

APPEAL TO EU LEADERS TO PRIORITISE A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE NEXT POLITICAL MANDATE

Dear Heads of State and Government,
Dear President von der Leyen, President Metsola and President Michel,
Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Today, 3 May 2024, the EU has used up nature's budget for the entire year.

With just one month until the EU elections, we appeal to you to make a top political priority of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution given the devastating impacts and growing intensity and frequency of climate-related events for ecosystems, health, economies, social justice and cohesion.

Our societies and economies are supported by what nature provides – food, water, fibre, timber, carbon absorption, and land to build infrastructure. The EU accounts for less than 6% of the world population but uses between 70% and 97% of the 'safe operating space' available for the whole world [1]. We would need 3 planets to satisfy our demand if everyone on Earth lived like Europeans. This is not only unsustainable, it is irresponsible.

The consequences of our ecological overshoot include global deforestation, biodiversity loss, collapse of fish stocks, water scarcity and pollution, soil erosion, air pollution, and climate change, leading to more frequent extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and wildfires. This concerns us all, as Europe is set to suffer temperature increases double that of other continents due to climate change. And risks linked to resource exploitation such as violence, poverty and poor governance put global peace and security at risk [2, 3].

In the coming months, you have the momentous opportunity and responsibility to turn the tide. The EU launched the European Green Deal in 2019. While it is still far removed from its initial promise, the prioritisation of a 'climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe' represented a remarkable shift in policy making. However, in recent months, politicians across Europe have begun breaking their promises in favour of short-term interests of those that lobby hardest, further undermining the credibility of the EU. Scrapping existing environmental safeguards, or putting new green laws on hold will only bring our nature closer to the brink of collapse, along with our economies.

We urge you to act before it is too late. Current and future generations need you to step up your political commitment to work towards a climate-neutral, zero-pollution and nature-positive economy, that protects citizens and our industries. You can do this by committing to:

- **Deepen and accelerate the Green Deal, by fully implementing recently agreed goals and addressing ambition gaps on nature, climate as well as pollution** by further establishing robust, legally binding targets and new ambitious protection standards based on the latest science available. Only with continued efforts can Europe safeguard our health, nature, safety and economy and create crucial links between those.
- **Radically increase public climate, environment and social investments**, while aligning all public and private investments with the objectives of the green transition and ensure big polluters are fully held accountable. Only then, will Europe be able to boost its competitive sustainability.
- **Strengthen EU governance, democracy and the effective participation of civil society.** The role of citizens at national and EU levels needs to be strengthened, and equal access to decision-makers as well as justice across Europe needs to be ensured.

These actions are essential to unlock the societal and industrial benefits of a well-executed green and fair transition. Already today, citizens are benefiting from the transition. In 2023, renewables used for our electricity production rose to a record 44% share - increasing our energy independence and stabilising soaring energy bills. In 19 Member States, electric cars are already cheaper than a petrol or diesel equivalent. The EU has been working on making rail travel cheaper, cleaner and easier, with notable successes. As a result of EU laws, air quality in cities and industrial areas has started to improve, saving lives and preventing illnesses. And the EU has seen substantial growth in green jobs, spanning various competencies and accommodating diverse skill levels, totalling 5.1 million jobs in 2020.



In the coming months, you will have the opportunity to set a political agenda that prioritises people and the planet, thereby creating even more benefits. Recent and forthcoming reports, such as the one on the future of the EU single market [4], highlight the political imperative to act. We urge you to respect the broad majority of EU citizens who continue to believe that climate, health and social issues should be top priorities [5].

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned 318 signatories*

List of references

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- [2] World Economic Forum (2024). Global Risk Report 2024
- [3] Open Letter (2024). 100+ organisations call for EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management
- [4] Enrico Letta (2024). Much More than a Market
- [5] EP Autumn Survey (2023). Six months before the 2024 European Elections

Signatories

2Celsius (Romania)

350.org (EU)

Academia Cidadã - Citizenship Academy
(Portugal)

ActionAid International (INT)

Action Solidarité Tiers Monde
(Luxembourg)

ACV-CSC - Confédération des
Syndicats Chrétiens (Belgium)

AEPOH - Association pour un espace
protégé des ondes hertziennes (France)

Agroecology Europe (Belgium)

AirClim - Air Pollution and Climate
Secretariate (EU)

Alternatiba (France)

Amycos.org (Spain)

An Claiómh Glas (Ireland)

An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland
(Ireland)

ARC2020 (Belgium)

Arche Noah (Austria)

Association Biom (Croatia)

Association Warrior Enguerrand (France)

B Lab (INT)

Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania
(Lithuania)

Bat Conservation Ireland (Ireland)

Bellona Europa (EU)

BirdLife Austria (Austria)

BirdLife Cyprus (Cyprus)

BirdLife Estonia (Estonia)

BirdLife Europe (EU)

BirdLife Finland (Finland)

BirdLife Malta (Malta)

BirdLife Sverige (Sweden)

BirdWatch Ireland (Ireland)

BLOOM Association (France)

Bond Beter Leefmilieu (Belgium)

Born Free Foundation (United Kingdom)

BRAL vzw (Belgium)

Broederlijk Delen (Belgium)

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation
(Bulgaria)

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of
Birds (Bulgaria)

BUND - Friends of the Earth Germany
(Germany)

Butterfly Conservation Europe (EU)

Canopea (Belgium)

Cantine Sans Plastique France (France)

Carbon Gap (EU)

Cátedra Del Tajo UCLM-SOLISS (Spain)

CDAFAL 70 - Conseil Départemental des
Associations Familiales Laïques Haute
Saône (France)

CEE Bankwatch Network (EU)

CEEweb for Biodiversity (EU)

Centre for Environmental Living &
Training (Ireland)

Centre for Transport and Energy (Czech
Republic)

Centrum pre filantropiu (Slovakia)

Changing Cities (Germany)	Culture Action Europe (EU)
ChemSec (Sweden)	Cyklokoalícia (Slovakia)
CircE Malta (Malta)	Danish Society for Nature Conservation (Denmark)
Citizens' Climate Europe (EU)	David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (United Kingdom)
Citizens Climate Europe Spain (Spain)	Deutscher Naturschutzring, Dachverband der deutschen Natur-, Tier- und Umweltschutzorganisationen e.V. (Germany)
Cittadini per l'aria (Italy)	Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. (Germany)
Clean Air Action Group (Hungary)	De Vlinderstichting - Dutch Butterfly Conservation (Netherlands)
CLER - Réseau pour la transition énergétique (France)	DOF BirdLife (Denmark)
ClientEarth (EU)	E3G (EU)
Climate Action Network Europe (EU)	EAA - European Anglers Alliance (Belgium)
Climate Coalition (Poland)	Earth Forever Foundation (Bulgaria)
Climate Strategy (Spain)	Eco Hvar Non-Profit Organisation (Croatia)
Coastwatch (Ireland)	eco-union (Spain)
Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité (INT)	ECOCITY (Greece)
Conseil National des Associations Familiales Laïques (France)	ECODES - Fundación Ecología y Desarrollo (Spain)
Collectif des Riverains de Pont de Crau - ARLES (France)	ECOLISE - European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (EU)
Comitato Torino Respira (Italy)	Ecological Assessment & Consultancy (Belgium)
Comitato Tutela Ambientale Genova (Italy)	Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)
Community Hygiene Concern (United Kingdom)	ECOS - Environmental Coalition on Standards (EU)
Compassion in World Farming EU (EU)	Ecoteca (Romania)
Cool Heating Coalition (EU)	
Crann - Trees for Ireland (Ireland)	
Creatura Think & Do Tank ry (Finland)	
Child Rights International Network (EU)	

Ei polteta tulevaisuutta (Finland)	Feedback EU (Netherlands)
Ekopolis Foundation (Slovakia)	FEWE - Polish Foundation for Energy Efficiency (Poland)
Electra Energy (Greece)	Fingo - Finnish Development NGOs (Finland)
Estonian Fund for Nature (Estonia)	Finnwatch (Finland)
Eurogroup for Animals (EU)	Focus - Association for Sustainable Development (Slovenia)
European Network on Independent Living (EU)	Food & Water Action Europe (EU)
Environmental Investigation Agency (INT)	Food Council MRA (Netherlands)
Environmental Justice Foundation (INT)	Forests and Citizens Foundation (Poland)
Environmental Justice Network Ireland (Ireland)	Forests of the World (Denmark)
Environmental Law Ireland (Ireland)	Foundation Science4Nature (Netherlands)
Environmental Paper Network International (INT)	France Nature Environnement (France)
Estonian Green Movement (Estonia)	Frank Bold (Czech Republic)
Euro Coop (EU)	Friends of Nature Czechia (Czech Republic)
European Environmental Bureau (EU)	Friends of the Earth Europe (EU)
European Public Health Alliance (Belgium)	Friends of the Earth Ireland (Ireland)
European Respiratory Society (EU)	Fundación Hope! Acción climática (Spain)
European Rivers Network (France)	Fundación Nueva Cultura del Agua (Spain)
European Vegetarian Union (Belgium)	Fundación Vida Sostenible (Spain)
EUROPEUM - Institute for European Policy (Czech Republic)	Fundacja FIDELIS SILUAS (Poland)
Eurosite - The European Land Conservation Network (EU)	Fundacja GAP Polska (Poland)
Facing Finance (Germany)	Fundacja Niech Żyją! (Poland)
Fair Finance International (Netherlands)	Fundacja Psubraty (Poland)
Fair Trade Advocacy Office (EU)	Fundacja Strefa Zieleni (Poland)
Fairtrade International (INT)	

Fundacja Szkatułka (Poland)	Institute for Health and Environment (Slovenia)
Fältbiologerna (Sweden)	International Fund for Animal Welfare (EU)
Generation Climate Europe (EU)	International Mire Conservation Group (INT)
Germanwatch (Germany)	Irish Peatland Conservation Council (Ireland)
GLOBAL 2000 (Austria)	Irish Wildlife Trust (Ireland)
Global Action Plan Ireland (Ireland)	ISDE - Associazione Medici per l'Ambiente (Italy)
Global Citizen (INT)	Join For Water (Belgium)
Global Footprint Network (EU)	Justice and Environment (EU)
Global Responsibility (Austria)	Klimabevægelsen i Danmark (Denmark)
Global Witness (EU)	Klimatsvaret - CCL Sverige (Sweden)
Good Food Good Farming (EU)	Klub Przyrodników - Naturalists Club Poland (Poland)
Green Foundation Ireland (Ireland)	Koalicja Żywa Ziemia - Coalition Living Earth (Poland)
Green Impact (Italy)	KOO - Coordination Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference for International Development and Mission (Austria)
Green Liberty (Latvia)	Kyoto Club (Italy)
Green Transition Denmark (Denmark)	La Garance Voyageuse (France)
Greenpeace (EU)	LandschappenNL (Netherlands)
Greentervention (EU)	Latvijas Ornitoloģijas biedrība (Latvia)
Grootouders voor het Klimaat (Belgium)	Leave No Trace Ireland (Ireland)
Générations Futures (France)	Leefmilieu (Netherlands)
Hawkmoth (EU)	Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (Italy)
Health and Environment Alliance (EU)	Legambiente (Italy)
Hellenic Ornithological Society (Greece)	Les Amis de la Terre France (France)
Humane Society International/Europe (EU)	
Humundi (Belgium)	
IFOAM Organics Europe (EU)	
INKOTA-netzwerk (Germany)	
Institute for Circular Economy (Slovakia)	

Les chercheurs d'air (Belgium)	Nivon Natuurvrienden Nederland (Netherlands)
Lifelong Learning Platform (EU)	No a la Mina Esquel (Argentina)
Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (France)	Notre Affaire A Tous (France)
Lithuanian Ornithological Society (Lithuania)	Oceana (EU)
Livorno Porto Pulito APS (Italia)	ODG - Debt Observatory in Globalisation (Spain)
LPN - Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (Portugal)	Oikologikos Politistikos Syllogos Chaidariou (Greece)
Luontoliitto - The Finnish Nature Association (Finland)	Olof Palme International Center (Sweden)
Misereor (Germany)	Onderzoekcentrum B-WARE (Netherlands)
More Than Enough (Belgium)	Oxfam (EU)
Mouvement Ecologique asbl. (Luxembourg)	Paludosa Research (Netherlands)
Musszelka (Poland)	Parent in the City Foundation (Poland)
NABU - The Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union (Germany)	Partnerstvo za okolje in zdravje (Slovenia)
Natagora (Belgium)	Pesticide Action Network Europe (EU)
National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary (Hungary)	Pesticide Action Network Italy
natur&ëmwelt a.s.b.l. (Luxembourg)	Pesticide Action Network Netherlands (Netherlands)
Natural Heritage Foundation (Poland)	Pestizid Aktions-Netzwerk e.V. (Germany)
Naturefriends Greece (Greece)	Plataforma contra la Especulación Urbanística y Ambiental de Candeleda (Spain)
Naturfreunde International (INT)	Plataforma de Toledo en Defensa del Tajo (Spain)
Natuur & Milieu (Netherlands)	Pentecostal Mission Development (Sweden)
Natuurmonumenten (Netherlands)	Poem26 (France)
Natuurpunt (Belgium)	
New Weather Institute (United Kingdom & Sweden)	

Polish Ecological Club Mazovian Branch
(Poland)

Polish Green Network (Poland)

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds
(Poland)

Polish Zero Waste Organisation (Poland)

Por Otra PAC (Spain)

PRIARTEM - Electrosensibles de France
(France)

Pro Wildlife (Germany)

ProVeg International (INT)

Reclaim Finance (France)

Reptile Amphibian Conservation Europe
(EU)

Réseau Action Climat (France)

REScoop.eu (EU)

Rethink Plastic alliance (EU)

Revo Prosperidad Sostenible (Spain)

Right to Repair Europe (EU)

Rodzice dla Klimatu (Poland)

RREUSE (EU)

RT-ON (Poland)

SAFE - Food Advocacy Europe (Belgium)

SALAMANDRA - Polish Society for
Nature Conservation (Poland)

Sanità di Frontiera (Italy)

SDG Watch Austria (Austria)

SDG Watch Europe (Belgium)

Seas At Risk (Belgium)

Secrets Toxiques (France)

SEO/BirdLife (Spain)

ShareAction (EU)

Silvers Indignados por el Clima (Spain)

Siostry Rzeki (Poland)

Slovenian NCD Alliance (Slovenia)

Slovenská ornitologická spoločnosť
(Slovakia)

Slow Food (INT)

Slow Food Deutschland (Germany)

Slow Food Italia APS (Italy)

Slow Food Youth Network (EU & INT)

SMC - Faith in Development (Sweden)

Society for Ecological Restoration
Europe (EU)

Society for Sustainable Development
Design (Croatia)

Society for Sustainable Living (Czech
Republic)

Society for the Earth (TnZ) (Poland)

SOLIDAR (EU)

Solsoc (Belgium)

SOS MCS (France)

SPEA - Portuguese Society for the
Study of Birds (Portugal)

Swedish Society for Nature
Conservation (Sweden)

STEP (Bulgaria)

Stichting Bargerveen (Netherlands)

Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne EKO-UNIA
(Poland)

Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Ochrony
Lasów i Zwierząt "Duchy Lasu" (Poland)

Stowarzyszenie Olszówka (Poland)

Suomen Retkeilyliitto ry - The Trekking
Association of Finland (Finland)

Surfrider Foundation Europe (EU)

Sustainable Water Network (Ireland)

Svalorna Latinamerika (Sweden)

Swedwatch (Sweden)

Südwind (Austria)

TAPP Coalition (EU)

The Finnish Association for Nature
Conservation (Finland)

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation
(Sweden)

The Nature Conservancy Europe (EU)

Transport & Environment (EU)

Trócaire (Ireland)

UECNA - European Union Against
Aircraft Nuisances (Belgium)

Umanotera (Slovenia)

Umweltdachverband (Austria)

Umweltinstitut München e.V. (Germany)

VCÖ - Mobilität mit Zukunft (Austria)

Via Pontica Foundation (Bulgaria)

Voedsel Anders NL (Netherlands)

Voedselpark Amsterdam Foundation
(Netherlands)

Vogelbescherming Nederland
(Netherlands)

VOICE - Voice Of Irish Concern for the
Environment (Ireland)

Warsaw Smog Alert (Poland)

We Are Here Venice (Italy)

WECF International (Netherlands)

Wetlands Conservation Centre (Poland)

Wetlands International Europe (EU)

World Fair Trade Organization (EU & INT)

Women for Water Partnership (INT)

Workshop for All Beings (Poland)

Wspólny Las (Poland)

WWF European Policy Office, on behalf
of the WWF European network (EU)

ZERO - Association for the Sustainability
of the Earth System (Portugal)

Zero Waste Alliance Ireland (Ireland)

Zero Waste Europe (EU)

Zielony Instytut (Poland)

ÖKOBÜRO - Alliance of the
Environmental Movement (Austria)

Žiedinė Ekonomika (Lithuania)