



## **European Youth Demands towards SB58 and COP28**

Young people as well as young European civil society are at the forefront of the climate movement. As organizations representing young people across the European family, we have been advocating for ambitious climate policy for years. This advocacy is driven by the bottom-up nature of our organizations and reflects a shared concern about the future of our planet and societies, which is at the core of the political demands of an entire generation. Since we are aware of the need to address the climate crisis on a global level, we have also been active in the context of the UNFCCC for years, collaborating between ourselves as well as the larger global climate movement to include the voice of young people in international climate diplomacy.

After years of informal collaboration, European youth NGOs from a variety of backgrounds, including environmental, value based as well as political organizations, have more formally associated themselves in the Network European Youth NGOs at COP in 2022. The goal of this Network is to develop joint political positions, with the goal to advocate together for our collective political demands in the UNFCCC context. The following document is therefore to be understood as a collection of demands young people from across civil society would like to see addressed by all responsible political actors, including the EU as political embodiment of a joint Europe as well as national and sub-national governments both inside and outside the EU. The signatory organizations mentioned at the start of the document as well as their respective member organizations call on you to act on our collective demands in the interest of the millions of young people we represent, many of which are still unable to vote, but see their future increasingly threatened by the climate crisis.

# Signatories



## Overarching topics

Climate justice must bear a central role in the EU's mitigation and adaptation efforts in order to ensure an equitable sustainability transition. Youth participation, intergenerational equity, and human rights are all crucial elements in fulfilling climate justice. To quote IPCC AR6: "Adaptation and mitigation actions, that prioritize equity, social justice, climate justice, rights-based approaches, and inclusivity, lead to more sustainable outcomes, reduce trade-offs, support transformative change and advance climate resilient development." The recent adoption of UNGA Resolution 77/L.58, seeking an advisory opinion from the ICJ on the obligations of states in respect of climate crisis, further underscores the role of human rights and intergenerational equity in climate matters.

In this regard, we call upon the EU and its Member States to:

### Recognize the right to a healthy environment

The climate crisis is a human rights crisis. The recognition of a specific right to a healthy environment directly addresses environmental and human rights concerns and provides greater legal certainty, by contrast to the current 'greening' of human rights courts are forced to engage in. Effective environmental protection demands a shift in perspective from the protection of ecosystems and natural resources with a direct impact on, or economic value for, humans, to the holistic protection of nature. The right to a healthy environment was recognized as a universal human right in UNGA Resolution 76/300, and most recently endorsed in UNHRC Resolution 51/L.7. In addition, the incorporation of the right has been extensively discussed within the aegis of the Council of Europe (CoE); a draft additional protocol to the ECHR on environmental human rights submitted by PACE (the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE) is currently under discussion. Meanwhile, the rights of nature have been increasingly recognized at national level. In light of these developments, it is high time the EU recognizes the right to a healthy environment and moves towards the recognition of the rights of nature, renewing the EU's commitments to human rights and a high level of environmental protection

#### We call upon the EU and its member states to:

- Actively support the recognition of the right to a healthy environment within the Council of Europe, through an additional protocol to the ECHR;
- Recognize the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment at the national level, in line with CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20;
- Incorporate the right to a healthy environment in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights to bring the EU in line with national and international developments;
- Recognize the rights of nature, particularly at national level, to ensure a high level of environmental protection beyond the scope of human rights;
- Strengthen mechanisms for the enforcement of environmental rights by individuals and civil society at both national and EU levels, including strengthening access to justice in line with the Aarhus Convention.

## **Strengthen youth and civil society participation in climate decision-making**

The importance of public participation in environmental decision-making is underscored by the EU's Aarhus Convention obligations. Such participation must equally extend to the development of climate policy, given the wide-ranging and significant impacts of climate crisis, as well as mitigatory and adaptive actions, on individuals and communities. Upholding intergenerational equity requires the effective participation of youth at all levels of decision-making. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should be taken into account in this context, particularly the right of children to be heard in matters affecting them (Art 12). In addition, participation must be representative of youth demographics and include persons with disabilities (Art 29 CERPD), women\* (Art 7 CEDAW), indigenous peoples (Art 5 UNDRIP), ethnic and racial minorities and racialized persons, those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, and other marginalized groups.

We call upon the EU and its member states to:

- Advocate for the elevation of the recommendation on youth participation in the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan (title XVII, para 87) to the level of mandatory requirement;
- Advocate for the effective inclusion of civil society and, at minimum, the provision of a safe environment for civil society participation, at COP28 proceedings;
- Provide robust protection for procedural environmental rights, democracy, and the rule of law, by championing youth and civil society participation at high-level climate negotiations, as well as at regional and national levels through the establishment of genuine, effective, and inclusive participatory mechanisms.

## **Increase the ambition of NDCs and ensure their effective implementation**

As asserted in IPCC AR6, current emissions trajectories are depleting carbon budgets at a rate that will severely aggravate climate impacts experienced by present and future generations and restrict the mitigation and adaptation options available to them to keep warming below 1.5-2°C. In the words of the report: "There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all." IPCC AR6 further highlights that the insufficient ambition of current NDCs, combined with implementation and financing gaps, will jeopardize the 1.5°C goal and make it more difficult to stay below even 2°C warming. If the objectives of the Paris Agreement are to be reached and intergenerational equity respected, it is crucial that the ambition of NDCs be raised while simultaneously enhancing implementation and finance flows. The EU must take leadership in this regard.

We call upon the EU and its member states to:

- Take leadership in raising the ambition of NDCs;
- Strengthen NDC implementation through the enhancement of finance flows, including driving forward work on the establishment and fulfillment of an ambitious NCQG on climate finance;
- Adopt a climate-justice mainstreaming mechanism applicable to all public action, at national and EU levels, to ensure the equitable and sustainable implementation of decarbonisation efforts.

## **Recognize the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a threat to European stability and reduce energy dependency**

As youth in Europe, we urge the EU and its member states to recognize the ongoing war in Ukraine as a threat to our social, ecological, and economic well-being. This conflict, which directly impacts our generation, has led to energy and food crises that threaten our future.

We call on the EU to take urgent and meaningful action to support peace in Ukraine, address the energy and food crises, and reduce further risks to water, food, and energy resources. By doing so, we can build a more secure, stable, and sustainable future for all European citizens, especially young people fighting for climate justice and a just transition.

- Recognize the dependency of EU states on Russia for fossil fuels as well as the interlink with the Russian invasion to Ukraine and to reduce and phase out the import of fossil fuels from Russia while expanding and investing in sustainable energy sources, including solar, wind and hydro.
- Diversify energy sources for better energy security and stability and reduce the dependency on fossil fuels as fast as possible, thereby also contributing to climate action globally.
- To refrain from investing into new nuclear power plants, as nuclear energy can be the source of nuclear terrorism, as evidenced by the potential risks surrounding the occupied Kakhovka Reservoir and Zaporizhia, the biggest European Nuclear Power Plant.

## **Causes of the climate crisis**

The IPCC report is clear and states with high confidence that the causes of climate crisis are rooted in "unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals." The current trend that can be observed in global GHG emissions, notably in power sector emissions and the usage of coal, reflect the concern that the EU is not yet on track to meet the determined targets for 2030.

The achievement of an equitable and just green transition must be underscored and mainstreamed into all approaches made by the EU to combat the climate crisis. The reduction of EU dependence on fossil fuel imports as well as the bolstering of energy security and energy efficiency must be prioritized in order to see the vision of a just transition realized. Delivering on the 2030 target cannot be compromised or scaled down in any capacity. Climate action must not be reduced to mere targets but should rather be approached as necessary measures to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis.

Of the many factors that contribute to the climate crisis, inaction is the biggest contributor to why we are seeing its effects at the magnitude that it is impacting our world now.

Commitment to tackling the causes of climate crisis is essential to a multifaceted and effective approach to adequate mitigation and adaptation to the climate crisis.

What can the EU do at COPs (and beyond) to make a change?

## **Support The Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

After the European Parliament adopted its resolution for COP27 and made a historical move toward calling on nation-states to 'work on developing a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty', it is time the EU bodies align all together in an orchestrated support of phasing down and ultimately phasing out fossil fuels. The growing support from different governmental bodies, be it nations-states such as Vanuatu and Tuvalu, or capitals such as Brussels, Warsaw, Paris and many others, only reflect the heightened need of such diplomatic tool to address the threat posed by fossil fuel production. We call on the EU delegation to take concrete actions in supporting the development of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

## **Commit to a collective withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty**

The risks posed by the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) jeopardize the prospect of a sustainable, green, and just future. By enabling retaliation of fossil fuel investors against states for implementing green policies, safeguarding fossil fuel investments, allowing the misuse of investor-state dispute settlements (ISDS), and allowing investors to weaponize international arbitration against states, the ECT is fundamentally incompatible with the EU's overarching climate goals. The failed modernisation efforts of 2021-22 demonstrate the need to act now. EU leadership must prioritize the timely, coordinated, and collective withdrawal of the EU and its Member States from the ECT.

## **Establish a comprehensive framework that enables a fair and effective energy transition**

The success of the green transition in the energy sector depends on more factors than simply phasing out fossil fuels. This is why it is fundamental for the EU to engage in establishing a framework that enables a just transition.

Among the various elements to tackle, the EU should look into:

- Harmonising the definition of "low carbon energy": The EU must provide a harmonized environmental legal framework around a clear and common definition of 'low-carbon energy'. The internal debates over nuclear, hydropower, and renewable energies are diverting political attention from what should be our absolute priority: becoming the first continent to remove fossil fuels from its energy mix. Delegates representing the EU at COP28 should also work to include a clear definition of "low carbon energy" in the final agreement. The term "low-emission energy" in the Sharm El Sheik implementation plan was interpreted by many states as including natural gas, which created confusion that needs to be addressed.
- Protecting vulnerable consumers and centre citizens at the core of the green transition: The EU must impose an EU-wide definition of energy poverty and protective measures in all member states to shield vulnerable consumers from the potential price hikes resulting from the energy transition. This will ensure that all end consumers in all member states receive fair and consistent treatment. The inclusion of "energy communities" in the renewable energy and electricity directives was a major step in involving citizens in the energy transition. However, these structures lack visibility, and the full potential of active consumers is not being maximized.



The EU needs to work on developing these structures throughout its territory while ensuring they remain a citizen initiative. Beyond the technical benefits they can provide, in terms of demand response and network flexibility, energy communities have the potential to raise consumer awareness about the importance of adopting less energy-intensive practices.

- Emphasising energy sobriety: At the EU level, the notion of energy transition revolves around two main levers: switching carbon intensive energy sources for low carbon technology and incentivising energy efficiency. The question of sobriety is carefully avoided as it directly challenges the European economic model based on constant growth.

## Engage in effective implementation

The Fit for 55 package and the REPowerEU necessitate robust implementation plans aligned with the proposed targets for a just, fair, and sustainable future for the planet. The Fit for 55 package must be approached with ambition and purpose, both in development and implementation. Reducing emissions, particularly in proposals and amendments made on renewables and fossil fuel legislation, must be a priority that demands ambitious negotiating. In line with the goals indicated in the Paris Agreement and the COP 27 outcomes outlining the urgent need "to collectively reduce emissions through accelerated action" (FCCC/CMA/2022/L.17) in the realization of equitable implementation, it is necessary for climate ambition and implementation to be prioritized as a collective unit.

## Address overconsumption

Overconsumption is an environmental and human rights issue, accounting for the exacerbation of unsustainable and unethical resource and labour exploitation. Half of the global greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to the extraction and processing of raw materials, fuels, and food. The Global North's outsourcing of extractive industry and production to the Global South paints a misleading picture of emissions and evades accountability for externalized emissions. A green transition requires an overhaul in economic systems, not a shift from fossil fuel dependence to the overexploitation of lithium, cobalt, and other raw materials critical to renewable energies. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) requires a more holistic approach to be successful. It must be ensured that fossil fuels and other high carbon entities are not exempted. Its scope must incorporate cooperation in development, technology, and coverage in order to ensure equity in its application, particularly where countries vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis are concerned. Additionally, this requires the EU to hold itself and its counterparts in the Global North accountable for overconsumption, addressing emissions loopholes, and leading the way in weaning society off its addiction to economic growth and overconsumption. The green transition must be at the forefront of policy-making, particularly as it concerns energy investments and imports made by the EU.

## Consequences of the climate crisis

The climate crisis already has a tangible impact on people around the world. According to the IPCC, one in three people will be affected by the consequences of global warming. And climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic development will only increase. At the same time, consequences for biodiversity and ecosystems, including the loss of species, are no longer deniable. It is therefore clear that serious consequences of climate crisis will affect us. We must now ensure that these consequences are minimized and actively address them.

## Build a more participatory Global Goal on Adaptation

Climate crisis already endangers people and their livelihoods, which will only worsen over time. As some of the impacts of climate crisis will not be reversible in the medium run, adaptation will be the only way to protect affected communities, in particular vulnerable groups in the global south. Since such groups often lack the means to adapt, the global north and the leading historical emitters have the responsibility to act quickly and decisively to prevent humanitarian crises and mitigate the worst climate crisis impacts in the future.

We therefore demand the following:

- Since the GlaSS (Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work program) represents a crucial step towards addressing the adaptation gap, the EU needs to ensure that it delivers real progress towards a common understanding of the GGA;
- The EU should in particular work towards building a more participatory GGA, specifically including local stakeholders to ensure that local adaptation challenges are represented;
- The EU should increase contributions to adaptation finance and motivate peers to do the same, as adaptation finance continues to be a matter of high importance. In this regard, it is essential to understand adaptation and LD finance as complements which should not stand in competition for attention and financial resources.

## Implement debt relief in response to loss and damage

Despite the fact that increased mitigation remains the centerpiece of our struggle against climate crisis, climate crisis has already progressed so far that some of its negative impacts will be impossible to avoid and damages already take place. Since the burden of these impacts falls largely on vulnerable groups, which additionally often contributed almost nothing to cause the problem, addressing these losses becomes a vital responsibility of all historical emitters.

We demand:

- In the Transitional Committee, the EU must actively work towards an outcome that does not replicate existing power structures and achieves a high degree of operability. This might include limiting the EU's influence in the favor of vulnerable countries and pushing for participation of voices from MAPA and civil society;
- The EU should also ensure that resources from the LD Fund reach MAPA. Therefore, the EU should strive to work towards a fund that is transparent and informed from the bottom up, considering MAPA realities and addressing their needs;



- As a leading historical emitter, the EU has the obligation to sufficiently contribute to the Loss & Damage Fund to ensure that it is able to deliver on the promise of COP27. Funds have to be additional, not merely relabeled existing ODA funds;
- In the spirit of international solidarity, the EU should work towards a contribution structure based on historical emissions related to per capita GDP;
- Incurring additional debt could lead countries in the Global South into debt traps and significantly hinder their sustainable development prospects. Therefore, the EU should strive to ensure that funds provided through the LD Fund are grants;
- Public contributions should cover the required sums for LD Finance, private contributions should only be considered as an addition to this sum. Philanthropy cannot be a cover for the Global North's historical responsibility;
- In case public contributions are insufficient, the EU should consider alternative revenue sources, such as redirecting fossil subsidies or additional taxes on fossil fuel companies, international fossil-fuelled transportation or high net-worth individuals.

## **Rethink migration management in times of climate crisis**

The impact of climate crisis on the livelihoods of all people has serious consequences, often leaving people with no other perspective but to flee. The people most affected and therefore most likely to become climate refugees are those who both contributed the least to the problem and have the fewest resources to flee. The already tense situation in many countries, combined with further refugee flows, is exacerbating existing crises and spawning new conflicts. UNHCR cannot adequately work to protect refugees under current conditions.

### We demand:

- The EU and the UN must work towards an improvement of the conditions of refugees around the world and need to provide sufficient safe and legal ways to claim asylum;
- The aspects of migration policy in the EU and the UN needs to be rethought in order to protect those who have to flee due to climate or environmental changes. For this, the approach to addressing migration needs to be redesigned and countries need to build up sufficient capacity to receive and integrate climate refugees in their societies;
- That the EU, the UN and its partners provide more funding for UNHCR to deal with the consequences of climate migration and flight.

## **Consider the interdependence between biodiversity and the climate crisis**

The Climate crisis is fundamentally endangering vital ecosystems and the biodiversity of our planet. According to IUCN, the loss of biodiversity is currently progressing at a pace several thousand times higher than it would be without human influence. If this loss and the destruction of ecosystems continue, the earth could become uninhabitable. It is therefore crucial to address the causes of this human-made mass extinction through concrete action and investments in the protection of nature and biodiversity.

### We demand:

- In all international contexts, the EU should actively work towards jointly addressing the climate crisis and species extinction;

- The UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy are the foundation of biodiversity protection. The EU must therefore ensure a timely and effective implementation of both;
- The EU must review all its relevant laws and regulations for compliance with and achievement of biodiversity targets and look for more ambitious goals;
- At the UN and EU level the elimination of all harmful subsidies to biodiversity;
- The EU should work towards the effective usage of synergies between the World Biodiversity Council and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for instance by holding the relevant COPs in the same location and at adjacent or partly overlapping times;
- The EU must fight for 50% of the world's marine and terrestrial areas to be placed under conservation protection;
- The EU should push for regulations and subsidies around the world to comply with international guidelines for protected marine and terrestrial areas.