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## Chapter 12. Green parties in government<sup>1</sup>

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Green parties' first forays into national governments did not augur well for their future beyond the threshold of cabinet participation. In Central and Eastern Europe, they participated in several short-lived transition governments in the early 1990s, only to be absorbed or marginalised as new party systems became established (Rihoux & Rüdig, 2006; Rüdig, 2006). In Western Europe, the Italian Greens' Francesco Rutelli was appointed as Minister for the Environment by Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi on 28 April 1993. One day later, Rutelli submitted his resignation (Pasquino & Vassalo, 1995, pp. 68–69; *Parlamento Italiano*, 2013).

Nevertheless, participation in government has become a central objective for Green parties and one that follows from their increased focus on using conventional means – especially parliamentary means – to achieve their goals. Since April 1995, when the Finnish Greens<sup>2</sup> first entered government, Green parties have joined governments in a range of European countries and with an increasing variety of coalition partners. Like their emergence onto the political scene (Müller-Rommel, 1985; Kitschelt, 1988; Hino, 2012, pp. 168–169), their participation in government is a crossnational development that has occurred over a relatively short period.

Despite crossing important developmental thresholds since their emergence, Green parties continue to constitute a coherent and distinctive set of parties in organisational and ideological terms. Many of their core characteristics can be linked to their origins in movement politics. Their policies on the environment, but also on a variety of other

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws on research carried out at the European University Institute in Florence for the author's PhD thesis (Little, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> For brevity and clarity, I generally use the terms 'Finnish Greens', 'Italian Greens', 'Flemish Greens', etc., rather than the parties' official names.

issues, remain both similar to one another and distinct from other parties (Burchell, 2002, pp. 151–154; Spoon, 2009, 2011; Carter, 2013). Their organisations are typically characterised by limited professionalization, collective or amateur leadership structures and formal equality among members, including through their participatory decision-making processes (Rihoux & Frankland, 2008, pp. 266–271).

Government presents a range of new challenges for these parties (Pedersen, 1982, pp. 6–8; Müller-Rommel, 2002, pp. 3–6; Deschouwer, 2008, pp. 3–4). Entering government juxtaposes their participatory structures and culture with the demands of confidential and sometimes rapid decision-making involving a wide variety of actors beyond the party’s members. On the other hand, it pitches their policy-oriented activists, seeking rapid change, against entrenched interests and slow-moving bureaucratic and legislative processes (Poguntke, 2002, pp. 142–143). The challenge of government is made all the more complex by the breadth of Green parties’ policy goals. They are not single-issue parties (see previous chapters) and therefore they must make difficult choices between such policy gains as are available across a wide range of policy fields. It is not surprising, then, that government has been a contentious issue within many Green parties and among their supporters.

This chapter provides a comparative overview of Green parties’ participation in national governments. Its scope is restricted in a number of respects. First, it focuses on stable parliamentary democracies, thus excluding those cases of Green party participation in transition governments in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, amongst others.<sup>3</sup> Second, it focuses on conventional Green parties,<sup>4</sup> thus excluding the Latvian Greens (see Auers, 2012), but including the Danish Socialist People’s Party (SF). Third, it includes only parties that received senior ministerial positions, thus excluding the case of the Slovak Greens, which held a junior ministerial position from 1998 to 2002; it also ignores the Italian Greens’ brush with government in 1993.

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<sup>3</sup> It uses Freedom House’s (2013) ‘Free’ status to identify stable democracies. It also excludes the case of the Mauritian Greens in government for lack of data.

<sup>4</sup> These are “parties with a predominantly ecological orientation that are or were recognised by or affiliated to the European Federation of Green Parties (since 2004: the European Green Party)” (Rihoux & Rüdiger, 2006, p. 7).

The chapter proceeds in a number of steps, addressing Laver and Schofield's (1990) key questions concerning government coalitions: 'Who gets in?', 'Who gets what?' and 'How long does it last?' First, it describes which Green parties have got into government, when, and in what circumstances. Second, it asks what they got in coalition: how many ministerial positions; which ministerial positions; and did they influence government policy? Third, it describes when and how their spells in government have ended. Going beyond these three issues, it asks, fourth, what has happened to them at and beyond the end of their time in government, with a particular focus on their post-incumbency election results. In each step, it describes the parties' outcomes and assesses the role of their distinctive characteristics in their experience of and success in government.

It shows that their time in government has indeed been challenging. This is evident in their limited gains in coalition bargaining, their relatively frequent defection from government coalitions and the electoral costs that they have paid at the end of their time in government. Nonetheless, this must be weighed against policy gains that have gone some way towards forwarding their agenda. Many of the most important factors that have determined their outcomes in government have been beyond their control. However, their typical characteristics – not least their difficulty in placing themselves centrally for the purpose of coalition bargaining, which is accentuated, in some cases, by their participatory organisations – may have compromised their capacity to attain more substantial outcomes.

### **Getting in**

Since 1995, ten Green parties have participated in national governments in nine countries. Green parties' participation in governments has occurred, approximately, in two waves: the first wave lasted from the late 1990s until the early 2000s and the second wave began in the late 2000s. Figure 1 identifies sixteen cases of Green parties in government, with several parties (in Finland, Italy, France and Germany) spending more than one spell in government.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As identified here, spells in government end when the party leaves government or when there is a general election. Some of the spells identified in Figure 1 encompass changes in the coalition's party composition and changes in prime minister (e.g., Italy

In two instances (the French Greens in 1997 and the Czech Greens in 2006-2007), Green parties' entry into government coincided with their crossing the threshold of representation in national parliament for the first time. Nonetheless, in almost all cases, the road to government was a long one. Among the ten parties that have entered government, the median time to doing so is 21 years after crossing the thresholds of declaration and authorisation and 18 years after crossing the threshold of representation (Müller-Rommel, 2002). Some Green parties (e.g., in Luxembourg and Belgium) had considerable parliamentary experience at the national level by the time they reached government and the German Greens, further, had several experiences in *Land* governments since the mid-1980s.

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1996-2001 and the Czech Republic 2007-2010), thus spanning several cabinets, as conventionally defined (Müller et al., 2008, p. 6).

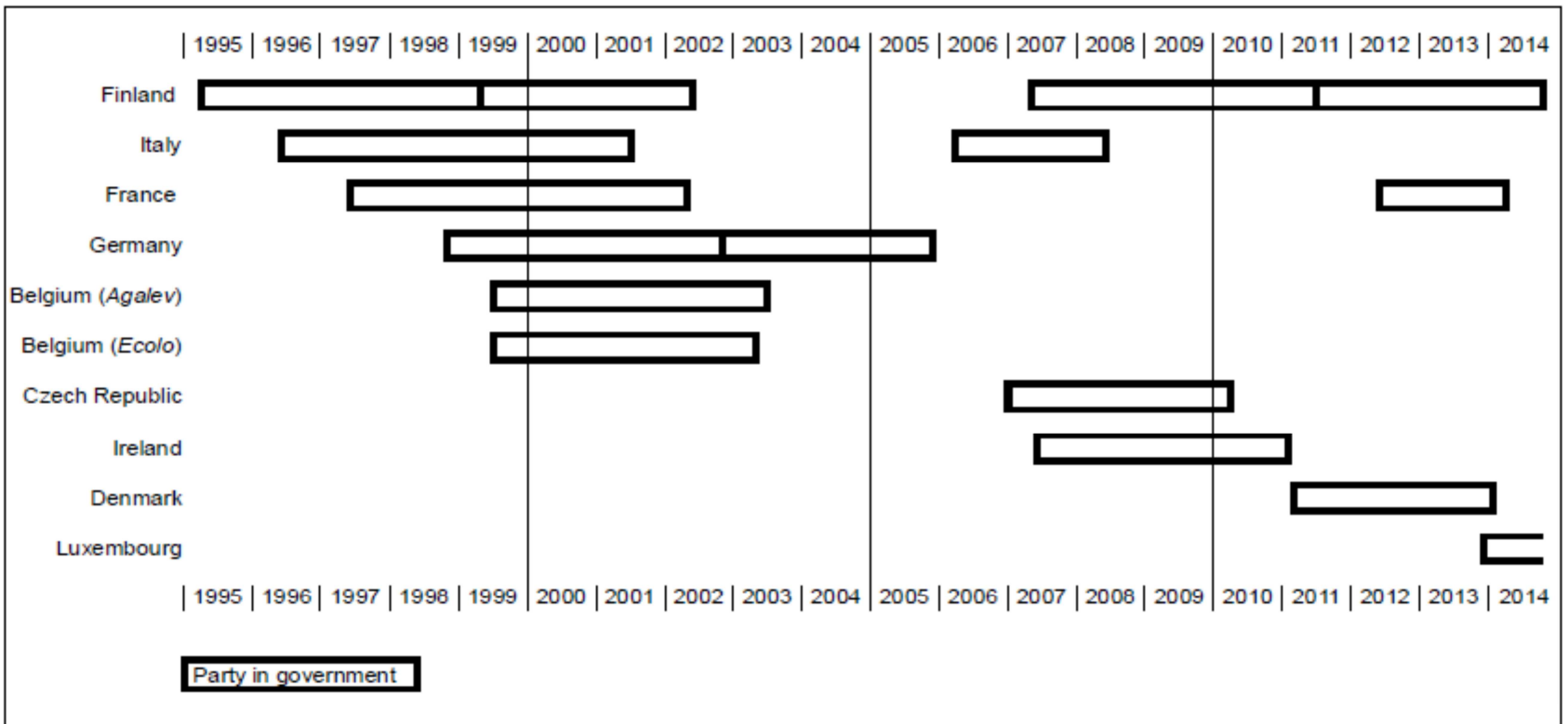


Figure 1. Green parties in national governments<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This chapter covers the period up to 20 September 2014.

Despite their oft-repeated aspiration to be neither left nor right (see previous chapters), Green parties have tended to enter government with parties of the centre-left. Several of these coalitions had their origins in electoral alliances that Green parties have joined in order to maximise their parliamentary representation. Some, like those formed in France and Italy, were formal electoral coalitions and appeared necessary if the party were to have any substantial parliamentary representation (Boy, 2002, p. 74; Biorcio, 2002, p. 59; Ignazi, 2007, p. 999), while others (e.g., in Germany) were less formal yet clearly benefited the Greens electorally (Poguntke, 2003, p. 962; Wüst & Roth, 2006, p. 455).

Recently, some novel government coalitions involving Green parties and the main party of the centre-right have emerged in a number of countries. 2007 was a significant year in this regard: the Czech Greens joined the Civic Democrats and Christian Democrats in government in January; the Finnish Greens joined the Centre Party, the Conservatives and the Swedish People's Party in government in April; and the Irish Greens joined the Fianna Fáil party and the Progressive Democrats in government in June. In 2011, the Finnish Greens renewed their coalition with the centre-right Conservatives, albeit with the Social Democrats and the Left Alliance taking the place of the Centre Party.

Several of the factors that have contributed to determining whether Green parties enter government or remain in opposition have been beyond these parties' control and are unrelated to their own electoral success (see also Dumont & Bäck, 2006). For example, the Austrian Greens have failed to enter federal government despite their relative electoral strength (Chapter 3) and the German Greens failed to enter government in 2009 despite unprecedented electoral success in a federal election (Chapter 5).

Typically, Green parties' accession to government has depended on the success of its putative coalition partners on the centre-left. The first wave of Green parties' participation in government in particular coincided with a period of dominance by the centre-left in European governments. Meanwhile, the Dutch Greens have failed to enter government due in part to a sustained centre-right majority (Chapter 6) and the Swedish Greens performed strongly in 2010, and would have been part of a Social Democrat-led coalition, had the larger party not performed so poorly (Chapter 7).

The comparison of Finland and Sweden in Chapter 7 further highlights the importance of different environments in determining the office-seeking success of two Green parties that have been relatively successful in electoral terms. The Swedish case illustrates the role of government formation rules (specifically, negative parliamentarism) in keeping the Swedish Greens out of cabinet in 1998 and 2002 (Aylott & Bergman, 2011) and this is lent further support by evidence from the case of the New Zealand Greens (Bale & Blomgren, 2008). It is notable too that for these support parties, it was not ‘power-shyness’ (Strøm, 1990) that determined the outcome: in each case, the party wanted to attain office but were successfully excluded by other parties (Little, 2014, pp. 115–116). However, excluding Green parties from government where possible is not the only goal of their potential coalition partners. In Finland in 1995, for example, the Social Democrats invited the Greens to join an already-large coalition in order that their electoral threat might be neutralised and the parliamentary opposition weakened (Jungar, 2011, pp. 141–142). Thus, their participation in government has depended on the strategy of larger parties.

There are also some factors rooted in Green parties’ own characteristics that have affected their capacity to accede to government. First, and most obviously, they are small parties. They have rarely exceeded 10% seat share in national parliaments. Second, and more particular to Green parties, they often find themselves ‘captive parties’ (Bale & Bergman, 2006, p. 193) with limited coalition options. In the presence of their participatory party organisations, their members’ antipathy to coalition with the centre-right has at times prevented them from joining such coalition or even from setting out an ‘open’ coalition strategy. This recalls the ‘captive’ position of the Swedish Greens in 2002 (Aylott & Bergman, 2011); the opposition of the Austrian Greens’ members to negotiating with the centre-right in 2002 (Chapter 3, above); and the Australian Greens’ failure to set out a credible ‘open’ coalition strategy in 2010, despite their leaders’ efforts to do so (Williams, 2011). Their ‘captivity’ is also supported by an electoral logic: as parties that have built their electoral bases to the left of centre, Green parties might quite reasonably fear losing electoral support if they enter government with the centre-right.

Nonetheless, they have recognised that their lack of potential pivotality may be a weakness and have expended some effort on opening up their coalition options in the medium-term. Green parties have entered a variety of cooperative arrangements short

of government coalition with the centre-right, including in New Zealand in 2009 on home insulation and energy efficiency, in Sweden in 2010 on immigration (Chapter 7, above) and in the Netherlands in 2012 on a wider range of budgetary issues (Chapter 6). Subnational government has been the site of a wider variety of innovative coalitions than national government: the Walloon Greens participated in the ‘olive tree’ coalition with the Christian Democrats in 2004; the Austrian Greens have governed with both major parties; and the German Greens have been in government with the centre-right in Hamburg and Saarland, for example (see country chapters). However, most Green parties are yet to credibly stake out a potentially pivotal position in their national party systems.

### **Getting office, getting policy**

How successful have Green parties been in securing office and policy in government coalitions? A first and crucial indicator of a party’s success in government how much ministerial office it attains. While all Green parties that have participated in government have been junior partners, the number and share of ministerial positions that they have received has varied significantly. In half of the sixteen cases identified in Figure 1, they received one ministerial position upon entering government. On other occasions, they have received between two and four positions, while in one case (the Danish SF in 2011) they received six. Their share of senior ministerial positions has ranged from 3.7% in Italy in 2006 to over one quarter of senior ministerial positions in Denmark in 2011.

Have these parties punched above their weight? A well-established observation in the literature is that of proportionality in portfolio allocation: parties tend to receive ministerial office proportional to their contribution to the cabinet coalition. A second observation from that literature is that of small party bias: small parties tend to get more ministerial office than is their due under a strict proportionality rule (Browne & Franklin, 1973; Warwick & Druckman, 2006). On the basis of these observations, we might expect Green parties to be compensated at least proportionally, if not more generously.

On average, Green parties in government have received a greater-than-proportional outcome. Their mean allocation of ministerial positions is two percentage points (pp.)



greater than their (lower house) seat contribution to the cabinet coalition (e.g., a party contributing 13% of the coalition's seats receives 15% of the ministerial positions, on average). However, this mean overcompensation is driven by a small number of cases (esp. the Czech and Danish cases) and therefore the median Green party's outcome is almost exactly proportional. Moreover, Green parties' overcompensation is substantially less than comparable parties of a similar size (mean = +4.2 pp.; median = +3.7 pp.).<sup>7</sup>

A second aspect of the allocation of ministerial office to Green parties is the kind of ministerial positions that they have been allocated. In thirteen of the sixteen cases examined here, Green parties were allocated the environment portfolio. Only in the cases of the Walloon Greens in Belgium in 1999 (when the Flemish Greens got the environment portfolio), the Finnish Greens in 2007 and the French Greens in 2012 did they not receive that portfolio. Among party families, the regularity with which they have been allocated this portfolio (81% of the time) is exceptional (cf. Browne & Feste, 1975; Budge & Keman, 1990). A similar pattern appears to pertain at subnational level (see esp. Table 5.5, Chapter 5, above). Other portfolios allocated to Green parties often (although not always) appear to complement their core policy agenda. These have included energy, consumer protection and transport.

One explanation for the regularity with which Green parties are allocated the environment portfolio is, no doubt, Green parties' policy goals and the possibilities for realising these goals that the environment ministry affords them (Bäck et al., 2011). These preferences are evident from their election manifestos (Carter, 2013) and from the details of individual cases: the Finnish Greens, for example, were disappointed not to receive the environment portfolio in 2007 (personal information). Another potentially complementary explanation is their coalition partners' lack of interest in environmental issues (Falcó-Gimeno, 2014). In at least one case (the French Greens in 1997), there is evidence of the unilateral allocation of the

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<sup>7</sup> The data referred to in this paragraph do not include the recent Luxembourgish case, which had a roughly proportional outcome (contribution = 19% of the cabinet parties' seats; allocation = 20% of senior ministerial positions). Relative to their size, Green parties were overcompensated by a factor of 1.31, while other small parties were overcompensated by a factor of 1.67. The data for the comparison with other small parties refer to 240 small ( $\leq 9\%$  seat share) parties in government, drawn from Warwick and Druckman's (2006) data. See Little (2014, Ch. 2) for details.

environment ministry to the Greens by their main coalition partner without their being allowed to express a preference for other portfolios (Evrard, 2012, p. 284).

A further factor that surely narrows the range of potential ministerial positions for Green parties is their lack of bargaining power in coalition. This forecloses the possibility of attaining the most weighty ministerial positions. Accordingly, in none of the cases examined here have Green parties held a prime ministerial position or the position of finance minister and they have only occasionally held the position of Deputy Prime Minister (e.g., Germany and the Walloon Greens in Belgium) and the foreign ministry (e.g., Germany, the Czech Republic and Denmark).

A third aspect of coalition payoffs – policy influence – is arguably the most important for Green parties as policy-oriented parties. Have Green parties in government influenced government policy? While policy outputs are difficult to measure and while they are the products of diverse factors, there is evidence for three general observations with regard to the policy influence of Green parties in government.

The first is that Green parties in government have indeed influenced government policy. Some evidence for this observation comes from comparative crossnational research on the influence of Green parties' presence in government on national environmental policy (Jensen & Spoon, 2011; cf. Knill et al., 2010). Further evidence – also from beyond the environmental policy field – comes from comparative case studies, which identify Green parties' contributions to influencing policy outputs (Poguntke, 2002, pp. 139–141; Evrard, 2012) and single case studies (e.g., Biorcio, 2002). Through their role in national governments, Green parties in government have also influenced policy at EU level (Bomberg & Carter, 2006). Even in cases of small Green parties in a weak bargaining position, such as the Italian Greens in each of their government coalitions, they influenced policy, including by working with like-minded groups within larger parties (interviews<sup>8</sup>).

The second observation is that these policy gains have been limited. This is not surprising, given Green parties' small size and typically weak bargaining position.

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<sup>8</sup> These interviews with current and former members of Italian political parties, the trade union movement and environmental NGOs were carried out by the author in 2014 in the framework of the ESRC-funded *Climate Change and Political Parties* project.

Significant compromises are inevitable for these parties. The case of nuclear power, described in several of the previous chapters and highlighted in previous studies as a bellwether of Green party influence (Poguntke, 2002), is illustrative of the limits of that influence. The first Red-Green coalition in Germany achieved agreement to close nuclear power plants, but only in the medium term (Chapter 5); in the short term they had to oversee controversial nuclear waste transports. In France, the Greens' influence on nuclear energy policy was severely limited in their first spell in government (Evrard, 2012). In 2012, the French Greens achieved an agreement not to build new nuclear power plants and to close a number of reactors by 2025, but failed to reach agreement concerning a new third-generation reactor under construction in Normandy (Chapter 4). The limits of the Finnish Greens' influence on nuclear policy while in government have been exposed several times, including when the government pressed ahead with plans to build Finland's fifth nuclear power plant in 2002, when they agreed to build a sixth plant in 2010 and when they issued a licence for building the sixth plant in 2014. In 2002 and 2014, the Greens responded by leaving government. The long-term and path-dependent nature of these large infrastructure projects also highlights a further limitation on Green parties' influence: their role in government has typically been transitory and this can make it difficult to influence policies in the medium-term.

The third observation concerning Green parties' policy influence is that, within these limitations, Green parties' policy gains have varied. Evrard's (2012) comparative case study of the French and German Greens shows how their influence has varied across parties and how, along with national institutions, their professionalization, the extent to which they were embedded in policy networks and their prioritization of policy issues have contributed to determining their level of influence. Green parties' influence has also varied across policy areas and types (Poguntke, 2002) and over time within their spells in government. Biorcio's (2002) study of the Italian Greens' first spell in government (1996-2001) shows how the party's policy influence waned with changing political and economic conditions. The case of the Irish Greens, too, illustrates how the party's deteriorating opinion poll standing and the onset of a severe economic recession weakened the party's bargaining position (despite it being increasingly necessary for the continuation of the coalition) and the government's capacity for policymaking (Little, 2011).

As with their accession to government, Greens parties' office and policy payoffs have often depended on circumstances beyond their control. However, as in that case, it is likely that their small size and their typical inability to pivot right and left to form alternative coalitions weakened their bargaining position. One further factor that has influenced their policy payoffs in individual cases is internal dissent and division, culminating at times in leaving government early, with negative consequences for the party's policy payoffs. It is to this outcome – and to their duration in government more generally – that we next turn.

### Getting out

All spells in government come to an end, but the timing and manner of this ending varies. As relatively inexperienced, policy-driven, internally democratic, small parties that risk heavy electoral punishment after being in government, Green parties are expected by some to be unreliable coalition partners (Brancati, 2005 fn.3; Gahrton & Aylward, 2010, p. 17). Their inexperience may lead them to make poor decisions, including exiting government; their policy-driven nature may mean that they are less attached to office *per se* than other parties; their internally democratic nature increases the pressures on party elites from policy-oriented activists; and their small size makes them more sensitive to potential electoral losses (Bolleyer, 2008), which may have existential consequences. If this is the case, they may be more likely to defect from government and this may, in turn, cause political instability.

**Table 1. The duration of Green parties' spells in government and how they ended**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Time in government (years)</b>	<b>How the party's time in government ended*</b>	<b>Electoral result (pct. pt. vote share gain/loss)</b>
Finland, 1995-1999	4.0	Election	+0.8
Italy, 1996-2001	5.1	Election	-0.3
France, 1997-2002	4.9	Election	+0.8
Germany, 1998-2002	4.0	Election	+1.9
Finland, 1999-2002	3.1	Defection	+0.7
Belgium ( <i>Agalev</i> ), 1999-2003	4.0	Election	-4.5**
Belgium ( <i>Ecolo</i> ), 1999-2003	3.8	Defection	-4.2
Germany, 2002-2005	3.1	Early election	-0.5
Italy, 2006-2008	2.0	Early election	-1.4**
Czech Republic, 2007-2010	3.2	Defection	-3.9**
Finland, 2007-2011	4.1	Election	-1.2
Ireland, 2007-2011	3.6	Defection	-2.9**
Denmark, 2011-2014	2.3	Defection	NA
Finland, 2011-2014	3.2	Defection	NA
France, 2012-2014	1.8	Defection	NA

\* 'Election' = scheduled election at the end of the legislative term.

\*\* Party lost all seats in parliament.

NA: Post-incumbency elections have yet to take place.

Sources: Döring and Manow (2012); EJPR data yearbooks; IPU (2013); various media outlets for recent (2014) events.

Have these expectations been borne out? In the fifteen completed cases that are detailed in Table 1, Green parties spent an average of three and a half years in government. In six cases, Green parties remained in government until scheduled, obligatory elections at the end of the legislative term, which was either four (Finland, Germany, Belgium) or five (Italy, France) years long. These elections occurred in Finland (1999 and 2011), Italy (2001), France (2002), Germany (2002) and Belgium (2003 for the Flemish Greens, *Agalev*). In two cases, early elections were precipitated by factors beyond the influence of the Green parties: once in Germany in 2005, when Chancellor Schroder called an early election due to increasing political competition within and beyond his party and declining prospects for his coalition in parliament and once in Italy in 2008, when Romano Prodi's government lost its majority in parliament.

On seven occasions, Green parties have withdrawn from government. This is a high rate of defection compared to the wider population of parties in government (Tavits, 2008, p. 499). In several recent instances, defection appears to have substantially shortened the party's time in government. The Danish SF left the Thorning-Schmidt government in January 2014, after little over two years, over the partial sale of a state-owned energy company to Goldman Sachs, which had given rise to intense conflict within the party. The French Greens left government in March 2014 due to the replacement of Prime Minister Ayrault with the right-leaning Prime Minister Valls. Uniquely, the Finnish Greens have twice defected over the government's nuclear power plans: once from a Social Democrat-led coalition in 2002 and once from a Conservative-led coalition in 2014. On both occasions, they did so several months in advance of the next scheduled general election.

However, other defections have taken place in the shadow of an imminent election and have therefore only slightly shortened the Greens' time in government. The Walloon Greens *Ecolo* left government less than two weeks before the 2003 elections, citing the issue of night flights over Brussels (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 152). The Czech Greens left government in March 2010, less than two months before scheduled elections, citing disagreement on energy policy and the Pruněřov coal-fired power plant in particular (Hanley, 2013, pp. 10–11). The only Green party defection to precipitate an election to date was that of the Irish Greens, which left government in early 2011 citing a breakdown of trust within the coalition and the need for an

election following the intervention of the EU and IMF in the country's economic affairs in late 2010. However, it was very likely that an early election would take place soon in any case as the coalition was steadily losing the support of MPs.

Thus, while Green parties have left government early almost half of the time, this has not generally caused wider political instability. Nor, in several cases, have they substantially shortened their own time in office, as they defected in the shadow of an imminent or very likely election. Finally, some of these parties continued to support the policies and even the survival of the government after defecting. Examples include the Danish SF and, for a short period in early 2011, the Irish Greens.

Clearly, external factors such as the timing of obligatory elections and the calling of early elections have played an important role in directly determining how long Green parties remain in government. However, in cases of defection, internal factors have also played a role. First, the strong policy-orientation of these parties is frequently reflected in the reasons given for leaving government. In particular, the prevalence of energy policy as a reason for leaving government (in Denmark, the Czech Republic and twice in Finland) is notable. Second, features of their party organisations and leaderships have played a role, at times, in constraining the party to quit government (e.g., in Denmark in 2014), consistent with Warwick's (2012, p. 279) suggestion that organisational cohesion or responding to activists may play a role in defection decisions. However, the relationship between Greens' participatory organisations or collective leadership styles and their duration in government is not a simple one. In the case of the Irish Greens, for example, it seems that defection was delayed precisely due to a culture of collective decision-making within the parliamentary party (Boyle, 2012).

### **Getting punished?**

If proportional portfolio allocation is one rule of coalition government, then post-incumbency electoral punishment is another. Green parties might expect to receive even worse results than other parties in government, as small, newly-governing parties and anti-establishment parties incur a greater cost than other parties (Font, 2001; Buelens & Hino, 2008; Van Spanje, 2011). Moreover, they began to join governments at a time when the electoral cost of government was high and rising

(Narud & Valen, 2008, pp. 380–381) and, in more recent years, the economic crisis has contributed to further electoral volatility.

There are twelve cases in which Green parties have faced the electorate after being in government (Table 1). Their outcomes have ranged from heavy losses (-4.5 pp. vote share) to modest gains (+1.9 pp.). Overall, their results have been decidedly negative. They have lost vote share on average (-1.2 pp.) and more often than not (on eight occasions of twelve; median = -0.9pp.) In four cases, they have been sent back over the threshold of representation, losing all of their seats in parliament. At the same time, these losses are comparable to other new or anti-establishment parties in government. Indeed, it seems that they have not been punished as badly, on average, as these parties (Buelens & Hino, 2008; Van Spanje, 2011).

Part of Green parties' post-incumbency losses can be accounted for by the fact that, like other parties, they often enter government on the back of electoral gains. These gains are hard to consolidate, as new voters are weakly habituated to voting for the party (Butler & Stokes, 1969, pp. 55–58; Gomez, 2012, Ch.3; Little, 2014, Ch.4). The cases of the Green parties in Belgium are illustrative: they contested their pre-incumbency election in the context of public concern regarding dioxins in the food chain in 1999. While this is an extreme case of vote gains that were likely to be unsustainable, it is not an isolated case. Of the seven Green parties that have entered government on the back of electoral gains, only one (the unusual case of the Finnish Greens in 2003) made further gains at the post-incumbency election.

Another explanation may be that the balancing act between loyalty and distance from government (Poguntke, 2002, pp. 143–144; Rüdiger, 2006) is too difficult to sustain, in many cases. As compromise on many issues is inevitable, supporters of a policy-oriented junior partner will be disappointed more often than not. This may be aggravated in cases where Green parties enter government with partners that are distant from their policy preferences, and especially if they leave a major electoral rival in opposition who can offer an alternative to Green party voters. This scenario appears to correspond to some particularly poor results (e.g., in Ireland in 2011; in Finland in 2011; and, to some extent, in the Czech Republic in 2010).

To date, Green parties that have defected from government have not done well at their post-incumbency election. This reflects the fact that these parties – in Belgium



(*Agalev*), the Czech Republic and Ireland – have generally defected with very poor electoral prospects. The exception in this regard is the Finnish Greens' defection in 2002, which took place well in advance of the next scheduled election, when the party had positive electoral prospects and over a policy disagreement that was easily comprehensible to voters. They ultimately gained votes. The results of coming general elections in Finland, France and Denmark will provide more data on the electoral results of comparable cases.

Thus, while earlier studies could observe that Green parties' post-incumbency electoral outcomes were relatively positive (Buelens & Hino, 2008) and that very few Green parties (and no Green parties in government) had been pushed back over the threshold of representation (Müller-Rommel, 2002, p. 5), these observations have, to a great extent, been overtaken by events. The cost of governing for these parties, while not invariable, is clear. Once Green parties have chosen to enter government, their electoral fate is often decided by forces beyond their control.

## **Conclusion**

Green parties' participation in government continues to pose new challenges for these parties. In facing the choice of joining government or remaining in opposition, they face a trade-off between coalition bargaining goals (office and policy) and electoral goals. Reconciling the compromises inherent in being a junior coalition partner with their policy-oriented support base, which is in turn empowered by their participatory organisational forms, is clearly difficult. Their bargaining power, further, is typically constrained at every stage of the process by the organisational and electoral costs of seeking to occupy a central position in their party systems. These features can be traced back to their origins in new social movements and more broadly to their core policy goals, which have tended to survive strategic and developmental changes. On the other hand, Green parties' 'rootedness' has been important for aspects of Green parties' success before (Bolleyer & Bytzek, 2013) and during government (Evrard, 2012). The costs of governmental participation have been high, while the policy gains have been variable, and are more difficult to quantify. Further to the difficulties that they face due to their own characteristics, as small parties they are often subject to the

institutions, political configurations and economic developments that are beyond their control.

However, the picture is not all bleak for Green parties that seek to influence policy from inside government. Contrary to Mair's (2001, p. 107, p.111) prediction that government would spell the end of Green party growth, Green parties have, with few exceptions (e.g., in Italy), both recovered and continued to grow electorally, even after post-incumbency setbacks. Some have returned to regional and national government. Even in Belgium, where both Green parties suffered crushing electoral defeats in 2003, they rejoined regional governments six years later. Their participation in government – and there is little sign that they are deviating from that goal – is becoming a standard feature of many parliamentary democracies, just as their representation in parliament did in earlier years.

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