

“BE THE CHANGE, VOTE GREEN”

Introduction

In 2014, the European Parliament election in May was the dominant event of the year.

The outcome of the election impacted the EU's internal dynamics in several important ways. Low participation in the election prolonged the trend of popular alienation. Successful right-wing, anti-EU parties changed the balance in the European Parliament. The new Commission with a new internal structure and a more “political” ambition changed the institutional game.

The fact that the election did not bring forth a clear mandate for change resulted in a half-baked attempt to combine austerity policies with modest new investment. That contributes to economic and political stagnation.

At the same time the EU and Europe beyond the EU as well are caught up in an unprecedented accumulation of external crises which challenge us.

For European Greens 2014 was a mixed year, our own strength in numbers and in achievements as a European movement did not grow enough to speak of substantial progress. National successes here and there notwithstanding, we are not as much the agent of change, environmental, social and economic change as we hoped.

I. The Common EU 2014 Election Campaign

The first half of 2014 was fully dedicated to the third common European election campaign for the EU elections 2014. The evaluation of the third Common Green Campaign, adopted at the Istanbul Council, stated:

“After the European Elections of May 2014, the EU on one hand still is where it had been prior to the campaign: at a crossroads. However, the election results have also made it obvious that business as usual is not an option. The EU has to change. The political struggle will focus on the question, which forces will dominate the change.

Anti-Europeans, chauvinists and right-wing extremists have been gaining in the elections. They have shown their capability of exploiting popular anger over any lack of European democracy, over the failed austerity policies represented by the Troika or “the institutions” 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 their success must mobilize us to analyse the situation even more thoroughly and to come up with better answers that will resonate more broadly throughout our societies.”

The Green electoral result was a mixed bag: in absolute numbers our strength in the European Parliament decreased by eight seats (to 38), but the result was better than any poll had indicated. Overall, EGP member parties managed to mobilize better than expected. In more detail, the picture shows a mixture of defeats and successes. Setbacks as compared to the 2009 numbers were suffered for instance by EELV (France), Ecolo (Belgium) and Oikologoi Prasinoi (Greece), amounting to a loss of 12 seats between them. Turnarounds were achieved in countries like Denmark and the Netherlands, where Greens successfully overcame stinging previous defeats and managed to win new strength. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen (Germany) lost three seats, owing partially to a change in the electoral law, but managed to overcome the weak showing in the previous national election. Advances were made in Ireland and the Czech Republic. 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 (2<3), Croatia (0<1), Hungary (0<2), Sweden (2<4) and the UK (2<3). The fact that Green political representation in the European Parliament now includes also Central and Eastern European countries - with MEPs also from Hungary and Croatia - is a great motivation for the whole European Green family. A disappointing situation was still dominant in the South of Europe, even if in Spain EQUO obtained a partially positive result, notably in view of the 2015 general elections. 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. Even though Green members have not grown in the European Parliament, the Green basis has been broadened throughout Europe.

The Green common campaign with the slogan “Be the Change, Vote Green” that the EGP ran together with the member parties, and with valuable support to information campaigns from the Green Group in the European Parliament, contributed positively to the national efforts of our EU member parties. Our third common campaign is considered the best one yet, with more member party involvement in its development and more member party use of the different elements than ever before.

Our unprecedented online primary that we organized prior to the proper election campaign, even though it also showed some weaknesses, that we must overcome in the future notably as far as the participation was concerned, positioned the Green family as an innovative force in the development of European democracy, raised awareness before the real campaign started and resulted in the election of two outstanding leading candidates that played a very positive role in the presidential debates during the campaign and successfully supported many member parties around Europe.

The work around the Green New Deal, the work on the future of Europe, the debates around the reforms necessary to ensure a democratic Europe and the efforts to elaborate shared proposals how to deal with the crisis, made it possible that we kept our political family united. This groundwork contributed to the fact that the Common Manifesto, adopted unanimously at the February 2014 Electoral Convention, provided a reliable basis for our political communication as a European Green family. This Manifesto was translated into all the official languages of the European Union plus Catalan. Our common decision on TTIP helped developing a clear profile in the electoral campaign.

The FYEG ran their own common campaign for the first time and successfully so, making a discernible impact.

A very important dimension of this election campaign concerned the development of European democracy. Through the nomination of leading candidates and the organization of presidential debates we, together with EPP, S&D, ALDE and GUE helped to create more transparency regarding the political alternatives advocated by the different political families by identifying the leading candidates as the common representatives, the faces and the voices of this agenda. The successful fight for the shared goal of electing the new President of the Commission from among

the leading candidates, taking into account the majorities in the European Parliament, has opened the way to a more visible European dimension of the electoral campaign and thus strengthened the visibility and role of the EP; it also created a dynamic, which contributed to successfully fighting back against the notion that the European Council should continue taking all the most important decisions.

The third common election campaign cost 1 million EUR, spent in 2013 and 2014 and funded by the EP grant and own resources that had been built up since 2010. Main cost items were the Campaign Agency, the provider of the online voting platform for the primaries and the costs for the campaign hub within the EGP office, staffed with a campaign manager and up to five campaign assistants. On top of that, up to ten volunteers reinforced the campaign team. The Autumn Council took notice of the successful conclusion of the campaign budget as adopted.

2. Political Priorities 2014 / 2015

In the second half of 2014, the Committee reprioritized its work towards the membership applications and the membership review process and identified the political priorities for 2014 / 2015, which were adopted at the Autumn Council:

- COP 21 Paris Climate Campaign
- Green Cities
- Populism and Euro Scepticism
- Gender
- Green New Deal
- Future of the EU

Working Groups were established and existing Networks (Local Councillors, Gender) invited to play a major role in developing activities and political programs on these priorities.

Regarding the COP 21 taking place in Paris at the end of 2015, a campaign manager was hired to build on the positive experiences from the Common EU election Campaign 2013/2014, to help building a common Green climate campaign and to guarantee a close cooperation and involvement of all member parties that wish to commit themselves to that campaign.

3. Council and Committee Meetings

Council Meetings

The two Councils held each year took place in:

- Spring Council: 22 February 2014, Brussels (“Electoral Convention”)
- Autumn Council: 7 – 9 November 2014, Istanbul

In non-election years, the Spring Council meets in April or May. Since the EU 2014 elections were held on the 25 May 2014, the Autumn Council 2013 decided to advance the 2014 Spring Council to February and to dedicate it fully to the upcoming hot phase of the election campaign, calling it the Electoral Convention. The Convention discussed and eventually adopted unanimously the Common Manifesto of the European Green Party, presented the main topics of the common

campaign as well as the European leading candidates Ska Keller and José Bové and the majority of the national Green leading candidates. Next to this, the Convention adopted a Declaration on the situation in the Ukraine and resolutions on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Treaty TTIP ("TTIP - Too many untrustworthy promises and real risks") and on the draft law on Abortion in Spain („Against the Draft Law on the Protection of Rights of Pregnant Women in Defence of Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy“).

The Autumn 2014 Council took place in Istanbul, Turkey. 2014 saw massive protests by Turkish citizens, calling for the protection of one of the few green spaces in Istanbul, the Gezi Park. These protests carried a far deeper message than just protecting a park, reflecting the desire for more democracy in Turkey. Since the Turkish Green party Yesiller ve Sol Gelecek Partisi played its part in these protests, it was chosen to go to Turkey. The Council focused on Green key issues: democracy, the future of Europe, energy and energy security in view of the COP21 in Paris in 2015, the future of Ukraine, Russia and its neighbours, conflicts in the wider Middle East and the current surge of violence in Gaza and Israel. Along with Turkish civil society, we organised workshops with groups working on civil rights and democracy, women's organisations, LGBT rights, groups working with Syrian refugees, and sustainable urban development organisations. The EU 2014 Elections having taken place, the delegates assessed the third Common Campaign, and space was given to Yesiller ve Sol Gelecek Partisi to present itself, as well as the Croatian Green party ORaH, being welcomed to the Green family as candidate member. Our long standing associate Socialistisk Folkeparti Denmark was awarded full membership. Other resolutions covered nuclear energy (“No new nuclear power in Europe“) and nuclear weapons, European night sleeper trains. Finally, Mar Garcia Sanz from ICV Catalunya was elected as new Secretary General of EGP.

Committee Meetings

The Committee had 9 face-to-face meetings in 2014:

- 10-11 January
- 21 February
- 28-29 March
- 13-15 June (retreat)
- 27-28 June
- 5-6 September
- 3-4 October
- 6 November
- 5-7 December

The agenda and the minutes of each meeting are posted on the internal delegates' platform.

4. Membership

The Committee invested much effort to visit member parties. Committee members visited Member Parties in 17 countries. Visits are helpful for getting a better understanding of each party and the political situation.

In 2014, the Croatian Green party ORaH became candidate members. Our long-standing associate Socialistisk Folkeparti from Denmark became full member. Thus, EGP consisted end 2014 of 39 full members from 34 countries, three candidate members and three associate members.

By the end of 2014, we had 5 pending applications (PM Hungary, Zeleni Srbije Serbia, Green Alliance-People's Party Russia, Lithuanian Green Party, DOM Macedonia).

Membership fees and reimbursement rules

The 2009 Autumn Council had decided upon a multi-annual framework for membership fees for the period 2009 – 2014, and within the 'Fit for the Future' project we decided not to discuss the reimbursement rules and the criteria for the membership fees until after the 2014 elections. After the EU elections 2014, the Committee installed a Financial Working Group to prepare decisions on the future membership fees for the period 2015 – 2019 and to revise the reimbursement rules. The Committee proposed to the Autumn Council a change of the Reimbursement Rules, adding the principle of own contributions for those member parties that benefit from reimbursement. The Council rejected that motion; the Committee will propose a revised motion and a raise in membership fees to the Spring Council 2015.

Party Leader Meetings

Party Leaders of the member parties were invited to Green Party Leaders meetings in Brussels in February and September.

25 member parties were present at these meetings, most of them represented by party leaders, vice-chairs or Secretary Generals.

5. Partners

Green Group in the European Parliament

The Committee built up strong working relations with the newly elected Green Group in the European Parliament. The Group designated two of its members as liaise persons to EGP, Ska Keller and Peter Eriksson. Cooperation was also organized on the levels of Co-Presidents/Co-Chairs, Bureau/Committee and Sec. Gens.

Global Greens

After the registration as a Belgian non-profit organization and the installation in the EGP office premises in 2013, the Global Greens Secretariat continued to build up capacities and resources. The Autumn Council 2014 adopted the Committee's proposal to celebrate the next EGP Congress together with the Global Greens Congress in end 2016 / beginning of 2017.

FYEG

We continue to work in intense cooperation with our youth partner. We appreciate the high level of activities they manage to organise with relatively low resources. The Committee intends to continue efforts for youth participation and keep this as a high political priority for the next year.

GEF

For much of our research, political analysis and information platforms we rely on the excellent work of our partner GEF. We appreciate our strong cooperation in full respect of each other's different roles and responsibilities.

6. Organisation

Revision of the Regulation on the Recognition and Financing of European Political Parties and Foundations

End 2014, the EU Commission finally adopted the rules for the recognition and financing of European political parties – a process that had started with the Giannaku-Report in 2011/2012. The new rules (1141/2014, repealing the Regulation 2004/2003) will first be applied for the 2018 grant application procedure. All European parties will have to apply for formal recognition in 2017. Main changes under the new rules are the ‘independent authority’ responsible for the registration and deregistration of European political parties and foundations; a public register of all recognized European political parties and foundations; revised recognition rules (a European political party has to have at least one MEP in order to receive EP funding) and the introduction of sanctions in case of non-compliance with the regulations.

In order to register as a European party under the new directive, EGP will have to slightly adjust its statutes in 2016.

Reorganisation of the EGP Office

The EGP office, transformed into a campaign hub during the campaign with 20 paid staff members and up to 15 volunteers, was brought back to its previous size after the election. According to the EGP Office organigram that was adopted by the Spring Council 2013 in Madrid, 10,75 full time equivalents plus the climate campaign manager were employed end December 2014.

Larger infrastructure projects like the integrated membership relation management tool / website, the archiving of EGP paper documents and visuals of the years before 2009 and the installation of a web-based bookkeeping software were finalized by the end of 2014.

Brussels, 7 May 2015
Mar Garcia Sanz