

Dear students,

Dear parents,

Dear staff of the European School,

On behalf of the **Sustainably Innovative School (SIS)** project and the **Environmental Group**, we are addressing this open letter to you while you are confined at home taking care of yourself and your loved ones.

Our ability to commute, travel and meet our friends and family, are things that we have all assumed as an essential part of our livelihoods and overall life, especially here in Luxembourg. Now that this has been hugely compromised as a result of all the containment measures, we cannot help but feel disoriented while moving forward during this new situation. As we have seen over the last few weeks, the changes we are experiencing can feel severe and even out of proportion. However, we must continue to remind ourselves that we are following the advice and consensus of the scientific community.

This means, as you all know, taking individual responsibility in order to reduce the stress on medical services in the health crisis we are facing, and most importantly, to save as many lives as possible! For this reason, we thank you for all the effort and sacrifices that you are making!

Nevertheless, we want to take this opportunity to remind you, that even though we should be conscious and aware of the social, economic, and even political repercussions, of this new crisis, it is only a matter of time until we recover that sense of normality that we so long for. Fortunately, this public health crisis is not going to last indefinitely, and it will resolve itself in a short time frame.

This said, our main concern as part of the environmental movement is still focused on a much larger on-going crisis which threatens the global balance of the climate. Unfortunately, no vaccination or immunity will fix that climate crisis. Once global climate change reaches a critical point, no measures can bring it back quickly, and all restrictions we might have to face, would apply for lifetime.

Although we see a few positive results of the confinement on the environment, like air pollution dropping, wildlife recovering or a decline in consumerism with perishable goods, it is sure that a sustainable approach will be needed to overcome the climate crisis, rather than a temporary forced lockdown. Living in one of the richest countries of the world, being privileged, fortunate and attending a reputable school like ours, we have a moral responsibility to act. The time has come to review our habits and a time of a crisis is always a chance to create momentum for renewal. Let us seize the moment and strive for a more environmentally friendly society, starting from now!

### **10 starting points to prevent the next crisis**

1. As long as the crisis persists, cycling to and from school, will not only help the environment, but also avoid the usual bus traffic where keeping at a safe distance might sometimes be difficult. In normal circumstances, when we emerge from lockdown, we encourage you to use public transport as well, in order to reduce car emissions.
2. Rethink your holiday destinations. Planning a local outdoor/hiking/biking holiday will not only support the local economy, but will, in addition, avoid huge quantities of carbon dioxide

emissions, which otherwise would contribute to the greenhouse effect on our climate. This comes in handy as you can avoid trouble with travel restrictions and higher risks of infections when travelling far away.

**3.** Reduce your consumption of meat and dairy. A (partially) vegetarian/vegan diet has a much smaller carbon footprint than meat. If you buy less meat and ideally organic food, intensive mass animal farming can be avoided where animals are kept under inhumane conditions. Not to mention the wide-spread use of antibiotics in mass animal farming might generate new antibiotic resistant bacteria, a possible source for the next pandemic.

**4.** Buy local, fresh, unprocessed food from regional markets or sources. This is not only a much healthier alternative than the processed food we normally consume, but also helps the local economy and reduces carbon emission linked to transportation and refrigeration.

**5.** Now, as many shops are closed, take the opportunity to start making things at home and upcycling stuff you already have at home instead of binning it. This way you can avoid waste and give things a second life. Before ordering online, think of something which you already have at home and which you can reuse, repurpose or repair. Buying second hand is also an option, as well as giving things a second life, like school books, school material, clothes, etc.

**6.** Replace meetings which would have needed a lot of travelling by video conference calls. Teleworking and online meetings can prevent you being stuck in traffic and reduce useless emissions. The time is ripe for a new technological age. We all have now improved our literacy in digital communication, let us keep up using it!

**7.** React positively and take advantage of the fact that we are spending so much time in our households by adopting an animal from one of the animal shelters here in Luxembourg. Remember that you are responsible for the animal's well-being both during the confinement and when things start reverting to normality afterwards. While you are providing a house for animal in need you will now have a new family member to spend time with that will bring you closer to nature.

**8.** Save energy by switching off unused electrical devices, prevent wasting heat and water, reduce waste. If waste is unavoidable, separate, sort, and recycle it. Staying 24/7 in the same house will make you become more conscious of your own consumption. Reduce it now and you will see the benefits in your own utility bills. Keep it up after the confinement and you will continue to protect the climate.

**9.** Mount solar panels on your roofs and isolate your houses. You will help the local economy and the climate, as well as your monthly electricity bill!

**10.** Participate in online strikes and get involved in the Sustainable Innovative School (SIS) project, e. g. as Environmental Delegates. Even if big rallies are forbidden now, time is short to be successful in the fight for climate justice. There are still many issues to be solved and the crisis is a good moment to reconsider habits and make things better.

The good news is that the measures we must take to solve the climate crisis are in no way as harsh as the ones we are currently living with. It will not be necessary to avoid contact with friends and family

members; it will not be necessary to stop all holiday trips; it won't be necessary to close borders and to stay confined in your households. As result, this current crisis has shown us that, faced with adversity, we are able to react quickly.

When we work together for a common goal, it is possible to succeed, but only then. The climate crisis is something that affects all of us and cannot be stopped or slowed down until everyone realises that climate change is indeed reaching critical levels and changes their behaviour. One person cannot change the world but if we all help together, we are going to make it. It is true that the biggest changes will have to be implemented by politicians, nevertheless, your perseverance, especially in setting an example for the rest of society, is what will facilitate that change.

Let us take a moment to rethink what truly matters. This time away has made evident what counts most for everyone. It is important that as this crisis subsides, we learn from this experience and use it as a precedent to avoid the next one. The measures put in place to tackle the pandemic were set in a very short time frame. However, the climate crisis which has been studied over the last decades, is still waiting for a strong appropriate response. We know it is coming. We already see its devastating effects on our planet and in our lives. We know it will not get better unless something drastic is done about it. At some point it will become too late to take action. Right now, is the best time to adopt new habits and rethink our lifestyle. We have already done it once, so we can do it again. There is not a plan(et) B. Let's act today!

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