

## European Greens welcome new party co-chairs

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News

Former Brussels government minister Evelyne Huytebroeck and Austrian Thomas Waitz have been elected as the new European Green Party co-chairs.



*Photo credit: European Greens*

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Huytebroeck and Waitz take over from long-serving Italian Monica Frassoni and Reinhard Bütikofer, a German MEP, who had reached the end of their term.

The move comes following a vote by delegates gathered in Tampere, Finland for the Greens bi-annual summit earlier this month.

Speaking after the vote, Huytebroeck said her election comes at a “critical time in our history.”

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"It is essential that we come together as Green parties across Europe to tackle climate destruction and biodiversity loss and build on our recent Green Wave successes. I will continue to work together with Green parties everywhere to strengthen our ties to civil society and support all those pushing for a real transformation of society that is both just and Green."

She added, "I have been engaged in Green politics in Belgium since the early 1980s at various levels, including as a government minister. My aim will be to build on this experience to support our elected officials and activists across Europe."

She served as co-chair of Belgium Green Party Ecolo between 2002-2004 and was a member of parliament for the Brussels regional assembly between 2014-2019.

Huytebroeck was also Minister for Energy, Environment and Social Affairs for a decade between 2004-2014.

"It is essential that we come together as Green parties across Europe to tackle climate destruction and biodiversity loss and build on our recent Green Wave successes" **Evelyne Huytebroeck**

Fellow new-elected co-chair Waitz said, "Both Evelyne and myself come from countries - Austria and Belgium - where the Green Wave has moved the general political discourse toward climate-friendly, sustainable and socially-just solutions."

"In the months ahead, we will work together with civil society and beyond ideological concerns so that we can help deliver concrete policies across Europe that secure proper living conditions for the next generation."

"We need to readjust our economy and way-of-life so that we can create a future that does not depend on the exploitation of people, our resources and nature."

Waitz added, "Through Europe-wide campaigning, we will strengthen the prospects of Green ideas and parties everywhere, especially in southern and eastern Europe. The daily needs and concerns of European citizens will always be our number one priority so that we can reach a critical mass of changemakers to turn the ship around towards a green future."

He recently completed his mandate as an MEP for the Austrian Green Party Die Grünen and holds a so-called 'Brexit seat' for the current mandate which means he would return to the European Parliament as an MEP if the UK leaves the EU.

Green parties from across Europe meeting in Tampere also pledged to build a “far-reaching campaign to transform climate emergency declarations into concrete action to speed up the process towards climate neutrality.”

Climate emergency declarations, the summit heard, have been issued by jurisdictions covering close to 300 million people. At the country level, these include the UK, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Canada and Argentina.

“The daily needs and concerns of European citizens will always be our number one priority so that we can reach a critical mass of changemakers to turn the ship around towards a green future” **Thomas Waitz**

Reacting to approval of the resolution, Waitz said Green parties from across Europe were urging governments at all levels to “not just declare a climate emergency but take concrete and substantial action.”

He added, “There is no longer any doubt that if we do not act now our very future is in peril. We must reach climate neutrality as soon as we can. In order to do this, we need to deliver concrete cross-sector solutions. All political actors together with the business world must now converge around this goal so we can attempt to preserve our planet for future generations.”

His comments come just ahead of the COP25 climate conference in mid-December which will now be held in Madrid.

Also speaking ahead of the keenly-awaited event, an environmental group has called for the EU to increase spending on so-called “climate finance.”

In 2018 the EU provided €21.7bn in climate finance to developing countries but Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe says this is only a “marginal” increase compared to €20.4bn in 2017 and €20.2bn in 2016.

Wendel Trio, its director, said, “EU climate finance is increasing far too slowly to meet the rapidly-growing needs of the poorest people in the world. On top of that, most of the money is diverted from existing development aid and adaptation remains sorely underfunded.”

“European countries continue to dodge their responsibility to empower developing countries to cut emissions and adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.”

Trio said many developing countries have recently committed to scale up their climate targets in 2020 but only if they receive the necessary financial support to do so.

“European countries have a number of opportunities ahead to step up and put money on the table, including COP25 in December. They can do so by doubling their previous contributions for the Green Climate Fund replenishment taking place at the moment.”

### **About the author**

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