

GREEN PRINCIPLES FOR A JUST TRANSITION



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In 2020 and 2021, the Federation of Young European Greens ran the project “Just Transition? No Green Society Without Social Justice!”. The Young Greens strive to see a transition to a carbon-neutral society while at the same time making sure that existing inequalities, as well as structural obstacles for marginalised groups are being diminished. Just transition is not only an energy transition, but the transition to a democratic and inclusive society where everyone is fulfilling their rights. The aim of the project was to ensure young people’s say in the political processes leading to a carbon-neutral just society.

After being disrupted by the global Covid-19 pandemic, in its readapted form the project consisted of, firstly, the Just Transition Learning Labs, five online webinars serving as an introduction to the concept of just transition and as an exploration of the struggles the youth faces when trying to move away from a carbon-intensive society both in rural and urban settings.

The second phase was Just Transition In Action, seven decentralised actions held in Catalonia, Italy, the UK, Scotland, Serbia, Cyprus and Latvia. The local actions presented a diversity of approaches and elements - from educational to awareness-raising, from data analysis to campaigning, a broad collection of topics - from sustainable transport to degrowth, from the use of hemp to homelessness - approached under the lens of the just transition, and a diverse richness in outputs - from publications to campaign material, from movie documentaries to policy papers.

Getting inspired by the outcomes of these multi-level discussions and projects, the Green Principles for a Just Transition were written. They show a Green holistic approach to a transition away from fossil fuels. When looking at them in 2021, we can see the relevance and meaning they hold in a world slowly transitioning to a post-Covid society.

Thank you to Tamara for giving them beautiful life and renewed energy in shapes, colors and patterns.

A just transition aims at a sweeping and comprehensive change of our societies. It therefore must be bold, challenge the current systems for distribution of wealth and power, as well as pre-existing injustices. In order to be just towards the future generations, it must also be the most ambitious plan our societies have ever embarked upon.



Scientists agree that if we are wish to limit the climate crisis and keep the global rise of temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius, a radical change in how we produce, consume and live is needed. At present, global warming is approaching 1.2 degrees Celsius warming compared to the 1990s and is accelerating. We are likely to reach the 1.5 degree target as early as 2030 and are headed for about 3-5 degrees of warming by the end of the century. With every year of inaction passing, the next generations will be required to engage in even more drastic changes in order to avoid the most damaging scenarios. Therefore, in order to be just, the transition must also be rapid and ambitious.

The fact that our governments are not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis has been recently recognized by several high-level courts, for example, in the Netherlands, France and recently also in Germany. The German Constitutional Court made specific reference to the rights of future generations, on whom an undue burden is postponed by our inaction today.

1. Until 1970, humanity's Ecological Footprint was smaller than the Earth's rate of regeneration. Today, we are overusing the Earth's biocapacity by at least 56%.
2. Globally, we are losing 30 million hectares of forests each year.
3. According to NASA, we are losing 429 billion metric tons of ice each year. Meanwhile, the amount of carbon stored in the permafrost is almost twice as high as the amount of carbon already present in the atmosphere.
4. Water scarcity is producing tensions within and between populations to control water resources leading to social unrest and conflicts.
5. We have entered a period of sixth mass extinction in history. According to IPBES, around 25 % of species in assessed animal and plant groups are threatened, suggesting that around 1 million species already face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss.
6. Covid-19 is sometimes referred to as a disease of the Anthropocene and a result of our unhealthy relationship with the environment.

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Everyone needs to be on board for a “just” transition to happen. A just transition hence is one which cares for the **workers** who might fear losing their jobs in the fossil industry and the non-green economy. But not leaving anyone behind also means actively working towards challenging existing **inequalities and axes of power**, tackling classism, sexism, racism, ableism and any type of discrimination, decolonise our systems and make sure everyone gets a say.

The effects of the climate crisis are unequal and unfair. This crisis was created by the privileged and wealthy few, but is hitting ecologically and socially ethnic minorities, and marginalised communities the hardest. They suffer the worst consequences: biodiversity loss, drought, flooding, crop failure, food insecurity.

Moreover, the response to the crisis is also reinforcing existing inequalities, as the social aspects of the action have received less attention and consideration from governments. Women, migrants and youth are usually under-represented in decision-making structures that determine climate actions and negotiate the compensations and transition policies.

Just Transitions represent an opportunity to break with the current inequalities and labour segregation. We can create better realities and do justice with those that suffer the climate crisis. Women, migrants and marginalized groups could benefit from work and social transformations related to just transition.

To achieve this, It is essential to establish a social dialogue and organize the just transition bottom-up, sharing the leadership of the process among the communities. The voices and identities of those most impacted by climate change and ecological action must be prioritized and integrated in the just transition policy not to worsen injustice, but instead reverting injustice.

1. Mouvement des gilets jaunes (“Yellow vests movement”) protested in France in 2018 against a government’s tax reform which represented an increase of fuel prices. The yellow vests initiated an important debate on the lack of justice and equality in the green transition planned in France.
2. Social energy parks, which produce low and medium voltage electricity to be consumed in proximity of where it is generated, are an example of renewable energy projects which aim to avoid inequalities and which narrow the rural-urban gap. They are led by local councils, small and medium enterprises and citizens.
3. Union of Justice (www.unionofjustice.com) is a European organization led by people of colour dedicated to racial and climate justice fighting for a just transition that leaves no one behind.
4. Scottish Young Greens polled that 70% of young Scots believe better public transport would help to slow climate change, while 51% felt obstructed from using it because of its cost.

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community
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Cooperatives can play a major role for communities to organize their own social economy. Investments and production processes on a local level are less abstract and easier to control. A local approach and a short production chain reinforce our democratic system and make sure sustainable development goals can be met.

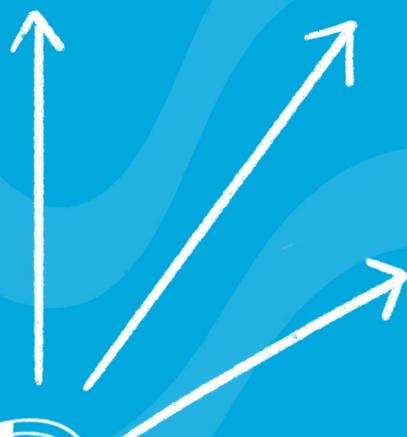
While empowerment remains a key value to the Greens, we cannot underestimate the value of belonging, of solidarity. Globalisation has a deep impact on our modern society and this has had both encouraging and disappointing results. This feeling of connectedness is often lost in huge cities, systems of mass production and world-wide networks where privacy is uncertain. A Just Transition that brings back communities on the human scale, will reconnect people, give insight to the consumers in our production systems, give people a place to relate to.

Local communities will experience the consequences of the climate crisis first hand. If not designed with fairness as a priority in mind, local communities might also become the first ones to be impacted by the measures put in place to battle the climate crisis. Only through listening to their concerns and acknowledging their situation, we create space for a just process. We can do this by embracing the power of shared knowledge, through which communities can educate others on their needs and influence policy-making.

1. Finland has a population of 5,5 million inhabitants. 4,6 million of them are members of a cooperative.
2. In the Czech Republic, over 1200 cooperatives are active, half of them in the construction sector.
3. In France, over 28 million people are members of a cooperative. Most of those cooperatives (63%) are active in the agriculture and food sector.
4. Cooperatives not only provide a responsible consumer solution, but are also a place where workers can organise to ensure dignity of their work. For example, the Spanish riders-led cooperative Mensakas, is a customer and worker-led alternative to all digital food-delivery platforms that are based on exploitation and false self-employment schemes.

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YOUTH-ORIENTED



Young people are likely to live longer with the consequences of inaction in the face of the climate crisis. They already faced the impacts of several crises, being particularly hit by the austerity measures put in place following the 2008/09 financial and economic crisis and their access to social rights has been severely impacted as a result of Covid-19. Yet, they are rarely represented in places where decisions about their future are being made. In the process of just transition, young people need to be taken on board as experts on topics and concerns most crucial for youth. We can do this by ensuring young people are represented at every level of decision-making.

As the population of the world is growing, we can expect a growing amount of young people who will be affected by the climate crisis. In May 2021, the Germany's Federal Constitutional Court ruled that unsustainable and ephemeral plans for cutting the emissions are violating the fundamental rights of young citizens forth and foremost.

Young people are increasingly concerned about the world that surrounds them, with its systematic oppression, violence and climate crisis. There is no other way of easing the stress and anxiety other than giving the youth a concrete possibility to make change.

The youth is not involved enough in policy making. In 2021, only 27% of the world's upper houses of parliament had members under 30. In many countries there is still a gap between the legal voting age and the age required for running for office, and the average for this "waiting time" is over 10 years. We need to explore and create systemic ways for young people to actively engage in political processes. Different forms of formal youth participatory structures, such as regional youth boards, are an example of good practice that can be used to engage youth in policy making. We should also provide young people with proper information and relevant education for them to feel confident in positions of power.

The support to youth-led grassroots organisations is also extremely important in order to achieve a just transition, as it is increasingly apparent that young activists are the ones setting the bar higher for change in environmental and social policy and are effective in holding decision-makers accountable.

1. In Wallonia (Belgium) there is a renewable energy cooperative 40% owned by people aged under 18 years old. Allons en Vent SCL was established in 2001 and during these 20 years the cooperative was involved in several political changes leading to a more just future.
2. Manchester Climate Change Youth Board, brings together 13-28 years olds from across the city who are passionate about ensuring Manchester tells the truth and acts on climate change. Members of the Youth Board sit on the Manchester Climate Change Partnership and ensure that political, business and community leaders are playing their full part to fight

3. In Denmark, the Youth Climate Council is an advisory body to the climate minister.
4. The Council of Europe's policy on youth is discussed and decided on in the Joint Council on Youth. This consists of government representatives from Council of Europe member states, as well youth representatives from various youth organizations across Europe. Through the Joint Council on Youth, young people can shape Council of Europe's policies in various areas. Thanks to the work of the youth representatives, the Council of Europe has recently started to look increasingly into the impact of the climate crisis on young people's rights.

Women are also to be severely affected by the climate crisis. In some countries, women's livelihoods and traditional roles afforded to them in society might be affected as a result of the climate crisis, therefore reinforcing gender discrimination. In most countries, women are missing from crucial policy debates about energy, agriculture and transport. We can achieve a feminist transition by closing the gender gap, eliminating the burden of non-paid work, redistributing household and care-work, including women in reskilling and retraining as well as in the political decision making processes. Likewise, a feminist transition requires tackling any discrimination based on sex, gender or sexual and romantic orientation.

Taking an example from the Global South, we can see that providing women with access to clean community-managed energy sources not only lowers emissions, but also decreases the burden stereotypically placed on women in providing for their families.

Taking an example from Europe we can see that, when discussing the closing of coal mines or other dirty energy sectors, governments often tend to focus on the workers directly impacted, such as the miners. These are male-dominated professions. In contrast, not much attention is turned to what happens to the administrative, cleaning or other support personnel, professions often dominated by women. Therefore, even if reskilling and re-education programmes are introduced, they are often not intended for the workforce typically dominated by women. A just transition would hence be, one taking into account the specific gendered needs and roles of women in our societies.

Recognizing this gap, some Green politicians have called for a feminist climate policy, tackling the climate crisis and gender inequalities at the same time. This approach aims at visibilising gender in discussions around climate and, most importantly, ensuring discussions feature people of all or no genders.

Another example for bridging this gap is the attempt by UNFCCC, who has called for gender-responsive climate financing. Such financing should aim not only at addressing the climate crisis but also at tackling existing inequalities. For example, when investing in public transport as means of reducing emissions, governments should also take steps towards making sure women feel safe and organise the transport schedules in ways which correspond to their needs.

1. In the 1970s a movement called ecofeminism emerged alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. Ecofeminists see a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women.
2. In 2018, FYEG held a webinar on climate feminism, you can learn more about the topic [here](#).
3. In 2020, the Green European Foundation organized a series of trainings for feminist climate ambassadors.
4. A feminist movement, #HalfOfIt, in Italy demands that half of the EU post-Covid recovery is spent on women.

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GROUNDING IN
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A just transition is not only one which centers around young people, but one which is rooted in the knowledge of previous generations. We can do this by honoring and reviving sustainable practices of indigenous populations and of our own grandparents.

Few indigenous populations are officially recognised in Europe and their traditional way of living is threatened by climate change and the diminishing of land and resources. For example, with the Arctic region warming twice as fast as the global average, the climate crisis threatens the livelihood and culture of Sami people who traditionally lived in the Nordic countries and Russia.

Ethnic minorities who are not officially recognised as indigenous populations may disproportionately suffer the consequences of the ecological mistreatment. In Europe this would be the case of Roma people who are often forced to live squalid living conditions in wastelands without access to safe water or sanitation due to systemic discrimination and exclusionary policies. In 2020, a study conducted by the European Environmental Bureau identified 32 examples of environmental racism targeting Roma from across Europe.

As for indigenous peoples outside Europe, they are often victim of forced displacement caused by attempts of meeting carbon targets in Europe in the name of sustainability. Examples are the dirty car battery industry violating human rights of indigenous people living near lithium mines in Argentina, or tree-planting projects used for carbon offsetting purposes that are displacing natives or curtailing their forest use.

As it's true that younger generations will live longer with the consequences of climate change, it's equally real that mortality due to heat waves is 15% higher among elderly people, affecting them most urgently and immediately.

The just transition is an intergenerational challenge and the wealth of knowledge from older generations can help us tackle it. Sustainable approaches that were used by our grandparents go from the creative use of food scraps to reduce waste and as an inspiration for circular economy practices at larger scale, to the habit of mending and repairing, from the use of available natural products to clean, while avoiding chemicals and microplastic dispersion, to countless farming practices used to restore the nutrients in the depleted soil.

1. The movie Honeyland tells the story of the last female bee-hunter in Europe, who utilises ancient beekeeping traditions to cultivate honey in the mountains of North Macedonia. When a neighbouring family tries to do the same, it becomes a source of tension as they disregard her wisdom and advice.

In the future of the just transition, everyone has career alternatives outside of the dirty energy sector and is trained to access them. We can do this by creating education and reskilling opportunities which are accessible, for example by removing fees.

With the key component of just transition being the idea of not leaving anyone behind, we need to make sure the just transition is a process which generates new opportunities. One way to ensure that the just transition is education oriented can be to look at the European Youth Guarantee. The European Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all EU Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship within a period of four months after becoming unemployed or leaving education. One way to achieve this goal could be to create incentives for creating these opportunities especially in the just transition sector.

High education fees increase inequality not only amongst young people. We need to make sure that everyone has access to free education at any point of their life.

When talking about accessible, quality lifelong education, we also need to rethink the way we educate. The unsustainable capitalist economic model should be challenged and the alternatives should be visibly given. Just Transition should be included in the curriculum for all education levels.

1. In 2016, 44.4% of people in the EU aged 25 to 64 took part in education and training, the majority of which participating in non-formal education and training.
2. In 2018, researchers looked into the potential of tackling youth unemployment in Greece and Spain by fighting the climate crisis. They discovered that, if combined with the right training, climate action could create a six-figure number of jobs in Spain and Greece, significantly lowering the portion of youth unemployment in these countries. Making education affordable, i. e. by removing fees and establishing support programmes hence also contributes to lowering levels of unemployment.

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Local authorities should be in charge of organising the transition, not large private corporations that history has shown are always ready to capitalise on every crisis. The main actors implementing the change must be known and lobbying at every level, including in the European Parliament. Visibility is necessary to increase accountability.

Countless activities aimed at facilitating and achieving a just transition have been taking place for many years, often at local and regional levels. Sometimes the successful implementation of such activities are blocked by higher level regulations. At the EU level, for example, we work with and for free trade agreements, while at the same time trying to enhance local production, consumption and resiliency.

This represents a barrier. The challenge is to identify proposals where policy domains can reinforce each other, instead of creating conflict of interest. Coordination and multilevel networks can be useful to achieve an effective decentralisation.

Sharing the decision-making capacity among different stakeholders (non-governmental organisations, labour unions, local communities groups) can increase the legitimacy and social acceptance of the just transition process. Rural areas' perspectives need to be integrated in this exchange.

Some actors are pushing for an interesting green transition. An example is the Common Agricultural Policy consisting of the subsidies and programmes that shape Europe's agriculture, farming and food system. Widely criticized for its lack of ambition and maintenance of a status quo that increasingly endangers biodiversity, depletes European soil and fails in lowering emissions, it serves as an attraction for profit-making interests of politicians. Investigations targeting national and local level decision makers linked to the use of these funds are evidence for this misuse

However, a just transition can only be achieved if clear systems of transparency are set in place for accountability of decision makers.

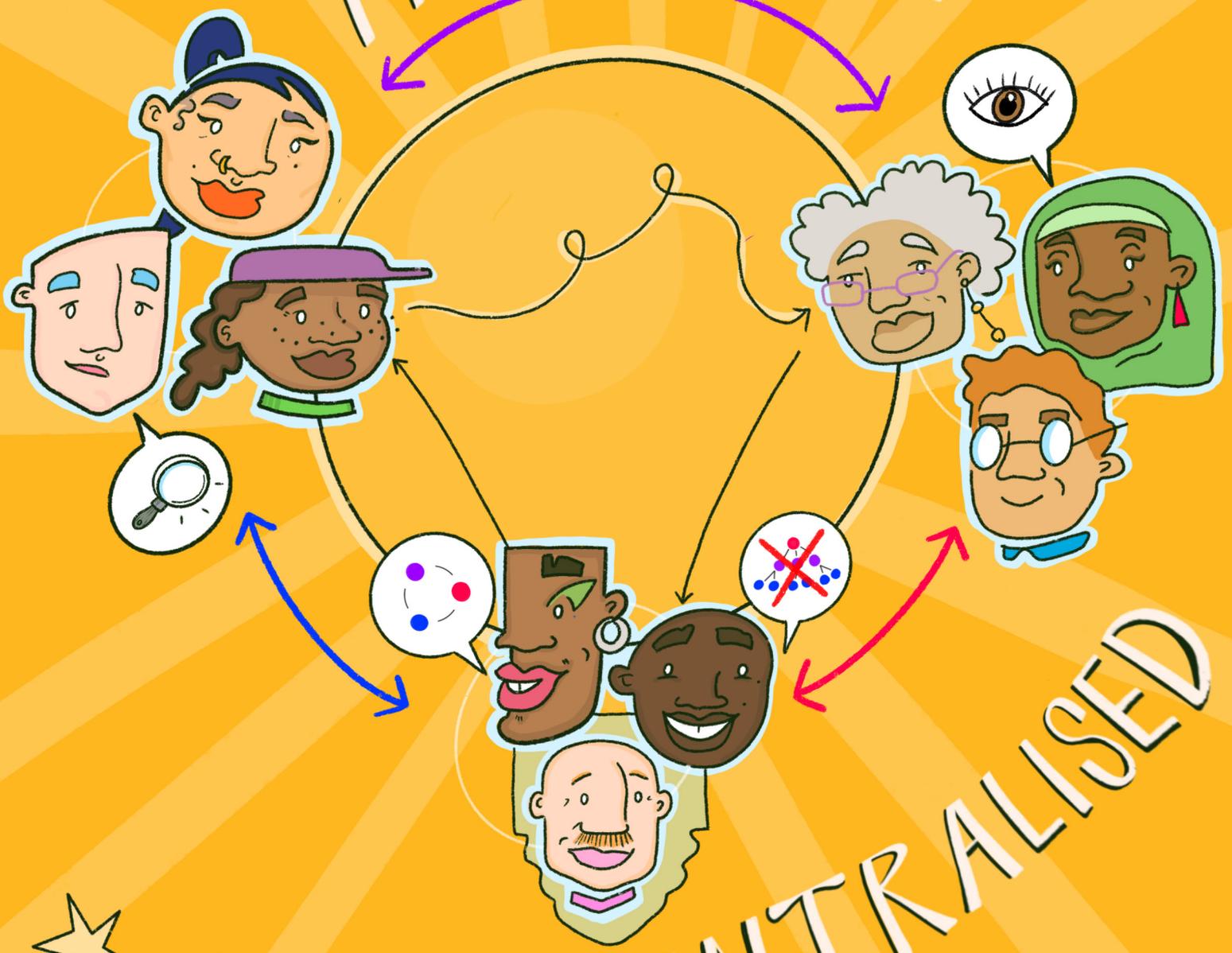
Historically, big polluters have delayed, weakened and sabotaged action on the climate emergency thanks to their lobbying activity, going as far back as the 1960s and 1970s. A just transition should be one that is envisioned in the memory of these past mistakes.

1. The five biggest oil and gas companies, and their industry groups, spent at least €251m lobbying the European Union over climate policies since 2010, according to Corporate Europe Observatory.
2. 80% of wind and solar farms in the area of Les Garrigues in Catalonia are owned by the big companies which did not prioritize social farms.
3. Green MEP Terry Reintke publishes on her website all the meetings she joins in her institutional position, showing the topic and the partners present at the meeting, in an attempt to provide more transparency.
4. An example of decentralisation is happening in Barcelona and Brussels. Both cities put in place participatory processes to give direct power to the citizens to propose and vote for city projects.

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OUR BEST OPPORTUNITY TO

reimagine
our
common
future



The current economic system is broken. Since GDP does not account for a country's success in achieving the wellbeing of people and the planet, we need to look beyond productivity rates and imagine new ways of success for our societies. If done correctly, a just transition benefits everyone and enables us to guarantee a good quality of life for all within the limits of planetary boundaries. It is thus the best opportunity to shift the boundaries of our own imaginations and reimagine our common future.



There are many examples for alternative measures of progress in our societies. Among the most commonly known is the Gross National Happiness Index. Another example would be the Social Progress Index. Other economists, such as Kate Raworth, came up with alternative models for our whole economies. Raworth's model is called 'Doughnut Economics' and proposes an economy meeting people's needs without overshooting planetary boundaries. All these alternatives show us that we do not need to focus on infinite economic growth in order to lead happy and fulfilling lives. All we need to do is to be brave and dare to think beyond what already is.

We, the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG), are the movement of the Green youth at the European level. Our individual and organisational backgrounds lie in the social and environmental justice movements, in feminist and queer battles, and in the defence of fundamental rights and democracy. For more than 30 years, our Member Organisations have joined forces at the European level, uniting their collective voices and aspirations to learn from each other, to debate, to campaign together, and to make the green Europe we wish to see become a reality.

Through our shared struggles and aspirations, we see that not a single one of our political issues is a lone priority. We refuse to choose between the survival and well-being of the planet, our personal liberties and freedoms, and social welfare. To be Green means to fight for all these demands simultaneously. To be Green means to fight for a just transition as summarised in these 9 principles.