

EGP Fact-Finding Mission to Portugal – Report (LIVRE)

Note: *The EGP Fact-Finding Mission to Portugal took place from 2 to 4 March to evaluate the request for membership of both LIVRE and PAN. Therefore, parts of the two reports (namely 1. Background, 2. Political Context & 3. List of Meetings) are the same in both reports.*

1. Background: Greens in Portugal

Since 1988 the European Green Party – then the European Coordination of Green Parties – has had as member the Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" (**PEV**, Ecologist Party "The Greens"), but other parties have also been close to our family.

In late 2019 two parties in Portugal have asked for membership in the EGP:

- LIVRE (FREE)
- Pessoas – Animais – Natureza (PAN, People – Animals – Nature)

2. Current Political Situation

After 4 years (2015-2019) of a government of the Socialist Party that depended on all left-wing parties – the so called *Gerigonça* (with the Greens, the Communists and the Left Bloc) – the 2019 elections brought a correlation of forces that made the Socialists only dependent on the approval of one of the main Left parties. This resulted in less coordination between the parties, the loss of support first of the Left Bloc and then of the Communists and the Greens¹.

At the 2022 elections, and as the debate became polarized between the possibility of a weak Socialist government without a clear potential majority or a government of all the Right (including the far-right), there was a heavy mobilization towards the Socialists to deliver a Socialist majority that would avoid the presence of the far-right in the government. This has hurt the Left Bloc and the Communist, as well as PAN.

¹ Paragraph updated after the exchange between EGP Committee and PEV on 28 April 2023.

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In March 2022 the new government with a one-party majority took power. The government has been full of political scandals of lack of internal coordination and corruption. In the first year, 13 members of the government (including ministers and junior ministers) have left the government or been fired.

In 2023 there has been relative social upheaval, mainly with the teachers' unions (both the established communist and socialist unions, as well as the nascent far-right). While the mobilization has been lower than in previous moments, and the issues raised by teachers are also long lasting, this adds to the social disapproving of the government due to all the scandals in the last year.

Party		European Affiliation		Election Polling	Previous		change
		Party	EP Group	as of 17.02.2023	30.01.2022	MPs	
				%	%	MPs	
PS	Socialist Party Partido Socialista	PES S&D		31% 27% - 34%	41%	120	- 10pp
PSD	Social Democratic Party Partido Social Democrita	EPP		30% 27% - 33%	29%	77	+ 1pp
CHEGA	Enough Chega	ID		12% 10% - 14%	7%	12	+ 5pp
IL	Liberal Initiative Iniciativa Liberal	ALDE Renew		8% 6% - 10%	5%	8	+ 3pp
BE	Left Bloc Bloco de Esquerda	LEFT		7% 5% - 8%	4%	5	+ 3pp
CDU	Democratic Unitary Coalition Coligação Democrática Unitária	PCP	in LEFT Group	4% 3% - 6%	4%	6	= pp
		PEV	EGP		-		
PAN	People – Animals – Nature Pessoas – Animais – Natureza	EGP Partner		2% 1% - 3%	2%	1	= pp
LIVRE	FREE LIVRE	EGP Partner		2% 1% - 3%	1%	1	+ 1pp
CDS-PP	CDS – Popular Party CDS – Partido Popular	EPP		1% 0% - 2%	2%	-	- 1pp

Recent polling started showing again a rise on the Right, with a Right majority (when including the far-right). This will restart the debates on which kind of government Portugal should have after

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the next elections, either a Socialist-led government or a Right-wing government that might include the far-right.

Democratic Right	PSD + IL + CDS	EPP + ALDE	39% 36% - 43%	36%	85	+ 3pp
Center-Right	PSD + IL + CDS + PAN	EPP + ALDE + EGP Target	41% 38% - 45%	38%	86	+ 3pp
All Right	PSD + IL + CDS + CHEGA	EPP + ALDE + ID	51% 48% - 55%	43%	97	+ 8pp
Center-Left	PS + PAN + LIVRE	PES + EGP Target	35% 32% - 38%	44%	122	- 9pp
All Left	PS + BE + CDU + PAN + LIVRE	PES + LEFT + EGP Target	46% 42% - 49%	52%	133	- 6pp

3. List of organised meetings during the Fact-Finding Mission

- **Susana Rogeiro Nina – Assistant Professor of Political Science and co-writer of the book "Breve História do Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" e Pessoas-Animais-Natureza" on the history of PEV and PAN**
- **Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses - General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers (Trade Union)**
 - João Barreiros - Member of the Executive Board and Responsible for International Trade Union Relations
 - Andrea Araújo - Member of the Executive Board
 - Maurício Miguel - Head of the International Department
- **Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" - Ecologist Party "The Greens" (EGP Member Party)**
 - Victor Cavaco – Member of the Executive Committee & International Secretary
 - Heloísa Apolónia – Member of the Executive Committee
 - Manuela Cunha – Member of the Executive Committee
 - Sofia Cabeleira – Member of the Executive Committee

- **ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável - Sustainable Earth System Association (Green NGO)**
 - Susana Fonseca - Director and Member of the Board

- **Ana Gomes – Former Candidate to Portuguese Presidency supported by PAN and LIVRE**

- **Público (Newspaper)**
 - Leonete Botelho – Political Affairs Editor

- **Ecolojovem (Youth wing of Partido Ecologista "Os Verdes" and member of FYEG)**
 - Patrícia Marcelino - Member of Ecolojovem Executive Committee
 - Marta Parente - Member of Ecolojovem Executive Committee

- **European Commission Permanent Representation in Portugal**
 - António Vicente - Deputy Head
 - Isabel Martinho - Political Reporter

- **ILGA Portugal (LGBT Rights NGO)**
 - Pedro Carreira - Board Member

- **LIVRE**
 - **Board**
 - Rui Tavares - Board Member and national MP
 - Teresa Leitão - Board Member
 - Mário Gaspar - Board Member and member of the municipal assembly of Felgueiras
 - Paulo Muacho - Board Member
 - Joana Filipe - Board Member
 - Miguel Bento - Board Member

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- **Local Councillors**
 - Carla Castelo – Local Councillor, Oeiras (independent)
 - Isabel Mendes Lopes – Member of the municipal assembly, Lisbon
 - Tomás Pereira – Member of the municipal assembly, Oeiras
 - Francisco Ferreira – Member of the parish assembly, Lumiar (Lisbon)
 - Patrícia Gonçalves – Substitute local councillor, Lisbon
 - Carlos Teixeira – Substitute local councillor, Lisbon

- **PAN**
 - **Board members:**
 - Inês de Sousa Real, spokesperson and national MP
 - Rafael Pinto, member of the board and of PAN Youth
 - Tânia Mesquita, board member and coordinator of the legal action office

 - **PAN local elected members:**
 - Sílvia Marques, Member of the municipal assembly, Oeiras
 - António Morgado, Member of the municipal assembly, Lisbon
 - Sílvia Vicente, Member of the parish assembly, Olivais (Lisbon)

 - **PAN Youth:**
 - Rodrigo Andrade, PAN youth and PAN's social media manager in Parliament
 - Laura Falcão, PAN youth and PAN's legal advisor in Parliament

 - **Members of PAN's internal local bodies:**
 - Isabel do Carmo, representative of the political commission of Lisbon region
 - Pedro Fidalgo Marques, representative of the political commission of Lisbon region

4. LIVRE – Liberdade, Esquerda, Europa, Ecologia



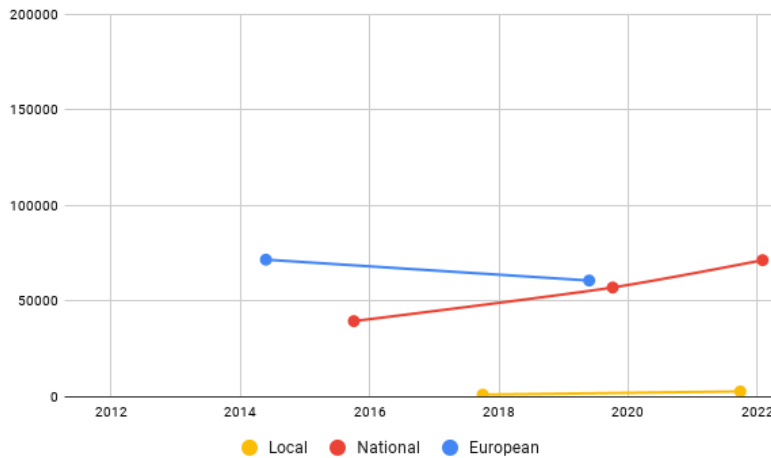
LIVRE – Liberdade, Esquerda, Europa, Ecologia

LIVRE – Freedom, Left, Europe, Ecology

LIVRE was founded in 2013 by Rui Tavares, an MEP in the Green Group which had been elected by the Left Bloc, which he left during his mandate in the European Parliament. The goal of the party was the convergence of the Left, as Portugal had a big social majority of the Left but lack of inter-party cooperation. While it was successful in pushing the topic, and after the 2015 election the left-wing parties did cooperate to form a government, at that time the party failed to elect.

In the European elections of 2019 the party cooperated with the European Spring, DiEM25's strategy for those elections, yet it failed to elect. In October 2019, LIVRE entered the national Parliament. The elected MP was Joacine Katar Moreira, a Black feminist activist who became viral during the campaign due to her stutter when speaking. One month after the election, LIVRE and the elected MP started a public conflict which led to a breakup between both making Joacine Katar Moreira an independent MP and LIVRE an extra-parliamentary party. This breakup was due to an initial lack of communication between party and MP which was then escalated to a public row of accusations between the two sides. In the following elections in 2022 the party elected Rui Tavares as their MP.

Electorally the party has had a stable growth pattern since its founding, electing one MP in the Lisbon constituency in both the 2019 and 2022 elections. At the local level the party has opted for a strategy of coalitions with other Left parties. Besides their 1 MP in the national parliament, LIVRE has 1 local councilor in Lisbon, 4 members of local assemblies and 3 members of assemblies at the parish level.



Electoral Results of LIVRE since founding, at local, national and European elections.

For local elections showed are the results of LIVRE's autonomous lists for the legislative branch (Assembleia Municipal).

Unified Green party in Portugal

Over the years there were several attempts to build a unified Green party in Portugal. In the last decade, while PAN and LIVRE grew in parallel, there were several informal talks about different forms of cooperation between both parties, also without success. In 2014 a formal proposal for a common list of PAN, LIVRE and the Left Bloc was rejected by the Left Bloc while in 2019 the possibility of a PAN-LIVRE coalition for the national and European elections was raised but never formalized.

5. Report from meetings

The overall perception of the actors and stakeholders met by EGP Committee Members in Lisbon about LIVRE is very positive. The presence of this party in the national parliament is considered a good sign for Portuguese democracy, as they have enriched the national political debate with ideas and new energy.

Most of the actors agreed that LIVRE can be considered a Green party. They are very much aligned with Green values and principles since its foundation, with a strong ecological and environmental agenda and a very pro-EU profile. They are very vocal on the rule of law and human rights. Also on foreign policy, especially Ukraine, LIVRE is aligned with Green positions.

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The common understanding is that the interest for environmental and ecological issues has been growing in Portugal driven by the young climate movement, as well as by the effect of the Green Wave in 2019. There are more and more young people concerned about climate issues, a phenomenon that was not present in Portugal until very recently. However even if the concern for climate change is growing, this hasn't been strongly seen yet in a strong electoral increase of Green-minded parties so far.

LIVRE is considered to be a rather young party, very close to Green values and principles and owns big part of its own recognizability as political party so their very strong pro-European stance. The Party has good relations with the civil society and the NGOs met by EGP Committee mentioned that LIVRE has been a good partner for them especially since they have parliamentary representation. Climate and environmental issues represent a significant part of the political activities of LIVRE including at the local level, where their representatives are recognizable for Green proposals in the field of mobility, urban-planning and several other fields. They are also at the forefront in the defence and expansion of LGBTQI rights, with a very proactive agenda. The voting behaviour in the parliament stays coherent with their program.

LIVRE is also recognised as a reliable partner when it comes to defending workers' rights, even if PEV has a longer-lasting and stronger relationship with the Union movement and is recognised as an important partner for them, also thanks to its long-lasting electoral cooperation with the Communist party.

The relationship between PEV and LIVRE is simply an institutional one, with no special cooperation or joint activities beyond the Parliamentary one. PEV considers LIVRE as ideologically different from them, especially on European integration where LIVRE self-identify as European federalists.

In terms of membership, LIVRE claims 1200 members. They do not have a fully-fledged independent youth wing, while they have a high degree of young representatives in their decision-making structures. Nonetheless, LIVRE is currently undergoing internal debates on whether to establish a youth wing. Gender equality is taken in high consideration within the party when it comes to board/committees' representation, adopting a 50-50 approach. In Portugal, LIVRE is recognized as one of the parties with the most female participation in internal structures. LIVRE has recognition and well-developed network within universities.

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The leader of the party, Rui Tavares, is considered a high quality and very visible politician. Tavares is a Green and progressive voice in Portuguese politics, and he has managed to shape LIVRE as a party that does not have only one issue, but rather a broad agenda.

The overall perception is that LIVRE has a good opportunity to capitalise at European elections thanks to the prominence of the European dimension in their political platform and especially considering that many voters are upset with the Socialist government and could look to other forces of the progressive area. LIVRE has shaped itself as a party that while critical towards the Socialists, is close enough to guarantee a progressive government if the majorities exist for such, so it has a good opportunity to capitalize on former Socialist voters that would like to vote against the Socialist party without giving the right-wing parties a majority.

On the other hand, LIVRE is considered very mediatically centered around the leader. Rui Tavares is a well know personality in Portugal, but there are no other party members that have visibility besides him. The big challenge for the party would be to bring out new figures in the coming months and years.

None of the actors met by the EGP delegation believes that a fusion of PAN and LIVRE in the short term is either a likely or a desirable option. PAN and LIVRE have two different electorates that do not compete with each other and although they collaborate a lot in parliamentary activities, there are differences and nuances between the two. PAN has a more animalist and environmentalist agenda with grassroots connections. LIVRE has a very pro-EU profile with a Green and progressive agenda and is spread especially in urban areas and among the middle class. The fear of all the actors is that a union of the two parties would deliver weaker results than the two acting independently. Considering the relatively low threshold needed to have representation in the National Parliament, interlocutors we met believe that a merger would not be worthwhile from that point of view.

6. Conclusions

LIVRE proved to be aligned with principles and values belonging to the Greens. Their dynamism and activism on climate change and environmental protection, social justice, human rights, migration, LGBTQI rights and feminism is widely recognised and positively assessed by the actors and stakeholders met during the Fact-Finding Mission.

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Over many years, the party showed a strong interest and motivation in becoming part of the Green family, with willingness to further cooperate, strengthen the ties and learn from EGP and its member parties' expertise.

The party proved to have an organised and established structure with internal democratic procedures, attention to gender balance representation and an active involvement of young people.

LIVRE's political agenda is aligned with that of the EGP and ticks all the boxes for a national Green party, with a clear and remarkable pro-EU approach. LIVRE and the EGP have bilateral relations since LIVRE's foundation in 2014, including a clear wish from LIVRE's political bodies to start the process to join the European Green family ever since its 2nd Congress in April 2015. The relation has allowed the EGP to follow LIVRE's progress and understand its development as party over time, including cooperating with them in multiple occasions and building a strong level of trust and collaboration.

As foreseen by our Statutes, the EGP Committee has consulted PEV during the FFM as well as after the outcome of the Committee deliberations.

PEV's opinion is that LIVRE and PAN are not integrally ecologist parties and that PEV is the only Party that can be considered as truly ecologist party in Portugal. PEV considers both PAN and LIVRE to be its electoral competitors. PEV has informed the EGP Fact-Finding Mission delegation that, while they are not in favour of the membership of LIVRE and PAN and would prefer to be the sole member from Portugal in the European Green Party, they will not actively oppose it.

7. Recommendation

The Committee of the European Green Party believes that LIVRE meets EGP's membership criteria.

Considering all the above, the EGP Committee recommends to the delegates of the 37th EGP Congress to accept LIVRE as a Full Member.