



1 **Draft proposal to the EGP Spring Council in Madrid in follow up of the**
2 **Athens Council on Greens in Bulgaria**

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4 The Committee, represented by Reinhard Bütikofer and Jacqueline Cremers, accompanied by
5 Erzsebet Schmuck, member of the EGP working group on membership review, met on March 9 and
6 10 2013 with representatives from Zelena Partija and Zelenite in Sofia, Bulgaria, to discuss the
7 situation of the Green representation in Bulgaria conform the assignment adopted at the EGP Athens
8 Autumn Council November 2012.

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10 We would like to express our great appreciation for the open and constructive attitude we met
11 from both sides and the expressed enthusiasm to belong to the Green family.

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13 We would like to put our conclusions in the context of Bulgaria's volatile political development:

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- 15 – The democratic development within Bulgaria is relative young. The specific post Communist
16 context provides a situation wherein party development has taken place under completely
17 different circumstances than in the Western part of Europe. This has had consequences for
18 party development in the early 90ties and it still has today.
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 - 20 – Traditionally there has been relatively low civic awareness in Bulgaria, with awareness for
21 nature conservation and environmental NGO's a positive exception since the early nineties.
22 The Green Party, Zelena Partija, gained ground, but did not manage to capitalise on the
23 environmental awareness over time. They have been a full EGP member party since 1994. In
24 2007 a relatively young and urban population formed Zelenite, a second green party that has
25 shown a good deal of activism.
26 They have been an EGP candidate party since 2009.
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 - 28 – Zelenite has played an active role on several environmental issues in Bulgaria recently, most
29 notably on shale gas fracking, in the nuclear referendum and on the issue of the forestry law.
30 Zelena Partija has been very much less visible on these issues.

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32 Bulgaria is living through an exciting moment. Mass demonstrations that were initiated as
33 protest against exorbitant rises in energy prices - up to 175 euro a month in a country
34 where the average income is below euro 400 a month - have led to a crisis of government.
35 Both Green groups have not played a relevant role in these demonstrations.

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37 The demonstrations express a huge discontent with the current political system that is not
38 able to provide solutions. The system is seen as corrupt and undemocratic. After the prime-
39 minister recently resigned, Bulgarians are called to early elections on May 12. It is yet unclear,
40 whether either Green group, Zelena Partija or Zelenite, will be able to run in these elections.

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- 42 – Both Green parties have not been able to have a significant electoral presence since 2007.
43 The parties have occupied less than 1% of the electorate in nation-wide elections. For the
44 upcoming national elections 10.000 leva (around euro 5000) are needed as a deposit and
45 within a period of around two weeks 7000 signatures need to be collected in order to be
46 able to register as a party for the elections. These are very high thresholds for smaller
47 parties.
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- 49 – Zelena Partija has expressed their wish to cooperate with Zelenite for the upcoming
50 elections. That wish is not shared by Zelenite. We have concluded that at this moment there
51 is not enough time to solve this issue satisfactorily before the May elections.
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- 53 – We maintain that it is desirable to have a higher level of Green activism, visibility, relevance
54 and unity in Bulgaria. There is, however, no way of achieving that, if the EGP insists, that
55 unity between the two parties come first. We therefore advocate a different route, even
56 though an EGP relationship with two competing parties in one country (constituency) is
57 problematic. We do not want to end our relationship with either one of the parties, but
58 intend to support them both. We remain hopeful that the two parties will be able to gain
59 more strength in the future.
60
- 61 – We hope both parties will do their utmost to engage with all energy in the upcoming
62 campaign. We expect both parties to respect each other and not focus on the differences
63 between them, but concentrate on efforts to convince citizens to vote green.
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66 **The EGP Committee proposes to the Council to adopt the following on**
67 **the situation of the Greens in Bulgaria:**
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- 70 1. The EGP Council accepts Zelenite as a full member of the European Green Party.
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 - 72 2. The EGP Council calls upon both Bulgarian Green parties to treat each other with
73 respect and dignity and refrain from recriminations.
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 - 75 3. The EGP Council calls on both parties to improve their performance. It calls upon
76 the EGP Committee to support them in these efforts. It asks the Committee for an
77 evaluation of the pertinent developments after the 2014 EP elections and before the election
78 of the next Committee.
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 - 80 4. The EGP Council calls on the Committee to moderate efforts towards creating a
81 common 'Green family list' for the European elections in 2014. Both Bulgarian parties are
82 called upon to agree to a roadmap towards that goal in cooperation with the Committee.
83 This Green list should also be open to candidates not belonging to either of the parties,
84 particularly to civil society and representatives of green and social entrepreneurs and other
85 progressive actors within Bulgarian society.
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 - 87 5. The EGP is willing to offer support and training according to the needs of both parties and
88 within the limits of our means. The EGP will not be able provide financial support.