

C4new6 Climate Emergency: We Can't Just Stop at Declarations!

Proposer: FYEG Executive Committee
Resolution date: 07/17/2019
Agenda item: 2 Resolutions

Text

1 By the summer of 2019, more than 790 local councils across the globe as well as
2 the governments of the Republic of Ireland and the UK have issued a declaration
3 of climate emergency. Carried forward by the increasing awareness of the climate
4 crisis, we can expect that the movement demanding similar declarations will grow
5 in the coming years. While we in principle welcome these developments for
6 providing an accurate label of the situation and a concrete frame for taking
7 action, we believe they also raise several questions. We believe that for the
8 concept of climate emergency to prove successful, the climate movement needs to
9 work intensively towards specifying the demands for measures which should follow
10 any climate emergency declaration.

11 We realize and acknowledge that campaigns surrounding declarations of climate
12 emergency present a window of opportunity to raise the urgency of the issue, as
13 well as a new frame for radical action. The strength of the concept of climate
14 emergency is self-evident. It is a more than an accurate description of the
15 state of crisis our societies are facing. Many activists across Europe and
16 world-wide have been pushing for climate emergency declarations since 2016 and
17 even more so in the last year. The concept seems to be getting new people
18 excited and attracted to the movement, in particular as the target - the local
19 governments - seem easy to reach and the goal - a declaration - concrete enough
20 to achieve even in the short-term. Climate emergency is thus providing the
21 movement with a new stimulus and perhaps, a sense of achievement. As many
22 political decision-makers are increasingly eager to present themselves as taking
23 matters seriously, the concept of climate emergency could have a key role to
24 play in shaping our thinking and our policies around the climate crisis in the
25 coming years.

26 Our main objection to calls for climate emergency declarations lies in the fact
27 that we know little about what these carry or should carry in practice. Climate
28 emergency cannot be reduced to a buzzword, let alone a political marketing
29 strategy. Many of those who have declared climate emergency haven't changed
30 their actual policies and used this declaration as a greenwashing communication
31 tool. Worse yet, we have seen and experienced how emergency regimes have been
32 used to curtail civil and political rights, such as freedom of assembly, and
33 applied against climate activists themselves. There is thus a severe risk that a
34 declaration of climate emergency, if misused, could run contrary to our
35 requirement of just transition and even hamper our abilities to organize.

36 **On this basis, we identify at least two conditions to make climate emergency**
37 **declarations work:**

38 **First, climate emergency declaration must be considered a tool, not a goal in**
39 **itself.** For the notion to have any meaningful impact, climate emergency
40 declarations must have higher ambitions than bringing about a new label or a
41 more accurate description of facts. It does not bring us any further if
42 governments, local, regional or national start massively declaring climate
43 emergency while continuing status quo politics. Any declaration of climate
44 emergency without a clear explanation of the consequences and measures to take
45 hollows out the concept and deprives it of its potential. As activists, we must
46 not be fooled by attempts of political players to gain credit by declaring a
47 climate emergency while not walking the walk. But also vice versa, we should be
48 able to detect and support those political actors who authentically and
49 consistently act on the climate crisis even when they do not necessarily do so
50 under the label of an emergency.

51 **Second, climate emergency as a new legal concept has to be fundamentally**
52 **different from emergency regimes as we have known them in the past.** Looking at
53 how emergency regimes have been misused in the past and recognizing that many of
54 our activist friends operate in semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes, it
55 is only correct to be careful not to give governments any additional exceptional
56 powers to make emergency regulations that might affect the freedoms and with
57 that our own opportunities to organize. However, we also do not miss out on the
58 potential of emergency powers to target the climate crisis. The way we propose
59 to use any possibly new exceptional measures created under climate emergency is
60 to target the big polluters from businesses and industry. Since 2017 we know
61 that around 100 companies worldwide are responsible for 80% of greenhouse gas
62 emissions. Yet governments keep failing at tackling their activity. While this
63 failure is undoubtedly due to the lack of political will, in some cases,
64 governments, including local governments, might be lacking the measures and the
65 mandate to tackle the corporate power effectively. The new emergency measures
66 could be designed precisely to rethink the way business law and international
67 private law works, from unfair trade deals to dubious public-private investment
68 dispute settlement mechanisms to the overall focus on the protection of
69 investment interests to the detriment of public good.

70 **On the European level, declaring climate emergency could include, among others:**

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73 • a European climate law with an overall emergency speed-plan to transition
74 to a carbon negative society by reducing emissions by 70 % by 2030 and
reaching a net zero emissions economy by 2035 and a carbon negative
economy by 2040

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77 • an immediate stop to all direct and indirect subsidies for fossil fuels be
78 it at local, regional, state or EU level and a total ban on any new fossil
79 fuel, nuclear or fracking projects everywhere in Europe
80 These banned subsidies can be relocated to investments in the
81 implementation and improvement of renewable energy production and its
distribution, as well as research and innovation in the sustainable energy
sector.

82 • a complete phase out of coal and other fossil fuels and a full transition
83 to renewables by 2030, relying in particular on supporting decentralized
84 modes of energy production by local communities

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87 • increase in the price of carbon, either by establishing a minimum price of
carbon or a CO2 tax, while simultaneously investing in good, carbon-free
transportation networks

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90 • ambitious and binding carbon budgets and emission reduction targets for
91 all EU Member States and EEA/EFTA countries with clear sanctions for not
92 fulfilling them
93 In addition, the EU can offer a platform for european governments,
94 research institutes, universities and companies so that member states can
95 support each other in innovation. Financial support in the form of
subsidies or loans can be organized by the european union for member
states where possible as well as expertise by the european agencies.

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97 • a reform of the ETS in order to end free allowances and to include the
shipping and aviation sectors

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99 • a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy to support small farmers
working on the principles of agroecology and enhancing biodiversity

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102 • an immediate stop to all EU-funded investment in airport expansion and a
103 European-wide kerosine and aviation tax including measures targeting
specifically frequent flyers, the revenues of which would be invested in a
European wide railway network

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- an annulment of all trade agreements and private investment projects which harm the climate

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- spending at least 60 % of EU budget on investment in just transition

107 **As FYEG, we will:**

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- fight for full public recognition of the urgency of the climate crisis, at any level regardless of whether this is framed as “climate emergency”, “climate breakdown”, “climate crisis”, or else,

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- fight for public declarations of climate emergency to be always accompanied by concrete action

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- push for the policies above, regardless of whether adopted in the framework of climate emergency or under any other label

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- call out any hypocrisy of declaring climate emergency without taking appropriate steps,

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- encourage FYEG activists and Member Organisations, as well as other climate activists and movements, to work towards filling the notion with our own content,

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- 121 • work towards rethinking the existing instruments to tackle the climate
122 crisis and exploring ways in which climate emergency could be used to
123 tackle big climate polluters while protecting and upholding political as
 well as social rights of individuals

Reason

By the summer of 2019, more than 790 local councils across the globe as well as the governments of the Republic of Ireland and the UK have issued a declaration of climate emergency. We believe that for the concept of climate emergency to prove successful, the climate movement needs to work intensively towards specifying the demands for measures which should follow any climate emergency declaration. With this resolution, we specify FYEG's position on the concept of climate emergency.