



PROGRESSIVE MUNICIPALITIES TO CHANGE EUROPE

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The rise of national populism in Europe is mainly caused by the lack of citizenry empowerment and neoliberal policies and others. One element that contributed to the multiple societal challenges we are facing is a lack of citizenry empowerment at the transnational level. Instead of reacting progressively to these challenges, the European Union is pressing the member states to comply with the demands of capitalistic structures to continue with neoliberal policies as if nothing happened. This left the vast majority of people behind. The continuation of neoliberal policies and the lack of democracy at the European level are only some of the causes that led people to consider the false solutions proposed by the far right.

Still, the policies proposed by the far-right are still policies following the neoliberal way of thinking. This is being realised by many. At the same time, it becomes clearer that, to overcome those neoliberal policies, empowerment is much more needed than before. The privatization of the commons has created a parallel administration which has gone towards greedy hands and uncontrolled oligopolies. The result of this harmful policy has been the massive increase in house prices, corrupt practices in cities, the privatisation of public spaces and social fragmentation. Local democracy is capable of defending the common goods, the recovery of public space and to resist from the plunder of the free market.

Radical change is required at every level if we want to stop this crisis and improve our life -and the life of the environment. The fights start at the local level and need to be connected. European municipalities, as the nearest administrative level to the citizenry, must guarantee everybody's quality of life. From providing social assistance to financing kindergarten education, municipalities have a great power to change the daily life of the citizenry. This reality is even recognised by EU Treaties with the "principle of subsidiarity", which expresses that decisions should be taken at the simplest and nearest to the citizenry level.

This is what many municipalities have been doing during the last years and months. Facing the fact that nation-states are simply overwhelmed by the multiple crisis -or unwilling to deal with the necessary reforms-, city councils from all over Europe have stood up in what it is already a growing movement.

Barcelona, Madrid, Paris, London or Grenoble, to name only a few, are innovating in policies and decision-making to include the citizenry's voice and to comply with international standards that their nation-states neglect. Some examples of their commitment are the international



network of cities that are eager to comply with the Paris Agreement and have even proposed higher benchmarks, the free-CETA zones and cities network, advocating for protection of our public services against undemocratic free trade agreements and the network of refuge cities that are demanding and preparing infrastructures to welcome refugees. Other examples are: the water remunicipalisation in cities like Paris or Berlin; the Hamburg referendum in 2013 for regaining the control of electricity, or the buyback of the power system in Finland. These alternative local policies are all the more needed in rural areas. Rural municipalities are as well affected by the destruction of public services and/or by rural exodus. They are also the places where right wing politicians get their best scores. But at the same time they also have a huge potential to come up with innovative local solutions. Initiatives such those that are part of the “Transition Network” are already implemented in many countries.

The Federation of Young European Greens cannot remain silent to these new developments. As young Greens who want to change Europe bottom-up, we need to stand in favour of these new ways of citizenry empowerment. It is for these reasons that FYEG demands:

To European municipalities

As the nearest administration to the citizenry, they need to defend the social rights of their citizens when they have been eliminated -“cut”- all over Europe with the excuse of austerity policies. When possible, they should not only defend such rights, but they have to strengthen them.

As the first level of government, they should use the principle of subsidiarity to surpass when nation-states are unwilling of or cannot comply with international, European or human rights standards.

Municipalities should use their power to change the European project progressively and support each other. We need to develop a Europe that takes the importance of regions more into account and reduces the power of nation-states and develops in the direction of regionalism as a network of European municipalities. Also creating equitable policies for citizens within and between states, according to the different needs and vulnerabilities.

To our member organisations, mother parties, and the Green Left in general

As champions of freedom, our movements need to fight together in order to put forward what makes us stronger. We need to fight for our ideals. Only then can we use them to begin using them as a tool to change the society and to overcome the capitalistic system.

As fighters for social equality, our parties have to push for progressive alliances when possible to recognise the diversity within society in order to not only serve as a minor alternative, but a government option. Such new realities are to be seen in many levels, but can be tested and proved useful especially at the local level.



As activists embracing the concept of cooperation and transnational solidarity, we have to demand to change the scope of policy- and decision-making. We need to connect the local struggles in Europe in order to bring back progressive ideas and voices into the political discourse.

To the European Union and, concretely, to the European Commission

The role of municipalities in decision- and policy-making processes needs to be strengthened massively. In order to succeed, Europe must embrace the principle of subsidiarity. This also means that nation states need to pass power to municipalities.

When authoritarian and fallen regimes arise in the “European Neighbourhood”, we must use networks of municipalities to counteract the power of authoritarian central regimes arisen in Europe.