

**Friends of the Earth Malta
Future of Europe Workshop Demands List
4th May 2019**



THE EUROPE WE WANT

The foundation of the European Union is one of the most impressive peace projects in modern history. A region was created proclaiming human dignity, respect for human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its core values. Along with maintaining lasting peace among its members, the EU also brought a series of positive social and environmental changes to the region.

Despite this, many are now feeling that certain policies and decisions taken by the EU have unfortunately run contrary to its core values and have walked back some of the historical gains we fought for. People feel that the economic and financial interests of the wealthy are prioritised over the common good.

In short, people in Europe are being left behind and not everyone shares in the benefits of the Union. Recognising the challenges of the current situation in Europe, we, as citizens, should not limit ourselves in the debates on the Future of Europe to the question: "Do you want more or less Europe?" but focus on our needs for the future and our rights. The key question is: "What kind of Europe do we want?"

That is why Friends of the Earth Malta came up with a series of demands for Maltese MEPs following a workshop during which concerned members of the public aired their views on how to strengthen Europe's core ethical values and sustainable development: democracy and transparency, social and environmental justice, human rights, the rule of law, equality, and solidarity.

Food, agriculture and biodiversity

The EU has committed to halt biodiversity loss and end overfishing and deforestation by 2020. While limited progress has been made, plant and animal species continue to vanish at an alarming rate, mainly due to industrial farming and infrastructure development, as well as climate change. The EU must get serious about enforcing its nature, marine and invasive alien species laws, and implement, rather than revise, its framework water law. It must allocate enough resources from the EU budget to protect nature, transition from fisheries management to ocean conservation, radically reform its farming policy, reverse global deforestation, and support nature restoration.

Policy is imperative to produce healthier food and give fair prices for the European small scale and organic farmers. This should mean more environmental and nature protection, increased food sovereignty, regional farmers' markets, healthier food systems, less food waste and the halting of dumping in the Global South. The EU should prioritise the transition towards organic, small scale agriculture, and reforestation as key measures for fighting climate change.

Friends of the Earth Malta demands:

- More support for small scale farmers, young farmers, and for new farmers to enter the sector and be able to access arable land
- Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) alignment to all existing EU directives, such as the birds directive, water framework directive, emission reduction directive and others.
- A CAP that supports farmers to shift towards agricultural practices that are truly sustainable, no false solutions (e.g. GMOs)
- Shift the current agriculture and food focus from one of production to one which is based on fair and efficient redistributions.
- Strengthen agriculture workers unions - ensure that seasonal farm workers are not abused.
- Bans and restriction on neonics and other agrochemicals
- Encourage connection to nature through more funding to NGOs for education awareness campaign.
- Funds and sites allocated to green areas especially in urban areas to enhance ecosystem services (eg. community gardening)
- Better regulation and funding for Nature 2000 sites
- National and EU wide Pollinator strategy enacted.
- More transparency in lobbying.
- Policies that reflect the size of the country

Climate Change and Energy

Under the Paris Agreement on climate change, the EU agreed to aim to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. To do so, it must significantly increase its 2030 targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions, renewable energy and energy savings. The EU must ensure a full decarbonisation of its economy by the middle of the century. This means ending the use of coal, oil and gas, while steering away from harmful alternatives, such as unsustainable bioenergy, nuclear energy and geoengineering methods to reduce carbon emissions. And it must go hand in hand with completely divesting public funding from carbon pollution and investing in a sustainable economy.

Friends of the Earth Malta demands:

- Increase usage of renewable energies but without compromising environmental and social standards, especially in relation to battery use and generally the storage of energy.
- Promotion of wind energy at a small scale/household level (including research into noise issues). Invest further resources for research into large scale that can be placed on the sea bed.
- Setting up of a body attached to the court of justice to monitor that the EU 2030 standards are met.
- Implement policy coherence in a way that other policies do not harm climate change goals.
- Address the cultural and behavioral changes needed to bring about a carbon neutral society, especially through youth and students.
- More research and resources toward hydrogen, and energy storage systems that do not create a different set of environmental and social problems.

Waste and Resource Use

Europe's throwaway culture worsens social inequalities, threatens public health and depletes resources worldwide. Poor coordination between laws on chemicals, products and waste impedes the protection of material cycles from toxic chemicals. The EU needs coherent policies to prevent waste and promote the use of durable and repairable toxic-free goods by design. Hazardous substances should not survive in recycled products. This shift will result in cost savings, new jobs, healthier people and a safer environment.

Friends of the Earth Malta demands:

- Encourage reusable cups and bottles and avoid the trap of 'rebound effect' - for example, using plastic bottles because they are recycled
- Tackle the issue of food waste - The cost of food waste in the EU is estimated at €143 billion each year, equivalent to the annual operational budget of the EU.
- Support better understanding of the interactions of packaging, food production and waste and supply chains through European funds for research
- Avoid falling for bio-based or biodegradable plastics: Avoid the substitution of single-use plastics by bio-based and/or biodegradable single-use plastics which are still detrimental to the environment, and ensure that if biodegradable plastics are used, they are accurately labelled to indicate to the consumer where they can be composted since most require an industrial composter and cannot be disposed of in the typical compost bin at homes and gardens.
- Shift burden to producers rather than blaming the customers - EU should not allow countries to choose to achieve consumption reduction and certain EPR measures through voluntary agreements between industry and authorities
- Enact binding EU-wide target to reduce the consumption of food containers and cups.
- Boost incentives for reuse - Reuse market and repair shops; Swap Shops - to encourage swapping of clothes instead of throwing them away

Water

Apart from the being the most water poor country in the EU, Malta is listed as one of the top ten water poorest countries in the world alongside the likes of Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. With groundwater being the only natural source of potable freshwater in the Maltese Islands, over-extraction is severely depleting this limited resource. We believe that the extraction of groundwater should be heavily regulated to curb illegal practices, especially when it comes to agriculture, the use in industry (including beverage companies), commercial establishments, and privately owned swimming pools.

Friends of the Earth Malta demands:

- Member States to implement and not revise the Water Framework Directive (WFD) - The WFD obliges Member States to prevent deterioration and achieve good status for all of Europe's freshwater bodies by 2027 at the latest. The implementation of measures under the WFD will contribute to the objectives of the Nature Directives, if implementation is coordinated.
- Create EU wide standards for industrial water reuse and create a legal framework for it.

Transport

The Dieselgate scandal exposed the failings of the EU's efforts to reduce emissions from cars and trucks, but it also offers a unique opportunity to accelerate the transition to genuinely clean mobility. The next European Parliament should regulate to eliminate pollutants, noise and CO2 emissions, in particular by delivering a strategy that makes Europe a world leader in zero-emission and shared transportation powered by clean renewable electricity.

Friends of the Earth Malta demands:

- Provide an alternative transport system that would promote modal shift and avoid the use of private cars to reduce GHG emissions, especially through the use of economic instruments. Increase effective implementation of VRT.
- Give the streets back to people - Priority should be given to pedestrians.
- Regulate emissions from shipping and aviation sectors
- Free public transport initiatives