

Renewing and rejuvenating the Greens

When analysing the results of the 2014 European elections it is clear that if young people had a say, the debate on whether we need a European Union would be much less sceptical¹. Moreover, when looking at voters' preferences, you can see that if the turnout among young people was higher, progressive parties, and Green parties in particular, would have a much greater presence in elected bodies².

A fundamental reason why some young people are not engaging in politics across Europe is the lack of candidates who look like them and are living the experiences they are. Too few political parties have been successful in addressing the main concerns of young people and are not bringing the ultimate progressive solutions that young people want. Green Parties across Europe recognise the importance of adequate representation. For example, there are several younger green members of the Swedish and Scottish parliament, across councils in the UK and The Netherlands, and in the European Parliament. However, we need to push further and focus more on candidates that have a better chance of being elected, which look and sound like our voter base, young people. No generation has a monopoly on knowledge and power, and the EGP commits to supporting candidates from the age of eligibility to run to ensure diversity and inclusivity in public office.

Although Green parties continue to have a higher concentration of younger people than most other parties, the chances of them getting elected are often slim. Even within our own progressive movement, we seem to find it difficult to put forward a Young Green.

Looking at recent developments in electoral campaigns, we note a lack of renewal and rejuvenation within parties. By not putting young people high on the list, more people will be re-elected rather than newly elected, preventing more experienced politicians from passing on their skills, knowledge and experience. Without fresh blood, political groups will stand still. And without young people on the lists, young people are less likely to vote Green.

As the Green movement, we are a great school for young politicians. One of our considerable strengths are the Green youth wings, where Young Greens can learn by doing. This is where they can learn to make mistakes, feel free to make alliances with newly emerging progressive movements, develop their own political views, and where they can gain experience in all aspects of politics – writing policy papers, campaigning or winning Green political victories. The Young Greens do it all and they do it well. Greens win elections because young people see them as a movement they want to campaign and vote for³. For young people in particular, the Young Greens are an important gateway for this.

¹ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/post/post_2014_survey_analitical_overview_en.pdf

² GroenLinks, with 30-year-old Jesse Klaver, would have been the second biggest party amongst under 25-year-olds, and the third under 35: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2163382-jong-of-oud-man-of-vrouw-wie-stemde-op-welke-partij.html>.

In the Czech Republic, the likelihood of young people voting Green is twice as high as for other parties: <http://showme.median.cz/volby-2017/>

In the German federal elections in September 2017, Greens performed best among 18-24-year-old voters: <http://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/bilder/uvchart-ydthzpcgmui-101~v-videoweb1.jpg>

Among 18-29-year-old voters in Finland, the Greens are the most popular party with 30.9% and growing: <https://tietoanurista.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Puoluekannatus-768x640.jpg>

³ In the recent successful Dutch campaign, young people joined the campaign both online and offline because they believed in the positive Green message.

If we want more young people to go out and vote, and in particular more young people to vote for the Greens, we must represent youth properly. To achieve this, we need young people higher on our lists, able to make a substantial contribution to campaigns, to gain even more political experience and thus to be able to get elected. Autonomous youth wings are an essential prerequisite for this.

Acknowledging the lack of representation of youth also raises the issue of political representation in general. Young women, LGBTIQ youth and youth from other underrepresented groups face multilayered structural discrimination which Green parties and Green youth organisations must be equipped to tackle in order to ensure diverse representation and sharing of power among youth as a whole. What's more, in some countries, people hold multiple offices or multiple terms and this is a real obstacle for renewal and for young people to get to political responsibilities.

With reference to the above, the EGP and its member parties commit to:

- Supporting autonomous youth wings;
- Giving youth-wing representatives the opportunity to represent the mother party in external debates whose topics aim mainly at young people;
- Keeping in mind the importance of renewal within Green parties, acknowledging age is not an automatic right to leadership;
- Encouraging young members to take positions of responsibility within the party, and acknowledging the successes of young members already in these roles;
- Encourage having at least one seat for a representative from the youth-wing in every board within the mother party.
- Giving adequate space and resources to youth-wing representatives to enrich debates, develop themselves and stand in elections;
- To take into account that young Greens are represented on panels at EGP events;
- Lobbying for a common age of candidacy for European Parliament elections to be 18 in all member states and
- Strengthening our joint campaigns for votes at 16 for European Parliament elections across Europe.