

POLICY PAPER FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

The EU needs to make amends and Act now for a just and safe future!

In 2020 it was determined that there were 73,6 million young people between the ages of 15-29. To discard what we as the youth say, is to discard one-sixth of the EU. 2022 is the European year of youth. That must mean our voices are meaningful. The “ACTJUST: Youth @cting for climate justice: building a paradigm of online and offline engagement in the covid era” project, which has been running for the last 10 months, has given us the right tools to speak up. That is what we intend to do now: to speak up with the intention of inspiring more young people to act and work together in the future (1).

Our vision regarding climate justice is to make the world a better place for everyone.

To make it a world without injustice, with empathy and the willingness to cooperate. To reach that goal it is important that we take action in making systematic change, through mobilizing local engagement and strong civil societies. That way, we can allow youth empowerment, raising awareness, educating, and implementing eco-friendly subsidies.

(1) <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20220105-1>

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Our goal with this policy brief is to make aware of the necessary action needed to be taken soon, to make a systematic change. We believe that these actions are necessary to ensure strong civil societies with youth empowerment, that are aware of the injustice, and will strive for the implementation of more and better eco-friendly subsidies and solutions.

We will attempt to go towards those goals by giving you five policy recommendations on food, energy, migration, transportation&mobility, and education.

Recommendations

Food

Implement a law on EU-level which allocates higher subventions to farmers doing sustainable agriculture and cut subventions for conventional agriculture.

Agriculture has a tremendous impact on our environment. Producing food in unsustainable ways results in overheating the earth, exploiting the nature and becomes a great threat to our future supply of food, while world population is only rising.

To be more specific, we are facing mass production of food, but still 828 million people suffer from hunger. (2)

Nearly one third of all the food never gets eaten and we actually waste 1.3 billion metric tons worldwide every year. (3)

On top of that, the alarming fact is that food production is responsible for more than 25% of greenhouse gas emissions. (4)

Conventional agriculture is also rapidly decreasing the biodiversity, while draining the soil of nutrients and making it harder to grow food. It has negative effects on our health due to high transfer of toxins to our bodies.

(2) <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>

(3) <https://www.ucdavis.edu/food/news/why-is-one-third-our-food-wasted-worldwide>

(4) <https://ourworldindata.org/greenhouse-gas-emissions-food>

However, a lot of farmers still don't have motivation to produce sustainably because conventional ways are just cheaper and easier for them.

In order to fix this problem we demand creation of a new law on EU-level which will support sustainable agriculture through higher subventions to farmers who decide to cast away conventional food system.

We want sustainable agriculture and by that we mean sustainability as defined by the UN as good for the environment, the economy and society. That way we can and we must reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses from food production, give farmers better conditions, improve public health, and make sure the soil is fertile in the future.

In order to ensure our present and future generations have healthy food and earth to live in, it's crucial to establish this law because statistics won't change by themselves unless we don't make an effort to do so.

Energy

Until 2050, 60% of public spaces(5) in each European country should be powered by renewable energy and decrease energy consumption by 25%.

The energy crisis is increasing both prices and injustice between developed and developing countries through the exploitation of their energy sources.

Since 1990 more than 140 million people are entering the middle class every year, so it is expected that the need for energy will rise. (6) However, fossil energy is unsustainable since it pushes global temperatures to the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that emissions from fossil fuels are the dominant cause of global warming. In 2018, 89% of global CO2 emissions came from fossil fuels and industry. (7)

Those effects have a tremendous impact on our health, our communities and the environment. Our recommendation is of utmost importance because conventional energy sources are unsustainable, they promote social inequality, they worsen our living conditions and the state of the environment.

(5) Our definition of public spaces includes town squares, traffic lights, city lights, public buildings, public schools, government buildings, landmarks and museums

(6) <https://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/howmuchenergy/>

(7) <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/latest-updates/stories/fossil-fuels-and-climate-change-the-facts/>

Migration

Establish an EU binding instrument which recognizes a legal status to climate induced refugees.

Climate refugees are people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their hometowns, because of environmental disruption. It is expected that there will be 216 million internal climate migrants by 2050. And according to the EEA extreme weather events have cost Europe 142.000 lives and 510 billion over the past 40 years. Currently, there are no international legal instruments safeguarding climate-induced migrants.

The impacts of climate change that can trigger displacements are: loss of land, shelter, educational facilities, employment, food insecurity, mortality and negative psychological impacts. Also gender inequalities are likely to be exacerbated by climate change and related hazards/disasters, by entailing higher workloads.

We demand the recognition of a legal status to climate refugees through the establishment of an EU binding instrument. We aim to achieve more social justice and democratic representation for this already marginalized group. It is their fundamental human right to be seen and recognized by society. By analyzing the current data, it can be claimed that in a few years we can be the next climate refugees. It is imperative to act now.

Transportation & Mobility

We demand better public transportation with the improvement of infrastructure and the aim for it to be free

Transport is responsible for almost a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions (8), and this is the only sector which has higher emissions than in 1990. Therefore, urgent action especially in the mobility sector is necessary.

Improving public transport infrastructure can give a solution to these problems. Therefore, it needs to be enhanced, made cleaner, safer and more comfortable. European citizens should be able to use it for free or at least cheaper than the actual prices: A European “climate-ticket” should be implemented, with which people can also use other mobility services such as bike or car sharing. With more public transport in cities, people get also emotionally and physically healthier because there is less air- and also less noise pollution. Additionally, social inequalities can be reduced.

On the other hand, driving with a car should be made less attractive and less polluting. An easy way to do this would be reducing the speed limits on all European highways to 100 km/h. This would cut down emissions distinctly in this sector. For example, a speed limit reduction from 130 km/h to 100 km/h lowers fuel usage on average by 23% (9).

(8) https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/transport-emissions_en

(9) <https://vcoe.at/service/fragen-und-antworten/welche-wirkung-hat-tempo-100-statt-130>

Education

Provide teachers with tools and methods to implement environmental education in all grades of school's curriculum by 2025.

Most school curriculums lack climate education, and if we don't educate the youth about climate injustice and the crisis, we will never see a change in how the climate crisis is evolving.

The goal of educating the youth about the environment is to give them an understanding of the climate crisis and to get them more aware of climate-friendly options. If we educate the people about the climate crisis, climate injustice, and the ways to tackle the conflict they will gain the knowledge and tools to be part of the change we need. They are the future and deserve the right to have an opinion on the subject. Furthermore, the Paris agreement, which all the participating parties in the ActJust project have signed, states that parties must implement climate change studies in their educational system. But now 7 years later only a handful of countries have implemented it (10).

Environmental education is needed to fight climate injustice. Studies show that only 4% of pupils feel that they know a lot about the climate crisis (11), and that 57% of students want to learn more about sustainable solutions (11). Not only this but a survey over 23 EU countries shows that up to 85% of young people are concerned about the climate crisis (12).

There is a need for more environmental education and therefore we need to implement it in the school's curriculum as this statement says.

(10)shorturl.at/bkG14

(11)shorturl.at/iopLQ

(12)<https://climateofchange.info/>

Conclusions

To adopt these recommendations means to acknowledge the climate crisis as more than just an environmental problem. To acknowledge the fact that the climate crisis is connected with racial injustice and gender inequality.

To adopt these recommendations, realizing that we have to acknowledge the climate crisis as climate justice. acknowledging that we, as the global west, have a responsibility to the global south and our joint future.

The implementation of these recommendations will serve as a bridge to a brighter future. We believe that our suggestions will make adaptation to climate change possible. If embraced, it could give youth across the world more hope for a better future. If we, the youth, feel like we're being heard, included, and taken seriously, it might provide a chance for a better conversation and better results.

We hope that the decision-makers will implement our recommendations and use them for future policies. We believe in a stronger partnership between the decision-makers and us as the youth. Only through joint effort will we be able to make a difference.