Young Europeans: Why we need a Green Deal now more than ever

In these challenging times, young people stand in solidarity with those most vulnerable. We are listening to experts, changing our habits and making our communities more resilient to the corona crisis, because together we can save lives. Our member organisations are supporting vulnerable groups, medical students are volunteering in hospitals, young people are buying groceries for those at risk, and youth organisations are supporting international students who are in lockdown in a foreign country. We all have a responsibility in overcoming the corona crisis.

An immediate response is needed but the climate crisis remains the biggest threat to our generation and the European Green Deal is under attacks. We strongly call for the European Union and its Member States to align their recovery financial packages with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

The World Health Organisation, the International Red Cross, and the World Economic Forum have identified the climate crisis as one of the century's biggest drivers for health, humanitarian and economic crises. According to WHO, climate change will cause 250,000 additional deaths annually between 2030 and 2050 from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Millions of lives and livelihoods are dependent on our ability to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and reverse the escalating loss of biodiversity, threatening future food security. We need to maintain the intergenerational solidarity and the will to act on the multiple interlinked crises, that threaten our living conditions, that we are currently showing

Recovery financial packages must be compatible with the European Green Deal's objectives

To solve the economic crisis, governments are readying historically large investments for the thousands of people who lost theirs due to the lockdown. We must avoid channeling the investments into archaic industries by bailing out big polluters. Instead, the investments must be sustainability-mainstreamed. To build a resilient society that meets the needs of future generations and avoids the worst impacts of the climate crisis, governments should focus their economy-boosting initiatives on creating green jobs and ensuring a just transition.

The European Green Deals policies should not be delayed but only reinforced for a green recovery post Covid-19

The European Green Deal should not be postponed. The Industry and the business lobby have called to postpone the European Green Deal policies. The Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy should not be further postponed. The European Green Deal Investment Plan must be pushed forward. For example, the investment in energy renovations suggested in the draft for the EU Green Deal should be implemented sooner than planned. This will bring down the emissions curve, while stimulating local jobs. It is also clear that it is now time to invest in infrastructure for sustainable mobility in Europe. An integrated and modernised rail network will be key to reducing emissions from aviation. For this reason, investments into the European railway system, must be prioritised over investments into the aviation and automotive sectors.

The European Union must reinforce its climate ambition

The UN summits to negotiate global strategies for fulfilling the Paris agreement and setting new biodiversity goals have been postponed. However, we still have the targets of the Paris Agreement to uphold. Delaying our commitment will worsen the problem, with the cost of climate action increasing the longer we wait. Instead, we must focus on creating synergies between solving the short term economic crisis and the slightly longer term climate and biodiversity crises. We need ambition and the EU should aim to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 65% by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2040.

We will overcome the corona crisis and we will be stronger and more resilient as a result. Let us seize this opportunity to restructure the economy in a way that works for all Europeans. That fulfils society's needs and protects the planet, leaving no one behind. Now is the time to act and it is all of our responsibilities to do so.