



# Draft

**Tabled by:** EGP Committee (European Green Party)

**Title:** Green recovery towards climate neutrality

## Draft text

1 Estimates suggest that because of the corona crisis, in 2020 global climate  
2 emissions will fall more than ever before in human history. However, this is no  
3 reason for complacency, let alone celebration.

4 We are still nowhere near solving the climate emergency. At most, this year we  
5 will accelerate climate disruption temporarily slightly less – but accelerate  
6 it we still will. Massive restrictions on people’s movements and livelihoods  
7 can never be a sustainable response to the climate crisis.

8 For Greens, it is clear that as we build on the ruins of the global pandemic,  
9 there is #nogoingback to the old system that was destined to destabilise our  
10 climate. Now we need to #REimaginerecovery and #buildbackbetter.

11 Putting climate at the heart of recovery can address two crises at once. Green  
12 and resilient recovery will help to kick-start the economy and get people back  
13 to work while accelerating our transition to climate neutrality. Investing in  
14 sustainable and smart solutions can future-proof our economies. If we get it  
15 right, the transition can also deliver many other benefits: cleaner air,  
16 healthier ecosystems, greater energy security and a more innovative economy.

17 To become climate neutral, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions  
18 must be reduced to as close to zero as possible, to a level that sinks can  
19 safely absorb. Climate neutrality is needed to keep global heating at 1.5 °C or  
20 even well below 2 °C, as agreed in the Paris Agreement – in other words, to  
21 avoid the worst climate disruption. This requires roughly halving emissions  
22 globally every decade or cutting them by more than 7% each year.

23 While we appreciate the European Climate Law proposal of becoming climate  
24 neutral by 2050, the European Union and other advanced economies need to do  
25 more. Becoming climate neutral by 2040 would recognise the historical  
26 responsibility of industrialised countries in heating the planet. Committing to  
27 this goal in 2020 would also answer the calls of millions of European citizens,  
28 especially the younger generation, and strengthen EU leadership ahead of the UN  
29 Climate Conference COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2021.

30 Setting ambitious targets is one thing but meeting them is another. Reaching  
31 climate neutrality in just two decades requires immediate and radical emission  
32 reductions. It requires an unprecedented transformation of our economies and  
33 societies, changes in our lifestyles and determined political leadership. We  
34 want to highlight five perspectives in particular.

35 First, for the EU to reach climate neutrality by 2040, all Member States must  
36 take ambitious actions. However, we recognise that not all European countries  
37 are starting their transition from the same point. If we want to collectively  
38 achieve climate neutrality by 2040, wealthier countries must get there already  
39 before 2040.

40 Second, even though 2040 may seem a long way off, immediate action is needed  
41 right here, right now. Today, any long-term investment in high-carbon  
42 infrastructure, such as fossil-fuel production and transport, would be  
43 incompatible with a pathway to climate neutrality. To get on the right path, the  
44 EU needs to enshrine in the Climate Law a binding target of reducing its own  
45 emissions by at least 65% by 2030 and adopt emission budgets compatible with  
46 this.

47 Third, while we need to do everything humanly possible to rapidly reduce  
48 emissions, even the most aggressive action cannot cut our emissions to zero.  
49 Various solutions providing negative emissions will be needed to first make sure  
50 we get to climate neutrality and then to become climate positive, i.e. absorbing  
51 more greenhouse gases than we emit.

52 Fourth, emissions need to be reduced rapidly in all sectors of the economy. As  
53 some sectors can be more challenging to decarbonise, others – such as energy  
54 production – need to go even further and faster. Europe should also address  
55 the consumption-based emissions it is responsible for through, for example,  
56 international aviation and imported products.

57 Fifth, while ambitious and rapid climate action can still save us from the worst  
58 climate disruption, some impacts will be inevitable. Therefore, the task is to

59 avoid the unmanageable and to manage the unavoidable. Investment in adaptation  
60 can future-proof our societies and protect the most vulnerable.

61 Looking more specifically at key sectors:

- 62 1. **Energy.** Green policy is built on rapidly expanding renewables, improving  
63 energy efficiency and reducing energy demand. The most harmful fuels  
64 (including coal) need to be phased out by 2030 at the latest, followed by  
65 other fossil fuels soon after. Nuclear power has no role to play in the  
66 clean energy future..
- 67 2. **Buildings.** To fully decarbonise the building sector, all new buildings  
68 must be net-zero emissions. A significantly accelerated renovation wave  
69 can cut energy use in the existing building stock while reducing energy  
70 poverty. Buildings must also switch from fossil fuels to renewables for  
71 heating.
- 72 3. **Transport.** Reducing traffic demand and shifting to public transport,  
73 cycling and walking play a key role. Phasing out the sales of new fossil-  
74 fuel cars by 2030 and switching to electricity produced from renewables  
75 can cut the remaining emissions from cars, vans and buses. Advanced  
76 biofuels meeting strict sustainability criteria and synthetic fuels made  
77 using green electricity are needed for aeroplanes and ships, for example,  
78 which can not realistically be fully electrified.
- 79 4. **Industry.** Energy efficiency, electrification and renewables are central  
80 for decarbonising energy-intensive industries. Moving to a circular  
81 economy would reduce both the use of natural resources and emissions.  
82 Residual process emissions need to be addressed by, for example,  
83 introducing radical innovations and storing or recycling carbon.
- 84 5. **Agriculture.** Energy efficiency and renewables also help to cut emissions  
85 in agriculture. Sustainable practices can increase the carbon stored in  
86 farmland and improve productivity, food security and climate resilience.  
87 Changes are also required in the way we eat, moving to more plant-based  
88 diets.
- 89 6. **Sinks.** Nature-based solutions, such as protecting, restoring and expanding  
90 forests, peatlands and other ecosystems, offer significant synergies for  
91 preserving our biodiversity. Technological sinks may also play a role in  
92 some sectors if they are applied responsibly and are not used as an excuse  
93 to delay emission reductions.

94 For decades, Greens have been at the forefront of fighting the climate crisis,  
95 together with our partners in civil society, trade unions and progressive  
96 business. However, confronted with such an enormous challenge, a certain amount  
97 of humility can be helpful for us all.

98 On the path to climate neutrality, we will face both surprises and difficult  
99 choices. The map is not yet fully developed, let alone detailed.

100 To help us navigate these challenges, we must be guided by strong principles:

- 101 1. **Listen to the science:** base all decisions on expert knowledge and  
102 evidence;
- 103 2. **Protect people:** put people – especially vulnerable groups – at the  
104 centre and ensure intergenerational equity and a just transition for all;
- 105 3. **Respect nature:** integrate halting biodiversity loss and other  
106 environmental concerns into climate action;
- 107 4. **Make the polluters pay:** divest from fossil fuels, fully apply the  
108 polluter-pays principle and phase out fossil-fuel subsidies;
- 109 5. **Invest in innovation:** seize the potential of new technology applied in a  
110 sustainable and fair way;
- 111 6. **Empower citizens:** include citizens in deciding on and implementing the  
112 transition;
- 113 7. **Work together:** cooperate within Europe, including with candidate  
114 countries, and internationally in the spirit of solidarity.