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Reclaim the Future
Emancipatory action by, for and of European Youth

Introduction

Since its outbreak in 2008, the crisis continues to whip Europe and affects our day to day life more than ever. This financial crisis is not an isolated situation. It has both caused and highlighted a democratic deficit, and the weakening of the welfare state. These have led to an increase in social inequality and threatened future social progress. These consequences primarily affect the most vulnerable groups, among them the European youth.

European society cannot afford to lose a whole generation of young people. 14 million young people are neither in education, employment nor in training (NEET). The highest ever unemployment rates, especially among young people, indicate an alarming situation in which many young people do not have any basic, or decent, opportunities. Still, young people do not surrender. They have the power and motivation to raise their voices against not just the crisis, but against all causes of it. Furthermore, young people are actively raising their voices against the handling of the crisis up till now, by national and European decision makers who rely on (or are hiding behind) austerity measures. Young people need Europe to deliver the urgently needed solutions to the systemic challenges that we all face. Solutions that are merely addressing a national level will not succeed.

We Greens do not see the present crisis as short-term catastrophe that Europe will magically survive if we just manage to handle it in the long term. We want to address the root causes of the crisis and advocate for transformational strategies that will enable us to fix core problems and ensure that in 20/50/70 years, future young people will not have to deal with one crisis after another. In light of the evidence, urgent action is needed. We want to establish youth issues as an independent policy field at the European level, and at the same time mainstream the needs and demands of young people in all other policy fields. However, we believe that the topic needs to be addressed not only at the European level, but at all different levels of decision-making. In order to do this we want to use both existing channels of policy-making, as well as develop new ways of empowering young people.

Stemming from the ability and right to enjoy full citizenship, we want the youth voice to be valued, respected and taken into consideration. Young people are not passive receivers of political decisions, but are active contributors – not only in the implementation phases but also in the process of setting political priorities. Next to that, we need to end the narrow understanding of youth participation, and enable young people to both express their thoughts and participate as equals in the decision making processes on social issues, environmental issues, political issues and all other issues that affect their societies, both directly or indirectly.

The current institutional response to youth issues must be examined and revised. Concrete processes for managing this framework must better reflect the interest of young people.

We see education systems as one of the core structures that need to be changed, to reflect young people’s identities and differences and to strengthen and widen their possibilities and opportunities. The system should be reformed towards more openness and flexibility. Through these reformed education systems we pursue the aim of guaranteeing emancipation while at the

47 same time matching vocational experience and institutional trajectories with the perspective of
48 “good work”¹.

49 Different areas of the economy need to be addressed and reformed to achieve these goals. Our
50 model is a de-carbonised and human-centric economy able to provide the conditions for both
51 good and fair jobs through a process of green re-industrialisation, capable of an effective re-
52 distribution of wealth.

53 Another world is possible, but we need to shake up the current one. We Greens do not stand on
54 the sidelines and wait for this to happen, but take an active and leading role in emancipatory action
55 by, for and of young people.

56

57

58

Youth must be heard

59

60 Youth are the future. But young people are also the present. Young people need to actively
61 participate in the construction of the political system that we live in to be able to enjoy the full
62 benefits of citizenship. Youth emancipation will never be achieved without **real democratic**
63 **process**, where young people take active part in the design and implementation of public policies
64 and without commitment from the rest of the society.

65 The contribution of young people is vital for the construction of a more democratic Europe. Thus,
66 youth participation must be enabled and ensured both as regards formal and informal structures,
67 non-formal education as well as voluntary work.

68 Youth participation will contribute political creativity to the construction and legitimisation of
69 Europe including non-violent forms of civil disobedience that have always been part of legitimate
70 political action. We need consolidated participation spaces which empower the expression of
71 youth perspectives throughout all aspects of life.

72 Youth movements and civil society groups focused on young people – particularly **Youth**
73 **Organisations** on many different levels – are key actors in ensuring social inclusion and
74 cohesion, ecological and environmental responsibility, political participation and democracy and
75 political accountability. We support the existing forms of youth dialogue, among them the Youth
76 Forum and Structure dialogue including national Youth Councils. Emancipation implies that youth
77 are able to participate in this environment in a free and independent way, without discrimination
78 or restriction.

79 We call on the European Union to develop an **open and transparent process of**
80 **consultation** with youth organisations. At local, regional and national level, public authorities
81 must engage with civil society to design measures that will allow the public to regain control of
82 **public finances** in the long term. To start with, young people should have a greater level of
83 inclusion in discussions on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) at a European level².

84 Active participation in the political system is part of a full emancipation process. Thus, we call for
85 the **reduction of voting age to at least 16 years old**. This measure needs to go hand in
86 hand with an increase in political education in both formal and non-formal education systems, in
87 order to give young people the tools to be informed about the political system.

88 Incorporating youth perspectives also means taking into account the diverse European realities.
89 We need to acknowledge **diversity and differences among young people**, who are one

¹ For more information on green definition of the “good work” please see [“The Social Dimension of the Green New Deal”](#) as adopted at the EGP Copenhagen Council 2012

² For the green position on Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) please see the draft resolution on MFF

90 of the most socially divergent groups in society. Additionally, there are disenfranchised groups that
91 need specific measures to be included in the process such as young people with disabilities, youth
92 from poorer families, rural youth or young migrants. The gender dimension also needs to be
93 strongly taken into consideration when addressing the situation of young people.

94

95

96

Institutions matter!

97

98 Not a single democratic, social, cultural or environmental transformation has ever been successful
99 without an act of confronting existing institutions, without finding ways of making better use of
100 them or building new institutions that represent the new goals and perspectives. This is why
101 European Youth movements must also find approaches towards dealing with and integration the
102 European institutions. They must find ways of utilising them to promote institutional change, in
103 order to support the realisation of their own aspirations. European institutional framework must
104 ensure a quality of content and guarantee sufficient financial means and self-supporting structures
105 that will enable youth programs to be independent of commercialisation.

106 European institutions, including the European Parliament, have to pay more attention to youth
107 issues, and be more responsive to young people, to allow for wider participation by young people
108 and to provide platforms for a more dedicated pursuit of the interests of young people.

109

110

111

Youth Guarantee

113 In 2010 Greens in the European Parliament introduced the **Youth Guarantee** into European
114 Union discussions on tackling youth unemployment. The Youth Guarantee has recently been
115 adopted by the European Council. We expect to see this measure be fully implemented in every
116 European country. It must ensure that all young people receive a good-quality offer of
117 employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four
118 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. However, this is not enough. The
119 Youth Guarantee should ensure inclusiveness within the labour market. Job offers, education and
120 training programmes should be individually tailored to the needs of the individual young person -
121 including those with special needs. Social businesses³ with diverse workforces should get extra
122 support.

123 We Greens want the Youth Guarantee Scheme to provide sustainable and long-lasting solutions
124 for job creation. The gains in terms of learning opportunities for young people are high, if they are
125 empowered to try out their own ideas. The Youth Guarantee should provide special support in
126 case young people want to establish their own projects. The founding of social enterprises, start-
127 up businesses and non-profit NGOs should be equally supported.

128 Even though the Youth Guarantee has been agreed upon on the European level, there has been no
129 readiness on the part of the member states to invest new money into the effort. The present
130 budget of €6bn over 7 years is not sufficient by far, as ILO has calculated that much more is
131 needed. We criticise this short-sightedness. We should not shy away from naming and shaming the
132 countries that do not live up to their obligations.

³ For more information on green vision of the social businesses please see "[The Social Dimension of the Green New Deal](#)" as adopted at the EGP Copenhagen Council 2012

133 The challenge of tackling unemployment cannot be solved at the EU-Level alone. The Youth
134 guarantee needs transnational solidarity, and every European country needs to implement the
135 Youth Guarantee in a concrete policy.

136

137 **Youth Fund**

138 The EU budget is obviously a core tool to refocus European policy towards young people. Youth
139 issues must be mainstreamed throughout the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). An
140 MFF that reduces the EU's funding of research and development and innovation is short changing
141 today's youth but also future generations. Any kind of public investment must consider the impact
142 on young people.

143 However, in the present crisis there also must be an immediate effort to address the pressing
144 burden of widespread youth unemployment. Therefore, we demand the establishment of Youth
145 Fund. This Youth Fund must be part of the EU budget, including and extending the existing EU
146 Youth programmes to create one integrated instrument. It should include financing for youth
147 entrepreneurship (particularly social entrepreneurship), strong mobility instruments for non-
148 academic youth, awareness raising amongst young people of their social, democratic and economic
149 rights and financing for European Volunteering and civil society activities.

150 The implementation of European Investment Bank micro-credit lines with low interest rates for
151 young people can contribute in alleviating the liquidity trap in the financial market and stir the
152 recovery towards a Greener economy.

153

154 **European Volunteering**

155 In addition to its other financing goals the Youth Fund should provide funding for European
156 Volunteering. In the appeal "We are Europe! Manifesto for re-building Europe from the bottom
157 up" many renowned European citizens and leaders have called for a European Year of
158 Volunteering for Everyone, as a response to the European crisis. The initiators explained their
159 proposal by arguing: "We need a European civil society and the vision of younger generations, if
160 we are going to solve the burning issues of today. ... The European Year of Volunteering for
161 Everyone ... forms a self-help organisation of creative disobedience, the countervailing force to the
162 power of the European and national elites that exist in politics and business." We Greens support
163 this initiative. We proposed a similar initiative in 1999 in the Gahrton Report to the European
164 Parliament.

165 We believe that introducing a European volunteering programme for all ages, classes and
166 backgrounds will help create a new debate about what Europe means to her citizens. Youth plays
167 a crucial role in this regard. Youth volunteering should be as diverse as European society is.
168 Everybody in the European Union should have the opportunity to experience the benefits of a
169 volunteering programme.

170

171 **Youth Convention**

172 Greens have long advocated for a new European Convention to as the necessary democratic step
173 of a European political integration. In order to make young peoples' voices heard more clearly as
174 part of this process, we also propose establishing an EU Youth Convention. As part of this, young
175 people under 30 years, representing both organised and non-organised youth, would come
176 together to help shape the institutional future of the European Union. The results of this Youth
177 Convention should be formally introduced into the deliberations of the general European
178 Convention, the European institutions and the member states.

179

180 **Youth Proofing of EU Policies**

181 While the Youth Convention would be an ideal source of youth involvement in the process of
182 resizing the European institutions, we also demand that youth concerns are given more attention
183 in the everyday work of the European Union. Hence, we propose two new policy instruments.
184 Firstly, Youth Proofing: in order to make the impact of EU legislation on young people visible we
185 demand Youth proofing of all regulatory and administrative measures taken at the EU level, i.e.
186 checking the short- and long-term impact of such measures on youth as a regular procedure.
187 Youth organisations are to be heard in the implementation of Youth proofing. Secondly, we want
188 to use the European semester more efficiently. Therefore, we propose that Youth emancipation
189 becomes a regular item in the country-specific recommendations that form part of the European
190 semester. Member states must be obliged to actively involve youth organisations in the process of
191 developing their own reform agendas under the European semester. We Greens will propose that
192 the European Parliament will regularly organise extra youth hearings in this context.

193

194

195 **Education must learn new lessons**

196

197 Education is one of the core processes to support and ensure the organisation of society and the
198 inclusion of individuals into the overall social system. The right to education must not be abridged.
199 Education is a pluralistic process centered around the individual that is of benefit to whole society.
200 It has an intrinsic value regarding the self-cultivation and self-realization of the individual and is a
201 core resource in the pursuit of happiness. It is widely understood that education starts at an early
202 age and never stops. Therefore, we acknowledge life-long and life-wide learning as the base of
203 understanding and systematization of education systems. Education as such can also be seen as a
204 base, support and regulator of democracy, political and civic engagement, the economy and labour
205 market. We see a great need and opportunity to develop educational systems towards the
206 improvement of the situation and opportunities for young people, and as a primary tool for the
207 reduction of youth unemployment.

208

209 **Multiple access points to education**

210 The opportunities an individual has both in life and in educational institutions should not depend
211 on the circumstances of their birth. However, the circumstances of their birth do have an
212 important influence on educational performance. Despite a rapid expansion of secondary and
213 tertiary education, which has paved the way for a more equal distribution of educational
214 opportunities, educational inequality has proven quite resistant. Expansion is not a sufficient
215 condition for more equality. The opportunity for second and third chances is more important
216 when performance at a young age does not meet the needs for educational success. Furthermore,
217 decisions on what kind of educational career an individual should choose should be more
218 independent from family background and parental advice. We therefore demand policies
219 guaranteeing that young people are not tied to any one educational path and enabling them to
220 make educational decisions further on. It is very important to ensure that young people leaving the
221 educational system are equipped with up-to-date and practically applicable knowledge and skills.
222 Integrating young people through vocational and university education and transitional measures
223 into the labour market helps them to emancipate from their parents, become independent from
224 social welfare and boosts their self-confidence.

225

226 **Opening the educational system**

227 The whole system of formal education should be reformed. Today it is organised in a linear, one-
228 way direction and leaves little or no place for entering educational system at a later stage. We
229 urge the opening of educational systems to multiple entrance and exit points, avoiding “dead-end”
230 diplomas and offering opportunities of horizontal mobility between more theoretical general
231 educational and the more vocational tracks. With this system we want to support emancipation of
232 young people, enabling dynamics within and between different social strata. Next to that, this
233 system enables better fits between qualifications and labour markets.

234

235 **Dual system of vocational training and education**

236 In terms of transition rates, of reducing the rate of youth unemployment, of salaries and formation
237 of competencies, the dual system of vocational training and education is the most successful in
238 Europe. Linking practical work experience with an ongoing training and education has been a
239 success. On the other hand, systems combining both school education and internships, and
240 systems where only vocational training-at-the-workplace prevail produce much poorer results,
241 because they do not consider that skill formation and youth employment are the social
242 responsibility of the companies that contribute to their economy. They lack the framework of
243 social partnership. From the point of view of the single firm, skills are seen as human capital that is
244 residing in the worker and not in the firm, and thus may move with the worker to competing
245 firms. Thus, the employer sees no incentive to pay for the training of competencies that are
246 portable. He either delegates that task to the state, the worker’s unions or to the worker himself,
247 or provides firm-centred vocational training at the workplace that aims at the formation of narrow
248 firm-specific skills that are not easily transferable. Within the framework of social partnership,
249 state, firms and trade unions cooperate in the process of formation of competencies. The firms
250 are able to share in the benefits of cooperation consisting of a large pool of skilled workers
251 accessible to the entire industry. The trade unions profit from raising their members’
252 competencies and using dual vocational training and education as a tool for youth recruitment.

253 Introducing this dual system of vocational training and education must be accompanied by re-
254 inventing the framework of social partnership and social responsibility of firms.

255

256 **Reorganising and opening higher educational institutions**

257 We call for democratisation of education institutions by overcoming the current focus on the
258 elitist model of high academic strata. The framework of life-long-learning tertiary education has to
259 meet the needs of those who enter universities with a more general education as freshmen, and
260 those who enter universities with occupational or social experience through institutions of further
261 education. This can be done within the same university by internal differentiation or by
262 institutional differentiation⁴.

263 The recognition of vocational experience and of informal/non-formal learning processes should
264 provide mobility between the different tracks of occupational education and academic or
265 professional education.

266

267 **Pan-European education**

268 We are facing the Europeanisation of decision-making, policies, people, information and capital. In
269 order to ensure sustainability, and the legitimacy of this processes we need to increase the

⁴ Internal differentiation: providing special curricular for further education; institutional differentiation: running universities for further education.

270 mobility of individuals through their own choice and competencies, and strengthen an equitable
271 and equalising pan-European education that is not mainly focused on the formation of a national
272 elite. We also recognise the value of the work of the Council of Europe in this context.

273 We acknowledge that English has become and is commonly accepted as the *Lingua Franca* of today.
274 Thus, we support English language education in formal curricula, from the earliest age, Europe
275 wide, without undermining the value of all languages.

276 We support the positive impact of current initiatives such as the Erasmus programme; however
277 we believe that the whole is greater than its individual parts. Therefore, we advocate for European
278 education that is European, not merely by where it implemented or funded. We call for pan-
279 European education based on European values, the common market and possibilities for the
280 application of acquired knowledge and skills.

281

282

283 **Go from Economy to REconomy**

284

285 Developing youth perspectives without addressing economic issues is like trying to ride a bicycle
286 without wheels. It doesn't work! Without a fundamental change in the economic outlook,
287 whatever promises are being made to the younger generations are hardly credible. This is what
288 the Green New Deal is about. In Europe, we need a transformational Green strategy. We call it
289 here the Green REconomy.

290 There are many causes of the recent crisis, but untamed financial capitalism focusing on
291 unsustainable, short-termed growth is certainly core among them. We present our alternative
292 concept, and advocate the many elements of our Green REconomy: REnewable Energies;
293 REthinking the economy; REindustrialisation including REshoring jobs and investments and
294 REcycling; REdistribution of wealth and opportunities; REgulation of the markets.

295 The Green REconomy can create both good and fair jobs, and contribute to meaningful and
296 decent standards of living for young people. Europe's young people need jobs. We Greens do not
297 want to store young people in job provision schemes, nor to bury them in endless sequences of
298 internships or cycles of fruitless training. We propose sustainable solutions and ideas that will
299 transform the economy and create both new and fair jobs. In order to do so, we pursue the
300 creation of a sustainable, de-carbonised and human-centric economy. The European Green Party
301 has defined this transformational process in its concept of the Green New Deal.

302

303 **REnewable Energies**

304 A major success story for the Greens has been the transition from a carbon-intensive, dirty oil-
305 based energy supply to clean, labour-intensive renewable energies. The renewable energy
306 revolution has already created 2.3 million jobs worldwide. The job creation possibilities of this
307 industry are huge and we Greens will continue to pursue our policies of investing in these new
308 industries.

309

310 **RE-Thinking our Economy**

311 Europe's biggest resource is its people. We aim to invest in young people. Therefore, we advocate
312 for programs that provide them financial support and advice for realising their dreams. Youth
313 Initiative and entrepreneurship need to be supported regardless of whether they create a social
314 entrepreneur or normal start-up. Whether through basic income grants, crowd financing or

315 labour contracts that include RElearning benefits or other such tools, we want to enable youth and
316 the rest of society to expand their economic options, including the opportunity to live decent lives
317 working in the social sector, taking care of cultural issues or realising their own dreams. We
318 expect companies to live up to their social obligations. We want to encourage businesses that are
319 organized as co-operatives. In the present crisis we've also seen the emergence of new, grass
320 roots economic systems like time-banks, local energy communities and regional currencies, not-
321 for profit self-organised local health communities and many more innovative non-capitalist
322 projects.

323

324 **Re-Industrialisation**

325 The ecological transformation of our industry will provide Europe with a new manufacturing base
326 and plenty of jobs. Such a transformation has to be achieved by creating the right framework for
327 industrial development by putting a price on CO2-Emissions and by working together with
328 European industry to recycle its waste and become more efficient. We support industrial moves
329 to bring jobs back to Europe. However, new industries need to look different. They need to meet
330 high energy efficiency requirements, high resource efficiency requirements, high environmental and
331 social standards.

332

333 **RE-Distribution**

334 Our vision for a sustainable economy that serves the need of the youth cannot accept current
335 imbalances in opportunities and wealth distribution within our societies and within Europe. We
336 need to encourage European solidarity on a state and individual level. The redistribution of wealth
337 will result in job creation for young people across Europe. It is also crucial for the democratic
338 viability of our societies. Two major instruments of redistribution are the introduction of a
339 Financial Transaction Tax and Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base.

340

341 **Re-Regulation**

342 The economic crisis is the result of an under-regulated economy that allowed for the
343 unsustainable development of bubbles. We need to stabilise our economy and that means re-
344 regulating it in order to safeguard it.

345 The programmes outline above need a solid financial basis. Perennially mounting public debt is not
346 a sustainable situation. Ecological financial reforms are at the heart of economic plans to counter
347 the crisis. Justice in the European tax codes, abolishing tax havens and prosecuting tax evasion
348 must be part of our strategy. We want to get rid of environmentally damaging subsidies.

349

350

351

Action!

352

353 Youth need concrete action and measures that provide perspective and hope for the future. Here
354 is our list of priorities:

355

356 **I. Youth Guarantee**

357 A **Youth guarantee** is the minimum measure we need to see in every European country. It
358 must ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of

359 employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four
360 months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. However, this is not enough: the
361 Youth Guarantee should ensure inclusiveness within the labour market. Job offers, education and
362 training programmes should be individually tailored to the needs of the individual young person -
363 including those with special needs. Social businesses with diverse workforces should get extra
364 support.

365 A Youth Guarantee Scheme should provide sustainable and long-lasting solutions for job creation.
366 The gains in terms of learning opportunities for young people are high if they are empowered to
367 try out their own ideas. The Youth Guarantee should provide special support in case young
368 people want to establish their own projects. The founding of social enterprises, start-up businesses
369 and non-profit NGOs should be equally supported.

370 The Youth Guarantee has been agreed upon on the European level. Now every European country
371 needs to implement it in a concrete policy.

372

373 **2. Youth fund**

374 We demand a Youth fund within the EU budget. It should provide financing for young people's
375 social entrepreneurship, Youth civil society, for mobility of non-academic youth and for the
376 European Volunteering.

377

378 **3. Dual system of vocational training and education**

379 We advocate the dual system of vocational training and education. In terms of transition rates, of
380 reducing the rate of youth unemployment, of salaries and of skills building, it is the most successful
381 in Europe. If embedded into the framework of social partnership it can help to foster a more
382 socially responsible economy.

383

384 **4. Quality Internships and Apprenticeships**

385 European states should ensure the **quality of internships and apprenticeships**. Young
386 people engaged in internships and apprenticeships need to be protected from exploitation.
387 Internships should be limited to a maximum of 6 months, provide decent financial compensation
388 and should be closely linked to the educational system and be labour market neutral. Interns and
389 apprentices must be covered by social protection and labour market protection measures already
390 in place for regular employees.

391

392 **5. Empowerment through languages**

393 Language education provides young people with power to communicate, express themselves,
394 understand others and contribute in various conditions and societies. Therefore, we call for scaling
395 up European language education curricula and programs open for pupils, students, apprentices,
396 workers, and volunteers.

397

398 **6. Voting from 16 years of age**

399 We ask for a reduction of the voting age to at least 16 years in order to involve young people
400 better in the democratic decision-making at all levels. This measure must go hand in hand with a
401 strengthening of political education in both formal and non-formal education.

402

403 **7. European Volunteering**

404 We support European volunteering as expressed in the appeal "We are Europe! Manifesto for re-
405 building Europe from the bottom up". It would offer a European Year of Volunteering for
406 Everyone. We Greens already proposed a similar initiative in 1999 in the Gahrton Report of the
407 European Parliament.

408

409 **8. Youth Convention**

410 In order to make young peoples' voices heard better as part of the process of shaping the future
411 of Europe, we demand the establishment of an EU Youth Convention for people under 30 years of
412 age, representing both organised and non-organised youth.

413

414 **9. Empowerment through decent living conditions**

415 If not supported by parents, young people have to bear huge costs of living. An affordable quality
416 of life is a justified demand for young people. Being entangled in a credit-dependent system is not
417 an option. We call for the support of youth housing schemes, affordable public transport and
418 affordable food for the youth. Social youth centers that provide spaces for self-organised living
419 should be further supported.