

The Greens of Finland - Vihreät De Gröna

A Greener common Europe

A program for the renovation of the European Union

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Introduction - Why EU?

The European Union during its 60 years of history has proven itself to be a great project of peace and co-operation, and it has advanced the creation of wealth in all of our continent. Now, however, the European states face various challenges.

We come to face the simultaneous challenges of climate change and long-term economic crisis threatening the experience of social justice and societal peace, which weakens the common understanding of European basic values. We Greens want to strengthen the EU, so that the different preconditions for our shared wellbeing can be maintained also in the future.

Only as a community of peace will the EU succeed, otherwise it will fade, and with it the European welfare states. Finland is not an island - instead, our future is in many ways dependent on how we can build a better Europe.

Human dignity, social wellbeing of its citizens, and securing a sustainable environment must be at the core of the EU. Our goal is a functioning and stable European welfare society, the citizens of which look to the future together.

To the Greens, the EU is foremost a union of its citizens, only secondarily that of its member states. This is why we want to strengthen the powers of the European Parliament. Legitimate decisionmaking must needs be based on the democratic representation of citizens, both in the member states and at the union level. All EU citizens shall have the right to vote in the national elections in their country of residence, and to effectively influence the politics of the Union.

The European model, regarding both society and economy, must be re-built on a more sustainable basis. Economic policy must be based on the wellbeing of people and the environment, and democratic control over its implementation strengthened. We demand strong measures to limit

detrimental tax competition within the Union. Only a Europe that is just and characterised by general wellbeing is also successful, stable, and secure for all.

The basis of the EU is in respect for human dignity, fundamental rights, and democracy. The foreign, trade, and agricultural policies of the EU must support human development, ecological sustainability, and improvement of human rights in the whole world - the peace project that is EU shall be consistently extended to its foreign relations.

I - A Union of its Citizens

The goal of a democratic Europe

Democratic deficit has been a buzzword in the European Union for a long time. To alleviate this problem, the role and powers of the European Parliament have been increased through numerous revisions to the principal treaties, and democracy thus gradually strengthened. This process shall keep moving. The Union shall resolutely be built to a community of its citizens that takes its guidelines and vision from the citizens.

The compromise formed by national interests of the member states has long been the core of the Union's actions. From this the EU must gradually transfer towards the co-operation between EU citizens' political views, that is, parliamentary democracy. Not even in situations of crisis shall authority be left on hasty decisions made behind closed doors, but standard democratic procedure shall be respected. The Union needs to act according to its democratic ideals, and be able to justify its existence through its own actions. The Greens view this as essential to improving the people's trust in and interest towards the Union.

The Greens value decisionmaking close to citizens, and we think that also EU decisionmaking must rely on the principles of proximity and subsidiarity. Supranational decisionmaking is however the best way to respond to challenges affecting the entire continent and the world. For instance protection of the environment and equal achievement of fundamental rights are prime examples of issues that require international co-operation.

The global era and the economic, social and environmental challenges we face demand intensifying European co-operation. Yet a more effective and democratic Union cannot be achieved without its citizens - a living European identity is needed. And to facilitate the EU in functioning more legitimately and transparently for the citizens, changes that increase democracy and openness are required in the EU treaties.

The EU should have a legible and understandable constitution, which shall be approved in the European Parliament and the member states. The most important changes shall be given to a European-wide referendum (by qualified majority of citizens' votes and member states' referendum results). The right of a single memberstate to entirely halt changes in the EU constitution shall be dismantled and revoked gradually, by separate task areas and competences granted to the EU. The European Parliament - beginning with the one to be chosen in 2014 - shall be tasked with the preparation of these changes to the EU treaties.

In the core areas of the Union's competence - human rights, conditions of EU membership, and e.g. in policies concerning the single market, labour market code, and the environment - the duties, rights, and terms of union membership of all member states shall be based on the same criteria. One either partakes in the common project of peace and prosperity, or not - and not just picks and chooses based on needs within one's own national politics.

However one must take note that member states differ in society, culture, and development. Although the central goals be common, one needs to accept that they may be implemented in a different pace - examples would be Schengen or Euro area memberships. The development towards common goals must be based on the view of the citizens, and the tasks of the Union are foremost to make possible and advance this mutual co-operation between memberstates and their citizens.

Functioning democratic institutions

The European Union according to the Greens shall be developed more clearly towards a parliamentary system based on the interaction and trust between the people, national parliaments, European Parliament, and the European Commission.

The Greens want to augment the authority of the European Parliament as the voice of the European citizens. The Parliament shall be given the right to legislative initiatives, and its status shall be raised to a fully equal legislator in parallel with the Council of Ministers. The Parliament shall also in the future represent EU citizens directly, and its members shall be chosen by direct, proportional election. Already in the elections the candidates will present themselves through the emblems of European political groupings, though most of the representatives are chosen nationally.

As a longer term goal Europe could move towards a system where the Council of Ministers is developed towards a more stable legislative assembly representing the many varying political views within the member states. The council members bring more of the national views and national expertise to the union level legislation.

The Parliament would appoint the Commission after hearing the member states, and it would have the right to dismiss either the entire Commission or a single commissioner through a vote of no confidence. The composition of the Commission shall follow the political balance of the European Parliament. Balanced geographical representation should however still be taken into account, and that a minimum of 40% of the commissioners be of each gender.

The area of unanimous decisionmaking shall gradually be reduced, so that common European decisionmaking gains precedence, and also the largest member states singly do not retain a veto. Particularly in decisions concerning the minimum levels of corporate, energy and environmental taxation, and in climate and energy market policies, the EU should move to qualified majority decisionmaking so that unchecked tax competition can be limited and climate change responded to effectively.

In addition to strengthening democracy on the European level, likewise member states and regions will also in the future have a strong role in European decisionmaking. The opportunities of national parliaments to partake in EU decisionmaking shall be improved, in particular with regard to common economic policy. Regular contact between national parliaments, the Commission, and the European Parliament shall be enhanced. National parliaments should actively use their right to monitor decisions taken in the EU in accordance with the proximity and subsidiary principles.

Respecting openness

To follow EU affairs should be made easier, and the preparation of decisions more open to citizens also in the early stages. The European Parliament must have easily navigable web pages, where each member's (MEP's) voting behaviour, election funding and economic conflicts of interest are clearly shown. Also the functioning of the Council and Commission working groups needs to be

opened up, and information on e.g. the member states' positions must be declared at minimum after the fact. Beginning in 2019, the Parliament shall convene only in Brussels.

The increasing influence of citizen hearing, possibility for petition, and giving feedback require a working feedback system and adequate resources. Public access to EU documents must be improved. Clearer and tighter limits on exceptions to documents' publicity must be set.

In parallel with EU organs, the new European Citizens' Initiative must be taken heed of. Citizens' initiatives must form a genuine channel of influence for the citizens - the initiatives must be seen as equivalent to Commission's and Parliament's legal initiatives, and they shall be discussed in the Parliament.

Also other forms of democracy must be developed further. The opportunities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to influence decisionmaking shall be improved in relation to economic interest groups. European NGO co-operation shall be supported also financially. Opportunities for common European-wide discussion shall be increased, and the duty to present also European civic discussions should be included in the guiding principles of European public broadcasters.¹

To create a community of Union citizens, the EU shall invest strongly in the development of functioning real time translation technology. A strong European feeling of sharedness can not form if people do not understand each other.

Between citizens and institutions, the European parties are a central actor, and the EU can not develop as a democracy without them. Political work in the European Parliament is done through party groups, and this shall be visible to voters already during elections.

II - A Europe of Wellbeing

EU to defend justice and the environment

Genuine wellbeing is based on the equality of human beings and the sustainability of using natural resources. One of the central tasks of the EU is to support the renewal of economy, livelihoods, and European welfare states onto a more stable and stronger base. We must not leave to the coming generations the burdens of a spoiled environment, soiled public economies, nor the multitude of problems caused by social inequality.

The Union shall forcefully advance social justice within its area, and most strongly defend those who are most in peril - the poor, unemployed, and supplanted. The EU citizens' economic, social and cultural rights must be secured by guaranteeing European-wide minimum criteria for basic social security and labour market code. This is important not only socially, but also to prevent unfair competition in the single market through inhuman working conditions.

In elementary schooling, equality, and occupational safety and health the common European level should be lifted closer to the Nordic standards. Member states must however retain the possibility to maintain higher standards. The EU shall provide leadership in combining work and social security in ways that create room for new forms of work, entrepreneurship, and equality between genders.

We need social innovations, such as the development of social business models. One way to increase the flexibility of work is a European basic income trial. Particularly in areas where there are serious economic and social problems, common means to combat poverty are needed. Special

¹ Open politics and good governance are dealt with also in the Greens' *democracy programme* (www.vihreat.fi/node/7980 - in Finnish).

attention in the EU should be paid to youth, in order to guarantee an education and independent livelihood for every young European.

The wellbeing of also us Europeans depends on the carrying capacity of Earth and solving the climate crisis. Because of this, we too need to adapt our way of living to match Europeans' proportional share of natural resources and usage of ecosystem services. Only by common agreements can we solve environmental issues that affect the lives of people across borders.

The Greens expect clear leadership in environmental and climate politics in the world from the EU, and the EU's emissions reduction targets must be on par with climate science. The reduction of biodiversity must be stopped by 2020, and the fisheries of the Union and its nearby waters must be secured also for those fishing in 2020. The EU shall act to prevent the opening of the Northern Sea Route from being taken advantage of at the cost of the arctic nature or indigenous people.

We support the European Citizens' Initiative *Water and sanitation are a human right!* which combines the goals of social wellbeing, environmental protection, and democratic participation.

A new green economy

We want to enhance the single market, so that the wellbeing of people and the environment is increased and the conditions for green business are improved. The EU shall advance investments that both create jobs and produce environmentally friendly technology, products, and services. Examples of such are cross-border ventures that serve EU citizens, such as the Rail Baltica railroad from Tallinn to Warsaw, a European-wide electricity supergrid, or an ambitious green economy investment program. On the union level, also investments into research on social wellbeing and ecological sustainability that benefit the entire community are called for.

To renew the economies in crisis countries and to uncouple member states from dependence on imported fuels, an ambitious investment program in green economy is needed. Financing for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable transport solutions research and development must be increased.

In addition to the four freedoms - free movement of people, capital, products, and services - also the fifth freedom - free movement of information - shall be improved. The Greens believe in openness and the exchange of information and know-how as a foundation for new ideas and wellbeing. The creation of European-wide digital markets shall be promoted. Everyday matters such as working in another EU country shall be made easier.

As a large market area the EU must require its most important trade partners tighter regulations both with regard to environment and the labour market. When necessary, climate based carbon levies on imports shall be required of trade partners. No import of products into EU, where the agreements of the International Labour Organisation or adequate environmental standards are not observed in the production, shall be allowed.

In the EU structural funds, ecologically and ethically sustainable criteria shall be mainstreamed, and no projects detrimental to the environment or the climate (as working against EU's 2020 climate goals) shall be supported.

Successful agricultural and forestry policies must control climate change, guarantee ecosystem functions, and maintain biodiversity, and in addition ensure adequate and equal protection of the environment. Agricultural environment subsidies shall adhere to their purpose, that is, reduce environmental degradation. Currently the EU agricultural policy is headed in the wrong direction in

particular with regard to minimisation of environmental harms. If this road is followed onward, also the Baltic Sea is further endangered.

Agricultural subsidies must guarantee a reasonable level of self-sufficiency and the farmer's wellbeing in all of Europe. However in the longer term a smaller portion, relatively, of the EU budget shall be allocated to agriculture. The negative impacts of EU export subsidies and fisheries policy on global food security, ecosystems, and the agricultural markets in the developing countries must face critical scrutiny, and problematic subsidies shall be dismantled. The Union must support the possibility of GMO-free areas and GMO-free agriculture in Europe. ²

Financing the welfare state

The public economy must stand on solid ground and work on fair criteria, so that we can build new wellbeing in a changing world, as well as secure financing for public services. A significant part of our economic policy is common with other countries and the EU - we have chosen the Eurozone as our economic area of operation. Because of this it is vital that we are in the EU, building the public economy on a sustainable ground. To guarantee the sustainability of public economies in member states, the EU must require its member states to implement tax policies that are solidary, and tax collection that is efficient and diligent.

The Stability and Growth pact must in the future be adhered to, and it is important that the EU have a credible set of rules for the sustainable management of public finances. On the other hand the rules shalln't be so tight, that they'd prevent wisdom in countercyclical stabilization policies, or e.g. expansionary fiscal policy. The responsibilities and duties in EU economic policy must be clear and the decisionmaking open. ³

A functioning common economic policy is possible only if the countries in a currency zone see their benefit through the longer term, and understand the need to increase common responsibility. Strong common institutions for the Eurozone are needed in this.

In taxation, the member states shall consistently move from taxing work towards taxing capital and the usage of environment and natural resources. Taxation must reduce the growth of wealth inequality and be socially just. To prevent destructive tax competition, common EU-wide minimum levels on corporate, value added, energy and environmental taxes must be instituted, and these must be decidable on qualified majority of member states.

Tax avoidance and tax parasites must be controlled through e.g. efficient definitions of tax avoidance and tax parasites, a common black list, country specific reporting, and automated information exchange.

Ways for the EU to gather revenue from genuinely European taxation directly towards the EU budget must be created. Actions bridging gaps between different regions and evening out competitiveness gaps, and investments in green economy, can be partially funded also through a European financial market tax.

² Agriculture, countryside, and the valuable ecosystem services produced by them, have been discussed in more depth in the Greens' policy paper *Kohti ilmastoälykästä eurooppalaista maataloutta (Towards a climate-intelligent European agriculture)* (www.vihreat.fi/node/7898 - in Finnish).

³ European economic policy and its co-ordination have been discussed in more depth in the Greens' *monetary and finance policy programme* (www.vihreat.fi/node/8039 - in Finnish) and the statement on *Euroopan talouden korjauspaketti – 10 ehdotusta siitä, millaiselle ajattelulle voidaan rakentaa kestävä eurooppalaista taloutta (How to fix the European economy - 10 propositions on the kind of thinking to build a sustainable European economy on)* (www.vihreat.fi/node/7189 - in Finnish).

III - As a European in the World

European values

The value basis of modern Europeanism are inalienable human rights and the respect for human dignity. The common values of the EU are democracy, freedom and equality, and respect for the rule of law. Also the EU is tasked with securing these in Europe.

Human rights apply to all. Also the rights of minorities, such as Roma people, sexual minorities, and immigrants shall be guaranteed equally. For example systematic violations of the rights of disabled people prevalent in some member countries' institution systems shall be acted on. EU shall have authority and jurisdiction to act also to secure the rights of indigenous peoples and to reduce discrimination.

European states and the EU must respect fundamental human rights consistently as well in their own actions as in their neighbourhood, foreign, and EU enlargement policies. The EU shall have concrete means and criteria to interfere in situations, where member states violate those rights and values to which they have committed to in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter shall bind member states also when they implement national legislation.

The Union shall introduce an evaluation system for the state of human rights and rule of law in its member states.

To guarantee and improve democracy, citizen rights and mutual trust between Europeans, it is also essential to defeat corruption, illegal economy (also in the financial sector), and organised crime, and implant the principles of good governance in all of Europe.

The EU institutions shall act in an exemplary manner with regard to good political and administrative culture. Decisions shall be evaluated with regard to their gender impacts, and for instance the transfer from leading government official to lobbyist (so called revolving door issue) needs tight rules. The EU lobbying register shall be made mandatory.

On the borders of Europe

The inalienable human rights apply to everyone, and do not cease on EU external borders. The Union is a success first and foremost as a project for peace and human rights. This task must be extended in its foreign and border policy.

All European states and in the long term also neighbouring countries shall have the option of EU accession if they fulfill all membership criteria⁴. Expansion fatigue inside the EU shalln't let slow down the positive developments (e.g. in rule of law) encouraged by membership prospects in for instance the Balkan countries or Turkey.

A common refugee & asylum policy in EU shall be created. It shall guarantee equal treatment of all asylum seekers in respect of human dignity. The returning of refugees to member countries where their just treatment cannot be guaranteed shall not be required. At the same time the burden of reception and settlement of refugees can be shared more equitably between member countries.

⁴ So called Copenhagen criteria.

legalised through common decisions in the EU, and their rights improved. Means to prevent particularly harsh human rights violations, such as human trafficking, shall be made more effective through co-operation.

The free movement of people is an important principle to the Greens. In the Schengen area, border formalities between states shall not be reinstated. Surveillance of people within the Union shall not be expanded without proper grounds on the pretext of general security. Where surveillance and monitoring are necessary, tight regulations on data protection must be applied.

EU as a builder of global peace

The means for a common foreign policy and the European External Action Service shall be gradually strengthened. The powers of the European Parliament to decide on matters of foreign policy should be augmented e.g. when deciding on the budget, and already when negotiating on international agreements. Matters of foreign policy shall be decidable by a qualified majority.

As a long term goal the EU should have a common voice in international politics. It shall have common representation in the UN Security Council, UN organisations, and other international organisations. When possible, the EU should strive for full participation in UN agreements instead of observer status.

In matters of foreign, neighborhood and development policy, the EU shall follow the method of conditional policy known in EU accession negotiations: co-operation will be strengthened and deepened when the partner improves human rights, peace, and democracy. EU agreements with third countries, also trade agreements, shall have binding clauses for the respect of human rights and rule of law. In energy policy, EU shall avoid and reduce dependencies on undemocratic countries that violate human rights.

The EU shall carry its share of the responsibility for alleviating world poverty, human suffering and environmental degradation, and therefore be coherent in all its actions. EU must support means of sustainable production and consumption in developing countries, and act to combat climate change and for adapting to its effects. In addition, the EU shall cease demanding the deregulation of financial markets in developing countries. Development co-operation by member states shall be co-ordinated e.g. through joint programming, which should lessen the management burden placed on developing countries. The EU must develop and use all means available to it to prevent capital flight that maintains poverty and inequality.⁵

The EU must assume a role as a global producer of soft security and a peacebuilder that is in agreement with its economic weight. EU resources for civil crisis prevention shall at least match those afforded to military crisis management. Crisis management co-ordination and co-operation with the UN shall be deepened. EU military operations must be based on a UN mandate, and joint operations shall require the assent of the European Parliament.

The EU shall be an active proponent of global disarmament, and the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Export shall be made legally binding. The long term goal is a world free of nuclear weapons.

⁵ The adequate financing of development co-operation, policy coherence for development, and the issue of measuring development are dealt with more comprehensively in the Greens' *Policy paper for development* (<http://www.vihreat.fi/node/8068> - in Finnish).