



**Federation of Young European  
Greens**

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## **FYEG paper on the European Union**

Brought in and written by FYEG EU Working Group

*This paper, presented to the General Assembly of FYEG in May 2008, aims to provide FYEG with a coherent and detailed policy concerning the European Union. It does not aim to be a strict plan for the future development of the Union, but rather an orientation of what direction that development should follow. For this purpose, the paper will centre on a number of key topics related to the European Union and its role in Europe.*

### **General aims and development**

Those who founded the first predecessors of the European Union had a clear vision in mind for the future of the European continent. They foresaw a continent of peace, cooperation for the benefit of all and mutual understanding between its different peoples. Their dream of unification has come true only to certain extent, partly due to socio-political circumstances that were not foreseeable during the 1950s, but also due to bureaucratisation and a lack of daringness to make truly fundamental changes to the way our political and economic systems and societies function. We, as Young Greens, deplore this conservatism and look to revive the ideals of peace, democracy, solidarity across borders, intercultural and inter-religious understanding, advocacy of human rights and diplomacy and international cooperation to better respond to international problems.

### **Democracy**

The European Union is a test case of a citizen based rather than nationalistic approach to politics and therefore the citizens must be at its heart at all times. It forms a step towards a democratic global dialogue and decision-making structure, where regions and communities take over the role of the centralised state. Regionalism under a global umbrella means that politics is brought a step closer to the people, while promoting international exchange and understanding between peoples, cultures and religions and dealing with international issues on an international level.

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A first step towards a more democratic Union is made in the Lisbon treaty, which increases the powers of the European Parliament and introduces a fairer voting system within the Council. However, these are only very small steps. The European Parliament must be a real parliament, able to make legislative proposals in all fields attributed to the European Union and with the competence of performing monitoring and control over the executive power, that is, the European Commission. On top of that, the Council of the European Union must become fully transparent and all meetings of the Council must become truly public, so inhabitants of the Union will know what their leaders have voted in their names. Furthermore, pan-EU referendums and more transparent information supplies have to become common practise to ensure closer relations between European politics and EU citizens. Finally, the practise of opt-outs, yet again used in Lisbon, must be abolished instantly. Opt-outs go fundamentally against the ideals and functioning of the EU as a Union and can have no place in its legislature.

### **Economic and social policy**

FYEG deplores how the development of the EU has long been focussed on the common market rather than other, non-economic aims. The policies that place economic growth high above the human welfare of both EU and non-EU citizens must be reconsidered, be it in the field of social welfare, agricultural policy, trade barriers or migration policy.

### **Peace and defence**

The Federation of Young European Greens believes the main source of peace and stability is ensuring the security of all citizens; hence, ensuring that all basic needs in life are fulfilled free of fear. Understanding an army as an instrument to protect people in situations where other structures fail to ensure this basic security, FYEG supports a better coordination of peacekeeping missions in the form of a European Peace Force. This force should be well trained, focusing on non-violent mediation, and readily deployable in conflict areas anywhere in the world. Peacekeeping in today's world depends on voluntary contributions and often sufficient troupes are not available. The European Union has a role to play and in a democratic and transparent coordinated effort, can ensure a broader and more effective deployment of European peacekeepers. This European Force should substitute national armies, creating a unique pan-European body.

FYEG furthermore considers that with the end of the Cold War, and the shown inability or disinterest in reshaping and redefining its aims and organisation fit for the present situation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is no longer a relevant actor in current international relations. Its American domination and inherently discriminatory principle only to include North American and European members are neither fair nor transparent and rather pose a danger to international security than furthering it. FYEG therefore calls upon all EU member states to pull out of NATO and for the ending of the subordination of European Security and Defence Policy to the North Atlantic agreements. Any reference to NATO in these terms should be eliminated from EU Treaties.

### **Foreign and trade policy**

FYEG believes in a Common Foreign and Security Policy on the EU level, in order for the European voice to be heard clearly in international relations. This foreign policy must be based on promoting universal human rights and contributing to the development of democracy in all countries. Applying international law and offering economic cooperation are often better and more effective ways of dealing with dictatorship and (potential) conflict than military interference, and therefore diplomacy is a key factor in a successful and just foreign policy. Ensuring respect for human rights must be at the heart of all



bilateral and multilateral relations and an inalienable precondition for establishing cooperation procedures, especially in terms of economic or trade agreements. Channels and tools for monitoring the accomplishment of compromises made in this field must be ensured.

Extreme poverty is a form of violence. Trade policy must reflect the EU's outspoken aim of working towards a more equitable and fair distribution of wealth. Unfortunately, the completely contradictory policies of giving out development aid on one hand and maintaining a system of barriers to trade and such practises as dumping cheap products on African – and other – markets on the other have coexisted for several decades now. The result is a system that intentionally ruins the chances for development countries to develop. FYEG welcomes the record of the EU of being the largest donor of development aid in the world, but realises this will never lead to actual equitability unless the trade system becomes fair. FYEG is deeply ashamed of being part of a Union that maintains these practices and therefore calls strongly for them to be abolished as soon as possible. Trade policy must become fair, giving equal chances to everyone and promoting development and securing sufficient livelihoods for all people.

### **Environment, agriculture and energy**

The key word in these three fields is sustainability. Humanity depends on the natural richness of the planet, and will continue to do so, even as technology advances. This means we have to act responsibly with regards to all the Earth's resources: from protection of the soil, air and water, to the safeguarding of rainforests from illegal logging, the prevention of desertification and the protection of biodiversity. Pollution does not stop at borders, which is why environmental protection is typically a field where the EU has an important part to play. EU legislation, in the form of the Habitats and Birds Directives, forms a solid base for environmental protection but legislation is of no use if it is not generally applied and checked. Therefore, FYEG urges for a better implementation of existing legislation in protecting the Union's natural richness.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is among the most destructive policies of the European Union. Its target of expanding European agricultural production through technological advancement and volume-based subsidies has led to enormous overproduction, a miserable status of animal welfare and environmental degradation, as well as needing more and more protection in the international markets, for which the costs are out of control. Together with the EU's trade policy, this policy must be radically reshaped, favouring sustainable agriculture and especially promoting organic and animal-friendly means of farming. CAP funds should be invested primarily in rural development rather than in production subsidies.

FYEG strongly opposes GMOs on the grounds that they interfere with existing ecosystems and have unforeseeable consequences for the future development of our environment, and calls on both the EU and its individual member state's leaders to keep GMOs from entering the European market. Instead, the EU should become a frontrunner in the production of 'clean' and sustainable products, serving both the planet and consumers' health.

FYEG considers climate change one of the most important threats we face today. Therefore we welcome the EU being one of the leading groups of countries when it comes to setting targets to reduce our emission of greenhouse gasses. However, studies show that current targets are not sufficient to make a real difference and that a more radical change in our lives and production methods is needed in order to do something substantial about this issue. FYEG therefore urges the EU to be stricter and more creative in finding ways of reducing emissions.



One of the central things the EU should focus its attention on is the field of renewable energies, by investing in research, new projects and subsidising clean energy methods. This does not include nuclear energy. FYEG calls for a nuclear-free Europe, on the grounds that nuclear energy is not sustainable as long as there is no answer for its waste, and the threat it poses both politically/militarily and in security terms.

### **Fundamental rights and civil liberties**

Strongly believing that every human being must have the same fundamental rights, regardless of sex, nationality, race, religion, political ideals, sexual orientation, age or disability, FYEG urges the EU to do more in protecting these inalienable rights. We welcome the coming into force as a legally binding instrument of the Charter of Fundamental Rights at the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, but realise that such a charter is only useful if it is effectively applied. Therefore, FYEG calls upon the Union to make guarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens a top priority – both within and outside the Union –, and take an active stance wherever they are not respected.

### **Enlargement**

FYEG believes that there are two ways for the EU to grow: outwardly and inwardly. The outward component exists in forming associations and alliances with neighbouring countries and, upon the accomplishment of certain established conditions, including them in the Union. The inward component is more a matter of improving the quality of the EU, by reviewing its structures to make them more democratic and transparent and by reviewing its legislation to make it more coherent, less bureaucratic and to simplify procedures.

It would neither be fair nor beneficial to both the EU and the greater Europe to put a halt to enlargement now. FYEG believes association agreements, accession procedures and ultimately accessions are a means of promoting shared values, furthering democracy and uniting and equalising the European continent. However, this does not mean that enlargement should not be worked towards carefully and guided by a number of specific criteria. We distinguish four such criteria. First of all, new member states must adhere to the European laws and regulations and must have the appropriate stable institutions that can guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities. Secondly, a new country should not destabilise proportional relations within the Union, that is to say that a country such as Russia is simply too big to function as an equal partner within the EU. Thirdly, a new accession should not lead to conflicts or tensions between member states. And finally, the country should actually be in Europe. It is a matter of discussion where the borders of the European continent lie exactly, but this at least excludes all countries of which there is no doubt that they are not in Europe.

### **Key values**

Key values in FYEG's policy on the European Union are:

cooperation – mutual understanding – solidarity – peace – democracy – human rights – diplomacy – dialogue – transparency – human welfare – security – non-violence – development – equitability – sustainability – social justice – environmental protection

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