

#FAMILIESVOTE 2014

HELPING YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICE FOR THE 2014
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS
22-25 MAY 2014



Date of publication: March 2014

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A "CONFIDENCE PACT" FOR EVERY EUROPEAN

An election, at whatever level it is held, is always a special moment that punctuates the life of a democracy. To vote is to take part in public life, to get involved in the future of a community.

As European families, you have chosen seven themes which are important to you and on which the political parties have had to take a stance. The debate is now open.

Because voting is about informing yourself, debating, forming an opinion and, ultimately, choosing. The vote of each and every one of you will shape the destiny of the European Union. The vote of each and every one of you is therefore vital to the future of our Community of Europe. And so I ask you to cast an informed vote.

For my part, I hope for a future Union which displays both responsibility and solidarity. A Union of respect for all, for individuals and families in all their diversity and with all their differences. And today I would urge you to help establish a "confidence pact" in and for Europe. A "confidence pact" for every European and so for you personally. A pact for you, which will therefore be written with you. With your vote.

Thank you.



Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council



FOREWORD

Dear Reader, dear Voter,

2014 is the year of the European Parliament elections! You are holding our publication in your hand and so you have already taken an important step towards getting informed beforehand. It also means, that you may be asking yourself one or both of the following questions:

What will change for me if I vote at the European Elections?
How do I know which candidate to vote for?

These are perfectly valid questions, and many European citizens are asking the same ones. The European Parliament along the other institutions of the EU may seem far away from citizens in the different Member States, and often they don't even hear about what decisions were taken.

At the end of May 2014, for the first time, 28 countries will open their polls over the course of 3 days, and the individual choices of EU citizens will have a major collective impact on the composition of the European Parliament for the next 5 years.

It is very important, that voters make a positive choice for Europe and do not express their frustration with national politics on the European Election Day.

Contrary to common belief COFACE is convinced that the European Parliament does have power in a large number of important areas that impact our everyday lives, and those of families living in Europe.

This is why we wanted to bring these elections a little bit closer to home. It is important to reflect on your choice and vote responsibly.

Therefore we have gone to the biggest European political groups, and asked them questions that may be on your mind. What will happen to youth unemployment? What will they do about energy prices? About work- family life balance?

We hope that you will find it interesting to go through and compare the answers of the main political groups: the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), the Greens and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group. Not all of our questions received an answer from each group, if you wish to have more information; we encourage you to go on their campaign websites and read more about the specific programmes that you are interested in.

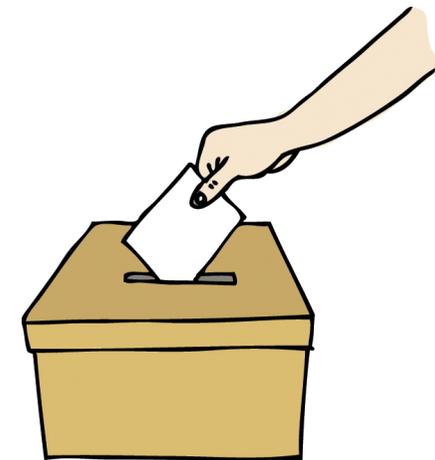
In closing we would like to thank all the contributors from the European Parliament, who responded to our request, and took the time to discuss internally and send us their answers and positions for the different questions. In addition, if you would like to read more about the work of COFACE, and what our positions are on the different subjects, you can find this at: www.coface-eu.org/en/Events/FamiliesVOTE2014

Enjoy the read and cast your vote!

The COFACE team

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly elected EU institution and one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world. Its 766 Members (751 after the 2014 elections) represent the EU's 500 million citizens.

Every five years, EU citizens choose who represents them in the European Parliament to defend their interests in the EU decision-making process. Each member state has the right to elect a fixed number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), 751 in total. The number of MEPs per country is calculated on the basis of a fair system proportional to the number of citizens in the country: countries with a larger population have more seats than smaller countries, but the latter have more seats than strict proportionality would imply. For the 2014 election, the number of MEPs ranges from 6 for Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus and Estonia to 96 for Germany.

Once elected, MEPs get organised in political groups along ideological lines, and not by nationality. The major political groups are the following: the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA). Some additional smaller groups may form after the elections for MEPs who do not belong to any of the previously mentioned political families. The EP does its work in the 24 official languages of the European Union, and every MEP has the right to speak in the official language of his/her choice.

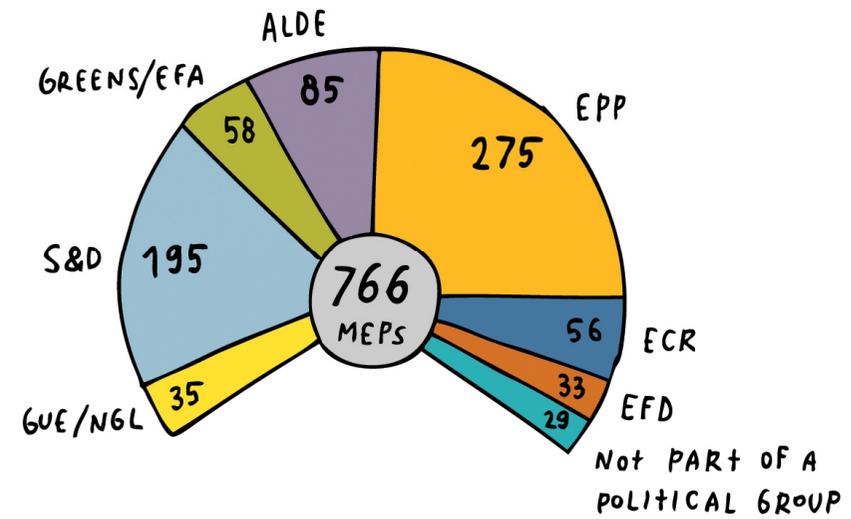
MEPs divide their time between Brussels, Strasbourg and their constituencies. In Brussels they attend meetings of the parliamentary committees and political groups, and additional plenary sittings. In Strasbourg they attend 12 plenary sittings per year, where the important voting takes place.

Since the first elections were held in 1979, European elections turnout is almost always lower in comparison to the most recent national elections. Voter turnout at European elections is very different in each EU member states with an all-time low of 24 per cent in the United Kingdom in 1999. Luxembourg and Belgium usually present the highest average turnout of approximately 90 per cent because they have a compulsory voting system.

We are wondering whether low voter turnout has something to do with lack of information before the elections, or perhaps because citizens don't feel that they are represented well at European level, or that the decisions in Brussels don't have an immediate impact on their lives. Hence this publication to bring some of these political programmes closer to citizens.

The new European Parliament will be composed in June 2014, with the first plenary session in July. It will be this new European Parliament that will ratify the new Commissioners and also elect the new President of the European Commission.

POLITICAL GROUPS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2013



AFTER THE 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THERE WILL BE **751** SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENT.

1. JOBS

The economic crisis has hit some EU countries very hard, and for these countries especially, the unemployment rates of women and young people have risen to unprecedented levels. This puts a lot of pressure on families, and also impacts the entire European Union.

What can be done to ensure young people have either a job, an internship or a place in education or training?

Many women cannot access the labour market because of family responsibilities or the way the labour market is structured. What will your group do to improve this situation?



The EPP Group initiated and supported the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Youth Guarantee to respond to the high rate of youth unemployment. We have been asking the Commission and the Member States to assess further measures, such as tax reliefs, to encourage SMEs to employ young people.

The EPP Group will work to develop policies to allow career guidance for the unemployed and their transition to work focusing on specific groups and privileging an individual approach! We will also focus on issues such as: young people with disabilities, integration of all disadvantaged groups, help to post-graduates and young researchers, equal access to higher education and fostering entrepreneurship.

The EPP Group will also address the problem of early school leavers who are not in employment education or training in order to ensure that every young person in Europe is offered a job, further education or work-focused training after leaving education or after becoming unemployed.



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

Across Europe, young people are bearing the brunt of the financial crisis that led to the "Great Recession". Unemployment across the region as a whole has reached record levels, with 16–24 year olds faring the worst of all. In general, young people are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as the adult population. The right-wing's austerity measures have made matters worse; social costs are huge and there is no growth.

The conservative and liberal policies to flexible reforms in the labour market has not led to better labour market access for the people of Europe, especially the young, where they are disproportionately represented in precarious jobs, meaning, non-standard employment that is poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and, in many cases, cannot support a household. Therefore, pro-active protection of young adults' working rights is required.

Our demands (as agreed by the PES Council in 22nd June 2013) are:

- To implement the European Youth Guarantee, the allocation from the European budget for the fight against youth unemployment must be significantly increased.
- More funds from the European Investment Bank should be specifically and measurably tied to the creation of jobs or quality apprenticeships for young people.

Such loans must complement, not replace the national and European grants, which are desperately needed.

- Youth Employment Initiative funding must be made available now. It must be easily accessible and must be spend on tailor-made projects. Each country must have the freedom to identify how the money is spent, be it subsidies or incentives to create new jobs, investment in training and education or active labour market policies.

- Every Member State must speed up the introduction of a national youth guarantees.

- A quality framework must be introduced in order to ensure that education, training and jobs offered in the framework of youth guarantee schemes provide appropriate pay, working conditions and health and safety standards.

Furthermore, we need to build high quality apprenticeships & traineeships as well as to rethink policy on skills and competences. We need recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. In this respect, we need to engage with dual training and work experience programmes - classroom training during part of the week, which is directly, related to students' workplace apprenticeships. According to a study used by the ILO, young people who go through combined classroom and workplace training are 30% more likely to get a job than those who only have classroom education!



Building on some of the proposals in the Green report on Youth Unemployment, such as the Youth Guarantee and Quality Internships, Greens are proposing the following immediate actions on Youth Unemployment:

- To put an immediate end to those destructive and counterproductive austerity measures, which are destroying instruments for a decent work and for combating youth unemployment and social exclusion.
- European Commission and Member States to launch a 1-year relief plan to tackle youth unemployment by the creation of at least 10% of the affected youth.
- To face the current unbearable unemployment rates in Europe by focusing on job creation. The current

message to young people "You must try harder, and if you don't have a job is because you are not good enough" is unfair and insufficient, since the problem is a lack of jobs in Europe.

- Investments in education and training, job creation, apprenticeship schemes and incentives geared towards employers, which need to be firmly agreed between all actors and upheld for a minimum of five years, for a maximum take-up of funds available for youth initiatives.

Greens/EFA Group calls on the Member States to integrate a gender equality perspective into the European Semester process, as well as to put more focus on training within labour-market policies by taking into account women's needs and situation when implementing the policy guidance.

We also call on the Member States to set ambitious specific quantitative targets for employment of women in their respective NRPs, and to take specific measures targeting vulnerable groups of women (such as young, migrant, disabled and single mothers).

Greens/EFA demands positive actions for integrating women in projects and programmes on ecological transformation, i.e. renewable sector, science and technology-intensive jobs. Investment in affordable, accessible childcare is an important element in supporting women in the workplace and the Barcelona targets have yet to be met.

It is important that national equality bodies are strengthened in order to support equality in the workplace and to enforce equality legislation

A living wage would also help support women at work. The Greens have supported the Framework Directive for an Adequate Minimum Income, the extension of maternity leave and the introduction of an EU wide paternity leave.



We believe that the greatest social and economic crisis now facing Europe is unemployment, especially among young people. These European elections must be about identifying opportunities through employment, education and training and this is the top priority for Those elected as ALDE Members of the European Parliament.

(ALDE Manifesto 2014)

In 2012 ALDE called upon its members to ensure that the EU puts aside significant funds in the post-2014 EU budget for addressing youth unemployment, focusing on providing professional training leading to concrete job opportunities and allowing unskilled, or highly educated but non-integrated in the job market, young workers to overcome their situation.

Furthermore, it emphasised the need to put in place a range of measures to support job creation in small and medium sized businesses including facilitating urgent access to finance for SMEs, supporting in particular young entrepreneurs; advocate educational systems with higher links to market requirements, where students have a possibility of using the talents they have developed.

(ALDE Resolution, November 2012, Dublin, Ireland)

2. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

High levels of unemployment, ageing population and low birth rates in addition to a very poor economic performance constitute the main challenges the EU is facing today. Many studies and reports show that a higher participation of women in the labour market and in decision making not only have a positive effect on birth rates, but also on the economy.

How will your group work towards supporting families and helping them better reconcile their work and family and private life?

What will your group do about the different leave proposals inside and outside the Maternity Leave directive?

How will you ensure working parents and carers have adequate leaves and what other time-policies will your group work on?

(We also asked the Groups whether they are in favour of a new Intergroup on work-life balance in the European Parliament).



The EPP Group clearly stands for a better reconciliation of work and family life: the family and their specific needs have to be at the centre of all policies. We believe that the Member States have to tailor these schemes according to their economic and social situations and customs. All employees have the right to a reasonable period of maternity, paternity, carers', parental leaves. The EPP Group is open to every realistic European initiative, which aims to define minimum requirements taking into account the situation of the Member States.

Though the creation of the Intergroup does not depend on the decision of political groups, but as EPP Group MEPs are rather active in this field, there would be definitely interest among the Group members to take part in such initiative.



Group of the Progressive Alliance of
Socialists & Democrats
in the European Parliament

The Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament have been very active on reconciling work and family life as well as on both maternity and paternity leave schemes. For instance, Ms Estrela MEP drafted a report, which was carried in 2010 on extending the minimum maternity leave in the EU from 14 to 20 weeks with full pay, with some flexibility for countries, which already have a form of family-related leave. An entitlement to paid paternity leave of at least two weeks was also approved by a majority of Members. Her proposal went far beyond the European Commission's original proposal. Regrettably, member states have not been able to respond to our proposals.

Therefore, the S&D has urged the member states to start negotiating the Maternity Leave Directive and to develop flexitime models to allow workers to reconcile their professional career with care responsibilities.

The S&D Group believes that, in a complex and changing society, it is necessary to support families in fulfilling their role. Parents need help in counteracting harmful social and market pressures, in reconciling the demands of work and family life. In this respect, there is an urgent need for further action to reconcile professional, private and family life in the EU in response to the demographic challenge and in achieving the Europe 2020 targets related to employment and poverty.

At European level, the current framework of legislative provisions and policies especially in the area of maternity protection and parental leave, working time and part-time work, childcare, care for the elderly and other essential household services should be evaluated, to assess where adaptations and improvements are necessary.

The S&D would favour the creation of such an Intergroup!



Greens are in favour of generous leave policies that enable parents to combine private life, family life and working life.

Greens have been advocating extending maternity leave to 20 weeks and introducing EU-wide paternity leave of at least two weeks to finally improve the gender gap in caring responsibilities.

Greens/EFA has been calling for years already on the European Commission and keep doing so in our annual resolutions concerning the Commission's work-programme, to come forward with a legislative proposal for different types of leave (paternity, adoption, care leave and filial) in order to improve the reconciliation of professional, family and private life, which at the same time could unlock the blocking of Maternity leave Directive in Council.

The Lambert Report on Access to Care saw the EP agree to the call for a Carers Leave Directive. Greens have a long history of challenging gender roles, so we also need to make it possible for parents and carers to share care.

Yes, Greens would support the creation of an intergroup on work-life balance providing it can work with a broad definition of family.



ALDE underscores the crucial role of the reconciliation of work and family life that is required in order to rise to the challenges of the XXI century.

(ALDE Strategic Programme 2009-2014)

Developing policies and practices for a better reconciliation of work and family life is one of the main challenges of the European gender policy. Awareness activities should target both women and men. In fact there still is insufficient encouragement for men to reconcile professional and family responsibilities. Both women and especially men should be encouraged to take parental leave. Mothers and fathers should be able to share the responsibility for their children on an equal basis.

The quality, availability and flexibility of child or family care services, as well as flexible work, is the main means of reconciling work and family life. Moreover, measures should be taken to encourage the modification of the gender roles in families and the sharing of responsibilities within the home.

The ELDR pleads for more flexible legislation on shop and public service opening hours with a view of facilitating reconciliation of professional and family life.

Increased female participation in the workforce and changing patterns of family life have profound implications for Europe's employment and social protection systems. It has a strong influence on the development of caring and providing for children, the sick and for the elderly. On the other hand the supply of care services is strongly affected by the need for budgetary discipline and the incentives encouraging a better distribution and quality of health care.

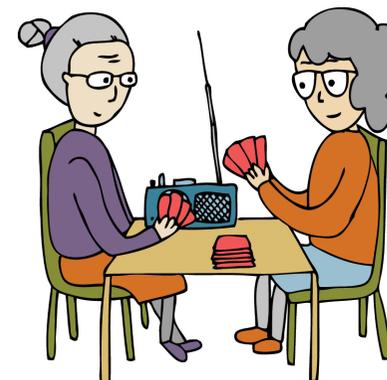
Both women and men must be given more flexibility at work while their children are small. Having children and taking care of them must not prevent career advancement. The attitudes at work must change. Parents taking care of children during parental leave at home should not suffer from a negative impact on their pension.

(ELDR Resolution, October 2002, Bath)

3. FAMILY CARERS, DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY

Families who have a member with a disability, a parent needing regular care or someone with long-term or chronic illness in the family, simply do not receive the support they would need. There is a great lack in available, affordable and good quality care services, either to care for the person, or support the family member doing the care. Families with special care needs would greatly benefit from a legal recognition, flexible working conditions, cash- benefits or tax-cuts, as well as respite.

What policies or legislation will you work on in the European Parliament to support families with special care needs?



In the context of demographic ageing, there is a growing demand for care services. Twenty-two per cent of EU citizens consider the burden of caring for ageing relatives as one of the major difficulties families are facing nowadays. In this regard the EPP Group is ready to support any proportionate initiative at Member State and European level, which would better carer's rights, entitlements and recognitions.

The Barcelona Incentives and the right to childcare were discussed in a workshop in the FEMM Committee on 25 November. The S&D Group sees affordable childcare as the most effective measure to ensure that women are not excluded from the labour market. Parents of children with disability have to get extra support. The issue of dependency should be given legal status at EU level, recognising a minimum degree of rights for dependant persons and recognising the role of care givers.





Women, and not men, are still considered to be those primarily responsible for looking after children and other dependants; quite often they are forced to choose between motherhood and career success. In many cases they are perceived to be "high-risk" or "second-rate" workers, or as "nuisances" given that they are highly likely to become pregnant and make use of their entitlement to maternity leave. It is essential therefore that the new leave arrangements proposed by the EU Commission should break with, rather than reinforcing, the stereotypes existing in society.

Motherhood and fatherhood are fundamental rights and central to social stability. Achieving a balance between men and women, the traditional gender role of reproduction and housekeeping seems one of the hardest barriers to overcome. Community legislation should therefore be revised for the benefit of mothers and fathers, protecting the roles of mothers and fathers, not least through measures to encouragements to shoulder family responsibilities.

In this respect, working time patterns and party and government structures are problems to be addressed. Both men and women should assume an equal share of responsibility in the public and private domains, in economic, political and family life.

Greens/EFA demands on the Commission to conduct an awareness-raising campaign and introduce pilot projects to facilitate the balanced participation of women and men in professional and family life, e.g. more support for parental leave of fathers.

We have also supported additional measures to support carers, through respite care, training to help them protect their own health (e.g. when lifting those they care for) as well as ensuring they have an adequate income. We have spoke out at many of the changes in the care system, which have removed support services (e.g. bathing, cleaning).

We recognise the job creation possibilities in providing care support and also how this can help carers maintain their own paid-work possibilities. There have been useful ESF supported projects from which we could learn.

4. HOUSING

Housing is the first preoccupation for 39% of European citizens. Housing of families is a fundamental anchor of the European social and economic model. At a time when Europe promotes mobility and sustainable development and worries about the burden of an ageing population on its economic and social system, we witness that in all European countries, the cost of housing is among the first source of financial difficulties for families, both on the private and the social housing market.

What is your group's position and what do you plan to do in the next years to secure EU funding for social housing and energy efficiency of buildings benefitting families?



The EPP Group believes that it needs both funding and reasonable policies to un-tap the energy efficiency potential of Europe. The EPP Group is fighting for a new climate and energy framework, which combines ambitious but realistic climate and energy targets with a cost-effective implementation. We want energy efficiency to be a central pillar of this framework, in particular for the building sector, which represents 40% of EU's energy consumption.

The 2010 energy performance of buildings directives requires that as of 2021 all new buildings have to be zero- or nearly-zero energy buildings (public authority buildings as of 2019).

But more has to be done. Upfront finance remains the biggest obstacle to tap into the huge benefits from energy efficient renovations, that's why the EPP Group supported to inject EU money via the Structural Funds and via national support programs to trigger more of such renovations. We encourage Member States to make substantial use of such funds for energy efficiency in social housing. However, we do not believe that new EU funding structure needs to be established as this is to be dealt with much better at national level (with the support of EU funds)



The S&D Group has always been fighting for an important increase of the ESF funds (European Social Fund). The ESF has allowed for example cities to set up a programme together with actors of social cohesion, including social housing providers, with the aim to reach out to people not in employment, education or training. It has helped to train employees of social housing providers to improve their social mediation.

Last year, the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions joined forces, calling for European action on social housing. The S&D Group, in a strong response to the housing crisis, exacerbated by the current recession, insisted that affordable and universally accessible housing must no longer be an unattainable dream and that action must be taken to guarantee better governance in housing policies.

An estimated 25 million European citizens live in social housing. All the Member States except Greece have social housing stock, the volume of which varies considerably from one country to another and particularly between the western Member States and the eastern ones which most recently joined the Union. Social housing needs also vary within Member States between urban and rural areas and, within conurbations, between city centres and outlying areas.

On the economic front, investing in social housing means boosting construction, which has been hard hit by the crisis, as well as renovation, particularly the heat efficiency and renewable energy sectors –high-return industries with the capacity to generate green jobs that are local and cannot be ‘off-shored’.

Having a sufficient supply of social housing helps to smooth out the cyclical nature of the property market and to lessen

the impact of phenomena such as property bubbles, which destabilise economies.

The Union’s macro-economic and budgetary surveillance system needs to take greater account of investment in social housing. It is important to recognise the added value of Structural Fund monies and European Investment Bank loans in stimulating social housing investment. In particular, these monies facilitate the development of further and vocational training in green industries and the creation of thousands of decent, local jobs that cannot be ‘off-shored’.

It must be ensured, in the next multi-annual financial framework, that sufficient funding from these sources is available, that it can be readily accessed and that unspent monies can be more easily reallocated to social housing.



5. ENERGY

Energy is arguably a paramount issue. Currently, at EU level, housing is essentially seen under the prism of the building's energy efficiency and European policies that contribute to achieve the EU2020 objectives, especially regarding the reduction of energy consumption. Therefore a lot must be done to improve the energy efficiency of existing social housing stock, and housing occupied by jobless, or low- to very-low-income households, whether as owners or tenants.



What is your group's position and what do you plan to do in the next years to tackle energy poverty and guarantee access to affordable energy sources for all families?



EPP Different Member States have different policies on both energy price regulation. However, tackling the increase of energy prices for private households and industry in Europe is among the top priorities of the EPP group's policies. National taxes as well as inconsistent and uncoordinated implementation of EU climate and energy legislation are driving energy prices in Europe. For this reason the EPP Group is fighting for a new climate and energy framework which combines ambitious but realistic climate and energy targets with a cost-effective implementation. This would help to reduce the rise of energy prices.

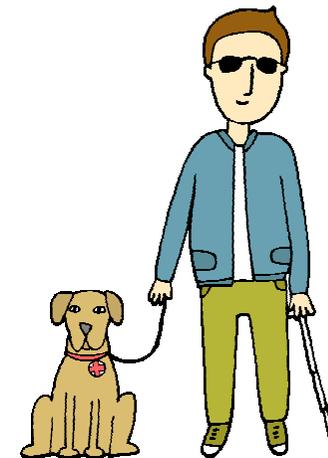
We furthermore support the introduction of a smart energy infrastructure (incl. smart meters) in order to enable consumers to make informed choices and where this helps in particular low income households to reduce their energy consumption. However, the EPP Group does not support a EU-wide definition of energy poverty as policies and prices vary significantly among Member States.



A key energy priority for the S&D Group is defending the interests of consumers and tackling energy poverty, so that European families have access to affordable electricity and gas. So far the commission also seems uninterested in seriously tackling issues relevant to ordinary citizens, such as consumer rights and energy poverty, where coordinated measures are badly needed.

The S&D Group believes that we need a strong 10-year strategy for a truly European energy policy, based on solidarity between member states that takes a long-term perspective up to 2050.

Energy-efficient homes cut fuel bills and not just for a few months. However, it is also important to argue for an adequate income, so that people can afford to heat or cool their homes while energy-efficiency programmes kick-in. There is also much cross-border learning that can be done as to how energy tariffs can be set so as not to disadvantage the poorest.



6. MIGRANT AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

Today, an estimated 214 million people no longer live in their country of origin. According to the same UN statistics, this figure has more than doubled since the sixties. Economic, labour and circular migration, both from third countries and within the EU, is an important phenomenon that cannot be neglected. Within the broader field of migration the following policies can be identified to be of urgent concern: the right to family reunification, transnational families and children left behind, education and the role of migrant parents for integration of migrant and Roma children.

Many migrants are filling labour market shortages of the EU. What is your group's position and what do you plan to do in the next years to guarantee the respect of the rights of third country nationals and their families coming to the EU?



The question risks to mingle up different elements: migrants can appear as "migrants on the basis of humanitarian grounds" and are called "asylum seekers" in legal terms. Their rights to enter the labour market and their right to family unification are restricted. Migrants can also appear as "legal working migrants". Their right to access the labour market and right to family unification is established in EU law. The last form of migration is "irregular migration". Access to the labour market and rights to family unification is logically excluded. One element is however in common to all three groups of migrants: the respect of their fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Charta of Fundamental Rights is guaranteed. In the upcoming years the EPP Group will focus on: (a) fighting irregular migration in a more comprehensive way: bringing together all political aspects involved: Home Affairs aspects, Development and Foreign Affairs aspects,

(b) further sharpen the EU Asylum Acquis: being open for those in real need, while being firm on those that would need to use other channels to migrate and (c) further develop a European framework for legal migration: currently legal migration is still a competence and dominated by Member States. However, a European approach and European coordination seems more necessary than ever before and finally (d) further provide for European ideas for a better integration policy in the Member States. All elements together will provide for a more targeted, sustainable and fair migration policy which can better help protecting the rights of migrants and their families.



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The S&D group advocates a coherent EU migration policy, with unified and logical migration legislation always based on the principle of equal rights, as the only way to ensure fair migration, respect for employment and social standards and avoid exploitation. We have consistently supported measures to promote the integration of migrants. The S&D Group puts particular emphasis on the need for measures to avoid exploitation of the most vulnerable migrants, including women and children, for example through precarious jobs, trafficking and prostitution.

For the S&D Group a Growing Europe is one that acknowledges the demographic and economic challenge confronting our societies, perceives immigration as a cultural, economic, social opportunity, attracts new talents, and fosters legal entry and mobility across borders. And one that guarantees that all those working and studying in the EU are not "guests" but equals with full rights.

For us, an Open Europe is the one that engages in a political, economic, social partnership with migrants' countries of origin, a dialogue linked to trade, development, democracy, whose aim is not just to secure borders, but to facilitate the legal mobility of all professional categories. For our Group, a Credible Europe is the one that provides clear rules for entry and stay, that does so together with social partners and national and local authorities and that ensures that new

Europeans coming for work, study, research, family reasons are not second class guests, but citizens of our common polis. For this reason, the S&D Group would like to see a change in EU immigration policy and put citizenship, mobility, integration and inclusion at the centre of a new global approach. The S&D Group believes that the EU needs to:

- Encourage member states to facilitate access to nationality for children born in Member states or having followed a full cycle of education in Member states - in the respect of national differences in legislation, but setting a European common principle.
- Gradually extend citizenship rights to third country nationals who are long term residents.
- Engage in a revision of its immigration policy, to foster access to employment in a framework of the compatibilities and needs of labour markets and to make sure that migrants enjoy the fundamental rights enshrined in the EU charter, which are the rights of all persons, not just of EU citizens, including fundamental social and labour rights. In this framework, it is extremely important to overcome the differences that still persist between Parliament and Council and come to a swift adoption of the proposed directives on entry and stay of seasonal workers and on intra-corporate transfers, in full respect of workers' rights.
- Ensure Member states ratify the UN Convention on the protection of migrant workers and their family members.



Europe needs immigration. As a first step, the EU should acknowledge its need for migrants and give legal immigrants the same rights as EU residents. Greens believe that immigration is an opportunity and when managed responsibly, is a win-win situation for all.

The EU and Member States need to acknowledge our need for and recognise the contribution of migrants and provide clear mechanisms for them to enter and work legally.

There will be no reduction to irregular (illegal) migration until there are mechanisms for legal migration. Europe must take up the challenge to govern migration to contribute to prosperity in both origin and destination countries while ensuring protection and providing benefits for migrants.

As Greens, we fight to ensure:

- Protection of an extremely vulnerable group of migrants by ensuring legal status and strengthen preventive mechanisms.
- Rights based approach for migration, decent living and working conditions and access to healthcare and education for children (whatever their migration status),
- Equal treatment and non-discrimination for third country and (host country) EU nationals.
- Family reunion is an important right and should apply to all children and dependent adults.
- Finance should not be a barrier to family reunion, nor should language acquisition.
- Right to free movement and respect for the payment of family benefits (among others).
- Tackling racism and xenophobia, whether against EU nationals (including Roma) or 3rd-country nationals.
- To ensure no child within the EU boundaries is stateless.
- Using monies available for integration rather than deportation.
- The rights addressing the specific needs of this group of workers.
- Facilitating procedures while safeguarding the principles of decent work.
- Safeguarding the principle "the place of work defines the working conditions" also known as "equal pay for equal work at the place of work".



Migration affects the composition of our European societies and is not a new phenomenon; the relocation of people across the world has been taking place for centuries. Without policies which address the economic and social aspects of immigration, undue pressure can be felt in recipient countries.

Liberals consider that the legal migration of skilled third country workers into and between member states to complement the workforce of member state nationals remains an important way to maintain Europe's workforce, stimulate research and innovation and ensure the EU's global economic competitiveness. However, to tap into the full potential, measures to facilitate the integration of foreign nationals must be increased.

ELDR notes that a substantial number of people migrate for reasons of marriage and family reunification. We support the right to respect for private and family life, and welcome these migrants without discrimination, e.g. that based on sexual orientation. Member states have to ensure that these migrants integrate successfully.

(ELDR Resolution: Liberal Responses to the Challenge of Democratic Change, 2010 Helsinki)

What is your group's position and what do you plan to do in the next years to ensure that intra-EU mobility will become more and more of an opportunity for people in Europe?



Free movement and right to work within the Union is guaranteed for all EU citizens by the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EPP Group has always supported the right of free movement as one of the fundamental freedoms.

The Commission has recently put on the table a proposal for measures on facilitating the application of this right to tackle discrimination based on nationality.

The EPP Group is in favour of the strong enforcement of intra EU-mobility including access to employment, conditions of employment and work (in particular as regards remuneration and dismissal),

access to social advantages, access to training, access to education for worker's children, access to housing and to membership in trade unions.

EPP Group has called for the improvement of the existing information and existing services (such as EURES, Your Europe etc.). EPP Group will continue to support the development of complementary retirement savings schemes to enhance retirement incomes as well as will stay a frontman in the negotiations for the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights for all those citizens moving to work between different Member States.



On 1 January 2014 the last restrictions on freedom of movement for the countries that joined the EU in 2007 will be lifted. A heated debate on inter-EU migration is taking place in several EU member states, often tainted by populist attacks against EU migrants.

The S&D group believes that the real issue we must address is social dumping and social exploitation. Freedom of movement is an inherent part and achievement of the European Union and all assessments show that it greatly benefits economic and social developments in the EU. Instead of giving in to an irrational frenzy and a populist debate that targets fears of our citizens, the S&D group asserts that we should work towards improving the conditions of intra-EU migrants.

We believe that we have to overhaul the Posting of Workers Directive, to apply the principle of 'same place and work, same pay'. Oddly enough, it is our impression that some of the countries that complain about intra-EU migration are actually blocking progress to improve the Directive.

Finally, the S&D group insists on the principle of equal rights and the definition of employment and self-employment must be the guidelines for a fair intra-EU mobility, combined with the improvement of economic and social justice in all EU Member States.

Greens defend free movement rights without restrictions. We have fought long and hard to ensure that family members of mobile workers are not discriminated against and have the same rights as locals. This includes especially access to work and social security rights, but also access to care, housing, social and health services. We are and were against restrictions for accession countries – not allowing EU citizens the right to free movement is a fundamental restriction of citizens rights and creates a 2-class Europe.

Restrictions in free movement of workers lead to other exploitative arrangements under the free movement of services. Free movement rights need to go hand in hand with strong protection, so that workers who decide to go mobile, know about their rights and do not get exploited.

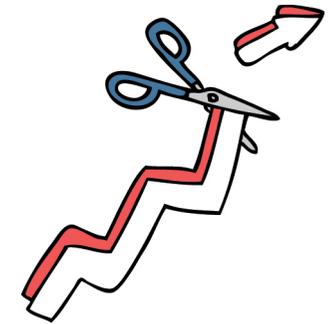
We have a strong expertise and track record on social security rights. Jean Lambert, UK Green MEP was Rapporteur for extending social security coordination rights to 3rd country nationals and family members. We link the citizens requests relating to social security problems for mobile workers with our concrete policy work. In the next years we will work hard to extend social security rights such as the export of unemployment benefits, rights for family members and claims rights. In the context of free movement of workers, we work hard to strengthen procedural rights and complaints procedures for citizens and the mutual recognition of partnerships across the EU.



7. FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND THE IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Clear and transparent information about financial services (bank accounts, credits, mortgage, and insurance) must be guaranteed by banks and financial institutions for families to enable them to take the right and responsible financial decision. Because of irresponsible lending, many families face grave financial consequences. The right to accessing a basic bank account is a precondition for inclusion. Without a basic bank account, one cannot receive social benefit payments, pay utility bills or apply for a job. Access to other financial services, is essential in order to purchase a family home. Mortgage credit therefore deserves specific attention by policy makers to ensure responsible lending and borrowing.

What is your group's position and what do you plan to do in the next years to ensure responsible lending and borrowing, and guarantee non-discrimination in accessing financial services?



Many forward-looking steps were taken in these fields. The EPP Group strongly advocated the recently-adopted mortgage directive which introduces many novelties in the protection of the borrowers and to promote responsible lending.

The directive introduces principles for marketing and advertising communications and on professional conditions; obliges creditors to give detailed explanations to borrowers at the pre-contractual stage and requires Member States to ensure that consumers

have a right to repay their credit before the expiry of the credit agreement.

The EPP Group believes that via these provisions and especially by strengthening the rights of borrowers for detailed information and explanation on credit contracts, a significant improvement in this field could be reached. The EPP Group will do its utmost to further improve the legal framework of borrowing.

The EPP Group is fighting strongly against discrimination. In the field of financial services the EPP Group is convinced that access to certain basic services of the preconditions for all consumers to benefit from the internal market.

It is essential for citizens to reap the benefits of e-commerce and is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for social inclusion in terms of access to employment, healthcare and housing.

Currently As of November 2013, the EP is discussing a proposal on the Payments Account directive which aims to eliminate discrimination in the financial sector and establishes a right of access to a basic payment account for consumers in Member States. EPP Group believes that access to a basic payment account should be offered free of charge or at a reasonable cost and if fees are charged, they should be transparent. Every Member State should establish an upper limit for the total annual fees related to opening and using a basic payment account.



The S&D Group pays particular attention to the issue of consumer protection in the field of banking and financial services. The European Parliament has recently adopted a couple of important directives on Mortgage Credit and Key Information for retail financial services (in both cases S&D rapporteurs) with a view to strengthening consumer rights and protections.

Consumer protection is a strong priority for all our work on financial services, including rights to a bank account and single market governance.



Greens strongly defend the right for citizens in the EU to open a bank account with basic features and we fight against discrimination in accessing financial services..

In the mortgage directive we fought for the following:

a) Better information and more transparency, b) Curtailing unfair commercial practise, c) Protecting consumers and d) Strict rules for the calculation of the annual percentage rate of charge.

In the final version we managed to include the obligation for a standardised information document (ESIS), containing key data on the credit agreement in a comparable and transparent way. In particular foreign exchange and variable interest lending will be based on the presentation of the full costs. And foreign exchange lending must come with a warning highlighting the risk linked to the fluctuations of exchange rates.

In case such a loan gets out of control, they may be swapped.
Concerning early loan repayments, the directive will protect against excessive penalties without hampering long-termist and generally safer fixed-rate loans.

8. CONTACT



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