

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

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For citizens worldwide today and generations to come, the EU should make sure all its policies contribute to sustainable development, human rights and the well-being of people and planet. CONCORD believes the EU can significantly step up its efforts to move us closer towards a sustainable future in the following seven areas.

Close the inequality gap

The EU must do more to reduce the extreme inequalities that exist both between and within countries. The benefits of globalisation are unevenly distributed as a result of unequal power relations between and within countries, and between poor host countries and the transnational companies that operate in them. This implies that the most marginalised and poorest people and countries must be given greater opportunities and a level playing field created. Key to this is to focus on redistributive policies (such as taxation and social protection) to reduce the concentration of wealth and power. A whole range of other policies would also need to be reviewed to this end, including international financing rules, trade policy, investment, agriculture, labour standards, and social policies such as education and healthcare.

Care about our well-being, not only GDP

To ensure that all policies work in the interests of all people and the planet, we must radically review our definitions and concept of progress. Progress needs to be viewed in terms of improved well-being for all (mindful of gender, age, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, location etc.) while fully respecting the planet. The EU should adopt a common set of indicators which encapsulate the concept of “well-being” from the social, economic, environmental and governance perspectives. These indicators should be used to guide future policy and decision-making in all areas in addition to GDP.

Help to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls worldwide

Gender equality is, most importantly, a fundamental human right but also necessary for global development and the achievement of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Although many important steps have been taken, women and girls continue to suffer structural discrimination and widespread violence across the world today, and in some parts of the world we are witnessing serious backlashes against women’s and girl’s rights. The EU should step up its efforts to contribute to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide.

Build a fair and just food system

The EU should make sure that all the EU’s investments in agriculture, whether in Europe or abroad, are sustainable, resilient and eco-friendly. This means: a focus on small producers, especially female and young, and on rural economies, ecosystems and biodiversity. The EU should also put the right to food at the centre of the EU’s contribution to sustainable agriculture and food security worldwide. This means: every human being has the physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.

Respect human rights of migrants and refugees

The EU should establish a regulatory framework to ensure safe, regular pathways for asylum-seekers to deliver on its 2030 Agenda commitments. Additionally, it should ensure that cooperation with non-EU countries on migration and displacement upholds all human rights. The EU should refrain from using ODA to pursue its interest of securing borders and managing migrant flows.

Adopt EU budgets that deliver for people and planet

Future EU budgets should be sustainability-proofed. Sustainable development should not be yet another line in the EU budget, but each and every euro spent by the EU budget should contribute to sustainable development. This means for example that the EU should do away with harmful subsidies, and safeguard its support to the countries and peoples most in need by increasing the share of Official Development Assistance in future budgets.

Inform and engage citizens in tracking progress

The EU often claims to be a global leader in sustainable development. Is this the case or plain lip service? The EU should ensure accountability and transparency to its citizens by reporting regularly on its progress towards sustainable development. The EU should also develop more meaningful ways of engaging with citizens and civil society while collecting feedback and designing new policies.



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