

PP2-III new FYEG Political Platform - A Sustainable Europe

Proposers:

Agenda item: 2 New FYEG Political Platform

Political Platform text

3. A Sustainable Europe

The climate crisis is the largest threat facing humanity. FYEG considers the current economic system of material growth and environmental exploitation as a root cause of climate change. To stop climate change, we need a shift towards a democratic economy able to properly address environmental damage, the use of natural resources and the voices of groups affected (see chapter 4). Without urgent action, it will jeopardise many human achievements and fundamental rights, endanger food and water supply, and put many territories at risk. Climate change is also likely to have important geopolitical consequences.

FYEG considers climate change a real injustice. Those who are the most responsible for climate change are least likely to be affected by it, whereas those who are the least responsible will bear the brunt of its negative effects. FYEG believes it is essential to adopt an intersectional approach highly critical of capitalism when analysing the causes and effects of the climate crisis. We advocate for just solutions to the climate crisis that take into account the racial, gender, class, age, disability, and colonial dimensions of the climate crisis.

Since the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* in 1992, the Paris Agreement* in 2015, and the declaration of climate emergency by the European Parliament in 2019, and thanks to the work of many activists and scientists, awareness of the seriousness of the crisis has grown. But the actions that have been taken to tackle climate change, including those of the EU, are still widely insufficient. The world is still on track for an increase in global temperatures way above 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels*.

The climate crisis is not the only global existential crisis humanity is facing. The biodiversity crisis is also a reality, the seriousness of which is still being underestimated. The sixth mass extinction*, resulting from human activity, is accelerating. Various sources of pollution are still the cause of many

diseases and deaths.

FYEG considers these crises as symptoms of an economic system that relies on unlimited economic growth, the exploitation of animals and nature. We need to rethink that relationship and offer concrete solutions to these crises.

a. An urgent and just transition towards climate neutrality

FYEG supports the objective of maintaining global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Much stronger action is needed to fight climate change, directly tackling root causes. This implies changing our entire economic system in an extremely short time altering our production and consumption patterns, in a just way, for emissions to drop overall. These types of shifts cannot be done by the market; instead, strong action from the state is needed.

European countries historically holds greater responsibility for climate change than most parts of the world. This means that European Countries holds a bigger responsibility to tackle climate change and its worldwide consequences. European countries and the EU must be the frontrunner in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Countries with the most resources should be even more ambitious and reach their climate objectives earlier.

FYEG supports the objective of reaching climate neutrality in Europe by 2030.

We encourage EU member states to implement a general tax on greenhouse gas emissions. The amount of the levy is equal to the damage that the greenhouse gas can cause per kilogram. In addition, this amount can be higher if it appears that the objectives are not being achieved. FYEG is also in favour of further using the European emission trading system by drastically lessen the number of emission rights.

Europe must also provide support in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to poorer countries, including via financial support and technology transfer. It must also assist them in tackling the effects of climate change, as well as supporting them in making their societies, their economies, and their food and water supplies more resilient to climate change. We must also be careful to ensure that Europe's path to climate neutrality does not involve externalising emissions to third countries. Instead, it should aim to reduce the emissions caused in third countries as a result of European consumption.

Globally, but also within Europe, the transition towards a climate neutral economy must be socially just. We are concerned about the unequal impact of climate change and of environmental hazards which often disproportionately affect poor people and marginalised groups. We need to make sure our response to

the climate crisis does not reinforce existing inequalities. For example, the extraction of rare minerals needed for this transition should not be at the expense of the populations of the countries in which those minerals can be found.

While we believe that technological progress has an important role to play in solving the climate and biodiversity crises, we are critical of approaches that tend to overestimate the positive impact of uncertain future technologies to avoid addressing core issues and engage in systemic change. An example is carbon capture and storage*, often used as a reason for less ambitious emissions targets, in spite of the fact that the technology has not yet been fully developed.

Current mainstream environmental and climate policies do not affect everyone in the same way. FYEG calls for those policies to be both socially just and to fight inequalities. We call for support measures for every worker at risk of losing their job because of the transition towards a carbon neutral economy*. They should receive help including, but not limited to, having a job guaranteed and having access to retraining. It is also important to reinforce our social welfare mechanisms (see chapter 5) and to take into account the gender and racial aspects of a just transition*. Failure to tackle the climate crisis would have terrible implications for all, including workers. We should make the transition a just transition.

b. Energy

In order to meet our climate objectives, a deep transformation of our energy system is needed.

Europe must phase out all fossil fuels, starting with coal and fracked gas*, which must be phased out in Europe by 2027 at the latest. Fossil fuels must be replaced by renewable and emission-free solutions: wind energy, solar energy, marine energy, , and waste heat recovery*. The production of electricity should be 100% renewable by 2035 at the latest. Taxpayers' money must therefore not finance fossil fuels. The opening or extension of fossil fuel extraction sites must be prohibited immediately, and existing sites should be closed as soon as possible. New fossil fuel infrastructure should not be built in Europe. This includes gas infrastructure.

It is also crucial that the energy gap in certain areas in Europe can be quickly filled in and that an optimal energy mix across the continent is achieved.

FYEG supports energy democracy and stands for the development of a decentralised and interconnected energy system. Energy systems should be localised. We support forms of collective ownership of energy production, such as energy cooperatives.

105 Networks to transport energy are crucial to enable this transition; they should
106 be owned, developed, and operated as commons, for example being publicly owned.

107 The cleanest and quickest way to achieve the energy transition is to reduce our
108 energy consumption. Efforts should be made to improve energy efficiency, to
109 renovate all buildings, and to transform the industry. Governments must organise
110 the renovation and insulation of all buildings by 2030. This would also play a
111 key role in reducing energy poverty across Europe.

112 Although nuclear energy* emits less carbon emissions, it raises high risks and
113 many serious long-term concerns that by far outweigh the benefits and we
114 strongly take a stand against any attempt to frame nuclear energy as a climate
115 change solution. These include issues regarding the extraction of uranium*, the
116 disposal of nuclear waste, the safety of nuclear installations, the security
117 measures and level of state control required, the huge consequences of potential
118 accidents, the link with nuclear weapons, the long time it takes to build, the
119 fact that it does not improve the stability of the electricity grid and the
120 significant cost, which could much more efficiently be used to pay for renewable
121 energy sources. Potential solutions such as nuclear fusion* will be unable to
122 provide a concrete response in time to solve the climate crisis. We therefore
123 believe that the construction of new nuclear plants should be avoided at all
124 cost, and that nuclear energy should be phased out as soon as possible across
125 Europe. The phase-out of nuclear energy should be carried out in a way that does
126 not endanger climate objectives. European countries should not export their
127 nuclear technology or build nuclear plants outside of Europe.

128 We believe natural carbon sinks* such as forests, oceans, wetlands, and
129 peatlands have an important role to play in reducing the concentration of
130 greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Policies should be adopted to protect and
131 enhance their potential. On the other hand, technologies such as geo-
132 engineering* are often presented as solutions to fight climate change, but their
133 large-scale efficiency remains undemonstrated and their risks remain unclear to
134 the public. While their full potentials are still yet to be seen, these
135 technologies should never be used as an excuse to continue the burning of fossil
136 fuels and delay real climate action.

137 **c. Water, food and agriculture**

138 Water is the backbone of life and agricultural production. It therefore must not
139 be considered as a commodity. Water sources and resources must be protected from
140 potential pollution through agriculture, mining, production, construction and
141 waste disposal. Food is essential to life. It therefore cannot be considered as
142 a commodity. FYEG stands for food and agricultural policies that guarantee that
143 every person has access to local, healthy, diversified and quality food.

Farmers and agricultural workers play an essential role in ensuring this right to food and their own rights should be respected, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*. Farmers and agricultural workers should be able to earn a decent revenue from their work. We believe in a model consisting of numerous small- and medium-scale farms, guaranteeing thriving countrysides.

Industrialised agriculture is responsible for substantial greenhouse gas emissions, massive biodiversity loss, water scarcity, soil depletion, and a range of public health issues (e.g. antimicrobial resistance*). A transition towards a form of agriculture which respects the environment, preserves soil, water, and the climate, and is based on agroecological practices and organic agriculture is urgently needed. Artificial fertilisers and pesticides* must be phased out within a reasonable time frame, starting with the most dangerous (e.g. neonicotinoids and glyphosate). A rapid drop in animal farming and in the consumption of animal products is also needed with the goal of phasing out industrial livestock production. Traditional indigenous livelihoods such as hunting, fishing and animal herding must be protected. In general, we consider it desirable that as little meat as possible is consumed, taking into account health concerns and the aforementioned issues. This would improve public health and animal welfare as well as drastically reduce the environmental impact of food production. The precautionary use of antibiotics in animal farming must be banned immediately and the maximum amount of animals held per area must be drastically limited.

Food systems should be rebuilt on the principles of food sovereignty*, eliminating corporate capture of food, reducing food waste, prioritising short supply chains and locally produced food, ending imports of deforestation-driving products such as soy or palm oil, and making sure that European agriculture is not exported in a way that harms agricultural systems in other countries. To achieve this, we need a food production system that ensures environmental and economic sustainability and food security for all, without endangering the food security* of future generations. It is of utmost importance to find ways to guarantee an economically viable system that does not have negative effects on nature and the wider environment.

To this end, FYEG looks positively towards promising new methods of food production. Research capacities have to be significantly strengthened and mainstreamed in order to find ways of reducing the environmental impact of the food system, while guaranteeing farmers' rights and ensuring decent living conditions in rural areas. Forms of urban farming such as vertical farming can offer solutions to provide cities with sustainable food, since they reduce the use of some natural resources, such as land area and water. Since sustainable methods of clean meat-production could potentially help the transition to a vegetarian society, while also coming with potential risks, research into safe, efficient and environmentally-friendly clean meat*-production needs to be

188 intensified.

189 This transition towards a more sustainable and fairer agricultural system
190 requires changes in the regulatory framework as well as ambitious public
191 policies. FYEG stands for more transparent labelling, with details of origin,
192 composition, methods of production, use of pesticides, animal welfare, and
193 nutritional values. A thorough reform of the Common Agricultural Policy* is
194 needed, taking environmental issues, animal welfare as well as working
195 conditions into account in its subsidy scheme. The promotion of sustainable and
196 plant-based diets should also be encouraged.

197 GMOs in agriculture have both positive and negative effects. GMOs are meant to
198 provide better yields, increase nutritional capacity, or be more resistant to
199 pests and extreme weather conditions. Yet, they can also increase corporate
200 control through patents, increase farmer dependence on biotech firms, and
201 threaten biodiversity through increased unforeseen mutations and increased
202 herbicide and pesticide use. Associated with mono-cropping practices, GMOs make
203 overall ecosystems less resilient to pests. We believe the use of GMOs,
204 including new GMOs, should be regulated and subjected to individual scientific
205 assessments for and by public institutions, concerning all risks to consumers,
206 farmers, and the environment, prior to authorisation. FYEG believes that
207 heirloom seeds and the development of agroecology represent a better solution to
208 the challenges faced by our food system. Moreover, in a world where the amount
209 of food produced would be sufficient to feed all, increasing yield productivity
210 is not the only leverage point to reduce hunger. Food distribution, the
211 reduction of food waste and shifting towards vegetarian diets are all part of
212 the solution. We firmly believe in food and land sovereignty. Financial
213 interests must never be placed above the environment and biodiversity, nor above
214 people.

215 **d. Transport**

216 Transport is responsible for almost a quarter of greenhouse gases emitted in
217 Europe and is one of the only sectors in which emissions have risen in recent
218 years, despite important technological progress. Transport is also one of the
219 main sources of air pollution, which is responsible for the premature deaths of
220 400,000 people in the EU each year. Changes in both practices and modes of
221 transport are needed, with a shift towards zero-emission travel a priority.

222 While keeping up efforts to reduce aircraft emissions, Europe needs to fly less.
223 This can be achieved by introducing a EU-wide kerosene* tax, and an end on both
224 the construction of new airports and the extension of existing ones. Train
225 travel should be favoured over air travel. An effective policy could involve the
226 phase-out of commercial flights for trips where it is possible to use an
227 alternative, more environmentally friendly means of transport with a journey

time of less than 10 hours. At the same time, train networks should be further developed, including the construction of high-speed trains and the introduction of more night train routes, with the aim of achieving a network of high-speed lines connecting major cities in Europe. We should prioritise the renovation of existing train tracks over the construction of new ones whenever possible in order to minimise the environmental impact. At the same time, existing secondary lines in rural areas should be maintained and the frequency of their service increased. Efforts should be made to achieve a 100% decarbonised network by 2035. Travelling across Europe by train should be made easier, for example by the introduction of a European train ticket system.

For everyday shorter journeys, regions and cities should continue developing public transport networks as well as safe and efficient cycling and pedestrian networks. We aim to eliminate the use of private cars in city centres and residential areas. Comprehensive urban planning* plays a crucial role in creating socially accessible and ecologically just cities and residential areas in which people can live, work, and spend free time without having to travel long distances. Insecurity in public transport which disproportionately affect women and gender minorities, should be tackled in order to make public transport really attractive to all. During air pollution peaks, teleworking should be made mandatory. Rural areas should not be left out: regions should guarantee public transport solutions, relying on intermodality between cycling, buses, trains, and private cars. New fossil-fuel vehicles should no longer be available for purchase in Europe by 2025, and their use should be phased out as soon as possible. FYEG also supports efforts to introduce fare-free local public transport throughout Europe, starting with people belonging to vulnerable groups and young people.

Further efforts should be made to ensure that public transport is fully accessible for all, including people with disabilities.

e. Rethinking our relation to progress

Technological innovation and new technologies can bring about substantial positive change in society. Progress in the medical sector, in digital technologies, in energy production, and in the development of clean vehicles is crucial to fight the ongoing crises Europe is facing.

Technological progress is not always a synonym for social and societal progress. We are firmly attached to the precautionary principle, meaning that innovations should be assessed thoroughly and should be proven harmless for the environment, human health, and society as a whole before being authorised. Uncertainty should not be used as a reason to postpone measures to prevent environmental degradation or preserve public health. New innovations should be open to scientific and public assessment to determine their potential costs and

benefits.

While we believe that technological progress has an important role to play in solving the climate and biodiversity crises, we are critical of approaches that tend to overestimate the positive impact of uncertain future technologies to avoid addressing core issues and engage in systemic change. An example is carbon capture and storage*, often used as a reason for less ambitious emissions targets, in spite of the fact that the technology has not yet been fully developed.

f. Animal rights

While most European citizens agree that the welfare of animals should be improved, not a lot is being done. We need to consider animals as subjects and sentient beings who should be protected from harm, and we should reflect critically on our place within the animal realm. Animals have rights that should be respected and be taken into account when transitioning towards a sustainable and just agriculture and society. We have to provide an appropriate and painless livelihood especially for animals kept as farm animals.

Animals should not be subject to cruel treatment. FYEG stands for the immediate ban of the cruellest practices, such as the production of foie gras through force-feeding*, *corrida**, fur farming, dolphinariums*, and hunting with dogs. We also believe that animals should not be kept in conditions contrary to their natural behaviours. We believe animals should not be allowed to be kept in a circus and that zoos should be subject to a much stronger regulation.

Every year, nearly 70 billion land animals are slaughtered worldwide for food. With the industrialisation of animal farming, the conditions in which farm animals live have become worse and worse. It is essential to both reduce the consumption of animal-based products and improve the welfare of farm animals. Cage farming, one of the commonest forms of industrial animal farming, must be banned with immediate effect. FYEG defends the small-farm model in which animals have access to sufficient space, are able to go outdoors, play and interact with others of their kind. Newly created animal breeds that favour rapid animal growth but often cause the animal to suffer should also be phased out. Stronger regulation of animal transport should be put in place, with a ban on the export of live animals outside the EU.

We support work towards the abolition of the use of animals in research and support research into techniques that will allow scientists to replace, refine and reduce the number of research animals they use. We recognise the importance of animal welfare and the essential contribution that animals have made and currently make to research that improves human and animal health. We support the replacement (through methods that avoid using animals such as computer (in

307 silico) models, in vitro techniques, or human volunteers), refinement (through
308 improvements to scientific procedures and husbandry that minimise pain,
309 suffering, distress or lasting harm and/or improve animal welfare, for example,
310 through improved housing and husbandry and better welfare assessments) and
311 reduction (through good experimental design and statistical analysis) of the use
312 of animals in in vivo experiments. We oppose in vivo experiments where research
313 animals are not housed or treated in a manner in keeping with international best
314 practice.

315 Wild animals should also benefit from better protection, with the protection of
316 wild natural spaces and the stronger regulation of hunting (see g). The Covid-19
317 pandemic, which likely originated from interactions between wildlife and humans,
318 is one example of the consequences that zoonotic diseases* can have on
319 humankind, and has clearly demonstrated the need to take measures to prevent
320 their development.

321 FYEG also defends stronger regulation in order to fight overfishing, regenerate
322 fish populations, and restore marine ecosystems. The use of fishing techniques
323 with a low impact on the environment should be encouraged, while higher impact
324 techniques such as bottom-contacting fishing gears, electric pulse fishing*, and
325 fish aggregating devices* (FADs) should be banned. Small-scale fisheries have to
326 be prioritised immediately, and measures must be taken to stop the concentration
327 and industrialisation of the fishing sector in Europe. The rapid development of
328 industrialised fish farming in recent years must be addressed with the
329 introduction of stronger regulations on fishing quota, fish welfare and
330 environmental protection. Activities of fishing companies in fishing grounds of
331 lesser developed states, in particular African, must immediately end.
332 Furthermore the EU and European states must end bilateral contracts which allow
333 European companies to raid African fishing grounds. Instead the EU and European
334 states should support African State to build and develop coast guards which
335 have the ability to effectively protect their fishing grounds from foreign
336 intruders.

337 **g. Protecting our natural environment**

338 Nature should not be regarded as a commodity, as something humanity is separated
339 from, but as something that it belongs to. Like climate change, nature knows no
340 borders. We believe it is time that nature be properly recognised and protected.

341 FYEG supports giving rights to nature that ensure its protection under national
342 and international law. We want the crime of ecocide to be recognised in domestic
343 and international criminal law. The most destructive fishing, deforestation,
344 soil degradation, and mining practices should be banned. We must fight
345 overfishing. Hunting should be strongly regulated, no longer permitted for
346 commercial and leisure purposes except for indigenous peoples practising their

347 traditional livelihoods, and only authorised as a last resort to preserve
348 balance within an ecosystem.

349 We support the objective of giving protected status to at least 30% of our
350 planet's land and seas, with 10% granted a particularly high level of
351 protection. The rainforests, coral reefs, Arctic ice pack, and oceans are global
352 commons, and decisions regarding these global commons should be a global concern
353 for all. We reject approaches to nature conservation that perpetuate colonial
354 domination and violate fundamental rights. No one should be displaced or forced
355 to leave their home because of a nature reserve.

356 We are on the brink of mass extinction. It is not enough to just protect
357 ecosystems; we must promote the restoration and renaturalisation of devastated
358 areas according to scientific criteria. Furthermore, our own human ecosystems,
359 such as cities, can and must be renaturalised – allowing space for new
360 ecosystems to flourish.

361 Across the world, environmental defenders are facing threats and violence, with
362 many being murdered for their defence of the environment. This is unacceptable.
363 Defending the natural world is not a crime. Those who threaten environmental
364 defenders must be prosecuted, and the European Union should grant protection and
365 offer asylum to those under threat.

366 The transition to a zero-carbon society might also have an impact on and
367 conflict with nature conservation. The impact of infrastructures such as wind
368 farms, hydropower plants, and high-speed railways should be minimised as much as
369 possible.