



## **Closing the Age Gap in Politics: Prioritising Young Candidates for the 2024 European Parliament Elections**

In order to build a sustainable and just future, we must invest in the next generation of leaders. We are committed to supporting and empowering young people to take an active role in shaping the political landscape of Europe. As European Greens, we commit to an increase in the number of young representatives in candidate lists for the European Parliament elections of 2024, with a particular focus on electable positions.

Young people are the ones most affected by the pressing challenges of our time, especially the climate crisis. We often talk about how youth are the future –but they are already here now, in the present. We need their perspectives and their input in the Green movement.

Currently, young people are underrepresented both in national parliaments and the European Parliament. The average MEP is 49.5 years old.[1] One-fifth of Europeans fall within the 18-35 age range, whereas only 6 percent of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) belong to this demographic. On the other hand, although one-fifth of Europeans are aged between 51 and 65, the proportion of MEPs in this age group is 42 percent, twice the number.[2]

This is concerning and needs to be addressed proactively. A lack of generational change leads to a reluctance to adopt new policies and jeopardises our ability to tackle the climate crisis and other challenges of our time effectively.

Additionally, an increase in the number of young representatives in parliament can help close the gender gap in politics. There are more women parliamentarians in younger age groups, as the findings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows.[3] For example, within the 21-30 age group, the male to female ratio among MPs is approximately 60:40. For the 31-40 age group, the ratio is only approximately 2:1.

We call on Green parties to make room for young candidates who represent the needs of future generations.

Greens have always championed increased youth representation and involvement in the structures of their parties, as well as of the lowering of voting age in all elections, and especially the European ones. Not only in Austria, the first EU member state to allow voting age at 16 in all elections in 2007, but also in Belgium and Germany, where voting age for the European elections was lowered to 16 in the recent coalition agreements: in all these countries Green parties triggered the conversation and achieved the result of lowering the voting age.

Greens also have been championing youth representation in the European Parliament, with the Greens/EFA being the Group with the highest number of MEPs under 30 years old. Younger voters associate themselves more easily with young candidates, particularly if they perceive they have real chances of being elected.

European Greens and its member parties commit to make room for young candidates who represent the needs of future generations.



1. We commit to prioritise putting forward young candidates, below the age of 35, in elections at all levels of government, especially for the upcoming 2024 European Parliament elections. In accordance with Green values, the participation of youth is crucial to ensuring a sustainable and just future.
2. We underline the importance of placing young candidates in electable spots on party lists. In many cases, young candidates are relegated to lower positions on lists, making it difficult for them to win seats. By prioritising electable spots for young candidates, we can ensure that their voices are heard, and their contributions are valued.
3. We strive to provide training and support to young candidates, to help them develop the skills and experience necessary to succeed in politics. This includes providing mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to resources and funding. We will develop a policy to support and defend candidates that face hate and social and structural discrimination because of their identity. This includes organisational support from the party to these candidates as well as capacity building that takes into account the intersectional dimension of discrimination. Moreover, parties should aim to provide adequate resources to young candidates to run their campaigns.
4. Being a young candidate is always a challenging experience, but young candidates targeted because of identity face extra barriers to accessibility due to discriminatory structures and systems, from gender-based to racial to ableist discrimination, to other forms of discrimination. We pledge to strengthen our support networks for (potential) candidates that are young women, trans, non-binary or queer, from racialised or ethnic-minoritised communities, with lived migration experiences, disabled, or that are otherwise affected by discrimination.
5. Investing in youth is an investment in the future of the planet. This includes supporting Green Party Youth Organisations with the necessary resources and political support. By empowering young leaders in politics, we can build a better world for generations to come.

By investing in young and electable candidates, we can build a stronger and more vibrant Green movement, and create a better world. The EGP and its member parties commit to prioritise young candidates and provide them with the support they need to succeed.

#### Background References

[1] European Parliament. (2019, July 9). *Facts and figures: the European Parliament's new term*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190705STO56305/facts-and-figures-the-european-parliament-s-new-term>.

[2] Shilhav, R. (2022, September 15). *There are as many Martins in the European Parliament as MEPs under 30*. *European Youth Forum*. <https://www.youthforum.org/news/there-are-as-many-martins-as-meeps-under-30>.

[3] Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2021, April 22). *Parliaments are getting (slightly) younger according to latest IPU data* [Press release]. <https://www.ipu.org/youth2021-PR>.