



Draft

Title: **Sustainable and Just Wellbeing Economies for People and Planet**

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Draft text

Preamble

In the pursuit of constant economic growth and development, we have come to neglect the wellbeing of not just the people, but of nature, of our planet and all life and non-life within it. As humanity and nature alike face unprecedented crises, we need to shift our prioritisations of our economies into one that works for all: an economy that emphasises human and ecological wellbeing in measure and pursuit, equalises the Global South through a decolonial economic order, and puts care at its centre.

The Problem

1. GDP is not an indicator of wellbeing.

For several decades, growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and an increase in prosperity have been understood synonymously. GDP is not designed to measure social and ecological wellbeing, yet it is the most commonly used indicator of a country's overall prosperity. The currently dominant view in economics still defines development as an indiscriminate growth of GDP and considers the environment and the society as a mere 'externality' of the system, ignoring its failure to internalise the tremendous social and ecological costs.

19 Simon Kuznets, the founder of the GDP indicator in 1934, warned against its use
20 as a measure of welfare. GDP interprets every expense as positive, and fails to
21 distinguish welfare-enhancing from welfare-reducing activities. It also
22 overlooks many components that enhance welfare but do not involve monetary
23 transactions and therefore fall outside the market.

24 As Greens, we reject this evident fallacy of increase of GDP with that of
25 prosperity, and instead propose alternative economic indicators that prioritise
26 human and ecological wellbeing. Alternative indicators such as the Human
27 Development Index by the UNDP, the Happy Planet Index, the Genuine Progress
28 Indicator, the Better Life Index by the OECD, the SAGE index, or the Gross
29 National Happiness are all more accurate indicators of economic performance
30 which account for social and environmental factors as well.

31 **2. The current global economic paradigm is fundamentally** 32 **colonial.**

33 The systems of colonialism and imperialism imposed by the West on the Global
34 South established a system of ecological unequal exchange through the
35 exploitation of resources and labour. These systems created the conditions for
36 the expansion of neoliberal capitalist globalisation, which in turn reproduced
37 said colonial and imperial asymmetries. The socio-political and economic
38 hegemony of the Global North over the Global South enables continued unbalanced
39 exploitation of resources, unequal resource flows and international division of
40 labour, and perverse power relations - exacerbating social, ecological,
41 economic, and political inequalities and entrenching them structurally.

42 An economy that works for all cannot be based on these extractive and
43 exploitative relationships, which especially disproportionately affect
44 communities of colour and indigenous peoples - those best-equipped to protect
45 the environment we rely on. Furthermore, continued exploitation of the
46 environment at our present rate will have severe consequences for the global
47 ecosystem, social justice, and economic development. We need to rethink the
48 current international economic order and systems of development aid towards one
49 that pursues ecological and decolonial justice, reverses such unequal exchange,
50 and equalises the Global South in the international order.

51 **3. Our current welfare system is failing caregivers.**

52 Capitalist pursuit of growth and purely economic indicators such as GDP conceal
53 the crucial role of caregivers, especially women who still bear a
54 disproportionate responsibility for caring duties. By not awarding family,
55 elderly, community, and environmental care, we exploit caregivers and ignore
56 their central role to the functioning of economies. Exploitative Global North
57 and South relations are reproduced in the exploitation of migrant workers for
58 care work. Welfare systems fail to adequately support caregivers, leading to
59 financial insecurity, exploitation, and poverty, or single mothers, farmers,
60 elderly caregivers, and so many more.

61 **The Solution**

62 **1. Prioritising social and ecological wellbeing in measure** 63 **and pursuit.**

64 **We the European Green Party and green parties of Europe commit to:**

- 65 • **Advocate for the adoption of an alternative indicator to GDP, one that**
66 **prioritises human and ecological wellbeing.**
67 Our economies must transform from purely growth-focused to regenerative
68 and distributive by design. Various alternative indicators that include
69 socioecological measures exist, as provided above, and provide for more
70 accurate measures of human-nature wellbeing. Shifting the manner of
71 measuring prosperity to one that centralises wellbeing ensures better
72 decisions will be made to truly enhance prosperity in the EU and
73 worldwide.
- 74 • **Prioritise socioecological policies that focus on wellbeing and**
75 **sustainability.**
76 This includes a shorter workweek, universal basic services, renewable
77 energy, and sustainable agriculture.
- 78 • **Strive to engage in dialogue with citizens, civil society organisations,**
79 **and movements in the drafting and implementation of socioecological policy**
80 **and strategies.**
81 Economic policies inherently have a social and environmental dimension,
82 and thus these dimensions must be engaged with when considering such

83 policy. We need to remember our grassroots values and work towards
84 prioritising participation, cooperation and equity in society and
85 politics.

86 **2. Re-designing the international system.**

87 **Given the imposition of not just financial but socioecological indebtedness by**
88 **the Global North towards the Global South, we the European Green Party and green**
89 **parties of Europe commit to:**

- 90 • **Reform the system of development aid towards one of sustainable**
91 **development cooperation with the Global South and its peoples.**

92 Such a system would prioritise civil society, striving for community-led
93 participatory, reflexive development that strives for collective human-
94 nature wellbeing and addressing root causes of ecological unequal
95 exchange. It would go beyond financial aid, and include capacity,
96 technology, and patent sharing. Such development processes should
97 especially platform the interests of indigenous and local communities.

- 98 • **Pursue fair, just, equitable, and ecological trade with the Global South**
99 **based on equal terms of trade and the protection and empowerment of local**
100 **communities.**

101 We strongly reiterate and emphasise the '[Green Transformation of EU Trade](#)
102 [Policy](#)' policy paper adopted at the 6th Congress in Copenhagen in December
103 2022. Trade policy must thus guarantee oversight of supply chains and
104 holds corporations accountable for abuses within it and for its
105 environmental and social impacts throughout it through corporate
106 sustainability due diligence; include participatory mechanisms for civil
107 society and specifically platform the interests of, support the capacity
108 development of, empower and protect the rights of indigenous and local
109 communities and their environments; emphasise circularity and trade
110 subsidiarity to protect local communities and their environments from
111 overexploitaiton; and overall strives for the reversal of perverse
112 resource and labour flows and exploitation.

- 113 • **Reverse the flow of wealth from and indebtedness of the Global South**
114 **towards the Global North.**

115 The global financial system has historically indebted the Global South
116 through unfair lending terms and exploitative market-oriented

117 conditionality mechanisms. Radical transformation of the global financial
118 system towards a system of equity based on the needs and adjusted to the
119 capabilities of the Global South is necessary. This includes debt
120 cancellations, fair lending terms that prioritise human-nature wellbeing
121 over economic development and neoliberalisation conditionalities, and
122 reparations for environmental damage.

123 **3. A new care economy.**

124 **We the European Green Party and green parties of Europe commit to:**

- 125 • **Work towards and lobby for a welfare system that supports caregivers and**
126 **rewards care workers.**

127 A welfare system that centres care would prioritise the wellbeing of
128 caregivers and care recipients, as well as recognise the value of care
129 work in building a healthy, sustainable society. We reiterate the '[The](#)
130 [Care of Older Persons](#)' resolution adopted at the 35th Council in Riga in
131 June 2022 and call to extend this to all forms of caregivers. The goal
132 should be to make an economy in which gender equity and fair remuneration
133 of care work are central, prioritising care work and rewarding care and
134 social workers fairly is an essential step to do so. This includes
135 policies for caregivers such as a European care strategy, social and
136 labour protections, equal pay and fair wages, professional and emotional
137 support, and accessible education and training; and policies for care
138 recipients such as universal childcare, accessible and quality
139 professional care, and overall socialisation of care.

Background

Reference

[1] Parrique T., Barth J., Briens F., C. Kerschner, Kraus-Polk A., Kuokkanen A., Spangenberg J.H. (2019). *Decoupling debunked: Evidence and arguments against green growth as a sole strategy for sustainability*. European Environmental Bureau. <https://eeb.org/library/decoupling-debunked/>.