

Civil Society's Strategic Role in the 2024-2029 Mandate

Introduction:

The European Green Deal (EGD) stands at a pivotal crossroads as the European Union transitions into a new mandate period from 2024 to 2029. As the new EGD takes shape with a new Commission, we observe a strong focus on competitiveness, defence and security in the EU. In light of these developments, the EU must prioritise social and environmental justice and sustainability over competitiveness and growth. This policy brief sets out the strategic role that civil society plays in shaping the future of the EGD, sustainable development and participatory democracy in Europe. It draws insights from the emerging topics and priorities for the new European Commission and Parliament mandate that were discussed during the 9th Civil Society Forum for Sustainability, held on 4th and 5th November 2024.

On observation, the European Commission's ambition to create an economically competitive model seems to overshadow its aims for climate ambitions by 2025. This brief presents key recommendations and actions derived from 9 different thematic workshops covering crucial areas such as deliberative democracy, economic justice, de-carbonisation, social equality, poverty and gender equality. These insights are intended to guide civil society's advocacy efforts and push for transformative change in EU policies, initiatives and practices over the next five years.

The recommendations and actions outlined in this brief reflect the collective discussions of diverse CSOs across Europe and beyond. They emphasise the need for inclusive, transparent, and participatory approaches in policy dialogue and policymaking. The brief also highlights the importance of addressing global challenges, including the debt crisis, economic and social inequalities, while ensuring that the EGD remains aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.

This policy brief is divided into three main sections, including background, with the following nine sections covering nine thematic and emerging topics. Each of these sections includes a brief introduction, key recommendations and actions. In addition, the last section of the brief provides concluding remarks. The organisers would like to thank all organisations who contributed to the workshop and broader civil society forum programme for their input and collaborations. This document represents a broader summary of the discussions and outcomes and highlights a broad range of recommendations from organisations participating in the Civil Society Forum.

Background:

The Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal is co-organised by SOLIDAR, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and SDG Watch Europe in collaboration with project partners within the framework of the REAL DEAL project. The Real Deal is a Horizon 2020

research project focused on reshaping citizens' and stakeholders' participation and deliberative democracy in the framework of the European Green Deal.

Over two days on 4 and 5 November 2024, more than 70 civil society organisations (CSOs) from across Europe and beyond came together for the final edition of the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal. The forum provided a crucial space for CSOs and participants to assess the future of the EGD by evaluating the new mandate of the Commission and the European Parliament for 2024-2029. This was done through the exchange of ideas and discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other emerging topics that are pivotal to uphold the commitments to Agenda 2030.

As Europe strives to become climate-neutral by 2050, the forum gathered civil society representatives and distinguished guest speakers to engage participants in thought-provoking discussions on the future of the EGD and its global dimensions. The 9th edition of the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability aimed to create a dynamic environment where people, CSOs, and experts came together to strategise, share insights, and build pathways towards a sustainable and inclusive future. The programme included a balanced mix of high-level discussions, thematic workshops, and opportunities for networking and collaboration.

As the new mandate and the priorities of the European Commission and Parliament (2024-2029) are set, the forum's primary focus was to shape civil society's strategic outcomes for the 2024-2029 mandate and align with civil society and people's priorities for a green and just transition, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the 2030 Agenda. To achieve these objectives, the forum participants had the opportunity to participate in a series of innovative and engaging workshops led by civil society representatives.

The workshops covered a range of critical topics:

- *The future of deliberative democracy and public participation under the new Commission*
- *Civil society mobilisation on economic justice in 2025*
- *Development finance & debt*
- *Gender, health and the European Green Deal*
- *A wellbeing economy: from ideas into transformative actions*
- *De-colonisation of de-carbonisation*
- *Strengthening citizens' participation in the EU's energy transition*
- *Equality and poverty from EU and global perspectives*
- *Intergenerational justice for the green transition*

A key objective of the forum was to facilitate discussions, exchange ideas and share insights on the future of the EGD, the SDGs, and other emerging issues through thematic workshops and from these discussions, to identify key recommendations and key actions that civil society continues to work on, advocate for, and push for during the five years of the mandate. This brief summarises the main outcomes and points the way forward for civil society on a number of emerging themes for the new mandate of the European Parliament and Commission.

The key recommendations and actions from the thematic workshops

The future of deliberative democracy and public participation under the new Commission

The workshop on the future of deliberative democracy and public participation was organised by European Environmental Bureau (EEB) & European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

As a prelude to the workshop, the Civil Society Forum in June 2024 focused on the future of **citizen deliberation** and the **EGD**, with discussions held across five learning spaces: social justice, environmental, global, economic, and participatory dimensions. Key recommendations from this previous forum emphasised the need for policy coherence for sustainable development, ensuring alignment across EU laws, trade agreements, and big tech regulations, as well as a framework for redistributing resources to green sectors and funding for civil society organisations. On a global scale, the EU should lead by allocating funds for the 2030 Agenda and ensuring transparency in trade agreements with the involvement of CSOs. From the discussions, the participatory dimension focused on establishing clear accountability mechanisms for addressing the needs of marginalised groups, as well as promoting inclusive participation of vulnerable communities in the green transition, with structured dialogue between policymakers and CSOs.

At EU level, there are two important developments which concern civil society organisations' involvement in participatory democracy. In his [hearing](#), the Commissioner-designate for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law, **Michael McGrath**, underlined his strong commitment to the establishment of the **European Democracy Shield** and the **Civil Society Platform**. While these initiatives are important and progressive steps forward, civil society will closely follow the developments regarding the European Democracy Shield to ensure the implementation of inclusive policies for everyone and protect the work of organised civil society in promoting civic participation. Secondly, the creation of the **Civil Society Platform** promises a more systematic and meaningful involvement of civil society in the Commission's work. As civil society organisations we have been an advocate for systematic and structured dialogue between the EU institutions and organised civil society for meaningful and active participation of civil society's in Commission's work. In this light, this workshop focused on what a democratic society looks like in the future of participatory democracy and what kind of role civil society organisations could have in their relations with the European Commission. Based on the discussions during the workshop, the following key recommendations and actions emerged:

1. Enhance civic education and participation for everyone

Key Recommendation: Advocate for including participatory democratic culture and SDGs in school curricula, but also in digital, non-formal and informal settings.

Key Action: Develop and propose a comprehensive educational program that integrates civic participation and sustainable development concepts into existing school formal, informal, non-formal and digital settings across Europe.

2. Improve Accessibility, Transparency and Inclusivity in Decision-Making Processes

Key Recommendation: Make participation accessible to everyone by addressing issues related to financial barriers and social backgrounds.

Key Action: Effective democracy requires both structural support for participation at every level and collaboration. People need to have time and feel confident to participate in public policy-making processes. Therefore, propose a policy that provides compensation or paid leave for citizens participating in deliberative democratic processes, ensuring diverse representation across socioeconomic backgrounds. This includes the creation of a participation toolkit (lessons learnt, best practices) from civil society to help organisations and people to understand know-how and actively participate in these processes.

3. Institutionalise participatory processes

Key Recommendation: To ensure these progressive initiatives are a step forward, civil society wants to see the implementation of Article 11 TEU through the establishment of an interinstitutional agreement. The article calls for an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society, ensuring a more systematic and meaningful involvement in the Commission's Civil Society Platform, that foresees also the possibility to monitor and renegotiate decisions.

Key Action: Decision makers should ensure that a dialogue platform truly includes diverse civil society voices and serves as a model for the implementation of a transversal structured, regular and meaningful civil dialogue and enables people and CSOs early involvement in participatory decision-making processes and establishes a regular structured dialogue that allows civil society to monitor the decision-making process in its whole. The dialogue platform should also include a renegotiation mechanism and guaranteed forms of co-monitoring and co-evaluation by citizens and civil society.

Civil society mobilisation on economic justice in 2025

The workshop on civil society mobilisation on economic justice for 2025 was organised by Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP).

Many countries are spending more on debt servicing than on health and education, while the International Financial Architecture continues to protect lenders' interests and reinforce austerity measures. With several key summits in 2025, including the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in Spain, the World Social Summit in Qatar, COP30 in Brazil, and the G20 Summit in South Africa, there is an opportunity to campaign for reforms in debt and tax justice and to push for fair governance to finance climate and social spending. This theme focused on plans for public mobilisation in 2025 to advocate for economic justice amid the worst-ever global debt crisis, which has led to massive cuts in social spending and hindered investments in climate action. Civil society explored how these plans can be implemented across different European countries, gathering input from participants on effective mobilisation strategies and identifying the support needed from European networks to effectively advocate for change.

The recent Summit of the Future has brought both positive and negative developments. While it resulted in the "[Pact for the Future](#)," which was broadly hailed as a success in challenging multilateral circumstances, the actual follow up and implementation of the pact remains hindered by rising geopolitical tensions, including the crises in Ukraine, Palestine and Lebanon, and there is a lack of ambitious commitments for structural economic change. The summit highlighted the increasing polarisation between the Global North and South, especially around issues like debt and economic justice. Several countries in the [Global South](#) have expressed mounting frustration with the Global North's limited engagement in enduring systemic reform, especially in terms of fairer debt management.

The worsening global debt crisis is pressing nations in the Global South to cut essential services, leading to significant social hardship. There is a clear need for a new approach to global debt relief and financial reform. Without a reformed international finance system, the Global South will struggle to achieve meaningful progress on climate and social protections.

Notwithstanding the debt crisis, there are also deep concerns about the shrinking space for civil society in global governance processes, with civil society sidelined in major discussions. The upcoming 2025 World Social Summit is a critical opportunity for civil society to push for stronger engagement, although the decision to hold the summit in Qatar could present additional obstacles.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Debt justice

Key recommendation: Policymakers should create a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt that includes a debt workout mechanism replacing the power of the IMF, G20 and informal groups such as the London Club and Paris Club.

Key action: Policymakers should ensure more EU civil society engagement and collaboration with civil society colleagues in the majority of the world to advocate for the UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt. Ensure key principles of civil society mobilisation such as decentralisation and global south leadership, are upheld.

2. Tax Justice

Key recommendation: Accelerate progress on a binding UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation to close loopholes, stop the race to the bottom, address tax evasion and illicit financial flows and end the use of tax havens

Key action: End austerity measures, including public sector wage bill constraints, and adequately fund quality public services, such as health care, education, and universal social security. End labour market deregulation, support decent work including living wages, adopt fair budget allocations, equitable spending priorities, and strong public services to address the root causes of inequality.

With thanks to GCAP Global for a number of the above recommendations.

Development finance & debt

The workshop on Development finance and debt was organised by Counter Balance.

Launched in 2021, the Global Gateway aims to make use of funds intended for international development to bolster European businesses and the EU's global standing through strategic investments – a plan reaffirmed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's proposal for a 'new economic foreign policy' in the Political Guidelines and in Mario Draghi's call to further upgrade the Global Gateway. The workshop discussed the findings of recent research from Oxfam, Eurodad and Counter Balance entitled [Who profits from the Global Gateway?](#) with discussions centred upon how to ensure a brighter future for EU international development cooperation that tips the scale from geopolitical strategic gain for European business, and towards genuine development cooperation with a decolonial approach.

The EU Global Gateway is described as a reaction to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, an EU and G7 counter initiative to promote an alternative mechanism based on conditionality, which claims to have higher standards with respect to human rights. However, as the research report shows, the narrative simply serves to gloss over the hard realities of many of the proposed projects. There is a clear lack of transparency, with unaccounted public money, no guarantees on the length of certain projects nor what they will include. There is also a lack of transparency in the investment structures of many projects, with little or no benefit for the local community. The financial institutions of the EU will not be liable for what could go wrong, hedging public risk for private gain. In the view of civil society working on the Global Gateway, there is a strong risk of further debt and dependency, as partner countries do not benefit from the infrastructural projects, but rather take on additional debt in the form of loans while European businesses profit from these projects. In addition, there is very little civil society inclusion in the planification or implementation of the projects.

Key actions and recommendations

1. Prioritise inclusive humane and just development approaches

Key recommendations: The Global Gateway mechanism must be completely re-evaluated and redesigned focusing more on inclusive, human and just development and less on investment to support EU trade and economic priorities. The EU must work with different regions around the world to produce a strong cooperation strategy rooted in sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and a just international cooperation framework.¹ Or else, this initiative will be another neocolonial initiative.

Key action: Re-evaluate the Global Gateway strategy without further delay

¹ Oxfam, Eurodad and Counter Balance (2024) [Who profits from the Global Gateway?. Executive Summary, p.2.](#)

2. Ensure transparency in development finance

Key recommendation: To remedy the lack of transparency of the global Gateway, civil society organisations must work together to oppose it more concretely, to monitor the framework through strong participatory mechanisms. The European Parliament and civil society organisations from the localities of the projects should be allowed to formally scrutinise the Global Gateway strategy and its implementation, in particular organisations working with multi-marginalised communities and for gender equality. CSOs should have an active role in the selection, design, and implementation of all projects receiving support from the EU development budget and EU external investments.²

Key action: Put in place processes and mechanisms to allow for public and parliamentary scrutiny of the Global Gateway, both in Europe and in the Global South

With thanks to Counter Balance for a number of the above recommendations.

Gender, health and the European Green Deal

The workshop on gender, ecofeminism and health was organised by Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN)

Women's healthcare requires much more attention in the post-COVID era, particularly following Roe vs. Wade reversal in the US, and its ripple effect globally. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1-5 are hindered by gender inequality, and almost all SDGs require gender equity to stay on track. A [UNFPA report](#) indicates that since 2016, there has been little or no progress in women's health, particularly reproductive health, due to deep-rooted inequalities related to poverty, disability, race, and lack of access. Critical issues like female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and gender-based violence are worsening due to legislative gaps, financial cuts, and polarised views. Additionally, climate change, conflict, and displacement have decreased women's access to healthcare. Despite the European Union's declared commitment to gender equality, [women in all their diversity are invisible in the European Green Deal policies](#), and progress in the sustainability agenda is backsliding. In the new Commission's political guidelines, we see clear priorities for the next Clean Industrial Deal (CID) namely a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition and a commitment to the Just Transition Framework. While the new CID is yet to be developed, there was no reference or mention of gender mainstreaming in CID policies during [the public hearing](#) of Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition.

In this interactive workshop, we focused on enhancing policy through discourse, process, and practice of a policy cycle, examining how gender health is shaped by narratives and creating inclusive, intersectional policies that involve all sections of society in reaching the SDGs. The following key recommendations and key actions came up from the discussions.

² Ibid.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Integrate gender mainstreaming in green and social policies

Key recommendation: Integrate gender equality in the new Clean and Industrial Deal policies and initiatives, including environmental and social policies for achieving a truly just transition, as connecting gender with climate and social issues is fundamental to achieve a real just transition. Additionally, ensure that just transition strategies are tailored to address specific needs of diverse groups (migrants, LGBTQI+, women and other marginalised groups) arising from energy poverty, post-covid, migration, climate crisis and economic challenges, all of which are exacerbated and linked in a ferocious cycle.

Key action: The EGD policies and initiatives must be re-assessed and gender specific objectives and indicators across all EGD areas should be prioritised and integrated during the next mandate. This should include a sufficient budget allocation for gender mainstreaming.

Key recommendation: Integrate gender-specific objectives and ecofeminist principles across all European Green Deal policies to address systemic inequalities and ensure a truly inclusive just transition.

Key action: Develop tailored programmes to improve healthcare access and participation for marginalised groups, such as women, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, and refugees, while ensuring sufficient budget allocation for gender mainstreaming initiatives within EGD policies.

2. Promote gender equality in decision making

Key recommendation: Increase women's representation in all policy-making mechanisms, including environmental and climate change policy-making processes at local, national and EU level. This includes ensuring gender balance in key parliamentary committees, cabinets and intergroups. In addition, ensure feminist analysis in all policy-making processes from local authorities developing policies with local communities to European level policy making through inclusive citizens deliberations.

Key action: Implement targeted measures and set quotas to increase women's representation and leadership in traditionally and predominantly male-dominated sectors crucial to the just transition, such as energy, health, transport and agriculture. Ensure the EGD (newly CID) policies are aligned with international frameworks such as CEDAW convention principles and UN's [Resolution 1325 report on women](#).

A wellbeing economy: from ideas into transformative actions

The workshop on a wellbeing economy was organised by Nyt Europa

If everyone on Earth consumed like Europeans, we would need three planets to satisfy global demand. Currently, in the EU, we consume more than 14 tonnes of raw materials per capita each year, a figure that surged to 14.8 tonnes in 2022, marking a 6% increase over the past decade. This unsustainable and irresponsible material footprint underscores the urgent need for measures to address resource use. Shifting from a linear take-make-use-dispose model to a genuine circular economy offers a multitude of benefits: it will help preserve resources, reduce costs, cut greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen resilience to price volatility and supply-chain disruptions, and avoid the emergence of highly destructive & exploitative practices like deep-sea mining.

A well-being economy prioritises human and planetary well-being in economic decision-making, offering a path to a green and just transition that leaves no one behind. It connects sustainability challenges with economic structures, providing civil society opportunities to collaborate on the European Green Deal (EGD), SDGs, and the Green and Just Transition. A well-being economy is about equality and creating a good life for people and nature, rooted in the principles of care, cooperation and solidarity. The current EU economic system clearly fails to achieve these goals as it is significantly overshooting planetary boundaries while not meeting its own social aims, such as healthcare and education needs or eliminating the gender gap in employment.

A key question remains, how do we translate Wellbeing Economy principles into advocacy strategies, identifying challenges and opportunities for collaboration? The workshop aimed to generate concrete recommendations for advancing a sustainable transition based on the Wellbeing Economy framework.

The participants discussed an initiative in Denmark using the Wellbeing Economy framework to question resource use and address the sustainability of the economic system.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Shift from Growth to Well-being and Sustainability

Key recommendation: Commit to a new social contract that ensures well-being within the planet's ecological limits. This contract should address persistent and deepening inequalities and exploitative structures, both within the EU and globally. It should also tackle the cost-of-living crisis and the root causes of poverty, democratise the economy with cooperative and social solidarity economic approaches, and reduce dependence on continuous growth and unsustainable material extraction.

Key Action: Replace the Stability and Growth Pact with a **Wellbeing and Sustainability Pact** and adjust the European Semester to put environmental and social justice goals at the heart of EU economic governance; create the fiscal space for countries to make the necessary reforms and investments to achieve these objectives.

2. Build a well-being economy by prioritising de-growth and a care economy

Key Recommendation: Integrate the principles of degrowth and the care economy into the framework of the well-being economy to ensure a just transition that prioritises social and environmental sustainability and puts all living species at the core of this transition. A true well-being economy can be achieved if these principles are recognised and included.

Key action: Call for the adoption of alternative measures beyond growth and stability such as well-being indicators to replace GDP. Strengthen monitoring systems by incorporating data on care work, use of resources and community well-being. Benefit from existing research and examples such as [the Merge project](#), to inform the development of these indicators and their use in policy-making.

De-colonisation of de-carbonisation

The workshop on Decolonisation of decarbonisation was organised by **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)** and **Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe**

Countries in the Global South have historically contributed very little to CO₂ emissions. Still today, Africa contributes only about 3-4% of global CO₂ emissions annually, despite being home to around 17% of the global population. While more than half of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity today, high-emitting countries and regions, including the EU, are looking at Africa as a potential provider of renewable energy, in particular solar energy and green hydrogen.

While hailed by some as Africa's opportunity to industrialise, the continent may also stay locked in as a cheap supplier of resources to the Global North, while Africans and African businesses do not have sufficient access to affordable green energy. The decarbonisation of Europe risks continuing past and current power imbalances.

At the EU level, there has been significant progress on environmental goals and commendable efforts from civil society to mobilise on several important environmental files, leading to significant legislative successes under the European Green Deal (EGD), including stricter regulations on resource use and waste, more robust climate targets, and new eco-design standards. These developments position the EU as a global leader in environmental legislation, with ambitious targets such as 30% nature restoration by 2030.

However, despite these advances, major obstacles remain, including inadequate fiscal commitments to support decarbonisation and dematerialisation. Industrial resistance—particularly from sectors like chemicals where many illegal chemicals are still exported to the Global South—continues to stall efforts to phase out hazardous substances like PFAS (per-polyfluoroalkyl substances -forever chemicals). Additionally, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy is outdated, needing reform to reduce environmental impacts and support farmers more sustainably and address inequalities in global value chains.

A critical challenge remains Europe’s reliance on non-renewable resources. The scramble for raw materials is now unfolding, particularly in regions like the Balkans, where local communities are already mobilizing against extractive projects like lithium mining in Serbia. While the EU takes a direct approach of “securing access” to raw materials, civil society organisations call for a “non-colonial” approach to resource use that respects the rights and ecosystems of local populations. A key question is how to achieve a green and just transition without repeating the same mistakes of historical colonisation, by ignoring and continuing to perpetuate negative externalities of raw material extraction and energy resource use.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Embark upon ambitious decarbonisation and dematerialisation that fully recognises historical responsibilities

Key recommendation: The EU should adopt more ambitious timelines to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040, aligning with historical responsibilities and global climate targets. To ensure inclusive and sustainable global development, the EU should focus on making the raw materials partnerships with countries in the Global South in full alignment with the SDGs and policy coherence for sustainable development, facilitating the transition from fossil and raw materials and mineral extraction to creating real added value and economic autonomy for partner countries sustainable development, rather than perpetuating cycles of value and resource extraction.

Key action: Establish clear pathways for dematerialisation and responsible resource use, with attention to impacts on global partners. Focus on energy sufficiency by **reducing the demand for resources.**

Key recommendation: The EU must recognise that historical injustices and inequalities persist today. It must embrace responsibility for wrongs of the past and decolonise its relationships with the Global South when it comes to exploiting labour and natural resources. The EU has a responsibility to minimise its negative impacts globally, to ensure fair conditions for trade and balanced financial flows between the Global North and South, and it has an opportunity to lead by example, learn from others’ leadership and to cooperate on the common challenges at eye level with its partners in the Global South.³

Key action: Accelerate global “Green Deal” diplomacy by positioning the EU as a global frontrunner in detoxification, decontamination, decarbonisation, reparation and restoration. Promote dialogue and cooperation with like-minded countries around the world and build new partnerships to encourage de-pollution and decarbonisation of industrial production. Hold multinational corporations accountable with clear and enforceable penalties where they exploit people, labour and natural resources.

With thanks to EEB for a number of the above recommendations.

³ For more information see the EEB’s the European Pact for the Future Action Plan —a green and social deal for a one-planet economy.

Strengthening citizens' participation in the EU's energy transition

*The workshop on strengthening citizen's participation in the EU's energy transition was organised by the **Green European Foundation (GEF)** & **Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union***

Europe's transition to a fully renewable energy system promises not only to combat the climate crisis but also to decentralise and democratise electricity supply while creating local jobs. However, the recent fossil gas price crisis has fuelled inflation and energy poverty, raising questions about how citizens can benefit more from the EU's energy transition and how costs and benefits can be equitable and fairly allocated. In their new research, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union and the Green European Foundation developed concrete proposals for strengthening participation in the EU's energy transition. The content builds on discussions between a group of over 30 energy and social policy experts from very diverse backgrounds as part of a knowledge community. The group has just developed a series of briefs with recommendations on fair participation in the energy transition for the EU's 2024-2029 policy cycle. The workshop participants discussed these recommendations and the challenges ahead.

Necessary actions should be taken to make sure citizens are on board with climate policy, particularly through the implementation of the emissions trading system [ETS2](#) and the Social Climate Fund, ensuring mid and low-income households get support, and regarding member states' top-up of those funds as a needed and positive investment for social justice and for emissions reductions. Addressing energy poverty is not in contrast with climate mitigation objectives, but there are win-win-win policies: renewable energies are cheaper than other energy sources, and the rollout of renewables has the potential to make energy more affordable directly and eventually via electricity prices (pending market rules in place in different countries) and reduce energy dependency from imports.

At the community level, energy communities and energy efficiency projects must be prioritised as a model for the future, as communities can mobilise around issues that are important to them. Decentralised and democratised initiatives are crucial, as well as greater equity and better regulation in the redistribution of subsidies, to ensure that those furthest left behind benefit the most, [such as people with disabilities, women in all their diversity, single-household parents, and older people](#)

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Ensure citizens benefit from the EU's energy transition

Key recommendation: Improve the rollout and function of energy sharing through target support from EU institutions, allowing citizens to [self-consume renewable](#) electricity remotely without becoming an owner.

Key action: EU institutions should provide adequate financial support for community energy-sharing initiatives, promote energy sharing amongst underrepresented groups and monitor and evaluate the success of energy-sharing schemes. The EU must facilitate energy communities so that their citizens can take ownership of the local energy transition.

Key recommendation: Provide real sustainable options to citizens by default, whether for mobility, housing, energy, food or other necessary consumables. Increase efforts to inform and raise awareness for citizens to maximise further energy savings and reduce emissions.

Key action: Provide direct payments to help all citizens cope with higher prices, not only those who own cars and homes, and enable countries to adapt to high prices in a very reactive way. Collect gender statistics on energy poverty by the European Statistical Office (Eurostat). Use a definition of energy poverty that includes gender dimensions.

Key recommendation: Promote inclusive participation in renewable energy projects by establishing transparent and equitable mechanisms that include youth, economically disadvantaged individuals, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

Key action: Develop and distribute comprehensive toolkits and educational resources to empower communities in adopting renewable energy solutions. Facilitate energy-sharing initiatives with targeted support and financial backing from EU institutions to ensure accessibility for underrepresented groups.

With thanks to GEF and HBF for a number of the above recommendations.

Equality and poverty from EU and global perspectives

The workshop on equality and poverty was organised by SOLIDAR

Social protection is a cornerstone in the global fight against poverty and inequality. As the world grapples with the climate crisis, universal social protection has a pivotal role to play in supporting climate action and a just transition and strengthening resilience and adaptation of disproportionately affected communities. Overall, it is estimated that over 100 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty as a result of climate change by 2030 but, [according to the World Bank](#), universal social protection could reduce this number by 80 million. To this aim, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) proposes a [New Social Contract](#) to ensure universal social protection, decent jobs with living wages, and accountability in business operations, which would help mitigate climate change's negative impacts. In Europe, while social protection is central to the European social model, many marginalised groups still face barriers to accessing adequate wages, pensions, and social security.

According to the new European Commission's political priorities, designated Commissioner Roxana Mînzatu, Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness underlined the importance of the follow-up to the [Social Pillar Action Plan](#), mentioned the role of the [European Semester](#) in stimulating social investment, focused on the need to advance gender equality and presented the Adequate Housing Initiative and the Anti-Poverty Strategy as key.

Based on the above, this workshop focused on social protection & fight against poverty in the context of climate change. We aimed to highlight both the European and the Global perspectives on the importance of ensuring universal social protection, to manage the transition to more green and sustainable economies, while guaranteeing decent jobs, social justice and inclusion for all. Based on this, the following key recommendations and corresponding actions have been developed to address the critical intersection of social protection, poverty reduction, and climate action. These recommendations are designed to strengthen social protection systems, ensure their universality, and enhance their role in supporting a just transition to a sustainable future.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Implement Progressive Taxation for Social Protection Financing

Key Recommendation: Introduce a wealth tax on the richest 20% of individuals, who control 80% of the total wealth, to tackle economic inequality. Complement this with implementing a more progressive taxation system that requires greater contributions from high-income individuals and corporations, while easing the burden on low- and middle-income households.

Key Action: Develop and propose a comprehensive wealth taxation scheme, similar to those suggested by [Kapeller\(2023\)](#), which could generate between €180 billion to €1280 billion for financing public services and welfare state provisions.

2. Redefine resource allocation and enhance transparency

Key Recommendation: Redirect existing funds to social protection and just transition initiatives.

Key Action: CSOs continuously advocate for a shift in current government spending, particularly in areas like military spending, private sector competitiveness and propose a reallocation plan that prioritises social protection. Simultaneously, CSOs shall develop a public information campaign to increase taxpayers' awareness about how and on what their money is used.

3. Strengthen civil society organisations' role in social protection advocacy

Key Recommendation: Enhance CSOs' involvement in policy dialogue and decision-making processes related to social protection.

Key Action: Establish a collaborative informal platform for CSOs, trade unions, and other stakeholders to develop a unified strategy for advocating universal social protection. This platform should focus on creating a common definition of key concepts like social protection and just transition, ensuring inclusive language, and building strong solidarity among diverse groups.

Intergenerational justice for the green transition

*The workshop on intergenerational justice for the green transition was organised by **FOND Romania & ENSIE***

How to ensure thriving communities and intergenerational justice in places where the shift from coal and fossil fuel and renewables will be most acutely felt? Covering the topic of intergenerational justice for the green transition, FOND Romania and ENSIE explored the push and pull factors related to youth and just transition communities, through interaction and non-formal education methods. One of the major challenges of the former coal-dependent communities, for example, in countries such as Romania, is their youth leaving for more attractive cities for studies and a steady job.

Although on paper there are various strategies meant to lead these communities to live more sustainably, in practice young people need coherent public policies to keep them connected to their communities. Participants brainstormed on constructive conclusions for how to ensure intergenerational justice for Just Transition in order and to better collaborate with each other on the topic. Ground-based examples from the social economy were presented to illustrate how future-oriented economic models can tackle both labour market needs and green activities. 2 examples of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) active in rural areas in Romania and in a deprived neighbourhood in Napoli were combining green activities linked to recycling, reuse and repair or installation of solar plants with work integration of people with support needs, including NEETS and young workers.

Ensuring the full integration of just transition measures into European Green Deal (EGD) policies is essential to leave no one behind and to ensure that all in society are actively on board in the transition. This needs to recognise the challenges faced by those from marginalised and low and middle-income communities, also challenged by the transition. The transition, if done wrong, can exacerbate existing inequalities and further exclude parts of society. For example, not all can currently afford heat pumps or solar panels on their roofs or balconies, with many people not even owning their homes. Many social economy initiatives, such as [Ateliere Fără Frontiere](#) in Romania, develop work integration activities in the agri-food sector, intertwining social and employment objectives and needs for the food transition, and nurturing new solutions for rural areas. To avoid some being penalised or excluded from the transition, we need to make sure everyone has access to affordable and sustainable housing, food, mobility and health care alongside other basic needs. There's a moral obligation to leave the world in a better state for youth and future generations.

Key actions and recommendations:

1. Ensure intergenerational participation in the green and just transition

Key recommendation: Commit to universal basic services and infrastructure to ensure availability, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability. All individuals, including those affected by the intersecting discrimination, young people, need healthy, accessible, affordable, sustainable basic services. These include education, health, housing and mobility. It is essential that each of these needs reflects and is part of the just transition and needed system change.

Key action: Roll out the Green and Just Transition policies in candidate countries to support fossil fuel independence, decent work, health and security with due legal, administrative and financial support. Reform EU governance to ensure that people from marginalised groups, youth and those representing the needs of future generations can inform EU policy-making in the next legislative cycle.

Key recommendation: The green transition must embrace an intergenerational approach, actively involving youth through inclusive methods that mobilise their energy and perspectives while also addressing the needs and contributions of older generations, particularly in bridging technological gaps; this requires fostering meaningful youth participation beyond consultations by addressing a sense of underrepresentation felt by young people and lack of participation political processes.

Key action: Close the generational gap by providing support and adequate training for young people to be active in green jobs, with a particular focus on the sectors most affected by the transition.

Key recommendation: Commit to universal basic services such as education, health, mobility, and housing, ensuring they align with just transition goals while addressing the needs of both current and future generations.

Key action: Design EU-wide policies that enable marginalised groups and youth to participate in decision-making processes. Offer structured opportunities for youth to contribute to shaping policies through direct engagement, capacity-building programs, and leadership initiatives.

Key recommendation: Establish local green hubs focused on youth-led initiatives that encourage intergenerational collaboration. These hubs can foster green entrepreneurship, capacity-building, and a shared commitment to sustainability.

Key action: Create, and support and improve existing EU-funded programmes that offer mentorship and seed funding for youth in former coal-dependent regions, providing sufficient and proper resources to do so. These programs should prioritize skills development for green jobs and address the technological gap between generations.

Concluding remarks:

Based on the discussions and recommendations from nine thematic workshops, the following overarching remarks were formulated for civil society's strategic role in shaping the future of the EGD, sustainable development and 2030 & 2050 agenda during the next mandate.

- 1. Strengthen meaningful and participatory democracy and civic engagement:** Ensure meaningful, and inclusive intergenerational participation of people and CSOs in policymaking at local, national, and EU levels related to the EGD, SDGs and 2030 & 2050 agenda, implement the Article 11 TEU to establish a structured civil dialogue between EU institutions and organised civil society. Additionally, concrete steps should be implemented for the inclusion of participatory democratic culture and SDGs across formal, non-formal, and informal education settings.
- 2. Improve transparency and accountability of the policy processes:** necessary steps must be taken to ensure that policy processes are transparent and accountable for people and CSOs. These include mechanisms to enable CSOs to scrutinise policy processes, resource allocation (military spending but not only), initiatives, and strategies such as Global Gateway from the beginning. The EU should also be taking the needs of the Global South regarding debt and economic justice.
- 3. Ensure balance between economy, social justice and energy transition:** Commit to a new social contract that prioritises the well-being of living species within the planetary boundaries moving away from competitive economic models. This contract should address the persistent and growing inequalities and exploitative structures both within the EU and globally while also tackling the cost-of-living crisis and the root causes of poverty. It is crucial to reduce reliance on continuous growth and unsustainable material extraction and ensure adequate funding for sustainable energy to provide affordable access for all. Additionally, a comprehensive wealth taxation system reform should be introduced at both the European and UN levels to close loopholes, combat tax evasion, and promote fair taxation. These new revenues could also be used to promote and finance universal social protection systems, which are key in supporting climate action and a just transition and strengthening resilience and adaptation of those communities disproportionately affected by climate change.
- 4. Advance gender equality and ecofeminist approaches:** For equal representation in all aspects of the EGD and its participatory processes, a broad range of CSOs including those who focus on women in all their diversity, gender diverse people, people with disabilities, youth, LGBTQI+ and people from other multi-marginalised groups must be put at the centre of policy-making and implementation strategies. To ensure equal representation and to tackle gender inequalities, increased inclusion of these groups, gender perspectives and ecofeminist principles must be integrated into the EGD and other relevant policies.

List of contributing organisations

- Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH)
- Association des Femmes pour le Développement Durable (AFDD)
- Association pour le Développement et de la Promotion des Droits Humains (ADPDH)
- Baku Volunteer Center (BVC)
- Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe)
- Counter Balance
- Democratic Society aisbl
- Educating Girls and Young Women for Development (EGYD)
- Eduxo è un'Associazione di Promozione Sociale (EDUXO)
- European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
- European Citizen Science Association
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- European Movement International
- European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)
- Fashion Revolution Belgium
- FOND Romania
- Futuro en Común, Spain
- Global Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
- Green European Foundation
- Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung European Union
- Human Development Research Initiative (HDRI)
- IFOAM Agribiomediterraneo
- International Women's Fund Azerbaijan
- Mujeres con Voz, Spain
- Network of Youth for Sustainable Initiative (NGYouthSDGs)
- Nyankonton Aid Foundation, Ghana
- Nyt Europa
- Povod Institute, Slovenia
- Pro Publico
- Réseau Mauritanien Education pour Tous (RMEPT)
- SDG Allianz Liechtenstein
- SDG Watch Europe
- SEAS for Environment and Training
- SOLIDAR
- Star Women's Association
- The Awakening, Pakistan
- Union Women Center Georgia
- Women and Modern World Social Charitable Center (CMMW)
- Women Engage for Common Future (WECF)
- Women's UN Report Network (WUNRN)
- Youth Compassion for Humanity Uganda
- ZIP Institute, North Macedonia