

## C4 Progressive municipalities to change Europe

Proposer:	Joves d'Esquerra Verda (Catalan Young Greens)
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### Text

1 Brexit, Trump and the rise of national-populism in Europe are only three results  
2 from the same sickness: there is a lack of citizenry empowerment at the EU  
3 level. The answer for the Juncker Commission has been to carry on a “business as  
4 usual” strategy as if nothing happened, while European member states are pushing  
5 to comply with the demands of the transnational financial elites. For each of  
6 them, we, the common people, are the last of their interests, far below paying  
7 national debts or maintaining a neoliberal way of life.

8 In such a situation, it is not a surprise that many of us have been searching  
9 for solutions that differ from those that lead us to this pan-European  
10 multicrisis. When the state and the classic political parties turn their backs  
11 to us, we searched for alternatives. It is then when we need to understand that  
12 those who lost everything due to the multiple crisis found hope in the far-right  
13 parties. They promised protection against every devil: protectionism for  
14 economic liberalization, nationalism for uncontrolled globalization, white  
15 supremacy for migration, fuel subsidies for maintaining carbon jobs.

16 However, at the time when this kind of populism arises, more and more people are  
17 realising that such a promises are false, that Trump’s, Farage’s and Le Pen’s  
18 are only another face of the neoliberal system. Actually, what common people  
19 understands is that only through our own empowerment we can fight the system  
20 that threw us into poverty and isolation.

21 Radical change is required at every level if we want to stop this crisis and  
22 improve our life -and the life of the environment. Nevertheless, it is at the  
23 local level where we need to fight our first battle. European municipalities, as  
24 the nearest administrative level to the citizenry, must guarantee everybody's  
25 quality of life. From providing social assistance to financing kindergarten  
26 education, municipalities have a great power to change the daily life of the  
27 citizenry. This reality is even recognised by EU Treaties with the “principle of  
28 subsidiarity”, which expresses that decisions should be taken at the simplest  
29 and nearest to the citizenry level.

30 This is what many municipalities have been done during the last years and  
31 months. Facing the fact that nation-states are simply overwhelmed by the  
32 multiple crisis -or unwilling to deal with the necessary reforms-, city councils  
33 from all over Europe have stood up in what it is already a growing movement.  
34 Barcelona, Madrid, Paris or London, to name only a few, are innovating in  
35 policies and decision-making to include the citizenry’s voice and to comply with

36 international standards that their nation-states neglect. Some examples of their  
37 commitment are the international network of cities that are eager to comply with  
38 the Paris Agreement and have even proposed higher benchmarks and the network of  
39 refuge cities that are demanding and preparing infrastructures to welcome  
40 refugees.

41 The Federation of Young European Greens cannot remain silent to this new  
42 reality. As young Greens but, more importantly, as common people that want to  
43 change Europe bottom-up, we need to stand in favour of these new ways of  
44 citizenry empowerment. It is for these reasons that FYEG demands:

### 45 **To European municipalities**

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

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52 • As the first level of government, they should use the principle of  
53 subsidiarity to surpass nation-states when they are unwilling of or cannot  
54 comply with international, European or human rights standards.  
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56 ◦ On this issue, it is important that municipalities use their power  
to shake the European project. We need to develop a Europe of  
cities, or a Europe of regions, that diminish the power those  
institutions that block decisions to be made -namely, nation-states.

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

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60 • As champions of freedom, our movements need to fight together in order to  
61 put forward what makes us stronger -ethnic diversity, gender equality,  
environment protection... Only then can we use them to begin using them as a  
tool to change our realities.

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

useful especially at the local level.

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- As activists embracing the concept of fraternity, we have to demand to change the scope of policy- and decision-making. We need to further include the whole citizenry in our policies and to bring back their voice, and we must do it with a networking strategy, uniting our local fights with other similar ideas and problems that are occurring all over Europe.

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

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- In a time when the future of Europe is being discussed as a merely academic exercise, we require that municipalities are to be put at the centre of European policy-making. They cannot remain silent, without power, anymore. Europe must be local if it is to succeed.

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