



Resolution in support of youth demanding urgent climate action

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Young people are demanding climate action all across Europe.

Throughout Europe, young people are on the streets demanding climate action. In initiatives like Fridays for Future, Thursday for the Climate or Youth Strike 4 Climate, thousands of students gather each week to protest for immediate and decisive actions to fight the climate crisis, forming a still growing movement for climate action. Also at the various other youth-led and non-youth-led climate marches taking place all across Europe, young people are at the forefront.

Young people perceive climate action as top priority.

The young people protesting on the streets represent the opinion of young people in Europe in general: the fight against climate change is perceived to be a top priority by young people in Europe. In the recent youth edition of the Eurobarometer, 50% of young people believe that the “protection of the environment and fight against climate change” should be a priority for the European Union. Only one other topic, “education and skills”, was given such a high priority (mentioned by 53%).¹ 92% of all young people in the European Union aged 15-24 consider climate change to be a fairly serious problem and 73% even as a very serious problem.² The statistical data even indicates that young people are more worried about the consequences of climate change than about the economic situation.³ Alarmingly, only 9% of youth are very confident the world will act quickly enough to address climate change, which shows a clear need for decisive and immediate action.⁴

¹ Flash Eurobarometer 455 “European Youth”, p. 40, published in January 2018; Noteworthy, the survey was conducted in September 2017, before the most recent climate strikes started.

² Special Eurobarometer 459 “Climate Change”, p. 22, published in September 2017, field work conducted in March 2017

³ Special Eurobarometer 459 “Climate Change”, p. 16, published in September 2017, field work conducted in March 2017; results of Generation What study (<http://www.generation-what.de/europe/map/occupy>).

⁴ UNEP, GlobeScan Survey, 2008; <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climate-change/>

The climate crisis is an emergency and requires decisive and immediate action.

This perception, shared by the young people protesting, is supported by strong scientific evidence. There is scientific consensus that decisive and immediate action is necessary in order to contain the disastrous consequences of climate change and to avoid at least its most harmful and catastrophic implications.⁵ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasises that therefore, “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” are required⁶ and that “the next few years are probably the most important in our history”.⁷ According to estimations, without immediate and sufficient action the critical threshold of an increase of the global temperature of 1.5C° might be already reached as early as 2030.⁸

It is necessary to identify the root causes of climate change in order to challenge the status quo. It has been documented that 71% of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 come from only 100 companies.⁹ While the ten countries that emit the highest amount of greenhouse gases are industrialised and developed countries, those suffering the most from their negative and harmful effects are among the poorest countries in the world, largely in Africa and Asia.¹⁰ It is also a socio-economic matter when it comes to the responsibility for climate change; the world’s richest 10% produce half of all carbon emissions in the world.¹¹ Individual, citizens’ responsibility and direct action must be encouraged and supported. However, the responsibility for combating climate change should be on big business¹² and governments in order to make meaningful change. Systemic change is required to counteract climate change.

⁵ Benestad, R.E., Nuccitelli, D., Lewandowsky, S. et al. *Theor Appl Climatol* (2016) 126: 699 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00704-015-1597-5>); cf. also YFJ resolution “On European youth fighting against Climate Change”, May 2008.

⁶ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warmiar-teng-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

⁷ IPCC: Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C approved by governments (<https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>)

⁸ IPCC Special Report Global Warming of 1.5 °C, p. 66 (https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/SR15_Chapter1_Low_Res.pdf)

⁹ Carbon Majors Database: <https://b8f65cb373b1b7b15feb-c70d8ead6ced550b4d987d7c03fcdd1d.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/cms/reports/documents/000/002/327/original/Carbon-Majors-Report-2017.pdf?1499691240>

¹⁰ PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency: https://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/cms/publicaties/pbl-2015-trends-in-global-co2-emissions_2015-report_01803.pdf

¹¹ Oxfam: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-12-02/worlds-richest-10-produce-half-carbon-emissions-while-poorest-35>

¹² Definition "big business": The term includes all kinds of polluters, multinational corporations and other companies in the economy.

The present and projected harmful changes caused by climate change include rising surface temperatures, more regular and longer heat waves, wildfires, more intense and frequent extreme precipitation events, the melting of permafrost and glaciers, a rising global mean sea level, and an acidifying and warming ocean. All of these changes are starting to damage or even destroy the ecosystems of our planet and impact biodiversity.¹³ Furthermore, the consequences to human health are also severe: according to the WHO, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, resulting from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.^{14 15} It is also necessary to take into account that extreme consequences of climate change are leading to humanitarian emergencies. We can see displacement of entire communities due to natural disasters related to climate change, which is producing internally displaced people (IDP) and climate refugees. Moreover, there is a loss in terms of language and cultural diversity by the eradication of entire communities.

According to the UNFCCC secretariat, the present effects of climate change are already causing economic damages amounting to billions of Euros.¹⁶ In particular, those who are already suffering from socio-economic disadvantages are likely to suffer most from the detrimental consequences of climate change.¹⁷

Young people are affected by climate change particularly strongly.

The OECD Youth Stocktaking Report points out that climate change is an example of a global challenge “that will impact young people much more than those who currently decide on how to deal with them”, therefore criticising that young people “have the least influence on policies that affect them the most.”¹⁸ Young people are already, and will continue to be the part of society that is most affected by climate change. The socio-economic burden they carry, especially in the current context, will increase with the consequences of climate change. Indeed, climate change reveals and reinforces inequalities especially for young people and particularly young women, and more so if they are living in the Global South.^{19 20}

¹³ YFJ resolution “Climate matters: The vision of European Youth for COP21”, November 2015; <https://unfccc.int/news/the-cost-of-climate-change>

¹⁴ http://ifmsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016MM_PS_Climate-Change-and-health.pdf

¹⁵ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/134014/9789241507691_eng.pdf

¹⁶ <https://unfccc.int/news/the-cost-of-climate-change>

¹⁷ YFJ resolution “Climate matters: The vision of European Youth for COP21”, November 2015

¹⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/gov/engaging-and-empowering-youth-across-the-oecd.pdf>

¹⁹ YFJ resolution “Climate matters: The vision of European Youth for COP21”, November 2015

²⁰ United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change, 2010, <http://bit.ly/1FBQsfy>; <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/environment-climate-change/>

The current efforts to combat climate change fall short by far.

Despite climate change being an emergency that requires immediate and decisive action to be undertaken by all states, the European Union and the international community and all sectors of the society, including especially the global economy, the efforts to combat climate change are so far significantly insufficient and far too slow.²¹ Alarming, most countries have not even met the goals they agreed upon in the Paris Agreement of 2015; all European countries have failed to increase their climate action efforts to meet the goals commonly agreed upon in the 2015 Agreement, and many of them missed their targets by a wide margin.²²

The interests and opinion of young people in Europe must not be ignored any longer.

THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

Stressing the need to acknowledge that young people have a right to a future in a healthy environment,

Acknowledging the United Nations Climate Change Conferences' 2015 Agreement reached at the Conference of the Parties in Paris, referred to hereafter as the Paris Agreement²³,

Taking into account the existing positions of the European Youth Forum^{24 25 26} on the topic of climate change,

Acknowledging the findings Eurobarometer published in the 2018 edition of European Youth, stating that 50% of young respondents identified climate change as one of the priority topics of the European Union, second only to education and skills²⁷,

²¹ <https://www.esu-online.org/?policy=resolution-regarding-climate-change>

²² <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/climate-energy-targets/3357-off-target-ranking-of-eu-countries-ambition-and-progress-in-fighting-climate-change/file;>
<https://climateactiontracker.org/>

²³ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

²⁴ https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/SustainableDevelopment-YFJ_web.pdf

²⁵ https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/0302-15_res_Climate_change_FINAL%20%282%29.pdf

²⁶ https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0438-08_Climate.pdf

²⁷

<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/2163>

With regards to the current European Youth Goals that include a sustainable and green Europe²⁸,

With regards to the 13th goal of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations²⁹,

Acknowledging the impacts of a 1.5C° global temperature increase as stated in the 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change³⁰,

With regards to the European Climate Change Programme³¹ and to the EU Climate Action³²,

AGREE THAT THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

Suggests tackling climate change issues from the perspective of youth and the organisations that represent them within its future commitments,

Expresses its support towards the climate strikers taking part in the Fridays for Future demonstrations and other non violent youth demonstrations, and their calls for urgent action on climate change,

Condemns any attempt to punish the climate strikers for exercising their freedom of assembly and association, as guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights,

Highlights the importance of young people using their right of freedom of speech and expression, which never should be undermined by the governments and educational institutions due to legal frameworks,

Calls upon the European Union and European states to implement concrete, binding and immediate plans not only to fulfil its obligations in line with the Paris Agreement, but to set more ambitious targets,

Calls upon the European Union to take environmental and climate impact into account in all of its decisions, as an underlying criterion when passing legislation (i.e. climate mainstreaming),

Calls also upon the European Union to take strongly into account the link between the prevention of conflict, policies of disarmament and peace, and the climate change in its foreign policy instruments,

Calls upon the United Nations and its member states to guarantee sufficient opportunities for young people and youth organisations from all backgrounds to participate in the decision-making process of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other relevant processes at all levels

²⁸ <http://www.youthgoals.eu/>

²⁹ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-13-climate-action.html>

³⁰ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eccp_en

³² https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/eu_en

and to create permanent structures to foster youth participation at all stages and levels of these processes,

Recommends that the European Union and European states implement structural changes that make climate friendly solutions more affordable for individuals with special emphasis on youth.