier this year, because making make all members automatically EGP supporters unless they opted out, wasn't a very good idea after all: because nor the EGP nor supportership were promoted, most members just wondered why they should pay an extra fee to an EGP thing. In most remaining parties, numbers stagnate because the scheme isn't promoted. New parties, even those actively interested in the scheme, haven't yet taken the necessary steps.

1. Online registration

In our experience, the administration of the scheme is one of the biggest hurdles: most parties that know about the scheme either don't know how it works, don't have the staff to handle it, or believe the benefits don't outweigh the costs. The Network's main proposal to overcome this problem is :

*An **online registration facility** linked to the EGP site, which leaves the right of parties to block individuals they consider as a risk untouched, but takes away most administrative implications.*

A draft plan was, after Lin and Inti explained the hows and why's, received positively. After a lively debate, improvements have been made which you'll find in the new version of the [draft resolution](#) and [technical proposal](#). The main points discussed:

• Admission of non-members of Green parties:

This should remain the parties' responsibility. No matter how few rights supporters have, all agree that a gatekeeper is needed to prevent that just anyone can join and make statements on behalf of the Greens - and that the national parties are best placed to assume this responsibility because they know national circumstances best. In Austria a strong right wing environmentalist movement exists, which 'participates in tree protection' but doesn't care much about women's' rights, whereas some conservative parties pretend to be green just to confuse the voters (Madeleine). In Aachen someone was denied membership because he recently had been campaigning for the extreme right (Niels), and in France multinationals tried to infiltrate Les Verts. (Constantin).

But a guarantee that parties in the country of residence have the last word, is sufficient, all agreed, and there is no need for extra rules, like demanding Green party membership. 'My party will only admit people who are members of De Grønna', said Øyvind, 'but I wouldn't see why it should impose other parties to do the same.' Anyway parties have different rules about who can join and may participate. The Luxemburg Greens, said Dan Michels, refuse members from other Luxemburg parties, but members from foreign parties can join. 'However, members from other national parties can participate in our working groups.'

• Additional safeguards:

Applicants will be asked to agree to two 'terms':

The [Charter of the European Greens](#) and a concise *netiquette*. Those can be used to withdraw the supportership in case an online debate gets out of hand. The decision – by the Network team*, should be well motivated and taken after a thorough procedure*.

Other extra admission suggestions: a recommendation by an EGP supporter or member of a Green party, and a written motivation, were rejected. The more complicated the form and the more barriers put up, the less probable it is that people will register. Moreover, 'it is good to have some sort of independent, non-institutionalised membership. And because supporters have so few rights, detailed procedures are not necessary: we are no secret police. We should be generous and leave space for different opinions. If we are too afraid, we don't do anything.' (Madeleine)

'The system should be open and so accessible that I can tell the people in my street: this European initiative exists and you can be part of it'. (Inti)

Question not yet answered: what procedure is called for in countries where more parties exist – or the member party is about to fall apart?

Responsibilities:

Individuals: for their data & options

Parties: for motivated refusal

Network team: for guaranteeing supporters' that they get what they have been promised – and for watching over the Charter and netiquette.

Levels of participation: 3 options, to be ticked in the form

1. Symbolic – not wishing anything in return
2. Wishes to receive news from EGP & Supporters' Network & GGEP and/or participate in the online forums
3. Wishes to participate in Network activities - applicants are requested to add interests and expertise

We have prepared [a draft resolution and technical implementation plan](#) that will, after your comments have been integrated, be tabled as a resolution for the autumn council. Apart from those mentioned above, Flemish and Scottish Green party delegates are interested.

- to be discussed.

2. Supportership promotion

The second big hurdle is a lack of proper promotion of the scheme. So our additional step will be, to provide short, ready to use texts for party newsletters and mailings to members, and website. Additionally, the Network offers all parties that are interested in the scheme live presence during party events, which preferably is organised in cooperation with party members.

The Network also will make a text for a 'Supporters' button on the EGP site, with a short explanation and registration form, which parties can use for their sites.

Other communication: at the moment, EGP supporters receive a bi-weekly Update containing news from the parties. Ideally, we think, those e-letters should also contain news and announcements from the Greens in European Parliament, the Supporters' Network and the EGP. On the longer term it might develop into a proper e-zine. We'll be working on that, and are open to suggestions and offers to contribute.

3. Projects & actions

The action plan 2010 was only very briefly discussed, so below you find an updated version.

A: Projects – which specialists from all parties are welcome to contribute to:

- *Post Copenhagen: new possibilities for a globally just climate policy*. Click [here for background](#). A plan and key questions will follow around Easter.

- *10 years of military intervention* involving the EU – which lessons can be learned? Click [here for background and plan](#).

- *New social networking tools*; seminar, co-organised with other European Green partners.

B. **Current activities:** *Network on Tour* will continue to promote Supportership, Network activities and EGP. The *annual meeting* ([read last one's report](#)) will be used to present the results of past projects and to launch new ones. The next meeting will take place the last weekend of either October or November.

4. Network team

The team consists, apart from the grassroots' members, of 4 'external' members who act as contacts with the EGP committee, GGEP, GEF and the parties not yet represented. They are nominated by the EGP committee, which has invited the grassroots' team to make suggestions. Two people the team has asked, have agreed: **Monica Frassoni** (committee) and **Leonore Gewessler** (GEF). We have asked two others, but don't yet have replies. **Nacho** has offered to be one of them in case no one else can be found. We'll send the proposal to the EGP committee as soon as we have all four names.

Party contacts: **Birgit** will be our contact in Spain.

Lin Tabak (coordination)