



Outcome document

Youth Climate and Sustainability Round Table

I

Overconsumption of natural resources

with Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans

13 July 2021



Summary

This document complements the Youth Climate and Sustainability Round Tables structure proposal and outlines the policy demands on the overconsumption of natural resources that were discussed with Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans on 13 July 2021.

Participants

Youth representatives

- Josephine Becker, YIKES Podcast and Treespeace
- Ergi Bregasi, Youth and Environment Europe
- Adélaïde Charlier, Youth for Climate
- Camille Étienne, On Est Pret
- Jan Mayrhofer, European Youth Forum
- Nathan Méténier, Youth and Environment Europe
- Agata Meysner, Generation Climate Europe
- Line Niedeggen, Fridays for Future
- Chibunna Ogbonna, European Development Days
- Alicia O'Sullivan, University College Cork Students' Union
- Valentina Ruas, Fridays for Future

European Commission

- Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal
- Biliana Sirakova, EU Youth Coordinator

European Economic and Social Committee

- Jana Hartman Radová, Member (Group I)
- Peter Schmidt, President of the NAT Section (Group II)
- Cillian Lohan, EESC Vice-President (Group III)

Other

- Prof. Stefan Rahmstorf, Head of Earth System Analysis, University of Potsdam

1. Introduction

We are a group of youth activists who are deeply concerned with the state of the world. We appreciate the European Commission's effort to decarbonise the European economy, including its commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and the recent Fit for 55 package. However, a truly sustainable Europe for us means that we also need to dematerialise our economies. Achieving EU emissions reduction targets currently involves massive increases in the extraction of certain minerals both in Europe and beyond. This could undermine efforts to prevent biodiversity loss and stay within the 1.5°C target, as well as recreating global injustices that continue to put pressure on those least responsible for climate change.

The core problem we are facing in Europe is the overconsumption of natural resources. Extraction of natural resources causes more than 90% of biodiversity loss and 50% of greenhouse gas emissions¹. In the EU in particular, we consume much more than our fair global share of resources, causing disproportionate impacts on people, especially those in the global South, and our shared planet. If the world were to consume as many resources as the EU, we would need 2.6 planets to sustain it².

The consequences of overconsumption will particularly impact today's young people and future generations, who do not have the possibility to raise their concerns in decision-making processes. Therefore, it is crucial that the EU response to the problem of overconsumption emphasise the long-term impacts on people and the planet as well as actively engage young people and youth organisations. Only legally binding targets to reduce resource consumption can help us to move to an economy that our earth can sustain. Reducing the overall EU consumption of natural resources would have a positive impact on our climate and biodiversity, as well as the wellbeing and health of all citizens³.

2. Policy demands

We are calling on the European Commission to:

Discuss: In 2022, organise a conference in collaboration with youth activists and relevant civil society organisations to bring together a variety of stakeholders as well as raise awareness about the problem of resource overconsumption and explore science-based policy solutions.

Monitor: In 2021, include both the material and consumption footprint indicators via the revision of the Circular Economy Monitoring Framework and build the capacity of Member States that are currently not monitoring these indicators.

Enforce: In 2022, introduce science-based binding reduction targets for EU material consumption to keep the level of consumption in the EU within planetary boundaries with annual targets starting from 2023.

¹ European Commission, 2019. [European Green Deal](#).

² World Wildlife Fund, 2018. [WWF Call for Action: A European Sustainability Pact for a safer, more competitive and responsible EU](#).

³ Julia K Steinberger et al., 2020 Environ. Res. Lett. 15 044016. [Your money or your life? The carbon-development paradox](#).

3. Next steps

The European Commission should respond to this document within 30 working days after its submission. The response of the Commission should provide clear feedback (yes/no) on the policy demands presented above. It should define detailed steps and a timeline for implementation in the case of a positive answer or concrete reasons for rejection in the case of a negative answer.

Both the outcome document and the Commission's response will be published on the [website](#) of the event.

A follow-up meeting should be organised between the representatives of the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, Generation Climate Europe and the European Youth Forum to further discuss the response and the next steps.