

**Green Party**  
Northern Ireland

# European Election Manifesto

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**2014**



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## Foreword

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In 1914 the countries of Europe entered a period of warfare that came close to tearing the continent apart. Today, a century on, and more than half a century since the Treaty of Rome, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Europeans in a democratic union that is at once our common home and our future.

Yet that future is under threat. The consequences of the economic crisis, and the ensuing politics of austerity, have stirred fears and tensions that threaten to divide neighbour from neighbour, plunging us back into a politics of division and suspicion that will leave all of us the poorer, the meaner, and the more isolated.

And no one in Europe is better acquainted with the bitter legacy of division and conflict than the people of Northern Ireland; no one in Europe more aware of the value of peaceable cooperation with our neighbours than the people of the UK and Ireland.

If we, in these islands and across the continent, are to preserve and build upon the achievements of the EU, now is the time for a democratic renewal, and for a fundamental political reorientation of the European Union.

Only by standing together can we face the daunting social, environmental and economic challenges ahead; only through fair economic cooperation can we meet our social responsibilities; only through collaboration can we build a clean economy fit to meet our environmental obligations to the generations to come.

We urge you, therefore, to exercise your hard-won democratic right in the European Parliamentary election of May 22nd, and make your voice heard. We are asking you to vote for the party of democracy, of equality, and of sustainability: the Green Party.

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**Ross Brown**

*Green Party candidate for Northern Ireland  
European Parliamentary elections, 2014*



## Introduction

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### **Beyond the Crisis: from Anxiety to Hope**

In the aftermath of the global economic crisis many of Europe's key democratic and economic achievements have been threatened, and in some cases rolled back. Fully a quarter of European citizens are now at risk of poverty and social exclusion; we are witnessing high levels of unemployment, stagnation, increased social division and injustice. People are fearful and angry. The root causes of the problem are a profit-at-any-cost economic model, and a deregulated financial model geared towards lavishing rewards on those who take ever riskier bets with the money of others. But instead of addressing those causes, many of us have been led to turn against each other, in our local communities, and in our wider global neighbourhood.

We in the Green Party want to change this, and change it for good. Europe needs fundamental transformation; we invite you to join us in our efforts to bring this about.

### **Your Vote Matters – let's fight for an Alternative Europe**

We want you to join us in the fight for an economic, political and social transformation in the EU that will build shared future prosperity on the basis of sustainable development, a Green Renaissance in our industries, and equitable relations with our global neighbours. We stand for:

1. Reclaiming Democracy: clean politics, transparency and accountability at the heart of our institutions, giving the EU back to its citizens;
2. Social Justice and Equality: caring for our communities, turning back the tide of inequality let loose by a politics that puts profits before people;
3. Green New Deal: building a sustainable, inclusive economy that serves the common good, not just the wealthy few;
4. One Planet, One Home: caring for our environment, doing justice to those we share it with, and to the generations to come.

## Aim 1

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# Reclaiming Democracy

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We will work for the right of citizens to determine the future of the EU by their choices throughout the law-making process

# 1. Reclaiming Democracy

## Clean Politics

### Europe needs a democratic renewal.

We need an EU that is more vigorously democratic all the way through.

We believe that a shift towards citizens' participation, as well as transparency and accountability, is crucial in gaining legitimacy for future European cooperation. The Green Party will work for increased transparency in the whole decision-making process, from the Commission, through the other EU institutions, to member-state governments.

More importantly, we will work for the right of citizens to determine the future of the EU by their choices throughout the law-making process.

We want to increase your opportunities to influence decisions, so we will work to bring about a more participatory democracy. Greens helped introduce the European Citizens' Initiative; it is time to take the next step. We want to make the EU more efficient and citizen-friendly by giving you the opportunity to put forward suggestions on all questions that the European Commission can deal with. In order to strengthen democracy we also want to create a legal basis for EU-wide referenda. Furthermore, where citizens are being deprived of their rights in an EU member state, and where there is no remedy from that country's judicial system, they should have the chance to take collective legal action in the EU's Court of Justice.

## Strengthen the role of Parliaments

By choosing the Members of the European Parliament citizens have a say on how some of the crucial issues of our times will be tackled, from climate change to bank regulation, from the policy on refugees to youth unemployment. We want to give the European Parliament a stronger role in relation to the other EU institutions, particularly in EU crisis management and economic policy making. We want to lower the voting age to 16 for the European Parliament, and also to introduce pan-European lists with transnational candidates.

The growing influence given to the European Parliament by the Lisbon Treaty must be exercised responsibly and not undermined by lobby interests. In the Council of the European Union, too, more transparency is needed - for example, all voting results ought to be published. To get a broader and more open debate, national parliaments need to take more responsibility, imposing closer control over governments' actions in European affairs. National parliaments should have the chance to engage when the EU exceeds its authority, failing to follow the rules of subsidiarity. National parliaments should also have more avenues of cooperation with the European Parliament.

The European Parliament should have the right to initiate legislation. While national veto-rights should be limited, decisions should be taken not by a cabal of technocrats, but as far as possible in consultation with the citizens. The European Parliament should have one location, not two - we should end the wasteful practice of shuttling, like a travelling circus, between Brussels and Strasbourg. Europe needs to renew its efforts on integration. So we want a new democratic Convention that will determine the future of European integration, a Convention with strong parliamentary and civil society participation. Its procedure must be fully transparent and democratic. European citizens should have a final say through an EU-wide referendum.

## Fight corruption and fraud

The EU needs a stronger anticorruption policy and more effective instruments against organized crime. Corrupt behavior by EU officials or parliamentarians in their relations with lobbyists must not be tolerated. Big business is still influencing the commission too much - almost 80% of stakeholders appointed by the commission represent corporate interests. We aim to tackle the problem of the 'revolving door', where top bureaucrats and politicians are made responsible for regulating businesses one day, only to leave and join their ranks the next. We need to safeguard democracy from corruption by introducing robust rules to make the financing of political parties, candidates and election campaigns fully transparent.

We want to provide the Court of Justice of the EU and the European Court of Auditors with stronger tools to regulate the way in which EU resources are spent. These bodies must be able to act against corruption both within the EU institutions and, in the case of serious problems, within the member states.

## Resources for the EU Budget

When it comes to the EU budget, the common interest is too often overlooked in negotiations between governments - as it was in the 2013 budget negotiations that failed to come up with effective policies to fight against the crisis. The EU budget must be based much more strongly on a system of own resources (raised, for instance, by a carbon tax) to reduce dependency on national contributions. The Greens have been fighting a tough fight for greater accountability and transparency in budget making. We want to see more participation too: citizens could be given the right to sign up for pilot-project initiatives to be approved by the Budget committee of the European Parliament.

## A digital Bill of Rights

The Greens in the European Parliament are at the forefront of the fight for digital rights. We helped stop the Anti-Counterfeit Trade Agreement (ACTA) and we are fighting for strong protection of personal data, for the right to privacy, and for strict net neutrality. Now it is time to defend and protect both European citizens and the internet from pervasive corporate and governmental surveillance, and to safeguard fundamental rights on the internet. Personal data should belong to the person, not to companies or governments. Your privacy must be respected. The data retention law, which obliges telecom providers to store data about who citizens communicate with, is a serious mistake and must be abolished. Governments have to abide by their own laws: whilst national security is important, personal freedoms and liberties must not be overridden. Governments must ensure that national security agencies work for all citizens to secure liberty for everybody.

## Aim 2

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# Social justice and equality

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Caring for our communities, turning back the tide of inequality let loose by a politics that puts profits before people

## 2. Social justice and equality

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### Caring for our communities

#### Without equality there is no democracy

The principle of equality is at the heart of Green politics. Without equality for women, for minority ethnic groups, for people with disabilities, for LGBT and for a range of other marginalised groups, there is no democracy.

The EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Greens do not compromise on human rights. Pluralism, nondiscrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality must prevail. The Green Party will push for effective anti-discrimination policies to overcome inequality and injustice.

In many member states equal rights for LGBT citizens are still not guaranteed, and people with disabilities are still too often treated as second-class citizens. Discrimination against people because of age, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief is still a reality. Islamophobia, homophobia and anti-Semitism are growing, along with prejudice against Roma and Traveller communities. Greens will push for effective anti-discrimination policies to overcome such injustices. We are long-standing advocates of the conversion of various anti-discrimination directives into a fully-fledged Equalities Directive.

For our democratic rights to be upheld and recognized, we need to keep the integrity of the rule of law both at the EU and national level. The EU lacks effective monitoring and sanctioning tools when there are violations of our values in the member states. This is why we have been pioneers in demanding the creation of a Copenhagen Commission, in accordance with the EU treaties and the European Convention on Human Rights,

to make sure that accession countries don't just put on a show of democracy to gain Membership, only to slip back into authoritarianism afterwards.

The impressive list of guarantees and protections for citizens in the Charter of Fundamental Rights should apply in practice where citizens live – so the current limitations on the Charter should be lifted.

The EU should mainstream gender issues at all policy levels. Gender democracy means women taking decisions in institutions and companies on an equal footing with men, fully taking part in the public life of our societies. We support the Commission in its work on legally binding quotas for women in corporate boardrooms. At the present pace it will take more than 50 years until 40% of all boardroom members of European companies would be women. This is not good enough. We will demand a quota to achieve this objective by 2020. Moreover, to achieve equality, we believe that the EU should adopt a more comprehensive policy approach against gender-based violence, including EU legislation in the form of a directive proposing measures to address violence against women. According to the EU Human rights convention all EU Member States should define rape and sexual violence against women within marriage and intimate informal relationships as a crime.

Shaping a better and more inclusive Europe also requires fighting the spread of child poverty and homelessness. And at the other end of the age scale, we must combat rising levels of poverty among older citizens. We advocate the inclusion of a social progress clause in European law, emphasising the priority of building a social Europe. By working for social and economic equality and inclusion across Europe we will be able to stem the brain drain that occurs when young people migrate in search of better opportunities elsewhere, while still preserving the fundamental right to freedom of movement.

**More democracy, not less, is the answer to this crisis.**

Aim 3

# A Green New Deal for Europe

Building a sustainable, inclusive economy that serves the common good, not just the wealthy few

## 3. A Green New Deal for Europe

### Sustainable local economies

**Europe has not been delivering on its promise. We need a new economic direction.**

So we are calling for a Green New Deal for Europe – a concerted effort to fight unemployment, poverty and inequality; to transform our economies with sustainable solutions; and to regulate the financial industry so that it serves the common good.

The European Green New Deal is about solidarity, sustainability, and an end to our addiction to debt – be it financial, social or environmental. A debt-fuelled society or economy is not sustainable. By becoming world-leaders in generating solutions that make a good life possible for everyone, while respecting the limits of our planet, we will unlock a new, dynamic route to jobs and shared prosperity. Austerity, imposed in the wake of the financial crisis, takes us in the wrong direction, increasing levels of debt, reducing social welfare, driving down wages and job security, and privatising public goods in what amounts to a form of corporate welfare. Broader shoulders must carry a fair share of the burden, and fiscal responsibility must go hand in hand with equally strong social and environmental responsibility.

With coherent and sustained policies, we can generate Green jobs and new investment, producing good and decent work, equal pay, workers' rights, increased economic mobility, regional development and greater opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises and social businesses.

### Laying the foundations of a Social Europe

Social justice is a founding value of the Europe that emerged from decades of war; yet the past thirty years has seen a sharp rise in inequalities of income and wealth. And rather than take the crisis as an opportunity for serious re-evaluation, many mainstream political parties have prescribed still larger doses of the same medicine, to the point where the patient is becoming dangerously ill – literally, in the case of the growing number of European citizens whose access to healthcare has been curtailed.

One key element of injustice is widespread and unnecessary unemployment, particularly among the youth of Europe. The EU must put an end to social dumping – zero-hour contracts, low-wage, precarious jobs, and the increasing use of unpaid 'internships'.

The Green Party advocates fair and gradually converging minimum social standards in Europe, particularly in terms of job quality and security. We support the idea of a European social card to streamline administrative processes across countries, and to make a genuine European citizenship more concrete. We want the European Central Bank to include employment among its policy objectives. And we want to see new instruments developed to mitigate large differences in economic cycles including unemployment rates.

## **RISE: Renaissance of Industry for a Sustainable Europe**

Europe needs a new industrial revolution.

If we are to build an economy to last, we cannot do it on the basis of dwindling and dirty fossil fuels, the energy supplies of the past. We want to transform our European economy into a global champion of energy and resource efficiency based on renewable energy, on less energy intensive technologies, and on improving the way we manage, use, reuse, recycle, and value resources. To this end we will push for the creation of a European Renewable Energy Community to help break our addiction to fossil fuels.

We want resource efficiency and eco-innovation to underpin policies and investment in all sectors of the economy. This Green initiative will create many quality new jobs in a variety of industries for high-skilled as well as low-skilled workers, and it will enhance working conditions and workers health. It will also enhance future economic resilience and competitiveness.

Industry should not follow false leads like shale gas or converting food to fuel. Rather it should become a key partner in an innovation-oriented Green transformation. Eco-design rules, public procurement, state aid rules, private investment, promoting small and medium sized enterprises and cooperatives, fighting corporate vested interests, better funding for research, development and education, promotion of social entrepreneurship, good industrial relations and workplace democracy – these must all be elements of our new economy. We want to strengthen trade unions and the right workers, men and women alike, to participate equally in decision-making processes. Trade policy should support a sustainable industrial renaissance in Europe and show respect and solidarity for our global partners.

## **Bringing the Financial Industry Under Control**

Our banks were said to be ‘too big to fail’ – yet fail they did. Five years on, having absorbed billions in public bail-outs, the system remains dominated by banks that are just too big, and financiers who seem determined

to inflate the same bubbles again. We want to ensure a properly sized, diverse and resilient financial sector that serves society – and not vice-versa. We want a banking sector that helps mobilise sustainable investments in the real economy, and for the common good; we propose stringent rules for the separation of banking activities, shutting down financial products and activities that are shown to have the potential to destabilise the economy.

We advocate a European banking union, combining a strong common oversight of our banks, a common authority and fund to restructure failing banks, as well as a common system of insurance for deposits up to €100,000 or equivalent. We Greens are proud of our achievements in this domain to date. We banned naked speculation on sovereign debt; curbed bankers’ bonuses; forced banks to disclose activities in tax havens; and submitted the European Central Bank’s banking supervision to more democratic accountability. We need to build on these successes. EU institutions must also contribute to tackling financial short-termism that limits the level of sustainability ambition in strategic investment decisions.

## **Fair and effective taxation**

Currently, the tax burden weighs disproportionately on low and medium income earners and on small and medium enterprises. At the same time an estimated €1,000 billion is lost annually to tax evasion and fraud. Our goal is to reduce the tax burden on labour and move towards taxing pollution and waste. We will fight for a financial transaction tax, in the face of opposition from lobbying by wealthy speculators. As we want large corporations and wealthy individuals to contribute their fair share, we advocate a common European approach to corporate and wealth taxation, including minimum rates. We advocate a common offensive against tax evasion, tax fraud and tax havens, starting by putting an end to bank secrecy. We also want an end to be put to the unanimity rule in tax matters, which should be subject to co-decision by the EU Council and Parliament. On the expenditure side, Greens explicitly fight wasteful and ecologically harmful spending such as fossil fuel subsidies – whereby public money literally goes up in smoke.

## Aim 4

# One Planet, Our Home

## Caring for our Environment

The ecological crisis has been overshadowed by the current economic crisis, but climate change and biodiversity loss pose threats to societies across the world, and the situation is becoming steadily more acute. The potential collapse of whole ecosystems puts our very lives at risk

## 4. One Planet, Our Home

There is now no room for doubt that an economy based on burning carbon, along with our destruction of natural carbon sinks such as rainforests, has contributed to climate change. Without a radical change in our energy consumption and production patterns, the planet could reach a tipping point, and the damage become irreversible. Yet solutions are available which could not only help mitigate climate change, but deliver massive economic, social and health benefits.

### European Climate Law

We want comprehensive EU climate legislation, consistent with our fair share of global efforts, built on legally binding emission targets, and sanctions to ensure climate goals are met. This will create the incentives to put Europe on a path to sustainable economic transformation.

The UN Climate Summit in Paris 2015 (COP 21) must deliver a binding global agreement on climate change. The clock is ticking, and the EU, together with member states, needs to play a leading role in the negotiations to secure binding commitments from all parties.

We need to up the scale of our ambitions: we should reduce emissions by at least 55% from the 1990 levels by 2030 in order to reach a carbon neutral society by 2050. Reviving the EU's emissions trading scheme is essential, so we must set an adequate price for CO2 emissions. The business sector must be encouraged to divest from climate-damaging assets. Public subsidies for, and investments in fossil fuels must be ended. We want to see a surge in investment in European energy networks connecting renewable energy production right across the continent – increasing energy security while reducing costs.

A coherent energy policy, based on energy savings and efficiency and renewable energy is the only way to get near to a fully renewable-based economy by 2050. So further binding targets on energy efficiency and renewable energy are essential. Our energy consumption must be reduced by 40% over the next 15 years and, at the same time, renewable energy, excluding agrofuels, must be boosted to ensure 45% of our energy consumption by 2030. This is not only essential for limiting global warming to below 2° C, it also makes economic sense, as it stimulates economic activity, creates jobs and reduces Europe's dependence on costly imports of fuels – not to mention geopolitical instability.

Sustainability must be put at the heart of every major economic decision. We want to see environmental and biodiversity protection and sustainable development given international priority. We propose the creation of a World Environment Organisation by combining and expanding the role of the different disjointed agencies that already exist within the United Nations. We cannot measure the quality of life only in coarse monetary terms: we need new indicators to complement Gross Domestic Product as a measure of sustainable prosperity and wellbeing. Moreover, the diverse natural environment in Europe is beautiful in itself, let us not forget, and has a value beyond money.

### Green Transport

Aviation and road transport are major sources of greenhouse gases air pollution and noise. The current volume of fossil fuels used for the transport sector not only has a strong negative impact on public health and the environment but also makes the EU dependent on energy imports and exposes us to rising prices. We need to shift to more sustainable and less environmentally-damaging modes like waterways, cycling, public-collective transport and rail. Trans-European Transport Networks must prioritise existing cross-border rail connections before

roads and aviation, especially for the movement of goods. Improving the energy efficiency of cars helps cut the fuel bills of European citizens and improves air quality. We also want to spur innovation by making electric bicycles, tramways and trains, electric cars, all based on renewable sources, all more attractive options. We support strong measures to reduce air pollution – a major cause of ill health and premature death.

### Greening Agriculture

**We need to make our farming climate-smart, sustainable, and ethically sound. We need resilient, biologically diverse, healthy and robust agro-ecosystems that not only adapt to climate change but mitigate it.**

Currently 80% of CAP payments go to only 20% of farmers. We're calling for a system which allows for a much fairer distribution of public funds, including more support for small farmers, for local production and sale, which brings farmers closer to consumers, and for organic production farming and for conventional farmers who want to green their production methods. Farmers deserve a decent price for their produce and we need to stop corporate buyers driving farm-gate prices below sustainable levels. We need to increase soil fertility, drastically cut the inputs of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers and eliminate harmful export subsidies. We must move away from intensive industrial farming.

We oppose the further privatisation of seeds and plant material in EU rules on seeds. We will continue our campaign for fair and unrestricted access to plant breeding material and against the patenting of plants

and animals. We will keep fighting against the corporate control of the seed industry which makes farmers reliant on seed designed specifically for use with chemical fertilisers and pesticides, instead of allowing them to save and breed their own seed and adapt their crops to changing local conditions. We have been consistent in our opposition to the cultivation of genetically modified organisms in food and farming, and lead the fight for a ban on importing GMOs for animal feed. We must impose mandatory GMO labelling: you have the right to know what goes into your food.

We will strive to make sure existing animal welfare legislation is properly enforced, and seek to increase standards of welfare for all sentient beings to the highest level possible.

The Greens have played a lead role in pushing for a more sustainable Common Fisheries Policy. The policy of throwing unwanted fish back into the sea was a massive waste of food and income and will now be curtailed. Fish stocks will be better managed and the capacity of the fishing fleet better regulated. You will now be able to see not only where your fish came from but how it was caught. Much remains to be done to implement these reforms and ensure loopholes are not exploited. We will continue to fight for better controls over intensive fish farming, which is highly polluting, and for fairer treatment for small scale local fishing inside and outside Europe.

### Europe in the World

Living on One Planet also means living equitably and cooperatively with our global neighbours. We want the EU to have a common voice on foreign and security policy, and to form strong and fair partnerships with countries of the global south, aimed at reducing inequalities within and between societies, through development cooperation. We will push hard to ensure Europe develops a coherent ethical foreign and trade policy.



**Vote for democracy,  
equality and sustainability**

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**Vote Ross Brown for MEP**

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**on May 22nd**

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For more information or if you would like to contact the Green Party in Northern Ireland go to [www.greenpartyni.org](http://www.greenpartyni.org) or telephone **028 9145 9110**. You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter for regular updates

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