



Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal

October 1, November 25 - 2021



Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal



This Convention originates from a proposal to involve over 100 young Europeans, delegated by various faith organisations active at European level, representative of Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim confessions to exchange on the European Green Deal. Young delegates reflected on five thematic areas linked to the European Green Deal and will take part in a dialogue session with EU Commission's Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for the European Green Deal Frans Timmermans to express their proposals on how to shape future EU policies related to the ecological transition.

A discussion around 5 Thematic Areas:

Housing and Energy

Mobility and Transport

Agriculture and Food

Production and Consumption

Education, Ecology and Skills



Striking a Deal for our Common Home



As partners in the Art. 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, religious organisations are committed to engage a in dialogue with EU institutions on the most urgent needs of European citizens, including issues such as sustainability and the care for Creation. The Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal - "Striking a Deal for Our Common Home" is proof of such commitment.

In the Convention's first webinar on October 1st 2021, young participants reflected on the EU Green Deal and formulated proposals around five thematic areas linked to environmental policy. On November 25th 2021, young delegates will present and discuss these proposals with EU Commissioner and EU Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans in a dialogue around Europe's ecological transition.

The proposals presented in this document aim to provide a meaningful contribution for the success of the EU Green Deal and bring forward the ideas of Europe's religious youth in their commitment to the European project, to our Common Home and to the securing of a fair and sustainable future for Europeans and the rest of the world.



Striking a Deal for our Common Home



Tie the principle of energy efficiency, also, to carbon emissions reductions

The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) are the backbone of the European Union's policy for energy efficiency in buildings. While the reduction of energy demand in buildings through efficiency can be expected to produce long-lasting CO₂ emission reductions, a double requirement in energy performance certificate scores based on both energy efficiency and carbon emissions reductions would further discourage the use of technologies based on fossil fuels. This would contribute both to increase Europe's renovation rate and to better reflect the transformational aims of the Fit for 55 target. Due to this, we propose:

1

Within the EU's Renovation Wave (EED and EPBD), the EU to envision, design and implement energy performance certificate scores which are based in both energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions reductions.



What we propose



Energy & Housing



Incentivise electrification the integration of renewables through an Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) review

Since their purpose is to make the production and consumption of fossil fuels cheaper, fossil fuel subsidies in the EU remain a critical caveat for successful climate policies and a timely green transition. For the EU Green Deal to advance its decarbonisation agenda, national tax incentives for fossil fuels should be revised in favour of the promotion of renewables and electrification. While the reform of the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) might offer good returns in the good direction, this approach should not preclude the extension of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to include the buildings sector (Proposal no. 15). In this regard, we propose:

2

The EU to engage in reviewing the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) for the purposes of phasing out national fossil-fuel subsidies in alignment with the goals of the EU Green Deal and the Fit for 55 target.



What we propose



Energy & Housing



Binding national energy efficiency targets

The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) requires member states to submit indicative national targets for energy efficiency and report back in their National Energy and Climate Plans. The lack of a binding target structure risks sustained advancement as it opens the door to business-as-usual scenarios based on limited upgrades which do not envisage deep, transformational, cost-effective renovation. In the light of this reality, we propose:

3

Within the EU's Renovation Wave (EED and EPBD), the EU to envision, design and implement energy performance certificate scores which are based in both energy efficiency and CO2 emissions reductions.



What we propose



Energy & Housing



Nearly Zero Energy EU buildings

When it comes to energy efficiency in buildings, pushing beyond compliance into the territory of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) constitutes a strong political statement by public actors. Exerting leadership by the example in this direction would provide the EU with a stronger foundation to develop a green identity to further advocate for the roadmap of the EU Green Deal. For this purpose, we propose:

4

The EU to study the possibility of launching an EU building renovation wave articulated around the paradigm of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB).



What we propose



Energy & Housing



Recognise the green competitive advantage of the railway sector and prioritise it accordingly

With 75% of inland freight in Europe currently being carried by road, accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility within the context of the European Green Deal can only be materialised through the boosting of rail and the design and implementation of measures to increase and better manage the capacity of European railways. Rail transport is the mass transport mode with the lowest emissions, the lowest external costs, the lowest impact on air quality, the most sovereign and the one whose assets have the longest life expectancy. Yet, the railway sector is not, as of this moment, considered the backbone of the future mobility strategy of the Green Deal. In the light of this reality, we propose:

5

The EU to make European rail the centrepiece of its long-term mobility strategy, to match this alignment shift with investment prioritisation and subsidies and to coordinate together with EUMS how to better integrate national rail networks, systems and infrastructure.



What we propose



Mobility & Transport



Aligning pricing with policy priorities

Transport is considered the most critical industrial sector when developing a strategy to decarbonise the economy and, to decarbonise transport, pricing reflecting the GHG impact of each mode of transport can and should play an important role in materialising this shift. Achieving key targets within the 2030 EU climate and energy framework will require changes to existing subsidy structures within the EU transport system environment. In particular, the establishment of a GHG emissions-adjusted level playing field between modes of transport should become a policy priority for the EU. In this regard, we propose:

6

The EU to end fossil-fuel subsidies, including the tax exemptions in the civil aviation and maritime sector. To lower allowances within the ETS frame to the aviation sector and extend it to cover maritime and road transport. The EU to subsidise EU battery industry. GHG emissions considerations and not just economic cost-benefit should be included and pondered within the evaluation of public infrastructure projects in the EU.



What we propose



Mobility & Transport



A digitalised Single European Rail Area

The European rail network could greatly benefit from higher market integration, improved digitalisation and enhanced inter-national interoperability to increase its capacity and efficiency. Digitalisation alone has the potential to increase infrastructure capacity between 20% and 50% depending on the traffic type and signalling used. To achieve an integrated highly-efficient Single European Rail Area, the EU should channel efforts into standardising national rail systems, promoting cross-national rail management and market building, investing on industrial rail policy and empowering a rail-equivalent of EUROCONTROL to provide governance. In the light of this reality, and the fact that more than 50% of the railway freight transport in Europe is international, we propose:

7

The EU to work towards a Single European Rail Area which overcomes the “patchwork” rail geography which currently limits and drags the potential of European railways both in terms of capacity and efficiency. To establish a governing body to design and oversee the renaissance of rail as the environmental alternative to road and air transport.



What we propose



Mobility & Transport

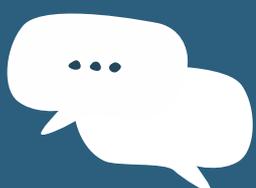


Foster a European network of night trains

Due to strong competition from low-cost air services during the day and a secular lack of investment, night train services across many EUMS are at risk of closure or have already closed in the last decades. Despite this trend, cases such as that of Austria have shown that, provided a smart mobility strategy is implemented, the popularity of the night dimension of rail transport can be boosted. Reviving an industry whose market driver, according to existing research, is comfort and not time nor cost in the context of a greying society could further contribute to find a greener aviation-rail balance within the context of the EU Green Deal's smart mobility strategy. In this regard, we propose:

8

The EU to conduct studies on an EU-wide industrial strategy which, attending at the policy example set by Austria, could foster a European Network of Night Trains to curb air traffic segments which could be substituted by a greener rail solutions.



What we propose



Mobility & Transport



From EU food carbon labelling to food carbon budgets in Europe

With food systems being responsible for around one third of the total current global GHG emissions, the promotion of sustainable food and the curbing of environmentally unfriendly diets constitute critical lines of effort in the fight against global warming. Empowering consumer choice through the implementation of emissions-based labelling for food not only would provide green products and producers an opportunity for differentiation, but also educate citizens on this fundamental dimension of the ecological puzzle. Beyond this, in order to provide effective market conditioning to favour greener technologies and ensure an equitable access to sustainable food, carbon budgets offer a just, simple yet effective approach to address food related emissions. In the light of these factors, we propose:

9

The EU to develop and implement a full supply chain-adjusted Eco-label for food products based on their production and distribution associated GHG emissions. Together with EUMS, to study the possibility of envisioning a carbon budget cap-based mechanism for food product to address and gradually de-escalate food-related GHG emissions in the EU.



What we propose



Agriculture & Food



EU Agency for food innovation

While still in its relative infancy, green food technologies will also play a critical role in further adapting our diets to the imperative of sustainability. In the context of a decarbonising global economy, green food products, production processes, technologies and patents will gradually gain both economic and geopolitical importance. As with other critical technologies of the upcoming future (such as AI), the EU's fragmented capital and research environments poses a caveat to technological leadership, global market share and strategic autonomy. To ameliorate this, the pooling of resources and coordination between EUMS at an EU level is necessary. Therefore, we propose:

10

The EU to study the creation of an EU Agency for Food Innovation with the mandate to coordinate, nurture, boost and upscale research on sustainable food technologies at the EU level.



What we propose



Agriculture & Food



Conduct research on the environmental and social impact of EU food imports and carbon offsetting

In the context of a globalised economy, to accomplish their stated aims and remain updated, CSR and environmental legislation in the EU require to be informed by in-depth research on the social and environmental impact of European supply chains abroad. In the field of food imports, as the second largest economy in the world, the EU should conduct due diligence on how European demand for food and domestic consumption affects critical Earth ecosystems and those who depend on them. In conjunction with this, carbon offsetting initiatives by EU companies often fuel and derive in land-grabbing practises which often take place in the context of human rights violations. To monitor and ensure a socially and environmentally responsible EU role within the global economy, we propose:

11

The EU to conduct or fund research to study and evaluate the role of EU food imports and consumption against the backdrop of social justice and environmental preservation. In conjunction with this, the EU should conduct or fund research on how carbon offsetting practices abroad by EU companies have impacted communities, ecosystems and on their long-term effectiveness as carbon sinks.



What we propose



Agriculture & Food



Limits to imports of highly perishable foods

While research has shown that what our diets contain rather than the provenance of our food is the key driver of our food-related carbon footprint and that international food-freight might, in some cases, even help reduce emissions, air-freighted highly perishable foods are a notable exception to these rules. With air freight emitting 50 times more CO₂e than shipping per tonne kilometre, the international logistics (including storage) behind some fresh products such as asparagus, green beans and berries are often ecologically prohibitive. In the light of this reality, we propose:

12

The EU to envision and develop a European strategy through which the promotion of local production of some highly perishable products coupled with the implementation of special labelling can contribute to shorten food supply chains for high-emissions freight product segments.



What we propose



Agriculture & Food



Smart, ambitious, Corporate Social Responsibility

Protecting life and the Earth through responsible sourcing, production, and engagement with consumers requires from a cultural shift which can only be fostered through ambitious and wide-scoped legislative action. In the field of due diligence, the European Commission's new proposal for a directive on sustainable corporate governance must reflect real transformative aims beyond just corporate compliance. In this regard, we propose:

13

The EU to deliver a EU transnational CSR framework which a) puts the ultimate responsibility for due diligence on individual companies, b) provides effective remedy and equips victims of abuses and their representatives -in the EU and abroad- to hold companies accountable, c) avoids safe harbours to legal liability while engaging in constructive sectoral and international dialogue, and d) actively promotes the production of sectoral guidelines on due diligence.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



An improved Rome II Regulation

Research and legal practise have revealed that the interplay between Brussels I Regulation (EC) 44/2001 and Rome II Regulation (EC) 864/2007 can become problematic when addressing corporate abuses in the field of human rights and climate litigation. In particular, the lack of special sets of rules tailored for the specificities of these two case-types prevents the level of accountability which would be required in line with current EU policy priorities in the field of environmental protection and human rights. In the light of this reality, we propose:

14

In tandem with the reinforcement of a mandatory due diligence EU frame, the EU should, in consultation with academia, international HR law professionals and EUMS members of the judiciary, develop the necessary fixes to align Rome II Regulation with the aims of the European Green Deal in the realm of climate litigation and justice.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



Strengthen the EU ETS system, include a social and an extra-market regulatory add-on

The EU ETS's ability to deliver a timely and just transition on its own and on its current set-up remains questioned. On one hand, the ETS currently encompasses the emissions sources responsible for just around 41% of the EU's GHG. On the other hand, the inclusion of critical sectors such as transport (20% of total EU emissions) and buildings (36% of total EU emissions) would likely derive in large-scale regressive social outcomes and enhanced inequality between EUMS once carbon costs are passed to end-users. Moreover, the ETS market mechanism cannot substitute regulation laying out new stringent emissions standards, a critical driver in forcing companies to spend resources on innovation. In the light of these factors, we propose:

15

To strengthen the EU ETS through a) stricter non market-based emissions-cutting mechanisms to foster the technological upgrading of Europe's economic platform b) the inclusion of maritime transport within the ETS system c) the inclusion of the wider transport and buildings sectors together with the implementation of a sufficiently funded Social Climate Fund to serve as an effective social shock-absorber with which to ensure and strengthen socio-economic cohesion within the EU.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



Intensify the regulatory offensive against the linearity of product life cycles in Europe

The EU's quest to reduce waste and through the economic reusability of materials away from throw-away business models and culture requires a steady and comprehensive regulatory pressure in support of circularity. A fundamental part of this effort is strengthening the right to repair, energy efficiency, reusability and fighting the practice of planned obsolescence. While we acknowledge progress through initiatives such as the Ecodesign Directive, we believe that more and more products placed on the EU market should abide by stricter sustainability rules and requirements. Following this assessment, we propose:

16

Ensure that the upcoming Sustainable Products Initiative (Ecodesign Directive reform) accelerates the end of the externalisation of environmental costs by economic actors through a) the design of a strategy to phase out unsustainable products, b) the across-the-board application and inclusion of the right-to-repair within the Circular Economy Action Plan, c) the rendering of planned obsolescence a punishable act in the EU and d) the introduction of an environmental performance Planet Score label for products to empower responsible consumer choice.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



Circularity and international justice taken seriously

Even though the EU currently occupies almost three times the per capita resource allocation that would legitimately correspond to Europeans under a global equitable and sustainable economic scenario, income growth remains Europe's macroeconomic horizon. Under this scenario, despite waste reduction efforts and the CEAP, the EU remains and will remain an overshooting consumption transgressor which actively contributes to global deforestation, biodiversity loss, collapse of fish stocks, water scarcity, soil erosion, air pollution, global warming and ultimately international inequality. In order to address this and bring justice and transnational ecological solidarity to the EU Green Deal, we propose:

17

Implement total aggregate and trade-adjusted resource-use targets for the EU for the purposes of delivering a parallel (material) green transition articulated around resource and consumption de-escalation. Design, develop and promote proposals for political economy regimes through the prism of socio-ecological needs. The EU to champion a European green diplomacy which acknowledges the need of advanced economies to de-grow in order to provide developing countries with the ecological space required to meet the needs of its citizens within our planetary boundaries.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



Improve the alignment between the public spending under the Just Transition Fund and the goals of the EU Green Deal

The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) focuses on making the transition away from extractive fossil-fuel and carbon intensive industries, yet the Just Transition Fund (JTF) provides financial fuel to sectors that also play a significant role in the warming of our planet and the endangering of biodiversity (such as agriculture, trade, transportation and fashion). Research has shown that investments in green skills generate the conditions under which the green sector and its technologies can prosper. By redistributing JTF spending from direct investment to green up-skilling, re-skilling and unemployment support schemes, the JTM can better align its main financial pillar with circularity and the aims of the EU Green Deal. In this regard, we propose:

18

The EU to revise the eligibility rules for the Just Transition Fund's (JTF) scope of support based on the European Green Deal's emissions reduction targets and the aims of circularity. To commit a larger proportion of the JTF's resources to the regional and local promotion of a labour skills environment which can give birth and nurture a green sector.



What we propose



Production & Consumption



Develop and strengthen partnerships with faith based actors (FBAs) in the field of environmental mainstreaming to achieve transformational change

Within civil society and in the field of global warming and the EU Green Deal, FBAs have the ability to transform the mandates of science and complex policy aims and frames into narratives through which the hearts and minds of citizens can be inspired and mobilised to spur behavioural change and action. As proven by the impact of the 2015 Laudato Si' Encyclical in climate negotiations and in the inclusion of the justice / ethical component in the environmental conversation, FBAs can greatly contribute to bring the transformational change that the EU aims and hopes to achieve. Because of this, we propose:

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The EU to involve and develop partnerships with Faith Based Actors (FBAs) at European level with the purpose of promoting and advancing ecological awareness and mind-sets across EUMS.



What we propose



Education, Ecology & Skills



Develop and strengthen partnerships with faith based actors (FBAs) to promote ecology within European private education and community-based formation

Within the educational sector and community-based formation, FBAs play an important -and often pioneer- role in bringing the theoretical and human dimensions of ecology and global warming to young European generations. This presents a unique opportunity for developing initiatives and coordinating curricular programmes around the promotion of the care for our Common Home and the importance of a just transition. Because of this, we propose:

20

The EU to involve and develop partnerships with faith-based actors within the education sector to deepen the centrality of environmental formation within curricular programmes and to develop and enhance cross-national cooperation around environmental education in Europe. E.g. through the Erasmus+ Programme.



What we propose



Education, Ecology & Skills



Establishing an EU Council / Commissioner for Future Generations

The EU's decision-making structures do not adequately reflect the interests and needs of future generations. While the EU has demonstrated a capacity for long-term strategic thinking, its impact assessment processes are often dominated by short-termism and an emphasis on cost-benefit analysis which prevent the addressing of issues related to inter-generational justice and equity. This has great importance both in the field of ecology and in the realm of social policy and cohesion in Europe. To fix this structural bias against future generations and to alert and provide guidance to EU bodies on the issues which affect the interests of future generations, we propose:

21

The EU to establish an EU Council / Commissioner for Future Generations with the mandate to alert and provide guidance to EU bodies and policy on issues linked to sustainability and inter-generational equity, representation and justice.



What we propose



Education, Ecology & Skills

Join us for the 2nd event on November 25 11:00-12:30 CET



Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans



[Register here](#)



Striking a Deal for our Common Home