



Luxembourg, May 2nd 2013

TO EGP COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL DELEGATES

Why the election of a Green leader for the 2014 Common Campaign by means of an online primary could do more harm than good

Dear Committee, Dear Delegates, Dear Friends,

In the last few weeks, the EGP has been actively preparing the Madrid Council and a few working groups have had first discussions on the 2014 campaign, including a party leaders' meeting. Details have been sent out to the delegates two weeks ago with an invitation for comments and further suggestions (annex A with proposal for the EU 2014 Common Campaign and annex B with the Campaign Outline). The proposed Annex A is featuring the idea of having a Europe-wide electronic primary election of one leading green candidate for the 2014 common campaign.

As this annex A was amendable until today midnight, we – the Luxembourg Green Party Executive Board – have decided to table an amendment in order to support a personalisation of the common campaign, but to oppose at the same time the proposal for the online primary election process.

It seems clear to us that the European Greens also have to put some known faces at the frontline to represent our political family in transnational debates or other specific 2014 media events, but we are also convinced that a "primary elections" pre-campaign would do the greens in Europe more harm than good. To put it short: the primary strategy is very uncertain regarding the outcome, but very certain regarding the costs, human resources and time that have to be invested in the organisation of the whole primary process. These resources can for sure be used more efficiently by EGP as well as by the member parties during their EU campaign at home. But we also have a few more fundamental remarks regarding the proposed primary mechanism. The non-balanced mechanism of the primaries clearly favours the green parties from the biggest EU member states, while our normal choice by council or congress vote is more balanced because the members' voting rights are calculated with several criteria.

The reasons for tabling our amendment are the following:

1. We clearly favour gender balance and a double male/female leader tandem to represent the greens during the election campaign, exactly like member parties do at home.
2. The winning leading EGP candidate will put his male/female co-head from the national EU list in a difficult situation because it will establish a ranking between them or at least give a certain bonus to the EGP ticket winner. This is a direct interference with national campaigning. It would be a "bonus" not freely determined by the national member party but imposed upon it by green and non-green EU citizens.

3. The objective that this single green leader could also be presented as the green candidate for President of the EU Commission and participate in related media events does not seem credible to us, because people will know that greens do not have the slightest chance to get that mandate. Hence, campaigning for an objective that nobody will believe in, will absolutely not work as motivating and mobilising strategy and could even have negative effects on the national campaign efforts.
4. If not every EGP EU member party participates actively in promoting the primaries at their national level, which is the most reasonable guess, the process would eventually be limited to a few countries with a higher participation, some with a limited one and a few with no participation in the primaries at all. This will certainly not result in a direct democracy or legitimisation bonus for us greens.
5. Promoting a large primary campaign in every member state would necessitate an important amount of human and financial resources that are simply not available at the moment for most of our member parties, because they will obviously focus their efforts on their national campaign, focussing above all on making their own EU candidates and the party known to the voters. And finally we all know that we already have shortages of money for the main campaign.
6. Allowing every citizen - and not only green party members - to participate in the primaries would certainly provide for bigger participation, but it will also provide for the biggest risk: Except for the stronger green parties, the risk of the primaries being hijacked by political opponents is real. If you have a lot of own green members, a few "trolls" will do no harm, but for the smaller green parties the risk is exponentially higher. And even though this might not have a dramatic impact on the overall outcome of the primaries on EU level, it might seriously harm the member party at home, in its own media arena.
7. If we target, as proposed, every citizen above the age of 16, we would have legal incongruences with those national election laws that have a minimum age of 18.
8. Allowing for a real open participation of citizens, be it green or other, is certainly a nice idea, but the absence of a secure possibility of control of identity or uniqueness of a voter would give the elected leading candidate no extra credibility not to speak of legitimacy. There is a serious risk of fraud associated with the electronic primary system, but legitimacy of the election would also be lessened by a eventually low number of the winner's primary votes. And they will in any case be insignificantly low compared to the real number of voters for the EU elections. That might even be used against us by opponents, with no real possibility to counter these attacks on the national level.
9. The proposed timetable of the EGP primaries and the candidate call in September would absolutely interfere with the national campaign timetables for the election of the European candidate lists.
10. In several member states - including Luxembourg and Belgium - there will be other elections simultaneously or close by. This makes it impossible to integrate the green primaries into the national campaign strategy and planning.
11. It will also interfere with the national head of list choice. If the winner would lose the national head of list race but still try to play a role as "third" head of list, this might develop into a... let's say "complicated" situation for the national campaign.
12. All the "other" candidates that have lost the green primaries – being a national head of list or not – would be weakened at home if national media takes up their defeat.

13. The process of primaries will strongly favour the bigger member states, respectively candidates from the bigger member states, while it is actually meant to be a tool to support the weaker and smaller EGP member parties.
14. Greens do not have European wide known personalities for the moment and even if we had, this leading candidate would not always have a beneficial campaign impact in the specific political context of our member parties. Just think of the benefit of, for example, a German EGP candidate in Southern Europe.
15. Another effect could be a bias in favour of either a “richer” candidate or a richer green party as the candidates for the primaries obviously need to travel to a maximum of the members states to campaign transnationally, to make themselves known, to support the national member parties campaign activities and to represent the Greens in the leading transnational debates with the other political families in Brussels or elsewhere.
16. If one citizen has one vote, the primary clearly favours the candidates from the biggest EU member states, except if we would introduce a voting rights balance into the primary system. This seems however quite impossible to discuss and agree upon before the election campaign itself. As every EU institution has a balancing of voting rights in order to protect the smaller member states from the bigger states’ dominance, including the EP, and for the time being, the normal EGP council or congress vote is more legitimate in this regard than the proposed primary process.
17. Another serious blow for the legitimacy of the process will be the technical platform and process. How do we control the identity of a voter without asking for too much sensitive data (for example ID number) while safeguarding at the same time his/her anonymity? How do we protect our primaries-platform from a IT security point of view? Our IT experts are quite unanimous in warning about the technical vulnerability of such a platform, which could jeopardize the entire process. In terms of political and internal harm, the worst case scenario would be if we had to admit that the platform was compromised and that therefore the already “regularly” casted votes of thousands of supporters/citizens were also compromised and null... giving a tremendous example of unprofessionalism and frustrating all of our primary voters.
18. The primaries will not help us reach a new public because it is primarily a non-motivational campaign - as described above – for a leading candidate for a function that he/she will never be able to get and, secondly, it will be about a person nobody will know outside of his/her home country. This cannot be a democratic choice from a green point of view. As greens we want people to make an informed choice in elections, but primaries with green candidates that are not known outside their own country, that do not have the time, the possibilities or a European media space to make themselves known to their voters, are quite the opposite of an informed choice!
19. To put it in nutshell: The committee proposal to organise primaries as a pre-campaign must not only be considered as an eventual chance, but also a burden and danger for us Greens. Instead of giving us a bonus of credibility, legitimacy and openness, the strategy could very well provoke the opposite result. But even if your green party does not have a fundamental problem with the idea, the technical, the financial and the human resources issues should convince you not to go for the primaries this time. Too many important questions are still open and time is running short. We therefore ask you to support our amendments for a personalisation of the 2014 common campaign without the idea of primaries.

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co-Presidents of déi gréng,*