



MANIFESTO OF THE ENGS

Introduction

In the near future Europe will witness a demographic change which will have to be addressed in both the political and economic spheres. This change will come about as the total population decreases overall while the number of older people increases. All European countries will be confronted with this reality. Under these circumstances the older people are too often only seen as a cost factor, responsible for every budgetary crisis, damaging the domestic economy and holding back economic growth.

We do not see the demographic development as a coming battle between the generations. The European Network of Green Seniors (ENGS) does not share this negative view. Instead we see here an opportunity to work positively together with all age groups for a common future where we can share our experience with the enthusiasm of the young people.

There needs to be a change in perspective which gets rid of the stereotypes that see the old people either as a poor and dependent group in society or as selfishly hanging onto their wealth and property. In fact our needs are as diverse as any other in society. As we age we intend to continue to participate actively in this society for the common good as long as we are able.

In addition, as the population continues to age, older citizens will have to take on more responsibility. Older people are a hidden resource having a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills which needs to be discovered and acknowledged.

Politicians should place their trust in the capability of senior citizens and welcome their participation in setting and implementing the political agenda.

As Greens many of us can look back to the beginnings of our movement. Some of us were founding members.

For us the question is not so much what the Green movement can do for senior citizens, but more what we can do for the Green movement since we can be generous with our experience, time, energy and creativity.

Therefore, regarding the Green seniors' approach the question rather is what can we elderly people do to improve ecological politics and the Green parties than what can the Green parties provide to their senior militants

From our perspective we can see that the Green movement with its social and ecological issues is not a temporary one. We know that if mankind wants to survive, it needs an everlasting Green movement.

The Green movement is neither regional nor national. It is both international and world-wide. While other parties can limit their activities to a particular region or nation, ecologists in the end cannot. For ecologists international activities are essential. The ENGS seeks to base its actions on the party programmes of the Greens in Europe and on the Guiding Principles of the EGP, seeking solutions to the changed demographics of the continent with more and more old people.

In order to achieve the above we set up the following points in our manifesto which are of concern to the personal life of the old people on the one hand and on the other hand

are the result of our entire lifelong experience that we want to bring into the Green political arena. By doing this we seek to contribute to reaching the common Green goals such as solidarity, peace, sustainability, fair trade and the prevention of climate change.

1. No Discrimination in the Job Market

ENGS rejects the discrimination of older employees in the job market through such practices as enforced early retirement and the refusal to retrain or upgrade them. No profession should routinely enforce early retirement irrespective of the health or ability of the employee. We also demand job training possibilities for older employees.

The consequences of the new regulations in Europe aiming at excluding age in the wage scale should urgently be examined.

2. Passing on Experience - Lifelong Learning

ENGS wishes that the knowledge and experience of the older people be integrated into society as a whole and into the place of work in particular.

Many older people have gained strategic thinking and acting and social competence in a long professional life, what young people still have to learn. On the other hand the older people need IT support and training. On this field most of the time younger people are better.

That is the reason why we seek the right to life-long learning, the right to the exchange of knowledge and to mentoring especially between older and younger people, in the place of work as well as in private.

The need for IT support and training should not be an excuse for disregarding or underestimating the many abilities of the older employees.

In this way we would create new chances for our society through joint activities of the older and the younger people.

Other discriminated groups like low-income persons, migrants and handicapped should be supported much more than up to now.

3. The Right to Personal and Social Development

All generations and all members of society should have the right to personal and social development. This enables a well educated person (in the society) to live in liberty and with self-determination.

A stable and attractive democratic society values diversity whether it be by age, by ethnic origin, by urban or rural life-styles. There should be an equality of access to the means to achieve this diversity. Neither poverty nor age should be a barrier. True awareness should enable people to understand their place in the whole ecosystem. In order to achieve this mutual respect, acknowledgement of the integrity of the other should be fostered. Intercultural and sensuous talents can be developed in old age, too.

4. Voluntary Work

We “young seniors” do not want to become a cost and load factor to society after we stop working, but we want to use the time given to us for a meaningful social engagement.

Through our voluntary work we would like to shift the values and give the terms “work” and “leisure” a new meaning.

Society must however honour our engagement in the communities by providing agencies for voluntary work, which are well organized and allow participation and inputs for their structure. However, this does not mean to take over normal jobs, sack the employees and replace them with voluntary workers without payment.

The countries where voluntary work is already organized are of course exempted. There we should however demand the official recognition of voluntary work and the creation of real regulations for the volunteers.

5. Old Age Pensions

We exert ourselves for a sufficient pension-scheme for everyone which through depreciation does not lead to poverty in old age. A basic income concept must also be discussed.

6. New forms of living for old people

We seniors of the ENGS want to spend our life in our own flat or house as long as possible. We do not want to live in ghettos for older people, which may create greater dependency, nor in a fragmented society, which the division by age groups may produce. If we need to be cared for, a diversity of possible concepts must be made available. Such different forms of living, also for older people are: living in multiple-generation houses, in a normal neighbourhood or in shared flats.

It should also be possible to obtain financial aid to convert a private home which has become too large into other forms of living.

7. Against an Increasing Liberalisation of Social Services

ENGS demands clear regulations for social services as basic care in Europe. We reject the definition of such services as 'goods' to be traded in the free market economy. Instead we demand their legal protection as public services. It has to be guaranteed that social services and the health service, which concern the citizens, especially the old people, can be kept as basic care in the future. Health care and social services should by no means be limited because of status or residency rights.

8. Assistance to Elderly Migrants

The welfare benefit systems should be made available to all heterogeneous group of migrants in such a way that they may easily get access to them according to their cultural backgrounds. We support an intercultural opening and modernization of the assistance given to elderly migrants. In order to achieve this, those working for these services should obtain the relevant information directly from the groups concerned and their representatives.

9. Access to Health Care. Dying with Dignity

A healthy and responsible way of life may help promote good health. The elderly should have access to good quality health care from a variety of providers including professionals, volunteers and relatives. For those who wish it, terminal care should be provided at home or in a hospice with palliative medicine.

Old people's homes should be subject to regular checks by residents associations which also have the respective authority for such inspections.

10. Mobility

Public transport should be made accessible and safe for all age groups so that it is not too cumbersome to take the train, tram or bus. There should be concessionary fares for those on low incomes.

In order to make public transport more safe the number of the security personnel should be increased.

11. A new Treaty between Young and Old

In the future with the demographic change in whole Europe, the older people will have to contribute more to the economy and to society. There needs to be a co-operation between the young and the old. While the young may fear unemployment, the older people may fear poverty as they age. This is the reason for a new treaty between the generations. The older people want to help find the best solutions for the problems concerned and thereby strengthen and maintain the cohesion of the generations.

12. The seniors of the ENGS want to be active on all political fields that are of concern for their personal life.

13. Conclusions

The Seniors of the ENGS interfere in all political issues that concern our society:

- a. We engage ourselves for a sustainable future of Europe , by not letting consumption become the only content of our lives and thereby proving that by practising non-consumption we can enable a better future for the people in the poorer nations.**
- b. If there is already a globalization, we want to develop it socially and ecologically and demand a meaningful growth for the economy.**
- c. Instead of the profitability thinking with its discriminating value scale of human resources we want to stress the ethical aspects of human life, which has its own purpose. The sense of life is not work as such, the sense of life is life itself.**
- d. Green national and supranational activities are necessary, because we need an effective counterbalance to the existing multinational, economic and financial structures and organizations, which are successfully active in our globalized world and do not have any problems with other languages, religions, mentalities, national identities or national attitudes.**
- e. There is an essential difference between the Greens and the traditional parties: The Greens bring an entire new dimension into politics. They are not only interested in the life of the human society, but also in the co-existence of the society with the environment and in the natural right of all species of living creatures to live and to survive under natural circumstances. That is the reason why there can not be a clear projection of the Green positions onto a simplified left-right pattern.**
- f. Because energy should be available to everyone, we demand that the control and delivery of energy remain a public service which under no circumstances may become a victim of liberalization.
Other services such as public transport, mail delivery, telephones and health care are also social services. We engage ourselves that all these remain public services or are reinstated as public services or as co-operatives, where this is no longer the case.**
- g. Natural catastrophes as well as social and other disasters and calamities have international dimensions. The reaction of the world is often an immediate overwhelming act of solidarity. However, what this globalized world really needs are not only spontaneous international solidarity campaigns, but effective and sustainable solidarity structures. The Greens not only have to support NGOs such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International as well as the UN, the European Union and**

UNICEF, but they must also create something new. Beside the European network an international network of Green seniors should be founded.

- h. In order to save life on earth the competition cannot be one between the traditional political parties, but one between science, industry and technology on one side and the ecologists on the other. If science cannot find a solution, there can only be the solutions of the Green Movement which mean living in another way, creating another economy or considering other terms of prosperity for our families and nations, i.e. terms for the use of values and not terms for the exchange of values.**
- i. If science does not offer alternatives, the world will be forced to live differently. This can lead to violent conflicts because of the lack of water and other resources. The ecologists, who are always warning that such conflicts may occur, must defend the cohesion in international democracy and thereby avoid wars and violence in the best possible way.**

All these points are the reason why we must strengthen the Green Movement on an international level. Therefore the ENGS needs politically motivated people, who are willing to help reach these goals.