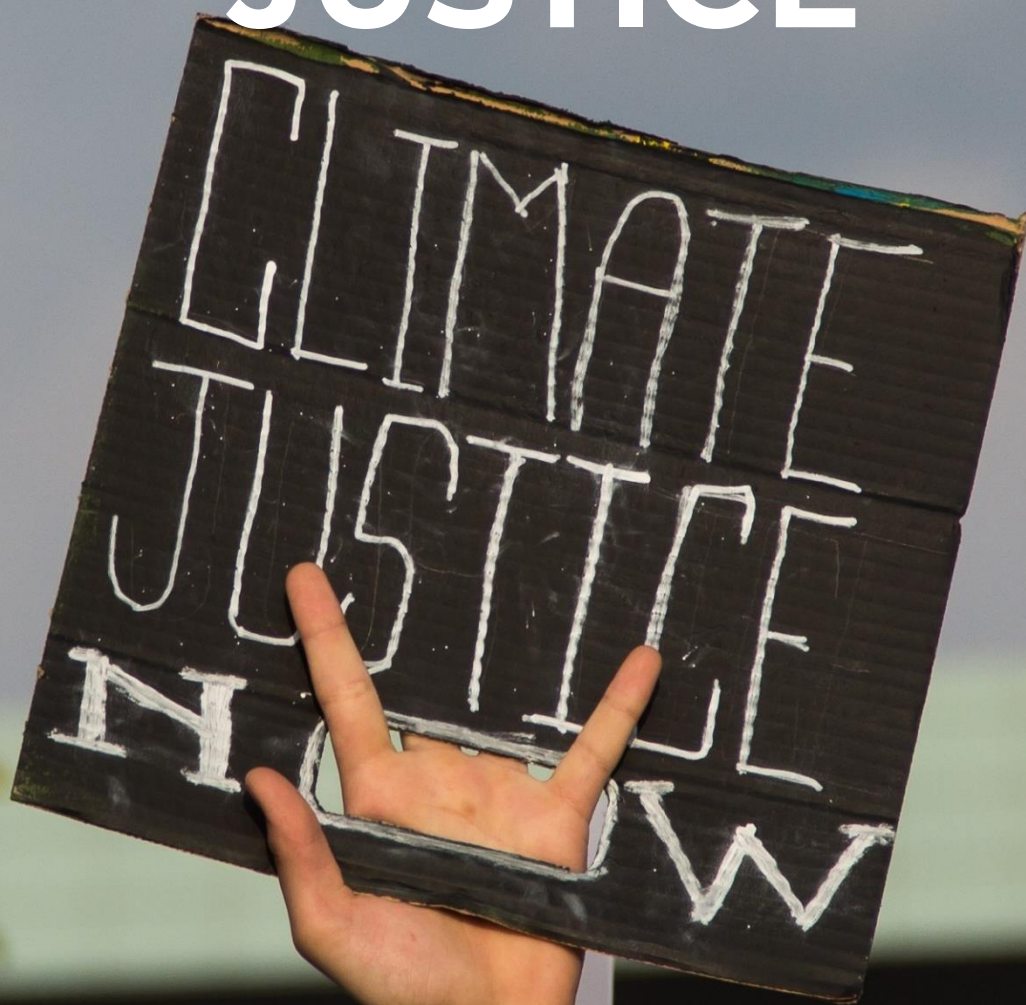


# YOUNG VOICES ON CLIMATE JUSTICE



**THE EUROPEAN YOUTH & CLIMATE  
JUSTICE REPORT 2020, PRESENTED BY  
GENERATION CLIMATE EUROPE**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For this report we have collected the opinions and ideas of young people on climate justice from across Europe. They hail from highly diverse backgrounds. Some live in their home countries. Some have left to live abroad. They are pupils and students, apprentices and young professionals. Some are active in youth organizations, some are out in the streets supporting the climate strikes, while others do not belong to any particular movement or organisation. Some are active at their university, some in a union, some at their local parish and some in environmental NGOs. Yet, they all are united by their vision of a sustainable and just Europe.

Our consultations indicate that young people are guided by values like responsibility, solidarity and community. Young people in Europe fear the consequences of the climate crisis and are concerned by the current lack of ambition and the missing sense of urgency. At the same time, Europe's youth thinks big and wants us all to act together to solve the climate crisis, with everybody doing their fair share.

This young generation has a particular sensitivity for questions of social justice. The respondents to our consultation, thus, recognized a series of barriers hindering a transition to a sustainable society and an economy that is comprehensive, fast and just at the same time.

For many young people it is difficult to live a green and just life. The European Union and its member states need to provide the necessary conditions making a sustainable as well as high-quality diet, clothing, mobility, energy supply and housing available and accessible to all, regardless of their socio-economic background. Europe must also ensure that sustainable quality jobs are available for all.

At the same time, young people demand a green and just economy. The young people who participated in our consultation are fully aware that for a real transition it is not enough to transform their own lives, but that we need to transform the entire economy and society. This requires a fair and sustainable use of natural resources as well as fair and sustainable taxation. Those who have more to contribute must contribute more towards the transition to a just and sustainable society and economy.

Furthermore, young people envision a green and just democracy. Our democracy can be improved with more meaningful youth participation, a lower voting age, more sustainable education and more sustainable and accessible youth work.

Moreover, young people call for a green and just international system. The foundations of this new international system need to be fair and sustainable trade; and international cooperation and solidarity, especially in the fight against the climate crisis.

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This report represents the opinions of the young people surveyed and of the authors and is not necessarily representative of the position of GCE or its member organizations.

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## 1.) INTRODUCTION

### OUR MISSION AND VISION: MOTIVATION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

Present and future effects of the climate crisis have far-reaching socioeconomic implications, both within Europe as well as on a global scale, especially for young people. The same goes for the comprehensive and urgent measures that are required to fight this crisis. The aim of our report, therefore, is to explore the domestic and the global dimensions of climate justice from a youth perspective, and in this way devise ideas of how the European Union and its member states can ensure a just transition. We want to collect expertise as well as creative and smart ideas and solutions to guarantee a transition to a more just, inclusive and sustainable society and economy. In particular, we aim to give young people in Europe a voice in this most important transformation process of our generation. It has been the European youth and their protests that have finally brought the urgent need to fight the climate crisis the attention this existential challenge deserves and requires. The decisions that are made (or not made) are going to determine our futures, which is why we, the youth of Europe, have a right to co-shape this transition as well as the opportunity to live a sustainable life.

### THE DOMESTIC DIMENSION:

**The challenge:** Fighting the climate crisis effectively requires a comprehensive, far-reaching and fast<sup>1</sup> transformation of our economy and society. If we fail to take the necessary measures to combat the climate crisis, those that will suffer from the implications of such a climate breakdown the most are going to be individuals and social groups that are already vulnerable, in particular disadvantaged young people. Therefore, Europe must make sure that the measures used to combat the climate crisis are decisive enough and implemented on time. While a transformation making our society and economy more sustainable will be profitable in a long-term perspective, it initially also involves significant costs. We currently witness that these costs are distributed in an unjust way, imposing the biggest burden on those who are already struggling whilst granting the profits to those who are already privileged. However, the costs could also be distributed in a just way, by imposing the costs on those who can afford the most, while allowing everybody to enjoy the profits. For obvious moral and social considerations, the European Union must make sure that it takes the latter path and in this way makes the transformation of our economy and society a just one. Besides the moral and social implications, such a just transition would also increase the general acceptance of the urgent measures taken to make our society and economy more sustainable and to fight the climate crisis, by minimizing social hardship which could be used as an argument against taking comprehensive measures.

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<sup>1</sup> The transition is fast enough if it manages to achieve the targets of Europe becoming carbon-neutral by 2040 and reducing the European emissions by 65% at least in 2030 compared to 1990.

**The mission of our report:** In our report we aim to explore this domestic dimension of climate justice from a youth perspective. We want to identify social vulnerabilities and challenges of young people confronted with such vulnerabilities that need to be taken into account when planning the transition of our society and economy. We also want to identify barriers and obstacles that make it difficult for young people to live a sustainable life. Based on this we make proposals of how the urgently necessary transformation of our society and economy can be shaped by the European Union and its member states in a just way, respecting the needs and rights of all people, especially youth.

## THE GLOBAL DIMENSION:

**The challenge:** While the industrialised and developed countries, including Europe, are emitting the highest amount of greenhouse gases, those countries and regions suffering the most from their negative and harmful effects are among the poorest countries and regions in the world, largely in Africa and Asia.<sup>2</sup> A majority of the people living in those poorest countries are young people. As young people from Europe we feel solidarity with them and are in touch with youth in other continents to find solutions to counter the climate crisis and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at the same time. Youth organizations provide a valuable platform for exchange across continents. For these reasons, we want to remind the European Union and European stakeholders about their responsibility to minimize the harmful effects of the climate crisis in other parts of the world and to support poorer countries; so as to empower them to contribute to the fight against the climate crisis, while developing sustainably at the same time. This is not only a moral obligation for the European Union, but also crucial from the perspective of fundamental, universal and indivisible human rights and Europe's commitments to the sustainable development agenda.

**The mission of our report:** In our report we aim to explore this global dimension of climate justice from a youth perspective. We want to identify the biggest challenges for the Global South and especially for young people in the Global South caused by the implications of the climate crisis. We also want to identify obstacles impeding the fight against the climate crisis in the Global South and in the cooperation work with countries in the Global South. Subsequently, we develop proposals on how Europe can better comply with its responsibilities toward the Global South in the context of the climate crisis, ensuring a sustainable and just transformation at the global level. We put forward ideas for concrete economic actions and make recommendations and proposals for fields such as youth and social policy, external relations and development and cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/cms/publicaties/pbl-2015-trends-in-global-co2-emissions-2015-report\\_01803.pdf](https://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/cms/publicaties/pbl-2015-trends-in-global-co2-emissions-2015-report_01803.pdf); [https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0052-19-Resolution\\_Climate\\_Change2019\\_FINAL%20.pdf](https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0052-19-Resolution_Climate_Change2019_FINAL%20.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> In the future, this European perspective should be complemented by consultations with young people living on other continents.

## **ABOUT GENERATION CLIMATE EUROPE (GCE)**

Generation Climate Europe (GCE) unites some of the biggest youth organizations in Europe in order to advocate together toward the European institutions for more climate action. Together, we call for a transition making our economy and society sustainable which is comprehensive, fast and just. Currently the following organizations are members of GCE:

- International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements (FIMCAP)
- European Students' Union (ESU)
- Youth and Environment Europe (YEE)
- Climates
- Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)
- International Young Nature Friends (IYNF)
- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)

## **2.) METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

### **2.1.) METHODOLOGY**

The consultations were prepared, conducted and analyzed by the Climate Justice Working Group of Generation Climate Europe (GCE). The working group consists of young people from all over Europe. The members of the working group developed a set of guiding questions based on their comprehensive practical knowledge from youth work. Many of the member organizations of the working group are active in youth organizations such as the International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements (FIMCAP), the International Movement ATD Quart Monde, the European Students' Union (ESU) and the youth of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Based on the guiding questions a qualitative survey was developed which was disseminated widely and additional consultation activities were conducted. Multiple youth organizations, volunteers from GCE and other experts contributed additional input to the consultations. Finally, the results of the consultations were discussed and analyzed systematically by the members of the working group. This report summarizes the values and life realities of the young people taking part in the consultations described and offers ideas, proposals and makes demands to achieve a timely and just transition to a more green society and economy.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.2.) DEMOGRAPHICS**

The consultations could reach out to young people with various backgrounds:<sup>5</sup>

- 361 young people took part in the qualitative survey conducted for this study. Additionally, various youth organizations and experts contributed with their expertise.
- In the qualitative survey young people from 37 different European countries are represented.
- 25.6% of the survey respondents have a migratory background. 13.6% of the respondents were born in a non-European country (13.6%).
- The qualitative survey covers all young age groups (22.4% of the participants were younger than 16 years old, 9.1% between 16 and 18 years old, 33.3% between 19 and 25 years old, 15.0% between 26 and 30 years old and 20.1% older than 30 years).
- The survey represents organized and unorganized young people (176 of the 361 respondents, i.e., 48.8%, of the respondents of the qualitative survey indicated that they were or are a member of one or more youth organizations).

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<sup>4</sup> A detailed description of the methodology used for the consultations is provided in annex 6.1.

<sup>5</sup> The full overview of the demographic statistics is presented in annex 6.2.



### **3.) VALUES AND LIFE REALITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Before diving into the responses and proposals we have collected during our consultations, we want to help you to gain a clear understanding of the way **young people**, the targeted group of our consultations, think. We want to show which values young people share and how their life realities look in the context of the climate crisis:

Young people are not a monolithic group of human beings with identical backgrounds, but rather they are a varied group with diverse personalities, complex relationships and a wide variety of aspirations. Still, a number of features can be observed that are characteristic for young people: Young people are just getting started with their lives and careers and are still in the process of defining themselves. Young people generally think in terms of having possibilities and discovering opportunities, but taking these chances is not always so easy. Being young also means experiencing failure and sometimes becoming overwhelmed by emotions. Being young means occasionally getting lost and discovering all sorts of societal barriers. At the same time, being young means having fresh ideas and visions and dreams for a better world. Being young is to still cherish hope, hope for a bright future. This hope motivates young people to strive for a transformation to a just, inclusive and sustainable society and economy. If our society listens to its young voices, their hopes, ideas and dreams can play an important role in driving forward a just and fast transition to a green society and economy.

In our consultations, we have asked young people all across Europe questions about their understanding of living a sustainable life, about what barriers they perceive and about their needs, ideas and dreams concerning a just and fast transition to a sustainable world. Later on, we present all these ideas, assessments and proposals in detail, but to understand how young people think and feel and what inspires these ideas, assessments and proposals we first need to gain a general understanding about how young people perceive the climate crisis and climate justice. The following mindsets and perceptions could be observed among the majority of the young people taking part in our consultations:

#### **1) Responsibility, solidarity and a simple life: Young people are guided by values**

First of all, how young people think and act about the climate crisis and climate justice is strongly influenced by values. Young people want to take their responsibility for future generations. Many are looking for ways to protect the climate and to care for the environment. They want to have a value-based lifestyle rather than to spoil themselves with unnecessary purchases and irresponsible actions. Many young people are willing to sacrifice material luxury and prioritize values such as friendship, family and a healthy environment. Indeed, many young people taking part in our consultations pointed out that they appreciate the idea of living a simple life and they try their best to live such a life. Yet, they are confronted with significant obstacles to do so.

**2) Eco-anxiety: Young people fear the consequences of the climate crisis**

While many young people do their best to live a sustainable life, they are also aware that changing their personal lives is not enough. Several of our respondents indicated they fear what the future might look like if political decision-makers and the society as a whole do not take action now. Eco-anxiety is closely linked to how young people expect the world to look. There is still a general optimism among young people that their voices will be heard - hopefully before it is too late. Should this optimism prove wrong however, it is also a potential source of frustration and anger.

**3) Feeling helpless: Young people are worried about the current lack of political ambition**

As scientists and experts tell us, the current actions to combat the climate crisis are woefully insufficient. Young people see this lack of ambition and urgency and many of them have the impression that policy-makers do not listen seriously to their calls for climate action. Thus, often young people feel powerless and ignored. For many young people, this experience is very frustrating. This, in turn, runs the risk that young people lose their motivation and stop believing that their own efforts to live more sustainably are meaningful. In this context, other generations, countries or groups not taking responsibility are seen as behaving in an unfair manner.

**4) Thinking big: Young people want us all to act together**

Finally, young people also emphasize that we all need to work together to solve the climate crisis. For many young people, community and solidarity are particularly important values. At the same time, young people tend to think big: They are fully aware that for a real transition it is not enough to transform their own lives, but that we need to transform the entire state, the entire economy and our entire society! To achieve a just and fair society, our system crucially needs significant changes.

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# **YOUNG PEOPLE'S OPINIONS, VISIONS AND IDEAS ON CLIMATE JUSTICE**

## **THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE JUSTICE**

### **4.) A GREEN AND JUST EUROPE**

#### **4.1.) A GREEN AND JUST LIFE**

In our daily lives, we are confronted with basic needs that need to be fulfilled: All of us need food and beverages for nutrition. All of us need clothing. All of us need mobility to be able to meet with friends, attend school or go to work. All of us need electricity and a place to live. And all of us need a source of income to fund these needs. And the fulfillment of these basic needs is a human right, for instance, guaranteed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The current infrastructure of consumption, however, as young people in our consultations report, has severe deficits. In many cases, sustainable options of consumption are not available at all or not accessible for many young people. Therefore, even though a vast majority of young people aim to live a more sustainable life, socio-economic and other barriers make it hard or basically impossible to live a truly sustainable life.

In this section, we want to describe the challenges young people are confronted with in their daily lives and the barriers which prevent them from living a sustainable life. Moreover, we present the visions and ideas of young people on how Europe can overcome these issues.

#### **A SUSTAINABLE, HEALTHY QUALITY DIET**

Many of the young people consulted for this report explained that they wish to consume quality food and beverages, i.e., ones are healthy, produced sustainably (organic, seasonal, locally produced food, grown and processed under conditions preserving the environment) and under fair conditions (fair-trade, fair wages for farmers and their assistants). However, many of them do not have a high income, because they are students or have just started their professional careers. Thus, they often cannot afford to buy these goods, because they are too expensive. Partially, it was also mentioned that the availability of quality food in supermarkets is still limited.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Offer free quality food at schools and universities, increasing the variety of sustainable meat-free dishes at cafeterias
- Affordable quality vegan food should become the default option in public cafeterias
- Support the creation of markets where healthy, sustainable quality food alternatives are cheaper than fast food and processed food
- Introduce education at all levels of school (as well as in adult education) on how to cook easy and affordable healthy meals
- Plant fruit trees in public spaces
- Create accessible community cooking spaces, where instructions are offered on how to prepare food that is healthy and sustainable
- Reallocate agricultural subsidies from big agribusinesses to small farmers working based on high ecological standards
- Introduce an all-European label certifying (agricultural) products that meet both high ecological and high social standards, in a mid-term perspective ideally those standards should be obligatory for all products
- Introduce a mechanism to distribute fruit and vegetables that have exceeded their expiration date but which are still consumable to people in need
- Promote tap water as an affordable and more sustainable alternative to bottled water in communities with a high tap water quality
- Install additional water fountains with drinking water in public spaces, especially in educational facilities, school cafeterias, public transport stations
- Offer tap water for a charge or for free in restaurants and for free in school cafeterias

**Quotes:**

- “stopping to export their rubbish and old clothes and food-leftovers (chickens, milk powder,...) to those countries because that destroys their economy and makes them addicted to those imports. And by stopping to outsource all the production steps we don't want to have in Europe, for example the soy for our meat or the sweat shops that produce our crazy amounts of clothes.” (young person from Germany)
- “Little money and time. Thus sustainable choices need to be in supermarkets and on usual routes through the city + place of work or education. Lack of a central website on the topic (for Vienna), need to look for correct info and graphs and often don't know for sure what is really sustainable now. Includes food, energy, cosmetics and services (incl barber etc) especially.” (young person from Austria)

- “ We have a law against plastic bags, however I have to daily interrupt cashiers and say ‘no bag, please’. Most food is in packaging in stores and school. Water bottles are bought daily, even though it is not necessary. I think people would benefit from some more education about the topic and overall raising the younger people and next generations to have better habits.” (young person from Bulgaria)

## **SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING**

Clothing and other products we use in Europe are often produced under conditions violating human rights and workers’ rights. Child labour, exploitation, working conditions endangering, for instance, occupational safety and health are still widespread. Even though many young people tend to have a strong awareness of those problems, in most instances it is not visible under which conditions a product was produced. Fast fashion and the dominance of big clothing chains on the clothing market are considered by many young people to be serious problems. Many young people favor quality production over mass production and would like to be able to buy products that are more durable. Often, however, such products are either not available or very expensive. In the latter case many young people, typically having a low income or no income of their own at all, cannot afford to buy these products.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Introduce standards that require clothing to be more durable, e.g., by expanding warranty claims
- People with low-incomes should be supported to be able to afford durable products, while taxation on fast fashion should be increased
- Ban and penalize planned obsolescence for all products and control the implementation of the ban sufficiently
- Foster second-hand and exchange initiatives for clothing, e.g., by providing spaces for “clothing swap parties”, supporting initiatives that increase the acceptance of (affordable) second-hand fashion and/or teaching how to repair clothes
- Sustainable, socially responsible alternatives to the big clothing chains dominating the clothing market should be supported
- Educate about the harmful consequences of fast fashion on the environment as well as about the human rights and workers’ rights violations that often take place to produce fast fashion
- Introduce an all-European label certifying products that meet both high ecological and high social standards, in a mid-term perspective ideally those standards should be obligatory for all products

- Introduce a global supply chain law,<sup>6</sup> making compliance with human rights, social rights and ecological standards obligatory for the entire chain of supply and ensuring sufficient capacities for controlling the compliance with this law
- The taxes on advertising for products that do not meet both high ecological and high social standards should be increased and, in this way, the amount of marketing for unnecessary luxury products reduced
- Introduce a universal right to repair:<sup>7</sup> repairing a product should not cost more than buying a new one. Legal barriers should not prevent individuals, independent repairers and community repair groups from repairing broken products. Everyone should have access to spare parts and repair manuals for the entire (as long as possible) lifetime of a product.

**Quotes:**

- “taxing clothing (a lot of people around me buy cheap clothes, but they could better buy second hand or more sustainable clothing)” (young person from the Netherlands)
- “FORBID companies to EXPLOIT those poor countries. The workers in poor countries need BETTER CONDITIONS and HIGHER WAGES. We should go back to those times, where for example there wasn't a new line of clothes every week.” (respondent to qualitative survey from India)
- “Ban unsustainable textiles/clothes until workers in Asia get better wages and conditions, ban plastic!” (respondent to qualitative survey from Luxembourg)
- “promote SHARING and REUSING of products (examples: toysharing, clothes sharing especially for kids, when they grow out of their clothes)” (respondent to qualitative survey from Germany)
- “People really need to search out sustainable options and some people can't be bothered, they prefer convenience. Also, eco-friendly options are often more expensive, meaning ‘green’ issues may be regarded as a ‘middle class thing.’ We need more people to appreciate the urgency of the message and to get on board.” (respondent to qualitative survey from the United Kingdom)

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<sup>6</sup> <https://lieferkettengesetz.de/pressemitteilung/eine-regulierung-ohne-sanktionen-ist-keine-regulierung-eu-kommissar-reynders-kuendigt-entwurf-fuer-eu-lieferkettengesetz-an/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://repair.eu/>

## **SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE MOBILITY**

Many of the young people consulted for this survey experience difficulties with public transport infrastructure: Public transport is too expensive and often, especially in rural areas, unavailable or slow and infrequent and, therefore, inconvenient. Many of the young people taking part in our consultations also observe that there is too little safe infrastructure for bikes and pedestrians in many places. This hinders their ability to be mobile and live a sustainable life.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Make clean public transport cheaper and carbon-intensive transport more expensive
- Invest more in bicycles and public transport and less in infrastructure for cars
- Introduce free public transport for children, youth and young adults. The models in Luxembourg and Tallinn could be used as examples of how free public transport can be implemented.
- Improve the infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians and make sure that the infrastructure they use is safe
- Expand public transportation networks, especially to poorer neighborhoods
- Improve the public transport in rural areas by using innovative models of public transport like the Village Bus of Kölsillre in Sweden. Based on experiences from the Rural Transport Solutions project the EU could create a manual with best practices for rural communities as well as funding to initiate new public transportation offers in rural areas.
- Introduce an all-European train discount card instead of having exclusively national discount cards like “BahnCard”, the SNCF discount card, ÖBB Vorteilskarte, etc. and improve trans-European rail connections, making sustainable cross-border commuting and travel easier and more affordable
- Introduce a right to part-time home office, if the employee desires to work from home. A sufficient internet connection should be available for this purpose, also in rural areas. The internet costs should be funded by the employer. However, no employee should be forced to do home office if they do not have sufficient space at their home place.

### **Quotes:**

- “The infrastructure in our societies make it hard. For example most shops sell products in plastic. Also, public transport is more expensive than driving a car or going with an airplane, besides public transport doesn't easily reach many places. Furthermore, we are constantly faced with advertising that works on our subconsciousness and makes us buy unnecessary stuff. Besides, for companies, like farmers that want to produce sustainably often face difficult and discouraging legislation and subsidies, which make it difficult to change practices.” (young person from the Netherlands)

- “Call a meeting of transportation leaders and figure out appropriate targets, funding levels, and funding options to electrify airplane transport while encouraging partnerships/mergers between airlines and rail companies so airline companies don't feel like they'll entirely collapse in the transition to rail and as demand shifts. They also will be faced with requirements to reduce emissions quickly and I want that to be clear to them.” (young person from the United States)
- “In addition, my work requires me to travel a lot, with very polluting transportation means, and I cannot say no.” (young person from Portugal)
- “Lack of people listening to the rules. That they should reduce their usage of fossil fuels and use renewable sources, don't use cars use public transport but transport takes a lot of time to take you to your place, you get late and tired because of the long journey” (young person from the United Kingdom)
- “I have a job that requires me to transport to places I cannot reach by train or bus, this is a problem that could be solved politically.” (young person from Denmark)
- “Subsidize international railway transportation to be cheaper than flying” (young person from the Czech Republic)

## **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SUPPLY AND HOUSING**

Young people perceive using energy from renewable sources as one of the most important priorities for the transition to a green society and economy. They expect the European Union and its member states to phase out fossil fuels, to cut all kinds of subsidies for fossil fuels and to accelerate the transition to an energy infrastructure based on 100% renewable energy. Many young people are willing to contribute to this transition by adapting their life-styles in order to save energy. While some young people already have a lot of knowledge about how to save energy, other young people still lack relevant information on reducing their energy consumption. Some particularly efficient measures, such as installing insulation for buildings and using a green energy provider, however, also impose additional costs (if they are available as an option at all) - costs which not all young people can afford. Therefore, it is the duty of the European Union and its member states to provide a green and affordable energy infrastructure accessible to all citizens. Until such infrastructure is available, young people should receive support, in order to make access to green electricity possible and energy saving measures in general affordable.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Support a quick transition to renewable energies and commit to a timely phase-out of coal. EU investments in renewable energy need to be made especially within the poorest regions of the EU, e.g. by prioritizing such investments more strongly within the Structural and Cohesion Funds (SCF).



- Adapt support schemes for students, young professionals and NEETs in order to enable them to live an autonomous and sustainable life
- Make student housing, publicly funded housing, public buildings, etc. energy-efficient, including safe, sustainable and efficient insulation
- Provide green energy (electricity, heating) to student housing, publicly funded housing, public buildings, etc.
- Improve laundry rooms in student housing, publicly funded housing, etc. by providing sufficient space to hang out the laundry, in order to use clothes dryers less often and to save energy and electricity costs
- The profits from the energy sector should be shared. Renewable energy production can be comparatively cheap. Energy makes up a high share of citizens' living costs. Co-ownership ("prod-usage") can help to increase public acceptance towards renewable energy. Thus, the EU should find options with member states to increase the ownership of local communities and citizens of renewable energy production facilities.

**Quotes:**

- "Little Information and transparency on sustainable investment [...] higher costs for renewable energy mix in household" (young person from Sweden)
- "Transition of all countries to sustainable energy" (young person from the United Kingdom)
- "I would forbid using coal as a source of energy and support the member states when they look for the best sustainable replacements minding the country's climate, infrastructure etc." (young person from Finland)

**QUALITY JOBS**

The negative consequences caused by climate imbalances are not only felt in the ecological, but are also evident in the socio-economic arena. For instance, access to water and agricultural land will be dramatically reduced in many places, forcing people to abandon their homes and communities. Industries and settlements in coastal plains and areas prone to extreme weather events are already facing the negative consequences of the climate crisis, as well as the economies closely linked with climate-sensitive resources (i.e., agriculture, fisheries and tourism).

At the same time, negative impacts of the climate crisis are affecting people with low incomes more than others due to their lack of means to adapt to the consequences of the climate crisis (such as floods, fires, drought, unhealthy environments, etc.). This leaves them with limited options, such as migrating, changing their lifestyles or changing their jobs. Therefore, the consequences of the climate crisis are being unfairly distributed among different social classes and more should be done in order to share the burden.

For young people, a successful entry into the world of work means more than simply finding a job. It means finding stable employment or jobs that offer decent conditions. In the face of the climate crisis and the necessary transition of our economy, public services and public infrastructures, social protection systems will be key in helping our societies to become more resilient. This transition will profoundly reshape the labour market in ways that create both new risks and new opportunities for workers: The creation, as well as the replacement of jobs and occupations leads to a need for new competencies and skills. Certain sectors and regions, especially the ones that are dependent on carbon-intensive industries, may be more negatively impacted than others.

Many participants in our consultations emphasized the importance of young people receiving a decent income, either through better-paid jobs or through a universal basic income. This would allow them to gain access to healthier and more sustainable options, when it comes to food or clothing for instance.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Invest more in education to provide the skills needed in a vastly different economy and society and help young people transition to the job market
- Make the most out of the opportunities resulting from the restructuring of our economies, especially for young people: On the one hand with regard to preserving our livelihood, on the other hand by creating green/sustainable jobs.
- Implement a just transition mechanism on the national/European level: We must not prioritize environmental policies to the detriment of social policies (or vice versa) but make the necessary changes socially acceptable. By implementing a Just transition mechanism, we want to ensure decent jobs and social justice.
- Set a stronger focus on the social rights of young people: Provide an environment facilitating the growth and formation of organized movements and democracy at work
- Establish conditions on investment in companies, centred on their financial discipline and social responsibility (including especially conditions such as no dividend payment, no buyback of shares, no executive bonuses, no tax avoidance and no aggressive tax planning)

**Quotes:**

- “tightening the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) limits alongside with a higher financing for the just transition of affected regions” (young person from Romania)
- “Also, invest in education to make people ready for a changing job-market and help them reduce their environmental footprint. Then, I would give people a basic income, to lift them out of poverty, so they can take better care of themselves” (young person from the Netherlands)

- “Funding for upskilling and reskilling of workers from industries that will be affected. Including grants so they can afford to complete their education while still supporting their families” (young person from Denmark)
- “I would foster a local and circular industry! In respect of our planet and our workers” (young person from France)
- “Universal basic income. Because we know that people are willing to do work if they think it is useful, so if someone is reluctant to do work, it may be that the work is not useful, so it would be possible to reduce the unnecessary work and therefore the unnecessary use of our resources.” (young person from Austria)
- “Providing the basic needs like DECENT AND AFFORDABLE LIVING, FAIR PAYING JOBS, UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME, replacing growth with NON-GROWTH ECONOMIC MODEL, FREE EDUCATION, SHORTER WORKING WEEK HOURS” (young person from Czech Republic)
- “DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN WORK so that the workers can manage the economy in harmony with Nature and its communities.” (young person from the United Kingdom)

### **4.3.) A GREEN AND JUST ECONOMY FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

The manner in which our economies function is a vital issue in confronting the climate crisis, as well as transitioning to a more sustainable way of living. This undoubtedly requires a comprehensive, far-reaching and systemic transformation of our economic system. In particular, survey respondents frequently voice their views about living and working within a system that is oriented towards essential needs and rights, instead of short-term wealth maximization and over-consumption. Ensuring a just transition, so that the most vulnerable members of society do not suffer the majority of the burden in the monumental societal changes that are needed, is paramount. In order for the EU and its member states to implement measures decisively and on time, stable social and economic conditions must be maintained and strengthened.

A large number of the young people taking part in the consultations emphasize the problematic nature of economic systems and lifestyles that do not take the limits of the earth's biosphere into account. The economy obtains natural resources and environmental services from the biosphere and returns pollution and waste. While such a system does not automatically rule out growth (in the traditional economic sense), it does place limits on resource and energy use. Therefore, a just and green economy must increasingly view economic activity as nested within the biosphere, thereby seeking to formulate economic policy and theory that will fit within its limits. For example, International Labor Organisation (ILO) research points to tangible benefits in transitioning to more sustainable approaches, estimating that 6 million jobs can be created by transitioning towards a 'circular economy' which includes activities like recycling, repair, rent and remanufacture — replacing the traditional economic model of extracting, making, using and disposing.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Utilize, promote and support the development of more sustainable economic thinking and research: support concrete implementation of alternative approaches at the macro/micro level and facilitate policy implementation of best practices
- Break away from the reliance on GDP as the dominant measure of welfare - take alternative welfare indicators (that better account for economic factors which improve well-being as well as for those that diminish it) seriously
- Internalize externalities by supporting the aim of putting a price on environmental costs
- Support low production of durable goods rather than high production of flimsy goods
- Facilitate the development of leasing and sharing economies

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/weso-greening/documents/WESO\\_Greening\\_EN\\_web2.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/weso-greening/documents/WESO_Greening_EN_web2.pdf)

- Facilitate and significantly accelerate the transition to a circular economy
- Put more focus on reserving the exploitation of non-renewables energy sources for the development of renewable alternatives
- Support decentralization and “produsage”, i.e., consumers should be empowered to produce some of the goods they need in their daily lives themselves locally. Households could be, for example, supported to produce their own energy by installing solar-panels or to grow their own food by providing space for “urban gardening”.
- Continuously strengthen transparency - especially with regards to the economic interests of Western-led multinational institutions and multinational corporations
- Support increased democratisation of citizens’ workplaces - in particular, empower the voice of youth in their workplaces
- Dealing with the economic fallout of the coronavirus crisis should not simply mean returning to 'business as usual' (or worse). The crisis has highlighted the importance of investing in the resilience of ecosystems, social systems, the economy and our governance structures. Short-term recovery plans must take into account inequalities within the EU and act decisively to ameliorate these inequalities, rather than allowing them to become further exacerbated. Decisions related to the EU's long-term reality must consistently consider the risks of our economic model to our health, well-being and environment. This should be seen as an important stepping stone to ensuring that the EU strengthens its actions towards achieving a sustainable future.

**Quotes:**

- “Limit the amounts of emissions, force all countries to create a system for recycling each product, fund projects and technologies that follow those lines. For example, there are indeed in several cities in Europe systems that reuse organic waste as energy for public urban transport or that force a user to use a page for a container (mainly a bottle) in which a product comes. That could be not just an anecdote but a custom in every country and city.” (young person from Spain)
- “To me the cornerstone of living a sustainable life means making conscious, informed decisions taking into account the differences between ‘need to have’ and ‘nice to have’, in general but especially in regards to what you buy/consume, your daily living habits and how you deal with things that you no longer want in your life. It also means taking into account what resources go into fulfilling my needs and wishes and under what conditions it is created and brought to me.” (young person from Denmark)
- On obstacles/barriers to a more sustainable way of life: “All the distractions around us. Our society makes us believe that the more you own, the better you are.” (young person from the Netherlands, born in Germany)

- “I consider that the main obstacles are systemic. Our economic system and the social mechanisms which relate to this, make it difficult to live such a life. If we consider individual behaviours (but mainly I think the solution goes beyond individual behaviours), that goes for our consumption choices, but also for example having to work full-time, which makes it harder to act collectively or just be an active citizen within the society.” (young person from Belgium, born in France)
- “The problem is our economic system. The costs we pay for a product do not include environmental and social externalities. These are paid by future generations and innocent bystanders. As long as we do not change our economic system to include social and environmental externalities in the real price of products, a sustainable lifestyle is impossible.” (young person from Belgium, born in Germany)
- “Enable limitations for companies in their production chain from an exploiting habit towards a regenerative habit. To stop importing cheap, single-use, plastic products from abroad. Investing money in start-ups for green future designing and sustainable circular economy ideas. To limit the lobby opportunities for companies that don't have sustainable and fair solutions in their production chain. To urge for absolute transparency of companies' production chains. To implement climate adaptation / justice / nature pedagogics / non-formal education into the school system. To deprivatize agricultural land and provide it to regional communities. To stop industrial livestock farming and invest in agroforestry. To prohibit extracting fossil fuel from the ground and start to invest in products with a regenerative energy system.” (young person from Germany)

## FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE TAXATION

Although a sustainable transformation of our society and economy has the potential to save costs and generate new sources of profit over the long-term, it will initially require significant financial commitments. Our consultations indicate that young people are fully aware of these costs. At the same time, they very often have a particular sensitivity for questions of social justice and are concerned about the social inequalities within Europe. According to Eurostat (even before the COVID-19 crisis) more than 20% of the population of the European Union are at risk of poverty or social inclusion,<sup>9</sup> while reports warn about a growing socio-economic divide in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Due to its particular sensitivity for questions of social justice, the young generation expects that the costs of the transition to a green society and economy are covered in a fair way: i.e., those who can afford the most must commit the most. At the same time, the transformation even offers a chance to decrease the high socio-economic inequalities in our society and economy, as the profits such a transition offers in the long-term can and should be enjoyed by everybody, not only by the wealthiest.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/sdg\\_01\\_10](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/sdg_01_10)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>

The most efficient way to achieve a fair distribution of the costs of the fast, comprehensive and just transition is to make the tax system fairer. Actions harmful to the climate and the environment need to be curtailed by imposing taxes that at least cover the consequential costs of the damage caused by these actions. At the same time, sufficient subventions need to be provided to make it possible for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged to cover the (initial) extra-costs of living a sustainable life (see also section 3.1.). The costs, in turn, should be covered by additional contributions from the wealthiest members of our society.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Combat tax avoidance. Introducing the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base may be a valuable tool to help achieve this goal.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the capacities of tax investigation authorities need to be increased and international cooperation in the fight against tax avoidance must be strengthened.
- Introduce a European financial transaction tax, as it was proposed by the European Commission already in 2011.<sup>12</sup> Such a tax should be comprehensive and cover shares, bonds, derivatives and the mostly speculative high frequency trading.<sup>13</sup>
- Ban high-frequency trading, considering its speculative character and destabilizing potential.
- Introduce a tax on greenhouse gas emissions that covers at minimum the costs for the damages caused by the emissions. One ton of CO<sub>2</sub>, for example, is estimated to cause damage worth 180€.<sup>14</sup>
- Additionally, cut all subventions for fossil fuels in order to phase-out fossil fuels and shift subventions to sustainable alternatives.
- Adapt support schemes for socio-economically underprivileged households, enabling these households to cover the (initial) extra-costs for living a sustainable life.
- Further explore the idea of introducing a universal basic income.

### **Quotes:**

- “If there are true costs - then if for every non-sustainable action one has to pay in the form of a tax, and that one is conversely compensated for a sustainable activity.” (answer of a young person from Switzerland on the question of “What would help you and other young people to live a more sustainable life?”)

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. also <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0048-18%20-%20Policy%20Paper%20on%20the%20post%202020%20MFF.pdf>, page 15f.

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_11\\_1085](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_11_1085)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cidse.org/2014/05/12/european-catholic-leaders-react-on-eu-financial-transaction-tax-plan/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/hohe-kosten-durch-unterlassenen-umweltschutz>

- “creation of a European tax for all European citizens” (proposal from a young person from France)
- “I would propose a tax system in which the polluters pay.” (proposal from a young person from Hungary)
- “A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION and ANALYSIS of companies and industries, regarding their pollution and current influence on the devastation of our environment. Of course also higher taxation of companies and industries responsible for the highest ....but that’s just dreaming, which will never happen.” (proposal from a young person from Germany)
- “Lobby to move assets, loans, gov bonds, EU banks etc away from fossil investments and crack down on fossil subsidies. By making it a priority, leading discussions/being vocal on it with EU country representatives and media. All along implement citizen participation and communicate how citizens are asked to contribute and what the effect of their voice is” (young person from Italy)



## 4.4.) A GREEN AND JUST DEMOCRACY

The urgently needed fast and comprehensive transition to a green society and economy can only succeed if it is not based on special interests but instead reflects the needs and rights of everybody, especially of young people and marginalized groups. This requires that our democracy creates a meaningful space for these people to participate, empowering marginalized groups through political education and enabling young people to vote by lowering the voting age. The foundation of such a green and just democracy needs to be comprehensive youth participation, free and accessible education for all and strong youth organizations.

This section describes how young people imagine the green and just transition in detail. We show the current challenges for youth participation and sustainable education as well as the visions and ideas of young people for how Europe can overcome the current deficits.

### YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Even before the recent climate strikes young people have actively vocalized their concerns about the climate crisis. They protest on the streets to raise awareness and are engaged in youth organizations, collecting and consolidating the voices, needs and ideas of young people. They organize and contribute to environmental projects and reach out to policy-makers, hoping that their concerns and proposals are heard. At the same time, however, many young people have the impression that political decision-makers do not listen to them. Many young people feel ignored, resigned, disillusioned and powerless. While it has become to a certain extent easier for youth organizations and movements to receive opportunities to talk with policy-makers about their concerns and ideas for fighting the climate crisis, the political actions following talks and protests are mostly perceived as too little and too slow. Follow-up processes are either missing, not sufficient or invisible. Existing mechanisms for youth involvement are partially perceived as “green-washing” and/or “youth-washing”. It is, therefore, crucial to create meaningful structures of youth participation that are not merely symbolic within all processes relevant for the just transition to a green Europe. In particular, young people and youth organizations need to be able to co-shape the European Green Deal.

#### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Introduce co-management structures at the EU level similar to the Council of Europe’s co-management system in the area of youth<sup>15</sup>
- Introduce an EU Climate Youth Dialogue: The core of such an EU Climate Youth Dialogue could be Climate Roundtables facilitated by the First Executive Vice-President of the European Commission. The roundtables should take place on a regular basis, ideally twice

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/co-management>

a year and could be hosted by the EESC in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP). The youth input to the Roundtables should be collated by facilitators from youth organisations and form the basis of the discussion. This should then be formally sent to the EP and EC with both institutions providing a written response, which would outline which proposals can and cannot be implemented and why. The Roundtables must not become a 'talking shop' but rather demonstrate meaningful engagement and responses from policy-makers. In addition to meeting with the EC and the EP, the relevant presidencies could also be invited. This will ensure that young people can enter into dialogue with the Council of the EU. The Roundtables could be timed to match the presidency rotation so that young people can truly impact the presidency agenda. The youth delegates taking part in the Roundtables should be appointed in a democratic, representative and inclusive way. A role model could be the electoral procedure for the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe.

- The European Youth Forum, bringing together the European National Youth Councils and the big International Youth NGOs, and its member organizations should be involved in the development, implementation and follow-up of different mechanisms for structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU decision-making processes. It will help to create engagement that fosters young people's creativity and ideas at the same time making sure that these ideas translate into concrete policies.
- Introduce Climate Youth Councils at the national level: Each Climate Youth Council should be youth-led and for purposes of democratic legitimacy linked to the National Youth Council of the corresponding country. The national government should be obliged to listen and react to the advice of the Climate Youth Council. The reactions should be available publicly. The Danish Climate Youth Council can serve as a role model for Climate Youth Councils in other countries.<sup>16</sup>
- Support youth organizations, also by providing additional (structural) funds (see the subsection on "Sustainable and accessible youth work").
- Lower the voting age in local, regional, national and European elections. Age limits in voting laws exclude many politically active and well-informed young people from fully participating in our democracy by denying them a key civil right: the right to vote. Age limits in voting rights means taking away one of the most important opportunities for co-shaping the future of our society and, therefore, young citizens' own future.

#### Quotes:

- "First, it is the system within which each of us has to operate. A system, in which profit comes before the impact on nature or life of people. The need to pay impossibly high rents and food forces us to participate in such a system even if we do not want to. The political representation responds to all crises and climate change itself keeping in mind

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<sup>16</sup> <https://kefm.dk/klima-og-vejr/ungeklimaraadet>

the corporates' well-being and sustaining the current system instead of giving people a voice and creating a system, which will truly serve people and aim to be in harmony with nature. Importantly, different stakeholders, who are already suffering in this society (disabled people, women, especially women of the Global South, etc..), are not even invited to the negotiation table to come up with a Green New Deal, after which we are all better off. And last but not least, the individualism in our society prevents anyone from seeing his/hers fellow humans' well-being as the true goal of forming societies in the first place." (young person from the Czech Republic)

- "[There needs to be] more mainstream access to organic, and local products at an affordable price. And not to 'shame' people who don't or can't access these types of goods but rather try to understand together why they don't and find local participative solutions to remedy this" (young person from Ireland)
- "establishment of citizen assemblies that directly participate in creating solutions (with support of experts to design feasible plans)" (proposal from a respondent from the Czech Republic mentioned in the qualitative survey)
- "On the one hand, it means to take individual responsibility for our lifestyle (e.g. to reduce our consumer behaviour) and that everyone can participate in a sustainable society regardless of financial or social status. On the other hand that political decisions always include the whole society in a democratic way and are taken with regard to our natural environment." (young person from Luxembourg)

## **SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION**

Even though not all students are young and not all young people are part of the education system, a large part of the young generation are either students, pupils or apprentices. Thus, the survey respondents provided many ideas on how the education system can become more sustainable. Many respondents mentioned access to education as fundamental for living a sustainable life. Many also highlighted the role of education in the development of society, as education is a prerequisite for its long-term sustainable development. Furthermore, many respondents emphasized the role of informal and non-formal learning in improving sustainability awareness. It was also clear from the responses that young people care not only about their own access to education but about the life-long learning of people from all parts of society.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Improve access to quality education on all levels for everyone, with special emphasis on improving the inclusivity for those currently left behind. This is not only a challenge on a global level, internally in "developed" countries severe inequality in access to quality education persists.
- Make education universally free to remove access barriers.

- Fund initiatives aimed at educating citizens about sustainability. This may be in the non-formal education sector and/or funding outreach activities of formal education institutions.
- Integrate sustainability into the curriculum of all types of education. This is often not a political decision that the EU or national governments can make, as there is local autonomy in the education institutions. The best solutions for curriculum development may be found bottom-up by teachers and students; governments or the EU can incentivise such initiatives financially and help in spreading good practices between the institutions, as well as integrate sustainability into the quality assurance mechanisms for education.
- Funding for upskilling and reskilling of workers from industries that will be affected. Including grants so they can afford taking education while still supporting their families.

**Quotes:**

- “I believe education is paramount in helping poor countries in many ways - one of them being fostering sustainable development. However, the way I see it, it's the richer countries that live the least sustainably and hold the responsibility and need to change.” (young person from Denmark)
- “Development aid focused on climate, gender equality, and education (besides being human rights, investing in education and sexual and reproductive health and rights has the co-benefit of flattening the population curve and making local societies more resilient)” (young person from Denmark)
- “I would provide education in all levels of school on how to cook easy and affordable healthy meals.” (young person from Ireland)
- “[We need] More sustainable OPTIONS in our life, better education at SCHOOL, better EXAMPLES in the community” (young person from Greece)

**SUSTAINABLE AND ACCESSIBLE YOUTH WORK**

Youth organizations have proven to be very important structures to empower young people and to bring young people's opinions together in a democratic way. Youth organizations contribute to educating young people about how to live a sustainable life and are the ideal space to develop new ideas and solutions for how to make society and our lives more sustainable. They are also excellent forums for discussions on how to fight the climate crisis, and thinking outside the box.

However, organizing summer camps and other youth activities in a sustainable way often requires additional financial resources. Considering that at many places in Europe sufficient (structural) funding for youth organizations is still missing, these costs must often be covered by the members of the youth organizations or participants of the activities. These financial barriers, however, make it more difficult for young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to engage in youth organizations.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Youth organizations are very important structures to empower young people and bring young people's opinions and ideas together in a democratic way. To be able to fulfill this important function, democratically structured, youth-led youth organizations need to be provided with unbureaucratic, sustainable financial support.
- So far, youth organizations often rely on membership fees in order to fund themselves. Even when solidarity mechanisms are provided by youth organizations, asking for a membership fee reduction remains a severe psychological barrier for young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. Better structural funding allowing youth organizations to get rid of their membership fees would, thus, make youth work more inclusive.
- Support youth organizations to be able to organize camps and other youth activities in a sustainable way without being forced to impose additional participation fees on the participants; adapt funding schemes correspondingly.

**Quotes:**

- "We notice that for Chiro groups making changes often requires the extra effort that has to be made. Durable materials are often slightly more expensive than non-sustainable materials. Our groups have limited financial resources, which sometimes makes it easier to choose the cheapest option. Furthermore, it is sometimes not always achievable to choose the most sustainable solution. For example, when a group goes to camp they need a lot of material that is not easy to move by public transport." (response from Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, the biggest youth organization in Belgium)
- "It's important to work on a grass root level as well as governmental. Sustainability needs to be a well-known and hands on term within all communities far and wide" (young person from Belgium)
- "The youth work in Flanders contributed to the advice "Sustainable living" of the Flemish youth council. In this advice, we wrote down what measures our government can take to help young people live a more sustainable life. These measures range from investing in good cycling infrastructure to banning unnecessary packaging. The last 4 recommendations in the advice specifically deal with measures that would help youth work. All the previous recommendations would of course also make it a lot easier for young people to live more sustainably." (response from Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, the biggest youth organization in Belgium)

## **5.) A GREEN AND JUST INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM**

As far as the international system is concerned, young people that participated in the survey had a range of ideas and proposals in order to improve global justice in the face of the climate crisis. Many respondents first pointed towards the historic responsibility of the industrialized countries, arguing that upper and middle-class lifestyles in these countries have to change since they have the biggest CO<sub>2</sub> footprint. Other respondents expanded this idea by arguing that the EU should step up fast, leading the fight against the climate crisis by example. This could include domestic policies already mentioned in previous chapters, such as an expansion of public transport, a shift to renewable energy and a sustainable transformation of the economy.

### **Quotes:**

- “The only thing that can help us if our politicians act now and responsibly.” (young person from Hungary)
- “The EU should just step up fast” (young person from England)

### **5.1.) FAIR AND JUST TRADE**

#### **TRANSPARENT PRODUCTION AND LABELING**

When asked which factors make it difficult for young people to live sustainable lives, a lack of transparency was often cited as an obstacle. Choosing the sustainable product is not only more expensive but since production chains are not transparent and certification labels are perceived as not clear, also very difficult. The young people in our survey therefore called for government intervention both regarding transparency and the prices of sustainable products in order to allow customers a more informed and more sustainable choice. Regarding the latter, a reduction of import duties or taxes for sustainable products was brought forward, an idea that could well be connected with an extended government certification of socially and environmentally responsible products.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Require companies to be transparent about their production chains.
- Harmonize unclear labels and introduce government labels for socially and environmentally sustainable products.
- Introduce tax and tariff reductions for sustainably produced goods.
- Make it more costly to import food that could also be locally produced, e.g. fruit.

**Quotes:**

- “Often, the chain of production is not very transparent or hard to find.” (young person from Germany)
- “Governments and companies must make it easier and cheaper to be sustainable, reward us for choosing sustainable.” (young person from Norway)

**CARBON LEAKAGE AND CO<sub>2</sub> TAX**

As the production of goods is more and more outsourced to other parts of the world and many countries are involved in supply chains, the risk of carbon leakage, referring to the shift of CO<sub>2</sub> intensive production to developing or emerging economies, is steadily rising. This issue is also on the mind of young people, with one respondent arguing that the EU needs to stop shifting these industries to developing countries in order to “clean up” its own economy. In order to address this issue, young people taking part in our consultations suggested introducing a CO<sub>2</sub> duty for imports.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Support developing countries in sustainable development instead of shifting CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive industries there.
- Introduce a CO<sub>2</sub> tariff and a reimbursement for sustainable exports from the EU in order to keep them competitive.

**Quotes:**

- “stop shifting industries there in order to get your own country “clean”” (young person from Germany)

**FAIR TRADE**

Globalization has allowed multinational corporations to take advantage of differing environmental and labor standards around the world. In our survey, this problem was repeatedly pointed out, referring to a range of potential issues, including natural resource exploitation as well as unfair working conditions and salaries. Respondents see the responsibility of enforcing proper standards in factories producing for domestic companies in this context with the EU and other industrialized countries with high standards.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Ensure proper environmental and social standards in production through trade policy and sanctions against domestic companies.
- Enforce proper payment of workers alongside with opportunities for education.

**Quotes:**

- “fair working conditions for the people working for multinational companies” (young person from the Czech Republic)
- “Have a fair hour paid income so the big companies stop taking advantage of the poor workforce. Ensure education and access to education to all the people. Support small businesses and innovative ideas.” (young person from Romania)

## **5.2.) INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY: COOPERATION AND SUPPORT**

### **INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION OF CLIMATE ACTION**

Meaningful and lasting progress towards a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is only possible if countries work together to achieve joint goals. Furthermore, if there is an imbalance in climate action, citizens of the more ambitious countries might feel disadvantaged, leading to a lack of buy-in from the population. This was pointed out by one respondent as the obstacle to living a sustainable life. In order to avoid this, more international coordination and the inclusion of climate and climate justice issues in international trade agreements were suggested as potential ways to go forward.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- All countries should act according to their possibilities
- International trade agreements should include climate and climate justice issues

### **EFFECTIVE AND JUST COOPERATION**

International cooperation has a leading role in ensuring global justice in the face of the climate crisis, which was also indicated by the overwhelming number of suggestions and demands by the young participants of the survey. Both the historic responsibility of the industrialized economies and their technological leadership in green technologies are pillars of this importance, while the higher vulnerability of people in developing and emerging economies makes it a necessity.



However, as many young people pointed out, international cooperation has to be done right. This has many dimensions. On one hand, bilateral relationships at eye-level, focused on mutual understanding and targeted at the needs of the developing countries are crucial and projects need to be implemented in partnership with local actors. In order to achieve this, respondents suggested that we should reconsider the current system of international cooperation and focus rather on individuals and small NGOs, empowering them by facilitating their projects through local hubs or development incubators. Another idea was to expand current programs for EU citizens and allow talented people from other countries to receive an education in the EU, enabling them to achieve meaningful change in their countries. Another suggestion goes back to the idea of leading by example. By doing so, one young respondent writes, the EU could not only encourage other countries to follow their lead but also support developing and emerging economies by exchanging and sharing policy experiences. Therefore, existing cooperation programmes in the fields of sustainable development and energy should be expanded. On the other hand, the burden of the climate crisis is so substantial that cooperation should only be motivated by the needs of local populations, ignoring political and economic interests. Furthermore, as the climate crisis presents new challenges, successful implementation needs not only engagement of local actors, but also a more scientific and detailed analysis of the effectiveness of implemented projects as traditional approaches might need to be thoroughly reevaluated.

**Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Expand existing cooperation projects and ensure that they are implemented on an equal footing. Further implement projects targeted at smaller NGOs and individuals from affected countries, possibly through development hubs or incubators, empowering local actors to achieve change.
- Expand access to EU-funded programs, including programs that are currently limited to EU-citizens to give people from developing countries the chance to receive an education and achieve meaningful change in their countries.
- Lead by example. The EU should increase its ambition in climate mitigation and climate/transition justice policies and then share experiences with other countries, motivating them to act.
- Investment and trade agreements should include provisions for sustainability and climate justice to ensure common standards and protect people from exploitation. Furthermore, the EU should work towards increased market access for developing countries.

**Quotes:**

- "I would suggest that the EU gives access for everyone to learn and benefit from EU programmes." (young person from Romania)

- “The EU should actively work and support civil society organizations in poorer countries and not support governments if they don't work in the real path for fostering sustainable development.” (young person from Georgia)
- “Deconstruct the myth of the "white savior" doing volunteering and "saving the world" but to build partnerships where both parties learn and grow.” (young person from Belgium)

## **FIGHTING POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION**

One of the central issues with regards to climate justice is the uneven global distribution of negative impacts of the climate crisis. People in developing countries already face severe obstacles to living a good life, but due to higher vulnerability, they are also much more likely to suffer from the consequences of the climate crisis. Therefore, addressing global issues of poverty, malnutrition and lack of access to education, sanitation and opportunities is crucial. Young people in our survey demonstrated that for them, the basis of climate justice is to reduce inequalities today and to give everyone the opportunity to live a good life. This has a range of dimensions, with participants calling for governments of industrialized countries to support people in developing countries with respect to issues ranging from poverty and hunger over deforestation and environmental destruction to lack of access to education, gender inequality and sexual and reproductive rights.

### **Ideas, proposals and demands:**

- Increase ambition to fight poverty and malnutrition, in particular keeping the consequences of the current COVID-19 pandemic on people's livelihoods in mind.
- Introduce programmes to protect future generations from environmental destruction and resource depletion and make sure trade with Europe does not harm other societies in this regard.
- Focus development aid more on climate, gender equality and education.
- Introduce a climate and environmental aspect in both EU and national project guidelines to ensure that future cooperation projects include this crucial aspect.
- Increase support for developing countries with respect to natural disasters and climate adaptation to reduce their vulnerability to the impacts of the climate crisis.

### **Quotes:**

- “End poverty and hunger in all forms and equality, protect future generations from environmental destruction and resource depletion, ensure fulfilling lives in harmony with nature, create peaceful, just and inclusive societies and implement development work through global partnership.” (young person from England)

- "Help them with natural disasters because we cause some poor countries to have floods." (young person from England)
- "Poverty is not just a lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being" (Amartya Sen, Indian philosopher & economist)

## TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH

Technological progress is central to ensure that the necessary CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction does not negatively affect people's welfare or the opportunity for countries to develop. Especially as many developing countries upgrade their economies and move into new sectors, modern technologies are crucial to allow for development without the negative environmental consequences many countries have experienced in the past. Therefore, leapfrogging is not only a promising but a necessary step to allow sustainable development. Industrialized countries and especially the EU as a leader in green energy and production technologies, therefore, need to make sure that developing countries have access to these technologies and support them both financially and with the know-how to ensure that for them, green technologies are the right choice to make. This way, we can enable a larger share of the world's population to share the high standard of living we enjoy in the industrialized world without endangering our environment even further.

### Ideas, proposals and demands:

- Make sure to expand technologies to reduce, recycle and treat waste, which are currently only employed by a small number of countries.
- Award innovations that improve sustainability in health, food, energy and water.
- Fund investment in leapfrogging for industry in developing countries and support research regarding the local application of existing technologies.
- Empower young people and innovators and promote their innovations.

### Quotes:

- "Funding of research to make 'sustainable' technologies MORE affordable than more polluting ones." (young person from Sweden)
- "Recycling centers in countries that don't have many, banning plastic bags at stores and more biodegradable cartons for product packages." (young person from Romania)
- "Empower young people, promoting their innovations, inspiring youth and having a follow-up plan to ensure consistency." (young person from Kenya)

## **6.) ANNEX**

### **6.1) METHODOLOGY OF THE QUALITATIVE SURVEY AND THE OTHER CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES IN DETAIL**

#### **QUALITATIVE SURVEY**

The qualitative survey asked the following open questions:

1. What does living a sustainable life mean to you?
2. What barriers and obstacles make it difficult for you (or other young people around you) to live a sustainable life?
3. What would help you and other young people to live a more sustainable life?
4. How can the European Union foster a sustainable development in poorer countries in other parts of the world?
5. If you were the president of the European Commission, what would be your first project(s) to enable a just transition to a sustainable world?

Furthermore, the survey asked the respondents to indicate some demographic information about themselves.

The survey was available in English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Catalan and Esperanto.

The survey was disseminated widely via social media as well as by the member organizations of Generation Climate Europe and a series of other youth organizations.

#### **OTHER CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES**

Besides a qualitative survey, additional consultations with youth organizations and other experts and other consultations with young people were also conducted. Such additional expertise was provided for example by the youth of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements (FIMCAP), Chirojeugd Vlaanderen from Belgium, Katholische junge Gemeinde from Germany, Jungwacht Blauring from Switzerland, the School Council of St Peter's R.C. High School in Manchester in the UK, PUSH Sweden, Greentervention and Entraide et Fraternité in Belgium. Katholische Jugend Österreich from Austria contributed by sharing with us the results of their "Call for Change" campaign.<sup>17</sup> During the campaign, Katholische Jugend Österreich collected 4,087 postcards in which young people formulated their demands toward policy-makers for ecological, economic and social sustainability.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.katholische-jugend.at/callforchange/>

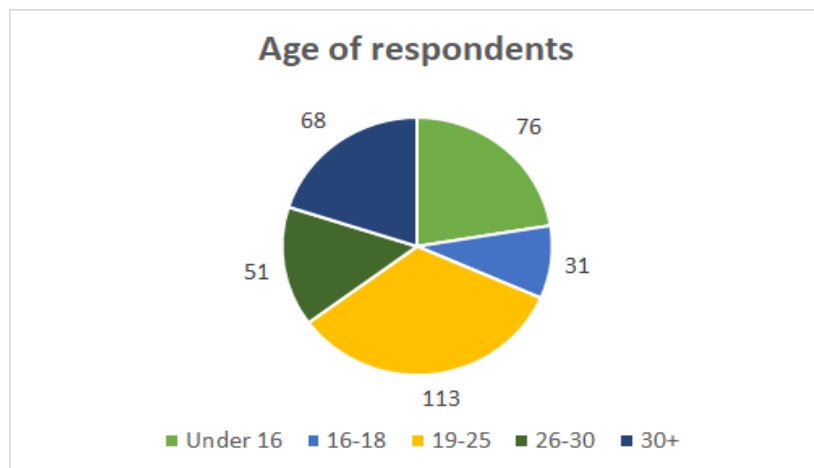
## 6.2.) DEMOGRAPHICS IN DETAIL

The participants of the consultations come from a very diverse set of backgrounds. For example, almost all member states of the European Union were represented in the qualitative survey. Young people active in youth organizations are represented as well as non-organized young people. A significant share of the participants can be considered to have a migratory background. Young people not born in Europe are represented well in the survey as well. Teenagers took part in the consultations as well as adolescents and young adults.

### AGE

#### Age of respondents in the qualitative survey

From 361 respondents 339 indicated their age. 22.4% of them were younger than 16 years old, 9.1% between 16 and 18 years old, 33.3% between 19 and 25 years old, 15.0% between 26 and 30 years old and 20.1% older than 30 years.



#### Age of young people participating in the other consultations

The participants of the other consultations for collecting input for this report mostly were aged from 18 to 35. The members of the working group preparing this report are also part of this age group.

### HOME COUNTRY

#### Home country of respondents in the qualitative survey

333 out of the 361 respondents indicated in which country they live. Young people from almost all member states of the European Union could be collected: 6 respondents are living in Austria, 26 in Belgium, 1 in Bulgaria, 7 in the Czech Republic, 8 in Denmark, 1 in Finland, 14 in France, 53 in Germany, 1 in Greece, 9 in Hungary, 6 in Ireland, 5 in Italy, 2 in Lithuania, 12 in Luxembourg, 11 in the Netherlands, 2 in Portugal, 18 in Romania, 1 in Slovenia, 10 in Spain and 6 in Sweden. Also young people living in countries, which are part of the Council of Europe, but not of the European Union contributed to the survey: 1 respondent is living in Albania, 2 in Azerbaijan, 3 in Georgia, 1 in Kosovo, 1 in North Macedonia, 2 in Norway, 5 in Switzerland, 1 in Turkey and 92 in the United Kingdom. 28 respondents did not mention the country they are living in. 26 respondents are living in other countries.

## **Home country of young people participating in the other consultations**

At other consultations for collecting input for this report, moreover, young people from Albania, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland have been involved. In the working group preparing this report, furthermore, young people from Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland have been involved.

## **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**

### **Country of origin of respondents on the qualitative survey**

332 out of the 361 respondents indicated in which country they were born. 7 respondents were born in Austria, 21 in Belgium, 2 in Bulgaria, 1 in Cyprus, 3 in the Czech Republic, 6 in Denmark, 1 in Finland, 16 in France, 56 in Germany, 1 in Greece, 9 in Hungary, 4 in Ireland, 10 in Italy, 2 in Latvia, 2 in Lithuania, 11 in Luxembourg, 9 in the Netherlands, 1 in Poland, 1 in Portugal, 18 in Romania, 2 in Slovakia, 14 in Spain and 2 in Sweden. 1 respondent was born in Albania, 2 in Azerbaijan, 3 in Georgia, 1 in Kosovo, 1 in North Macedonia, 2 in Moldova, 1 in Norway, 1 in Russia, 1 in Serbia, 4 in Switzerland, 1 in Turkey, 68 in the United Kingdom and 1 in Ukraine. 46 respondents indicated that they were not born in Europe. 29 respondents did not mention where they were born. 85 of the 332 people responding to the questions on their home country and their country of origin were living in a different country than the country they had been born in. 25.6% of the respondents, thus, can be considered to have a migratory background. 45 of the 332 people responding to the question on their country of origin responded that they were born in a non-European country (13.6%).

### **Country of origin of young people participating in the other consultations**

A number of the young people participating in the other consultations were living in countries other than their country of birth. Also within the working group drafting this report several people have been living at least partially in another country than their country of birth during the time this report was drafted.

## **YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS**

176 of the 361 respondents (48.8%) of the respondents of the qualitative survey indicated that they were or are a member of one or more youth organizations.

Many of the respondents are or were active in an organization focussing on sustainability, climate and/or sustainable agriculture. The following organizations were mentioned by the respondents: FUGEA, BUND, Climate and sustainable development action club, CliMates, Generation Climate Europe, Wake Up, Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for future, Fotspar, Fundacion gogreentoy, Generation Earth (WWF Österreich), Green Office Movement, Greenpeace, Abuja Climate Change Club, Auckland Climate Action, Young Friends of the Earth Europe, Students for Future, Impact Youth Sustainability, International Young Naturefriends, Naturfreundejugend Deutschlands, Klimaat en Energie Koepel (KEK) Netherlands, GreenDeal4Youth, Mediterranean Education Initiative on Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES), climate strikes, animal crossing Stan, Push Sweden, Scottish Youth Climate Strike, Youth and Environment Europe (YEE), Climate Emergency Scotland, Youth for Climate.

Many of the respondents are or were, moreover, active in a students organization and/or an international exchange organization. The following organizations were mentioned by the respondents: AEGEE, AIESEC, Climate Justice at Boston College, College Climate Coalition, DYPALL Network, AFS Intercultural Programs, Eco commute in school, Enactus, Erasmus Student Network, Young European Federalists, Government Secondary School Kurudu, Board of European Students of Technology (BEST), Junge Europäische Bewegung Germany, Uni nature and LEO team.

Furthermore, many respondents are or were active in faith-based youth organizations and/or a member organization of the International Federation of Catholic Parochial Youth Movements (FIMCAP). The following organizations were mentioned by the respondents: Mouvement Salésien des Jeunes (MSJ), AGLT, Laudato Si Generation of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, Don Bosco Green Alliance, Don Bosco Youth-Net, CCCCE Catalonia, Ephata Don Bosco, Jesus Youth, Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Franciscans Africa Youth Program, KjG, KLJB, Kolpingjugend, MCECC, MIJARC Europe, MRJC France, church choir, FIMCAP, Esplai Sant Pere i Sant Pau, Esplai Trencaclosques, Mouvement Xaveri du Rwanda, Kerala Catholic Youth Movement (KCYM), Youth Network of Interreligious Brotherhood AFRICA (YOUNIB).

Some respondents indicated also that they are or were active in unions, organizations for young professionals and/or organizations working with young people living in poverty. The following organizations were mentioned by the respondents: ETUC Youth, Junggärtner Germany, Youth Association for Training and Inter-employment Programs (TIP), ATD Quart Monde.

Some respondents also indicated that they are or were active in the European Youth Forum, national youth councils, youth parliaments, youth press organizations and/or youth wings of political parties. The following organizations were mentioned by the respondents: European Youth Forum, Grüne Jugend Germany, Jugendparlament Luxembourg, Jugendrat Luxembourg (CGJL), Junge Liberale Germany, Junge Presse Niedersachsen, Kreisjugendring und Ortsverein offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit, Mladi Zeleni (Young Greens Czech Republic), FYEG, GYG, National Youth Council of Ireland, Green Party of England and Wales, SJD DIE Falken, Jusos, Flemish Youth Council, NAYORA.

Also the following other organizations were mentioned by the respondents, many of them are grassroots and local community organizations: akzente Salzburg - Initiativen für junge Leute - Jugendinfo, BOCS Civilisation Planning Foundation, CNEL, el pubillatge, OSMON, Umbrella, Guides and Scouts, Hideaway, Bulgarian Red Cross Youth Organisation, Lions Clubs International, Lions Club of Chirgadi Town, Zugvögel - Grenzen überwinden e.V., Ohaha Family Foundation, Buswe Institute, Scouts et Guides de France, Sea-Eye, Swiss Scout and Guide Movement, TEJO - Tutmonda Esperantista Junulara Organizo, WOSM, WAGGGS, UMT, Youth Cameroonian organization, Fahamu Africa, YPAC, Confédération des MJC de France (CMJCF).

185 of the 361 respondents (51.2%) either did not answer whether they are in a youth organization or indicated that they are not a member of a youth organization.

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