



Generation
Climate
Europe

GCE COALITION MANIFESTO for the EU elections



24 proposals for 2024 for a planet-friendly,
youth-inclusive and future-proof Europe



Ensure meaningful **youth engagement** throughout the entire EU policy-making process, to secure a well-functioning and rights-based democracy.

Young people are heavily affected by the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, and the environmental pollution crisis, which are not only putting their current lives in danger but also their liveable future. They have been, and are, at the forefront of actions and initiatives that demand urgent climate action and respecting our planetary boundaries. **Young people must be involved in every stage of EU decision-making processes.**

Youth participation must be **meaningful**, instead of being reduced to “youth-washing”¹. **Youth organisations** are an important partner in facilitating these contributions as they are connected to diverse groups of young people on the ground, understand their priorities and concerns, bring in particular expertise and ensure continuity.

Young people are not a homogenous bloc. A deliberative democracy should be **inclusive** by paying particular attention to the effects of policies on **marginalised communities and groups** including women, minorities, people with disabilities, people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, and people who are mostly affected by climate change, and give these groups a platform and the resources to participate in policy-making.

This participatory approach can only work in a European-level **democracy** that is stable, upholds the rule of law, ensures access to justice, and widespends participation in elections by respecting everyone’s rights.

We call the EU to:

Legally **recognise young people as a key stakeholder** to be consulted and involved when shaping (climate and environmental) EU policies, from the initial steps of defining policy priorities to the final implementation and evaluation stages;

Develop **formal channels of youth participation for each of the EU institutions** together with young people, with active representation of marginalised groups and communities in these channels;

Engage in **partnerships with youth-led organisations** in each of the EU institutions, and support them with **additional funding**;



Adopt the **EU Youth Test**² and the **Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis** (IBPA) framework³ to assess the effects of EU policies on youth and marginalised groups;

Create a **COP youth delegate programme** to include **young people in the delegations of all EU institutions**⁴ to the COPs of climate and environmental treaties (following the example of the EESC⁵), and fund the participation of MAPA youth delegates in COPs;

Lower the **voting age to 16** for the European elections, make it easier for people to **vote from another place** than their city of residence, and introduce **transnational electoral lists** for the European elections;

Make the **protection of (climate) activists** around the world a priority in the EU's foreign policy, and **protect the right to protest** in the EU.

Improve climate change and citizenship education and provide support for educational institutions to pursue the green transition and reach climate neutrality.

Quality climate change education⁶ is essential for young people to understand the causes and impacts of the triple planetary crises, and acquire the necessary resources to tackle them. It should also provide young people with the skills required to adapt and foster in a fast changing environment. Addressing the climate crisis is a society-wide issue that affects and involves all disciplines.

It is essential that young people have access to **quality citizenship education** through which they can acquire the needed knowledge and skills to participate as active citizens in our democratic society, and contribute to the solutions that will solve our current societal challenges. **Students** and

their associations should be involved in the co-creation and development of curricula for green and civic education, which extends beyond the school environment through extra-curricular activities and cooperation.

The combination of climate change and citizenship education contributes to **combatting disinformation and fake news**, and equips young people with critical thinking to rework our current systems and stop the destruction of our planet. **Educational institutions** should not only provide these knowledge and skills, but also demonstrate their commitment to address the climate crisis in their operations and become frontrunners to achieve climate neutrality.



We call the EU to:

Mainstream climate change education within and across all disciplines in the educational systems of Member States;

Increase **funding for youth projects** working on democracy and citizenship education;

Support educational institutions via **funding instruments and guidelines** to enable them to pursue the green transition in line with the 1.5°-objective of the Paris Agreement, and become **climate neutral by 2030**;

Provide more **funding for research and development** in higher education institutions which support and address the **green transition**.

Guarantee **social justice** in the green transition, and make environmentally-friendly alternatives affordable and accessible to everyone.

Upholding the principle of just transition, policies to address the climate crisis should not pose a financial burden on lower income groups. Instead, **climate policies should go hand in hand with social policies and respect social rights**.

Focusing on the energy transition, we do not only face the challenge of decarbonising our energy sources, but also the **energy poverty** concerns that affect a significant number of young people in Europe.

When it comes to transportation, there are still plenty of **financial and practical burdens** that prevent travellers from choosing **low carbon international transportation means** to move around Europe. Relying on consumer behaviour to achieve climate and environmental objectives is only effective insofar as the most **sustainable options are recognisable, affordable, and accessible**.

We call the EU to:

Guarantee the **right to energy**, by banning disconnection practices and ensuring a minimum energy supply for all, and create a **massive renovation programme** across the EU to provide **decent and energy-efficient housing** for all by targeting the most vulnerable household groups;



Remove the VAT on cross-border train tickets, and facilitate the creation of a **Europe-wide ticketing platform** for passenger rail;

Provide **additional funding for green transportation in Erasmus+ mobility**, and ensure that these funds are sufficient for widening the access to Erasmus+ for marginalised groups.

Radically rethink our current economic framework by shifting towards a system that respects planetary boundaries and works towards wellbeing for all, and align **funding and taxation** with the 1.5°C objective of the Paris Agreement.

Our current economic system continues to be based upon GDP-growth and extractivism. Despite efforts to transition from a fossil fuel-based to a green economy, the current green growth paradigm fails to deliver on social and global justice, and does not ensure meeting the climate objectives in time to limit global warming to 1.5°C. We need a **radical shift of our European economic system** where our society works

towards a **future that ensures the wellbeing of all people** (current and future) and stays within the planetary boundaries.

This profound economic shift requires redefining economic priorities, transforming the **fiscal and monetary policies**, downscaling the production of resource-intensive and polluting goods and services, and **tackling overconsumption**.⁷

We call the EU to:

Work towards a system which is based upon **universal basic services** where every person can rely on affordable housing, green job guarantees, high-quality healthcare, free and accessible education, public transportation, and environmental protection;

Shift from (mainly) gaining tax revenues from labour, towards (primarily) **taxing wealth and environmentally harmful, resource-intensive, and high-income activities, industries and individuals**;



Terminate subsidies, tax benefits, and financial support for fossil fuels such as the tax exemption for aviation fuels;

Phase out fossil fuels by 2034, halt the development of **all new fossil fuel infrastructure** immediately, and push for the conclusion of a **fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty**⁸ at an international level;

Develop a new framework on **sustainable resource use** tackling EU resource overconsumption, including science-based binding material footprint reduction targets, strengthened right to repair and other sufficiency measures;

Adopt a **new EU flagship programme** to adequately address the triple planetary crisis, putting **wellbeing, justice, redistribution and sufficiency** objectives at its core, while moving beyond the European Green Deal.

Future-proof EU policies, recognise the principle of **intergenerational justice** and consider the impact on and the rights of future generations.

Our current policies, in particular those where climate change and the environment play a role, are not only affecting the people of today, but also the **lives of future generations** given the long-term effects of the triple planetary crisis. Policy-making requires long-term thinking and should consider the implications for future

generations whose rights to a prosperous life on a liveable planet are currently not being respected. Therefore, we need a long-term **vision of a European Union that is future-proof** for young people and next generations, developed together with young people.

We call the EU to:

Recognise the principle of **intergenerational justice** in the Treaty on the European Union and **mainstream** intergenerational justice in EU policies;

Recognise the right to a clean and healthy environment in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;



Assess the **impact** of EU policies **on future generations**, and evaluate the achievement of long-term objectives and the needs of future generations in strategic foresight reports;

Appoint an EU **Commissioner for Future Generations** who serves as the guardian of rights of future citizens across all EU policy areas and create a **parliamentary intergroup** in the European Parliament **on Future Generations**.

References

1. We consider youth-washing a practice of involving youth to legitimise decisions without genuinely considering their input to make or change policies.
2. European Youth Forum, "EU Youth Test", www.youthforum.org/topics/eu-youth-test.
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4. The delegations of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.
5. European Economic and Social Committee, "EESC Youth Delegate to COP", www.eesc.europa.eu/en/initiatives/climate-change-conferences-cop/eesc-youth-delegate.
6. Education International, "Education International Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All" (2021), www.ei-ie.org/en/item/24244:education-international-manifesto-on-quality-climate-change-education-for-all.
7. N. Mrówczyńska, J. Beier, M. Karamperi, T. Stabile, S. D'Angelo and S. Abraham, "Manifesto for an intergenerationally just post-growth European economy" (2023), <https://gceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Manifesto-for-a-post-growth-economy.pdf>.
8. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/>.

Generation Climate Europe (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led networks on climate and environmental issues at the European level. GCE unites the largest youth-led networks in Europe bringing together 381 national organisations across 46 countries in Europe. We are guided by the voices of over 20 million young Europeans.

Contact us about our Coalition Manifesto at epelections@gceurope.org.

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