

Manifesto for a Sustainable Europe for its Citizens

THE NEED FOR ACTION

The foundation of the European Union is one of the most impressive peace projects in modern history. A region was created proclaiming human dignity, respect for human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its core values.

Along with maintaining lasting peace among its members, the EU also brought cleaner rivers, protection against chemical pollution, parental leave, quality education and free movement within the Schengen region.

Despite the European Union's great legacy and mission, the response of European decision makers' to the financial crisis, to combating climate change and environmental degradation, to halting growing inequality and undermining women's rights, to scandals such as those in our food system and Dieselgate, and to increased migration by closing our borders to those in need, have unfortunately run contrary to the core values of the EU and have walked back some of the historical gains we fought for.

People feel that the economic and financial interests of the wealthy are prioritised over the common good. We are confronted with the impacts of austerity - growing poverty and inequalities, deteriorating access to healthcare and increasing (youth) unemployment - while large companies are allowed to refuse to pay fair taxes. Urgent problems go unsolved, such as the climate crisis and air pollution, which kills hundreds of thousands of people. In short, people in Europe are being left behind and not everyone shares in the benefits of the Union.

Furthermore, as the European Union we have so far been unable to develop a common and human response to movements of migrants and refugees. Respect for their human rights is not ensured. We also see that the space for civil society and trade unions to act in defence of fundamental rights, freedoms and environmental protection is shrinking across many countries in Europe.

In this context, many Europeans feel frustrated and have lost trust in the capacity of EU institutions to respond to their needs. The growing support for nationalist and xenophobic political forces across Europe is a worrying indicator of this discontent and a severe threat to democracy and our core values.

Another Europe is possible!

Recognising the challenges of the current situation in Europe, we, as citizens, should not limit ourselves in the debates on the Future of Europe to the question: '*Do you want more or less Europe?*' but focus on our needs for the future and our rights. The key question is: '*What kind of Europe do we want?*'.

That is why (200+) civil society organisations all around Europe are uniting to bring people together to discuss the "Europe we want", and to put this on the agenda of the forthcoming European Parliament elections. We believe strongly in a European project based on Europe's core ethical values and sustainable development: democracy and transparency, social and environmental justice, human rights, the rule of law, equality, and solidarity. Those values must be at the heart of all policies. This means fundamental changes from today. We want European policies, rules and standards that do what they were intended for: protect and safeguard well-being and health, ensure safety and freedom for people and protection of the climate and the environment. We want policies that support and serve present and future generations in and outside Europe.

THE ROAD TO ACHIEVE THE EUROPE WE WANT

To regain public trust, the European Parliament, the European Commission and Member State governments need to prioritise the following key issues on the agenda for the coming debates for the European Parliament elections, the new Commission and the Future of Europe.

1. **PUTTING EUROPE IN THE HANDS OF PEOPLE** - New and effective civil society participation and active citizenship must be prioritised to improve democracy (including at the workplace), transparency, access to fundamental rights for all and trust of EU citizens in building a just and sustainable Europe. Youth and children should be engaged as active citizens and encouraged to meaningfully participate in European political processes. Measures should be taken to ensure increased accountability and transparency of decision making by EU institutions and national governments. Citizens and civil society interests must be prioritised over vested financial and commercial interests. Citizenship education and the promotion of critical thinking should empower people to better participate in public debates.
2. **EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS** - Public policies and legislative measures should ensure that, in line with European and international human rights law, all European citizens and residents enjoy the same level of protection and can exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms, allowing them to live according to their own convictions under the principles of self-determination and human dignity, free from discrimination. The EU must improve its policies and actions to ensure gender equality, in addition to guaranteeing that all people facing multiple discrimination have equal opportunities in society.
3. **A STRONG SOCIAL EUROPE** – The European Social Model should provide full and fair protection to all citizens, while alleviating poverty and providing opportunities for everyone to thrive. Decent incomes should narrow the gap between the wealthy and disadvantaged and ensure quality living . Everyone should benefit from decent work standards, equality, improved wellbeing and decreased health disparities within and between countries and across generations. Social inclusion and protection, decent work, gender equality, public health and health care, access to affordable and quality housing, environmental justice, quality education and equal access to culture, must be the main principles driving national and European political agendas.
4. **AMBITIOUS CLIMATE ACTION** – The Paris Agreement should be fully implemented and reflected in the alignment of the EU's emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2050 with the commitment to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C and through ambitious EU climate policies, including a rapid phase-out of all fossil fuels, and moving from energy efficiency towards an absolute decrease of energy use. The EU should accelerate the just and sustainable transition to a 100% renewable energy supply, which is clean, affordable and supports community ownership and does not lead to energy poverty.
5. **ROBUST MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES** - Common standards should be set up and enforced to deliver clean air and water, and safe and healthy food. Ambitious measures must be implemented to stop deforestation and biodiversity loss in Europe and globally, and to end the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, including from the Global South. Measures should be taken to bring European consumption levels in line with the Earth's capacity to produce including through implementing sufficiency strategies.

6. **SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS** – Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is imperative to produce healthier food and give fair prices for the European small scale and organic farmers. This should mean more environmental and nature protection, increased food sovereignty, regional farmers' markets, healthier food systems, less food waste and the halting of dumping in the Global South. The EU should prioritise the transition towards organic, small scale agriculture, and reforestation as key measures for fighting climate change.
7. **FAIR TAXATION** - Effective and coordinated taxation measures should ensure that all companies pay their fair share of taxes and contribute to national and European public budgets for access to socio-economic rights and wellbeing. The EU must commit to effectively fight tax evasion worldwide and shut down European tax havens.
8. **A FAIR-TRADE AGENDA** - International trade should be seen as a means to the efficient distribution of goods and services, respecting social and environmental objectives. Trade agreements should benefit people, workers and small producers and cannot be seen as tools solely in the interest of multinational companies and investors. This should guarantee, for instance, decent work and better social protection. Trade and investment agreements must be designed primarily to advance wellbeing and the public interest, instead of cost and burden reduction for companies. Existing VIP rights for investors and corporate courts should be abolished.
9. **THE EU'S ROLE IN THE WORLD** - The EU has a key responsibility to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EU must ensure that all its internal and external policies are coherent and aligned with the SDGs. EU Overseas Development Aid should prioritise those most in need including Least Developed Countries and benefits the most marginalised. The EU must restructure its investments to achieve sustainability, poverty eradication and make universal access to fundamental rights a reality worldwide. The EU should actively support legally binding European and international human rights obligations for its businesses that operate overseas, including push for a UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights.
10. **A PEOPLE-CENTRED RESPONSE TO MIGRATION** - Europe should assume a leading role in ensuring a human response to global migration, for the benefit and protection of all those involved. Asylum seekers should be welcomed in Europe and treated in the spirit of the UN Refugee Conventions .
11. **NEEDS-DRIVEN & RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH** - EU investments should deliver returns for the public good and address societal challenges. Research that is prioritised and funded today should have a decisive impact on the future of our societies and our planet. Our research should make Europe and the world environmentally sustainable, peaceful and healthy place to live. Preference must no longer be given to military budgets and business priorities. EU Research should be democratic, for public profit, localised and respect planetary boundaries which means a move away from high-growth, profit for the few, resource-intensive economic models.
12. **A PEOPLE CENTRED EU BUDGET** - The EU Budget should use its potential to catalyse sustainability and economic justice and wellbeing, through investment in social infrastructure, education, culture, and climate action. This includes phasing out unsustainable investments and subsidies as well as strengthening accountability mechanisms. In other words, it should be a budget made for and with people and the planet.