Final Convention Report

Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal

October 1, November 25 - 2021

Organised by

COMECE

JESC Jesuit European Social Centre

FEMYSO

DBI Don Bosco International

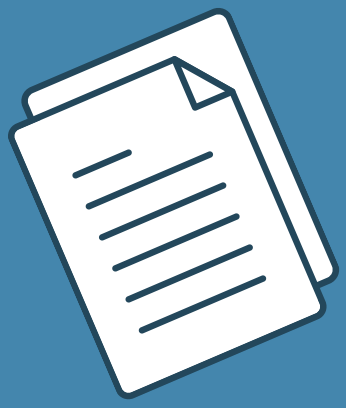
ebu European Buddhist Union

Young caritas europa

EF European Fellowship Of Christian Youth

fimcap

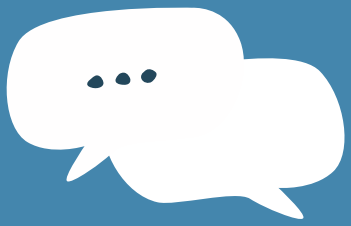
Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal



The European Green Deal was adopted by the European Commission in December 2019. Since then, its provisions have been elaborated upon in more detail in respect to key sectors: energy, transport, the circular economy, food, agriculture, climate protection and the preservation of biodiversity, among others. If the objective of this monumental policy in the history of the EU is to make our continent and planet more sustainable, then a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainability must be a new appreciation of nature, of the natural limits of our planet, our role within the planet's ecosystem and of the conditions needed to shape a society where people and nature thrive, enjoying fair access to resources and social and ecological justice. This bold endeavour requires a radical change in both mentality and actions which will only be possible gradually and through a comprehensive dialogue that involves all constituent elements of society, including faith communities.

Faith can give purpose to human actions, allowing us to understand our world in a deeper and more profound way. Faith also inspires and motivates individuals "to do the right thing" even when it is a challenge. Taking care of our Common Home, a gift from the Divine in many religious beliefs, implies caring for all living beings, especially for those in situations of distress, and reaching out to the most disadvantaged in society, working to preserve human dignity in every circumstance. Our faith also teaches us that everything is interconnected. In the face of the current complex and multi-sectoral crisis, there is no option other than pursuing solutions that address all aspects of our lives and to remain strong in our resolve to protect the Creation in all its diversity, complexity, beauty and grace.

Striking a Deal for our Common Home



As valuable partners in the Art. 17 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, religious communities are committed to an ongoing dialogue with EU institutions on the most urgent needs of European citizens, including on issues of sustainability and care for the Creation. The Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal – "Striking a Deal for Our Common Home" is proof of such commitment.

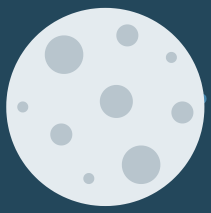
The initiative involved over 100 young Europeans aged 18 to 35, delegated by several faith-based organisations active at the European level and representing the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim confessions. The project aimed to provide young people of faith with an opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions on the European Green Deal. In the first webinar event, on October 1st 2021, participants reflected and formulated proposals on the European Green Deal vis à vis five thematic areas considered to be priorities for young people: Housing and Energy, Mobility and Transport, Agriculture and Food, Production and Consumption, Education, Ecology and Skills. In the second webinar event, on November 25th 2021, participants had the opportunity to share their proposals and concerns in a dialogue with Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for the European Green Deal.

The following is a comprehensive report of the first Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal. It sets out the 21 proposals developed by the young people who participated in the Convention so that they may be shared with a wider audience. The proposals and this report are a reflection of the commitment of young people of faith to a shared European project, the care for our Common Home, and their aspirations for the future of the European Union and its role in the world.

What we propose

This report sets out the 21 proposals that young people of faith have put forward, developed, and wish to see reflected in the European Green Deal. The discussions which led to these proposals highlighted both the urgency that young people feel towards the climate emergency and the solidarity among faiths to safeguard the natural world and to promote a just society.

Young people see the European Green Deal as an opportunity for a just transition towards the foundation of a just and sustainable society in Europe. For this to happen, the Green Deal must be ambitious in its intended outcomes in order to earn the support of young people who fear that the ecological and economic consequences of inaction towards climate change would be catastrophic. Through the Green Deal, the European Union has the opportunity to mainstream formidable but necessary decisions and societal changes in the areas of housing, energy use, mobility, consumption, agriculture and education, all of which are stepping stones towards creating a fairer and more sustainable Europe. The overarching message emerging from this Convention is one of overwhelming support for the Green Deal, with the request to align the emission reduction pledge with the recommendation coming from science: Europe should increase its Fit for 55 package to Fit for 65.



Furthermore, the Green Deal must be anchored in shared values. Young people of faith invite leaders to move away from the traditional method of measuring economic success (e.g. GDP growth) and instead embrace the circular economy as a means for humanity to thrive within our finite planetary boundaries, respecting and protecting all forms of life around our world.

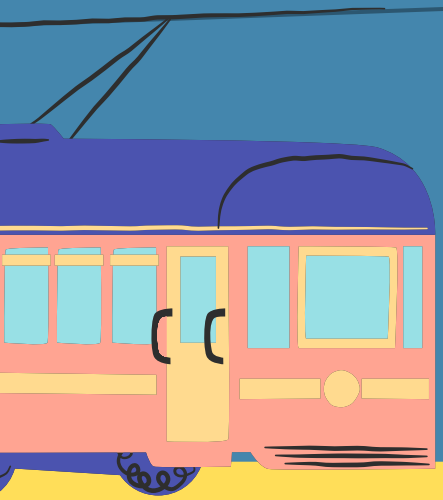
The participants stand ready to support and contribute towards the realisation of these changes in their professional and personal capacities, through mobilising youth organisations, advocating for ecological justice and for an inclusive, fair and sustainable society that is capable of meeting our current needs and those of generations to come, as a commitment to intergenerational and interspecies solidarity. This commitment by young people to be catalysts of change is nourished by their faiths and the proposals that follow reflect their shared vision.

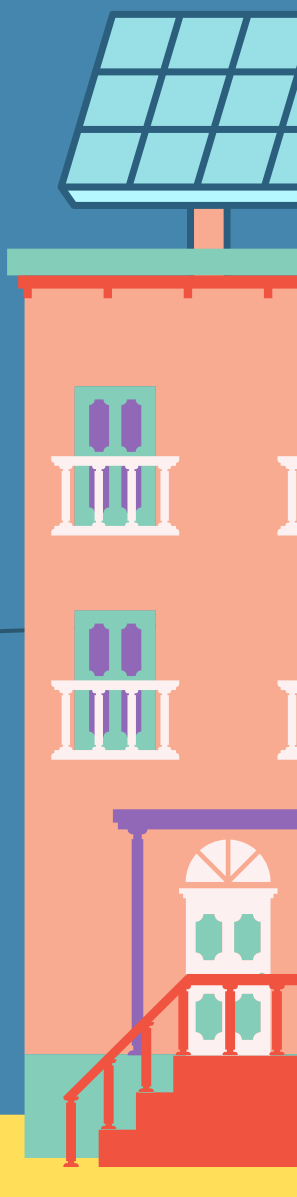
A transition anchored in solidarity and the recognition of planetary boundaries

Housing, Energy and Transport

Young people from all the represented faiths recognise the importance of tackling issues linked to energy production and consumption, housing and transport for the sake of the preservation of the Earth's resources and the sustainability of humanity's activities.

Since both lack of housing and overbuilding are two grave issues, young people recommend that they be tackled swiftly. Considering cities, housing and accommodation plans should uphold the right to adequate housing for all. Providing safe and sustainable housing to the most marginalised members of society means to recognize and protect human dignity. Affordable housing and the sustainability of buildings need to be clear objectives for city planners and brought into mainstream policy in all cities across the EU. Ecological houses and green infrastructure, as well as the renovation of old and energy-inefficient buildings, are among the solutions suggested. Young people are increasingly the population group most affected by ever rising costs of living and have limited access to decent accommodation on the housing market. In addition, incentivising participatory forms of urban planning that promote the creation of new or the preservation of existing green spaces will improve the quality of life of city dwellers and promote beneficial interactions with nature.

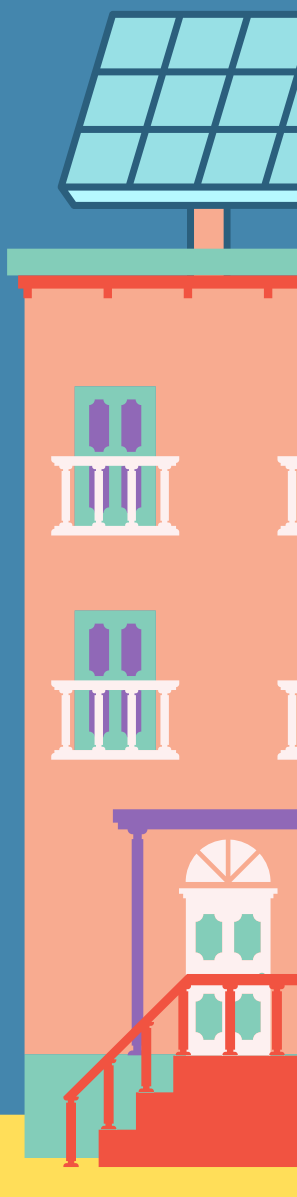




Housing, Energy and Transport

Just as housing must become more sustainable for people and the environment, energy production and consumption must respect and protect the environment and safeguard our Common Home. It has become urgent to turn away from models of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels in favour of more sustainable, clean and green materials and energy sources. Boosting investments in renewable energy sources, however, has not been widespread. Such good practises have been limited to most developed countries, which have the responsibility of cutting their use of non-renewable energy and assisting developing countries in their movement towards energy efficiency and sustainability. In a spirit of fraternity among peoples, as advocated by the world's faiths, efforts towards energy sustainability should be done in cooperation through the sharing of technologies and strategies that can transition all countries and peoples towards more sustainable energy systems.

To achieve sustainability in energy consumption and infrastructure development, transportation is a key issue that must be addressed. Transport is the means by which people can gather and engage, facilitating dialogue within societies and between peoples and religious communities. Transportation allows people of all ages to share experiences, get involved in common initiatives and has positive effects in tackling the rural-urban divide, favouring the further integration of societies. Access to transportation promotes human development and enables young people to experience different cultures, affording them an opportunity to grow in their understanding of the world. Green transportation modes need to be more widely distributed, sustainable, affordable and accessible to make them viable alternatives to more polluting forms of travel.



Housing, Energy and Transport

Tie the principle of energy efficiency -also- to carbon emissions reductions and issue binding national energy efficiency targets

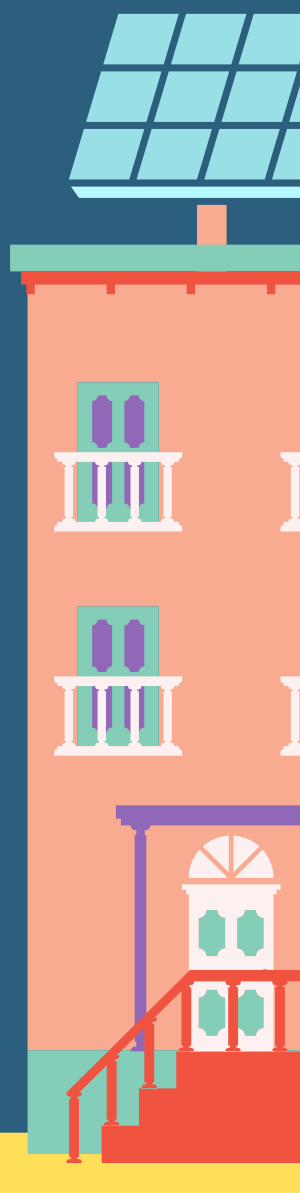
The Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) are the backbone of the European Union's policy for energy efficiency in buildings. While the reduction of energy demand in buildings through efficiency can be expected to produce long-lasting CO2 emission 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 towards increasing Europe's renovation rate and would better reflect the transformational aims of the Fit for 55 targets. Moreover, the Energy Efficiency Directive (EDD) 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 jeopardises progress as it opens the door to business-as-usual scenarios where changes proposed might not deliver the systemic changes required. Due to this, young people propose:

1

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

What we propose

Housing & Energy



Housing, Energy and Transport

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

For young people, solutions that are not just focused on technology, but also on social and economic factors are important in tackling climate change. They would like to see an integral ecology paradigm incorporated into EU policies. A good and just taxation system must be a part of an integral shift towards incentivising electrification and the integration of renewables. Fossil fuel subsidies in the EU remain a critical obstacle 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, on its own, be beneficial, this approach should include the inclusion of the buildings sector in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) (Proposal no. 15). In this regard, young people propose:

2

The EU should 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 objectives of the Fit for 55 package.

What we propose

Housing & Energy

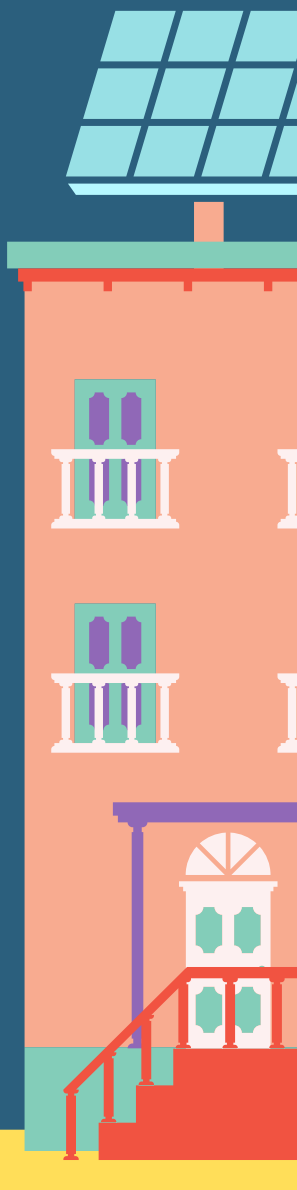
Housing, Energy and Transport

Nearly Zero Energy EU buildings

As the construction of buildings is an energy-intensive and high-emission endeavour, and reduces the space left available for nature, young people wish to see the uptake of new, innovative solutions like recycling building materials, reusing existing buildings and bio-housing. When it comes to energy efficiency in buildings, pushing beyond mere compliance and into the territory of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) would constitute a strong political statement by public actors. The EU should lead by example on this issue and further articulate it within the EU Green Deal. For this purpose, young people propose:

3

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



What we propose

Housing & Energy

Housing, Energy and Transport

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 can only be materialised through the boosting of rail and the design and implementation of measures to increase and better manage the capacity, accessibility and affordability 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 and infrastructure have the longest life expectancy. Yet, the railway sector is not currently envisaged as the backbone of the future mobility strategy (for passengers and freight) in the EU Green Deal. In light of this, young people propose:

4

The EU to make European rail the centrepiece of its long-term mobility strategy, to match this realignment with investment prioritisation and subsidies and to coordinate together with Member States on ways to better integrate national rail networks, systems and infrastructure.

What we propose

Transport

Housing, Energy and Transport

Aligning pricing with policy priorities

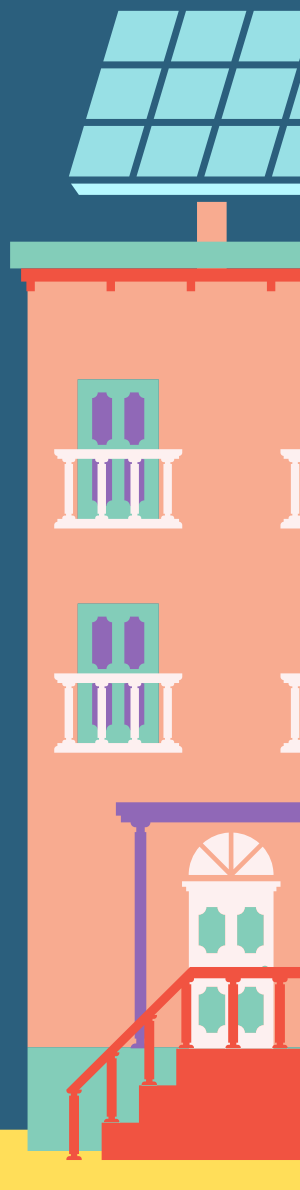
Transport is considered the most critical industrial sector when developing a strategy to decarbonise the economy. To decarbonise transport, pricing reflecting the greenhouse gas (GHG) impact of each mode of transport can and should play an important role in materialising this shift. Achieving key targets within the 2030 EU climate and energy framework will require changes to existing subsidy structures within the EU transport system. 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, young people propose:

5

The EU should end fossil-fuel subsidies, including tax exemptions in the civil aviation and maritime sector and lower allowances within the ETS to the aviation sector and extend the ETS system to cover maritime and road transport. We propose the EU to subsidise the battery industry, and Member States and the EU to work towards increasing the capacity, accessibility and affordability of rail transport for all. GHG emissions considerations and not just economic cost-benefit calculations should also be included and considered within the evaluation of public infrastructure projects in the EU.

What we propose

Transport



Housing, Energy and Transport

A digitalised Single European Rail Area

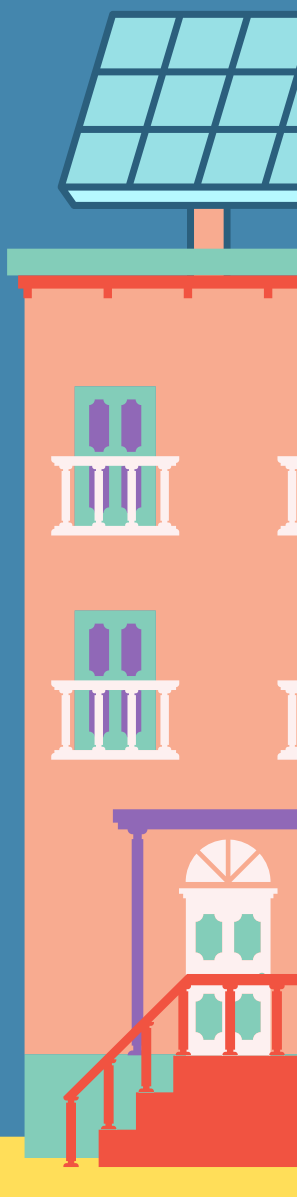
The European rail network could greatly benefit from higher market integration, improved digitalisation and enhanced interoperability to increase its capacity and efficiency. Digitalisation alone has the potential to increase infrastructure capacity between 20% and 50% depending on the traffic type and 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 this context, and considering the fact that more than 50% of the railway freight transport in Europe is international, young people propose:

6

The EU should work towards a Single European Rail Area that overcomes the "patchwork" rail geography which currently limits and drags the potential of European railways both in terms of capacity and efficiency. Furthermore, they suggest establishing a governing body to design and oversee the renaissance of European rail as the environmental alternative to road and air transport.

What we propose

Transport



Housing, Energy and Transport

Foster a European network of night trains

Due to strong competition from low-cost air services during the day and a protracted lack of investment, night train services across many EU Member States are at risk of closure or have already closed over the preceding 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 train option in 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 finding a greener aviation-rail balance within the context of the EU Green Deal's smart mobility strategy. In this regard, young people propose:

7

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 solution.

What we propose

Transport

Housing, Energy and Transport

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

Vice-President Frans Timmermans was very much aware of the importance of the social aspect when developing sustainable housing and transport solutions in Europe. The Vice-President emphasised two goals within his view of sustainable housing and sustainable mobility systems: a reduction of the carbon footprint and the creation of more liveable cities . He used the example of the Bauhaus movement to reinforce this idea by stating that, it was not only a matter of "building", but also the possibility of "granting access to affordable housing with high levels of comfort to groups in society that never had access to it."

Carla Halioua, Jewish representative

The Vice-President also seemed rather hopeful regarding the differences in the motivations and aspirations between generations. He felt that whereas his generation was more keen on private car ownership, younger generations are more interested in making use of public or active transport when the option is available.

Housing, Energy and Transport

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

The Vice-President further emphasised the importance of social cohesion by stating that the risks of 'identity politics' emerge a result of the lack of communication between groups and cultures - a situation in which one individual judges another based on who they are, and not on their actions.

Carla Halioua, Jewish representative

The biggest danger, according to Vice-President Timmermans, is seeing the other as a threat to one's own survival. He stated that transport systems, particularly public ones, are a great way to develop and foster a sense of community which is much needed in contemporary societies.

Food and Agriculture

The theme of food and agriculture is one in which worldwide interdependencies are undeniably and intricately linked with our daily lives and actions. Young people of faith believe that their day-to-day impact on the world is important. However, through lack of information or lack of power, and within the current structures and functioning of our nations and societies, they are not always empowered to act in the most beneficial way.

Enhancing connections is important to young people, whether it is between and within communities, to learn from and encourage each other towards a more sustainable society, or connecting with nature and acknowledging their dependence on it as the source of food and life. Young people's connections extend around the globe. The EU should therefore be aware of the impact of its policies and their implementations on the rest of the world, especially in terms of human rights interdependencies and the durability of our solutions: temporary solutions are not acceptable. Pushing towards the consumption of healthier foods and making them more accessible would lead to a real change of habits and enable the better preservation of our planet.

Food and Agriculture

Acting with fairness and kindness towards all beings which inhabit this earth is a key priority for young people. Young people of faith have a strong sense of responsibility to act and consume in accordance with the ethics and kindness found in the teachings of their religions. They are confident in their belief that they have the power to change themselves and the planet for the better. Their faith gives them a direction to look for what is truly important, which is to live in a kind, considerate and aware manner. At its core, this is a belief that transcends the material world.

The following proposals are important to young people of faith because they help build a world where young people can live their lives and feed themselves in accordance with doing good instead of causing harm.

Food and Agriculture

A fundamental reform of EU agricultural policy and subsidies

European agricultural policy faces fundamental challenges that affect the lives of us all. Agriculture currently accounts for a significant share of greenhouse gas emissions (9.8% of EU greenhouse gas emissions in 2017). Unsustainable practices (such as the use of pesticides, monocultures, etc.) also threaten biodiversity. Many small farms barely manage to secure their existence as they have limited capacity to contend against price pressures and the market power of larger companies. A systemic change in European agricultural policy is therefore urgently needed. The most recent reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has done little to address these fundamental problems and has thus remained a disappointment. According to estimates, 80% of the subsidies will continue to go to only 20% of the applicants, and the reformed policy contains few mechanisms to combat and address the issue of biodiversity loss and GHGs emissions. In light of this, young people propose:

8

EU agricultural subsidies to be articulated around the contribution that an agricultural enterprise makes to reducing GHG emissions and countering biodiversity crisis. Small farms should receive special support, whereas large corporations should only receive targeted support if the necessary ecological measures cannot be financed through their own profits.

What we propose

Food & Agriculture

Food and Agriculture

From EU food carbon labelling to exploring food carbon budgets in Europe

With food systems being responsible for around one third of 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 would not only provide green products and producers with an opportunity for differentiation, but also could educate citizens on this key aspect of the ecological puzzle. Beyond this, as well as providing effective market conditioning in favour of greener technologies and ensuring equitable access to sustainable food, carbon budgets offer a just, simple and effective approach to addressing food's environmental footprint. In this regard, young people propose:

9

The EU should develop and implement a supply chain-adjusted eco-labelling system for food products based on the GHG emissions associated with production and distribution. Together with Member States, the EU should study the possibility of a carbon budget cap mechanism for food products to address and reduce food-related GHG emissions and boost the idea of a just, shared, transition.

What we propose

Food & Agriculture

Food and Agriculture

Fostering food innovation through the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Green food technologies will play a critical role in shifting our diets towards 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 upcoming technologies (such as AI), the EU's fragmented capital and research environments pose a challenge to technological leadership, global market share and strategic autonomy. The pooling of resources and the coordination of national efforts by an ambitious EU is necessary to overcome these caveats. Due to this, young people propose:

10

The EU should further empower the European Institute of Innovation and Technology with the mandate and resources to coordinate, nurture, boost and upscale research on sustainable food technologies at the EU level.

What we propose

Food & Agriculture

Food and Agriculture

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

To achieve their stated aims in the context of a globalised economy, the EU's corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental legislation must be informed by in-depth research on the social and environmental impact of European supply chains abroad. As the second largest economy in the world, the EU should conduct due diligence on how European demand for food imports and domestic consumption affects global ecosystems and the people who depend upon them. In addition to this, carbon offsetting initiatives by EU companies often encourage and result in land-grabbing practises with concomitant human rights violations. To ensure that the EU plays a socially and environmentally responsible role within the global economy, young people propose:

11

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

What we propose

Food & Agriculture

Food and Agriculture

Limits to imports of highly perishable foods

While research has shown that the content of our diets, rather than the provenance of our food, is the key driver of our food-related carbon footprint and that international food-freight may occasionally help reduce emissions, air-freighted highly perishable foods are a notable exception to these findings. With air freight emitting 50 times more CO_2 equivalent than shipping per tonne per kilometre, the international logistics (including storage) required behind some produce such as asparagus, green beans and berries is often ecologically prohibitive. In the light of this reality, young people propose:

12

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

What we propose

Food & Agriculture

Food and Agriculture

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

Vice-President Frans Timmermans acknowledged that there is a lot of confusion with product labels and around what is actually green. He also admitted that a large volume of greenwashing exists within consumer markets. The European Commission is preparing legislation to address this issue and make labels more understandable to the public. He acknowledged the importance of labels that highlight the nutritional score of the products, but noted that consumers should also be informed on a product's carbon footprint.

Amalée Rycroft, Buddhist representative

Soon, the Commission will be looking at the issue of deforestation, including whether a product has been made with by-products of deforestation or if the product itself is a driver of deforestation. Another element that should be considered is the working conditions of producers. He hopes that, within a couple of years, at least in the EU market, we can achieve complete clarity on what a product contains, how the product has been produced, where it comes from, and its true environmental cost.

Food and Agriculture

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

The Vice-President also shared that the intention is to create a stronger position for consumers and citizens so they can make informed choices. For that, it is necessary to tackle consumer confusion caused by product labelling. Sadly, the attitude of many producers is, "if I can't convince them, at least I can confuse them." He concluded: "it's our responsibility, as public authorities, to take that [confusion] out of the equation, and I believe your proposition goes a long way to that direction".

Amalée Rycroft, Buddhist representative

In response to the aspiration that unsustainable products would not be allowed to enter the EU single market in the future, Vice-President Timmermans mentioned that the Commission wants to take a step-by-step approach so as to give countries that engage in deforestation for the production of agricultural and other products an opportunity to change their practices and to work with them constructively. However, he added: "but at some point, if that doesn't work, products will be banned from European markets, that's absolutely clear".

Production and Consumption

The production and consumption (distribution) of goods and services are two essential topics from an interfaith perspective, as they link together environmental responsibility with social responsibility. The natural world, with all of its living and non-living aspects, is a responsibility for humanity to care for and protect. People have the power to exert a positive or a negative influence over the Earth.

Living on this planet is a trusteeship and requires the encouragement of environmental sustainability which has been increasingly undermined by our lifestyle choices. European citizens should make choices that enable fair working conditions, opportunities and safety in the developing world. People also have the power to reduce their consumption of meat and animal products, as well as to improve the living conditions of livestock. It is also crucial to prevent the exploitation and overuse of plants and other natural resources which fuel irresponsible and unsustainable lifestyles.

Production and Consumption

All faith groups advocate for a simple and sober lifestyle, and to treat people and animals with respect. Doing so has the added benefit of improving our spiritual health and connection to ourselves and the natural world. Young people of faith are aware of the effects of their actions on a wider scale, not only viewing themselves as individuals, but rather as part of a wider collective. It is of great importance to be fully aware of the damages caused by consumerism.

However, the developed parts of the world that can afford and overtly consume goods too often turn a blind eye to the places that are depleted and exploited to provide for such a lifestyle. As human beings, and as Europeans of faith, we should consider how our consumerism harms others and how a reduction in our consumption could be of benefit to people and the environment.

Production and Consumption

Smart and ambitious Corporate Social Responsibility

Protecting life and the natural world through responsible sourcing, production, and engagement with consumers requires a cultural shift that can only be fostered through ambitious and wide-scoped legislative action. In allocating funds, the EU should ensure that the "do no significant harm" principle is respected and that regular checks are carried out during the implementation of projects. 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, young people propose:

13

The EU should deliver a transnational CSR framework which: a) puts the ultimate responsibility for due diligence on individual companies, b) provides effective remedy to and empowers 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

Production and Consumption

An improved Rome II Regulation

Research and legal practice 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 fields of human rights and climate litigation. In particular, the lack of sets of rules tailored for the specificities of these two case-types undermines that level of accountability which would be required in line with current EU policy priorities towards environmental protection and human rights. Therefore, young people propose:

14

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

What we propose

Production & Consumption

Production and Consumption

Strengthen the EU Emission Trading System (ETS), and include a social and an extra-market regulatory add-on

The ability of the EU ETS to deliver a timely and just transition on its own and on its current set-up remains to be seen. On one hand, the ETS currently encompasses the emissions from sources responsible for only around 41% of the EU's GHG emissions. 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 result in large-scale regressive social outcomes and enhanced inequality between Member States once carbon costs are passed to end-users. Moreover, the ETS market mechanism cannot substitute regulation laying out new stringent emissions standards which are a critical driver in forcing companies to invest in innovation. In the light of this, young people 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 that would serve as an effective social shock-absorber with which to ensure and strengthen socio-economic cohesion within the EU.

What we propose

Production & Consumption

Production and Consumption

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

The EU's mission to reduce waste, by promoting the economic reusability of materials and turning away from the throw-away business model and culture, requires steady and comprehensive regulatory pressure in support of circularity. A fundamental part of this effort is in strengthening the right to repair, increasing energy efficiency, encouraging product reusability, and also fighting the practice of planned obsolescence. While acknowledging progress through initiatives such as the Ecodesign Directive, more and more products placed on the EU market should abide by stricter sustainability rules and requirements. Following this assessment, young people propose:

16

To ensure that the upcoming Sustainable Products Initiative (Ecodesign Directive reform) addresses the negative effects 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 obsolesce 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

Production and Consumption

Circularity and international justice taken seriously

Even though the EU currently consumes 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 Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), the EU remains and will remain an overshooting consumption transgressor which actively contributes to global deforestation, biodiversity loss, the 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, young people propose:

17

To implement total aggregate and trade-adjusted resource-use targets for the EU, for the purposes of delivering a parallel material green transition focused on resource and consumption de-escalation. To design, develop and promote proposals for political economy regimes based on 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 their citizens within our planetary boundaries.

What we propose

Production & Consumption

Production and Consumption

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

In response to the proposal for an enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility framework with regards to production and consumption, Vice-President Timmermans stated that the Commission is working at the EU level on CSR rules that would move in the direction of what young people have proposed. The Vice-President believes that there is another aspect that needs to be looked into, which is to stop treating people as consumers and address them more as citizens, focusing on their conduct and asking for their responsible behaviour in making more sustainable lifestyle choices.

Yusra Eleslambouly, Muslim representative

Working together would allow the EU to impose these rules on corporations. Generally, the Vice-President believes that those sorts of rules will only work if done at the European level and, in order to achieve this, European legislation is necessary.

Production and Consumption

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

Environmental justice is a major part of the Commission's plans while social justice is at the heart of them. Once again, the Vice-President emphasised the importance of a matching dynamic between legislative action and society. Therefore, within their plan they also address the social responsibility of citizens as consumers. Being consumers is only one part of citizenship but, nevertheless, it needs to be looked at in an integral way.

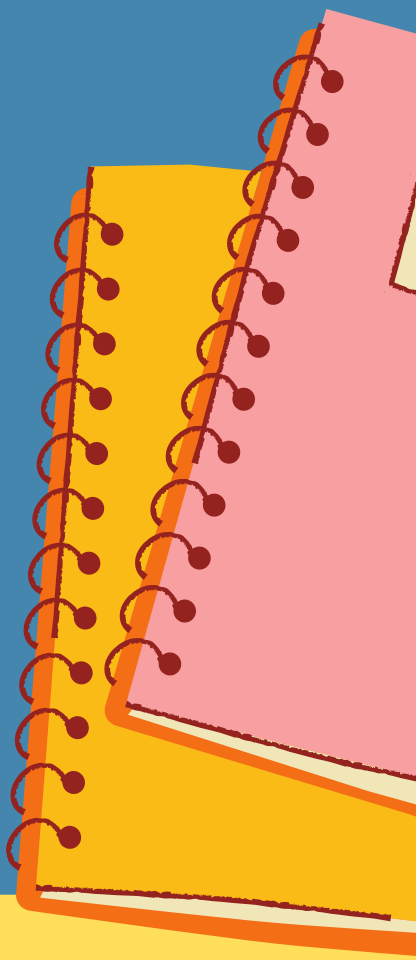
Yusra Eleslambouly, Muslim representative

The Vice-President strongly believes that if effort is put in from both sides, individual behaviours and legislative framework, we will really see progress. This would also be to the benefit of countries outside of the EU, because it would mean that, in their production and value chains, European companies would make sure that corporate social responsibility does not stop at the border of the EU.

Education, Ecology and Skills

A change in personal behaviours is essential for the success of the green transition. Starting in the family and continuing through formative institutions, education determines the actions of future generations and underpins behavioural change. Religious awareness through education greatly contributes to providing the next generation with positive moral values and to counteract tendencies towards individualism, radicalism and extremism. Thus, the role of religions in the implementation of sustainable practices becomes central on account of the religious and spiritual dimension of each person's life.

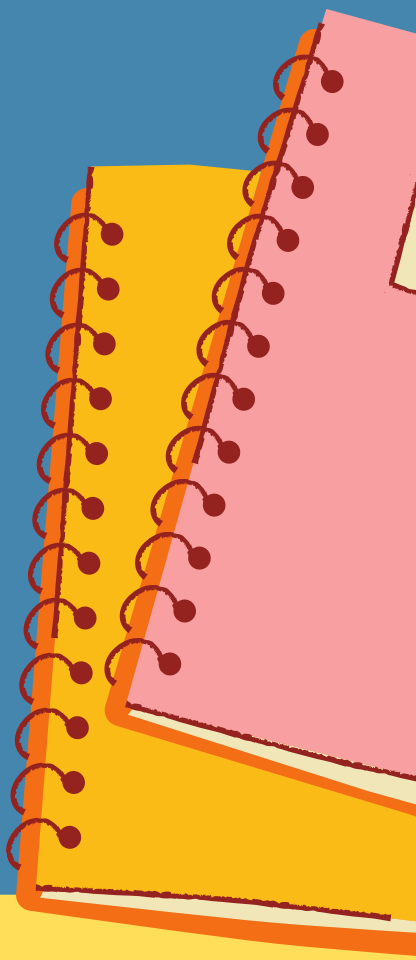
In the context of sustainability and environmental protection, it is evident that, by educating on respect of our Common Home and our brothers and sisters around the world, faith allows young people to understand all dimensions of the human condition, shifting from a partial to a truly integral vision of the individual. The vocation of religions to be all-embracing allows us to understand the complexity of the world and the consequences of our actions, in a truly ecological manner: care for the Earth and for others is a tenet of religious traditions.



Education, Ecology and Skills

To achieve the goals of the European Green Deal, governments cannot handle this task alone and must rely on the support and the continuous, but oftentimes invisible, work of religious communities and faith-based actors, together with families, civil society, education institutions and the private sector. By including religious communities in the equation for an ecological transition through education, a change in behaviour becomes achievable and adds depth to the appeal of the green transition, which the European Green Deal strives to accomplish.

Young people of faith from all religious traditions are empowered by education to understand the meaning behind the ecological conversion, and their spirituality gives meaning to their work towards a fairer and more inclusive world.



Education, Ecology and Skills

Improve the alignment between the public spending under the Just Transition Fund and decarbonisation

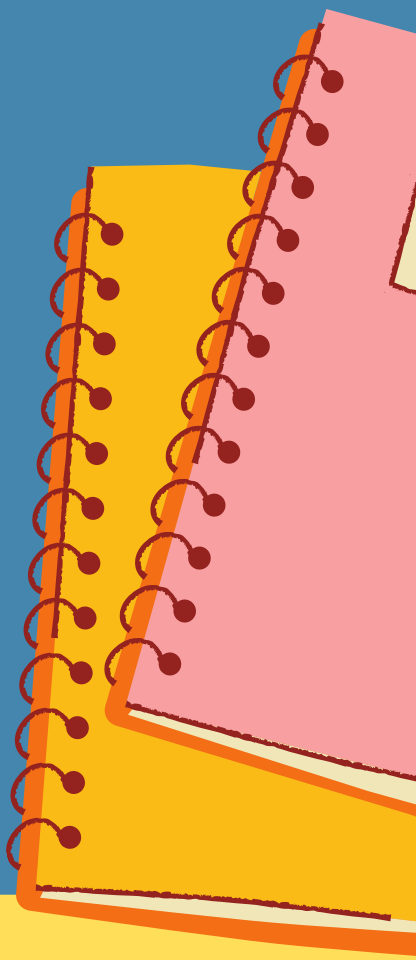
The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) focuses on moving away from fossil-fuel extraction and carbon intensive industries, yet the Just Transition Fund (JTF) provides financial incentives to sectors that play a significant role in the warming of our planet and the endangering of biodiversity (such as agriculture, trade, transportation and fashion). Research has shown that investments in green skills generate the conditions under which green technologies can prosper. By redistributing JTF spending from direct investment to green up-skilling, reskilling and unemployment support schemes, the JTM can better align its main financial pillar with circularity and the aims of the EU Green Deal. Moreover, the EU should cooperate closely with Member States, in order to encourage the reskilling of workers in professions that are expected to disappear in the future, e.g. by intensifying cooperation between education institutions and the private sector. A precondition of re-skilling is a positive environment for lifelong learning, which the EU should foster by focusing on cooperation with non-formal and informal education. In this regard, young propose:

18

The EU should 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. The EU should also commit a larger proportion of the JTF's resources strengthening regional and local re-skilling programmes.

What we propose

Education, Ecology & Skills



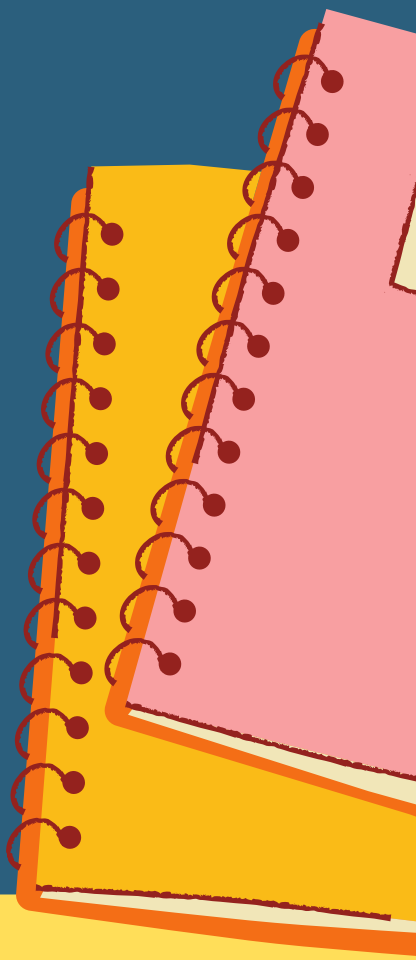
Education, Ecology and Skills

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 context of global warming and the European Green Deal, FBAs have the ability to transform the complexity and technicalities of evidence-based policies 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 realising the transformational change that the EU aims and hopes to achieve. In the light of these factors, young people propose:

19

The EU should involve and develop partnerships with FBAs at the European level for the purpose of promoting and advancing ecological awareness and mind-sets across EU Member States.



What we propose

Education, Ecology & Skills

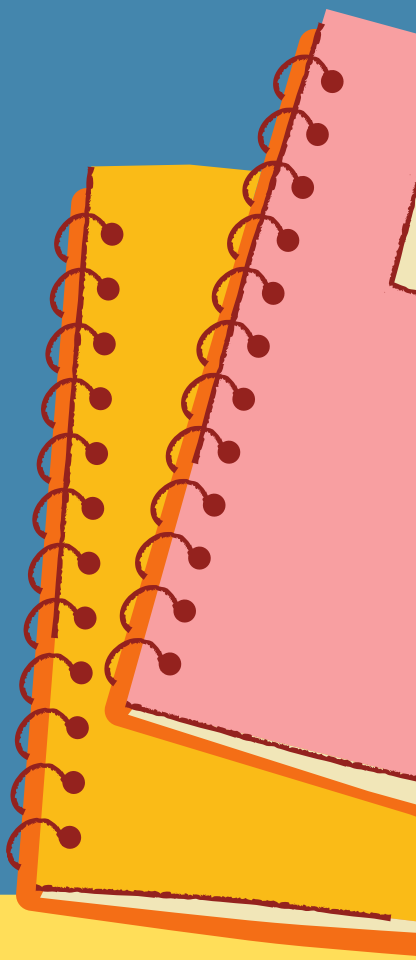
Education, Ecology and Skills

Develop and strengthen the role of environmental education at all levels of formation, especially through partnerships with faith-based actors (FBAs), in order to promote ecology within European private education and community-based formation

Within the educational sector, including community-based programmes, FBAs play an important and often pioneering role in bringing the theoretical and human dimensions of ecology and global warming to the attention of 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. The EU should also reinforce support for education programmes targeting environmental studies, in particular providing funding and information on sustainable practices and environmental policies and developments. In support of this, young people propose:

20

The EU should develop partnerships with FBAs within the education sector to deepen the centrality of ecology as a taught subject 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

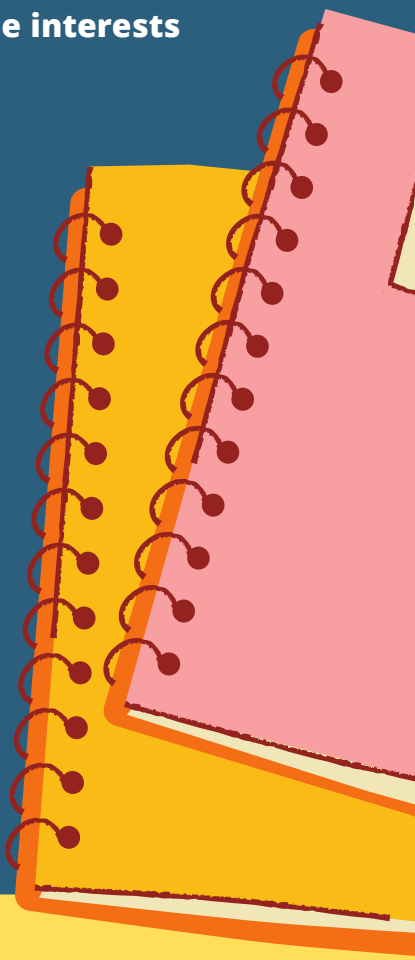
Education, Ecology and Skills

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 intergenerational justice and equity. Concerning the youth, the European Commission has already taken meaningful steps, for instance with the creation of the EU Youth Coordinator. However, the concerns of the EU institutions towards future generations should be stepped up, widening the scope of the EU action beyond youth, to address all policies through the lens of intergenerational justice and solidarity. This has great importance both in the field of ecology and in the realm of social policy and cohesion in Europe. Young people acknowledge the fact that an enhanced focus on intergenerational justice would be more budget-demanding, but also stress the urgency of such intensified action. To provide guidance to EU bodies on the issues which affect the interests of future generations, young people propose:

21

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



What we propose

Education, Ecology & Skills

Education, Ecology and Skills

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

On the basis of the proposals made during the first Convention webinar, young people of faith suggested that the EU should develop partnerships between faith-based communities and actors within the education sector to deepen the centrality of ecology. For instance, through education programmes such as Erasmus+, the EU should foster partnerships between educational institutions and faith-based organisations oriented to ecology and the care for Creation, to strengthen learning on environmental issues and a change in behaviours.

Emilio Dogliani, Christian representative

Vice-President Frans Timmermans stated that education and youth are a priority and that the Commission strives to support education systems to incorporate awareness of the biodiversity and environmental challenges in their endeavours, with the caveat that education is still a national responsibility.

Education, Ecology and Skills

Dialogue with EC VP Frans Timmermans

The Vice-President believes that environmental education should be addressed from the early years of life to help young people reflect on the consequences of behaviours and actions. Through behavioural change and increased awareness on environmental issues, it is possible to live comfortably within finite planetary boundaries. Moreover, education should not be limited to young people, but encompass generations and lead to adult and workforce upskilling and reskilling. Citizens should understand that the ecological transition is not a loss, but rather a gain, from which next generations will profit even more than us.

Emilio Dogliani, Christian representative

Lastly, the Commissioner addressed freedom of education and freedom of religion, pointing out how they are often interlinked. Since education is intimately connected with the practice of faith in many parts of the world, it is essential that faith communities engage with environmental issues so as to better inform society. Faith and science should work hand in hand for the sake of protecting our planet and act together for the benefit of all.

Interfaith Youth Convention on the European Green Deal

These proposals reflect the hopes and aims of the young people delegated by their faith groups to engage in a meaningful dialogue with one another on ecological issues and the European Green Deal. It has been a great privilege to engage directly with the EU highest level official in charge of the Green Deal, Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

This has been an extraordinary opportunity and represents the beginning of a genuine and sincere dialogue that is driven by the urgency of the current multi-pronged ecological crisis affecting society and young people in particular.

Each participant to the dialogue and - we hope - each reader of these proposals will feel committed to closely monitor how the proposals are received and whether or not they are implemented.

Striking a Deal for our Common Home

Keep the conversation going!

The future of our Common Home is at stake.
Join us and engage on social media

#interfaithyouth4EGD

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