

# Opinions of Greens 2004 activists on the programme of their party<sup>\*</sup>

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## Introduction: The programme audience

While constructing its election programme or deciding which of its parts to particularly expose, a party can take two strategies. In the first, the party focuses mainly on the problems of the entourages it is associated with (e.g., of one or more social groups) at the expense of the rest of the groups. This approach allows for more ideologisation and integrity of the programme, but presenting oneself as a representation of a narrowed group of people decreases the potential electorate, and hence diminishes the chance of electoral success. Most of the parties worldwide therefore strive to pose as if they represented the entire society, thereby canvassing support from as wide a range of voters as possible. However, it is difficult to create a political programme that would equally take into account interests of all the citizens, often mutually contradictive. The programme must then become more blurred, more ambiguous, more centric, so as not to antagonise the undecided electorate.

As many as 75 per cent of the delegates of Greens 2004 have opted for creating a programme aimed at everyone.<sup>1</sup> It can be therefore assumed that in this way they supported emphasizing less controversial topics in the party programme — those that enjoy

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<sup>\*</sup>This article is an excerpt from the author's Ph.D. dissertation *Zieloni 2004: studium instytucjonalizacji partii politycznej nurtu postmaterialistycznego* (Greens 2004: Study of Institutionalisation of a Postmaterialist Party). It is an English translation of section 3.3. The surveys referenced throughout the article have been designed and carried out by the author at four congresses of Greens 2004 in the years 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010. For completeness, a translation of the 2010 survey form is annexed to this article.

<sup>1</sup>Question used in the 2006 survey: "In your opinion, should the programme of Greens 2004 reflect the interests of groups of people or of the entire society?"

a wide consent of the society (e.g., ecological and pacifist issues). In the 2008 and 2010 surveys, about one fourth of the respondents opposed any modifications of the programme that would be directly aimed at increasing the party's vote share (e.g., putting stronger emphasis on socially popular topics over those that arouse controversy). Most people (50–60%) have stated, however, that the programme message can be altered only to a certain extent. People from Warsaw are more open to change in this respect than delegates from the rest of the country. More than half (54%) of the Greens believe that at times it pays to refrain from expressing controversial views in order to settle at least moderate matters; the rest do not share this opinion.

## Key postulates

Amongst the postulates indicated by the respondents as most important in the Greens 2004 programme,<sup>2</sup> three major groups can be identified:

- ecology and sustainable development, including green economy, ecological tax reform and green jobs — 2004: 80% of indications, 2006: 73%;
- respect for diversity and rights of minorities, mainly sexual ones (supporting tolerance and introducing civil partnerships) — 75% and 60% respectively;
- women's rights (in particular the right of abortion and the problem of equal status) — 52% and 40%.

The following topics were also mentioned, albeit with much less frequency:

- strengthening democracy, building civil society;
- individual freedom, working to extend and respect civil rights and freedoms;
- social market economy, lessening economic differences between people, solidarity with the poor, expanding the social sphere of the state;
- world view neutrality of the state;
- pacifism.

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<sup>2</sup>Question used in the 2004 and 2006 surveys: "Name the three programme postulates of Greens 2004 that are of most importance to you."

To find out what concrete postulates the Greens see as an implementation of these rather general ideas, and also how they envision adapting them to the Polish law, I asked the congress delegates what bills they would bring in first in the event of the party gaining seats in the Sejm<sup>3</sup>. The most frequently mentioned projects were related to such areas as ecology, situation of women and sexual minorities, world view neutrality of the state, and taxes. Specifically, they included:

- ♦ ecological bills, including the green tax reform, a bill on implementing sustainable development, an alternative energy and transport source bill, ban on factory animal farming, a renewable energy bill, an amendment to the environmental protection act (putting a value on environment), a biofuel bill;
- ♦ bills regulating women's situation — mostly the anti-abortion bill; only two respondents offered other suggestions: a bill on equality of the sexes and a bill introducing gender parity in politics;
- ♦ introducing registered civil partnerships / legalising cohabitation;
- ♦ bills maintaining world view neutrality of the state, e.g., on secularity of schools and the state, termination of the concordat (the most popular postulate in this group), cancelling church subsidies, a bill changing regulation on insulting religious beliefs, withdrawing religion lessons from schools;
- ♦ tax bills aimed at equalisation of wages, e.g. setting minimal salary at 50 per cent of national average.

Single suggestions were also offered regarding: increasing education spending and access; withdrawing troops from Iraq; drafting a bill against violence and fascism; amending the radio and television act; depenalising drugs; a registration of residence bill; an emergency medical services bill; changing the electoral system.

To recapitulate, it appears that most of these postulates are present and strongly articulated in the party's programme. The only group of indications that is not as clearly present in the official messages of the party is, in my opinion, the "anti-clerical option," focused on achieving neutrality of the state in religious matters and diminishing the dominant position of the Catholic Church by cancelling the legal regulations that it benefits from. Greens 2004, of whom 95 per cent agree that the Church should not influence decisions of the rulers, raise the topic of laic state at internal debates rather than in statements of central organs.

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<sup>3</sup>The lower house of the Polish parliament.

In addition to the question regarding proposed bills, Greens 2004 also answered whether, should they gain a majority in the Parliament sufficient to make changes to the constitution, they would like to introduce any amendments. My intent here was to investigate whether the Greens' postulates are implementable in the current constitutional *status quo* or the reforms need to go further, reaching the very roots of the system. Almost half of the respondents suggested amendments to the constitution; however, many of those who did so hinted at their unnecessary (e.g., offering a proposal and at the same time stating that the constitution as it stands is good).

It seems that the statements of the surveyees were highly influenced by the then-ongoing (2006) discussion on changes of the constitution proposed by rightist parties (introducing provisions to protect life from conception). The parliamentary debate quickly spread to the press, and advocates of the left took the stance of defending the constitution in both cases. While the women's or LGBT circles would previously voice strong objections against the basic law (regarding, *inter alia*, too weak provisions against discrimination, notes on life protection or *invocatio dei* in the preamble), at that time it was widely praised for being a sound compromise. This situation could have discouraged many people from trying to change the constitution, as the changes would disrupt its persistence — one of the most common arguments of opponents of the right-proposed changes.

The suggestions of constitutional changes offered by Greens 2004 mostly touch on the same thematic areas as the proposed bills (except ecological postulates that were not present, most likely due to lack of controversial constitutional clauses in this matter). Some of the postulates are about modifying existing stipulations, while others introduce new legal regulations. Most common proposals include:

- changes for improving situation of homosexual people (legalising same-sex relationships, altering the legal definition of marriage (Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997), clarifying the ban on discrimination (Article 32) by augmenting it with preventing sex discrimination);
- changes for improving situation of women (absolute or conditional legalisation of abortion, adding proviso on life protection from birth);
- changes widening the range of citizen freedoms (removing the possibility of legally restricting freedom of citizens (Article 31), especially with respect to freedom of assembly and participation in assemblies (Article 57));
- changes for secularity of the state (stronger emphasis of world view neutrality of the state (Article 25), removing references to God (Preamble)).

The liberal nature of the party is confirmed to a certain extent by declarations of its members on the possibility of restricting freedoms and citizen rights or democratic procedures in exceptional circumstances, like terrorist threat, economic collapse, or peril of conflict (the 2006 survey). The majority of respondents only agreed on acceptability of increasing economic restrictions (including nationalising key sectors of economy — 64%; or tax increases — 55%).

Out of the other restrictions, the only ones enjoying some popularity were introducing faster procedures in courts (40%) and secret control over certain people (e.g., foreigners or members of anti-government associations). In contrast, most of the Greens would not agree to: limiting the competence of the Parliament, temporary suspension of certain citizen rights, or imposing death penalty on heaviest crimes (on average 25% of indications each). One quarter of the respondents agree that under some circumstances an authoritarian regime can be better than democracy (2010 survey) — this view is more common among members older than the average, living outside Warsaw and feeling relatively unempowered in the party. The Greens' views tend to be more libertarian than those of the Polish society in general; it is, however, worth stressing that these percentages are relatively high from the point of view of the programme as it is pro-democratic and places very strong emphasis on persistence of human and civil rights.

## Views of the party members

In the 2008 and 2010 surveys, by asking about opinions on specific political problems, I verified whether the declared pro-libertarian attitude of the surveyees corresponds to support for liberal solutions. I assumed that the replies would be more varied and less determined in the economic and political matters, thus most questions were examining this dimension.

Hierarchical analysis of the clusterings in responses revealed two distinct types of responses in two dimensions: world-view and economic. The first of these encompasses questions about strengthening women's political representation, introducing civil relationships and legalisation of drugs (thus all questions with average replies falling into the range of "moderately" or "strongly liberal"). The remaining issues belong to the economic dimension, with the Greens' attitude towards them averaging as "moderately social". Within this dimension, a gap between indications on the horizontal axis allows it to be further subdivided into two subdimensions:

1. associated with the tasks of the state (publicly funded health care, obligatoriness of social insurance, state subsidies to political parties);

- specifying attitude towards redistribution of wealth and relations between social groups with different levels of income (more duties for the rich, extending labour rights and strengthening trade unions), as well as the level of economic freedom (removing limits to free trade, state control over key branches of the economy, priority of environmental protection over expanding the transport network).

There exists a consensus among the party members with respect to the liberalism of world view, especially the matters prominently present in the party's programme. In the 2008 and 2010 surveys, most of the respondents supported such solutions as right to same-sex marriage, full right of women to terminate pregnancy and institutional warranties of equal participation of both sexes in the Sejm (with over 90 per cent agreeing<sup>4</sup>). However, the opinions on drug consumption and circulation were mixed, with a slight prevalence towards the liberal option (4:6). The supporters of liberalisation of anti-drug law were mostly young men.

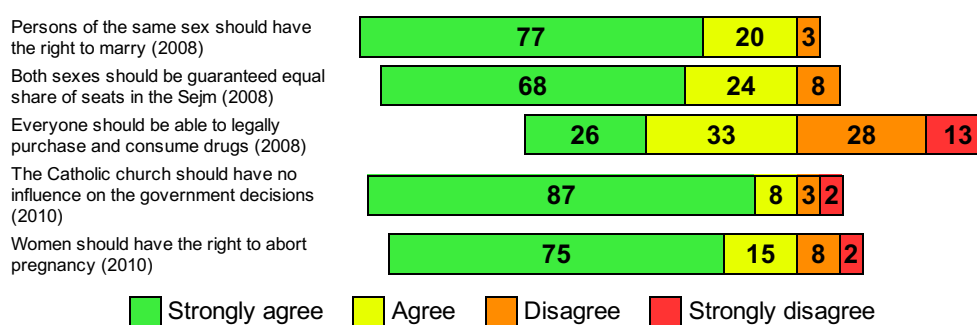


Figure 1: World views of Greens 2004

In economic matters, the Greens tend to adopt the social democratic stance. While the number of respondents favouring broad range of social security is only slightly higher (55%) than those opting for low taxes, as many as 80% support progressive tax system as opposed to flat tax rates (in the 2006 survey). Among the supporters of low taxes the numbers of proponents of linear and progressive systems are approximately equal; however, those who picked extensive welfare almost unanimously favoured the progressive tax. (In other words, all the proponents of flat tax rate support low taxes, while the opinions of supporters of a progressive system vary in this regard). The choice of tax type

<sup>4</sup>Of these, 20% and 30% respectively indicating "agreement" (mostly elder men), with the rest "strongly agreeing."

appears to be a matter of world view — there are no sociodemographic determinants for it in the examined group. However, 85% of the respondents endorse tax exemptions for entrepreneurs to create new jobs, even at the expense of decreasing benefit funds for the jobseekers.

In the 2010 survey, the Greens’ reactions were more socialist. Three quarters of the respondents opposed the statement that taxes in Poland were too high, while over 60 per cent maintained the view that the state should provide accommodation and board to anyone who cannot afford it. Even though opinions vary on the importance of equality versus freedom, according to a third of the Greens, competition is harmful and elicits the worst out of people. Moreover, only a little less respondents denied that the governance in the People’s Republic of Poland was very bad.

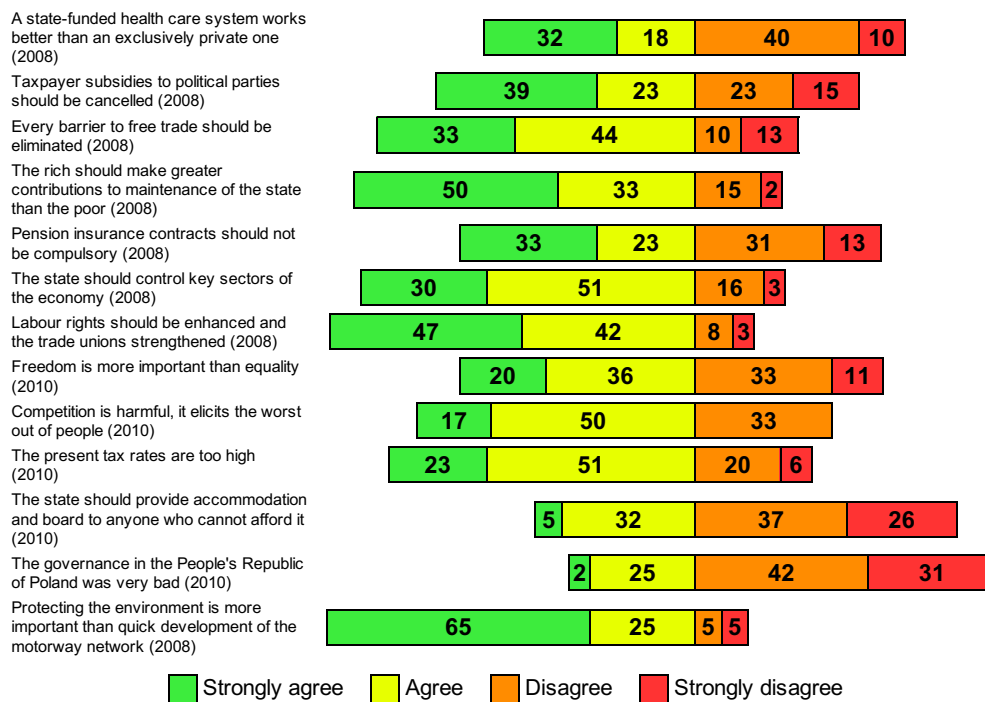


Figure 2: Economic views of Greens 2004

A significant majority of the Greens surveyed in 2008 (over three quarters) have opposed removing all barriers to free trade and granted to the state the right to maintain control over key sectors of the economy. Almost everyone agreed that the trade unions needed to be strengthened and the rights of workers enhanced. However, the members’

views were varied on such matters as privatising the health care or allowing to opt out of the pension system.

## **Conclusion**

The rather significant discrepancies observed between the respondents' replies to questions on ideologically close matters (e.g., opinions on the private/public model of the health care system and the pension system) may be accounted for by inconsistencies in the members' views or their lack of clarity. It seems, however, that apart from the issues that were not examined closely by Greens 2004 while editing the programme of the party (including privatisation of the pension system or subsidising the political parties), the surveyees' answers are reasonably in line with the ideology of Green Politics.

Owing to this lack of precision, there are several possible paths of further development of the programme. While maintaining the social nature of the state, thereby imposing on it redistributive tasks aimed at the poorer groups of people, the Greens can either support the model of a strong welfare state, with sophisticated and compulsory systems of social insurance, or a more free-market model, close to the ideas of new public management, in connection with a broad range of citizens' freedom in the economic sphere.



## Appendix: 2010 survey form<sup>5</sup>

1. How would you rate your ability to influence the activity of Greens 2004?
  - (a) Very high
  - (b) High
  - (c) Moderate
  - (d) Low
  - (e) Very low
  
2. In your opinion, have these elements improved, stayed the same, or worsened in the party over the last two years:

	improved	worsened	no change
programme			
organisation			
social support			
media presence			
circulation of information			
the party's activity in politics			
co-operation with other parties			

3. Would it be acceptable if the Greens modified their programme, putting especially strong emphasis on socially popular issues (e.g., fighting bribery), while stressing the controversial issues, like civil relationships, less?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) Only to a certain extent
  - (c) No
  
4. In your opinion, which social groups constitute the Greens' electorate?
 

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<sup>5</sup>The original was typeset so as to fit on a single sheet of A4 paper.

5. Do you think that the decision-making process of the Greens is transparent?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) Partially
  - (c) No
  
6. Is the presence of ecological postulates in the programmes of PiS or PO:
  - (a) a win for the Greens, because their ideology is spreading
  - (b) a loss for the Greens, because their ideas have been taken over
  
7. What is the greatest obstacle to the Greens' operation? (Pick a maximum of two answers.)
  - (a) Lack of funds
  - (b) Lack of members
  - (c) Internal splits and conflicts
  - (d) Unsuccessful leaders
  - (e) An incoherent programme
  - (f) Other: .....
  
8. Would you change anything in the Greens' way of functioning (the programme, party structure, methods of operating)?
 

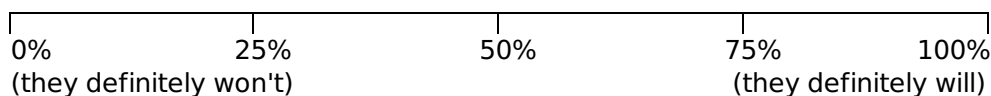
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9. Rate your attitude towards the following parties on a scale from 1 (strongly negative) to 5 (strongly positive). If you don't know a party or have no opinion on it, place a X mark.

Party	SLD	SdPI	PD	PO	PiS	SO	LPR	UP	PPS	PSL
Rate										



10. How do you estimate the chance of the Greens entering the Sejm or Senate within the upcoming two parliamentary elections? Mark it on a scale from 0 to 100 per cent.
11. In your opinion, what is the greatest limitation to increasing the social support for the Greens?  
.....  
.....  
.....
12. Which of the following goals should be implemented in Poland within the next 10 years? Please assign them numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) in the order of importance:
- (a) Maintaining social order
  - (b) Empowering people to influence the decisions of the authorities more strongly
  - (c) Preventing price increases
  - (d) Securing the right to speak one's mind openly
13. If the parliamentary election were to take place tomorrow, which party would you vote for?  
.....  
And whom would you vote if that party didn't nominate any candidates?  
.....
14. How should the Greens take part in the following upcoming elections:

	on their own	in coalition (with whom?)	support another party's candidate (which party?)	don't take part
Senate 2010				
Presidential 2010				
Local 2010				
Parliamentary 2011				

15. In your opinion, which parties or organisations are the greatest competition of Greens 2004?

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 .....  
 .....

16. Do you think that there exist internal splits and conflict among Greens 2004? If so, what are they caused by?

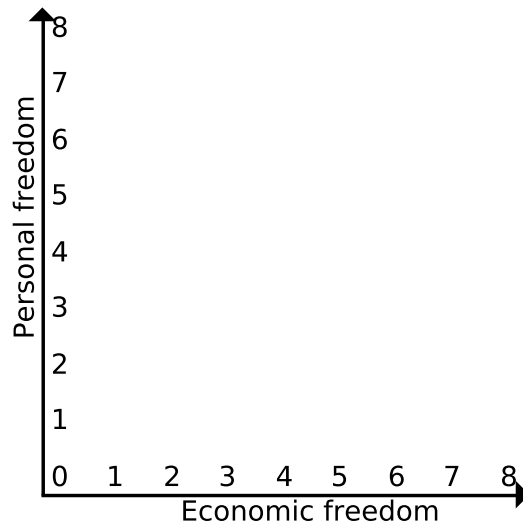
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17. Name the three most important cleavages that you think exist on the Polish political scene:

- (a) .....
- (b) .....
- (c) .....

18. Where would you place the following parties on the chart?

Greens 2004, SLD, SdPL, PD, PO, PiS, SO, LPR, UP, PPS, PSL



19. What should be the Greens' slogan in the upcoming parliamentary election?

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20. Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Catholic church should have no influence on the government decisions				
Freedom is more important than equality				
Competition is harmful, it elicits the worst out of people				
The present tax rates are too high				
Women should have the right to abort pregnancy				
The state should provide accommodation and board to anyone who cannot afford it				
The governance in the People's Republic of Poland was very bad				
There would be no Green party without new social movements				
Under some circumstances, an authoritarian regime can be better than democracy				

### Your data

- ♦ Age: ..... years
- ♦ Sex: (a) female, (b) male
- ♦ Local party branch: ..... (enter town)
- ♦ Place of residence:
  - (a) village
  - (b) town under 20,000 residents
  - (c) town 20,000–50,000 residents
  - (d) town 50,000–100,000 residents
  - (e) town 100,000–500,000 residents
  - (f) town over 500,000 residents
- ♦ Income per person in your family:
  - (a) below 1000 zł, (b) 1000–2500 zł, (c) above 2500 zł

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- Education: (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) higher
- Religiosity: (a) practicing believer, (b) non-practicing believer,  
(c) agnostic, (d) atheist

Thank you for your participation!

## References