



Young Europe Ambassadors

on the Future of Europe



Foreword

The future of our planet, sustainability concerns, climate change and the energy transition — for a few years, these topics have been on the top of young people’s agendas! This paper presents the policy recommendations of the 27 Young Europe Ambassadors for decision-makers on climate and energy policy.

In the framework of Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2020, a diverse group of young Europeans was invited to discuss young people’s visions for the Future of Europe with the 27 Ministers of European Affairs of the EU Member States (MS), 2 European Commissioners and over 30 additional government officials. 27 young people from 24 European countries aged between 18 to 26 were selected to take part in the project as “Young Europe Ambassadors”. The European Youth Parliament (EYP)¹ initiated this project with support from the German Federal Foreign Office. The initiative has served as preparation for the Conference on the Future of Europe – a major EU-wide initiative that fosters citizens’ participation.

This paper represents an extended version of the Climate and Energy policy recommendations presented by the Young Europe Ambassadors² complemented by proposals written by young people in the frame of EYP’s **“Power Shifts — Reflecting Europe’s energy”** project. The “Power Shifts” project enables young people from 40 European countries to monitor, be informed on and debate various European energy topics. The project is supported by the E.ON Foundation and focusses on the diversity and interdependence of energy policy, energy governance, technological innovations as well as the energy transition and sustainability.

1 The European Youth Parliament (EYP) is one of the largest and most dynamic youth organisations in Europe, currently represented in 40 European countries. Since 1987, the European Youth Parliament has inspired and empowered hundreds of thousands of young people to be open-minded, tolerant and active citizens. As a peer-to-peer educational programme, EYP is much more than the sum of its events – it’s an ecosystem that provides its volunteers and members with an environment to learn, grow and take on responsibility in a multitude of roles. The members also jointly steer and shape the future of the organisation at large, being encompassed by a vibrant network of thousands of people. You can find more information about EYP here: <https://eyp.org/>.

2 The Young Europe Ambassadors on the Future of Europe Paper can be found [here](#).

Key facts 2020:

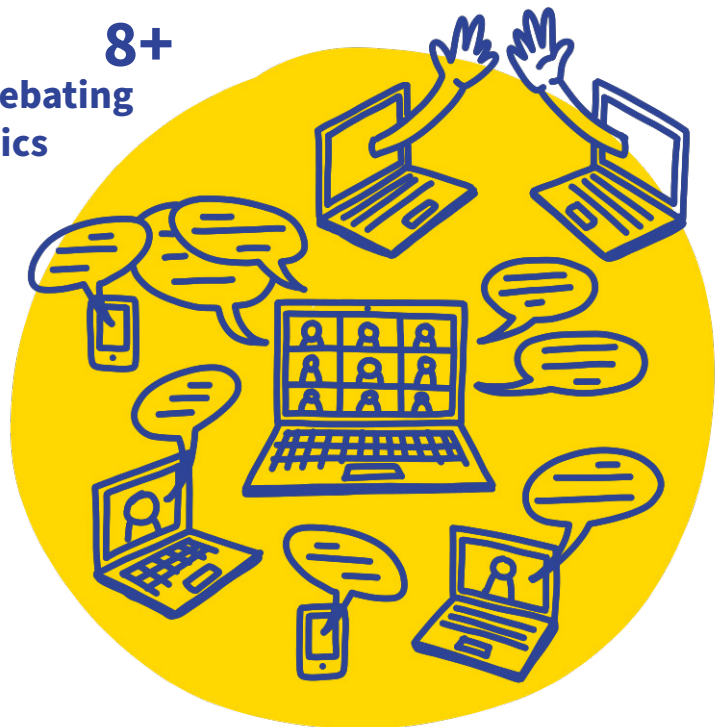


27
Young Europe
Ambassadors

35+
Countries



8+
events debating
energy topics



700+
young people involved
in energy discussions

Mission Statement

for the Policy Recommendations:

As the last generation able to effectively tackle global environmental change, we envision a carbon-neutral European Union where sustainability is at the core of all policies, and where planetary boundaries are respected. We believe that it is only through decision-makers' cooperation with relevant stakeholders that we can set up sufficiently ambitious targets to ensure a dignified and fair lifestyle for current and future generations.

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Global Leadership

Take global leadership in the transition towards sustainability. We urge the EU to renew its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), living up to its ambition to become a global leader of the green transition.



Context: For the first time in history, the international community has adopted a holistic agenda for sustainable development. By integrating the SDGs in both internal and external policies, Europe can make its policies more coherent and be at the forefront of the international sustainable development agenda.

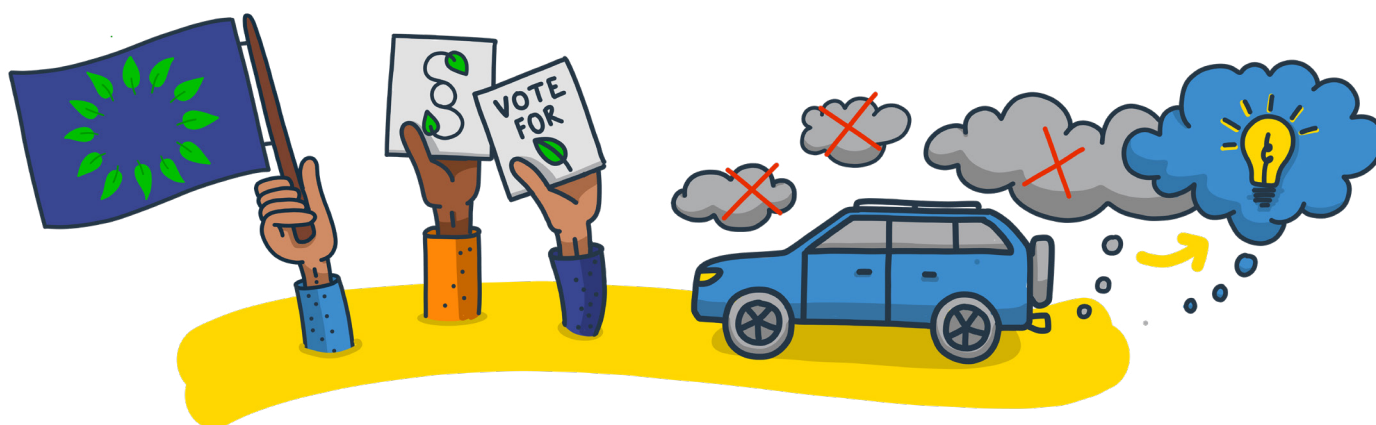
We urge the EU and its MS to:

1. Adopt a strategy to **achieve the SDGs**, in particular by explicitly integrating the SDGs in the European Green Deal.
2. Closely **monitor progress** towards achieving the SDGs³.
3. Use diplomatic and economic influence to promote the adoption of **ambitious international agreements** and push the international sustainability agenda forward, in particular at the:
 - World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) — Marseille 2021,
 - Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) — Kunming 2021,
 - Conference of the Parties (COP 26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) — Glasgow 2021,
 - World Ocean Summit — Lisbon 2021,
 - Food Systems Summit 2021.

³ See also: [ECON II resolution #Synergy – 1st Digital Session of EYP Greece](#)

Sustainability and coherent policy-making

Consistently embrace sustainability as a framework for policy-making. Ensure all EU policies are in line with the EU's environmental objectives and follow an ecosystem-based approach⁴.



Context: EU environmental legislation has developed gradually over multiple decades. In some cases, these policies are inconsistent or incoherent.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

- 1. Ensure that **environmental legislation** is:**
 - Effective and seen as necessary,
 - Efficient, balanced, yet ambitious,
 - Practicable and enforceable,
 - Inclusive of climate risks,
 - Coherent,
 - Simple, clear and accessible,
 - Grounded and negotiated.
- 2. Report, monitor and assess EU environmental actions and policies with common **indicators**.**
- 3. Assume legal duties and **align policies** with climate, energy, environmental and biodiversity commitments.**

⁴ The ecosystem-based approach is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

Just transition

MS should actively commit to the energy transition in their national economic and social spheres.



Context: 2018 data shows that the energy dependency rate of the EU has risen to 58%. The energy transition will affect the European labour market, especially in regard to **loss of jobs in non-renewable industries** such as mining and a lack of trained workers in renewable industries. Due to past investments in non-renewable energy sources, national and regional governments will have insufficient funds to invest in the energy transition.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

1. Tackle the future labour market crisis in the renewable energy sector in the next decade by requesting the European Labour Authority to develop and fund **retraining schemes** for workers in non-renewable energy sectors.
2. Call upon the European Commission to **allocate further funds** to renewable energy technologies, while ensuring pan-European accessibility and pragmatic application in rural areas of the EU.
3. Ensure energy security in all regions by supporting energy exchange among MS, thereby creating a **pan-European green energy scheme** and eliminating barriers (i.e. when obtaining building permits, spatial planning licences and grid access), as referenced in the Action Plan on Renewable Energy Sources in Europe.

Transport

Promote a comprehensive plan for a Europe-wide rail transport framework.



Context: At the moment, the public transport sector in the EU has too little interconnectivity between countries and ‘sustainable travel’ — including traveling by public means — is not incentivised enough.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

1. Tax kerosene⁵ for all flights to, from and inside the EU. Kerosene is the only fossil fuel not taxed in the EU (and world-wide). This would impact short-haul flights the most, which are the most pollution-intensive and most easily replaceable by other means of transport, namely by rail.⁶

2. Develop a true high-speed, high-quality, modern rail system that effectively connects important hubs around Europe and is comparable in price, safety and availability to current airplane routes, even though this means an upfront increase in emissions related to new infrastructure. In addition, assure an

improvement to energy efficiency and emissions of current rail networks.

3. Apply a standardised road safety programme to curb road fatalities⁷.

4. Further integrate the European Space Agency (ESA) in the EU’s science programmes and fully develop new reusable space vehicles like the Falcon 9, Retalt⁸ or CALISTO, which are proven to be necessary technology for space exploration in the 21st century. Create a new hub for space launches in Europe to decrease dependency and constraints on the French Guiana Space Centre.

⁵ Question for written answer E-004459/2019, [Introduction of a European Union tax on kerosene](#), (2019).

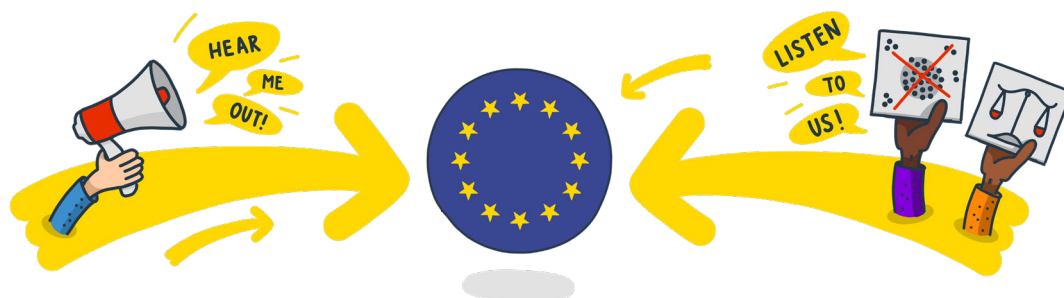
⁶ [Climate change: Should you fly, drive or take the train?](#), BBC News, (2019).

⁷ [Road fatality statistics in the EU \(infographic\)](#), (2020).

⁸ More information can be found [here](#).

Engagement

Ensure the participation of youth and marginalised people in decision-making processes.



Context: The Green Deal ambition of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 requires comprehensive economic and societal transformation, engaging all sectors of the economy and society. The goal implies a determination to leave no person and no place behind in the just transition process⁹. Citizens play a key role in the energy transition, hence their education on and awareness of energy and climate issues is essential for encouraging responsible energy consumption. Achieving the EU climate targets requires decisive action across policy areas, and it is essential that the EU is able to make necessary decisions in an efficient and democratic manner.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

- 1. Boost collaboration** with existing non-governmental organisations, civil society and research institutes to ensure that everyone is given ownership and responsibility in the energy transition, and in reaching climate justice.
2. Improve citizens' abilities to engage in **local decision-making** and support the organisation of events similar to the Citizens' Energy Forum, taking place in different regions of Europe.
3. Invest in **digital platforms** and support such work by developing templates and best practices¹⁰.
4. Incorporate youth and other marginalised groups in the **Conference for the Future of Europe**.
5. **Avoid the "tokenism"**¹¹ phenomenon when engaging with youth and marginalised people.
6. Ensure **meaningful and legitimate youth engagement** by promoting self-organised, institutionally-recognised, well-resourced and accountable youth participation in decision-making. In order to be able to effectively act when it comes to policy advocacy, young people must have permanent spaces to do so, where resources are not contingent on agreement with, or support of, those in power¹².
7. Implement climate change and its prevention as a part of **school curricula**.
8. Invest in the development of national educational programmes fit for the digital age to ensure **equal access** to quality digital tools at all levels of education.

⁹ [A more efficient and democratic decision-making in EU energy and climate policy](#), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, (2019).

¹⁰ The Young Europe Ambassadors' Vision for Digitalisation Policy can be found [here](#).

¹¹ Tokenism can be defined as participation "for show" in initiatives where citizens and young people ultimately have little to no influence.

¹² [Principles and Barriers for Meaningful Youth Engagement](#), UNMGCY (2017).

Plastics

**Ban all crude-oil based plastic items.
Subsidise further research and the production
of bioplastics.**



Context: Sustainable production has to exclude the use of crude-oil based substances, as such substances have a range of negative environmental and economic impacts. Plastic waste gyres the size of Texas are in the ocean that release plastic particles ingested by marine organisms.

Banning only a few single-use plastic items is not enough to tackle the massive waste and microplastic problem that the world faces. We need to **stop using plastic for packaging**, a trend that has increased due to COVID-19.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

Stop the **usage and production** of crude-oil based, non-biodegradable plastic by means of:

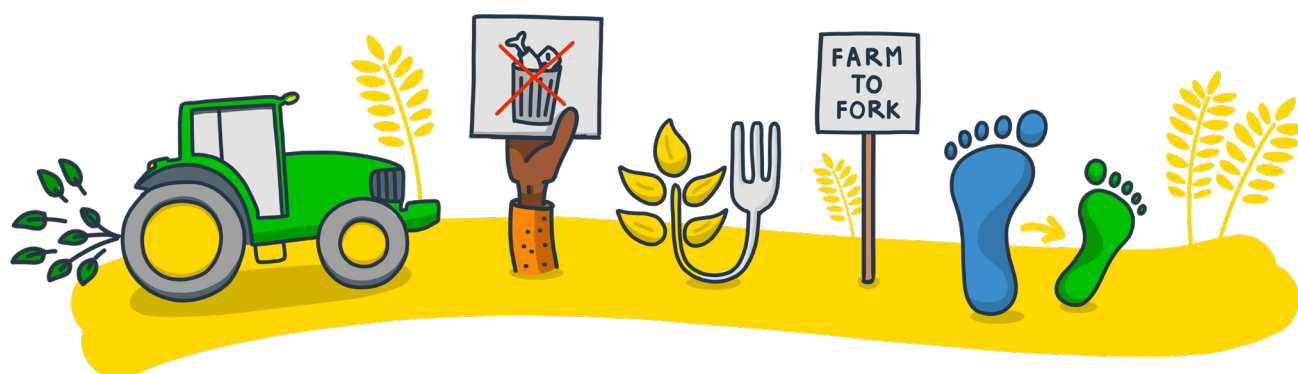
1. Imposing **higher taxation** on single-use plastics, until such plastics are no longer used;
2. Implementing **recycling facilities**, such as the bottle-refund system, across all Member States;

3. Supporting companies to replace plastic with biodegradable materials;

4. Subsidising further research and the production of bioplastics, e.g. polylactic acid (PLA) or polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHA).

Agriculture

Rethink the most recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and work towards the establishment of sustainable agricultural policies.



Context: Several trends in the farm and food sectors are contradictory to the EU's climate ambitions. Since 1962, The CAP has evolved a lot, became more complex and increasingly difficult to implement. Attempts to “green” the CAP are insufficient while there is an urgent need to ensure its sustainability for all its stakeholders and the environment.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

1. Support farmers and the transition of farms towards a **new food system** that the current climate, ecosystem, and biodiversity crises urgently require.
2. Set **agricultural policies' objectives** in line with those set by the Biodiversity Strategy, Farm to Fork Strategy and climate law.
3. Link the CAP objectives and indicators to the **Biodiversity Strategy and Farm to Fork** targets.
4. Ensure **coherence** of CAP Strategic Plans with the European Green Deal.
5. Compulsorily comply with the **Paris Agreement**.
6. Support **organic farming** with CAP eco-schemes.
7. Put in place a comprehensive, consistent **EU Common Food Policy** embedded in the frame of the planetary health diet and ensure European food sovereignty.
8. Allow for direct collaboration and **consultation with farmers** to implement and adjust agricultural policies.

Oceans

Establish effective and equitable global governance to protect the ocean and the seas.

Adopt an international agreement to significantly reduce ocean and sea pollution, stop overfishing and ban destructive sea-bed activities.



Context: Humans are extremely reliant on seas and oceans for subsistence and a variety of economic and social purposes, as well for the oceans' climate-regulating properties. However, anthropogenic climate change and pollution have severely impacted the health of the marine environment. These stressors particularly affect the portions of the ocean known as the high seas, or Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), for which there is a pressing need for global governance. Existing laws were created decades ago, and therefore do not adequately reflect the complexities of recent economic development or climate change.

We urge the EU and its MS to:

- 1. Expand and update** the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (**UNCLOS**) to develop regulations for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in ABNJ.
2. Create or mandate an authority to ensure compliance with UNCLOS rules.
- 3. Expand and ratify** the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (also known as the London Convention) and its subsequent Protocol.
4. Ensure **global governance of marine environments** are set under preventative, precautionary, substitution and responsibility principles, as well as an ecosystem-based approach.
5. Initiate **assessment procedures** and **knowledge-sharing** for the purpose of better understanding the importance of marine resources and habitats as well as the impacts of human activities on aquatic biodiversity.
- 6. Standardise monitoring, reporting and enforcement** within the sectors engaged in marine activity in order to achieve consistent and relevant assessments.
7. Make information regarding marine activity widely **accessible** and **accurate**, and release such information in a timely manner.

Legal Notice:

Published by:

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Sponsored by:



Federal Foreign Office



Initiated by:



The Schwarzkopf Foundation is the international umbrella organisation of the European Youth Parliament.