

European Free Alliance (EFA) Manifesto for the June 2004 European elections

Sovereignty, Social Justice, Subsidiarity Towards a Europe of diversity

The European Free Alliance has been standing up for the rights of stateless nations, peoples and regions for decades. Democratic legitimacy makes our cause unstoppable. To fully realise our historic rights and improve the social well being of our citizens and the economies of our countries we need to be fully represented in Europe.

The full representation for all peoples at the European level requires that they be given full respect and equality at the state level in those EU countries where stateless nations and peoples do not enjoy comparable status. As far as Greece is concerned, respect and recognition of particular identities (national, linguistic and cultural) must be given to ethnic Macedonians, Turks, Vlachs, Arvanites, Pomaks, and Roma, and the rights of those citizens identifying as such must also be fully respected. This is absolutely necessary to furthering the country's democratization and Europeanization process.

The age of the traditional sovereign state is over. But we reject as its replacement a monolithic EU, with power in the hands of the largest member states. The challenge now is to achieve an ever broader participation of all peoples in the political process. Political devolution, leading to self-government and the recognition of particular identities, is the natural synthesis for our political struggle.

Decentralization and the devolvement of power to all peoples and regions in Europe must be a fundamental policy at the national state level. As far as Greece is concerned, we consider it necessary to introduce a 3rd tier of Local Administration, which would include the establishment of regional administrative bodies headed by elected Regional Governors and Regional Parliaments. These bodies would be empowered to legislate on matters concerning the particular region and would extend the capabilities of the 1st tier of Local Administration. We also advocate for economic self-management at the regional level. These reforms together with other measures in the same direction will serve to change the centralistic character of the Athens-centric Greek State as we know it. This change will enable and encourage all citizens in every region to participate fully in the political process and in matters involving the regions where they live. It would also gradually relieve regional dependency on the centralized power.

In these elections EFA will campaign for our countries to be better represented in Europe. We work on two fronts. Our representatives are committed to putting forward progressive policies. We work for improved social conditions, quality of life, and a fair redistribution of wealth. We also champion the principle of sustainable development as the vehicle to deliver improvements in people's quality of life within a clean environment. Our ideology is in line with people's desire to build a better world for present and future generations. But our countries' current constitutional status means that we lack the level of representation that other countries enjoy in Europe. As a result we risk being left behind when Europe makes vital decisions that affect all our futures. This is undemocratic and we are working for reform. This is also why we

operate, beyond the state level, on a national and regional level, fighting for proper representation for the stateless nations and peoples of Europe at every level of government.

EFA comprises stateless nations and territorial entities with a strong sense of identity that want a proper voice in Europe. Our member parties are:

Bloque Nacionalista Galego
Chunta Aragonesista
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
Eusko Alkartasuna
Fryske Nasjonale Partij
Libertà Emiliana-Nazione Emilia
Liga Fronte Veneto
Ligue Savoisiene
Lithuanian Polish People's Party
Mebbyon Kernow
Mouvement Région Savoie
Partei der Deutschsprachigen Belgier
Partido Andalucista
Partit Occitan
Partito Sardo d'Azione
Partitu di a Nazione Corsa
Plaid Cymru-the Party of Wales
Rainbow-Vinozhito
Scottish National Part,

Silesian Autonomy Movement
Slovenska Skupnost
Spirit
Union Démocratique Bretonne
Union du Peuple Alsacien
Union für Südtirol
Union Valdôtaine
Unitat Catalana

(Observer parties:
Hungarian Federalist Party
Moravian Democratic Party
Partido Nacionalista Vasco,
Partit Socialista de Mallorca i Menorca-
Entesa Nacionalista,
Transilvanian Party)

In the 1999-2004 legislature our 9 MEPs have been working hard in the European Parliament (Scottish, Welsh, Flemish, Basques, Galicians, Catalans and Andalusians). Through a parliamentary alliance with the Greens we established a significant presence in parliament.

With your vote we will continue to champion the following critical issues at the European Parliament:

(a)- EU Institutions should be simplified and democratised in a bicameral structure: European Parliament (directly elected by the European citizens) and the Council or Senate (composed of representatives of self-governing territorial entities). This Senate, the successor of the Council, transformed into a territorial chamber, would legislate by co-decision with the EP. The latter would appoint the Commission and would be able to instigate impeachment proceedings. This structure would facilitate the process of internal enlargement through self-determination. In the meantime EFA advocates full participation for our devolved governments in the Council of Ministers. Our countries should also have access to the Court of Justice.

(b)- Constitutional Pluralism. The different levels of government, EU, States, Self-governing Countries, Regions, Cities etc, shall have different fields of competence with equal co-operation, and without hierarchy. This would be a network of governance.

(c)- All languages have the right to be recognised at the European level, with no artificial difference between state languages and other languages. EFA will strive for

the meaningful realisation of European cultural and linguistic diversity and equality of all European languages. To this end EFA will work for the establishment of legally binding instruments and budgets for the promotion, development and normalisation of Europe's minoritised and stateless languages. Those Member States, such as Greece, that have not yet done so must see that the competent governmental bodies sign, ratify and implement all international conventions, such as the Charter for the Protection of Minority and Regional Languages. This will contribute subsidiarily towards the recognition of those languages that do not enjoy legal status.

(d)- Control and management of structural funds to be given to the devolved authorities. This would help alleviate the gap in the EU between its developed states and those regions or countries that are less developed.

(e)- Freedom to develop inter-regional and cross-border co-operation free from the interference of the States. Development of the Euroregions (European regions that transcend Member State borders)

(f)- Solidarity, equality and the social well being of its citizens must underpin all EU policies. EFA is committed to social cohesion and the welfare state and feels it necessary that the EU should establish minimum social standards.

(g)- Full employment and harmonisation of workers' rights which have been cut back through the Neo-Liberalism policies.

(h)- Equal rights and an end to discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, religion, language, age or sexual orientation.

(i)- A radical switch in the CAP. Big agricultural producers are swallowing most of the EU budget. EU money should be directed to small producers, family farms and fishing communities securing vitality and a future for rural communities. Sustainable agriculture and extensive farming would flourish, countering the present threats to food quality.

(j)- Support for the polluter pays principle in environmental protection. With regard to water, the way forward is the rationalisation of its use while avoiding disrupting the natural flow of this vital resource. It is time to put an end to nuclear energy. It is dangerous and follows a centralised pattern of creation and distribution. Investing in renewable sources will improve our environment and help local economies gain control over their own resources.

(k)- Support for a common foreign policy for the EU. Security, defence and diplomacy must come together in a common EU body acting for a multipolar world united against war and fighting hunger and injustice which are the main root causes of most conflicts.

(l)- Support for a peacekeeping role for the European Union when conflicts arise within and outside its borders.

(m)- More transparency and openness in the way the EU conducts its business.

We have a vision of a harmonious Europe made up of diverse peoples helping each other in a spirit of co-operation. We want to protect our rich diversity while taking advantage of what a bigger union has to offer. The political tool to do this is subsidiarity, bringing decision making closer to the citizen. We need a fair and flexible distribution of responsibilities under the banner of shared sovereignty. The way forward is the construction of an interconnected system where everybody has a say. We advocate effective, co-operative bilateral relations between the EU and self governing states and entities with respect for the principle of self determination.

Our priority is defending the rights of the citizens Europe to determine their own future and live in a peaceful, democratic and diverse society.

I - Europe of Diversity

(A multicultural Europe of peoples, languages, and identities)

The European Union needs to integrate into its institutional framework the reality of the territorial entities with political and legislative powers. To be a state cannot be the only condition for the recognition of political representation at the European level. The enlargement process, with more than ten new member states entering the European Union, most of them small countries, will reinforce this contradiction. If the only guarantee for political existence at the European level is "statality", the only possibility given to stateless nations to be recognised at the European level will be to become an independent state in the framework of the European Union.

As far as the Balkans are concerned, we consider that the cycle of ethnic emancipation of the Balkan nations has been completed with the establishment of corresponding states that, of course, contain national minorities inside their borders. Within this framework we believe that national minorities in the Balkan countries should adopt independent policies when it comes to advocating and promoting their rights. We have learned a lesson from the former Yugoslavia, where in the recent past national minorities became the instruments of expansionist ideas and corresponding political practices, with devastating consequences for its peoples. Not only must national minorities in the Balkans refuse to play such roles, but they also should strengthen their bonds of trust with the entire citizen body of the countries in which they live. They have the responsibility to reassure the majority that in advocating for their rights they do not aspire to change national borders, which must be respected and inviolate. In this way national minorities can fully participate in the democratic process while setting an example of stable, constructive cooperation among states and their peoples.

The European Union has to recognise and put into practice "unity in diversity", respecting the reality of its different peoples and, in particular, the stateless nations and regions which have their own languages, history, economic and social characteristics and political aspirations. The European Union has to overcome the centralistic and technocratic mentality and practises of the States that still predominate in the European political arena.

Broader recognition of the linguistic diversity of the stateless nations and regions is essential to give full respect to languages other than official state languages. That would in essence imply the acceptance by the EU of the different languages that have been officially acknowledged by the Member States and their internal nations or regions at the same level as EU languages. EU policies also have to respect the cultural diversity of TV and radio in the stateless nations.

Member States that do not recognize minority languages must do so officially. As far as Greece is concerned, the legal recognition of minority languages (Macedonian-Makedonski, Aroumanian-Armanesti, Arvantica-Arberichte, Pomacki, as well as Romany languages) must be accompanied by their introduction in the educational systems of the regions in which they are spoken. There must also be an upgrading of Turkish-Türkçe (the only legally recognized language). Knowledge of a minority language must be a necessary employment requirement for the public officials in the region in which it is spoken. This requirement in the public sector would contribute to the expansion of democracy and to the harmonious functioning of the state by providing a better quality of service to its citizens.

II - Europe of the citizens (democracy, social dimension, rights)

New forms of popular participation and strengthening democracy

Democratic participation has to be strengthened. For that reason, the following measures to help increase popular participation are proposed :

- 1-Encourage direct forms of participation in addition to the election of representatives to the legislative members: referenda, assemblies, etc.
- 2-Promote citizen involvement at all levels.
- 3-Develop educational systems which encourage public involvement in public affairs.
- 4-Bring the activities of pressure groups and lobbyists under control.
- 5-Ensure that the media, particularly those in public ownership, are open to and reflect the plural nature of society.
- 6-Promote electoral systems which encourage involvement and ensure that parliaments are as representative as possible.
- 7-Direct access to information for all citizens' initiatives concerning European discussions.
- 8-Recognise the importance of NGO's, organisations and civil society in the preparation of legislation.

The European Social Model

The European Social Model has to be strengthened as a cornerstone of the European Model of Society based on solidarity: full employment with quality jobs in a healthy and safe work environment with access to universal services of general interest.

Binding quantitative and qualitative targets should be agreed upon on the European level. **A European Social Stability Pact** should be implemented- a pact for full employment, social welfare, social equity and ecological sustainability. As part of the

Social Stability Pact the idea of a country-specific bottom line for the share of expenditure for welfare and social services in GDP is proposed.

For a world at peace

It is essential to reject any form of aggression or violence as a means of imposing sets of values. We actively advocate non-violent means and dialogue for resolving conflicts.

Conflict prevention and lasting peace requires a more equal balance in world trade and sustainable development. The EU has to take the side of people in developing countries in WTO negotiations.

A binding code of conduct on the arms trade and to prevent the exploitation of resources by multinational companies at the European level would be a cornerstone on the way to a more just and peaceful world.

The eradication of poverty must be the top priority.

III - For a European Constitution

Towards a Europe of the Peoples and Nations

The European Union has hitherto been exclusively based on the Member States, which are extremely reluctant to cede sovereignty to a European political body. Furthermore, the major discrepancies between the Member States in terms of size and population do not facilitate effective co-ordination between them.

Despite the fact that from the European Free Alliance standpoint the current process of European unity is inadequate, the party states its wish to work from within the existing institutions to influence, take part in and make use of all opportunities given for our work, so as to push the European Union in the desired direction.

The institutions should be reformed on the following basis:

- * By encouraging and improving the role of internal nations and regions within the Institutions. We will call for their representation within the Council of Ministers.
- * By thoroughly applying the principle of subsidiarity, in the sense that what can be done by a lesser body should not be done by a superior body.
- * By facilitating in every possible way interterritorial and cross-border co-operation between the Union's various countries, whose borders are the result of history and do not necessarily reflect the natural, economic or cultural links which bind them together.
- * By moving towards a single electoral system for the European Parliament throughout the Union, respecting proportionality and the direct representation of peoples and nations.

The present constitutional process

The European Free Alliance supports the idea of a Constitution for the European Union. This is essential in order for citizens to achieve a democratic and transparent form of self-government in the Union, with respect for human rights (including self-determination) and for the principle of subsidiarity, ensuring decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens they affect.

From a democratic point of view, the Draft Constitution proposed by the European Convention represents a real advance on the existing jumble of Treaties that define the Union and its powers. We especially welcome the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights as an integral part of the Constitution. Failure by the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Convention text was a serious setback for a more sensible reconstruction of the Union.

But there are inevitable defects in the Draft Constitution. There were very restricted opportunities for input to the Convention from stateless nations, even those endowed with substantial internal self-government inside existing Member States.

IV - A Safer Planet for Our Children

Sustainability is at the heart of our political strategy- cultural and linguistic as well as environmental. Building sustainable communities in a sustainable Europe.

The European Union should promote GMO free regions and zones and stringent legislation on labelling and traceability. Almost 90% of the people of Europe reject GMOs. So this is not only an issue of food safety but of our democratic right to choose what we eat and for the rights of people to be put before profit.

Fighting climate change has become a concrete example of European leadership. As well as its implications for the future of Europe's energy and transport policies, the campaign against global warming has wider political implications. For instance, the high dependence of the U.S. economy on fossil fuels made the control of energy resources, especially oil fields, a major factor in the U.S. military attack on Iraq. Europe continues to lead on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol without the U.S., the major emitter of CO₂, which refused to sign.

As far as nuclear energy (Euratom) is concerned, EFA defends a clear anti-nuclear position-and a phasing out from nuclear energy at the European level. Energy saving, renewables and the efficient use of energy represent the future for European society.

With over 1.2 billion of the world's people surviving on less than €1 day, we are committed to the achievement of the eight UN Millennium Goals and Johannesburg commitments. Combatting poverty and hunger, providing universal primary education, the empowerment of women and accessible health care are essential in achieving peace and justice.