

# LOOK TO THE FUTURE - VOTE GREEN

**GREEN PARTY / COMHAONTAS GLAS  
EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2014**



**green**  
party  
comhaontas glas

## INTRODUCTION

We know that together we can build a better Europe. It needs to be one that looks to the future but which delivers in the here and now. It needs to create a fairer economy, that gets us out of our crisis but that avoids boom and bust.

Instead, the EU has experienced a profound crisis over the past five years, with serious flaws exposed in its economic and political system. The solutions offered to date have failed to resolve the problems, and in some cases have made them worse. As a result we have seen a growing disillusionment with the EU, which threatens to undermine public confidence in an institution that has been so positive for Ireland.

It is the Greens in the European Parliament that have been offering the only real, effective alternative to this path. From investing in a new economy to data protection, and from the youth guarantee to energy efficiency, it is the Green Group of MEPs that have effectively challenged the status quo and provided a clear alternative.

The next five years will be crucial to determining whether Europe can make the changes necessary to face an increasingly globalised world. Europe needs to respond to this challenge with a broad investment in a Green economy. Since 2009 the European Greens have championed a Green New Deal that will increase Europe's investment in renewables, ensure finance is properly regulated and create employment across the Union. The Greens, as the fourth largest group in the European Parliament, are well placed to put Europe on a fair and sustainable footing for the future.

Irish Green MEPs will be champions for this transition. We will encourage sustainable businesses here in Ireland that can export abroad, we will help communities to harness their abundant natural resources for the benefit of everyone and we will build a Europe that works for all of its citizens. Irish Green MEPs will work with our colleagues across the continent for policies that are good for Ireland and good for Europe.



Green MEP Candidates Mark Deary (Midlands North West), Ross Brown (Northern Ireland), Eamon Ryan (Dublin), Grace O'Sullivan (South)

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## THE FOCUS FOR IRISH GREEN MEPS

- A “Green New Deal” where Europe investment in an economy built to last – sustainable jobs and a green energy future;
- A Europe based on rights – protection for workers, digital and privacy rights, and combating discrimination in all its forms;
- A democratic EU – where citizens are heard instead of lobbyists, and where we bring Europe closer to the people;
- A Europe that leads on climate change – helping draft a global climate deal, and ensuring Europe plays its role in combating rising temperatures;
- A Europe that invests in the smart economy – making the continent a global leader for the smart, digital economy;
- A Europe that celebrates its cultures and languages – protecting minority languages and promoting our varied and diverse cultures.

# ECONOMY, JOBS, INVESTMENT AND THE EURO

Since the outbreak of the crisis, Ireland has been hit worse than most Member States. But across Europe, too many people have been left unemployed and too many people have suffered from the short-sighted policies adopted by European leaders. The crisis has exposed serious weaknesses in the construction of the Eurozone and the single market. Too often, Member State governments have settled for short-term solutions that have failed to resolve the problems, with public confidence being lost along the way.

A change of economic direction is urgently needed, towards investing in a green economy that is rooted in greater solidarity, social justice, environmental protection and sustainable prosperity. We need to build an economy that will last, and make the necessary investments today for current and future generations.

At its core, this green policy is rooted in three objectives

1. A functioning monetary union that shares prosperity among all Member States;
2. A sustainable economy that is not based on environmental destruction, excessive public or private debt or an undue focus on GDP growth;
3. Social justice for all citizens of the European Union, regardless of which Member State they are in.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- Increased powers for the EU to protect the Euro, including implementation of effective banking union

that cuts the link between banking and sovereign debt, limited mutualisation of existing debt and a more responsive EU budget. Such reforms are crucial to the future of the European Union, and must therefore be made in the most open and democratic manner. Closed door arrangements which ignore the role of the European Parliament go against the public's demand for greater accountability and must be resisted;

- Greater shared fiscal capacity to offset differences within the European Monetary Union, such as an autonomous euro area budget providing the euro area with a fiscal capacity to help Member States absorb economic shocks. Such a scheme could take the form of an insurance system to pool the risks of economic shocks across Member States, thereby reducing the fluctuations in national incomes;
- Greater 'own revenues' for the EU such as polluter taxes and the full implementation of the financial transaction tax across the EU;
- To use the 2016 review to correct some of the mistakes of the 2014-2020 budget, such as restoring funding to the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF);
- Youth Unemployment is a problem across the Union, but is especially focused in a number of Member States. Irish Green MEPs will work to ensure the EU focuses as much on reducing the number of young people without jobs as it does on deficits and debt. The Youth Guarantee is not adequately funded, and current macro-economic policies will not resolve the problem;

- A recognition that tax competition is damaging public services and public budgets across Europe, and that agreement needs to be reached between all Member States to ensure corporations and wealthy individuals pay an adequate amount into national treasuries.
- A sharing of information and a coordination of tax policy, to ensure corporations and wealthy individuals are unable to avoid their tax obligations;
- Unless trade agreements, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership currently under negotiation, bring about a substantial increase in environmental, labour and social rights, the benefits will not outweigh the losses and the Greens will oppose them. Irish Green MEPs will express a strong preference for multilateral trade agreements that provide fair and transparent rules for all participants;
- Reform European investment institutions to ensure that all investment plans and projects commit to environmental and social development across Europe;
- Require Member States to establish public banks, if not already present, so as to ensure both a more stable banking system and adequate investment in essential infrastructure;
- Support strong local economies that can be the foundation of a strong European economy. Irish Green MEPs will work for a reform of state aid rules, increased regional investment, changes to procurement rules and the protection of local culture and diversity.

# DEMOCRACY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Even before the crisis, too many of Europe's citizens felt disconnected from decisions taken at EU level. There is a feeling across Europe that such decisions are being taken without considering their impact on people's daily lives and without legitimacy. While the European Parliament has been given considerable powers under the Lisbon Treaty, including the right to decide on almost all legislation, this problem remains fully unresolved.

The reasons for this are several, but one of the biggest is that European leaders have responded to the crisis with a seemingly never-ending series of decisions made behind closed-doors. Citizens will never have confidence in the EU unless all of its decisions are made in an open and transparent manner, where people feel their voices can be heard.

The Greens have always led the way in ensuring democratic participation, and were instrumental in pushing for more power for the European Parliament and more transparency in how decisions are made.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- Oppose decision-making through undemocratic and non-transparent intergovernmental processes (the 'late night' closed-door decision-making by European leaders);
- A stronger role for a reformed Seanad Éireann in scrutinising EU legislation and decisions. Such a role would involve greater examination of European legislation, a role for debate with Irish MEPs and oversight of decisions made by the Council of the EU;
- Support an end to the European Parliament's "two seats" arrangement, where the Parliament splits its work between Strasbourg and Brussels. This is both wasteful and environmentally damaging, and reduces the Parliament's effectiveness;
- A mandatory register of Brussels lobbyists, to bring greater transparency concerning the 20,000 lobbyists operating in the city;
- A single national constituency for electing Ireland's MEPs, bringing us in line with the 24 Member States who operate such a system;
- Reduce the level of expenses received by MEPs and ensure greater scrutiny and oversight of all Parliamentary funds;
- Confidence in the European Parliament has been eroded thanks to a number of scandals involving sitting MEPs. The European legislation relating to European Parliament elections must be expanded to include greater transparency of, and restrictions on, donations to candidates and political parties;
- Expand access to Europe's democracy. This includes extending voting rights in European Parliament elections to those 16 and over and ensuring European Citizens can vote in each others national elections.







## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

The impact of climate change has never been more evident, and the scientific consensus has never been stronger. We must rapidly shift to a low-carbon economy or risk temperature rises above 2 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, which would be disastrous for our planet and future generations. Recent years have exposed the fragility of both our economy and our planet. The environment can't stand, and the public can't bear, a constant boom and bust. Resilience must therefore be the guiding principle of our economy, but in particular of our energy policy.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

However daunting this challenge may be, we can take comfort in knowing that the transition to a low-carbon economy is one that brings countless benefits. Ending our dependence on fossil fuels, both imported or otherwise, and creating green jobs will bring a much-needed boost to our economy, a boost that is sustainable and long lasting. While the scientific consensus exists, too many political leaders are dragging their feet on the action that is needed. Misled by fossil-fuel lobbyists and wedded to the status quo, European leaders have squandered the last five years. A repeat performance will surely put us on the road to climate disaster.

The next European Parliament must act decisively in favour of a low-carbon economy. Some of Europe's ageing energy infrastructure needs upgrading while other infrastructure needs to be phased out entirely. This is essential to both combating climate change and making the necessary energy transition fit for a 21st century economy. Decisions made now will lock us in for decades, and so we must therefore take the path that leads to a green-energy future. Achieving this aim is not just a question of setting targets, crucial as they are. A drive for a green economy must be done in a way that shares any costs fairly across society

and where consultation is the basis of all decisions made. No one part of Europe or no one part of society should bear an excessive cost in this switch, which if done properly, will have benefits for all.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- Combating climate change should be a core policy of the EU. This includes leadership at international level as well as ambitious domestic climate action through investment in renewable energies, energy efficiency, and support for adaptation to climate change;
- Support a European climate law, built on existing national and regional initiatives;
- Support for ambitious 'triple targets' for 2030 for renewable energy, energy efficiency and CO2 reduction, with at least a 45% target for efficiency and a 55% target for renewables and a 60% carbon reduction based on 1990 levels;
- If the EU is to be responsible for setting renewable energy targets, it must also accept the responsibility of ensuring Member States achieve these targets through a process that is democratic, has effective citizen participation and protects the natural environment;

- Ensure an effective pricing of carbon so as to support renewable energy sources;
- Effective environmental and liability regulation for nuclear energy and shale gas, which ensures these industries cannot pass these environmental and economic costs onto taxpayers. If effectively regulated and left without unfair subsidies, both nuclear and shale would be left economically unviable;
- Reform of EU State Aid rules to allow greater government support for green energy and energy efficiency and remove subsidies for outdated fossil-fuel industries;
- Member States must act to ensure greater community involvement in green energy, including ownership of local green energy projects;
- Continued EU support for smart energy grids within and between Member States as an essential means of ensuring the energy transition takes place;
- Use the 2016 EU budget review to reverse the 50% cut to the European Union Solidarity Fund, which is used to assist Member States which suffer from natural disasters such as flooding, to the levels of the previous budget.

## A EUROPE OF RIGHTS

Under the current direction of the EU, its citizens are left with the feeling that their rights are under attack. The economic crisis has been used as pretence to undermine workers' and social rights. Growing inequality across the continent is leaving many people, particularly those in vulnerable and minority groups, left out. Authoritarian governments in some Member States are compromising core democratic principles. Migrants are dying on our borders without a response from the EU. And companies are happy to disregard the privacy rights of their customers in search of greater profit.

The EU's response to these developments has been to turn a blind eye, or in the case of the ACTA Treaty, become an active participant in undermining rights. An excessive focus on deficit and debt figures has ignored the social consequence of the crisis. Five more years of this indifference will see the EU lose further credibility as an advocate for the protection of human rights.

A change of direction is urgently needed, and the Greens want to restore human rights to a central position in EU policy-making.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- The rescue packages for Member States such as Ireland have lacked any consideration of these social consequences. The European Parliament must continue its investigation into the Troika's activities to help prevent a repeat of this process;
- EU policies have had an insufficient focus on the growing level of economic inequality within and

between Member States. All policies adopted by the EU must be grounded in a drive for social justice, and in the understanding that economic inequality is both intolerable and a direct threat to Europe's economic and social stability;

- Water supply and management of water resources must not be subject to 'internal market rules' and water services must be excluded from liberalisation.
- Stronger monitoring of Member States to ensure full compliance with accession criteria, the Copenhagen criteria, even after accession, to ensure they are abiding by democratic and judicial norms;
- The strongest possible data protection legislation, to ensure technological developments do not deprive citizens of their rights;
- Call for Ireland to offer whistleblower Edward Snowden political asylum in Ireland and to guarantee his safety and protection from arrest and rendition;
- Support gender quotas for corporate boards;
- Greater protection for posted workers;
- Ensure minimum labour standards are applied across Europe, so that countries such as Ryanair cannot 'shop around' for weakened workers' rights;
- Reform of the Dublin 2 treaty for asylum seekers, and replace it with a Europe-wide system for legal entry that adequately shares the burden between Member States and ensures an effective and fair process for all applicants. Expand the remit of the EU's Frontex agency to include rescues at sea and agree a pact with countries on the Mediterranean Sea to avoid more human tragedies and the unnecessary penalisation

- of victims rescued while attempting to enter the EU;
- Ensure EU Citizens working in other Member States have full access to their legal and social rights, which is a particular problem for Irish emigrants;
  - Have the Commission draft and implement a roadmap for combating homophobia and ensure full support for other roadmaps such as those for disabled and Roma communities;
  - Resist attempts by certain Member States to water-down the founding principles of the EU, such as the free movement of people, which have been so crucial to our economic success but also our quality of life;
  - Further education about our rights as citizens of the EU, including our access to information, democratic scrutiny and freedom of expression;
  - Demand that all publicly accessible documents be made available in open source and machine readable formats to ensure equal accessibility to the visually impaired, blind, deaf and hard of hearing; and
  - Strengthen protection provisions for victims of human trafficking including guarantees of legal assistance.
  - EU membership is an aspiration that should not be denied to other states. For the Balkan region in particular, which has endured so much conflict, EU membership holds out the prospect of stable and peaceful cooperation. However membership must always be based on respect for core EU principles, both before and after joining. Accession should only be granted to those states that have demonstrated a lasting and firm commitment to fundamental rights such as LGBT rights and democratic norms.

## ACCESSION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Accession is not an immediate prospect for some states, where a close relationship may be more effective for the medium-term future. EU neighbourhood policy should therefore be forward looking, with an emphasis on forming sustainable economic, social and political ties.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- Accession conditional on effective and independent democratic institutions, and the adequate protection of human rights;
- Support the Eastern Partnership and ensure it contains strong engagement with civil society organisations;
- The EU needs a responsible, sustainable neighbourhood policy, that reduces tragedies at our borders, retains development aid goals, fosters sustainable economies through fair trade and real support for strong democracies;
- LGBT rights must be a crucial aspect of EU neighbourhood policy

## EUROPE IN THE WORLD

When acting in concert, the EU can have an enormous impact on world affairs. The Greens want to ensure that this impact is positive. The past five years have seen some successes, such as the EU's role in anti-nuclear proliferation negotiations with Iran, but other opportunities have been missed. Human rights must be the central element of the EU's foreign policy, guiding all policies made in this area. The EU must lead by example, particularly in the area of climate change, where the 2015 COP negotiations will be crucial to our ability to minimise temperature increases.

- The EU's foreign and security policy should be based on addressing the root causes of conflict and instability; this approach must then be complemented by assistance plans that prioritise the needs of conflict victims;
- Mainstream human rights in all its external affairs;
- Nuclear disarmament is an important goal. The EU must make full use of its diplomatic tools, such as sanctions, to prevent nuclear proliferation;
- Oppose financing military research from the EU budget and oppose arms deals to states with questionable human rights records;
- The EU has two tasks in the run up to the Paris COP in 2015 when a new global climate agreement will be adopted. First, it has to ensure it has a strong, agreed plan to fight climate change at home, in line with its responsibility, and corresponding to a fair share of the emission reductions needed globally. Secondly, that it reaches out to the rest of the world to secure as ambitious as possible an agreement, that will truly bring us on the path to a <2°C global warming;
- Private European businesses play a major role in funding, facilitating and supporting Israeli violations of international law and illegal Israeli settlements. The EU should introduce Union-wide corporate guidelines to prevent such complicity;
- The EU should cease economic engagement with illegal Israeli settlements and support the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) campaign;
- The EU needs to make good on its financial assistance to developing countries so that they can develop in a clean, climate friendlier way and so that the poorest can adapt to the consequences of the climate change we are already locked into;
- A renewed commitment to development co-operation is necessary to ensure lasting and sustainable prosperity for countries receiving EU aid.

# ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FISHERIES

A strong, sustainable and growing agriculture sector must be at the heart of EU and Irish economic policy. For Ireland in particular, our unique resources and high-quality produce deserve recognition. EU policy in this area must be to ensure the protection of both the farming community and the environment, and the structure of the CAP programme can work in ways that benefit both. Funding must be disproportionately targeted at smaller and new farmers, and close cooperation must be used to ensure environmental measures are adopted in the most efficient way possible.

On food regulation, cooperation at EU level is the most effective means of ensuring people know what they are eating. The strongest possible tracing and transparency measures must be adopted to ensure consumers have full confidence in what is being produced.

The recent reforms of the common fisheries policy are a step in the right direction and can be the basis of a sustainable fishing industry that ensures maximum employment for coastal economies. These reforms must be fully implemented, with sufficient compensation for those communities that are negatively affected.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- CAP reform that ensures payments are directed towards small farmers and not large agri-business, and that payments are linked to reasonable environmental measures in the 2017 mid-term review;
- Introduce a cap on the maximum payment that can be received, so that support is directed to small and medium sized farmers, rather than large agribusiness;
- Support all measures that encourage a new generation of farmers;
- Full and effective implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy agreed in June 2013;
- The strongest possible food regulations, including full information for consumers and the adequate sharing of information between national authorities. Origin tracing should be transparent and reliable;
- Secure biodiversity and the protection of bees by supporting the ban on certain types of neonicotinoids and other types of environmentally damaging pesticides;
- Oppose further Commission approval of GMOs and defend the right of Member States to declare themselves GMO-free;
- Oppose the further privatisation of seeds and plant material in EU rules on seeds;
- The Greens have led the fight against animal testing under EU legislation and will continue to do so. We want to ensure animal transport is done in a way that maximises animal welfare. At international level, the EU must be more energetic in combating wildlife trafficking, protecting marine mammals and defending its ban on seal products.



## TRANSPORT

To ensure economic success reaches all parts of the Union, and to ensure that economic success is environmentally sustainable, there must be sufficient investment in Europe's transport network.

- Adequate pricing mechanisms to ensure a shift in transport away from roads and the use of EU structural funds to support a sustainable transport system for Europe;
- Improve the energy efficiency of cars to help cut CO2 and fuel bills;
- Limiting of subsidies, including tax exemptions, for airlines and airports. They should exist only when there is a compelling case, for example the need to ensure peripheral regions have adequate access to the rest of the single market;
- Expand the use of European development funds to support cycling planning and infrastructure, including the development of cross-border cycling routes;
- Support new measures to improve the design of trucks, which will improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

## EUROPEAN CULTURES, CREATIVITY, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

Though the EU's competencies and budget in this area are limited, it should at all times advance policies that support, celebrate and grow Europe's diverse range of cultures and languages. As a conservationist movement, the Greens remain committed to protecting our linguistic and cultural diversity.

Cultural and Creative industries (CCIs) support millions of jobs across Europe, with indigenous sectors such as architecture, publishing, film, gaming, multimedia and the visual arts all showing huge potential for growth. For the potential in these industries to take root, the EU must continue to champion creativity, and provide appropriate funding and support mechanisms to these sectors.

If elected, Irish Green MEPs will work on the basis of the following policies and objectives:

- Support the diverse mix of cultures, languages, heritage and artistic creativity in Europe which is good for communities, the economy and quality of life;
- Restrictions for artists, in the form of grant unavailability, travel restrictions and costs, as well as underexplored opportunities in the digital economy could be significantly improved by more cohesive EU-wide approaches;
- Support Irish as an official language of the EU and ensure adequate funding for its full realisation.

## ABOUT THE GREEN PARTY / COMHAONTAS GLAS

The Green Party / Comhaontas Glas is a progressive political party focused on social justice, peace, democracy and the protection of the environment and our natural resources.

The Green Party was formed in 1981 by a group of people interested in better planning, social justice, sustainable economic growth and protection of our natural environment. The first Green Councillor was elected in 1985 and in 1989 the Party took its first seat in the Dáil. The Green Party served in a coalition government from 2007 to 2011 with 6 TDs.

The founding principles of the Party are based on peace, democracy, protection of the environment and our natural resources and social justice. We believe in a range of policies to alter things for the better, from properly funded education and a better transport system, to improved

primary health care and a fairer tax system. We believe in equality, in a political system that is transparent and in decision-making at community level. We understand that we need to plan now for our future energy needs.

The Green Party is a democratic party, largely run by its members on a voluntary basis. Local groups, organised on a constituency basis, play an important role in organising meetings and events, canvassing and fundraising. Local groups select candidates to run in local and general elections. The National Executive Committee (NEC), made up of Party Leaders and member representatives meets bi-monthly to oversee decisions in the Party. The National Council meets every three months to consider policy development.



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