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Naturally Europe – Towards a resilient, sustainable and healthy EU

What the German environmental, nature and animal protection organisations want to see on the agenda of the European Parliament and the Commission after the 2024 European elections

Supporting organisations





Content

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Naturally Europe – Towards a resilient, sustainable and healthy EU

What the German environmental, nature and animal protection organisations want to see on the agenda of the European Parliament and the Commission after the 2024 European elections

The climate, biodiversity and pollution crises pose a threat to our ecosystems and thus to the foundations of humans, animals and plants. In Europe in particular, the climate is heating up faster than in many other parts of the world, and this trend is putting our health and food security at risk. Glaciers are melting and we are exposed to ever more devastating natural disasters such as heatwaves, droughts, storms and floods. These multiple crises also have social impacts both within and outside Europe: rising living and energy costs, growing social inequalities, and increasing migration flows - due in particular to the ongoing overheating of the climate, which is making some regions of the world uninhabitable. The Russian war of aggression on Ukraine further exacerbates the situation.

How we in the European Union meet these challenges will be determined by the votes of the EU citizens in the 2024 European elections and the ensuing policies of the new members of the European Parliament and the new EU Commission. More urgently than ever, we need a Europe that is fit for the future and resilient. This can only be achieved through a shift towards a sustainable way of living within the planetary boundaries, one that is fair to people, animals and the environment alike. All measures taken within the framework of the European Green Deal, as well as all legislation on financial, fiscal, social and animal welfare matters in the European Union, must focus on this overriding objective. Only in this way can we maintain an equitable and sufficient foundation for life for all people. A free society based on solidarity, security provided by nature-friendly renewable energy, a lifestyle and an economy consistent with the limited availability of resources, and a healthy and liveable environment with intact ecosystems constitute the foundations for a sustainable, peaceful and democratic Europe.

Since its foundation, the European Union has shown time and again that the best way to deal with cross-border crises and challenges is for Member States to act together. Such joint action also resonates beyond Europe's borders. And the European Union still has the chance to live up to its historic responsibility by demonstrating how well countries can work together to further the social-ecological transformation. The European Union can only emerge stronger from these multiple crises if it continues to deepen its democracy and become more equitable and more sustainable across the board. For this to happen, our elected representatives in the European Parliament are crucial. The people of Europe appreciate what the European Union has already done to protect the environment, nature and animals, because they have long realised that clean air, unpolluted water, unspoilt nature, a toxin-free environment and a proper respect for animals can only be ensured through cooperation between countries and common ambitious minimum standards.

The European Green Deal has set the course for a social-ecological transformation in the European Union. The task now is to continue along this path in a consistent and reliable manner.

In this, the following points must be prioritised:

- **The climate and biodiversity crises are inextricably linked.** Combating them must become the top political priority. Agriculture will be of particular importance in the coming legislative period, as it has contributed significantly to the extinction of species, the climate crisis and the degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. **A binding EU climate target for the agricultural sector** is therefore needed. Agricultural subsidies should only be paid if they are tied to **ecological services for climate,**

biodiversity, animal welfare, health or environmental protection, or to the rigorous reduction and conversion of livestock farming. In this way, the sector can and must become a pioneer of transformation.

- The responsible and sustainable use of natural resources should bring financial benefits, whereas waste and pollution need to come at a cost. So the **polluter pays principle must be enforced everywhere, rigorously**. To this end, taxes on pollution and resource consumption should be introduced. **Subsidies that are harmful to the environment and the climate must be abolished**, because they counteract all investment in climate protection and sustainability. They slow down the structural change towards a climate-neutral economy and way of living in Europe. The financial resources thereby made available should be used primarily to cushion the social impacts of the transformation. All financial resources must be clearly **aligned with the requirements of the social-ecological transformation**.
- The precautionary principle is one of the fundamental principles of European environmental policy and must remain central. Instead of gambling solely on the putative potential of future technological solutions and thereby risking negative impacts on our ecosystems, European environmental and climate policy must be designed to be farsighted and preventative. This also means that **new genetic engineering techniques must continue to be strictly regulated** and that genetically modified organisms must not be released into ecosystems or introduced onto the market without strict controls.

Within the next five years, the European Union must systematically take forward the ecological, social, economic and political transformation that was set in motion by the European Green Deal. As German nature, animal and environmental protection organisations, we therefore call on the European political parties, the future Members of the European Parliament and the future EU Commission to make Europe fit for the future. The ensuing demands and measures represent a practical contribution to solving the challenges that lie ahead.

Strengthening democratisation and sustainability in the EU

The EU must put the future of our planet and the wellbeing of its people at the heart of its policies. Strengthening democracy and building real transparency in decision-making both within and between institutions, along with the full implementation and consistent enforcement of laws, is crucial to this.

- Ensure that the EU internalises **social and environmental sustainability as an overarching and paramount guiding principle**, implements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in all policy areas and pursues its economic goals in a socially just way that remains within the planetary boundaries. This entails cross-party support within the European Parliament for abandoning gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of growth in favour of progress indicators that are much more closely aligned with environmental and social sustainability.
- The European Union and its precursors have made great progress, often in the face of urgent necessity. The climate, biodiversity and pollution crises can only be tackled through joint action. This requires **Europeanisation in additional, targeted policy areas where common goods should be promoted**. For example, the requirement for unanimity voting on taxation issues should be abandoned, not least so that subsidies that are harmful to the environment and the climate can be completely eliminated. The EU also needs to acquire more competence, both in cross-border rail transport and to ensure the preservation of carbon sinks.
- Promote an EU that its citizens can see for themselves is democratic, with **transparent and accountable decision-making processes**. Lobbying must be made visible and regulated - not only through a compulsory

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register. The governance structures and working procedures in the EU, including the composition of parliamentary committees and transparency and ethics regulations, must be assessed and enhanced.

- In addition to better regulation, a better **implementation agenda** is also needed to achieve the goals associated with the European Green Deal initiatives. This requires stringent targets that **do not permit any violation of environmental law**.
- Advocate for an EU-wide legislative framework for **access to justice in environmental matters** in accordance with the Aarhus Convention. Increasing and improving the prosecution of violations also entails increasing staff numbers in the relevant departments of the European Commission.
- The social-ecological transformation can only succeed if all people in the EU are empowered to participate in it. Stand up for aligning existing funding programmes such as Erasmus+ with the SDGs and with UNESCO's 'Education for Sustainable Development 2030' programme. Establish new programmes to promote **education for sustainable development, for human rights and democracy, and civic education**.
- **Social and gender justice** are core elements of a sustainable and resilient democracy and key to a successful social-ecological transformation. Through gender equality measures and proper consideration of marginalised groups, social inequality and environmental pollution can be reduced and social participation enhanced. Work to ensure that all measures proposed for mitigating the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises are gender-sensitive, especially for women and all people who are discriminated against on the basis of their gender, and are backed up with adequate financial resources.

Delivering the industrial transformation and reducing resource use

Endless growth is impossible in a world with finite resources. In terms of resources, we are living on borrowed time and thereby endangering the lives of people everywhere where resources are extracted or exploited for use by the EU. The IPCC report of 2022 explicitly refers to several studies showing that climate stabilisation below two degrees is only possible if our economic system becomes less dependent on GDP growth. The path to sustainability can only be pursued via a systematic transformation of the economy. The transformation path we have embarked upon through the European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan must be continued rapidly and consistently in order to make the EU more environmentally friendly and climate neutral.

- Push for a **rigorous transformation to a climate-neutral industrial sector** worthy of that description: the core must be provided by massive **efforts to reduce consumption**, sufficiency, efficiency and electrification as prerequisites for true innovation - which must also include a greater focus on the circular economy.
- Ensure an absolute **reduction in the consumption of raw materials** and an increase in material efficiency. This requires binding targets for the incremental reduction of the consumption of primary raw materials and the generation of waste per inhabitant. **Critical raw materials** must increasingly be derived from recycling, and above all their consumption must be drastically reduced. The EU must become a pioneer in the substitution of such raw materials by alternatives.
- Work to ensure that the European Union adopts and enforces the **waste hierarchy**. To do this, it must prioritise waste prevention and the reuse of materials, and boost the eco-design, repair, reuse and recycling of products. A consolidated circular economy can only be achieved through the further development of relevant policy on products. This includes the adoption of common measures across the Union to address the availability of materials and supply chains for the required technologies. Products that are durable, reusable and repairable, as well as recyclable and produced using recycled materials, must become the standard. Services that conserve resources must be promoted, e.g. through a **right to repair (at low cost, independent of the manufacturer and of high quality), loan systems and second-hand markets**. The use of packaging must be drastically reduced, above all by promoting return schemes.

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- Make sure that the **precautionary principle** is applied consistently in environmental policy, including with regard to subsidies and incentives. It is still too often the case that secondary raw materials are not competitive with primary materials in terms of price. This must change, for example through **taxation of primary raw materials and sectors**.
- Hydrogen is not an end in itself, but must contribute to climate protection and be used in a measured and targeted manner. Only **green hydrogen**, produced using additional renewable energy, should receive public financial support. Its use in sectors such as industry, aviation and shipping, which cannot be converted for direct electricity use, must be strictly prioritised. The extensive use of hydrogen for heating buildings and its widespread use in car transport should be firmly rejected, as they offer only minimal climate benefits due to energy conversion losses. The future hydrogen infrastructure must be planned so as to align closely with climate goals and its use must be restricted to the most sensible areas of consumption.
- The European Green Deal must become an **engine for new jobs**. The European Commission should issue targets and recommendations for training and employment. Companies should develop binding transformation roadmaps and then follow them step by step. Education and training should be consistently geared towards climate-friendly employment.
- Push for a faster implementation and enforcement of the processes already under way as part of the industrial transformation, such as the introduction of **sustainable public procurement**.

Towards a sustainable and fair climate policy compliant with the 1.5 °C limit

The 2020s are crucial for the social-ecological transformation of the EU and for our ambition to limit global heating to 1.5 °C and thereby avoid even more drastic climate impacts around the world. In order to have a sustainable future, the EU must reduce its greenhouse gas emissions quickly, fairly and substantially and accelerate the energy transition –also in order to set an example for the wider international community. The use of and dependence on fossil energies is no longer sustainable, whether from an economic, social-ecological or climate justice perspective. This also requires investing in genuinely sustainable technologies in order to maintain Europe's status as a location for high-technology industries.

- Ensure **an ambitious EU climate target for 2040 in line with the 1.5 °C limit based on the scientific expertise of the independent EU Climate Change Advisory Council (ESABCC)**. In order to drive a rapid transformation towards climate neutrality, an interim target must be set for 2035, as already agreed in the UN framework. This must deliver the largest emissions reductions in the first half of the decade and for that reason must not be derived in a linear fashion from the 2040 target. The EU has a historic global responsibility to live up to. Work to ensure that the EU, in addition to its own emissions reduction efforts, strengthens its support to other countries through climate partnerships, climate finance, and technical assistance and expertise in the areas of emissions reductions, adaptation and climate-related loss and damage.
- Ensure that **avoidance and reduction always have the highest priority when dealing with CO2 emissions**. Carbon removal must play only a very limited and subordinate role. It must not be allowed to dilute or even replace avoidance and reduction efforts, but must be supplementary, and for the purpose of compensating for residual emissions in hard to abate sectors (which must be narrowly defined) and creating net negative emissions. Targets for carbon removal and emissions reduction must therefore be set separately. In addition, permanence and accountability must be guaranteed with respect to carbon removal. Meeting the EU's climate targets must be decoupled from unrealistically high carbon removal targets. This is because the technological and economic feasibility of these removal targets and the resilience of natural sinks are difficult to calculate due to the ongoing climate crisis.
- Push for a sensible and systematic delivery of the targets through the strengthening and scaling up of existing instruments. For example, advocate for the **continuation and enhancement of the Climate Action Regulation**

for Europe (CARE), the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and existing sectoral legislation after 2030 - all in line with the 1.5 °C limit. CARE must continue to set binding emissions reduction targets for individual EU Member States and the emissions reductions needed by 2035, 2040 and for EU carbon neutrality by 2050. The polluter pays principle must be applied in the ETS1 by abolishing free allocations and moving to 100 percent auctioning of allowances. A price corridor, with annually increasing minimum and maximum prices, is needed to provide investment confidence, incentive effects and social compatibility for the ETS2 for buildings and transport. The Commission should present a proposal for a faster phase-out of the free allocation of emissions permits as part of the review of the EU border adjustment mechanism (CBAM).

- Drive forward the EU's **energy transition** decisively and in a fair manner, and ensure that only genuinely green and climate-friendly technologies - such as nature-friendly **renewable energies and innovations furthering the circular economy** - receive funding. By 2040, the entire energy sector of the EU should be 100 percent renewable, with priority given to community energy schemes. The EU needs a stricter framework for a limited and nature-friendly use of bioenergy, especially in view of the increasing competition for land and its use and the declining resilience and sink capacity of many ecosystems. Put in place the framework conditions for the development of effective **governance structures** that will enable spatial planning throughout the EU for the accelerated and nature-friendly expansion of wind and solar energy and of electricity grids. Provide planning certainty for industry by means of guarantees, for example with regard to the availability of renewable energies and the associated infrastructure. The use of carbon capture and storage (CCS) should play only a very limited and subordinate role and only for unavoidable residual emissions. Subsidies or accelerated planning procedures for nuclear power and fossil gas must be firmly ruled out.
- Ensure that the EU unequivocally commits to the **end of fossil fuel use** by setting **legally binding deadlines for the phase-out** of fossil gas and oil for energy use by 2040 at the latest. This would be a key step towards climate neutrality and would create legal certainty for investors and consumers.
- Support European sovereignty by making a much stronger commitment to **reducing energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency**. Of particular importance in this context is the buildings sector, which accounts for 40 percent of the EU's energy consumption. A Europe-wide **phase-out of fossil fuel heating** and the **introduction of ambitious minimum energy standards** are needed as soon as possible. This will protect citizens against energy poverty and high energy prices.

Towards a sustainable transformation of the agriculture and food system

The EU needs an agriculture and food system that proactively works to combat the biodiversity and climate crises and ensures animal welfare. Policymakers must set the framework conditions to enable habitats to be restored, soil biodiversity to be enhanced, and pesticides, fertilisers and greenhouse gases to be systematically cut back in accordance with the Green Deal. Only in this way can a healthy and sustainable food supply be ensured for all people in the long term and a just transition for farmers and consumers made possible. With the "Farm-to-Fork" Strategy, the EU has established an important framework that now needs to be applied. This means that environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies must be phased out and diverted into targeted payment systems and investment support. This is the only way to achieve a more resilient and sustainable agricultural system that is better equipped to face future crises.

- The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** must become the central transformative instrument for agriculture. **All CAP funds** - whether subsidies or investment aid - **must be linked to its environmental goals**. This means that direct payments by area without any steering effects must be replaced by targeted measures aimed at enhancing the common good in terms of climate, environment, animal welfare and biodiversity in order to finally create a CAP that rewards farmers for the provision of public goods.
- **Organic farming** must be expanded to reach a share of **at least 25 percent** in all EU Member States. Ensure there is sufficient funding and support for the expansion target in the Organic Action Plan 2021-2027.

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- The decision **not to cultivate genetically modified plants** gives European agriculture a competitive advantage, which would not be possible without the existing legal framework of risk assessment, authorisation, labelling and traceability. Only strict legislation on genetic engineering will maintain freedom of choice for the agricultural and food sector as well as for consumers. Support the continued regulation of all genetically modified organisms in the EU.
- **Excessive use of pesticides and inordinate nitrogen** input is threatening our terrestrial and marine ecosystems, degrading soil, air and water quality and exacerbating the climate crisis. Ensure that the **EU Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation (SUR)** is adopted and rigorously enforced with **ambitious reduction targets**, better pesticide authorisation procedures and comprehensive monitoring. The toxicity and quantity of pesticides used must be reduced by at least 50 percent. Also press for **effective measures and binding regulations to reduce and avoid nitrogen surpluses**.
- In the interest of animal welfare, combating the climate crisis, reducing nitrogen inputs and resistance to antibiotics, and in order to promote a healthier diet including reduced consumption of animal products, a **transformation of livestock farming** is essential. This can be achieved by reducing the density and overall numbers of animals, drastically improving the conditions under which they are kept, curbing the import of unsustainable feedstuffs, and establishing area-based animal husbandry as the standard. In addition, push for a **binding EU climate target for the agricultural sector**.
- Ensure that the **revision of European animal welfare legislation** after the election is quickly implemented and carried out in a manner consistent with good animal welfare standards. This means, among other things, a ban on live animal shipments to countries outside the EU, the implementation of the ban on the caging of animals, and a ban on water-bath stunning of poultry.
- The **keeping** of millions of fur-bearing animals is not only a significant animal welfare problem, but also a health risk for humans and wildlife due to the transmission and spread of diseases. Fur farms in the EU must therefore be closed as soon as possible and fur imports banned.
- Drained peatlands are a significant source of CO₂. Peatlands are responsible for seven percent of total emissions in the EU. The **rewetting of peatlands** is a key tool for combating the climate crisis and achieving climate and biodiversity goals in the land use sector. Apply binding, widescale and socially sustainable regulations for the phasing out of peatland drainage. Ensure that sufficient funding and consultation services are available to promote wet use options such as paludiculture and to support farmers at every stage of the biomass value chain, and **put an end to subsidies for agriculture on drained peatland soils**.
- The new **legal framework for Sustainable Food Systems** must establish binding and measurable targets within a fixed timeframe, as well as effective implementation, monitoring and sanction mechanisms for all relevant sectors of the food supply chain. Priority in agriculture must be given to sustainable value chains, healthy, plant-based and affordable nutrition, ensuring cost-covering producer prices, and binding targets for agriculture with regard to the protection of the environment, climate, biodiversity and animal welfare.
- In addition, the EU has a special responsibility on world markets. Work to ensure that the **global land take of the European agricultural and food industry is reduced**, that no new destruction or degradation of natural ecosystems takes place due to the expansion of agricultural land, and that minimum standards for imports are met and export dumping are prevented. Especially in the Global South, support for small-scale farming is particularly important for sustainable cultivation, food security and the protection of biodiversity.

Accelerating the protection of nature, animals and biodiversity in order to safeguard the natural foundation of our lives

With the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, Europe has already laid down the fundamental guidelines for meeting the global biodiversity targets which it pledged to implement in the Montréal Convention on Biological Diversity. It is vital to continue to implement these rigorously over the next legislative period. The preservation of biodiversity is crucial to safeguarding the natural foundation of our lives. Nature conservation policy goals must therefore be given a much higher priority in political decision-making and the protection of biodiversity must be integrated into all legislative processes across all sectors. Animal welfare is another important cross-cutting issue that is particularly close to the hearts of EU citizens: six of the ten successful European Citizens' Initiatives have championed animal welfare issues.

- Ensure that **all 23 targets specified in the Montréal Global Biodiversity Agreement (KM-GBF)** are met by the relevant European institutions swiftly and in full. In particular, ensure that the increase in the EU's international biodiversity funding by 2025 and 2030 respectively - in accordance with Target 19 of the KM-GBF - is guaranteed. To this end, the EU and its Member States must at least double the current budget for biodiversity of around €25 billion per year by 2030. In addition, the EU must deliver on its own target of devoting at least 10 percent of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to investments in biodiversity by the end of the current financial period.
- Adopt legally binding targets and measures that **place 30 percent of land and marine areas under enforceable protection** and at least one third of this under strict protection, and ensure that the **Natura 2000 network** is finally put fully in place and effectively protected by means of detailed conservation measures, requirements and prohibitions. Ensure that these objectives are linked in a coherent and consistent way with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy and the expansion targets for organic farming.
- In order to carry out the large-scale **restoration of terrestrial and marine ecosystems** in an effective and lasting way, an urgent and legally binding codification of restoration and land protection targets through the adoption of an ambitious EU Nature Restoration Law is indispensable. In addition, funding for nature restoration must be guaranteed and incorporated into the EU's MFF.
- The EU is an important market for the **international trade in wildlife**. Press for a rigorous, comprehensive and swift implementation of the EU Action Plan to combat illegal wildlife trade. The private ownership of wild animals and the trade in wild animals for private purposes must be restricted in the European Union to species that are deemed suitable as pets from the perspective of nature, animal and species protection, as well as from that of public safety and health, for example by means of an EU-wide positive list. Take action to ensure that animals and plants illegally taken from the wild in their country of origin and exported cannot be imported into, owned or sold in the EU. A precondition for a sustainable, safe and legal wildlife trade is a species-specific registration of imports of wild animals and plants currently not covered by the EU Regulation on the protection of species. Urge for a review of the importing of hunting trophies of protected species to check for corruption, lack of transparency, illegal hunting practices and threatened populations, and for the promotion of alternative sources of income not involving consumption.
- **Large predators** are an important component of European biodiversity and represent key species within ecosystems due to their potentially wide-ranging impacts on food web processes. Ensure the continuation and consistent enforcement of conservation measures affecting large predators and the facilitation of coexistence between humans and wildlife.
- Animals do not have a voice of their own and also need strong political representation at EU level. **Animal welfare is an important cross-cutting issue** and affects not only many policy areas but also a great many people in the EU. Support the call for an EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare.

For a consistent protection of seas and other water bodies

our conservation goals, while overfishing and the influx of waste further exacerbate the situation. Because ecological stress limits are already being exceeded today, the protection of our seas and other water bodies must be significantly improved. In addition, the management of our fisheries needs to be based on science and on an understanding of ecosystems, and fisheries subsidies that damage the environment must be phased out. In order to ensure a just transition, those working in the fisheries sector must receive support.

- Ensure that the **UN High Seas Agreement on the protection of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction** (BBNJ Agreement) is ratified swiftly and implemented effectively. Without the means to protect areas on the high seas, the implementation of the marine area target will not be possible. Institutional structures and financial resources for its effective implementation will need to be planned and set up. Push for the EU to introduce **effective measures against the loss of marine biodiversity**, so that the core ecosystem functions of the oceans - climate regulation, carbon storage and oxygen generation - can be protected in the interests of global climate protection.
- Speak out forcefully **against the approval of deep-sea mining projects**. It has not been demonstrated how large-scale mining of mineral resources in previously untouched marine ecosystems could be carried out without significant damage, nor has any robust evidence been provided that such resources are needed at all. Take seriously the commitments already made by the international community of states to protect the oceans. Instead, boost the circular economy.
- The EU has committed to achieving **good ecological and chemical status for all water bodies** by 2027. Ensure that the targets in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) are met and that implementation deficits are swiftly rectified, without the WFD itself being called into question. Also, push for a new **EU roadmap for water and climate adaptation** that focuses on strengthening the regional water balance and includes the costs of climate change impacts (e.g. floods, droughts).
- The EU is committed to implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Press for measures for the **immediate reduction of underwater noise**, such as quiet zones, pilot projects for reducing the speed of ships in European waters, and the prevention or mitigation of impulse noise.
- Take action to further **reduce discharges of waste from the land into seas and rivers. Reduce plastic and pollutant discharges** into the sea, stop the use of dolly ropes and the improper disposal of waste, pharmaceuticals and other chemicals. The immediate enforcement of an EU-wide ban on plastic dolly ropes would be an important signal. In addition, producers should always be held financially liable for the pollution of the (marine) environment.
- Consistent implementation of the objectives of the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** is essential for maintaining and rebuilding healthy fish stocks, marine ecosystems and their essential functions - including climate protection - and serves as the basis for a European fisheries sector that is sustainable in the long term. Fewer fish must be kept in aquacultures, and under better conditions, and the management of fisheries must be based on science and an understanding of ecosystems in order to minimise the impact of fishing on them. Press in addition for strict fisheries control in European and international maritime waters, a zero-tolerance policy towards illegal, undocumented and unregulated (IUU) fishing, a committed engagement in regional fisheries agreements, and a halt to harmful fisheries subsidies that fuel overcapacity in the fishing fleet and overfishing.

Enhancing Europe's environment and health

The Covid pandemic showed how great the influence of the environment is on our health. Zoonoses, antibiotic resistance, air, water, soil, noise and light pollution all threaten the health of humans, animals and the environment. The global cost of the harmful effects of chemicals is more than ten percent of global GDP. Every year, more than

300,000 people across Europe die prematurely due to air pollution, including 1,200 children and young people. With its Zero Pollution Action Plan and the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, the EU has embarked on the right path. We need to follow this path steadfastly so that the health of people and the environment is better protected and the EU's Zero Pollution target can also serve as a good model for other regions of the world.

- Work to ensure that the vision of a **toxin-free environment in the EU becomes a reality by 2030 at the latest, in line with the Chemicals Strategy**. To achieve this, the European Union requires legislation that regulates substances of concern quickly, efficiently and in line with the **precautionary principle**, as well as a legislative framework that applies the **polluter pays principle** in full. All forms of pollution must be addressed properly across all policy areas. Ending pollution requires joint and cross-departmental action, because a healthy environment is not only a human right but also a prerequisite for a properly functioning economy and for public welfare.
- Put an end to **double standards** in chemicals legislation. Substances that are banned or restricted in the EU because of their harmful effects on humans, animals and the environment are just as harmful in other parts of the world, and it should no longer be possible to export them from the EU. We need a comprehensive export ban for such substances.
- Devise strategies and laws that set in motion the **social-ecological transformation of the key chemicals industry sector** and its value chains and that enable the development of a sustainable and toxin-free circular economy.
- Work towards a robust, binding **UN agreement to tackle plastic pollution**, with the aim of setting clear reduction targets for new plastic production and for releases into the environment, as well as phasing out the use of hazardous chemicals in plastic. The process of implementation and enforcement to achieve the targets in the EU must be carried out by way of an **action plan**.
- Work towards an EU commitment to achieve the **quality standards of the 2021 WHO air quality guidelines** throughout Europe by 2030 and to maintain air quality improvements. This can only be successful in combination with ambitious emissions legislation such as the NEC Directive, the Ecodesign Regulation and the EURO 7 emissions standards.
- Soil conservation is a task for the whole of Europe. Press for the EU to adopt ambitious **soil health legislation** that sets clear targets to curb land use and soil sealing, among other things.

Delivering the sustainable mobility transition

The transport sector is among those most damaging to the climate, producing around 25 per cent of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions, and, unlike other sectors, it has so far hardly reduced them. Regular scandals such as illicit collusion between companies and systematic manipulation of the exhaust gas purification systems of cars, as well as persistent detrimental impacts on people from noise and air pollutants, especially in our cities, are evidence of the overwhelming need for action. Billions in tax subsidies and an adherence to outdated, superfluous and oversized infrastructure plans stand in the way of sustainability. A genuine propulsion and mobility transition is needed. The European Green Deal has started a rethink in the transport sector, one that must now be taken further and intensified.

- Ensure that the new initiatives agreed for the transport sector in the European Green Deal - for **sustainable and smart mobility**, a green European maritime space, stricter limits on air pollutant emissions, lower CO₂ fleet standards for cars and trucks, combined and electrified freight transport and the installation of public charging stations - are delivered and enforced swiftly, effectively and on an ambitious scale, and that they are aligned with climate protection requirements in the upcoming revisions. **Energy efficiency** must be the overriding requirement.

- Try to ensure that the **polluter pays** principle is applied in full to all modes of transport, and in particular to air transport. In this spirit, press for the **phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies for transport**. This requires, among other things, an ambitious implementation of the Energy Tax Directive, with short transition periods to ensure that environmentally harmful fuels are taxed at the highest rate. In order to drive forward the social-ecological transformation, the resulting revenues should be used to make sustainable mobility affordable, especially for poorer households and small and medium-sized enterprises - for example, through low-cost rail tickets.
- Ensure through ambitious and consistent measures for traffic avoidance, modal shift and electrification that the energy demand for transport is significantly reduced and the **use of biogenic and synthetic fuels is limited to an absolute minimum**. E-fuels must only be used in the shipping and aviation sectors, only in conjunction with additional renewable energy and only after all options for avoidance, modal shift and electrification have been excluded. Put an immediate end to the use of biogenic fuels from cultivated biomass, the production of which exacerbates the climate crisis, the extinction of species and the global food crisis. The quantities of residual and waste materials available on a sustainable basis are extremely small and their use in material applications must be prioritised in accordance with the cascade principle. While biogenic fuels are still in use, it must be ensured that the sustainability criteria and monitoring procedures are adapted in such a way that fraud can be reliably ruled out.
- Press for the **electrification of the transport sector**, especially on the roads. Energy saving and recycling must be ensured here: press for the **introduction of efficiency standards for battery-electric passenger cars and commercial vehicles**. These standards should provide incentives for the most economical use of energy and resources in the production, operation and recycling of electric vehicles. This also includes the introduction of recycling quotas as well as more stringent requirements for supply chain responsibility.
- Push for a well-run network of **cross-border long-distance and night trains across Europe** to provide an attractive alternative to air travel. This requires that the climate costs of all modes of transport are priced in fairly, that priority is given to a massively accelerated expansion of the European rail network, in particular on busy flight routes, as well as to a clear timetable for the introduction of a Europe-wide regular interval timetable and to the strengthening of passengers' rights. Campaign for a European platform where tickets, including for bicycles, can be easily booked online across Europe. This Europe-wide rail policy should be coordinated by a Eurocontrol for the railways. To this end, the mandate of the European Railway Agency should be significantly strengthened.
- In order to make an effective contribution to climate protection, air traffic - by far the most climate-damaging mode of mass transport - must be significantly reduced. Press for an **EU-wide tax on jet fuel, the swift introduction of a price on non-CO2 climate impacts, and a socially just tax on frequent flyers**.
- **Maritime transport** contributes about three per cent to global CO2 emissions. In order to reduce these emissions, support the strengthening of minimum quotas for RFNBOs (Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin), a mandatory shore-to-ship power infrastructure using green electricity, and an equitable taxation of marine fuels. In order to quickly reduce emissions in European waters, support the development of a decarbonisation plan for ferries and short sea journeys.

Ensuring funding for the social-ecological transformation

According to calculations made by the European Commission, public and private investments of one trillion euros are needed by 2030 if the social-ecological transformation that Europe has embarked upon is to be realised. Without these funds, we will not succeed in maintaining the foundations necessary for our lives. This is where the financial markets can exert a leverage effect by identifying negative impacts at the portfolio level, consistently setting science-based targets consistent with the planetary boundaries, and tracking these using transformation plans. In addition, the EU budget will have to take on a much greater role in the transformation through other

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supporting measures. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that public funding and subsidies have a clear political incentivising effect towards transformation.

- Expanding the EU taxonomy into a comprehensive **“transformation taxonomy”**, as proposed by the Platform on Sustainable Finance, can provide a basis for guiding and regulating financial flows towards transformation. This requires the systematic further development and adaptation of regulations that have already been put in place. The disclosure regulations (CSRD, SFDR, CSDDD) must be coordinated with each other to form a regulatory framework compatible with an expanded taxonomy, one that builds on the Sustainable Finance Package. Push for an **EU taxonomy** that is rigorously science-based and does equal justice to all environmental goals. This also means reversing the decision to designate fossil gas and nuclear power as sustainable technologies by including them in the taxonomy. For a successful transformation of the economy, it is necessary to apply the taxonomy to all government spending and to the Multiannual Financial Framework.
- Push for the development of a comprehensive **data infrastructure**, the European Single Access Point. This can enable transformation plans to become a widely available basis for financing and investment decisions and help build competitiveness. In order to promote transparency and reliability in sustainability evaluations, there must be stricter regulation of sustainability (ESG) ratings.
- All funding must be clearly aligned with the **requirements for the implementation of the European Green Deal**. One approach to achieving greater consistency between public environmental and financial policies is **Green Budgeting**, which must aim at enhancing impact analyses for public spending. Push for ambitious and rising targets for minimum shares for environmentally and climate-friendly spending in EU programmes (“climate mainstreaming”). Human rights and environmental standards must also apply to all investments made under the “green industrial plan”.
- In order to implement the polluter pays principle universally and consistently, push for the **rapid abolition of all subsidies harmful to the environment and the climate**, to which Germany and the EU have already committed themselves several times within the framework of the G7 and G20. Subsidies that are harmful to the environment and the climate counteract all investment in climate protection and in the transformation towards more sustainability and slow down the structural change towards a climate-neutral economy and way of life in Europe.
- Press for a **European fiscal framework** that enables investments in the climate package “Fit for 55” and in the social-ecological transformation. The debt brake must not take precedence over the investments necessary for the social-ecological transformation. Push for a full transformation of the European Semester into an annual sustainability cycle. This needs to integrate the European Green Deal and the SDGs so that it strengthens the EU’s resilience.
- In order to cushion the social-ecological transformation and the goal of climate neutrality in a socially just way, an **immediate increase in the Climate Social Fund** (before 2030) is needed, together with an ambitious development of other financial instruments such as the European Sovereignty Fund. In order to drive forward the heating and transport transition in particular and to make it socially sustainable and acceptable, the size of the Climate Social Fund must develop in proportion to the CO2 price in the ETS2, and with no cap. At least 35 percent of the ETS2 revenues should flow into this solidarity-based climate fund. In addition, the co-financing through the Member States should be maintained.
- Ensure that the **European Hydrogen Bank** only subsidises the production of renewable hydrogen. Environmentally harmful fossil or nuclear hydrogen production under the mantle of “low carbon” must be clearly excluded from support. The funding volume from the Bank must be in proportion to the expansion within Europe of renewable energy, which must be given priority as the basis for green hydrogen production.

Contact

Bjela Vossen

Head of EU-Coordination

Phone: +49 (0)30 6781775-85

Mail: bjela.vossen@dnr.de

Elena Hofmann

Advisor für European climate and energy policy

Phone: +49 (0)30 6781775-79

Mail: elena.hofmann@dnr.de

Lavinia Roveran

Head of nature conservation and agricultural policy

Phone: +49 (0)30 6781775-901

Mail: lavinia.roveran@dnr.de

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Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR) e.V., German League for Nature and Environment

Marienstraße 19-20, 10117 Berlin, Mail: info@dnr.de, Phone: +49 (0)30 6781775-70, www.dnr.de