

Green campaign: from climate emergency to climate neutrality

Climate change is an urgent crisis on an unprecedented scale. Alongside the alarming rate of biodiversity loss (sixth mass extinction), it threatens the very foundations of human civilisation.

Despite the aim of the Paris Agreement to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 and at least well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, government reactions have been mainly timid and overdue – and at times utterly negligent. At best, we have seen individual pockets of action addressing the crisis.

However, people around the world have risen up to fight for ambitious action and climate justice. The movement has been led by young people, millions of whom have gone on school strikes and mass demonstrations in almost every country.

One of the calls of the global movement has been to declare a climate emergency. Declarations to this effect have already been issued by jurisdictions covering close to 300 million people. At the country level, these include the UK, Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Canada and Argentina.

At the local level, similar decisions have been made by more than 1 000 communities. In Europe, the cities issuing a declaration include Amsterdam, Warsaw, Brussels, Lyon, Cologne, Naples, Barcelona, Basel and two district councils in Prague, among others.

Declaring a climate emergency can trigger debate, attract media attention and highlight the urgency of the crisis. It can mobilise people to take concrete action and to support progressive climate policies. It can also be used to call out hypocrisy and put pressure on political and corporate leaders. Recognition that we are in a climate emergency is a political act in itself as it requires bravery to face and acknowledge the climate crisis.

We also acknowledge and support the rise of climate litigation actions, aiming at getting countries to respect high climate goals throughout the world and especially in the EU, as well as to obtain climate action from companies. We also observe the rise of climate justice social fights, in the world and in the EU.

However, declarations alone are far from enough. Climate emergency cannot be reduced to a buzzword, let alone a political marketing strategy or greenwashing. Declarations must be followed by immediate and ambitious climate action to take us swiftly to climate neutrality. Climate neutrality requires all greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to a level carbon sinks can absorb. At the same time, we must avoid that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions result in negative impact in other areas.

In the past few years, we have witnessed worrying attacks on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, sometimes under the excuse of emergency regimes. The concept of climate emergency may vary from one country, culture and language to another, but it should not be confused with declaring a constitutional state of emergency. A climate emergency can never be used to limit civic rights – on the contrary, it must protect people from the ravages of the climate crisis.

EGP Council, Tampere, 8 - 10 November 2019

Adopted Resolution - subject to proofreading

We, the European Greens, will work for issuing climate emergencies at all levels of government in Europe. We want the declarations either to include, or to be immediately followed by, actionable steps. These include:

- actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 65% until 2030 in order to meet the Paris Agreement as we demand in the European Parliament, without relying on unsustainable options like nuclear power and carbon dioxide capture and storage in fossil fuel energy production, and reaching climate neutrality by 2040 or before, without relying on unsustainable options like nuclear power or options which reduce carbon emissions but have unacceptable negative environmental or social impacts;
- targets for immediate and ambitious emission reductions with a focus on energy saving measures;
- a roadmap with concrete measures and timetables for all sectors and emissions, including consumption-based emissions;
- sufficient resources to implement the roadmap;
- a pro-active focus on synergies among climate solutions and other sustainability goals such as a just transition and reversal of biodiversity loss.

In our campaign, we will build on the experiences gained in the EGP campaign to divest from fossil fuels. We will work closely with the whole Green family, including Member Parties and their local and regional chapters, FYEG, the GGEP, GEF and the Global Greens. To guide the campaign, a joint steering group will be set up.

We will also build broader alliances with progressive political forces, civil society organisations and movements, including supporting relevant European Citizens' Initiatives. The work must be inclusive with climate justice at its core.

Campaign objectives include:

- to issue climate emergency declarations and commit to climate neutrality in as many European communities as possible;
- to put pressure on policymakers to ensure that declarations and goals are followed by immediate and ambitious political actions;
- to empower, mobilise and connect local and regional Greens, together with civil society activists;
- to build a learning network across the continent and provide concrete tools for action;
- to channel the current energy on the streets to induce change in political institutions and to enable people to play a part;
- to position the Greens at the centre of the debate, as actors for real change and as a partner to civil society in the fight against the climate crisis and for climate justice;
- to recognise that social justice is intrinsically linked to climate justice and the need for a just transition on a local, national, European and international level;
- To ensure in collaboration with the member parties in question the presence and participation of the European Green Party at COP25 and COP 26.