

The logo consists of a green rounded square with a white graphic of a folded page or document at the top left corner.

**GREEN
EUROPEAN
JOURNAL**

Volume 8 May 2014

A close-up, low-angle photograph of several dark wooden chess pieces on a light-colored board. The pieces are in various positions, some standing upright and others slightly tilted. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

The Green fights for Europe

The logo features the letters 'GEF' in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a green rounded square.

GEF

**GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION**

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

Contents

The Green European Fights Benoît Lechat	3
Climate/Energy: The Empire Strikes Back Claude Turmes	6
A tough fight on social issues Jean Lambert	12
Green victories for digital rights Jan Philipp Albrecht	17
Improving LGBT Rights in times of a conservative reaction Ulrike Lunacek	22
Forbidding overfishing in Europe Isabella Lövin	28
“Political ecology is a martial art” Edouard Gaudot	34
What difference can it make? A comparison of the European parties’ electoral manifestos Manuel Müller	39
Counter-democracy to the rescue of Europe Etienne Balibar	50
For a Political Community for the Euro Benoît Lechat	58
Pathways to a Europe of the citizens Isabelle Durant and Gesine Schwan	66

The Green European Fights



Benoît Lechat

2009-2014: The legislative period has come to a close. That means it is time to take stock, look to the future, articulate actions, results and offer a vision for the short and long term. This will be necessary in order to face the many challenges to come.

One of the primary conclusions of the past five years is that the days of “easy politics” are gone, we have moved to an era of “hard politics.” The shift of society to a more sustainable paradigm has run into greater resistance than the Greens anticipated. The great wave of environmental consciousness that began in 2007 quickly gave way to strong conservative pushback. This is not just because of the economic crisis, which actually only served to boost the already existing counterattack launched by a system that feels its vested interests are directly at risk.

Identifying the Adversaries

Producers of fossil fuel generated energy are loath to give up the €500 billion in gas, oil and coal that is imported each year to the E.U. The banks would rather pass off the cost of their irresponsible behaviour to the taxpayers. Agro-industrial lobbies would prefer to maintain a system that wreaks havoc on the environment, harms farmers and damages the health of consumers. Proponents of neo-liberalism and *productivism* continue to believe that competition by all and with all and growth spurred by consumption of goods, irrespective of what they are, are intrinsically good.

The Greens have shown that they are capable of forging alliances with those in the current system that are willing to work towards sustainable development. From financial regulation to fighting overfishing, from promoting renewables to fighting for digital rights, they have pragmatically moved forward a number of important files through alliances with parties with which they do not always agree.

But, they also know how to fight those who resist change. Sometimes that means starting by simply naming them! In this age of global communications, it is important to clearly establish who one’s opponents are and then state it publicly. This is all the more important since the Greens can count on the increasing support of the citizens, who have already begun to change their habits. These alliances between politicians and grassroots movements are of paramount importance to the success of the Greens, because although entering in the majority culturally speaking, they remain firmly in the minority in the political sphere. These alliances are crucial in Europe as it is the only arena where it is actually possible to have an effect on global changes.

A Green Battle In Europe

The Green battle is being waged in Europe. As understandable as the desire to reject European decision makers is, it would be entirely counterproductive to support political parties that advocate for receding back to within national borders. Supporting sovereignists and nationalists on the left or the right will only play to the favour of the conservatives who have already clearly stated that they do not intend to change their currently policies, something their campaign manifestos confirm. The fight against today’s major challenges – climate change, declining bio-diversity, and financial deregulation - can only be done globally, through a united and willing EU. Europe must re-establish itself as a leader in the fight against climate change, a position that it sadly lost in 2009 in Copenhagen. Similarly, only the European Union is capable of

enacting legislation to regulate finance to protect against future crisis, the brunt of which the least advantaged always bear.

A Green Battle For Europe

This battle for global justice will not be possible if we do not first re-establish justice within Europe. This will require building bridges over the trenches that have been dug between Europeans. This can be done through a better handling of the crisis. Europe will not be taken seriously in its defence of solidarity globally if it is not able to uphold it within its own borders.

There will be no economic governance of the Eurozone without social governance and a meaningful transfer union. Those who would have us believe otherwise will bear a major historical burden.

Moreover, we must keep all of the pieces of the European puzzle together! The debate surrounding the need to tighten integration within the Eurozone means that we must give a clear indication to those who are not yet a member as to what it will require to become one. Citizens of Ukraine know well what the E.U. means in terms of democracy and by extension of shared prosperity, whatever the definition.

Paying Heed to History

This edition of the Green European Journal aims to show - without overestimating or underestimating - what a small group of Green MEPs can accomplish. Their courage and determination are anchored in a vision of shared progress for all Europeans. If the crisis has taught us one thing it is that progress is slow and comes through trial and error, and that we have an obligation to learn as much from our failures and as from our triumphs. In honour of the 100th anniversary of WWI (1914-1918), we contemplate our history to better understand current policy. In order to ensure a fruitful debate on what our priorities should be for reform, or for where to best take action, we must, as Etienne Balibar advocates, understand the historical moment in which Europe finds itself. As arduous and theoretical as this may seem, we have an obligation. Failing to do so would mean failing to be effective in our political endeavours, and in our ability to offer a firmly forward looking vision. ■

Author: Benoît Lechat is editor-in-chief of the Green European Journal.



Claude Turmes

Climate/Energy: The Empire Strikes Back

In 2009, the fight against climate change entered a phase that is as difficult as it is decisive. Behind the resistance of conservatives to taking action lurk the big lobbies for the fossil fuel sector who would prefer to see small consumers pick up the bill for the energy transition. The Greens believe we cannot let our guard down. On the contrary, we must step up our efforts from now until the COP summit in Paris in 2015. The following is an interview with Claude Turmes, Member of the European Parliament from Luxembourg (Die Greng).

GEJ: Could you give us an overview of progress made on the issue of climate change in Europe since 2009?

Claude Turmes: I differentiate between three phases of progress in efforts to fight climate change. The first starts in 2007 and ends in 2009 with the failure of the Copenhagen summit (COP 15) and the change in attitude of conservative parties. The second runs from 2009 to 2013 and the third began in early 2014 with what I call the “Barroso Putsch,” which marked the beginning of phase marked by much more conflict compared to the previous two.

The first period, 2007- 2009, was generally positive. It began with increased awareness of the challenge of climate change thanks to the Stern report and Al Gore’s film, “An Inconvenient Truth.” The second phase started with the failed Copenhagen conference. During this phase, the impetus of the previous phase meant that we were still able to make some progress on two very important directives in the area of energy efficiency.

The first directive applies to new constructions and was concluded in 2010. We weren’t able to make progress in the area of building renovation due to a lack of funding. However, thanks to an amendment made by the Greens, we were able to secure provisions that require all new buildings built in Europe as of 2021 to be “Near Zero Energy.” This is an enormous incentive for the building sector. The next step will be for new buildings to produce more energy than they consume.

GEJ: What is the second directive?

CT: The *European Energy Efficiency Directive* (EEED), for which I served as rapporteur. The directive sets the objective of reducing primary energy consumption throughout the EU. This is crucial if we are to segue into a new green economy. For this purpose the directive establishes a whole range of instruments. Each Member State must draw up a full register of all buildings and establish an action plan for renovation to boost energy efficiency. This plan must include subsidies and measures to improve the training of those working in the construction sector. All public buildings must be exemplary. What’s more, all major industries must have an Energy Management System to handle energy flows. In this way the directive establishes the principle of “Demand- Response.” That means that in the future the European electrical grid must have increasingly flexible production systems so that they can pick up where renewables leave off, such as gas turbines. Also, some types of highly consuming infrastructure must be made more flexible. The directive is currently being transposed into national legislation. This is a very important accomplishment that came after a long and arduous battle.

GEJ: What resistance did you encounter?

CT: Until the French presidency of the European Union in 2008, the conservatives had a climate agenda. Then, they completely abandoned it to toe the line of Mr. Mittal (Part-owner and CEO of *ArcelorMittal*) and other giants of the energy industry. They want us to believe that the economic

crisis in Europe is the consequence of overly strict environmental laws.

Prior to the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 we had won the meta-debate on climate change. Al Gore's film and the IPCC report were so convincing that even a conservative like Sarkozy drew up a Climate Package, which the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union made a priority. This demonstrates the importance of social movements in setting the political agenda. This impetus meant that we were able to conclude the EEED, despite the fact that the conservatives had changed stance. Then, in early 2014, came what I call the "*Barroso Putsch*" i.e., the Commission's proposal for the Climate-Energy Package 2030.

GEJ: Why do you consider this a putsch?

CT: First, because it calls for a European-level reduction in GHG emissions of 40% in 2030 compared to 1990 levels. That is lower than what scientists are advocating for and it will result in developing countries doing nothing. Second, by suggesting that as of 2020 we will not need binding objectives for each Member State, Barroso is attacking the governance of the two flagship directives of the Energy-Climate Package: the Renewable Energy Directive and the Energy Efficiency Directive. Without binding national objectives, some governments, Poland and the United Kingdom to name two, will be tempted to stop making any progress in the way of renewables and energy efficiency. Most importantly, without European convergence on what we call the three "No Regrets" (energy efficiency, renewables

and grids), we're running the risk of blowing up the internal energy market.

GEJ: How do you explain Barroso's stance on this?

CT: He's been influenced by the business lobby **BUSINESSEUROPE** and by the so-called "Marguerite" group, the gas and coal lobby. Under the supervision of Gérard Mestrallet, chairman of the board of GDF-Suez, this surreal lobby aims to kill renewables and energy efficiency. They know perfectly well that energy efficiency and renewables would mean energy savings for Europe of €500 billion a year. This would be money in hand for the citizens of Europe. And it would also mean a smaller paycheck and less clout for geopolitical meddling for Monsieur Putin. But mainly it would be a blow to the profits of GDF-Suez and other gas and coal companies. So Mr. Mestrallet lobbied Mr. Barroso to water down any European energy policy that would actually protect the environment while boosting energy independence and job creation in renewables and insulation worth some 400,000 jobs that in time could become 2 million jobs in Europe.

GEJ: Hasn't there been an outcry?

CT: Yes, thankfully in February 2014 the European Parliament rejected Barroso's 2030 proposal. Instead, they called for a 30% renewable target instead of 27% and for a binding energy efficiency target of 40%, whereas the Commission proposes no target for efficiency at all. They also demanded targets that were binding on Member States instead of one target for the EU as a whole. This illustrates the European

This illustrates the European Parliament's ability to resist the pressure of lobbies. The ball is now firmly in the court of the ministers and heads of state and government.

Parliament's ability to resist the pressure of lobbies. The ball is now firmly in the court of the ministers and heads of state and government.



GEJ: How do you explain why this conflict is not more clearly apparent outside of the European Parliament?

CT: Well the problem is that Mestrallet is working on the sly by entering into contracts with politicians. For example, GDF more than likely signed a contract with Rachida Dati, an MEP from the French right, in exchange for negatively swaying European energy policy. In the near future she will appear before the Parliament's Ethics Committee. Plus, cunningly, Mestrallet and his buddies in the electricity sector sent in Mittal and "coal" ironworkers to say that the Greens, in their attempts to tackle climate change, were destroying jobs. However some very energy intensive companies, like BASF for example, have yet to pay a single penny under the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). None of the 17 companies from Luxembourg that are in the EU ETS have paid a single

Euro to date. It is estimated that by halting, but not closing, the metal plants in several regions in Europe, Mittal made a profit of €300 million on the European quota system. That has not stopped him from complaining to European governments that it is their efforts to fight climate change that are killing his business.

His second line of attack is to say that renewables make the cost of electricity higher in Europe than in the United States. It's ludicrous! The cost of electricity has been lower in Europe than in the United States for 30 years. The German bank KfW carried out a study that clearly shows that Europe has not lost its competitive advantage in energy precisely because European businesses are more energy efficient. Mittal forgot to point out that the price on the electricity market has fallen from €65 per megawatt in 2008 to €40, or even less, today. Electricity has never been more affordable for European industry. Companies like Mittal have received hefty exemptions from the mechanisms to boost renewables.

We also know that since 2008 European exports of steel have increased while imports from Kazakhstan, the United States and Brazil haven't fallen. If European companies were not competitive, how could this possibly be the case? So, Mittal does the dirty work for the gas and electricity sector and he has the ear of some politicians. He lies to destroy what we have accomplished in the area of energy policy. At a time when two thirds of European production plants must be replaced, when we need to invest in distribution lines and high voltage, the strategy of the big industrial producers who account for 30-40%

of electricity consumption in Europe is to pass on the cost of the energy transition to small consumers and SMEs. They want to be the only ones who don't have to bear the brunt.

GEJ: Besides Rachida Dati, who are the main European Parliament points of contact for the big producers?

CT: Generally, the conservatives, some liberals, and a few socialist governments. Having said that, we were able to face down the "*Barroso Putsch*" in February thanks to the support of the Socialists and Democrats Group of MEPs, who voted with the Greens, and some far-left MEPs, some liberals and a small minority of around 50-60 conservatives, including a Belgian MEP Anne Delvaux, with whom we have worked on numerous occasions.

GEJ: What is the best strategy to fight back against the stealthy approach of the fossil fuel sector?

CT: First, we need to strike head-on and show Messieurs Mittal and Mestrallet's lies for what they are. We need to use the numbers to debunk their shameful and intolerable lobbying. Then, we need to strengthen the link between environmental policy and economic recovery. How can an economy that loses €500 billion every year because it inefficiently uses gas, coal and oil possibly be strong? By sending less money to Putin we redirect that money to Europe for added value and job creation at home. Developing wind turbines, solar energy,

building energy efficient cars and expanding public transportation are also ways of bringing added value back to Europe and creating jobs. Therefore the Greens have the major challenge of showing that Europe must make investing in energy a priority.

GEJ: Fine, but with what money?

CT: The bad news is that the European budget at 1% of total European GDP is not enough. The battle over the European budget has clearly been lost. However we cannot forget that there are still €23 billion of structural funds that are earmarked for energy efficiency and renewables. A flagship project for the European Greens should be to use this money to leverage loans for investment from the European Investment Bank. The EIB, the world's biggest public investment bank, could offer cheap money for building renovation, development of wind energy, and photovoltaic (to take back the competitive edge from China). It could also contribute to modernising the European grid to facilitate integration, especially in the area of wind power.

GEJ: What is your take on the future of international climate negotiations?

CT: The Copenhagen Summit was a real failure, notably because of divisions that existed within Europe. Europeans also made the mistake of believing that they could count on an alliance with Obama, who unfortunately didn't have backing from a majority back home. Therefore, we should learn from our mistakes if we want the COP Paris 2015

No other political movement has as much expertise on climate change policy and on the best way to implement it while factoring in social, employment and industrial development issues.

summit to be a success. First, we need to make the financial commitments that were made to developing countries after Copenhagen and Cancun a reality. There is no chance for success in Paris without the establishment of the Green Fund or the Climate Fund.

GEJ: Who can make that happen?

CT: The next European Commission and the French government who will be chairing the Paris Conference. Plus, Luxembourg will hold the rotating Council presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2015, so Carole Dieschbourg (Green Party Environment Minister) will be key. We also will need to build a global movement involving stakeholders like towns and cities. Currently there are several alliances like the Climate Alliance, Energie Cité, and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg's C40. They've set themselves the goal of getting 5,000 big cities from around the world to commit themselves to fighting climate change from now until the Paris Conference. In the area of renewable energies a partnership should be forged with IRENA, which is the global organisation for renewables, to show developing countries that renewable energy sources can be developed at a cost that has decreased drastically over the course of the last few years.

GEJ: Do we also need to reinvigorate citizen involvement?

CT: I, like José Bové, believe that Paris must be the "Climate's Seattle." So in November 2015 we need tens, even hundreds, of thousands of citizens to take to the streets to exert pressure on the governments.

GEJ: After Warsaw, people are sceptical. Should we continue to use the streets for our activism?

CT: Warsaw was an insult to the climate and to future generations by the Polish government. Fortunately, it was viewed as such by all of the other delegations present from around the world. Poland forever tarnished its reputation by changing Environment Minister in the middle of negotiations.

GEJ: What role should the Greens play?

CT: The role of the Greens is threefold. No other political movement has as much expertise on climate change policy and on the best way to implement it while factoring in social, employment and industrial development issues. We must bring this expertise to the negotiations. We should also use our position within the governments of Finland and Luxembourg. Then, the Greens must tighten their networks with the various stakeholders: cities, producers of renewables, those working in energy efficiency. The Greens work best when they serve as a soundboard for social movements. They will have to be a catalyst for the Climate's Seattle in Le Bourget in Paris.

More generally, after the European elections, we must be ready to act to make sure that tackling climate change is an absolute priority on a planet that will soon have a population of 9 billion and where the majority of ecosystems are already in the red. ■

Claude Turmes is a Green/EFA MEP from Luxembourg





Jean Lambert

A tough fight on social issues

From the Youth Guarantee to the EU's annual growth survey, the Greens played a key role in reinforcing the awareness on the dramatic social consequences of austerity. The fight was hard fought against all those who used the crisis to justify a weakening of social protection. The following is an interview with Jean Lambert, Member of the European Parliament from the United Kingdom.

GEJ: How do you assess the evolution of the debate on social issues during the closing sessions of the current European Parliament term? Were the answers that were given to the consequences of the crisis sufficient? And what was the role of the Greens in this discussion on taking up the social challenges of the crisis?

Jean Lambert: It has been a major fight. It's been a fight just to maintain social issues, whether on social security or wider on access to services as part of the political landscape. On the answers that we're getting on crisis, joblessness, we are beginning now to see something of a way forward. But if you think of the earlier part of the parliamentary term, with a lot of the discussion around how to maintain the stability of the euro, there was an enormous emphasis being put on the economic side of things: "How do we deal with the currency?" Not, "How do we actually deal with the people using the currency?" The Parliament has really had to fight its way in to that debate, whether that was Parliament fighting to even be part of the 2020 strategy or to be part of the discussion about what the Troika was doing - where was the social dimension on that? Why wasn't Parliament even being involved in this discussion in any particular way? Let alone civil society. So these have been some of the markers.

Struggle for a focus on social rights

GEJ: And what was the role of the Greens within this?

JL: We have actually had quite a significant role, partly because the Greens who sit in the economic committee, the Monetary Affairs Committee, have

an interest in and an understanding of the social dimension, like Sven Giegold, Philippe Lamberts and Pascal Canfin. But also in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee we've had a really strong team of Greens. Right from the beginning, Tatjana Ždanoka has been alerting us to the total lack of any sort of social conditionality in what was being done in Latvia, which was a precursor of what we've seen by the Troika. Marije Cornelissen did really excellent work buying into that in terms of "What we were going to do with the European semester and the annual growth survey (a Commission-led process of increasing economic coordination between Member States)?" The Greens were first off the block in talking to civil society about their perspective on the national reform plans and the annual growth survey from the Commission. The report Marije Cornelissen authored in the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, on the annual growth survey, worked very strongly with the economic affairs committee rapporteur. And that has become part of the framework for how Parliament now deals with the annual growth survey. We've been very strong there, partly because we had already done background research as a political group. And when it came up in the employment coordinators we could say, "Look, we're ready. We've got this." And we were lucky to manage to get that report. So Greens have set the framework.

GEJ: The Greens have played a key role in the discussion on the Youth Guarantee, yes?

JL: Yes the Youth Guarantee that was another opportunity we took up. Every year within the Employment-Social Affairs Committee the

We were very aware that the Youth Guarantee is not a silver bullet which could solve all the problems. But it is a mechanism that we can offer to help young people stay in contact with the labour market.

coordinators put forward a number of ideas for genuine initiative reports and a number of us had put forward the idea about having a report on the situation of youth unemployment. When it came to actually handing out the report no other political group put their hand up so we said we'd take it. For that report, we allocated Emily Turunen from Denmark, who was the youngest Member of Parliament. She did a really thorough report. What's come through from that has partly been the quality internships, but also the Youth Guarantee being put forward at the European level. We were very aware that the Youth Guarantee is not a silver bullet which could solve all the problems. But it is a mechanism that we can offer to help young people stay in contact with the labour market, to feel that they are important to our future. It went through in the Parliament. Emily did a lot of work with the Commission, in helping to shape what the Youth Guarantee might look like at the European level.



Jean Lambert and fellow Green MEP Isabelle Durant at a rally against austerity

The social rollback of the governments

GEJ: Was there an evolution on social issues during this time period?

JL: Things have moved in this legislature, in some of the different political parties. From the beginning the Greens have been very aware of the social dimension that obviously you would expect parties of the left to be. Then we've seen a growing understanding across the Parliament about the devastating effects that a lot of the measures that have been taken have had on the very structures of our society. Last year I did a report on access to care for vulnerable groups in times of crisis, which certainly in its original form was quite a tough report. It basically said that austerity measures are incompatible with a social Europe. And it went through in the employment committee, and albeit without the reference to incompatibility with austerity, the rest of that report went through pretty well untouched in the plenary with an enormous majority of over 500 votes. This means that people across the Parliament have come to realise that even if you want to balance budgets, that what has happened in the EU has been dramatic, and has cut far too far, far too fast in many countries. And that we're actually destabilising our own future with some of the measures taken.

GEJ: So there is no social roll-back?

JL: Well... I think there still is. Because while people might be very concerned about the dramatic social effects, such as the lack of access to healthcare in Greece and very high levels of youth unemployment

You've had a social roll back on that under the Troika in programme countries. And what we're hearing from social partners is that it will take a long time to really re-establish that.

in so many countries, a number of governments are still making pretty dramatic cuts and looking for all sorts of changes in the name of the crisis, but which I think they would do anyway. Obviously a prime candidate for that is the UK. We still have, and you can see it in some of the votes, this question about what constitutes red tape in the labour market. There has been no movement on the Working Time Directive in this entire five years. If you look at what's happened with the Maternity Rights Directive, which hasn't gone anywhere. Or in terms of social dialogue. You've had a social roll back on that under the Troika in programme countries. And what we're hearing from social partners is that it will take a long time to really re-establish that. So in the Parliament, what we managed to do is a bit of holding on. I wouldn't say we've actually been making progress.

GEJ: How do you see the challenges of the next Parliament?

JL: Well, if the forecasts about the outcome are correct, there will be a difficulty in the next Parliament, in terms of forward movement on a number of social issues. We'll probably see certain Directives back for revision and so on. Basically the two largest political groups will look to each other to form an easy majority. There will certainly be some questions about what a larger GUE (the European Left Grouping) will do. Because if we're going to see any sort of social progress it may well be that their votes are going to be necessary to get that. So are they going to accept something that is better than what we've got, or wait for perfection? There's a degree of

pressure there as well. Given that we still have the climate crisis growing, if we're really looking at where are the new jobs, where's the investment got to come from, it is going to be a struggle. And it's going to be a struggle linked with the environmental dimension. If you look at some of the people who didn't support backloading of the emission trading system (a reform to improve the effectiveness of the system), part of their reason for not doing that was that they were nervous about job losses in their own Member States. So I think this issue about how potential job losses as opposed to job gains plays against the environmental agenda is going to be a very important one in the next Parliament. And there, I don't see that as necessarily a left-right issue, but as an issue between different countries and their own political programs.

GEJ: And their industrial structures...

JL: And their industrial structures. Because you saw the Spanish Socialists, the Spanish Popular Party, abstaining on backloading. This was a national issue, in terms of protecting the jobs that you have, instead of believing you can find investment to create new jobs which will last a lot longer.

Priority: tackling poverty by reducing inequalities

GEJ: The top priority for the next time period?

JL: One of them has got to be to make sure that we don't lose any of the gains that we made in terms of bringing that stronger social dimension into

the annual growth survey. We have implemented indicators there now. We've got the Commission looking at the national reform programs on a much more organised basis, on social dimensions. We can't lose that. We've really, really got to keep that. That's been such a struggle. The second thing I think we need to do is start looking a lot of these issues, not through a dimension necessarily about jobs, but an issue about poverty and wellbeing. Because even if we're looking at job creation in new sectors, even if we're trying to develop care sectors, there will still be a lot of people who will not be in work. Either because they're too young, too old, maybe have other factors which mean they can't work, what do we do? So this is more about how do we reduce those inequalities in society and really actually start dealing with the issues of poverty. This is about social structures and the social benefits. That shift towards tackling poverty by reducing inequalities is a major issue for us.

GEJ: Just a final question. Is it possible for the English and Welsh Greens to be identified as an alternative to the mainstream parties in the UK, with this vision that you have just described?

JL: I think so. We've been pigeonholed as Greens elsewhere have as "you're only about the environment." As if the environment isn't our life support system. But in reality we have done a lot of work on a lot of the social issues. For example during the European year of anti-poverty we were the only party in the UK that was visible. The consistent work that we've done in the Parliament here, the links that we've got with civil society and trade unions, that are really beginning to question whether certain parties really want to go forwards, or whether they recognise the climate dimension as well. And we're seeing a lot more trade unions recognising that this isn't just about jobs, this is actually about climate jobs. The Greens have a strong record in the UK as well in opposing a lot of the austerity measures, opposing the cuts from the British Government. So I think that increasingly the Greens have a social identity that links with the environmental one in the UK. ■

Jean Lambert is a Greens/EFA MEP from the United Kingdom

Green victories for digital rights



Jan Philipp Albrecht

Stronger data protection and a digital bill of rights are a core part of how the Greens want to change Europe. Europeans should be entitled to their privacy and it must be respected. An interview with German Green MEP Jan Philipp Albrecht on his struggles for digital rights in the European Parliament.

Greens are always successful if they have strong connections to social movements and to civil society.

GEJ: What were your objectives and goals at the beginning of this legislature, when you first arrived in the European Parliament?

Jan Philipp Albrecht: For me it was clear that the Green Group in the European Parliament was the group which was into the whole digital rights issue already. We had the fights on the software patents and data retention directives in the previous legislature. And we knew that there would be challenges for freedoms and rights in the digital environment, and they came quite soon. And the biggest fight for sure was the ACTA agreement, where we wanted to avoid a punitive approach to the sharing of information on the internet. Especially when it comes to remixes of videos, to artistic content, and to free communication. And of course we wanted to achieve standards for fundamental rights. And they weren't included in the ACTA agreement.

GEJ: Yes, and what made this victory possible? It was a hard struggle probably.

JPA: We worked for almost two years on rejecting that agreement, on working against the Commission's proposal in negotiations. And also against a majority of the Parliament, which just wanted to conclude the agreement, until there was public awareness in Europe and people took to the streets and protested with us. And we managed to get a majority against the agreement in the Parliament, and that was for sure a huge victory.

The essential link to the social movements

GEJ: Was the link between the social movements and the Greens in the European Parliament a crucial element to explain this victory?

JPA: This was really important for us. Greens are always successful if they have strong connections to social movements and to civil society. And as we have had a very consistent policy with regard to digital rights, these movements were fighting with us. And they helped us to work against the ACTA agreement and to build a majority against it. Just to give you an example, in June 2012, Avaaz – which is an supranational democratic community of 20 million members – presented a petition that was signed by 2.5 million citizens in a few weeks, calling on MEPs to reject ACTA. Combined with a telephone and mailing campaign, it overturned a majority that was initially supporting ACTA.



The ACTA victory was only made possible by a strong link with social movements.

GEJ: All this helped also to change the position of the other parties. What was the position of, for example, the Social Democrats on this issue?

JPA: For a very long time, the majority of the Social Democrats were completely in favour of adopting the ACTA agreement. So they also wanted a document that was not transparent. And we always had to fight for it and convince them. And only when we were speaking in public debates did the Social Democrats change their minds, and also some Liberals and Conservatives changed to our position.

GEJ: And what was the attitude of the far-left in this debate?

JPA: They were most of the time absent in the debates. They were not really there, because they did not have really a profile on digital rights. But at the end it was clear that they were voting with us when it was on transparency and on strengthening digital rights. So we had to do the job for them. But at the end we could also count on them to vote with us.

GEJ: Could you sketch for us what are the main challenges of digital rights for the next legislature, on the European level? What is the top priority for you?

JPA: We can already see these challenges right now. They are already there. This is on data protection, and privacy, on copyright reform, which will come, it's on net neutrality regulation, which we just debated

in the Parliament, and which will be in the next Parliament too. And of course it's also the whole debate on the negotiations for the TTIP agreement (the EU/US Trade Deal currently under negotiation), which also has an effect on the fundamental rights in the internet.

The challenge of privacy protection on the web

GEJ: The NSA scandal, which did not provoke everywhere the same public discontent, gives me the feeling that public awareness of the protection of privacy is not really sufficient in Europe. There seems to be some kind of fatalism. The people know, 'yes, we are all controlled, we are followed by the NSA', but how can we change this?' I was personally really surprised by the lack of reaction after the Snowden affair. Do you share this point of view? And how can we go against this state of mind?

JPA: We have to better explain to people how important it is for our freedoms and for our self-determination in society, both as citizens and as consumers, that we have strong data protection rights. That we can decide which data we want to make public or provide to companies. And that we have the right to privacy and private communications. And that is endangered of course because of companies and because of security institutions. And thereby, I think we have to go on the offensive, but we are on a very good track and we can get a majority on this.

The citizens of Europe expect us to deliver a strong EU wide data protection regulation. If there are some Member States which do not want to deliver after two years of negotiations, the majority should go ahead without them.

A new data regulation

GEJ: OK, so you think the European Parliament has a real competence and role to play in this, in order to increase the protection of digital rights?

JPA: Absolutely. Just yesterday (March 13th) in plenary MEPs voted overwhelmingly to adopt the Data Protection regulation that I drafted. That was one of our most important projects for the Greens in the European Parliament. And we really showed that we take care of the online rights of individuals in the digitalised world.

GEJ: Can you explain the main outlines of this new regulation?

JPA: The new regulation tightens the EU's existing data protection rules, which have been in place for 19 years and urgently needed updating. It calls for strict safeguards to protect the data of citizens when that data is transferred to non-EU states. It also ensures that the same laws apply in all EU states, which makes it easier for companies and organisations to do business.

GEJ: Are there real guarantees that this will be complied with?

JPA: The report calls for strict penalties for companies that break data protection rules. Firms that break the rules should face fines of up to €100 million, or up to 5% of their annual worldwide turnover, whichever is greater. This is a far greater deterrent than proposed by the European Commission, who had suggested penalties of up to €1 million or 2% of worldwide

annual turnover. Any organisation would have to ask the permission of the relevant Member State's data protection authority before transferring that data to a non-EU country. Organisations would also have to inform the person concerned.

GEJ: Are there other key measures?

JPA: The new regulation would put strict limits on using information stored to profile a person for advertising purposes. Companies would also have to ask for explicit permission to process your data and ensure that any privacy and user agreements are explained in plain, easy-to-understand language. The citizens of Europe expect us to deliver a strong EU wide data protection regulation. If there are some Member States which do not want to deliver after two years of negotiations, the majority should go ahead without them.

GEJ: Was it an easy legislative process?

JPA: The regulation faced a record 4,000 amendments, mostly copied and pasted from industry lobbyists. However most of these were defeated because there is a broad consensus in favour of strong data protection in Europe. After the latest revelations from Edward Snowden it became unlikely that proposals for cutting protection would be supported. Unfortunately the Parliament rejected an amendment from the Greens to the report on mass surveillance that would have called for EU Member States to grant protection to Snowden in light of those revelations.

GEJ: The issue of the digital rights seems to be one of the key challenges of the TTIP (the EU/US trade deal currently being negotiated) negotiations. Are they really endangering the results of the work of the European Parliament?

JPA: The US industry has a massive interest in using the trade agreement to undermine our data protection standards and is lobbying heavily around it. If the trade negotiations go wrong before we have concluded the work on the EU data protection reform, we might even be barred from improving our data protection and digital rights standards because US companies could reject them under the investor protection clauses that are also foreseen in TTIP.

GEJ: What should we do in order to strengthen the “open source approach” in these negotiations?

JPA: Free and open source software and other open products and services often do not have an investor in the classical sense, but are collaboratively built by the community. We therefore have to ensure that proprietary software and related goods and services are not discriminated by trade provisions such as investor protection clauses. And of course we have to walk the talk and conduct the negotiations themselves in a much more open and inclusive manner. Something is fundamentally wrong when negotiation documents are shared with hundreds of lobbyists and not the citizens that are affected in the end. ■

Jan Philipp Albrecht is a Greens/EFA MEP from Germany.



Ulrike Lunacek

Improving LGBT Rights in times of a conservative reaction

Strengthening the rights of LGBT people was one of the goals and achievements of the Greens in the last European legislature. Not an easy task in this time of conservative reaction. In this interview Austrian Green MEP Ulrike Lunacek also addresses the issue of EU enlargement to the Eastern European countries.

GEJ: Ulrike, you have been the rapporteur of the Roadmap against homophobia that was adopted by the European Parliament in February 2014. Why is this report so important?

Ulrike Lunacek: In comparison to other continents, in Europe we have already quite good legislation on the rights of LGBT people. 17 Member States have either marriage or partnerships for lesbians, gays and sexual transgender people. There is an anti-discrimination directive in the field of employment. Since I had my own coming out about 30 years ago, there has been a lot of progress.

But in 2013, the Fundamental Rights Agency published a study that showed: almost two-thirds of LGBT people in the EU are afraid to walk hand-in-hand with their loved ones in the street. The study has also documented that around one quarter of these people had experienced some kind of verbal or physical violence and that a certain number of them had been attacked or beaten because of being lesbian or gay.

GEJ: So this study convinced the European Parliament to react?

UL: Yes, ten times previously the European Parliament had asked the European Commission to develop a roadmap and strategy against homophobia and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. But the Commission has always refused to do so, arguing that the victim package which also includes LGBT people was sufficient. That's

why the European Parliament and more precisely its Committee on Civil Liberties decided to produce an initiative report asking the Commission to develop such a roadmap. I was the rapporteur of this report which means that I had the lead in drafting and negotiating it. I was supported with shadows from several groups, including Roberta Metsola from the Conservatives in Malta, a progressive woman herself, and that helped a lot.

GEJ: Can you give us some examples of the recommendations issued in this roadmap?

UL: The roadmap describes clearly the areas where action is needed, and what kind of action can be done. But there is also a very clear clause of subsidiarity on the respective competences of the Commission and of the Member States. On the field of education, the report states that the Commission should facilitate the exchange of best practices in different countries, in order to enhance positive images of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, for example, in schoolbooks. There is also a focus on the education of police forces on the issue of homophobia.

Facing a conservative reaction

GEJ: There was a controversial issue on the rights of married homosexual couples...

UL: Indeed, the roadmap addresses the issue of the rights of married couples who are moving inside the EU, like a lesbian couple married in Spain with

There is a growing community, a mixture of Christian fundamentalists and nationalists, anti-Europeans, right-wing people, who unite on these issues against lesbians and gays, against women's rights. They are very well organised and have a lot of money.

children, or a gay couple married in Sweden or Great Britain. If they move to Austria or Slovakia or Poland they should have equal rights according to what marriage or partnership means at home. But this simple recommendation has been abused by many opponents who accuse us of telling Member States that they have to introduce marriage for same sex couples. It is ridiculous. We knew perfectly well that such a demand wouldn't pass in Parliament, even if I of course would personally go for that. But it's not in the EU competence.

BL: I heard that you received a lot of negative messages.

UL: Yes, I was really amazed by the amount of emails I got in one week, more than 40,000, most with the same accusations, probably automated, from a website. They were totally false allegations. One of them was that with this report LGBT people would have a veto right at EU level, something never heard of! I got some hate mails that included some threats. My website was hacked four days before the vote. There is a growing community, a mixture of Christian fundamentalists and nationalists, anti-Europeans, right-wing people, who unite on these issues against lesbians and gays, against women's rights. They are very well organised and have a lot of money.



GEJ: Do you see that throughout Europe? Or just in some countries?

UL: It is happening all over. Most of the mails I got were from Spain, but there is a website that is organising different websites, active in many Member States. And of course in France, the opponents were also very heavily organised after that country's discussion on same sex marriage. They even called people like a Conservative MEP at home to ask them not to vote in favour of the Report. Nevertheless, there was broad support in the European Parliament. 398 MEPs voted in favour, which was more than I expected, and it was a very good sign that MEPs from the more conservative parties weren't all influenced by these hate-filled people who don't really understand what homophobia is about.

GEJ: Ok, so you went through this. What now needs to be done in the future on this level?

UL: Well, this report is not a legislative one, but it is one which clearly asks the Commission to go ahead. What is now important before the election is that candidates for the Parliament and the Commission sign up to the pledge that ILGA Europe is asking the candidates to sign. And after the elections, we will be forming a new LGBT Intergroup with likeminded people in the Parliament. In the hearings for new Commissioners in the Parliament, we will ask the candidates whether they will support that pledge.

GEJ: Are there other issues or aspects of discrimination, against women for example, which you addressed during this legislature?

UL: In the spring of 2010, the Women's Committee and a majority of the Parliament voted on a legislative act to demand that women who become mothers should have, if they were currently employed, 20 weeks paid leave after the child is born. They also decided that the fathers should have the right to two weeks of paid parental leave, right after birth, together with the mother (the directive would also apply to same sex parents). But the Council - Member States' governments - are blocking implementation saying this would be far too expensive. I find that really very irresponsible, knowing how important it would be for equal participation of women at the work place fighting against the glass ceiling in careers - and for employers to learn that men also stay at home when they have kids! And for fathers to learn

very early to show responsibility for a newborn baby. But yes, we will try again in the next legislative period.

Against the enlargement fatigue

GEJ: Maybe now we can jump to the enlargement issue. I saw your reaction in October after the European Commission published its strategy on enlargement. You were quite critical of it. Can you explain your vision of the continuing enlargement process?

UL: It is true that we can see something like an enlargement fatigue. After the accession of Croatia, there seems to be a lack of will by Member States to have more countries accede to the EU. Of course with all of them, be it Montenegro, Serbia, or Macedonia, or others, it will still take years until they can accede. But what the European Parliament has been saying in all of its reports is that we need to support enlargement because, especially for the Western Balkans countries, it gives them a vision of lasting peace and stability. The horrible wars we had after the falling apart of Yugoslavia should never again happen. We must repeat this precisely at the moment we are experiencing a new threat to peace on the continent, with Russia annexing Crimea and with the unstable situation in Ukraine. The European perspective, for the countries in the Western Balkan countries, is the motor for democratic, economic and social reforms. It is also crucial - we've seen this very clearly with Croatia- for working on the past and bringing war criminals to justice. We see the

The European perspective, for the countries in the Western Balkan countries, is the motor for democratic, economic and social reforms.

normalisation process between Kosovo and Serbia. It's not done yet, it still will be difficult, but I know so many young people in all the Western Balkan countries who are so keen on working towards this EU accession and also fighting against corruption and organised crime. They just want to have normal, modern, rule of law based countries. This is the big promise of European accession.

GEJ: This is the vision. But there can also be disappointment if this vision is not realised.

UL: Yes, for sure, there is always disappointment if promises are never totally fulfilled. This is politics. But with Croatia we have seen what the enlargement process has brought. In the end, also the system in Croatia itself has been improved. It's not perfect yet. But the situation for minorities has been improved. There is also some kind of reconciliation with Serbia. The public awareness and the support for LGBT Pride has improved. But it's not enough yet. We also have some Member States who are blocking others, like Greece with Macedonia. We - specifically my Dutch colleague Marije Cornelissen - were successful as Greens in the European Parliament with including in the report on Macedonia the proposal to accept a geographical name for the country, be it northern Macedonia or something else, in order to open the process for accession negotiations.

GEJ: How is the current discussion on Bosnia?

UL: This is the country that is of most concern to me. Its constitution simply sticks to ethnic and religious definition of citizens. The people who are outside of

that, be they Jewish or atheist or people of mixed ethnic origin, are not allowed to be a part of the state system. 20 years ago, this was something that was good for ending the war, but now this should change. I hope there will be progress in the future on this because currently there is no real will to change that constitution.

GEJ: For the Greens, the Balkans is also a region with important ecological issues.

UL: In Montenegro, there was one project to construct a big hydropower plants on the Moraca river. There is a new party, Pozitivna Montenegro, which is close to the Greens. When their party leader was still active in an NGO we cooperated closely to stop the building of a hydroelectric power plant. But others are being planned. In all those countries it would be necessary to invest more in insulating buildings, to keep people's energy bills low, in energy efficiency and renewables. These are things that those of us in the Green group in the next Parliament will also be working on.

GEJ: Just to come to the conclusion, is it not unavoidable to have this fatigue on enlargement when you see the discussions on a two-speed Europe gaining more and more importance?

UL: I personally do not like that idea because I'm afraid it will create a kind of centrifugal force, meaning that those who are outside the nucleus will drift away. It could mean that at one time we really have two Europes; the one that is the nucleus, and the other around it, who is getting further and

further away. That is not my wish, and I don't think it should be the Green vision of Europe either. I think we should keep the continent together. Of course, we have to change the way it's going. There's still too much neoliberal economics going on. Too little has been done on the social side. But by starting with a Eurozone budget, or a Eurozone Parliament, would make the two parts of Europe drift apart.

GEJ: How do you see the global election context for the Greens? Your colleague, Philippe Lamberts, and others mentioned the risk of a grand coalition in different European countries and also in the European Parliament.

UL: We have already experienced it in the European Parliament with Martin Schulz who wants to become President of the Commission for the Social Democrats. All those who think that Schulz would be a very good President of the Commission, and all those who are hoping for a progressive majority, must know that - since Schulz needs to be nominated by Angela Merkel - we might get a grand coalition, where Social Democrats will be more and more doing deals with the conservative party. So the only answer to get the changes we really want in Europe is to vote Green. ■

This interview was conducted on March 18th

Author: Ulrike Lunacek is a Greens/EFA MEP from Austria



Isabella Lövin

Forbidding overfishing in Europe

A first important victory has been won towards a change of course in European fisheries policy. The expertise and the conviction of Swedish Green MEP Isabella Lövin played a key role in this promising move.

We had the knowledge, and the really frightening example from Canada, and still all the politicians in the EU were just trying to get as much of the quota for their own fishermen.

GEJ: What was your professional and political background before being elected to the European Parliament (EP)? And how do you explain your interest in the issue of fisheries?

Isabella Lövin: I was working as a journalist in Sweden for more than 20 years, mostly writing about cultural and environmental issues. At the time I was writing for *All About Food*, basically Sweden's biggest food magazine, with a lot of devoted readers who are interested in food, where there was the first discussion in the Swedish media about overfishing. I started doing some research around the situation in the Baltic Sea. The first question was: is it ok to eat fish from the Baltic Sea, the Baltic Cod? Is it overfished? Is it ok to have recipes with cod or not? And what I discovered was that all the scientists were agreeing that cod in the Swedish sea was endangered. I also discovered that in Canada in 1992 the world's largest cod stock collapsed and was completely eradicated from the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and has never recovered. There's no more cod fishing in Canada where they used to have the world's largest cod fishery. Ten years later, the same thing was going on in the Baltic Sea and in the North Sea.

Fishery: a global issue

GEJ: Was this a real surprise for you?

IL: For me it was completely unbelievable that no one was doing anything about it. We had the knowledge, and the really frightening example from Canada,

and still all the politicians in the EU were just trying to get as much of the quota for their own fishermen as possible each year and consumers were not even aware of the problem. So I was so shocked by the whole thing, because it's not only a problem about having only access to our own fish, it's also affecting water quality, it's promoting algal blooming, it's also making us dependent on imported fish instead of being self reliant for fish. And we're subsidising EU fleets going to West Africa and the Indian and Pacific Oceans to provide fish for Europeans. So it's wrong on all counts. It's wrong on the environmental point of view, in terms of justice between the rich countries and poor countries, and also it's morally insane that we're driving certain species to the brink of extinction, using taxpayers' money to subsidise the fleet.

GEJ: So you decided to write your book then?

IL: I decided to write a book about it because it was too complex and too huge a problem for a single newspaper article. We decided by the way, in the magazine, not to print any more fish recipes for fish that were endangered. My book *Silent Seas* was published in 2007 and translated into English and Japanese. It was a bestseller in Sweden. I received all sorts of awards and prizes for the book which was greatly debated in the media. And then the Greens asked me if I wanted to join them and to be a candidate for the EP elections, in order to be in Brussels, be in the Parliament, and try to reform fishing policy.

Jumping in the European arena

GEJ: And so in 2009, you jumped into the European arena.

IL: Yes, it was quite a shock!

GEJ: But you knew from the start that it would be a tough game? Or have you been surprised?

IL: I wasn't expecting to be able to implement much change. But I was determined to do whatever I could, even if I could just change policy a little bit in a positive direction. So this has been my only aim and goal in the EP. I told the Swedish Greens not to expect that I will work on all the issues around immigration, gender equality, climate change or whatever. I had the same image that others had of the EU system, that it's so huge, and so impossible to influence anything. I was almost prepared to leave the EP, if I understood that I could not influence anything, and that I would do a better job as a journalist in shaping public opinion.

GEJ: And did this image change?

IL: I felt quite soon that I could really change the views of my colleagues in the fisheries committee by explaining some certain things to them, and if possible, get a majority. And quite soon we stopped a fishing agreement with Guinea because there was a military coup there and a massacre of civilians. The people acknowledged that it wasn't a good agreement and it was cancelled. It was the first time ever that the EP had said no to a fisheries agreement. Industry is no longer deciding

GEJ: So it took quite a long time to reach last year's success, with this agreement on the reform of fisheries. But you were not alone on the committee. You had allies in other parties.

IL: That's the key. If you belong to a small group, the Green Group, you can't do anything if you don't find allies. So that has been the real work: to find allies in the other groups and convince them. We formed a cross-party action group called *Fish for the Future*, where we had very active members from all the political groups and who cooperated in order to make people aware in the whole Parliament, not only in the fisheries committee.

GEJ: Why was it so important?

IL: Because normally the people in the committees vote in the way that their groups recommend. But because the members in the fisheries committee were very closely linked to the fisheries industry, we wanted all the MEPs who belonged to the environment committee, and beyond that, all the MEPs in the EP, to be aware of the problem, that we had the possibility to change things during this mandate. We arranged lots of seminars and debates to spread information to all the members, not only to the members of the fisheries committee. That was also a key to success.

GEJ: It seems that one of the major changes is that you succeeded for the first time in not having industry running the committee. Can you explain that?

IL: Yes, of course it's important to know that the Lisbon treaty changed the dynamics on fisheries policy. Before 2009, the EP was only giving recommendations. Now we have full co-decision powers. The industry was not really prepared for this change. They were much more used to cooperating with governments from the different Member States. They had their connections and their good old lobbying tactics in the capitals of Europe.

GEJ: But your lobbying was more efficient obviously?

IL: Our lobbying was more internal, in the European Parliament. And we got a very strong majority in the Parliament in the end. We had about 502 against 139 in the final vote in plenary to ban overfishing and to phase out the practice of discarding (throw edible fish overboard). We also had many good suggestions on creating networks of marine protected areas and also putting a lot more strict conditions on the EU fleets fishing outside of European waters, especially in developing countries.



The growing awareness of the fishermen

GEJ: I was surprised that there was no negative reaction from the sector. The reception was rather positive, no?

IL: I think most of them realised that if we continued the same way, by the next time there would be a possibility for reform only eight out of more than a hundred commercially exploited fish stocks would be within safe biological levels. So if you look at all the numbers, catches have gone down in Europe in the last 10 years by 40%. We are importing 70% of all fish, employment in the industry has gone down, the size of the fishing economy has decreased. No one is really earning anything out of this situation where we are taking too much fish out of the water. Most of the industry realised that fact except for a small part, which is the large multinational fleet that don't really care about European waters because they go fishing somewhere else if it's overfished here. They could even go to the other side of the planet, and they do.

GEJ: So you succeeded in starting real European regulation and cooperative management of fisheries in Europe. The next fight for the Greens will be on a global level I guess.

IL: You are right. Fishery is a very global activity. So it's really important that the EU fights for sustainable fisheries globally, and we can, because we're really active all over the planet and in all the global organisations. But this was such an important, crucial step to make, to say 'We forbid overfishing in Europe'. Because if we had continued, we wouldn't have had

We Greens managed to make access to fisheries much more transparent.

any credibility at all if we were to go to the Pacific Ocean and tell people over there, you overfish. Until now it was impossible for the EU to be a promoter of sustainability anywhere else.

GEJ: The new regulation has also a very important part on transparency.

IL: Indeed, this was a really important step. We Greens managed to make access to fisheries much more transparent. So each Member State can choose who, out of their fishermen, they want to give the right to fish. Do they want to give it to the big industrial trawlers? Or do they want to give it to the small-scale coastal fishermen? It's the same fish, but in one case you have maybe 10 people that work on the boat and they get the same amount of fish as a hundred smaller boats that are fishing with nets and it's much less damaging for the environment. So you can choose to give the fish to smaller boats instead of the bigger boats. That's a concept that the Greens pushed very hard in this reform, and that's actually in the legislation now, that Member States have to be very transparent on how they allocate the fishing resource. Of course, this is decided on a Member State level, but they have to provide the objective criteria for allocating fish.

GEJ: Will the way the subsidies are given be more transparent?

IL: This is one of the points where we're disappointed in the reform. We are not happy with this part on the fisheries fund. There is still money going to the wrong things. Transparency has not improved. One of my missions was to disseminate so much

information that people understand a little bit about this problem.

GEJ: Looking now to the future, what are the priorities? When will we see if this reform has an effect on the stocks of fish?

IL: Well we should already have the first results next year when all the quotas should be set at sustainable levels. And in the Baltic Sea there will be no more discarding of fish starting in 2015/16. But it is difficult to predict when stocks will recover. I would say that maybe within ten years we will see substantial differences. In the United States they had their new fisheries legislation in place from 2005 and they can see substantial improvements now. But in some cases it will be very difficult to see recovery because the stocks are so depleted. On the west coast of Sweden for instance, there are some stocks that are probably already eradicated and that will never come back. If you look at the example of Canada, they have had a complete cod fishing moratorium there since 1992 and stocks have never recovered, and they're never coming back.

GEJ: What needs to be done in the next legislature?

IL: First of all, I think number one is to see that this policy is really being implemented. So while we can't control that Member States do what they're supposed to do, it's important that now that we have all of the good principles on paper we also need to see them done in practice.

Secondly, I look very much at the global arena, the UN is going to negotiate a new agreement to protect biodiversity in international waters. That will be very important. Also the issue of the Arctic and the fishing possibilities that are opening up as the ice is melting. We've already had a resolution in the Parliament that we want to see a protected area where the icecap used to be. There are also lots of environmental things that impact the oceans, like plastics, there are lots of micro-plastics in the ocean. The EU is going to propose a new directive on plastic garbage and that could be very interesting to work on. And not least the issue of climate change because that is also very negative for our oceans.

GEJ: So it's crucial that the Greens continue to be strong because the other parties are less vigilant on these issues.

IL: Absolutely. One of the most important things for the EU during the next mandate, I think, is environmental issues. The economic issues are also important but mostly they can be dealt with on a Member State level. But on all the issues without any borders, such as the atmosphere and the ocean, we need the EU to be very strong. And the Greens are the most active and the ones prioritising these issues. So I think it's extremely important that we get a strong Green group that can influence and lead the Parliament on these issues. We have the competence and the drive and the passion to do it. I think the citizens of Europe want the EU to deal with these

global, important issues that are so decisive for our future and our children's future. ■

This interview was conducted on March 28th

Isabella Lövin is a Greens/EFA MEP from Sweden



Edouard Gaudot

“Political ecology is a combat sport”

Greens are impatient people. The sentiment of urgency has been fuelling their calls for radical change over the past four decades. When they make it to the institutions, it is primarily with the intention to “make a difference” – and bring systemic changes to a model they rightly deem unsustainable. A tentative political assessment of the past European legislature.

Spring 2104 – as Parliament heads towards recess and its Members towards the European voters, the time has come for most of the political forces seeking re-election to reflect on the past five years. This exercise, hovering between honest self-assessment and shameless political communication, is like walking a tightrope. A sentiment of self-inflated importance might drive you to present anything you’ve done in the exercise of your individual and collective mandate as an achievement – and face either public ridicule or self-delusion. But measuring achievements relative to the ambitions of origin might be a cause of severe depression and further lack of mobilisation for your candidates, your supporters and your voters.

Changing the world?

Truly, on the one hand, organising nice outreach conferences and serious professional network building can hardly pass as actual legislative work – and let’s not even mentioning the numerous side-events, ranging from pure window-dressing to obvious complacent promotion of friends and clients. On the other hand, it might prove difficult to convince reluctant voters that you actually changed the world (or at least their daily life) in the framework of your strictly defined legislative activity, made of countless shadow meetings (where you discuss and negotiate on a text with other political groups), exhausting trilogues (conciliation meetings between Parliament, Council and Commission to strike deals once each institution has reached an initial position), and tedious debates and votes in Committee or in Strasbourg-based plenaries.

Indeed, the plight of any member of a parliamentary assembly is to strike a fair and legitimate balance between effective work, which is the purpose of the mandate, and visible activity, which is often the justification of the election. And it’s not unusual, especially in countries like France, Italy, Poland, Romania, etc., where European politics remain a strange, far, far away realm, that no matter the good work, some deserving politicians have to give way to party cronies, favourites or exiles when the lists are made – or to be voted out by a volatile electorate, with little to no interest for the EU institutions.

The parties that do not need to even defend their record...

Paradoxically, for the bigger political families as well as for the Eurosceptic parties, this is not really a problem. For completely different reasons, they do not have as much of a need to defend their “record”. Although the Socialists and the Conservatives are in competition, their major concern or what they have at stake is which of the two will come first and claim the lion’s share of the EU’s top jobs. At the other ends of the spectrum, the radical left and the extreme-right parties have no need or interest in concerning themselves with actual achievements. As a matter of fact, running on the denunciation and rejection of the EU saves you the burden of putting together an actual action plan for the it – why fix something you’re promising to the dust bin?

Some clever politicians even decided to shun the legislative part of the work in favour of an overactive production of vote-explanations, trying to shift the

Greens are impatient people. The sentiment of urgency has been fuelling their calls for radical change over the past four decades.

focus from a framework they view with contempt in favour of their own representation of the EU – French radical-left MEP Jean-Luc Mélenchon has made an art of this kind of magic, going even as far as denying any legitimacy to websites that call him out on his legislative no-shows.



Green MEPs in action during the past five years

When others really care about it

But some political families take this exercise of counting gains and losses quite seriously. For the Greens it is in fact representative of their views of politics. Greens are impatient people. The sentiment of urgency has been fuelling their calls for radical change over the past four decades. Yet with somewhat limited impact – still few easily welcome the inconvenient truth, even from serious people like a former US Vice-President or a British Lord like Sir Nicholas Stern. Anyway, when Greens make it to the institutions, it is primarily with the intention to “make a difference” – and bring systemic changes to a development model they rightly deem unsustainable.

In addition, it is a necessity imposed by their modest size. Although covering the whole continent with sister parties in every Member State, the European ecologists are serious contenders only in half of the EU – give or take a few surprises. This limited scope doesn’t provide them with the comfort of an electoral mattress like the Socialists who can always count on being the biggest political left-of-centre group, even in lean times. Stability of representation is thus essential to the green agenda of change. And it gives particular relevance to the track record. Achievements become synonym for political relevance. It’s like having to justify your existence every five years.

Six Green priorities

Over the past five years, in addition to the daily business of reacting to global developments, the Greens present their action¹ in the European Parliament (EP) around six major priorities:

1. promoting crisis resilience through social justice;
 2. securing our climate and energy future;
 3. striving towards a healthy environment;
 4. fighting for human rights, including social, democratic and digital rights;
 5. contributing to global solidarity and security; and
 6. celebrating cultural diversity.
- Of course bullet points are useful for presentation, but in reality the political agenda of the Parliament doesn’t organise itself so easily and certainly cannot be controlled by one of its smaller groups. But the quality and efficiency of a political group primarily lies in the ability of its members to shape the narrative and policy-making priorities even on an agenda they don’t control: through the visibility of its leadership, through the activity and skills of some specific

¹ See the full document on http://www.greens-efa.eu/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Policy_papers/Green_review_2009-2014/7th_legislature_of_the_European_Parliament_Green_Review.pdf

Although the Socialists like to claim it as theirs, it was a Green idea to introduce the youth guarantee at EU level in 2009, just as it was a green fight for rights of posted workers.

members, and through the subtle crafting of ad-hoc political coalitions.

Joys and sorrows of green politics are probably best illustrated on the world stage. Surely, setting a green agenda in a complex and fast-moving world is an interesting experiment. From a purely European viewpoint, the major geopolitical shift in recent years occurred with the Arab Spring, the rise of new powers like Brazil or China, making the global race for natural resources more acute and dangerous, and the recurrent confrontation with Russia on the EU's border in Ukraine. Responding to these challenges, Greens engaged in the shaping of the European external action services and successfully fought for the establishment of an EU Special Representative for Human Rights. On top of this they also negotiated important improvements to the EU's Mediterranean macro-regional strategy and supported the democratic and pro-European aspirations of the Ukrainians. But none of this proved enough to stop the bloodbath in Syria, level the playing field with China or reverse the worrying trends of a divided Europe when it comes to challenging Putin's illegal occupation of Crimea.

Major Green achievements

The half empty bottle in foreign affairs could well be half full when it comes to crisis resilience and energy-efficiency. Indeed the dire and devastating situation in the southern periphery, the Eurozone's extended recession with unemployment reaching unprecedented levels outmatched the capacity of the Greens in the EP. Yet they tackled the necessities

of financial and economic re-regulation with efficiency and increasing credibility. The Greens contributed to several important decisions, such as a cap on bankers' bonuses and the establishment of financial supervision bodies; they successfully brought the ECB's banking supervision powers under parliamentary control and were one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Financial Transaction Tax. Although the Socialists like to claim it as theirs, it was a Green idea to introduce the youth guarantee at EU level in 2009, just as it was a green fight for rights of posted workers. And in the energy field, the major success was the negotiation of the energy efficiency directive, which lays out the energy efficiency objectives for Member States until 2020. Even though the objective of an increase in energy efficiency by 20% was watered down in the Council, this remains a major step forward.

Fighting against conservatisms in all its kind

There would be many other smaller and bigger achievements worth mentioning, but the real question is: how much fuller could the bottle have been without this mainstream obsession with fiscal consolidation and austerity policies? How much fuller without the fierce reaction of the financial industry against any re-regulation? How much fuller without the firepower of the oil and extractive industry defending its market domination?

And the million-euro question: how much fuller without the conservatism of all major political forces, from right-wing to social-democrats and so-called “liberals”? There are two kinds of conservatism – and when the resistance to change is fuelled only by fear

The key is to pick the fights that can change the system in each and every field. Not the ones that comfort your identity, sentiment of self-worth or illusion of legitimacy.

of the unknown and the preference road already travelled, it is annoying but somehow understandable. The fundamental problem is when conservatism combines these fears with the defence of the established positions and vested interests. The apex of this combination was probably reached with the reform of the Common Agricultural and Common Fisheries policies (CAP and CFP) – with very diverging fates.

With the EP for the first time on equal footing with the Council (i.e. the Members states) in both sets of reforms, the breakthrough success of the CFP vote contrasted with the failure on the CAP. The former managed to finally put an end to overfishing: instead of allowing national fleets to continue fishing according to historic quotas, it tied quotas to what was objectively deemed sustainable. But for CAP, although the Greens managed to introduce environmental focus areas, restrict monocultures and reserve a certain percentage of farmland to protect biodiversity, this was outweighed by agro-industrial lobbies mustering a majority to continue disproportionate levels of support for industrial farms.

Likewise, the same coalition of conservative politicians and industrial interests prevented the traffic-light style food labelling designed to inform consumers and contribute to healthier food-behaviour. Moreover food labels still do not contain information on whether animals have been fed with GMOs, and the Unitary Patent provides no solid protection of biodiversity and farmers’ rights to seed breeding.

When a small number of MEPs makes a big difference

When a crucial vote like the one trying to “cap the CAP” (i.e. cap the maximum payment that one farmer can receive) fails by less than a dozen MEPs, it is tempting to claim that size matters. And indeed currently being the fourth biggest group in the EP can really make a difference. But does size really matter? In relative terms, not much: gaining 1, 5 or 10 MEPs and perhaps one or two ranks in the hierarchy of the Parliament’s forces is indeed nice and worth fighting for. But it is not enough in itself and still misses the critical mass by far. Geographical diversity, political nuances and individual quality are paramount. It is the absolute number that matters. In terms of presence, dedication and political capacity: one committed MEP can make more of a difference than a dozen seat-warmers. The key is to pick the fights that can change the system in each and every field. Not the ones that comfort your identity, sentiment of self-worth or illusion of legitimacy.

“Politics is a combat sport” as José Bové once said (in his excellent book on lobbies in the EU and how to fight their influence: *Hold Up à Bruxelles*, La Découverte, Paris, 2014). ■

This article is based on a report written by Malte Arhelger for the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament.

Edouard Gaudot is a strategic advisor for the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament.

What difference can it make?

A comparison of the European parties' electoral manifestos



Manuel Müller

As the different European Parties unveil their election manifestos, we can see real differences in the direction that each of them want to take Europe over the coming years. The voters will have a real choice in next month's European Parliament election.

European parties are no longer the heterogeneous alliances they used to be. The groups in the European Parliament take an increasingly cohesive stand and can thus represent clear alternatives for the citizens to choose from.

In most democratic countries, this is how an electoral campaign goes: First, all parties publish an electoral programme in which they announce what measures they want to implement if they win. Then they appoint a candidate whom they support as head of government. Then they go out and advertise their programmes and their candidates with posters and events. And finally, voters decide at the polls which party they support.

At European level, by contrast, for a long time electoral campaigns went like this: Instead of a single programme, the European parties published several dozen – one for each Member State. There were no European top candidates, the Commission President was chosen after the election in the back room of the European Council. The posters and events often dealt with purely national issues that had nothing to do with European politics. And in the end, ever more voters decided simply not to go to the polls.

European candidates, European issues

This year, however, everything is going to be different. For the first time, the major European parties have nominated top candidates for the post of Commission President: Martin Schulz for the Party of European Socialists (PES), Jean-Claude Juncker for the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), Guy Verhofstadt for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Alexis Tsipras for the European Left (EL), and Ska Keller and José Bové for the European Green Party (EGP). Only the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR) decline to participate in what they consider a "federalist scheme".

These pan-European top candidates increase the chances that the major topics in this year's electoral campaign will be pan-European. Whether it's the financial crisis, climate change, foreign policy, migration, or the future of democracy: The European Union has become a central actor in so many important areas that there is little reason to switch to national sideshows instead. Moreover, European parties are no longer the heterogeneous alliances they used to be. The groups in the European Parliament take an increasingly cohesive stand and can thus represent clear alternatives for the citizens to choose from.

The European electoral manifestos

As a consequence, the pan-European electoral platforms gain importance. Although the European parties adopted joint manifestos since the first European elections in 1979, these were usually kept in rather general terms and were overshadowed by the national programmes adopted by their member parties. This general constellation has not changed in 2014. However, the increasing group discipline in the European Parliament makes clear that what matters in a European election is not the national platform, but the common European manifesto of each party.

Depending on the party, the format of these manifestos differs significantly. While the EGP has adopted a fairly detailed text (18 pages), ALDE and PES keep it rather short (8 and 4 pages). The EL has not adopted a manifesto, but a 15-page "political document", which includes not only policy proposals, but also reflections on the future of the party. The

EPP offers two texts – a rather nondescript 4-page “manifesto” as well as an exhaustive 40-page “action programme”. Several of the smaller European parties have also adopted their own manifestos, such as the centrist European Democratic Party (EDP), the regionalist European Free Alliance (EFA) or the right-wing European Alliance for Freedom (EAF). AECR, in turn, has no joint platform.

And how, then, do the policy proposals of the major parties differ? What alternatives do they offer to their voters? In the following, I shall present a comparison of their stances regarding three of the most important issues facing the European Union: the financial crisis, ecological sustainability and a democratic reform of the European institutions.



The next five years will see crucial votes in the European Parliament, but what do the parties stand for?

Causes of the financial crisis

When it comes to the financial crisis, the discrepancies between the parties start with the analysis of the causes. The most detailed explanation is offered by the Left: For them, the euro crisis is explicitly not the consequence of “mismanagement on the part of the southern European countries”. Rather, it is an – albeit special – manifestation of the “global crisis of capitalism”, “the result of a predatory process aimed at socialisation of losses and privatisation of anything capable of generating profits”. According to the EL, the crisis made “class confrontations become palpable”.

Although EGP and PES use a less aggressive tone, they too see “[n]eo-liberal deregulation” (EGP) at the root of the crisis, which then was exacerbated through the “[a]usterity only policy” (PES) in Europe. The EPP manifesto, on the other hand, sees national debt as the primary cause of the crisis: “The spend-now-and-pay-later policies of our competitors caused the crisis in the first place, and increase the risk of another crisis down the line.” In their action programme, however, they are somewhat more differentiated and speak of “a diverse range of factors, including excessive public and private debt, a lack of competitiveness in certain Member States, flawed regulation of financial markets and insufficient integration in the Euro area”.

Unemployment and public investment

Despite these differences in their root-cause analysis, the parties are largely in agreement about what is the main challenge today: The high unemployment is one of the “key elements for injustice” (EGP), “a danger for social cohesion” (EPP) and the “greatest social and economic crisis now facing Europe” (ALDE). More employment is thus a “top priority” for the Liberals and a “first and main priority” of the Social Democrats.

And how do we reach this goal? In particular for the parties of the centre-left, one solution is more public investment. In the context of the “European Green New Deal”, for example, the EGP wants to increase the EU budget and create “financial solidarity instruments aimed at helping to finance the economic recovery”. Through investments in energy and resource efficiency, the Greens intend to “create many new quality jobs”. PES and ALDE also support the promotion of green technologies with public funds. In addition, the PES demands an “ambitious European industrial policy” and an expansion of the European Youth Guarantee. One step further, the EL speaks of a “public re-appropriation of strategic sectors” and wants to finance investments through a “European public bank”.

On the other side, the EPP remains sceptical. According to them, “[i]nvesting in unreformed economies never generates sustainable growth” and “more government spending is not the answer”. Thus, the EPP only supports “targeted investment, developing EU networks in the fields of energy, transport and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), in particular through Public Private Partnerships”.

Structural reforms and internal market

Otherwise, however, the Christian Democrats bet fully on “structural reforms”, which in their eyes “are necessary today to ensure the right conditions exist to create new jobs”. In particular, the EPP wants to address “the health sector, pension systems, labour markets and education systems” and introduce “inclusive and active employment policies” as well as “modern, life-long learning training systems”. How these reforms should exactly look like, however, is not revealed in the action programme.

Finally, EPP and ALDE propose the completion of the European internal market in order to “stimulate entrepreneurship” (EPP) and “simplify doing business in Europe” (ALDE). Both parties want to create jobs by “encouraging economies to facilitate more labour flexibility and mobility” (EPP) and “further facilitating the free movement of services and workers” (ALDE).

Public debt

The question of public debt management again shows a clear contrast between the parties of the left and right. Thus, EPP and ALDE insist on less government spending and call for “better control mechanisms and more automatic sanctions when the stability and growth pact is broken” (ALDE). The PES, by contrast, demands “more room for manoeuvre for investments through national budgets” and supports “mutualising responsibility and rights within the euro zone”. The EGP is in favour of “setting up a debt redemption fund and gradually issuing common debt instruments (Eurobonds) under clearly defined and realistic common fiscal discipline rules”.

The EGP is the only party to require not only a common resolution mechanism, but also a "common system of insurance for deposits up to €100,000.

The EL, finally, supports "a European convention on public debt, which will decide on the abolition of the biggest part of the – unsustainable – public debts of over-indebted states, along with revised repayment terms, such as a 'growth clause'". Moreover, they want the European Central Bank "to be lender of last resort, that is to say, lending directly to states".

Macroeconomic Coordination

By contrast, the need for better macroeconomic coordination has a consensus among the major European parties – even though they remain rather vague about what exactly should be done. For the EPP, "[f]urther coordination of fiscal and budgetary policies should be considered". The PES wants a "real coordination of the economic and fiscal policies in the Eurozone", although the "national Parliaments must keep their sovereignty". The EGP, finally, speaks of "new instruments developed to mitigate larger differences in economic cycles including unemployment rates", which seems to be an allusion to the much-discussed European unemployment insurance – only that it is put in such a roundabout way that probably no-one will notice.

Moreover, EPP and ALDE explicitly mention that non-euro countries are to be included in the common economic policy, too, since "our economic futures are inextricably bound together" (ALDE). According to the EPP, "the EU and the Euro area should eventually converge".

Banking Union

Another idea that has broad support is that the financial sector has to be regulated more tightly. The European banking supervision and the Single Resolution Mechanism, by which the "vicious link between sovereign debt and bank debt" (EPP) is to be broken, enjoy general support.

In the details, however, the claims of the parties do differ. For example, the EGP is the only party to require not only a common resolution mechanism, but also a "common system of insurance for deposits up to €100,000". The PES is in favour of "firewalls between Commercial and Investment Banking" and of an "independent and public European credit rating agency". The EPP, in turn, presents itself as the guardian of subsidiarity: While they want "all systemic and trans-boundary working major banks" to be monitored by the European Central Bank, "[f]or smaller banks such a strict supervisory system is not necessary".

Taxes

Also as an effect of the crisis, all parties have now discovered tax policy as a European activity. However, once more we can see significant differences between left and right. The most radical position is taken by the EL, which warns against "plans for the creation of 'Special Economic Zones' on European soil" and summarises its demands in the sentence: "The rich should pay for the crisis!" But also the Greens aim to "restore tax justice and efficiency". For this, they require less "tax burden on labour" and more taxes on "pollution and waste". Moreover, the EGP calls for common minimum rates of corporate and

While all parties agree that the EU must further reduce their carbon emissions, only the Greens propose specific figures

property taxes in all Member States, and also the EL advocates "generalising taxes on capital in the various countries". In addition, EL, EGP and PES all demand a financial transaction (or "Tobin") tax.

In turn, the Liberals and the EPP also want to redesign the tax system, but only in order to "encourage the setting up of new businesses" (ALDE) and "stimulate entrepreneurship" (EPP). And when it comes to equilibrating national budgets, the EPP expresses "a clear preference for trimming unproductive expenditures over increasing rates of taxation". By contrast, cross-party unity exists in the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion, which also the EPP considers "unethical and unfair". Moreover, most parties want to take action against "tax havens". Only the ALDE declares itself "committed to the principle of tax competition" and criticises only "tax avoidance and evasion", but not tax havens.

Social Europe

Another issue on which the left-wing parties make their mark is European social policy. Although the EPP also calls for "upward social convergence between EU Member States" and "progress in the fight against poverty and social exclusion", their concrete proposals remain rather modest. For example, they only want "country-specific minimum wage levels implemented according to national labour laws" – unlike PES and EL, who outright demand European minimum wages.

Moreover, PES and EGP promise to fight against "social dumping", want to strengthen European trade unions, support the conclusion of European collective agreements, and favour a ban on "precarious contracts that harm many Europeans" (PES). With

a "European social card", the Greens intend to improve the portability of social benefits between Member States. Last but not least, PES and EGP both want to amend the EU treaty with a "social progress clause", according to which "economic freedoms cannot outweigh social rights" (PES).

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

Climate change and emission targets

From the financial to the environmental crisis: Here again, all parties are in broad agreement that a sustainable energy policy and more resource efficiency are key tasks for the future. In detail, however, their rhetoric differs. While the Greens warn urgently against "catastrophic climate change", the EL considers ecology as "an affair of popular sovereignty and democracy". For ALDE and EPP, the main objective seems to be "less dependence on fossil fuel imports" (EPP).

When it comes to concrete demands, these nuances are present, too. While all parties agree that the EU must further reduce their carbon emissions, only the Greens propose specific figures: Compared to 1990 levels, they aim to reduce emissions by 30% by 2020 (rather than by 20%, as current legislation provides), by 55% until 2030, and to achieve a "carbon-neutral society" by 2050. To this end, the EGP calls for the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) to "be radically reformed" or, if that fails, the introduction of "national carbon floor pricing".

In contrast, the other parties remain much more general. The EL also criticises the poor functioning of the ETS, but does not mention any alternatives. The

ALDE sees an “effective and well-functioning carbon market” as “a key tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively” and wants to “strengthen” the ETS. The PES demands “further binding targets on the reduction of carbon emissions”, but doesn’t propose any numbers. Even less enthusiastic is the EPP, according to which “[b]inding, but realistic, EU level targets for 2030 could be proposed for those policy areas where they provide a proven added-value in terms of investor certainty, as well as cost-effectiveness”.

Renewable energies and energy efficiency

A similar pattern can be seen in the promotion of renewable energies and energy efficiency. Once more, all parties agree in principle: The PES calls for “further binding targets on [...] the increased use of renewable energy and improved energy efficiency”. The ALDE wants to “increase energy efficiency” and “decarbonise energy generation” by “building even more upon renewable energy sources”. The EPP is for “moving away from our dependence on fossil fuels”.

But again, the Green manifesto is the only one that gives concrete numbers. By 2030, the EGP wants to reduce energy consumption by 40% and make renewable energies account for 45% of energy consumption. This is to be achieved through the promotion of green technologies, an end to public subsidies and investments in fossil fuels, as well as a new “European Renewable Energy Community” (although the proposed functions of this Community remain rather unclear). In addition, the Greens also advocate a “phase-out” of nuclear energy in Europe.

Here, too, they primarily want to reduce direct and indirect subsidies, in particular by making power plant operators fully liable in case of nuclear accidents. Finally, “fracking” – the controversial extraction of shale gas – is explicitly rejected in the Green manifesto.

Apart from the Greens, the party that is most outspoken about its energy strategy is ALDE. The Liberals also want to “phase out environmentally harmful subsidies, including those for fossil fuel production and consumption”. At the same time, they are the only party that promotes “carbon capture and storage technology”. The expansion of pan-European electricity networks, finally, is a common goal of EGP, ALDE and EPP.

There is another issue, however, in which only the two largest parties seem to be interested: Both the PES and the EPP don’t want to see energy prices rising. However, there is an interesting difference in their emphasis. While the PES wants to “fight energy poverty” and “guarantee minimum access to energy for everyone”, the EPP cares mainly about “preserving Europe’s industrial base through affordable energy prices”. The solution offered by the EPP is the “completion of the internal energy market”.

Green investment

The question of how green technologies can be promoted is also answered differently by the parties. Once more, the most radical proposals come from the EL, which mentions the “ecological transformation” in the context of its demand for a “public re-appropriation of strategic sectors”. Social Democrats

PES and EPP, by contrast, don't mention the Convention in their manifestos – which is certainly not a good sign for the proponents of treaty reform.

and Liberals, by contrast, are mainly focused on public investment. While the PES wants to “promote the implementation of Project Bonds to finance good investments in the green economy, renewable energy and technology”, the ALDE wants a “shift of EU support under structural and cohesion funds towards research and investment into future oriented sectors such as the renewable energy sources sector”. The EPP, on the other hand, looks mainly at the private sector and wants to “create opportunities for European businesses to develop new sustainable technologies”.

The Greens, finally, propose a whole bunch of measures: “promoting eco-design rules, public procurement, state aid rules, private investment, small and medium sized enterprises and cooperatives, better funding for research, development and education, promotion of entrepreneurship, and in particular social entrepreneurship, good industrial relations, workplace democracy and fighting corporate vested interests”. Moreover, they are the only party to put an emphasis on European transport policy, where they want to reduce resource consumption by enhancing cross-border rail links and promoting energy-efficient cars and public transport.

An aspect on which EPP, PES and EGP agree is that environmental policy is not a purely European affair. All three parties strive for a “close cooperation with our global partners” (PES) in order to reach “a global solution to climate change” (EPP). For this, the Greens place their hope on the United Nations and propose to merge all existing UN environmental agencies into one “World Environment Organisation”. By contrast,

EPP and PES seem to regard environment protection primarily as a kind of international championship. For them, the EU should “regain global leadership on the protection of nature and natural resources” (PES) and “remain the world leader in this area” (EPP).

DEMOCRATIC POLICIES

Democratic reform of the European Union

The euro crisis did not only put economic policy on the top of the political agenda, but also the demand for a democratic reform of the EU. The left-wing parties were especially harshly critics of the crisis management of the Troika and the European Council. In recent years, thus, the possibility of a new European Convention, which would prepare the first major treaty reform since Lisbon, has been a recurrent issue in European politics.

ALDE, EL and EGP support this demand in their manifestos – albeit with slightly different rhetoric. While the EL claims for “breaking the frame of the treaties [...] which are binding ECB and EU to neoliberal policies”, the Liberals more moderately “support the calling of a Convention to develop the Union further in a democratic direction”. Finally, the Greens call for “a fundamental political reorientation and for a democratic renewal of the European Union” and propose not only “a new democratic convention [...] or a constituent assembly”, but also a ratification of its results “through an EU-wide referendum”. PES and EPP, by contrast, don't mention the Convention in their manifestos – which is certainly not a good sign for the proponents of treaty reform.

Strengthening the European Parliament

And what should a more democratic EU look like? For most parties it is clear that the European Parliament needs to be strengthened. Their concrete proposals, however, remain rather vague. The PES seeks “a prominent role for the European Parliament”, the EL wants “a European Parliament with full powers and jurisdiction”, the ALDE suggests “greater involvement of the European and national parliaments in decision-making”. Only the EGP gets more specific and proposes to give the Parliament “the right to initiate legislation”, “to co-decide on the priorities of economic policy coordination” as well as “some competences concerning tax policy and social policy”.

The Green manifesto is also the only one that calls for changes in the European election system: The EGP not only wants to lower the voting age to 16 years, but also proposes to “introduce pan-European lists with transnational candidates”. Finally, ALDE and EGP agree that the European Parliament should have only one seat and “stop the travelling circus between Brussels and Strasbourg” (EGP).

Commission and Council

The European Commission is also seen in need of reform by most parties, even if it is not always clear what they actually want to do with it. Thus, the Greens request the Commission to “be held accountable for their actions”. For the EL, “[t]he European Commission must transfer its powers to the European and national parliaments and its role must be limited to its executive duties”. ALDE and EPP want to reduce the number of portfolios in

the Commission. However, the EPP insists that the principle of “one commissioner per country” should not be abandoned.

As to the Council, Greens and Liberals agree that more transparency is needed, “for example by publishing all voting results” (EGP). More detailed reform proposals come from the EPP, for which “[t]he Council should be reformed into one central formation that takes all legislative decisions prepared by the different Councils of Ministers”. Both EPP and EGP also want to reduce the national veto rights in the Council, the EPP mentioning specifically “the fields of foreign policy and justice and home affairs”.

Other institutions

Another wide-spread demand of the manifestos is to strengthen the national parliaments, although once again the concrete proposals for this remain very unclear. Thus, the EL simply demands “powers to national [...] elected assemblies”. For the EPP, “[n]ational parliaments must become more proactive and involved in European decision-making within the framework of national constitutions”. The Greens want to “strengthen the national parliaments’ opportunities to react when the EU exceeds its authority by not following the rules on subsidiarity”, have them impose “better control over their governments’ actions in European affairs” and give them “more avenues of cooperation with the European Parliament”.

The electoral manifestos of the European political parties are not in every respect as precise as one might wish – but on the important issues they are still clear enough to allow the voters to make an informed decision.

A reform of the European Central Bank is proposed by EL and EGP. Both want to increase democratic control and include employment promotion among its policy objectives. Moreover, the EL wants the ECB to lend “directly to states”, which is not considered by the Greens.

The ALDE in turn is the only party that is also interested in the secondary organs of the EU – but only in order to abolish them: For the Liberals all organs should “contribute significantly to the decision-making process [...] of the Union”, which is why they support “restructuring” the Committee of the Regions and want to dissolve the European Economic and Social Council. Moreover, the Liberals call for an “audit of all existing EU agencies” and propose to abolish “[t]hose that do not deliver significant added value”. The criteria by which this “added value” is to be measured, however, are not specified in the manifesto.

Further proposals

Another great challenge of the EU is how to deal with member states violating democracy and the rule of law on the national level. Cases like Hungary or Romania have shown that the current mechanism in article 7 TEU is not sufficient to secure generalised respect for the common values of the Union. However, only ALDE and EGP address this in their manifestos. Thus, the Greens call for “effective monitoring and sanctions when there are violations of our values in the Member States” and propose a new “Copenhagen Commission [...] to make sure that the democratic demands that are put

upon candidate countries [...] are not followed by backsliding into authoritarianism and cronyism once a Member State has joined the EU”. Similarly, the Liberals want “a mechanism to monitor violations of fundamental rights and civil liberties in the EU and enforce sanctions, on the basis of objective criteria, free from political interference”.

Finally, the Greens also emphasise the idea of direct and participatory democracy on the European level. Thus, they want to make the European Citizens’ Initiative “more efficient and citizen-friendly” and intend to “create a legal basis for EU-wide referenda”.

Conclusion

The electoral manifestos of the European political parties are not in every respect as precise as one might wish – but on the important issues they are still clear enough to allow the voters to make an informed decision. Above all, there is a clear left-right contrast when dealing with the euro crisis. While PES, EGP and ALDE place emphasis on public investments and the EL even proposes to completely nationalise some sectors of the economy, the EPP takes a very sceptical stand on public spending and focuses primarily on structural reforms. Moreover, there are also clear differences in tax and social policy between PES, EGP and EL on the one hand and EPP and ALDE on the other.

Larger agreement exists in environmental and climate protection, where all parties support the transition from fossil to renewable energies. However, when it comes to concrete proposals it is mainly

the EGP who underpins its claim to be the ecologist frontrunner. Finally, the EU's democratic future seems to be a priority especially for the smaller parties – ALDE, EGP and EL –, whereas PES and EPP hardly mention this issue in their manifestos. In any case, whatever the voters decide on 22-25th May, it is already clear that their election will make a difference. ■

Manuel Müller is the author of the blog "Der (europäische) Föderalist" (<http://foederalist.blogspot.com>), in which he focuses on European constitutional issues, ranging from the functioning of the monetary union to the perspectives of a supranational democracy.



Etienne Balibar

Counter-democracy to the rescue of Europe

Europe is dead. Or is it long live Europe? There are those who believe the threat of paralysis and dissolution remains, and those who optimistically seize any small positive sign as a reason to announce (yet again) that Europe's crises can serve as a springboard. But what is lacking is a deeper sense of history, which would help us to understand the current crisis as a turning point in a process that has lasted over 50 years.

The European project
always presents
alternatives. But the
possibility of grasping
them depends on forces
and plans that are not
always on the table.

The European project has gone through several distinct phases which are closely linked to transformations in the world system. The first lasted from the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 to the aftermath of the 1968 events and the oil crisis; the next, from the early 1970s to the fall of the Soviet system and German reunification in 1990; and the last from the subsequent eastern enlargement of the European Union to the crisis sparked by the bursting of the US speculative housing bubble in 2007 and Greece's sovereign debt default, averted in extremis in 2010 in circumstances which are well known.

Europe's deliberate choices

It would be mistaken, though, to see the development of the European project as linear and the speed at which it progresses the only variable. For each phase has involved a conflict between several possible paths.

The initial post-1945 phase can be seen in the context of the cold war, but also of Western Europe's industrial reconstruction and the creation of social security systems. This phase included a pronounced tension between Europe's absorption into the US sphere of influence and the quest for a geopolitical and geo-economic renaissance of its own. The latter prevailed, within a capitalist framework of course.

The same goes for the most recent phase, with the opposite result – not to the advantage of (now declining) American hegemony, but assimilation by globalised financial capitalism. Here, Germany played the decisive role: the support of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) for industrial competitiveness through low wages was critical.

But the crucial issue is understanding how choices operated and power relations changed in the middle period of the Franco-German condominium and the Delors Commissions (1985-94). In this period, two supranational developments intended to be the twin pillars of the "great market" were proposed: the creation of a single currency and "social Europe". As we know, the euro became the EU's central institution (even if not all states signed up to it) and social Europe was restricted to formal employment legislation. This turnaround would merit a detailed history in its own right, to explore not only individual responsibilities but objective political causes. These include, alongside neoliberal pressure, the European trade union movement's inability to influence EU decisions, which was due as much to its member organisations' provincialism as to the imbalance of power. Meanwhile businesses continued to relocate outside the EU. There is an important lesson for the future here:

The European project always presents alternatives. But the possibility of grasping them depends on forces and plans that are not always on the table.

The re-emergence of a divided Europe

Let us turn to the economy, including its social and political dimensions. If, as is generally accepted, no policy can be defined independently of economic constraints, it is conversely the case that there is no economy that is not also an amalgam of (collective) decisions and the product of power relations.

From the late 19th century, class struggles and social policies had given the working classes a standard of living above the minimum defined by “free and fair competition” and which presumed certain limits to social inequalities. Today, in the name of competitiveness and the control of public debt, we are seeing a two-pronged movement in the opposite direction. Real income from labour has been squeezed and made precarious in pursuit of competitiveness, while mass consumption has continued to grow, fed by workers’ spending power or their capacity to take on debt. It’s conceivable that “zoning” strategies and social or generational differentiation could delay the moment when the contradiction between these incompatible objectives explodes. But in the end, it can only get worse, as can the systemic dangers of a debt-based economy.

European integration that pursues an almost constitutional neoliberal path has produced another effect that undermines its own political and moral conditions. The possibility of overcoming historical antagonisms within a post-national structure, with shared sovereignty, presupposed moving towards the convergence of states in three domains: synergy of their capabilities, resource sharing and mutual recognition of rights. Yet, the triumph of

the competition principle has created increasing inequalities. Instead of joint development in Europe’s regions, we are witnessing a polarisation, which the crisis has made much worse. There is increasingly unequal distribution of industrial capacity, jobs, opportunities and education networks — to the extent that it could be said, looking at the Europe-wide trend since 1945, that a major north-south divide has replaced an east-west one, even if this disjunction does not take the form of a wall, but a one-way drain on resources.

The “German question” continues

What place does Germany occupy in this system rooted in unequal development? It was predictable that reunification after half a century would bring a resurgence of nationalism, and that the reconstitution of Mitteleuropa in which German companies have profited to the maximum from a “low-wage, high-tech” labour force (1), would give them a competitive advantage over other European nations. But it was not inevitable that these two factors would produce a political hegemony (even a “reluctant” one, as the current formula goes (2)).

It results from the pivotal position that Germany has managed to occupy, between exploiting European economic resources, or even their weaknesses (as is the case with German borrowing at negative interest rates on the financial markets, compensated for by the high rates other European countries pay), and German industries’ specialisation in exporting outside Europe. And so for now Germany finds itself at the sweet spot where the national advantages of unequal

Applied to Europe,
the neoliberal project
does not lead to the
transformation of its
object: it tends towards
its disappearance.

development are concentrated – all the more so since it is less committed than other countries (notably France) to neoliberal financialisation (3).

But the impression of hegemony has other causes, ranging from the absence of EU mechanisms for developing “communitarian” economic policies collectively to the foolishness of other governments’ defensiveness (notably the French, who rule out alternative formulas for developing supranational institutions). Finally, this impression of hegemony is now one of the factors that divide the “Europe of the rich” and the “Europe of the poor” – a structural impediment to the European project. There is likely to be a “German question” in Europe for a long time to come.

The purpose of neoliberalism

Yet the current situation contains a paradox for neoliberals. At the moment when there are hints of downturns and even IMF economists are themselves criticising austerity — for creating recession and worsening the insolvency of indebted countries — it seems that Europe, as an economic unit, is among the least well-placed parts of the world when it comes to stimulating fresh activity. There is no simple explanation for this, but some ideological reasons can be advanced.

Some relate to the projection onto the single currency of the “ordoliberal” model of an absolutely independent European Central Bank (ECB) in relation to the aims of “real” economic policy. Others relate to the European ruling classes’ bad conscience: having had to concede more than others to Keynesian public policy, they perceive fresh demand-driven economic

growth, which comes through improved working-class living standards, as a grave danger, risking relapsing into the logic of “social” capitalism. Finally, I think that another, more sinister, kind of calculation cannot be discounted, shown by the stubbornness with which the dismantling and colonisation of the Greek economy have been pursued under the pretext of “structural reforms”. The idea here is that, however injurious the results of austerity and monetarism to general prosperity, they at least lead to increased profitability for some investors (or some capital): those who, whether European or not, are already largely “deterritorialised” and can instantly relocate their activities. Clearly, this calculation is only politically viable as long as “creative destruction” does not significantly affect the social fabric and the cohesion of dominant nations, which is not guaranteed:

Applied to Europe, the neoliberal project does not lead to the transformation of its object: it tends towards its disappearance.

The search for legitimacy and democracy

The European project has reached a turning point, which contains the possibility of a new phase, pointing in directions that are radically and mutually incompatible. But neither the crystallisation of the conflict nor its evolution can take place outside a political space of confrontation and representation. In short, they depend on the way in which the twin problems of legitimacy and democracy are resolved. This is the third dimension I want to emphasise. How can it be tackled realistically?

First of all, we have to move beyond the opposition between “sovereignist” and “federalist” discourse, which is based on two imaginary situations. On the one hand, we have the idea of national communities as in some way natural and the source of institutional legitimacy derived from the expression of popular will. And on the other, we have the idea of a virtual European demos, in a sense called upon to constitute and express itself as a result of there being a representative structure at supranational level.

The first idea supports the fiction that the nation-state possesses unvarying legitimacy and is the only framework within which citizens can realise their rights. The second restricts itself to a procedural conception of legitimacy. It is necessary to recognise the fact that the European political system, however incoherent it may seem, is now a mixed system with several levels of responsibility and authority. It is far more federal than most citizens realise, but less democratic than it claims, since the division of powers among community and national institutions allows each of them to make unaccountability structural and block the creation of counter-balances.

This system has never been stable. But the current crisis has further destabilised it by causing the rise of a quasi-sovereign institution in its midst: the “independent” Central Bank, located at the intersection of states’ financial institutions and the international financial market. Its increased power is not just a technocratic development or the result of the control of private capitalism. It is rather an attempt at “revolution from above” at a time when

political power is no longer separate from economic, especially financial, power (4). The key question is whether it could lead to a new system of sovereignty, and what alternatives can counter it.

From this stems a second confusion, worth dispelling, about the links between legitimacy and democracy. If we stick to a realist, rather than ideological definition, we cannot claim that democratic processes confer the only effective form of legitimacy: all of history suggests otherwise. It is in so-called exceptional situations that authoritarian structures tend to claim and obtain power over populations, with or without constitutional procedures. But what is striking is that the urgency of fending off speculative attacks against the single currency and partially regulating a financial system has brought the European Commission no new legitimacy. Faced with the “extraordinary” measures by the ECB and its president, governments and heads of state have been able to present themselves as sole embodiments of popular sovereignty and people’s rights of self-determination. Democracy has been undermined on both sides at once, and the political system as a whole has taken a step towards de-democratisation.

A profound change for the nation state

This state of affairs requires us to look back at the historical causes of nation-states’ privileged position as far as the legitimation of power is concerned. Some of these causes derive from the affective power of national or nationalist ideology in societies which forged their collective conscience through resistance to waves of imperialism. But with hindsight, another

The crisis of democratic legitimacy in contemporary Europe comes both from the fact that nation states no longer have the means or the will to defend or renew the “social contract”, and that EU institutions are not predisposed to seek the forms and contents of a social citizenship at a higher level – unless (eventually) pushed to do so by popular insurrection.

factor has acquired strategic significance: the fact that – especially in western European countries – the transformation of the police state into the social state took the form of the construction of a national social state, in which winning social rights was closely linked to the periodic reconstruction of a sense of national belonging. This explains both why the mass of citizens saw the nation as the only context for the recognition of and integration into the community, and why this civic dimension of nationality is eroded (or degenerates into xenophobic “populism”) when the state begins to function in reality, not as an enabling structure for social citizenship, but as the powerless witness to its degradation or enthusiastic agent of its dismantling.

So the crisis of democratic legitimacy in contemporary Europe comes both from the fact that nation states no longer have the means or the will to defend or renew the “social contract”, and that EU institutions are not predisposed to seek the forms and contents of a social citizenship at a higher level – unless (eventually) pushed to do so by popular insurrection, or by becoming conscious of the political and moral dangers which Europe runs, through the conjunction of dictatorship exercised “from above” by financial markets, and an anti-political discontent fed from below by the precariousness of living conditions, contempt for labour and the destruction of hopes for the future.

Indignation must cross borders



If Europe is to change, indignation must cross borders

But however hard times are and however bitter the missed opportunities, we must hope that pessimism, resulting from experience, will not destroy our imagination entirely – which also results from a better awareness of the facts. The introduction of democratic elements into the EU’s institutions would already provide a counterweight to the “conservative revolution” which is under way (5). But it does not deliver its own political conditions. Those will not come except through a simultaneous push from public opinion for revised EU priorities, with an emphasis on employment, integrating young people into society, the reduction of inequalities and equitable sharing of the taxation of financial profits. And this push will not come unless social movements or moral “indignation” cross borders, and gather sufficient strength to rebuild a dialectic of power and opposition across the whole of European society.

Resisting de-democratisation is not a sufficient condition for crystallising a historic leadership, but it is a necessary condition to “remake Europe”.

“Counter-democracy” must come to the aid of democracy (6).

The legitimacy of the European project cannot be decreed, or even invented, through legal argument. It can only result from Europe becoming the framework for social, ideological, passionate conflicts about its own future – in short, political ones. Paradoxically, it is when Europe is contested, even with violence, not in the name of the past (which has been relegated) but in the name of the present and of the future (which it can control), that it will become a sustainable political construction. A Europe capable of governing itself is undoubtedly a democratic rather than oligarchic or technocratic one. But a democratic Europe is not the expression of an abstract demos. It is a Europe in which popular struggles proliferate and block the removal of decision-making power:

Resisting de-democratisation is not a sufficient condition for crystallising a historic leadership, but it is a necessary condition to “remake Europe”.

A struggle of ideas not nations

Europe’s current crisis – genuinely existential, because it presents its citizens with radical choices and ultimately the question “to be or not to be” – was probably prepared by the systematic imbalance of its institutions and powers, to the detriment of people’s ability to take part in their own history. But what precipitated all this is that Europe began deliberately to function, not as a space of solidarity among its members and of initiatives to confront globalisation, but as an instrument of penetration for global

competition within the European arena – ruling out transfer between territories and discouraging common enterprise, rejecting all harmonisation of rights and standards of living “from above”, and making each state a potential predator on its neighbours.

Clearly it is not possible to escape this self-destructive spiral by replacing one form of competition with another – by substituting tax regimes and interest rate competition through devaluation for wage competition, for example, as has been advocated by some supporters of a return to national currencies (7). We can only escape it by inventing and continuing to propose another Europe than that of the bankers, technocrats and rentier politicians. A Europe of struggle between antithetical models of society, and not between nations in search of their lost identities. An altermondialist Europe, capable of inventing its own revolutionary development strategies and enlarged forms of collective participation, and proposing them to the world – but also of taking on board and adapting ideas which originate elsewhere. A Europe of peoples – of the people and citizens who make it up. ■

Etienne Balibar is a philosopher; his most recent book is Saeculum: Culture, religion, idéologie (Galilée, Paris, 2012). A longer version of this article was published in the French edition of Le Monde diplomatique in March 2014.

References:

(1) According to Pierre-Noël Giraud, *L'Inégalité du monde: Economie du monde contemporain* (World Inequality: Contemporary World Economy), Gallimard, Paris, 1996.

(2) See "Europe's Reluctant Hegemon", *The Economist*, London, 15 June 2013.

(3) See Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *La grande bifurcation: En finir avec le néolibéralisme* (The Great bifurcation: Finishing with neoliberalism), La Découverte, Paris, 2014.

(4) See "Union européenne: la révolution par en haut?" (European Union: revolution from above?), *Libération*, Paris, 21 November 2011.

(5) See Jürgen Habermas, **Zur Verfassung Europas: Ein Essay** (On Europe's Constitution), Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2011. [As far as I can tell, this has not made it into English yet, so I have cited the original edition rather than the French translation.]

(6) See Pierre Rosanvallon, *La Contre-Démocratie: La politique à l'âge de la défiance* (Counter-democracy: politics in the age of distrust), Seuil, Paris, 2006.

(7) See for example Jacques Sapir, *Faut-il sortir de l'euro?* (Should We Leave the Euro?), Seuil, Paris, 2012.



Benoît Lechat

For a Political Community for the Euro

Beginning in the fall of 2013, three manifestos published by German and French intellectuals revived the idea of establishing a “Political Community for the Euro” to give the single currency a true system of democratic governance.

While the levels of poverty in Europe are different, the current crisis mirrors the events that led to the Third World debt crisis in the global South.

There was good reason to believe that the economic crisis would revive the debate within the world of European politics as to how to reform the European institutions. Yet, even an idea that has broad support, such as a establishing a new European Convention, is only on the political platforms of a few groups, i.e., the liberals, the Greens, and the far left. The two biggest political groups, the socialists, and the

conservatives of the EPP, do not even mention the idea. The same holds true amongst intellectuals where the debate focuses more on a criticism of neo-liberalism than on the institutions that could be established to counteract it. This is yet another good reason to take an interest in the ideas that exist as to how to achieve that.

■ *Glienicker Gruppe* was formed in October 2013 by Guntram Wolff (Director of the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel). It is a grouping of German intellectuals and experts including Daniela Schwarzer (Director of the European Integration Department of the German think tank SWP), Jakob von Weizsäcker (Economist, SPD candidate for the European elections), Henrik Enderlein (Economist, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin), and Armin von Bogdandy (Expert in Constitutional and European Law). The Manifesto is currently available in German and English.

■ The *groupe Eiffel*, founded in February 2014 by Sylvie Goulard (French MEP, from the UDI party), Jean-Louis Bianco (Influential member of the French Socialist Party), Etienne Pflimlin (President of the Crédit Mutuel Foundation), Agnès Bénassy-Quéré (Deputy President of CAE), Denis Simonneau (member of the Executive Committee of GDF SUEZ, in charge of European and International relations), Yves Bertoincini

(Director of Notre Europe), Shahin Vallée (Economic adviser to Herman Van Rompuy), Laurence Boone (Director of Economic Studies for Europe at Bank of America Merrill Lynch), Carole Ulmer (Director of Studies at the think tank Confrontations Europe, managed by Philippe Herzog, Special Advisor to Michel Barnier). The Manifesto is available in English, German and French.

■ A collective made up of, notably, Guillaume Duval (Editor in chief of *Alternatives économiques* magazine), Bruno Palier (head of research at CNRS, Sciences Po), Thierry Pech (General Director of Terra Nova), Thomas Piketty (professor at the Paris Ecole d'économie), Pierre Rosanvallon (professor at the Collège de France), Xavier Timbeau (OFCE), Laurence Tubiana (president of Iddri) published their Manifeste pour une union politique de l'euro (Manifesto for a Euro Political Union) on February 16th, 2014. It is available in French, English, German, Dutch, and Spanish.

“We speak as German but also as EU citizens who are connected with other EU citizens in a community. This is no contradiction: it is in Germany’s self-interest to overcome fears about a transfer union and to stop dismissing any constructive proposal as an attempt to pull the money out of German pockets.”

Reviving French-German Debate

On October 17th, 2013, the German magazine *Die Zeit* published a robust essay drafted by a group of 11 German academics, who call themselves the *Glienicke group*. Just a few weeks later, a group of French academics and politicians offered their response. Then, in early 2014, yet another group of French intellectuals published a Manifesto in the French daily *Le Monde* entitled *Manifesto for a Euro Political Union*. The article explicitly makes reference to some of the ideas put forth by the *Glienicke group*. One of the most interesting things about the text is that it is expressed from a two pronged point of view, both national and European. They speak to their national public about Europe and about the responsibility that their countries have towards Europe, all the while engaging in dialogue with intellectuals from the other country.

Reevaluating the Effectiveness of the German Approach to Tackling the Economic Crisis

The *Glienicke group* takes as its starting point the fact that the eurozone crisis is far from resolved. The banking crisis, the sovereign debt crisis and the competitiveness crisis are still ongoing. In those countries effected, the future of an entire generation is at stake. Our ability to find solutions in concert is waning. Therefore, the solution should be to strengthen integration and to set up a valid form of European economic governance. In response to German public opinion wary of contributing more to European solidarity, the Manifesto states: “We speak as German but also as EU citizens who are

connected with other EU citizens in a community. This is no contradiction: it is in Germany’s self-interest to overcome fears about a transfer union and to stop dismissing any constructive proposal as an attempt to pull the money out of German pockets.” The refusal on the part of some states to contribute to a bail out, although justified, caused so much collateral damage that it is impossible to implement. In order to find a lasting solution to the European and Euro crisis requires respect of the following four principles:

Four Principles for Governance of the Euro

Principle 1: *Responsible debtors need responsible creditors.* Rules cannot be more lenient for the financial sector than those that apply to States. The Banking Union must mean that shareholders and creditors take responsibility. “Only when these options have been exhausted, should we resort to the European taxpayer”.

Principle 2: *Responsibility and solidarity go hand in hand.* There are limits to responsibility: If in Greece, Portugal or Spain, a whole generation is deprived of their chance to live a productive life, it is not just a Greek, Portuguese or Spanish problem, but one that affects us all as citizens of the EU. Stability within the eurozone cannot be restored without a transfer mechanism. The *Glienicke group* advocates for setting up a “common unemployment insurance system, to complement national systems.” Additionally, we must facilitate intra-European mobility of workers as well as give countries from the South of Europe access to credit once again.

Principle 3: *Democracy and rule of law must be strengthened.* Europe must truly be able to guarantee the respect of the rule of law, even in times of crisis. A system of sanctions should be set up for those countries that do not respect the rule of law, because failure to respect the rule of law is an affront to all citizens of the European Union.

Principle 4: *Public goods must be provided.* Responsibility reaches its limits when it prevents the State from providing basic services, such as security in airports or the respect of the human rights of asylum seekers. These public services affect all citizens of the Union and therefore must be provided even if and when a State defaults.

To uphold these four principles the main proposal of the *Glienicke group* is to draft a new treaty for the Union of the Euro. This would establish a form of economic governance for the eurozone capable of acting, even having influence over national budgets. It would also have its own resources for financing projects to boost growth. It would be an elected body that would be accountable to a Euro Parliament, the members of which would come either from the European Parliament (MEPs elected from countries that are a part of the eurozone) or of members of the national parliaments from eurozone countries.

Shared Responsibility



By 2034 no single EU country, on its own, will qualify to be part of the G20. To influence the world, we therefore have to stick together.

The *groupe Eiffel* agrees with the *Glienicke group* that the crisis has not yet passed. Their approach is to look also to the longer term. By 2030, not a single European country, on its own, will qualify to be a part of the G20. So, we must act together. French intellectuals share the same concern as their German counterparts as to the persisting problem of debt. They are also worried about the suffering of the general population that has strengthened political radicalisation. *“A section of public opinion has been lost. Some make people believe that austerity is imposed on the southern countries by “Europe” when it is these countries which have largely put their own futures in danger by creating too much public debt (as for example in Greece) or too much private debt (as in Spain or in Ireland). The “virtuous” countries forget that they often supplied the “southern” countries with*

a large proportion of the goods which were bought on credit, and they also supplied them with equity which meant that they ended up highly indebted. Thus, it is both the North and the South, national governments and European institutions, which are responsible for the current situation. As for the markets, who were supposed to hold people to account, they turned a blind eye for a long time."

The *groupe Eiffel* acknowledges France's role in the current state of stalemate in European construction. As much as the country has been a driving force in that process, it has just as much thrown on the breaks, the last example of which was when the country voted no to the Treaty for a European constitution in 2005. For this reason, Eiffel plans to distance itself from the French decision makers who refused to even discuss the offers of strengthened integration as proposed by German politicians such as Wolfgang Schäuble in 1994 and Joschka Fischer in 2000. France must stop acting on the defensive and recognise that with the Euro, the country has already accepted to share part of its sovereignty.

Eiffel also plans to send a political message to German decision makers. *"German pride in the construction of exemplary democracy and rule of law since 1949 is legitimate. Following on from the distressing history of the 20th century this is progress not simply for Germany but for the whole continent. However, the German authorities must understand that the control of European decisions by the institutions of a singular Member State is difficult for others to accept. Without a doubt the Germans would not accept this themselves*

from another Member State. The current situation, where German federal bodies (Bundestag, Court in Karlsruhe) hold the fate of the euro in their hands is not good for Germany, placed in a position of hegemony, nor for Germany's partners, reduced to complying."

Like their German counterparts, the members of the *groupe Eiffel* advocate for the establishment of an executive for the eurozone in charge of policy areas that offset the effects of economic cycles, unemployment benefits, boosting professional mobility, labour market harmonisation, etc. They emphasise the need to fight inequality and exclusion and to promote education. This eurozone government could also coordinate long-term policy making for example in the area of the energy transition and big infrastructure.

The Euro and the Myth of National Sovereignty

The second French manifesto lays out an even more ambitious vision both in terms of the aims and the means. The primary objective is not just to tackle the lingering economic crisis but also the loss of political sovereignty to the world of finance. *"The central issue is simple: democracy and the public authorities must be enabled to regain control of and effectively regulate 21st century globalised financial capitalism. A single currency with 18 different public debts on which the markets can freely speculate, and 18 tax and benefit systems in unbridled rivalry with each other, is not working, and will never work. The eurozone countries have chosen to share their monetary sovereignty, and hence to give up the weapon of unilateral devaluation, without however developing new common economic,*

fiscal and budgetary instruments. This no man's land is the worst of all worlds."

The first proposal of the third group is to levy a community corporate tax. A common Europe-wide tax base would be established. Each country could then set its national tax level of at least 20%, while a 10% federal levy would be imposed. This budget would be used to fund economic recovery policies, namely for the environment and training. A "Eurozone Parliament" would have oversight.

That is the main thrust of the third manifesto. This European chamber would coexist with the European Parliament in its current form. A Minister of Finance would be held accountable by this body as would a future European government. Each year, the Euro chamber could set a single deficit level depending on the economic cycle. *"The choices made by this body will sometimes be more conservative than we might personally wish, and at other times more liberal. But they will be taken democratically, based on majority rule, in the light of day. Some on the Right would like these budget decisions to be confined to post-democratic bodies or frozen in constitutional marble. Others on the Left, prior to accepting any strengthening of political union, would like a guarantee that Europe will forever carry out the progressive policies of their dreams. These two pitfalls must be avoided if we want to overcome the current crisis."*

Concurrence and Dissent

All in all, the three manifestos agree on the shortcomings of the current system. They share the same will to strengthen democratic governance in the eurozone through a government with more or less powers and which is checked and balanced by a democratically elected government. As much as they agree on the need to boost intra-European solidarity, they disagree on how to do it.

Intellectuals do not agree on the financing of a future European budget nor do they agree on the makeup of the legislative body that would vote on said budget. The *Glienicke group* believes this should be financed by resources from the Member States at a rate of 0.5% of GDP. Eiffel believes that the Euro Community budget should come from own resources such as a corporate tax or a carbon tax, but does not specify the amount. The *Manifesto for a Euro Political Union* insists that this must be financed (at a rate of between 0.5%-1% of GDP) by a Europe-wide tax: *In these times of starving budgets, the eurozone needs to demonstrate its ability to raise taxes more fairly and more efficiently than the States; otherwise, people will not grant it the right to spend.* They place their aspiration for a European Tax as part of a large goal of fair tax policy. *Beyond that, it is necessary to very quickly generalise the automatic exchange of banking information within the eurozone and establish a concerted policy to make the taxation of income and wealth more progressive, while at the same time jointly waging an active fight against tax havens outside the euro zone.*

The first positive contribution of these manifestos is to breathe fresh air into the French-German partnership as a driving force for Europe. But, we have reason to fear that we will need much more to push the two countries towards real dialogue, in which each side makes concrete strides towards the other.

Another point of debate is who should be a part of the Parliament of the eurozone. *Glienicke* leaves it open: members of the national parliaments or members of the European Parliament from the countries of the eurozone. The *Manifesto for a Euro Political Union*, like Joschka Fischer in 2011, maintains that this European Chamber should be made up of members from the national parliaments, proportionate to population: “It is impossible to completely deprive the national parliaments of their power to set taxes. Precisely, it is on the basis of national parliamentary sovereignty that a shared European parliamentary sovereignty can be forged.”

Unlike *Glienicke*, *Eiffel*, with prudence, speaks of potentially pooling debt. The question of the capacity of collective indebtedness should also be broached, at least in the long-term, while underlining the fact that this is not a question of mutualising existing Member State debt, but, if necessary, the ability to borrow together in order to finance joint projects. The *Manifesto for a Euro Political Union* is much more direct referring to the proposal of a “European Debt Redemption Fund” made at the end of 2011 by economic advisors to the German chancellor. According to this proposal all debt exceeding 60% of a country’s GDP would be pooled. Not surprisingly, this is not a part of the new German government’s platform.

Method for implementation

There is a common thread running through the three views: they all establish two circles within Europe that remain open for movement between them by the Member States, including Great Britain. The *Glienicke group* maintains that candidate countries such as Poland, which is set to be the next to join the Euro, should be a part of negotiations on a new treaty for the community of the Euro from the outset. The *groupe Eiffel* underscores the fact that we need to avoid a situation in which a single country can prevent other countries from moving forward if ratification is not unanimous. If a country rejects the treaty, that country, and not those keen to take part, should bear the consequences of their decision. A double negotiation could be set up: one for a treaty amongst the countries that would like to be a part of the Political Community for the Euro and one with the 28 Member States to reform the European Union. The wider circle could include those countries for which accession is difficult because of their size (Turkey, Ukraine) or because of their lagging development (Moldova, Albania).

Moving Beyond Simply National Positions

The first positive contribution of these manifestos is to breathe fresh air into the French-German partnership as a driving force for Europe. But, we have reason to fear that we will need much more to push the two countries towards real dialogue, in which each side makes concrete strides towards the other. The SPD-CDU government does not make any progress beyond the very strict interpretation of responsibility as called for by the *Group of Glienicke* (See more). On the French side, it has yet to be seen if the newly appointed Prime Minister Manuel Valls will actually mark a shift in the

French sovereignty stance. Whatever the political reactions, or lack thereof, following the results of the European elections, one thing is clear. A debate amongst Europeans who are capable of thinking outside the national context is crucial. Responsibility and solidarity must not be pitted against each other but rather go hand in hand. ■

Benoît Lechat is editor-in-chief of the Green European Journal



Isabelle Durant

Pathways to a Europe of the citizens



Gesine Schwan

The time has come to review the democratic workings of the European Union. Ideally, this should be the subject of a new Convention, but it is also possible to strengthen, here and now, European democracy.

We cannot disregard the repeated messages which have transpired over the last few years, Spain, Greece but also Germany (Merkel government supporters are not alone).

This text is a summary of the concluding chapter of the book, "Hymne pour une Europe insoumise, Les citoyens à la manœuvre" (An anthem for a rebellious Europe, Citizens on the move), Luc Pire Editions.

Should we change Europe and European policies? Yes, definitely. Should we change the decision-making institutions and procedures? Yes, and alongside each other, if we want these institutions to serve democratic activities and reflect European identity and citizens. Significant institutional modifications are indispensable to kick-start Europe on a less intergovernmental, more democratic, more participative route. We do however need a Europe of the citizens, of diversity, unified to face global and environmental challenges, to build cultural bridges and partnerships. We cannot disregard the repeated messages which have transpired over the last few years, Spain, Greece but also Germany (Merkel government supporters are not alone). These requests are expressed in all types of ways, in dramatic fashion or disseminated, not just by means of activities, demonstrations or via social networks, but also by abstaining or protesting votes at national elections.

A federal leap?

Europe needs new fundamental legislation which redefines missions, skills, decision-making methods, the ways resources are collected, in the format of brief and legible text. Its preparation must be the object of a convention, part of a constituent meeting, held the day after the May 2014 elections. However, the convention we are speaking of must feature some substantial modifications with regards

methods. The consequences, before even tackling work, of ratification or not of the decision, must be decided. In the case of non-ratification, the Member State should be obliged to choose: the refusal of an agreement may result in dismissal from the Union, losing its Member status. The convention must also be more open and participatory. The relative work can also be extensively advertised via the media and social networks. Alongside these sessions, it can enable citizens of the 28 Member States to start communicating in order to exchange points of view and recommendations. These participatory and media elements enable the exposure of disagreements, limitations, any difficulties. Making the preparation process public and participative will not result in a reduction of discussions which distort the truth. Time is needed for transparency and participation. Such an investment is worth it, not just from a formal perspective, but also to be able to include past experiences within the future text.

Bringing together national parliaments

We must work on two separate processes which run parallel. On the one hand, we must uphold the long-term vision of an integrated Europe. On the other hand, we must progress accumulating the experiences of the European communitisation. In actual fact, the Treaty of Lisbon already allows democratic parliamentary contributions relative to European decisions. In important cases, the European parliament can issue a decision jointly with the representatives of national parliaments, in addition to any regional representative recommendations. This could be applied to the budget plan, which is not currently the case.

A third pathway involves the European Parliament inviting national parliaments to attend its discussions and, vice-versa, national parliaments inviting European parliaments to attend theirs.

At present, as per the framework of the European term, which has determined since 2011 the procedures governing establishment of the European budget and the framework of national annual budgets, the Council of Ministers and European Council (heads of States) discuss the Commission proposals at the start of the year preceding the budget year concerned on the basis of the draft budget in question. They define the guidelines for each national budget, which is finalised by the Council of Ministers and the Commission, to which national parliaments must comply. The Commission signs agreements, on this subject, with national governments. Once budget submissions arrive within national parliaments after all these decisions have been made, we are already in autumn. This leaves national parliaments with little room for manoeuvre. Everything has been established by executives, i.e. national administrations and the Commission. Everything is decided without public debate on possible alternatives, not on a national or European level.

There are many in Brussels and Strasbourg, who secretly confirm that the budget legislation of national parliaments has for some time lacked substance. Many European parliamentarians believe that it has become redundant, seeing as their national interests can just as easily be represented within the European Parliament. This indifference is extremely dangerous as it upholds hypocrisy and ambiguity which could further damage the credibility of the European Union, if fully exposed.

At the end of the day, budget legislation remains the main authority of national parliaments, from a legal point of view as well as a political point of view, least forgetting in terms of public rhetoric. It is not just national interest which is at stake, but also democratic participation which should be suitably decentralised so that citizens have a voice. If this does not happen, such participation is simply a front, where national parliaments are reduced to simple puppets following orders.

Combining national and European parliaments

It is possible to both distance ourselves from the current situation which is the integration of an executive and technocratic Europe and avoid Union policies which place power in the hands of a federal State, on the one hand, and renationalisation (confederation of States), on the other hand. A third pathway involves the European Parliament inviting national parliaments to attend its discussions and, vice-versa, national parliaments inviting European parliaments to attend theirs.

This would lead to better understanding of issues, as well as the consequences of national decisions on neighbouring entities. These national parliaments could also discuss a common framework at a much earlier stage, where they could decide upon their national budgets.

Central to this proposal, is the meeting of the two parliamentary levels (and not rivalry between them or the creation of new institutions!). The existing treaties are able to make this possible.

Moreover, the European Union Parliament must also assume a new position of power, in line with national parliamentarians, in terms of the decision of the Council of Ministers and European Council; it must have the power of suspensive veto, at a minimum. Such parliamentarisation would avoid dominance of the more powerful States - notably Germany - which not only opposes the founding ideas of the European Union, but presently threatens to destroy the credibility of the Union. It would be fatal if Germany appeared once again imposing its decisions to (nearly) all the other States and does not leave genuine space for public discussions on the subject of alternative policies.

The long road to European citizenship

This strengthening of parliamentary government must be performed alongside the development of participatory democracy instruments, including individual citizens. The plan for greater democratic engagement, launched by the European Commission in 2005 in the wake of the rejection of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe by French and Dutch voters, was ambitious and interesting. The originator, the Swedish commissioner, Margot Wallstrom, believed in it and dedicated much effort to it. As well as serving as Vice-President of the Commission, she was also in charge of communication. In other words, the inclusion of citizens, the strengthening of citizenship and participation, dialogue with civil society were regarded as communication and institutional instruments, and not as powerful means towards discussions, changing direction or assessing the policies.

Such a choice saw the remainder of this action went no further...communication never served to include the new measures at the core of the decision-making system. The European Commission then decided to place it under the authority of the Commissioner, Viviane Reding, declaring 2013 "European Year of Citizens". One year before the European elections, it risked reducing European citizenship to a pre-election gimmick. It is true to say that it was limited, amongst other things, to informing European citizens of their rights, such as, by chance, their right to vote.

However, as can be seen on the Commission's website, it included a bit of everything as part of *Join the debate*. We still remain a long way off finding an alternative to that which propels the existential crisis across the European Union. We also still remain a long way off countering the rise of populists, partisans of sovereignty and Eurosceptics. The Union owes its citizens much more than rights and a year's worth of discussions.

"We are not uniting States, but people", states Jean Monnet. It is all part of the challenge of European citizenship, which implies concrete legal consideration of treaties, to bestow European citizens with rights. This was the case, for the first time, with the Maastricht Treaty: "As a citizen of the Union, all persons have the nationality of a Member State". The Treaty of Lisbon repeated such concept and extended it in its Article 10.3 "Every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union".

It specifies that “Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen”. It finally implements a new form of participation, the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI). This is what remains of the concrete tools reflecting the ambitions of the members of the Convention who prepared the Europe Constitution project in 2003. An entire chapter was dedicated to citizenship and participatory democracy, it was a first. It stated that 1 million citizens would oblige the Commission to submit a proposal on an issue citizens consider requiring legislation to the Parliament and Council.

Citizenship initiatives and decisions

After the censorship of the Heads of State, all that remains is the European Citizenship Initiative which is a measure which citizens can use to make suggestions whilst the Commission has the final say. It took almost two years for the European Parliament Committee on Constitutional Affairs to implement this measure into working regulations. To this date, sixteen initiatives have been launched and are awaiting signatures. There is no shortage of proposals and they present a good number of quite different aspirations, such as *Fraternité 2020* (education and mobility), *Right2water* (the right to water), *Let me vote* (the right of foreigners to vote) and others, mainly focused on the consumer, such as *Single Communication Tariff Act* (with regard to the one single phone tariff). They demonstrate that, contrary to the threat presented, including slimming down the initiative, this new tool has not been seized by the organised lobbies. The citizen’s voice must therefore appear as too slow-paced and too far removed when compared to other more effective strategies deployed to influence European legislations.

Petitions are still used, which also represent effective tools with which to apply pressure. A minimum number of signatures is not required and the Parliament is not forced to respond. It is the European Parliament Committee on Petitions who is in charge of handling them. Demonstrating the power of petitions and the success of “citizen lobbies” is the ACTA case. In June 2012, the Avaaz organisation submitted a text to the Committee on Petitions rejecting the agreement, signed by 2.5 million citizens within the space of a few weeks. Together with the citizen phone and mailing campaigns intended for Members of the European Parliament, numerous demonstrations within the field, the petition made an impact: it resulted in a majority of MEPs rejecting the ACTA Treaty.



Was the defeat of the ACTA treaty by MEPs a sign of growing democracy within the EU?

Finally, another instrument, which is particularly suited and citizen-based which remains under-used: citizens decisions via citizen panels or consensual

Fifty years after their foundation would it not be useful to revise our democratic systems, a fortiori, seeing as though this flawed democracy is increasingly more decisive than supranational democracy?

conferences. This measure is useful as it is both effective in terms of implementing citizenship and individual and collective intelligence, and in terms of the quality of resulting recommendations. In essence, regardless of the subject, the discussion on conflict of values inherent to policies enables each of the participants to learn a great deal about the possible solutions to a given issue. The resulting recommendations are usually of great interest. The citizen panel is particularly useful on a transnational level. Bringing together citizens of different origins, nationalities and cultures, despite the cost for interpretation into the different languages, is of great interest in order to establish the feeling of belonging against a background of diversity. The consensual conference organised for the context of Citizens'Agora in 2010 focusing on poverty issues was a time of great intensity. Twenty-seven citizens aged over 60 years, who lived on less than €1,000 per month, spoke of the digital and cultural division which accompanies - or failed to accompany - material poverty. Discoveries which led to, a couple of day's work in the Parliament assembly room, formed part of a rich experience. The decision was however "snatched" and passed to colleagues more disposed to support only traditional consultation forms of an organised civil society. This sterile threat resulted in the forestalling of the second citizen conference on agriculture and food which should have taken place the day before the decision on common agricultural policies was to be made by the Commission on Agriculture. The argument put forward was that hearings from all sorts of entities had already been held.

Beyond European representative democracy

Those in power, and who often have been for a number of years, have exhausted all the boundaries (and limits) of our national representative democracies. In their eyes, the elected are elected. They are therefore legitimate throughout their appointment and it is up to them to make decisions, to ensure they are applied or to control them. This cannot be disputed. Those in power should however be questioned, although not always correctly communicated, such questioning must be reasoned. Our western national representative democracies are based upon universal suffrage. Over the decades and in varied fashion across the different European countries, they have been shrouded with more or less limited advisory measures from the perspective of rights (Council of State, Constitutional court) and in terms of content (social partners, various advisory councils). However, each time, there has been expansion or extension of the representative democracy system. Fifty years after their foundation, subsequent to major social and technological upheavals, at a time where information is exchanged across the globe within a fraction of a second and is accessible to citizens without the need for a filter or intermediary, would it not be useful to revise our democratic systems, a fortiori, seeing as though this flawed democracy is increasingly more decisive than supranational democracy? We definitely think so. It must be an area of priority for the European Union. ■

Isabelle Durant MEP is Vice-President of the European Parliament. Gesine Schwan is Dean of the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder).



1 Rue du Fort Elisabeth, 1463 Luxembourg
Brussels office:
T +32 (2) 234 65 70 F +32 (2) 234 65 79
info@gef.eu www.gef.eu

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu