

GREEN
BALKAN
NEWS
LETTER
#2

November 2012



Balkan
network

POWERED BY THE EUROPEAN GREEN PARTY

GREEN BALKAN

NEWSLETTER #2

NOVEMBER 2012

Dear friends,

It's been almost a year since the establishment of the Balkan Network and exciting developments have taken place. Green thinking and activities are getting stronger in the Balkans, as you can see from this newsletter. From our side, the new electronic platform which is up and running gives us hope for improved communication and exchange of ideas, the development of common campaigns and the enhancement of our presence in the Balkans. We certainly expect that the upcoming meeting in Athens will strengthen existing ties within the Network and will contribute to further cooperation among the different green parties in the region.

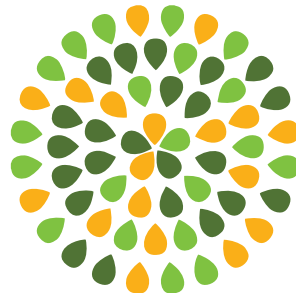
Olga Kikou and Ahmet Atıl Aşıcı
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Greens and Equality and Democracy Party: More than unification!

Talks between Green Party of Turkey and Equality and Democracy Party (EDP) for a further collaboration open for a probable unification started almost one year ago. The two parties first organized a Democracy Conference in Istanbul in order to understand each others' approach to urgent political issues. During this conference many intellectuals and academics were invited and they all agreed on the urgent need for the creation of a democratic-pluralistic alternative to AKP Government.

Greens and EDP aimed to fulfill this gap in the political arena of Turkey, thus their intention was to form a new political party broader than mere unification of these existing parties. The focus of this new movement was to combine libertarian left wing tradition, which EDP represents, with the ecology activists and the Green movement. Regional fora were organized in 35 provinces all around the country to discuss hot topics of democracy and ecology. Thousands of people attended these fora and shared their enthusiasm towards forming a new political alternative.

Greens and EDP simultaneously held their congresses in June 2012 and declared their will for unification and the formation of a new party in autumn 2012. All summer long a joint committee worked on the draft constitution and program of the new party, contacted hundreds of renowned academics, journalists and activists all over the country, worked on a plan to assure the financial structure of the new party and prepared P.R. road map. Various camps were organized to familiarize both party members and independent individuals.

Conferences, workshops and meetings were organized in various cities to discuss the critical subjects such as Green Economy, Identity Politics, Women Rights, Agriculture, etc. Small meetings were organized with target groups such as LGBT, youth, ecology movements, women's rights activists, religiously sensitive groups to discuss their opinions.

The new party is scheduled to formally establish itself on November 25, 2012. Hundreds of intellectuals, journalists and activists have declared their support for the new party. More than 2000 people expressed their support only in one week's time. The draft party constitution and program are being openly discussed among supporters in a very transparent and participatory way. Social media is commonly used for this purpose and especially young people are encouraged to join and be a part of this new green and left party.



Regional Energy Strategy

On October 18th, the Energy Community adopted its Regional Energy Strategy for the Western Balkans region at a Ministerial Council meeting in Budva, Montenegro, despite public criticism. Franziska Brantner, MEP and foreign-policy spokesperson of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, had criticised the draft strategy and called for postponing the decision.

The Energy Community brings together the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine. It aims at extending the EU internal energy market to South East Europe and is chiefly funded by the EU. The Regional Energy

Strategy will shape the energy landscape of South-East Europe for years to come and will have a direct impact on people's lives and the environment.

Franziska Brantner and three other MEPs – Jelko Kacin, Eduard Kukan and Maria Eleni Koppa – urged the responsible EU commissioner for energy policy, Günther Oettinger, in a letter to postpone the adoption of the strategy. The MEPs' main concern was that the strategy had been drawn up in an opaque and non-inclusive manner. The Energy Community's secretariat had, in particular, failed to properly consult and involve civil society organisations and parliaments in the preparatory process. Moreover, the MEPs are

worried that the strategy fails address corruption and public procurement issues and does not put sufficient emphasis on low-carbon technologies and energy efficiency.

As a consequence of the failure by the European Commission and the Energy Community to adequately respond to these concerns, Franziska Brantner proposes to hold a public hearing at the European Parliament to discuss the Regional Energy Strategy and the Energy Community's procedures for public consultation.

*For more information see:
www.euractiv.com/regional-policy/meps-questions-commissions-pract-news-515437 and
www.franziska-brantner.eu.*

The Green Institute Greece and the Balkan Green Newsletter

It was with great pleasure when Olga and Ahmed suggested that the Green Institute, Greece supports the Green Balkan Newsletter. Needless to say, that the Executive Board of the Green Institute voted unanimously in favor of that suggestion. I am more than happy that the tireless efforts of Ahmed and Olga have taken (electronic) shape!

I am one of those who think it is high time we Balkans reconsider our political views and prioritize our Green orientation. The austerity measures we are experiencing almost all over our peninsula are paving the way for more vicious attacks on common goods, natural resources, the environment by and large. In the

same way that we Greens believe that the air, the water, the birds and the sea cannot "belong" to a state they cannot be privatized and thus fall victim to the neoliberal quest for profit.

Economic bottlenecks lead to skepticism, more populism and give rise to nationalism. We, in the Balkans, have paid a great share to the Moloch of nationalism. Many of us are historically linked to places in another Balkan state, other than our own. Many of us speak or have a distant memory of a second language spoken in the Balkans. Our mustachioed and bearded war heroes cannot hide the sorrows inflicted upon generation after generation in many instances blinded by our nationalist desire for domination.

We Balkans need to talk more to each other! We need to express our fears and not let them grow behind closed doors! We need to discuss and compare the common strategies that all those who put profit before human lives have put in action. We need to identify what has gone wrong and ultimately set our own targets!

We live in a part of the world rich in culture, natural beauty, diversity and dynamism! We should bear in mind that we share common traditions and invaluable common intangible heritage. It is in our hands to transform all these into a strategy for the Green Balkans! Let this Balkan Green Newsletter be a short 'electronic step' toward that direction!

Ecological transformation in the Western Balkans

Ecological transformation in the Western Balkans is both necessity and opportunity for the region to reach the point of sustainability in resource governance and sovereignty in the terms of energy supply. Therefore it is one of the core dimensions of the change of the patterns that are currently dominating in the economy. Through number of measures carbon free Western Balkans with higher social standards and green economy is possible in the near future.

These are the preliminary findings of the study which will be published soon by Heinrich Böll Stiftung. Coordinated by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Zagreb office and conducted in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, work on this study has brought together approximately 20 experts and involvement of around 150 local stakeholders in the last two years involved in the different phases of research. The study presents scenarios that demonstrate capacity of the domestic energy and agriculture sectors in four countries to couple ecological modernisation measures with increase of well being and prosperity. At the Green Balkan Network meeting there will be presented paper that relates to energy sector in four countries, authored by core expert Aleksandar Kovacevic.

This paper argues that prosperity could be achieved by other means. The region is endowed by renewable energy potential far beyond the European average. Renewable energy is available, suitable and accessible with available technologies today at investment cost that is more efficient than conventional investment mix envisaged by

available investment strategies in the region. There is a need to change governance patterns but that change has been achieved elsewhere and remains within capability of local communities in the region. There is a feasible sequence of policies and events that could result in a change of governance patterns and the design of property rights required to facilitate investments and economic development. Nothing prevents international donors to re-design their assistance programs to facilitate change described hereby. Economic development could be based on productivity of renewable resources and not on natural resource rents. Therefore, economic development could be sustainable in terms of longevity and human development impact. This economic development is likely to require less, not more energy. Only at its maximum extent, in case full employment is achieved, energy demand approaches the annual volume of energy consumed during the last years. Therefore, available energy infrastructure is used in a far more effective way. The region has a potential to provide considerable enabling contribution to the European energy security and renewable energy development elsewhere in Europe. It does not require more international financial assistance. However, that is to be smart, focused, targeted and coordinated assistance. Primary goal of the international assistance is to stimulate valuable contribution of the region to the Europe energy markets, its security of supply and full de-carbonization or sustainable economic development. In this respect, EU accession obligations are critical policy and assistance tools: the region is able to achieve obligations envisaged in this moment and lead the way toward

sustainable negative carbon emissions for the economy in 2050. Environmental impact of the energy industry could turn into positive: energy industry emerges as a component of sustainable development. It is to be embedded into human development process and the human community in a very traditional way achieved within sustainable communities from the history of Balkans.

This paper is not critique of existing policies. It stands as an alternative and provides a policy choice. Being provided with feasible options, policymakers and communities obtain the responsibility to choose. Choice is going to be a deliberate decision and not a consequence of perceived necessity.

This scenario comprises a mix of policies, institutions and tangible investments that are mutually reinforced and sequenced to build a durable strategy for change. It returns sovereignty to people in the region and their communities and reminds that international aid is intended for people in need to facilitate, educate, promote and assist their human development. It is based on available means, known institutions and policies, available technologies, proven policy advice, renewable resources that could be developed or harvested in place where available with direct access to economic use.

As European Union rules and regulation result from centuries of development experience, application, not derogation of these rules, is in the best interest of both the region, its people and Europe. The scenario presented hereby, demonstrates that application of these rules (envisaged by the Energy Community Treaty and other compacts) is technically feasible. It could be done.

Western Balkans and EU enlargement: the state of play and the Greens role



The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union is a timely reminder of the principle of 'cooperation instead of confrontation' that has ended a history of bloodshed. And it is also a reminder that the European peace project will not be complete until South Eastern Europe is part of the EU. So where do we stand in the enlargement process in the Western Balkans after EU-Commission published the recent progress reports?

Croatia, the next country to join by mid-2013 must not slow down its reform process with EU accession in sight. On the contrary, for Croatia's government this final step to EU membership should be used as catalyst for speedily tackling outstanding reforms, in particular in the fields of justice and anti-corruption, the protection of ethnic and sexual minorities, and the domestic prosecution of war crimes.

In the overall picture Montenegro, the next country at the negotiation table, has already achieved much. But there are still some areas of concern: Corruption is widespread, with the political elite and foreign investors deeply involved. But the election success for „Pozitivna Montenegro“ on Oct. 14th provides new hope for all those in the small

Western Balkan country who are frustrated and even annoyed by the old power structures. This new left-liberal party, which has actively shown interest in joining the European Greens and will be at our upcoming Council meeting in Athens, has gained 7 seats in the parliament – only half a year after being established! Congratulations!

As for Serbia, which was given candidate status last spring, the Commission has not recommended a date for the start of accession negotiations at this stage. I welcome this decision as Belgrade has not yet sufficiently improved its relations with Kosovo. The Serbian government's decision to ban the Pride parade in Belgrade some weeks ago is also deeply regrettable. The Commission must keep up the close monitoring of the protection of minority rights in Serbia and all the other countries of the region. At the recent 'Wiener Ball' (traditional Viennese dancing event based on Viennese Waltzes) in Belgrade not only Ivan Karic, Green MP, joined me but also two other activists and we strategized against the new government's idea of deleting the ban on nuclear power plants and to reduce feeding tariffs for renewables.

The Commission is also right to give Kosovo a real and palpable accession perspective with the feasibility study for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Kosovo, nevertheless, needs to improve the functioning of its state institutions and start delivering tangible results in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as in establishing rule of law for all its citizens. At a recent high level Conference on Women's Empowerment on invitation by

Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga I had the pleasure of addressing more than 200 women from many Balkan states and the US, making clear that without women politics will neither be just nor sustainable anywhere in the world.

In the case of Macedonia, anger is directed against Greece over the naming issue. For the fourth year in a row the Commission has recommended opening accession negotiations with Macedonia. The Council must now step up the pressure on Greece to remove its veto. Such disputes should be dealt with via an EU arbitration mechanism. The European Parliament already has called for such a mechanism. My Green colleagues and I in the parliament also believe that a solution to the name issue is close as soon as both sides show more flexibility and stop entrenching themselves in increasingly nationalistic disputes.

The European Parliament will now adopt its own accession reports over the next few months, and at the EGP Council in Athens European Greens will strategize on how to strengthen Green parties in the region to make our struggle for social justice, environmental sustainability, equal rights and against corruption more visible and successful!

Ulrike Lunacek, MEP, is foreign affairs spokeswoman for the Greens/European Free Alliance political group in the European Parliament, the parliament's rapporteur for Kosovo and co-president of the Intergroup on LGBT rights

'BALKANIZATION', STEREOTYPES AND OVERCOMING NATIONALISMS: A green Roadmap for EU enlargement in the Western Balkans



Balkanization», as a term for irrational fragmentation and destructive nationalism, reflects not just stereotypes of Western and Central European societies about us Balkan peoples, but also real weaknesses we need to jointly address and overcome.

While traditionally each country's immediate neighbors were regarded potential enemies and our neighbors' neighbors potential allies, we now live in an era of ecological crisis where the environment knows no borders and immediate neighbors are indispensable partners. In this context, every nationalism is damaging its own country first.

Cross-border cooperation in jointly protecting environmental assets and promoting a green transformation of our economies, should be a first priority for all our Green parties. Nevertheless every cross-border effort, such as fighting destructive goldmining or supporting, upgrading and reestablishing decent train links, would be highly vulnerable as long as nationalisms are rampant and unsustainable interests are able to label cross-border grassroots contacts as "talking with the enemy".

It is important then that we Balkan Greens work together to jointly overcome all nationalisms in our region. In this context, accession prospects for those countries not yet EU member states, can be a highly important tool. A key challenge for

the EU in these enlargement processes, is to actually play a constructive role and avoid the temptation to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms.

The current dispute about the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its EU accession project, clearly exemplifies this challenge to overcome nationalisms. Since 2008, the common position of the Balkan Greens, is resolving the name dispute "with respect and tolerance to the feelings of both sides". A compromise name implying there "might" also be a Greek and a Bulgarian Macedonia besides the ex-Yugoslav one, would be an important step to build mutual trust and promote cooperation.

In recent years, this name issue has also been associated with the EU enlargement prospects in the Western Balkans; the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has already an EU candidate country status, but the opening of accession talks is constantly postponed as Greece is warning it would oppose such a step in the European Council.

MEPs of Oikologoi Prasinoi, the Greek Greens, have repeatedly stressed that our country should balance legitimate concerns about the name issue with the standard interest of every European country to pursue and prioritize the EU accession of its immediate neighbors. This is at least what France has done with Spain and Portugal in the early 80s, Germany with Austria in the 90s, Sweden and Finland with the Baltic countries in the early 2000s.

Publishing some personal thoughts in this context as "food for thought" for the green movement, I would then like to outline a possible initiative leading to a Roadmap for EU accession talks with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- As a first step, Greece would offer

to accept the opening of 2-3 (out of the total of 35) chapters of the accession talks, as a symbolic gesture of goodwill.

- Opening of the remaining chapters would follow as soon a preliminary agreement is reached on the framework and scope of the compromise name now under negotiation.

- Greece would also identify, right from the start, which accession talks chapters it considers as closely associated with regional good neighborhood issues. As far as these chapters are concerned, Greece will reserve the option to make their closing conditional on a final solution to the name issue, either through the current UN talks or through the arbitration mechanism proposed by the EP about differences between member states and / or candidate countries.

Such a Roadmap could also reflect the precedent of Croatia, whose successful completion of their accession talks had been made conditional on having their border dispute with Slovenia resolved; the talks about both issues proceeded then in parallel (and were both concluded successfully). Greece itself has adopted a similar strategy on Turkey's EU candidacy.

This way, the opening of the accession talks could rather facilitate resolving a decades old dispute that has poisoned the mutual trust and relations between the two neighboring societies. In any case, it's vital to keep in mind that green thinking and citizens 'diplomacy' have both much to offer. Maybe it's time we Balkan people overcome nationalisms on our own initiative and show the rest of Europe that old stereotypes no longer reflect the new realities.

** co-head of Oikologoi Prasinoi
in last May's and June's national
elections in Greece*

Nasa stranka reclaims its position in the 2012 local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Nasa stranka entered Bosnia's politics in 2008 after existing for less than half year and went on to achieve major results: 22 municipal councillors, 3 deputy council chairs, 1 mayor and 1 deputy mayor. The 2010 elections were a hard fall and a blow to Nasa stranka. However, it peaked back in the 2012 elections, retaining its 4th position in Sarajevo with 14 councillors, winning councillors in two new municipalities and retaining another three councillors from 2008. The votes are still being counted for the municipal councillors and agreements on council chairs and deputies are to be brokered, but success is evident already. The campaign took place in 19 municipalities with over 300 candidate councillors and 5 mayoral councillors. Nasa stranka was the first in the history of Sarajevo City to offer 4 women mayor candidates for its 4 municipalities and put gender equality in practice and not only lip service. The 4 women mayor candidates won an average of 4th position in these municipalities competing with 10 other candidates in each location, gaining a total of 10,055

votes or 9.9%. Nasa stranka was also recommended by NGO monitoring the election campaign for its substance: it had the most elaborate local policies dealing directly with issues pertaining to local problems: security in the streets and in schools, youth marginalisation, green municipalities, opening municipal doors to SMEs, developing tourism potential, equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. The campaign slogan We can...offer new solutions, green our municipalities, be a service to

citizens and partner to entrepreneurs, revive tourism, provide equal opportunities to ALL citizens... was not a copy of the Obama Yes, We Can, but rather a response to the all-too-familiar municipal official's response to all requests by citizens and councillors to make changes: No, we can't! Therefore, Nasa stranka answers by saying, ok, but we can! Mi možemo!



Nasa stranka promotes a green approach in its campaign

Nasa stranka meticulously prepared the local election campaign in 2012. In addition to selecting high quality designers, photographers, stylists and printing companies, it decided to show citizens that it keeps its green policies at a high priority. In place of making posters that will be stuck all over town, often torn down in the middle of the campaign and left as trash on streets and in parks, Nasa stranka chose to skip the posters all together and opt for a few clean billboards and invest into sustainable bags. Nasa stranka has been loud in requesting a ban on plastic bags since 2009, both at municipal and at regional level and the campaign was a good opportunity to put our money where our mouth is. A significant portion of the campaign was invested into printing shopping bags that were then distributed to citizens in markets and on streets. The citizens were very impressed with the move and were more than willing to take the shopping bags and replace the plastic with them.



Nasa stranka promotes a clean and healthy environment

Nasa stranka Novo Sarajevo decided it is high time to come out in the spring of 2012 and be an example of citizen action in creating a healthy, clean and green environment. The members of the board came out one weekend with their families and friends and spent the day cleaning the parks and streets of their neighbourhood. The action was mentioned in local media and some neighbours chipped in to help.

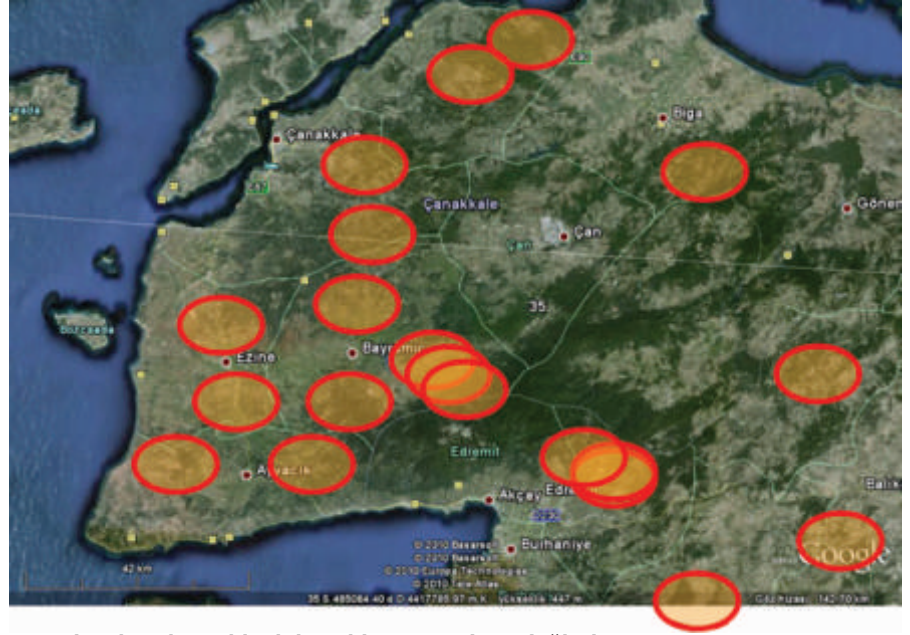


Gold Mining at Kazdağlari

Kazdağlari (Mount Ida) is one of the important mountain chains situated on the provincial borders of Çanakkale and Balıkesir, on the Biga peninsula which is situated at the north of Aegean Sea. Part of the region, which possesses rich resources in terms of natural and cultural aspects, within the borders of Edremit District of Balıkesir Province has been announced as a “National Park”. The National Park and its immediate surroundings demonstrate quite rapid developments for tourism perspectives because of diversity and visual value of natural and cultural resources owned.

Yet, the whole region is under a major threat from gold mining companies whose investments surged after the adoption of the new Mining Law. As of August 2011, a total of 285 mining fields has been opened which cover almost 6000 square kilometers.

The gold potential of the region is estimated to be 338 tons. In order to unearth that much gold, it has



Map showing the gold mining sides around Kazdağlari

been estimated that a total of 2,5 billion tons of rock have to be transferred. In other words, 125 million trucks with 20 tons capacity. Moreover, considering the need to use 3 tons of water in order to get 2-3 grams of gold per tons of rocks, it is not difficult to estimate the negative consequences of gold mining over the natural environment as well as

water resources. The region is populated by 1,5 million people whose subsistence is based on eco-tourism, olive and animal farming.

In 2008, the municipalities around the region were united against gold mining (<http://www.kazmad.gov.tr/index.php>), and have been engaged in raising awareness by organizing conferences as well as other activities. Between 12 and 14 October 2012, a workshop has been organized, with the presence of many activists from Turkey and other countries.



The new Gold Rush in Greece

Several gold mining projects have recently been given permission in Greece and are ready to start digging! "Small" firms which acquired initially the mining rights through various (often ambivalent or controversial) ways, have been recently bought by multinational "investment" corporations: Eldorado Gold Corporation (based in Canada) has acquired Skouries and Olympias at Halkidiki, as well as Perama Hill at Evros [1], Glory Resources (based in Australia) has acquired Sapes at Rodopi [2], while another deposit in Kilikis is up for lease [3]. All these deposits present low concentrations in gold - lower than 1gr per ton of excavation materials - and are typical of all the new projects in the Balkans [4].

Gold mining is gathering momentum after Greece began what it called a "fast-track" approvals program, downgrading environmental restrictions. "We noticed an enormous change in Greece in the time we were there driven by the financial crisis," said officials from gold mining corporations to the Independent newspaper recently [5]. "With tourism falling and with the crisis they were collapsing into with the Euro they really had no choice." This is a blunt confirmation of an over-exploitative colonialist attitude which is usually found in Third World countries with no environmental regulations or human rights guarantees.

The environmental as well as social and economic impacts are huge. At Skouries, a whole mountaintop will be removed to create an open-pit mine, almost 400 hectares of old growth forest will be clear cut, with an accompanying loss of water

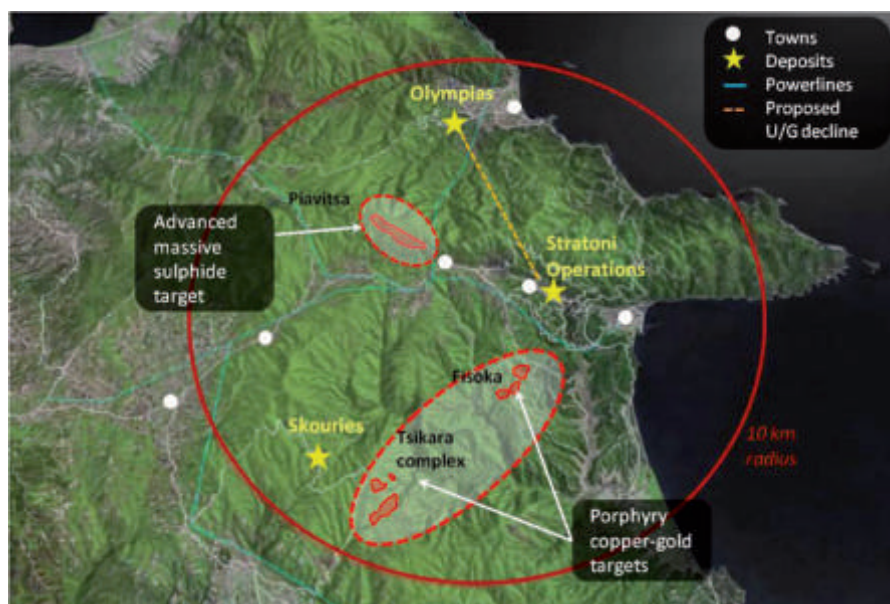
resources sustaining the surrounding area. An experimental method for extracting gold (flash smelting) is feared that will end up in unrestricted use of cyanide. A metallurgical industrial installation will produce large quantities of sulphur dioxide emissions, while two tailing ponds with toxic wastes will be constructed at nearby valleys. But most significantly, every other possibility for economic activity will be cancelled. Tourism, bee-keeping, animal farming, irrigation agriculture, sustainable tree-logging will be almost impossible to conduct at the nearby area. Greek legislation did not impose any royalties for these mining activities. In Halkidiki, this was scandalously supported with the argument that the mining corporations should mitigate previous environmental damages by investing in remediation of previous toxic waste accumulation which included cyanide, arsenic and other heavy metals!

Ecologist Greens have expressed their opposition to these projects through mainly the questions of



their MEPs in the European Parliament [6] and their active support to the struggles and protests of local citizens groups.

- [1] www.eldoradogold.com
- [2] www.gloryresources.com.au, Sapes gold project.
- [3] <http://ekathimerini.com>, Lease process starts for Kilikis gold mine.
- [4] www.euromaxresources.com, Map with mining projects in Balcan.
- [5] www.independent.co.uk, Greece welcomes gold miners.
- [6] www.europarl.europa.eu, Written Questions by Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE) to the Commission: Sale of Cassandra Mines, 9 April 2010. The Aarhus Convention and auditing on the Hellenic Gold company's EIA, www.europarl.europa.eu, 17 January 2011. Co financing of the Petrenia dam in the Gomati region in Halkidiki, www.europarl.europa.eu, 31 October 2011.



Protests against shale gas exploitation in Romania

Over 50 people protested in Bucharest on 22nd of September outside the Ministry of Environment and Forests against shale gas exploitation by hydraulic fracturing. The action was organized by the 'Green Institute' (Romanian Green Party's think tank), supported by members of the party, environmental activists and protesters from the University Square.

The action lasted for two hours and more than 50 protesters from all over the country gathered in front of the Ministry. The conveyed messages were: «Get the frack out!», «They get money, we get cancer» or «No fracking way». The event was associated with the international context of 'Anti-Fracking Day' (Global Frackdown). Even if the attendance was not as high as expected the protest was well covered in national media (newspapers, news websites, TV and radio).

«We protest against the use of hydraulic fracturing in Romania and to show solidarity with similar movements from all around the world. We don't want contaminated water, compromised soils or unhealthy air. It is proved that this kind of exploitation endangers human health, the environment, threatens biodiversity and significantly contributes to climate change. Examples of other European countries such as France - which banned hydraulic fracturing, or Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands - where a moratorium already passed the Parliament in order to suspend all activities, makes us believe that Romania will abandon the intention to exploit shale gas» said Ciprian Ciocan - PR Green Institute.



Erimitis is not for sale

The ecosystem of Erimitis is situated on the north-east coast of the island of Corfu. It covers an area of approximately 500.000 sq.m of woodland with rich fauna and flora, includes 3 lakes and 7 beaches and is the habitat of lutra-lutra (otter) as well as a stopover site of rare migratory birds.

The local government of the Ionian Islands as well as the town council unanimously passed a resolution, stating that Erimitis, an ecosystem identified as Protected Natural Formation (art.5 of law 3937/2011 par. 5, b) can only be transformed into an eco park and sustain its natural beauty and biodiversity. Nevertheless, the Greek government, ignoring the above resolutions decided to grant a 99 year lease of the place to foreign investors. The plan is to "develop" the area by exploiting approximately 180.000 sq.m of its surface in order to construct vacation villas and hotel leisure facilities, which will change the microclimate and will affect the fauna and flora of the ecosystem. Ownership of Erimitis has been transferred from the Hellenic Republic to the recently established Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HARDF), which has been assigned to carry out transactions with the prospective investors. Local entities have made an appeal to the court of justice for the annulment of the above decision, claiming that the establishment of HARDF is illegal as it is contrary to the constitution. The case is to be heard on the 27th of November 2012.

Furthermore, the region is very close to the Greek Albanian border and there is an outpost within the area to be granted. The site of the outpost was very carefully



selected for strategic reasons, therefore it must not be removed.

Erimitis is an attraction for tourists who love nature and is offered for hiking, horse riding, swimming and sailing. The visitors of Erimitis stay in local hotels, dine in local restaurants and go shopping in small local shops. If it is turned into a large tourist complex, local economy will wither since everything will be offered on the premises. Therefore, claims that the development of Erimitis will bring gains to local economy are disputable.

We, the people of the island of Corfu, want this place of outstanding natural beauty to be heritage of the next generations as it has been heritage to us from our forefathers.



For more information on Erimitis:
http://ecocorfu.gr/download/OIKOSYST_HMA_ERHMHTH_DHMOS_KASSOPAION.pdf

At
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjRROK-Trjw>
you can watch a video of the ecosystem of Erimitis made by a local lady who has an active role in the movement against the sale of Erimitis. The writing expressing the feelings of the local people is in Greek but you can enjoy the pictures all the same.

The Green European Journal

The Green European Journal was launched last year, and is an online platform for outstanding articles of interest to the Green movement across Europe. The journal is published on a quarterly basis, but its 'In the debate' section is updated on a more regular basis, with articles on a wider range of issues.

The purpose of the GEJ is to provide a space at European level for discussion and debate around key issues facing the EU and the Greens. Not only as a forum for new ideas, but also to critique and review what the European Green movement stands for and how it could progress.

If you are interested in writing an article for the GEJ, or in having an article reprinted in the GEJ, then please let us know at info@gef.eu

You can see below the articles of the 3rd edition of the Journal '**Beyond growth/degrowth**'.

I. MAJOR: BEYOND GROWTH / DEGROWTH

- **Beyond growth/degrowth, questions for the Greens in transition**, Benoit Lechat, Editor-in-Chief
- **Beyond old cleavages, new green debates**, Paul-Marie Boulanger
- **How fast should the wheel turn?** Ralf Fücks - Reinhard Loske
- **Transitioning to a Postconsumerist Future**, Maurie J. Cohen
- **Getting markets to work for green politics**, Heikki Sairanen and Jaakko Stenhäll
- **Four steps to a growth-free, prosperous Finland**, Timo Järvensivu
- **An Austrian debate: Green New Deal and the post-growth economy**, Benoit Lechat
- **No growth? In search of another path for Europe**, Aurélie Maréchal
- **De-growth: Can Croatia afford less work and less consumption?** Igor Matutinovic



- **Greens vs transition towns: same aims, different means**, Alexis Rowell & Sarah Nicholl

II. MINOR: THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

- **Only deeper European unification can save the eurozone**, Peter Bofinger, Jürgen Habermas & Julian Nida-Rümelin
- **What democratic Europe? Response to Jürgen Habermas**, Etienne Balibar
- **The crisis, ferment of European Federalism**, Pierre Defraigne.

Read these interesting articles in: www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

The Athens Express

The European Green Party organizes a council every six months. This is the time where all the Green parties from all over Europe come together to discuss, share, and vote. The Individual Supporters' Network (ISN) - the network which connects individual Greens to the European Green Party - always sends a few team members to a council, to engage with these Greens.

This time the ISN is going to Athens by train. We want to show that it is possible to travel from one end of Europe to the other by train. On our way, we will visit Greens and their parties, and try to connect with

them. Prague will be our first stop on the way, where the Greens are engaged in an election campaign, which focuses on energy issues and anti-fracking. Our second stop will be Zagreb, where we organize a press conference which focuses on the poor situation of the railways and public transport. The third city is Budapest, where we will give a workshop on transport in coordination with Lehet Más a Politika. The next stop will be in Bucharest, where we will focus on democracy issues, with a public movie show in the Contemporary Art Museum. The fifth and final stop will be in Sofia, where we will engage in a campaign on a

referendum concerning a nuclear power plant, and a demonstration by Anonymous. When we leave Sofia we will experience first hand what budget cuts to public transport do: there is no train between the Bulgarian and Greek border. These are the only kilometers of the trip we have to do by car, because Greece decided to quit the railway connection between Sofia and Athens.

The ISN co-organizes this trip and is supported by the European Green Party, Michael Cramer, MEP, the Federation of Young European Greens and the European Network of Green Seniors.

If democracy is a good thing, let's have more of it

For a number of years now we have been wrestling with a crisis which began as a debt one, deepened to become an economic crisis and is turning more and more into a crisis of democracy and legitimacy of representative government - nationally and Europe-wide. Democratic commitments are being replaced by the financial dictates of the executive branch. Austerity mandates are being imposed without public consent. Democratic freedoms and a plenitude of social rights are under attack everywhere, but especially in Central and South-East Europe, where top-down political communication has been the trait of political life as an aftermath of socialist command systems or authoritarian regimes.

Europe and the Member States are bound together. Neither of them can revive itself without

addressing the area of democracy. Political elections are just a democratic minimum which our citizenry have long ago outgrown.

If democracy is a value we all share, let's have more of it. Let the national states, and again especially in this part of Europe, install voter-friendly rules and practices providing for meaningful citizens participation, public reasoning and direct decision-making. The mechanisms of direct democracy (referendum, initiative and recall), can also serve as citizens' checks and balances on representative government and improve accountability and legitimacy of public institutions.

Let us use the European Citizens Initiative (ECI) to address cross-boundary issues of importance. The ECI - the first ever transnational instrument of public participation, is already in place

and operating. A dozen of ECIs have already been registered and are kick-starting petition circulation. Of course, the ECI alone cannot bridge the gap of democratic deficit in the EU. Enhancing the role of the Parliament, reforming the European elections shall also be considered as ways of improvement in a serious and urgent fashion. But may be improvement will not do, may be it's time for a wider reform and deliberation on the future of Europe, time to go back to the drawing board, time to call a new democratic European Convention.

Coming back to Greece as the birthplace of democracy might be just about the right thing to do at this moment. It's like coming back to the crime-scene for more clues. It's coming back to the agora as the oldest democracy prototype which definitely had been direct.

Olsi Bakalli
Chair,
Albanian Young Greens

AL

Albanian young greens plant new trees

Tirana - Albanian young greens in collaboration with an organization called "Balkans lets get up", undertook a start off planting some trees in Fushe-Kruja municipality. Our action was supported even by young people of high schools.

In Albania the phenomenon of massive wood cutting and the lack of replanting is very spread, causing air pollution, erosion and destroying the ecosystem of many species. Furthermore, the

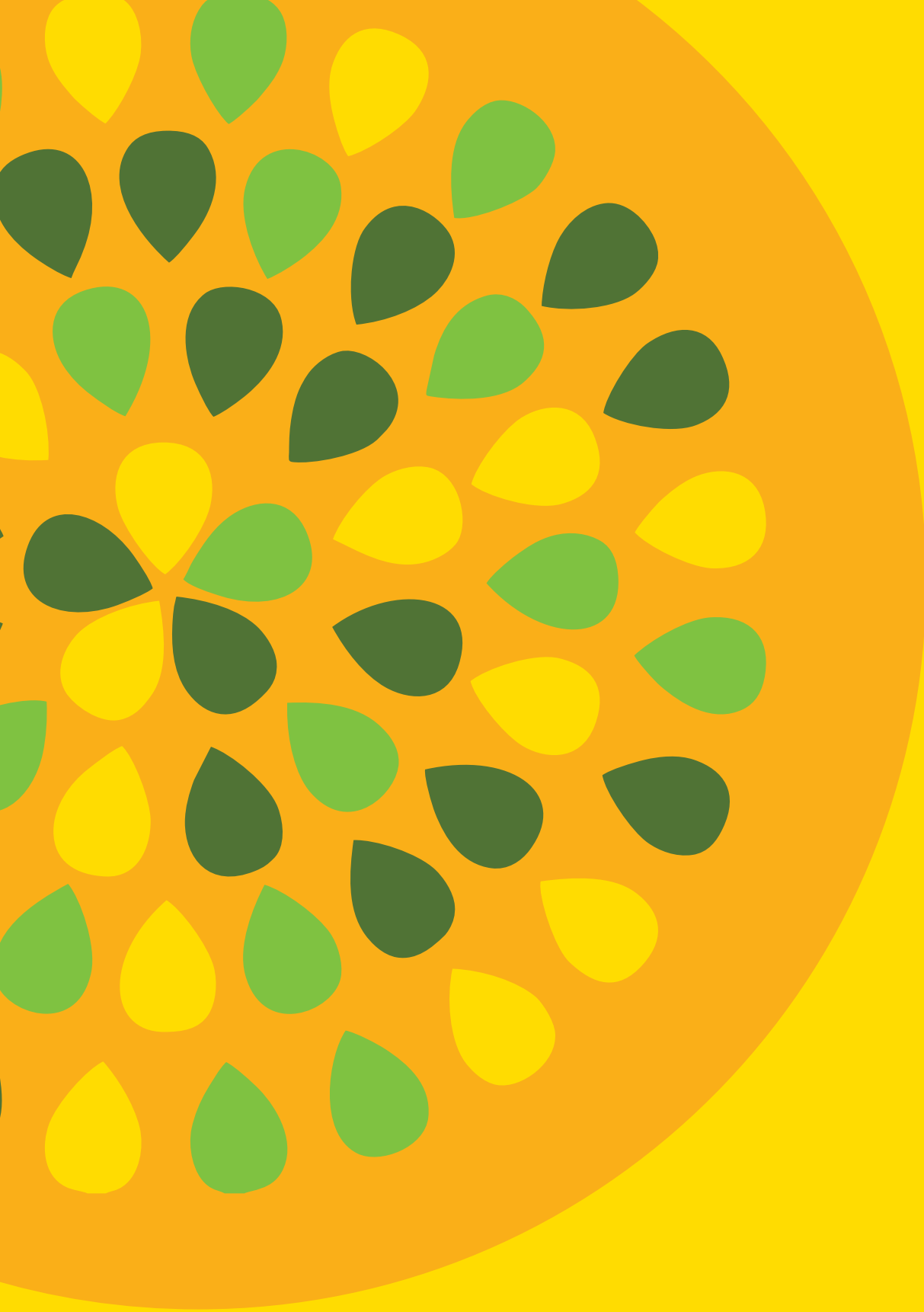
reduction of the natural resources damages the economy of the country. Citizens today absorb more carbon dioxide than oxygen.

The society and the government sometimes are not aware or willing to take measures, to prevent further damages. Planting many trees in the cities will add green surfaces and will improve in a visible way the quality of the air, and will improve the quality of the life of citizens.

Therefore, we undertook this initiative with a desire to



encourage volunteerism, especially among young citizens, and to bring a different spirit of awareness in the community of that polluted area.



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