

A healthy environment for a good quality of life



The Green 10 top ten demands for the new European Parliament

Europe is struggling to find its way out of multiple crises. Austerity measures in reaction to the economic crisis are causing untold human suffering. The environmental crisis is continuing apace, endangering the well-being of future generations. Meanwhile, little has been done to put the region on an environmentally sustainable path. Ten of the leading environmental organisations in the EU, representing over 20 million Europeans, believe that the answers to these crises lie in smarter and more sustainable EU policies. This will help Europe create new jobs, regain competitiveness, address the climate crisis and improve quality of life within the limits of our planet.

The European Parliament, a driver for sustainable change

To respond to these crises, new Members of Parliament elected in 2014 should focus on the following ten key priorities:

1. Create new jobs, shift the tax burden from labour to resource consumption, and eliminate environmentally-harmful subsidies through a new economic strategy based on sustainability principles.

The EU should align its spending and lending with its environmental targets, ensuring that the European Investment Bank lends money to projects that protect the environment and our climate. All these measures will help combat climate change, reduce resource consumption and safeguard biodiversity.

2. Ensure the EU adopts three separate, ambitious and binding targets for renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions cuts and energy efficiency for 2030.

To help keep global temperature increases below two degrees centigrade, these three targets must be met in a sustainable way. This means ending harmful bioenergy including biofuels, stopping the use of polluting fossil fuels in energy, industry, buildings and transport, and phasing out nuclear energy as fast as possible. Such policies will deliver a healthier environment, a better quality of life, new jobs, greater energy security, and technological innovation.

3. Halt Europe's accelerated loss of biodiversity by 2020.

The strengthening of the EU's biodiversity strategy, the enforcement of flagship conservation issues such as Natura 2000 (Europe's network of protected areas) and the implementation of the reformed fishing and waters laws will help protect our habitats, forests, animals, waters and soils.

4. Put in place comprehensive resource-reduction, product and waste policies.

Europe is using more than its fair share of the world's resources – exacerbating global social inequalities and environmental damage. Policies are needed which tackle this overconsumption and put Europe on a path to eliminating waste, and encourage quality, resource and energy-efficient products. Food waste is a particular problem and should be cut by at least 50%.

5. Adopt measures to reduce the use of pesticides and replace hazardous chemicals.

Many chemicals, including nano-materials, used in the production of goods are a threat to our health and wildlife. For example, pesticides that kill bees are still widely used in Europe, despite the vital role that pollinators play in food production. The Parliament must adopt measures to reduce the use of pesticides and exposure to endocrine disruptors, which are chemicals that disrupt our hormonal systems and increase rates of breast cancer, diabetes and infertility problems.

6. Limit air pollution and bring levels in line with latest health recommendations.

The World Health Organisation recently classified outdoor air pollution as a cancer-causing agent. The Parliament should set ambitious and binding air pollution ceilings for 2020 and 2025. It should also limit air pollution from major sources such as power plants, agriculture, shipping, construction and domestic heating. This would improve the quality of the air we breathe and bring down cancer and respiratory disease rates.

7. End European and global deforestation and forest degradation.

Forest loss is increasing greenhouse gas emissions and threatening wildlife and the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. The newly elected Members of Parliament should adopt, by 2015, an action plan to reduce the overall impact of EU consumption on forests, eliminate goods linked to deforestation, and support efforts by developing countries to tackle rainforest destruction.

8. Oppose any new free trade deals, especially agreements with the US and Canada, that jeopardise strong social and environmental standards.

In particular, the European Parliament should oppose any deal that includes an investor-state dispute settlement measure. This clause would allow private corporations to legally challenge democratically agreed EU, national and local laws, which preserve citizen rights, health and the environment. The EU-Canada deal is likely to include such a clause and should be rejected to avoid setting a dangerous precedent.

9. Put the environment at the heart of the global development goals to end poverty.

Environmental protection should be at the centre of post-2015 global sustainable development goals to help eradicate poverty. The Parliament must ensure the global development agenda is implemented in all relevant EU policies.

10. Guarantee the right to information, participation and justice for European citizens.

Greater transparency in EU decision-making and lobbying activities would strengthen EU legitimacy, help ensure a balanced composition of EU advisory groups and avoid politicians' conflicts of interest. The European Parliament must adopt new policies to guarantee these rights and good practices. It must also ensure the public rights to information and participation in decision-making in environmental matters, at both EU and national levels, are respected.

What can you do?

We want you to support these 10 key demands. By doing so, you are joining over 20 million Europeans who want the environment to be a priority in the new European Parliament.

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