



On the Future of Europe

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is going through one of the worst crises it has ever experienced, a crisis that has already cost millions of lives, tens of millions of people to lose their jobs, that has deepened social injustices, strengthened patriarchal structures, disproportionately affected marginalised groups, women and girls with hard-fought gains for their rights currently being under threat, that has shown the fatal impacts of our abusive natural resources exploitation and productivist model.

For citizens in the EU, the crisis has also shown how much the lack of European reforms in the last decades heavily harmed our capacity to act fast in the general interest and how damaging were the member states' egoistic reactions at the beginning of the crisis. It has shown, at a very high price, that European solidarity is not an abstract concept. It is a very concrete reality on which lives can depend.

Nobody could have predicted the timing of the crisis. But the political majority ruling Europe for decades bears responsibility for not having engaged in reforms that would have allowed us to manage it better. A Union with more competences in crucial areas, a more efficient decision-making process, more resources, well-funded health and social care services, strong welfare states, resilient communities, a patent and research system that doesn't give so few multinationals a monopoly on vaccination supply, a relocation of key economic sectors would have undoubtedly been more efficient and more resilient.

The path-breaking decision to issue a €750bn post-pandemic recovery fund showed that some long-standing taboos like the issuance of European public debt, such as coronabonds, or the creation of new own resources can be overcome when there is a political will to do so.

Future crises will hit us: health crisis, environmental crisis, financial crisis, geopolitical crisis. By definition, crises require preparedness and resilience. Although we remain preoccupied with the current crisis and the need to contain a new wave of infections, we also believe that it is essential to prepare the post-Covid Europe.

Political will is needed now. Let's not wait for the next crisis to conduct the necessary changes. In the next year, more than a third of EU citizens will go to vote. With coming national elections in Germany, France, Hungary, Czechia, Slovenia and Cyprus, lines can move in key countries and Greens, as the alternative to the neoliberal productivism status quo and reactionary populism, can reorientate Europe and build it back better.

In this framework, the Conference on the Future of Europe is an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and build a Union fit for the future and for its common challenges. Experiences in Ireland and France show that participatory exercises, where representative samples of citizens are given the mandate, with the assurance that it would be followed up with actions, to formulate recommendations on a political topic works, as proven by the ambitious package of 150 measures formulated by the Citizens Convention for Climate in France.

To be a success, as we have claimed in our communication, it needs to ensure meaningful citizens' participation, be an inclusive process and most of all, it has to deliver real changes. For this, we encourage fostering and offering targeted learning and information for citizens in order to allow for



real deliberation and participation processes. The citizens' input must be recognized throughout the whole process and be incorporated in the final document of the executive board. It is the commitment to deliver changes that will make citizens willing to engage and it is the citizens' engagement that will ensure the success of the process. The issue of multilingualism should be duly considered in order to enable a genuinely European debate for citizens. Options such as better systems for automatic translations between EU languages should be considered.

Our political family will invest this unique opportunity to bring citizens together and shape our common future. During the next phase, we will engage with citizens and civil society organisations at all levels to ensure that their demands, needs and ideas are properly reflected in the debates and get the attention they deserve. We will organise debates and actions to put our main proposals to public debate. We will coordinate our Green political family across Europe.

In particular, we will defend core proposals that can spark meaningful change in Europe:

Investing in the ecological transition

Post-Covid society has to tackle the climate crisis and ensure social justice within planetary boundaries.

We have also to fight to create permanent investment schemes for the future while improving the economic governance of the Eurozone. A crisis response like the Recovery and Resilience Fund has to be made permanent and turned into a Sustainable Investment Fund integrated under the European budget with full Parliamentary involvement and oversight. This fund will allow us to make the necessary investments to achieve climate neutrality and invest in health care and social protection.

This investment strategy has to go hand in hand with the reshoring of essential sectors of the economy and a radical change of paradigm when it comes to trade and competition policies in order to make it compatible with climate goals, human rights and social justice. We have to ensure that the objective of these funds would be achieved, evaluated and scored for future similar plans to avoid EU members allocated resources in other investments and allow a massive Greenwashing for big corporations.

A Europe that protects fundamental rights

The EU is a union of rights and values. However, our legal framework doesn't always reflect this principle. European citizens still do not enjoy the same rights and when women's rights, LGBTI+ rights, minority rights as well as the rights of the elderly and young people are under attacks in some member states, the EU does not always have efficient tools to protect them. Attacks against fundamental rights usually go hand in hand with attacks against the European project. The fight for "unity in diversity" is not just a slogan for the EU, it is a condition of its existence and should propel EU institutions to confront LGBTIphobia and racism in all their forms.

That is why we believe that the EU should be competent to protect and promote fundamental rights, through a pillar of rights enshrined in primary law. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and such additional rights should apply also to the actions of Member States, and citizens should be able to defend them in the European Court of Justice.

A stronger European democracy

In order to ensure equal influence on European politics to European citizens and that political debates are truly European, we call for the creation of a **joint European constituency**, where part of the members of Parliament are elected on European lists in 2024. We have to ensure transparency and EU citizen's participation in our institutions. Every European citizen should have all the facilities to participate in the EU policy process in order to make it easier for the whole European society to understand the EU institutions. Furthermore, encouraging MEPs to have an increased presence in Member States outside their home countries and the Brussels-Strasbourg axis could help bring the EU closer to its citizens.

Democracy is also damaged by egoistic behaviour. This is why **unanimity voting should be ended** in key policy areas, including tax policy, social policy, foreign and security policy, and budgetary matters.

At the same time, transparency in decision-making must increase and some new transfer of competences to the EU, like on health issues, are necessary. This would ensure that the EU can coordinate action, like organising patient transfers, information sharing and decide on measures when a health crisis has a cross-border effect. In addition, further coordination of social security systems and establishing minimum standards, including on pensions, is needed.

Making the health sector fit for the common good

Accessibility of health services is heavily dependent on our Intellectual property rights system, our Research and Development Scheme and the organisation of production and supply. In order to ensure that the health sector is driven by general interest considerations, the EU should have a steering role, coordinate R&D efforts, launch public procurements, organise production capacities, reform its IP rights regime and align public and private initiatives. The growing health gap caused by inequality must be addressed. All member countries should be obliged to prepare action plans with clear pathways on how to close these gaps.

A Feminist Recovery

The labour market is heavily dominated by a gender effect. Most sectors in the economy are predominantly occupied by women or by men, and only few sectors are effectively mixed. Work in sectors predominantly occupied by women is undervalued and therefore underpaid, including in the care sector. At the same time, the absence of gender-budgeting results in unbalanced investment in sectors that mostly benefit men, thus resulting in growing inequalities. In order to shift towards a feminist approach, the EU has to take binding measures for equal pay for work of equal value, pay transparency and has to ensure gendermainstreaming in all policy and budgetary decisions and promote it in the Member States.

Solidarity that does not stop with EU Citizenship

Migrations and displacements are some of the biggest challenges but also opportunities for the



European Union. A permanent mechanism to fairly allocate asylum seekers, based on a two-stage system with positive incentives to enhance solidarity should be implemented. It would make EU asylum policy more resilient and contribute to solving the humanitarian crisis at European borders.

Migration policy should be radically reformed, which includes a fundamental change in EU foreign policy especially with regards to Africa and the Middle East. Such a reorientation should build on increased cooperation and investment in these regions avoiding post-colonial schemes. Additionally, it has to recognise the reality of migratory flows caused by climate change. An EU foreign policy built on the protection of human rights needs to ensure that there is an end to the dying at EU external borders, including an immediate stop of illegal practices of pushbacks by Frontex.

Combating social inequalities with a fair and just taxation system and adequate living wages

The post-covid European economy should be based on tax and social justice. Tax avoidance deprives public budgets of necessary funds. It prospers thanks to tax dumping and opacity. That is why we need tax convergence, through minimum tax rates and common basis and tax transparency. This will provide public money to fight better social and economic injustices, to invest in ecological transition, education, and public services; to fund civil society organisations; to ensure digital giants effectively pay taxes. A post-covid European Social Union should also guarantee all European people will be lifted out of poverty by ensuring social rights and minimum income and wages that are above the poverty threshold whilst fully respecting the diversity of labour market models, to better balance the social effects of external shocks in the Economic and Monetary Union.

Protecting our environment with a fair and sustainable agriculture

Providing sufficient and safe food in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner is one of the key challenges of the century. To tackle it, a shift of paradigm is needed and the Common Agricultural Policy has to be deeply reformed. We need a fair and sustainable CAP, in which payments to large landowners are capped and which ensures that small-scale farmers can also benefit from financial aid. We want to see investment in regional food production, cutting down the distance food is transported, respect for animal welfare, linking rural development as well as binding CAP payments to ambitious environmental objectives to ensure CAP does no harm.

Strong EU voice on the global scene

The EU should strive to become a more resilient global actor on the world stage being able to implement its own decisions based on and defending our common European values. The current geopolitical developments and crises in the world reinforced by covid-19 urge the EU to further develop a truly common European foreign policy overcoming unanimity in the Council.

We need to defend human rights, freedom and the rule of law but the EU cannot do it alone. Alongside partners, the EU therefore should promote international cooperation, connectivity and new multilateral impulses. As European Greens, we fight for a credible prospect of accession for the



Western Balkans, want to invest more in the EU Neighbourhood Policy and search for new ambitious partnerships with other regions and regional cooperation.

This will also enable us to work together in fighting the climate crisis. Pushing for a global Green Deal begins at our end: We fight for more diverse and shorter supply chains and a sustainable trade policy so we no longer cause environmental damages and breaches of human rights.