



Greta Thunberg is right: We should all find the courage to change

15/03/2019



Hundreds of thousands of people are joining Greta Thunberg today for a Global Strike for Future. We can only support the appeal of these young people, who resolutely aim to forge a sustainable Europe, a sustainable planet.

In a world undergoing profound technological, economic, geopolitical and demographic transformations, we are confronted with five major crises: a climate crisis, whose effects are already being felt on our continent; a social crisis with rising inequalities and the radical transformation of work; an economic and competitiveness crisis and a democratic crisis with the

rise of nationalisms and the questioning of fundamental values. But above all, we are hit by a European Union crisis, which undermines its very own foundations.

Faced with these challenges, we need a real new European renaissance, a rEUnaissance, which meets the main concerns of our citizens: the threat of terrorism, the poor management of immigration, the disruption of the world of work, pollution harm to health, climate change and biodiversity loss, the call for security and defence, and threats to peace.

Where to start? Greta nailed it: From a genuine sustainable development strategy at European level, based on the agreement concluded by the United Nations in 2015. The only way forward for Europe is that of social, economic and environmental sustainability and it must become the main project for the next decade.

There is no other alternative. Strong climate action means we must allocate at least 40% of the EU budget to fight against climate change (the Commission proposed only 25%). Adequate financial resources must be made available to promote renewable energies, decentralized production and self-production of these energies, in order to reduce bills and create new business opportunities and new jobs.

That's why Greta's message is important. At only 16, she told us with the freshness of an adolescent and the maturity of an adult that we must, with courage and determination, adopt the policies, which will allow us to avoid the point of no return, announced by scientists around the world.

But our commitment must not stop at climate actions. A campaign must be waged against all forms of insecure employment and against increasing wage, social and regional inequalities by making the issue of "living power" one of the priorities of the European Union. This "living power" will include not just purchasing power, but also non-discrimination, gender equality and recognition of the dignity of each and every citizen.

Such campaign must be teamed up with a tax revolution to end unacceptable exemptions and socially and environmentally harmful practices and to avoid market distortions for businesses, especially SMEs. This tax revolution must enable us to move towards the sustainable development model we want and to protect Europe's most vulnerable citizens.

We also need a solid European industrial project to restore Europe's competitiveness. The new commercial opportunities offered by the sustainable development agenda will allow companies to compete with American and Chinese ones: the battery supply chain, renewable energies and electric cars are examples for all to see.

Much has been done to promote a circular economy, but we need a more ambitious circular economy strategy to support sustainable production and consumption and redefine our behaviour as responsible consumers. With that comes also a review of our agricultural policy in accordance with our goal of climate and sustainable management of rural areas.

Finally, we need to reinvent civic engagement, based on new technologies but going far beyond online consultations. This civic commitment, which generates ideas, visions and ways forward must be structured, organised, regular, and involve all levels of decision-making; it must be capable of truly bringing on board all intermediary bodies and local authorities.

It is time for a fundamental transformation of our development model, of our democracy, of our societies.

Greta can only reinforce this message. Her movement gives hope and further enhances our commitment.

As President of the EESC, for me it is clear that our commitment, in view of the upcoming European elections, must pay off the winning themes of sustainable development, the commitment of the younger generations and the mobilisation of European civil society.

["Greta is right: We need courage to change", euobserver, 15/03/2019](#)

["Greta Thunberg vuole azioni forti e ha ragione. Destiniamo parte del bilancio Ue al clima", Il Fatto Quotidiano, 14/03/2019](#)