

**2021**

# **GREEN TRACK REPORT**

PREPARED BY

**GENERATION CLIMATE  
EUROPE**

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**Generation  
Climate  
Europe**



**EYE**  
2021

# CONTEXT

Through its European Green Deal strategy, the European Union aims to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. But how can this be achieved?

Young people have been invited by the European Parliament to share concrete proposals on the Youth Ideas Platform and help answer a fundamental question: how can we live in harmony with nature?

Generation Climate Europe (GCE), the Green Partner for the European Youth Event 2021 (EYE21), is the largest coalition of youth-led networks at the European level, pushing for stronger action from the EU on climate and environmental issues. GCE has collected the key ideas shared on the platform to create the following report.

The variety and diversity of ideas shared on the Youth Ideas Platform demonstrate that young Europeans have ambitious and bold ideas to address the climate crisis. Young people have played a central role in pushing for stronger climate action in the EU and beyond, putting pressure on decision-makers and launching various initiatives at the grassroots level.

Young people's ideas will be further discussed at the European Youth Event 2021 (EYE2021) and feed into the European Parliament's youth consultation process related to the Conference on the future of Europe.

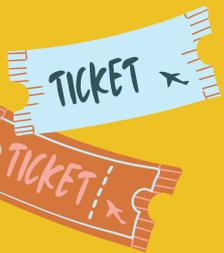


# SYSTEMS CHANGE

Young people across Europe demand **a complete transformation of the way our economic system and society work**. To this end, they call for a radical system change that comprises a variety of factors: from the need to implement a circular economy to the **importance of acting based on long-term impacts rather than short-term economic gains**.

However, 'systems change' means more than just revolutionising our economic production: it has to be tied in with other factors such as **education in schools focused on environmental protection** and climate science. Funding environmental journalism is also crucial to this, says Bárbara Pinho, one of the responders to the survey, as well as **increased support for local communities in their implementation of green projects**. It has to be a multi-level, multi-faceted reshaping of the socio-economic system. The EU has a large role to play in determining how its Member States and other countries step up to the challenge and meet the need for a paradigm shift across the continent.

## BRAVE IDEAS



"Promoting a sustainable Erasmus through Transport", (Proposal by Sofia Carballo, Luisa Ingrid Abrahamyan and Eric Valdivia)

Create a 'green transport card' for Erasmus students, allowing them to obtain significant discounts on other journeys they wish to make during their Erasmus stay, provided that they are carried out using sustainable means of transport such as the train or electric bus (among others).

"Greener cities", (Proposal by Denisa Záchenská)

We should massively subsidise and support projects that include green improvements in cities. Green roofs, unmounted meadows, water retention measures, tree planting, bee gardens and many others.



"Sustainable practices in our school curriculum", (Proposal by Gaia Sasso)

Schools are responsible for shaping the minds of tomorrow's adults. I am 18 years old and my school 'career' is accompanied by experiences and interventions by environmental professionals. Our professors taught us to correctly separate waste, not to dispose of it on land, to make simple washbasins to recycle plastic and even to create compost in our school.



# LAND USE



Several youth ideas focus on the necessity to shift land-use practices in the EU. Young Europeans call for greener spaces, urging both for an **increased number of protected natural areas**, but also the creation of urban gardens. In addition to having environmental benefits, green spaces also contribute to mental and physical health. Furthermore, young people stress the need to consider the environmental and social impacts of wind farms, and to subsequently create appropriate compensation mechanisms for the local populations impacted by the installation of these infrastructures.

Additionally, young people suggest **changing the orientation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, which strongly influences food production patterns in the EU and thus its land use. In particular, they propose to stop calculating CAP subsidies based on the agricultural surface owned, and **instead incentivising farmers to turn to more environmentally-friendly practices**. Several youth contributors underline the impact of unsustainable diets on the environment and the importance of **reducing meat consumption and food waste**. Educational activities around food production, including in schools, were said to have a critical role in changing diet habits.

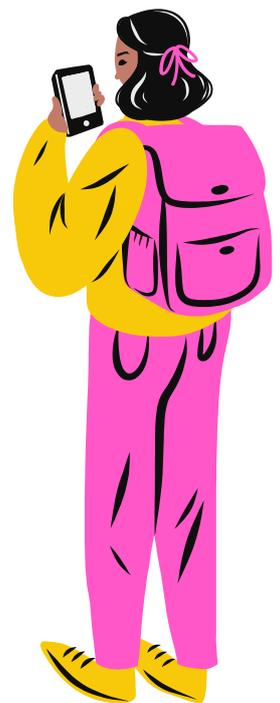


# CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The importance of **shifting towards a more circular economy**, a system that aims to maintain the value of products for as long as possible while minimising the generation of waste, was highlighted by multiple youth contributors. Young participants emphasise the **responsibility of manufacturers** in this endeavour, suggesting they should offer better quality products and increase the minimum guarantee time to address the issue of planned obsolescence. Moreover, **policies should be implemented to force producers to phase out plastic packaging**. Another contributor pushes this idea further by proposing that, in the future, a product should not be created unless manufacturers have created a sustainable life-cycle plan for it.

Young Europeans call for changes in product marketing and **the need to address the greenwashing strategies developed by companies**. This includes the need to come up with clearer criteria to define a product as “green” or “sustainable” through a labelling system.

Youth contributors mention the importance of buying and recycling habits for consumers. They suggest a change in behaviour could be encouraged by making people pay a refundable deposit when they buy bottled items. Finally, youth participants emphasise **the role of public authorities in improving waste treatment processes**, by turning waste into energy, for example.



# ENERGY

Young people care about energy: where do we get it? How can we ensure it is sustainable and reliable? A few ideas are most noteworthy on the subject.

First and foremost, they call to start **taxing non-renewable energy more heavily**, in order to discourage its production and consumption. As for renewable resources, many speak highly in favour of a larger investment and reliance on solar-powered energy and also call for greater use of solar panels.

Moreover, like all technology, once it has reached its limit of functioning date it becomes waste. There needs to be a good plan in place **to recycle solar panels effectively** in order to make sure they are a sustainable source of energy during and after their use. Another topic mentioned is **nuclear energy**: while it is undeniable there are risks, many young people call for **its use in the plan to decarbonize Europe** in areas where it would be used in a safe and controlled manner.



# CLEAN MOBILITY

Big asks from European youth come in the field of clean mobility: **it is imperative that clean, cheap, and accessible transportation is guaranteed to all around Europe**. First and foremost, short distance trips should be made much cheaper to encourage the use of trains over planes. Furthermore, **railroads need to be made more accessible and efficient throughout Europe**: Eastern European youth specifically note how poorly connected the trains are in the region compared to the rest of Europe. Yet, it is not only intercity and interstate transport that needs changing: public transportation is also a topic addressed by one of the respondents of the survey, Wajid Ali Khilji, who thinks that public transportation should also be made more appealing, perhaps by being free-of-charge for non-car owners, to discourage the buying of cars.

With regard to private automobiles, a big push needs to be made in order to **make electric cars more appealing to the population and offset the use of non-renewables**. Finally, young people also request systems of clean mobility to be implemented alongside existing projects such as Erasmus+: for instance, by granting all people accepted into the Erasmus+ program free train tickets to reach their destinations.



# KEY MESSAGES FROM THE YOUTH FOR COP26



System change means a multi-level, multifaceted reshaping of how our society works and requires approaching the problem of climate change from different areas such as the economy, education, and culture.

We need to **change the way we manage ecosystems and adopt environmentally-friendly approaches**, especially on agricultural land.

Producers and manufacturers must play a critical role in the transition towards a circular economy. In order to **avoid greenwashing, future policies should set clear and ambitious targets for the industry** to genuinely change its practices.

Changes in the energy sector should start by **taxing non-renewable energy more heavily**, in order to discourage its production and consumption.

We should ensure that renewable energy sources are truly sustainable in the long run.

For behavioural change to happen, **sustainable transportation options have to be developed** alongside coherent funding and tax mechanisms.

It is crucial to **establish meaningful youth engagement mechanisms** that would ensure a regular, structured, and diverse **participation of young people in decision-making** processes on climate and environmental issues.

