

A Green New Deal for Europe

Manifesto for the 2009
European elections



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party**
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Introduction



DEIRDRE DE BURCA
Dublin constituency

The Green Party continues its commitment to the development of the European Union along democratic, sustainable lines with a commitment to social justice and peace. While this economic crisis will strain the capacities of governments and the EU, it has the potential to usher in a new era of green economics that provides stable jobs in a sustainable economy.

Future generations will not thank us if we simply patch up our economy and continue along the same destructive path, repeating the mistakes of credit bubbles and unsustainable resource depletion. We have a short term necessity, and a long

“Future generations will not thank us if we simply patch up our economy and continue along the same path.”



DAN BOYLE
South constituency

term moral obligation, to respond to this crisis by adopting new and innovative policy proposals.

Of all the political parties, only the Green Party stands ready with bold ideas for this new era – ideas to repair our damaged economies, to renew government and to combat problems such as climate change and mass poverty in the developing world.

The Green Party also recognises that Ireland cannot act alone – both the financial and environmental crises have an international dimension and as such can only be resolved working within the EU.

This manifesto outlines what measures Irish Green MEPs would adopt to resolve the financial crisis, protect our environment and ensure a more democratic and accountable Union.



Making Europe more democratic

The EU's ability to respond to the environmental and economic crises has been hampered by the limitations of its democratic legitimacy. It needs to adopt urgently measures that will make its operations more transparent and accessible, with citizens having an easy understanding of what their rights and entitlements are.

Such transparency must exist throughout EU institutions and bodies, with the European Parliament leading the way. This can be done through reducing graft and abuse of MEPs' expenses, including full disclosure of their accounts.

Another example of waste is the splitting of its meetings and administration between three locations – Strasbourg, Brussels and Luxembourg. This costs taxpayers €200m per annum and emits a total of 20,000 tones of carbon dioxide emissions in transportation. This must be corrected by giving the Parliament a single seat of assembly and administration.

The Parliament remains the most democratic EU institution and as such an attempt to resolve the Union's democratic deficit must involve increasing the role and responsibility of the Parliament.

To achieve this Green MEPs would fight for the following:

- **Right of legislative initiative:** At present, the Parliament may only suggest to the European Commission that it should propose certain legislation. Irish Green MEPs would seek to amend the treaties so that both the Parliament and the Commission have the right to initiate legislation.
- **Oversight of agencies:** The number of EU agencies has expanded enormously since they were first introduced in 1994. While they conduct vital work, it is important that they are accountable to the EP. Irish Green MEPs would hold them accountable to the Parliament.
- **International trade agreements:** such agreements will, despite the current economic crisis, remain crucial to the global economies. For these to have legitimacy, the Parliament must be given a say in their drafting from start to finish, including full power to approve or reject them.
- **Relationship with the Commission:** Irish Green MEPs will actively work to hold the Commission to account in both committee and plenary sessions of the EP.

One of the most insidious aspects of the legislative process is the dominance of lobbyists, of which there are an estimated 15,000 in Brussels, most of whom represent business

interests.

Irish Green MEPs would work for stricter regulation of lobbyists, including the establishment of a compulsory register of all lobbying groups, stricter rules to prevent EU officials leaving their jobs and immediately going to work for the business interests they have been dealing with and greater transparency in the Commission's dealings with lobbyists.

Opt outs, while important in protecting the sovereignty of member states, should also be recognised as creating an overly complex and disjointed EU. Irish Green MEPs would therefore work with the UK to end our opt out from the Schengen zone either by entering together, or by establishing a system whereby Ireland could enter alone.



Climate change, transport and energy policy

A Green New Deal for Ireland

Combating climate change can be the solution to our economic crisis. By focusing on green technology, governments can both tackle climate change and help Ireland develop a sustainable economy. By investing in insulation, renewable energy and public transport infrastructure we can create thousands of jobs and, through creating new technology, return Ireland to a nation of exporters.

Ireland is uniquely placed to benefit from this Green New Deal – because of its young, educated workforce; energy and environment ministers committed to expanding significantly Ireland's green infrastructure and its untapped alternative energy potential.

The first aspect of this Green New Deal will be political –

ensuring that the EU remains committed to its energy/carbon targets such as '20/20/20' (20% reduction in carbon emissions, 20% improvement in energy efficiency and 20% of energy from renewable sources by 2020'). Irish Green MEPs will pursue a binding target of a 90% reduction in 1990 levels of CO2 emissions by 2050.

The second aspect of this Green New Deal will ensure that sufficient capital is directed towards the green sector. To this end, Irish Green MEPs will ensure that the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions have a strengthened role so that it can contribute capital to these objectives.

The third aspect of this Green New Deal is ensuring that the pan-European infrastructure exists to enable a green energy revolution – largely, this would consist of building a 'supergrid' across the continent so that

“Ireland is uniquely placed to benefit from this Green New Deal – because of its workforce; committed ministers; and its untapped alternative energy potential.”



renewable energy such as wind from Ireland can be sold across Europe. Work on such a project is underway, but Irish Green MEPs will ensure it is expanded and expedited.

The fourth aspect is ensuring that EU policy is sufficiently orientated towards the green economy. A priority for Irish Green MEPs will be to establish an energy hierarchy similar to the waste hierarchy that exists, with the preferred energy options being those ranked lowest in terms of their carbon emissions and levels of pollution, including toxic pollution, to guide EU energy policy.

Irish Green MEPs will also push to establish a European community for renewables modeled on Euratom which would coordinate the development of renewable energy in Europe.

The fifth and final aspect is in the international sphere – using the authority of the EU to ensure that the strongest possible treaties are agreed in international negotiations on climate change.

If implemented, the above actions have the potential to radically alter Europe's energy consumption; minimise climate change and develop a highly dependable and sustainable green economy which will provide millions of jobs across Europe.

Nuclear energy cannot be part of the solution to climate change. Expensive investments in this dead-end technology will be unable to contribute to the urgently-needed emissions reductions and will divert much-needed funds from the promotion of sustainable energy production.



Transport

Recent policy positions from the Commission indicate a growing preference towards public transport and rail freight. However, there remains a severe bias in transport policy across the EU over recent decades and it will be difficult to undo the legacy of this. In the late 20th Century an average of 600km of railway disappeared each year across the EU, replaced with an average of 1200 new kilometres of motorway.

This bias means Ireland is not unique in witnessing an explosion in car usage – between 1970 and 2003, EU car usage increased 2.5 times.

As oil supplies decline, we potentially stand at the cusp of a major investment in rail and other public transport methods

which will make a significant contribution to reducing our CO² emissions, as well as providing employment during these difficult economic times.

To that end, Irish Green MEPs will adopt the following measures:

- Ensure that walking and cycling are mandated as the primary modes of transport in all future EU policy documents. This prioritising of the least energy-intensive – and healthiest – modes of transport must find its way to the heart of policy making in all member states.
- Extend the remit of the European Rail Agency. While its current remit is centred on safety, there is scope to expand its work so that it

actively assists member states to boost rail freight, make maximum use of existing lines and reopen closed lines.

- Radically reduce the bias in regional funding towards road networks and ensure member states' phase out subsidies of internal airlines.
- Irish Green MEPs will insist on making air travel as efficient as possible. To this end, our MEPs will support the implementation of a single, Europe-wide air traffic control system which will better coordinate flights and so reduce CO² emissions. Irish Green MEPs will work to have a North Atlantic European air traffic system based in Ireland, securing hundreds of highly skilled jobs.
- Legislate to ensure that ferries should connect to an on-shore supply of renewable energy while in port rather than using their huge diesel engines. Sweden has already introduced such measures at its ports.
- Further advance the

preference for public transport and other carbon friendly transport methods in EU transport strategies. The EU must play a key role in ensuring that a coherent, reliable transport system develops on a pan-European basis.

Cap and share

Cap and Share is a new system which involves 'capping' and progressively reducing carbon emissions, and then distributing that total equally among the population. There is a growing recognition that the introduction of such a system is the most viable and equitable way of reducing carbon emissions.

Like all measures to combat climate change, there must be an element of urgency to this project and so our MEPs will aim to have a framework for such a system in place by the end of their first term in the Parliament. One proposed system is 'environmental credits', a system similar to distributing tax credits.

“With declining oil supplies, investment in public transport will make a significant contribution to reducing CO² emissions, as well as providing employment.”

Social and workers' rights and equality

A Europe of rights

The Green Party opposes recent European Court of Justice rulings that have delivered a neo-liberal slant to workers' rights in the Union. Irish Green MEPs will make these workers' rights a priority. In particular, they will push for the following measures:

- Amending the Posted Workers directive to deal with social dumping as illustrated in ECJ judgments, which allows companies to bring in workers from other Member States on a temporary basis and which results in wage levels in the host state being undermined.
- Supporting the Agency Workers Directive. Agency workers are those who work for employment agencies and have some of the lowest employment rights in the workforce. An Agency Workers Directive will clearly outline the rights available to them.
- Seeking to better resource the European Court of Justice so as to expedite cases. There is currently a two year back log of cases, which undermines the Court's ability to enforce EU legislation in this area.
- Ensuring that the EU remains committed to equal pay for equal work. At present, women still earn, on average, 16% less than men.

The Green Party also stands opposed to any measures which

will worsen the position of those most vulnerable in our society such as the less able, single parent families and the long-term unemployed.

Principal to protecting these rights is the defence of the public sector, which provides vital services to all in the EU but especially to those most vulnerable. Irish Green MEPs will therefore push for legislation that defines Services of General Economic Interest and outlines how these are to be defended.

Protection of health services will be a crucial priority for Irish Green MEPs. While the above Directive on General Economic Interests will offer broad protection for member states' health services, it is equally important to combat the pervasive influence of medical lobbyists and the pharmaceutical companies. For example, advertising or promoting prescription drugs to the public is about profit for pharmaceutical companies and not about public health.

Irish Green MEPs will oppose Commission proposals that may directly permit or may lead to excessive advertising of consumer medicines to the public.

“Irish Green MEPs will use their position to ensure minority rights are advanced.”



Ending discrimination

Irish Green MEPs will use their position to ensure minority rights are advanced. The EU must continue to combat racism and xenophobia, in all its forms.

Appropriately managed immigration is an opportunity, not a threat. We need positive-minded policies that will allow people, especially the skilled workers needed in certain areas, to come here legally and efficiently. Immigrants who work in the EU deserve equal rights and equal pay, as well as the opportunity to obtain European citizenship and the right to participate in the political process.

Greater EU action is needed to end discrimination based on sexual orientation, such as extending recognition across states of same-sex partnerships and extending family definitions in the EU beyond the traditional nuclear family.

Irish Green MEPs will work towards a Europe-wide directive

on independent living, ensuring that people with disabilities in all EU member states

1. are supported with services and opportunities
2. have choice and control in their lives to enable them to access education, employment, services and community life equal to non disabled people.
3. are able to move throughout member states as is the right of all EU citizens, with support services to enable this.

Ensuring a sustainable recovery

The financial crisis of the past year was the result of decades of neo-liberal policies that deregulated markets, led to increased global interdependency and encouraged excessive risk taking without the necessary safeguards. Irish Green MEPs will ensure that we never return to such a destructive system.

At a European level our priorities will be developing an independent financial regulator, with real powers capable of ensuring the mistakes of the past few decades are not repeated. The role of the European Central Bank must be examined. Currently its remit is to ensure a low level of inflation. Added to this should be the achievement of full employment through the pursuit of sustainable economy.

On a global level Irish Green MEPs will work to introduce a financial transaction levy (also known as a 'Tobin Tax'), which would reduce speculation and fund a war chest to combat poverty and provide security against future economic uncertainty.

International institutions such as the IMF are in need of urgent reform so that they are capable of regulating international transactions and ensuring the mistakes of the past decades are avoided.

damages public health, which in turn places a strain on societies and economies. The EU needs to do more to address the threats to public health, whether water or air borne, noise, toxic substances, or through the spread of diseases.

One potential way of advancing environmental quality in Europe is through a 'green cities initiative'. Many cities are experimenting with different initiatives to improve environmental quality and quality of life in previously decayed urban areas. Irish Green MEPs would make cities like Cork, Belfast and Dublin innovators in this area.

As well as securing EU funding for such projects, our MEPs would work to ensure knowledge and policy suggestions on this topic are shared between different urban areas in the Union. Establishing an EU version of the 'United States Conference of Mayors' would be a good start to such a project.

Greening our cities would in particular involve reconnecting urban dwellers to food and agriculture – people must have an appreciation of how the food chain operates. Access to allotments is a right for all citizens, and Irish Green MEPs would ensure that EU cities provide them for their inhabitants.

Biodiversity is severely under threat worldwide, with a species extinction rate that is 1,000-10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. The

Resources, agriculture and the environment

Safeguarding our environment

Environmental responsibility does not stop at ensuring we combat climate change. Environmental responsibility must also be concerned with the safety of the air we breathe, the water we use and the food we eat. Environmental pollution

EU agreed to halt biodiversity loss within the EU by 2010. Irish Green MEPs would seek to back this proposal and extend it by setting new targets for the increase in land area under conservation protection and making the protection of biodiversity central to all future policy decisions and documents. The protection of biodiversity can have positive economic benefits such as in the continued growth in nature based tourism and food production, which means protection of biodiversity is central to our economic recovery.

While there are 23 official EU languages, there are over 60 indigenous regional or minority language communities. In an ever expanding Union, extra effort needs to be made to preserve this cultural diversity. Irish Green MEPs will work to protect vulnerable minority languages as well as promote intercultural communication through supporting Esperanto.

Agriculture and fisheries

A secure farming future for Ireland is vital for our economy and society. Irish Green MEPs will be at the forefront of reforms that will both strengthen the economic future of farming and minimise its impact on Ireland's environment.

Central to this objective is developing a model of agriculture and food production that is advantageous to small producers, respectful of the local

environment and that secures a sustainable future for farming. Ireland is already well positioned for such a development, with Food Minister Trevor Sargent setting ambitious targets for organic production and supporting the development of farmers' markets.

Irish Green MEPs would ensure that EU policy is positioned to support such a model of agriculture. This can be done by directing subsidies more towards local producers, passing legislation that favours the transportation of food over shorter distances and increasing the level of organic farming in the EU from 4% in 2006 to 10% by 2014.

Crucial to a sustainable agriculture industry is a ban on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), Irish Green MEPs will work to make the European Union a GMO free zone. Farming policies should promote sufficiency on a local level, which reduces unnecessary transport. Animals must be treated ethically – in agriculture, as in all other contexts.

Such an approach would advance Ireland's position as a leading exporter in high quality food, securing thousands of jobs in rural Ireland.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has been an exercise in self-destruction, driving many fish stocks to precarious levels. It needs to be urgently reformed away from the current model of waste and exploitation so as to allow fishermen to responsibly manage fisheries and fish stocks.

Human rights, defence and foreign affairs – Europe in the wider world

International institutions

The economic and environmental crises have placed us in an era of unprecedented change. They have proven to us that old global institutions have failed – failed to provide stability, failed to respond to global challenges such as poverty and conflict, and failed to secure the planet for future generations.

The world has changed radically since the membership of the UN Security Council was decided at the end of the Second World War – victory in 20th century conflicts is insufficient grounds for such dominance in the 21st century. Irish Green MEPs would seek a greater role for developing nations in the Security Council.

For too long, the priority of the WTO has been the free movement of goods and services regardless of the consequences. The past 12 months have shown that reckless disregard for consequences can only continue for so long – the WTO must be reformed to end the control wielded by developed countries. Its priority must shift from free trade to fair trade, trade that helps local communities develop not suffer and trade that takes

into account its overall impact on the planet.

Peacekeeping

The European Union must play a more active role in civil and non-violent conflict resolution, peacekeeping operations and disarmament beyond its borders. The EU must champion peace in other regions of the continent, such as the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, and throughout the world.

Ireland's position as a 'neutral state' should be recognised by having a greater emphasis on Ireland's diplomatic capabilities, rather than its military capabilities, in international conflicts.

By drawing on experience gained in Northern Ireland, Ireland can make a unique and valued contribution to international peacemaking via non-military means.

International cooperation and humanitarian aid must be prioritised. Establishing a European Civil Peace Corps ready to make non-military interventions for humanitarian purposes would play an important part in this.



The Greens have delivered in Europe – from protecting the rural environment to expanding democratic accountability, from ensuring a more social Europe to ensuring Europe plays a peaceful role in the world.

By voting for Irish Green Party candidates in this year's

European elections, you will be supporting an ambitious but vital programme of green investment that will combat climate change, reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels and create a just and sustainable economy and society for us all.

On June 5th, choose a **Green New Deal**.

Think Big.

Vote for Deirdre de Burca and Dan Boyle.

THINK

BIG

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Be part of the

Green New Deal

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