

European Green Party Congress

Rome, 20th - 22nd February 2004

Accepted resolution

Equal and Fair European Electoral Opportunities for Candidates

Introduction

Recent elections have pointed out the necessity for European Greens (EFGP/European Green Party) to take an initiative in the equalizing electoral opportunities for candidates at all levels of government in Europe and outside EU in order to prevent violation of the political and human rights of many, and to give equal opportunity to candidates of all parties to contest elections at all levels.

In many countries, old electoral laws, which favour the rich and big parties, are still in effect. These laws prevent small parties with fresh and new ideas (mostly Greens) from participating in the electoral process. Some countries, besides requiring a very high threshold of 5%, require 10 000 letters of support that should be fulfilled under difficult conditions.

As an example: in Serbia candidate parties for elections had to pay additional court taxes and court expenses in addition to the cost of approximately one to two Euro per each letter of support. In addition, the Electoral Commission in Serbia does not accept any state issued official documents (such as an ID card, etc) for candidates that should run for parliamentary elections. The Electoral Commission requires documents that prove Serbian citizenship, electoral right, address of candidate, all of which must be issued especially for electoral needs by the proper state organs again. Also in Serbia voters cannot vote for the name of certain candidates, but only for the party, coalition or the certain list (parliamentary elections).

After elections, representatives of the party electoral list, or coalition are entitled to decide who from the candidates list will attend parliament after elections and who is not, ignoring the order of the candidate list as it was presented to the voters.

In Serbia, several persons representing electoral lists are already in Hague International War Crimes Tribunal accused for war crimes and crimes against humanity or they are under wanted circular by the same Tribunal. We wonder what kind of electoral right they could have, when they have no address (as candidate for parliament) in the country of the election any longer?

Currently, the strongest parliamentary party in Serbia (30% of all seats) is represented by Hague prisoner Vojislav Seselj while the electoral list is represented by ex Serbian president Milosevic, who could also enter Serbian Parliament and easily can become a part of a coalition government.

How can such parties continue to gather around nationalistic leaders who ignore the interests of the international community as well as the human rights of their citizens? This can easily be a contributing factor to future instability in Europe with global implications. We strongly suggest that all those party candidacies represented by persons imprisoned by Hague Tribunal and/or those under wanted circular by the same Tribunal should be treated as ineligible by the national electoral commissions as well as by EU authorities.

Also, all those electoral regulations that reduce political rights of candidates at all levels should be treated as illegal by national and international bodies. We recognise that there are many instances of questionable practices, which result in prejudicial treatment of small or new parties in other countries. In keeping with our Green principle of guaranties for democratic human rights, we must assume responsibility for discovering undemocratic electoral practices and doing what we can to actively redress the imbalance.

Motion

- I. that the European Green Party
 - a. set up an informal working group to examine and define basic standards for equal and fair opportunity for candidates running for election;
 - b. that this group submit its findings and recommendations to the European Green Party Council meeting in Dublin, November 2004 with the object of setting up a formal Federation Working Group;

2. That the guidelines for determining equal and fair electoral terms for candidates listed below shall be considered by the working group when developing their terms of reference;
 - a. the threshold should be for one representative in any national parliament. That means that a minimum number of votes should be set so that smaller, newer parties get one seat in parliament and have the opportunity to hear and to present their viewpoints and ideas.
 - b. the state should partially fund small and new in order to give them the opportunity to run for elections without getting into financial debt which would restrict their political action.
 - c. that state electoral organs provide basic space in the media free of charge for promoting electoral programs of small, new non-parliamentary parties, such issues which are in the national/international interests, such as sustainability, peace and stability - promoting those political options that couldn't else be heard in the wider society.
 - d. those accused for war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of human rights shall not lead any electoral lists;
 - e. the electorate, and not the parties in power, should decide whether they want to hear more new, different political aspects of small, new parties as part of peace, stability and sustainability process.
 - f. that electoral laws should support the freedom of expression of new, small parties with their fresh points of view in politics along with that of the old parties. This is because the stability of various national and international governmental bodies will not depend on small number of coherent parties, but on Democratic Way of Work in decision making process regardless of the number of political parties involved.
 - g. to implement as much as possible an constructive, positive, mutually supporting system for promoting the ideas of peace and sustainability without prejudice to country or party of origin as a part of world-wide sustainability building process.