

Make EU's recovery a Green Deal

The world is facing an unprecedented crisis. In just a few weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across the world and caused tremendous human tragedy and a historical economic setback of which we still do not know the full impact. Our societies have shut down, borders are closed, unemployment is on the rise and companies are struggling.

The focus is presently on fighting the pandemic and its immediate consequences. We should, however, begin to prepare ourselves to rebuild our economy and to introduce the necessary recovery plans to bring renewed, sustainable progress and prosperity back to Europe and its citizens.

While doing so, we must not lose sight of the persisting climate and ecological crisis. Building momentum to fight this battle has to stay high on the political agenda. The lesson from the COVID-19 crisis is that early action is essential. Therefore, we need to maintain ambition in order to mitigate the risks and costs of inaction from climate change and biodiversity losses. We cannot afford setbacks that can have detrimental effects on our climate, biodiversity and environment as well as on human health and our economies.

These crises have reminded us that answers need to be found in a concerted manner through a common European response. The EU's capacity to act depends largely on our ability to work together in solidarity to build the bridge between fighting COVID-19, biodiversity loss and climate change.

We therefore strongly welcome that the Heads of States and Governments on 26 March invited the Commission to start working on a comprehensive EU recovery plan integrating the green transition and digital transformation.

We call on the Commission to use the European Green Deal as a framework for this exercise and thereby to keep momentum by implementing its initiatives. The Green Deal constitutes a new growth strategy for the EU, which is able to deliver on the twin benefits of stimulating economies and creating jobs while accelerating the green transition in a cost efficient way.

For example, the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 as well as a strong policy framework ensures a stable and forward-looking investment environment for Europe's businesses, which is an essential precondition for green growth and job creation.

In addition, we encourage the Commission to look into elements of the Green Deal, including the European Green Deal Investment Plan, which can be pushed forward to boost green recovery and a just transition. We need to scale up investments, notably in the fields of sustainable mobility, renewable energy, building renovations, research and innovation, the recovery of biodiversity and the circular economy.

The Green Deal provides us with a roadmap to make the right choices in responding to the economic crisis while transforming Europe into a sustainable and climate neutral economy.

We should withstand the temptations of short-term solutions in response to the present crisis that risk locking the EU in a fossil fuel economy for decades to come.

Instead, we must remain resolved to increase the EU's 2030 target before the end of this year adhering to the timetable of the Paris agreement despite the postponement of COP26, and inspire other global players to raise their ambition as well. In that light we are pleased that the Commission is on track to present by

September 2020 an impact assessed plan to raise the EU's 2030 ambitions and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50-55% compared to 1990 levels.

Furthermore, we need to maintain and strengthen EU's effective regulatory tools such as the Emissions Trading Scheme, environment standards and sectoral policies, and make them more effective at reducing emissions in the most cost effective way while providing a path for European businesses into the future green and circular economy.

We need to send a strong political signal to the world and our citizens that the EU will lead by example even in difficult times like the present and blaze the trail to climate neutrality and the fulfillment of the Paris Agreement.

In the same vein, urgent action to protect and conserve biodiversity must be a key part of our response to the global health and environmental crisis and a key aspect to ensure the long-term survival and well-being of our societies.

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