

Dear colleagues, Dear friends

Since I launched my candidacy for the co-spokesperson of the European Greens for the period of November 2019 to spring 2022, this document shall provide some background information on me as a person, the way I view Green European politics, and what I believe could be the next steps in developing the role of EGP within the “orchestra” of European green parties.

First some history: Thomas Waitz, born in 1973 in Vienna as child of a rail worker and a farmers daughter, three children age 19 to 25, organic farmer since 1994, beekeeping and forestry as the main work fields, been with the Austrian Greens since 1999, I have served on all political levels, locally, in the region of Styria, as a farmers parliamentarian in the chamber of farmers, in regional and national boards, seven years as treasurer in a green foundation, as an Austrian EGP -delegate since the founding of the EGP in 2004 (with a break of approximately three years), since 2017 as committee member, end of 2017 to 2019 as a member of the European parliament.
If Brexit happens, I will return to the EP as the 19th Austrian MEP.

The last European elections showed that - if we do our job right - our voters potential rose towards 20%.

This is true for the member states of the EU where the green parties have an established traditional basis, where we have been active and present in parliaments and sometimes in governments. Some may say, we have arrived at the center of the political spectrum. Being a part of the green movement since more than 20 years, I do have a different perspective: we greens may have become more professional, we have become more experienced in communicating and governing, we have become more pragmatic in the solutions we propose, but -
the core of our demands, the core of our political positions has not substantially changed.

The political discourse as such has strongly moved towards our positions!

Majorities of our populations are starting to acknowledge environmental threats like climate change, or plastic pollution, or pesticides, and the extinction of thousands of species as the relevant and crucial policy fields they are.

Social equality, equal pay and social inclusion have as well found their way into the center of citizens political positions.

Even the fact that our current economical model has it's substantial downsides, that resource waste has to be replaced with circular economy, that there is a need for environmental and social minimum standards wherever in the world a good is produced, that it can no longer be that very rich individuals and big multinational companies dodge paying proper taxes or that the power and the problematic influence of an overly grown financial sector is a substantial threat to the “real” economy, all of this has reached the center of citizens political discussions!

Since we Greens collected a vast amount of expertise in these fields and have been warning for decades that problems like climate change or unfair free trade practices or the rise of the populist extreme right will become considerable threats to our societies,
now we Greens are perceived by growing shares of citizens as the competent, relevant and ambitious political offer to vote for.

Based on these value-oriented strongholds it is our duty to transform this societal support into concrete political solutions.

The task in the south and east:

While the Greens have had considerable success in the former western European countries, we must not neglect the difficulties that we as greens face in southern and eastern European countries. Due to a wide range of different reasons it seems to be very hard to establish stable and successful Green parties.

In the east we have to acknowledge that due to the political history many citizens have a different perception of many political demands. For the bigger share of eastern European citizens, liberalized markets, privatizations, strong national independence or massive investments into militaristic security are unquestioned as the good, the “right” policies to support.

Regulations, a strong state, women's and worker's rights, social inclusion and equality but also being ruled by a transnational body is heavily linked to the historical experience of totalitarian communism.

For these and many other reasons we Greens need to adjust the way we communicate, the way we formulate our political proposals, the way we campaign in these states.

It will be one of the core political EGP duties of the upcoming four years to build, grow and stabilize Green Parties in the south and east of Europe.

Greens in the European Parliament will only be able to become a ruling force, if we as Green family manage to send representatives not only from former western European states but MEP s from all over the Union.

Beyond EU:

It is a fact, that the EGP is financed by more than a 90% share through EU Green parties and the European institutions. Nevertheless we as EGP consist of more than 40 green parties from all over Europe.

Some of the states we have member parties in, do have an EU accession perspective, others do not even aim to ever join the EU. As our green movement is driven by the Europe-wide and global ecological and societal threats and urgencies, our cooperation and solidarity does not end at the EU or European borders. Therefore, beyond our priorities to support Greens in EU and EU-accession countries we shall follow the path of providing networks, knowledge, experience and political content to all our member and partner parties in Europe and beyond.

Even if the global Greens have not really taken off yet, I still believe the right thing to do is to formulate global Green policies, global solutions, and demands to global problems and tasks.

Eu wide campaigning:

In the past years we have seen several examples of successful Europe wide campaigning: remember the “save the bees” or the “TTIP” campaigns. In 2019 the “upload filter” or “animal transport” campaigns were successful. The cherry on top one was the “Fridays for future” climate campaign where also our youth wing, FYEG and their national members organizations, played an essential role. All of these campaigns substantially influenced the political decision making process, so far that even right-wing

conservative parties were forced by public opinion and demand to react, to formulate and to support progressive and green political proposals, resolutions or laws.

All of these campaigns have one thing in common: they were built or they developed as EU or even Europe wide campaigns.

We as EGP have made the first steps towards Europe wide campaigning with our TILT platform.

Within 18 months we have attracted more than 200 000 citizens to sign up, more than half of them including their mail address to receive further updates by us or our member parties.

Our activities, in TILT and by the Green group in the European parliament, have managed to increase the trust and risen the willingness of civil society to cooperate with the Greens.

This cooperation I consider vital for our future success.

On top of that it offers us a chance to run strong campaigns even in countries where we up to now do not have strong green representation and, subsequently, help our member parties to settle in as relevant players of the national political sphere.

EGP networking:

One of the main responsibilities of EGP is to provide, support and run platforms where we can exchange experience, best practice, content, solutions and contacts.

This is or can take place within our youth organization, the FYEG, the local councilors, greens in government on local, regional or national level, regional networks, topical networks or simply well prepared and well-delivering councils or congresses.

The EGP and our member parties have run many positive and rewarding projects in these fields; still, I do see room for improvement here, too. We shall be brave enough to let existing networks go if they do not deliver anymore and, by doing this, create room for new networks that fulfill our current and actual demands of exchange and coordination.

Knowing many parts of our green movement, I can assert that the amount of knowledge, of experience, of solutions, concepts, or practical examples within our organization is massive. We have the potential to grow our professionalism and our abilities to deliver proper green solutions to our voters by enhancing and strengthening our networking culture.

Final words:

I am a dedicated Green since I have a political consciousness. What drives me is the will to contribute to positive change, to fairness, to equality. I want to help building a world that takes care for the planet we move through to universe on, I want to be part of a generation that tries to form human society on earth in a way that leaves a planet worth living on to our next generations.

I am not longing to become rich, I have some land that feeds me, I have a house that is mine, I have no debt at the bank, I have three wonderful and healthy kids. What else do I need?

And I do have the honor to serve our political green family in doing a job that fits my personal interests and longing.

I am a team player, based on mutual respect, in search for common ground believing that cooperation delivers best.

I am a campaigner, a practitioner, a good speaker as they say.

And, as we all are as human being, I am not perfect at all- sometimes I don't communicate enough, sometimes I am not sensible enough, sometimes I oversee the beauty of a given hint or second option while sticking to my very own concept. And I am sure my friends and enemies are able to formulate half a dozen other weaknesses I sometimes have.

But, you can count on my will to give my best, you can count on my openness to accept your feedback and you can count on my apologies if I make a mistake or if I oversee something or if I was not sensible enough.

This is what I want to offer to you as a possible future co spokes person of our European Green family. Do not hesitate to address me with your questions or feedback before or during our next council in Tampere/ Finland.

Together we move the world to the better, every day a tiny little bit!

Thomas Waitz