

C4 Progressive municipalities to change Europe

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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.