

## **PP2-III FYEG Political Platform - A Sustainable Europe**

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### **Political Platform text**

## **3. A Sustainable Europe**

The climate crisis is one of the main threats facing humanity. Climate change is caused by human activities and 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 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 a broken system that relies on the exploitation of animals and nature. We need to rethink that relationship and offer concrete solutions to these crises.

### **a. A 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. This implies changing our entire economic system in an extremely short time. This cannot be done by the market; instead, strong action from the state is needed.

Europe historically holds greater responsibility for climate change than most parts of the world. This means that Europe holds a bigger responsibility to tackle climate change and its worldwide consequences. Europe must be the frontrunner in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. FYEG supports an EU emissions reduction target of at least 80% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, as well as European climate neutrality by 2035 at the latest. Countries with the most resources should be even more ambitious and reach those targets earlier.

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.

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, job prospects in other sectors through 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

66 terrible implications for all, including workers. We should make the transition  
67 a just transition.

## 68 **b. Energy**

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

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

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

85 FYEG supports energy democracy and stands for the development of a decentralised  
86 and interconnected energy system. Energy systems should be localised. We support  
87 forms of collective ownership of energy production, such as energy cooperatives.  
88 Networks to transport energy are crucial to enable this transition; they should  
89 be owned, developed, and operated as commons, for example being publicly owned.

90 Although nuclear energy\* is a low-carbon way to produce energy, it raises many  
91 serious concerns. These include issues regarding the extraction of uranium\*, the  
92 disposal of nuclear waste, the safety of nuclear installations, the security  
93 measures and level of state control required, the huge consequences of potential  
94 accidents, and the link with nuclear weapons. Potential solutions such as  
95 nuclear fusion\* will be unable to provide a concrete response in time to solve  
96 the climate crisis. We therefore believe that no new nuclear plants should be  
97 built, and that nuclear energy should be phased out as soon as possible across  
98 Europe. The phase-out of nuclear energy should be carried out in a way that does  
99 not endanger climate objectives.

100 We believe natural carbon sinks\* such as forests, oceans, wetlands, and  
101 peatlands have an important role to play in reducing the concentration of  
102 greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Policies should be adopted to protect and

enhance their potential. On the other hand, carbon capture and storage\* and geo-engineering\*, among other technologies, are often presented as solutions to fight climate change, but their large-scale efficiency remains undemonstrated and they are likely to pose great risks to society. These technologies are often used as an excuse to continue the burning of fossil fuels and delay real climate action. FYEG believes they should be treated with caution and their development must not be made a priority.

### **c. Food and agriculture**

Food is essential to life. It therefore cannot be considered as a commodity. FYEG stands for food and agricultural policies that guarantee that 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\* should be phased out, 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. We should aim at reducing the use of antibiotics in animal farming, including by limiting the concentration of animals held in one place.

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.

This transition towards a more sustainable and fairer agricultural system

requires changes in the regulatory framework as well as ambitious public policies. FYEG stands for more transparent labelling, with details of origin, composition, methods of production, use of pesticides, animal welfare, and nutritional values. A thorough reform of the Common Agricultural Policy\* is needed. The promotion of sustainable and plant-based diets should also be encouraged.

The use of GMOs in agriculture is sometimes portrayed as a solution to some of the challenges faced by our food system, by providing better yields or contributing to adaptation to climate change. We consider the use of GMOs\* to have many disadvantages, including increasing corporate control over the food system and the dependence of farmers on biotech companies, threats to biodiversity, and the filing of patents on plant and animal life. Most GMOs are developed to be resistant to chemical herbicides and their use therefore results in an increase in pesticide consumption. We also believe that the challenges faced by our food system are better solved with heirloom seeds and the development of agroecology. This is not compatible with the large-scale development of GMOs in agriculture. We therefore support regulations that ensure a ban on the cultivation of or import of GMOs into the EU, including new GMOs.

#### **d. Transport**

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

While keeping up efforts to reduce aircraft emissions, Europe needs to fly less. This can be achieved by introducing a EU-wide kerosene\* tax, and an end on both the construction of new airports and the extension of existing ones. Train travel should be favoured over air travel. An effective policy could involve the phase-out of commercial flights for trips where it is possible to use an 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. 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 should aim to eliminate the use of private cars in city centres. Comprehensive urban planning\* plays a crucial role in creating socially accessible and ecologically just residential areas in which people can live, work, and spend free time without having to travel long distances. 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. Reflecting on the condition of animals

requires us to recognise our place within the animal realm and realise that we are not superior to it. We must extend our empathy and our moral sense to other animals. We must stop considering them as objects but rather as sentient beings with rights and who should be protected from harm.

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, should be phased out. 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.

FYEG also stands for the stronger regulation of the use of animals in tests. Using animals in scientific testing should be illegal in the event that there are alternatives. The welfare of animals raised for animal testing should be significantly improved.

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

FYEG also defends stronger regulation in order to fight overfishing, regenerate fish populations, and restore marine ecosystems. The use of fishing techniques with a low impact on the environment should be encouraged, while higher impact techniques such as bottom-contacting fishing gears, electric pulse fishing\*, and fish aggregating devices\* (FADs) should be banned. Small-scale fisheries should be prioritised, and measures should be taken to stop the concentration and industrialisation of the fishing sector in Europe. The rapid development of industrialised fish farming in recent years should be addressed, with the introduction of stronger regulations on fish welfare and environmental

259 protection.

## 260 **g. Protecting our natural environment**

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

264 FYEG supports giving rights to nature that ensure its protection under national  
265 and international law. We want the crime of ecocide to be recognised in domestic  
266 and international criminal law. The most destructive fishing, deforestation,  
267 soil degradation, and mining practices should be banned. We must fight  
268 overfishing. Hunting should be strongly regulated, no longer permitted for  
269 commercial and leisure purposes, and only authorised as a last resort to  
270 preserve balance within an ecosystem.

271 We support the objective of giving protected status to at least 30% of our  
272 planet's land and seas, with 10% granted a particularly high level of  
273 protection. The rainforests, coral reefs, Arctic ice pack, and oceans are global  
274 commons, and decisions regarding these global commons should be a global concern  
275 for all. We reject approaches to nature conservation that perpetuate colonial  
276 domination and violate fundamental rights.

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

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

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