

## The Greens/European Free Alliance

Although they began by highlighting purely ecological issues, the Greens have increasingly branched out into the political mainstream in recent years. During the recent debates on the services directive their co-President Daniel Cohn-Bendit summed up their philosophy when he said "at a time when the EU Commission is pursuing an increasingly pro-industry agenda, the Greens/EFA group is vigorously fighting to ensure the right balance is struck between economic reforms and social interests".



Comparatively speaking, this is a young political group. The very first ecological parties emerged in 1970s and it took them another decade to turn their support into real political power. It was not until 1984 that the Greens started to coordinate their activities on the European level. In July 1999 they came together with the European Free Alliance, which draws together political parties fighting for democracy and the right to self-determination for the stateless nations and regions of Europe, to give birth to a new political grouping - the Greens/EFA.

The group comprises 42 MEPs from 13 countries. It is the German delegation with 13 MEPs that has the most members while on the other hand Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Latvia all have one representative in the group. The group's representatives are vice-chairmen of four standing committees and one vice-president of the Parliament also comes from its camp. Unlike most of the other groups, there are two co-Presidents of the Greens/EFA so the gender balance is always guaranteed.

With its ongoing participation in European politics, the group has extended its interests beyond topics directly linked to the environment. The current party says it aims to build a society respectful of fundamental human rights and environmental justice, to increase freedom within the world of work, to deepen democracy by decentralisation and encourage direct participation of people in the decision-making process and finally to undertake economic and social reforms that will make development sustainable for humans and the natural world.

Mr Cohn-Bendit's colleague as co-President of the Group, Monica Frassoni, recently summarized the group's activities by saying that "the Greens try to prevent the EU from pursuing short-sighted policies, which sacrifice the environment and social justice by pandering to narrow lobbying interests."