A fair Green Deal for all.
15 proposals to energise cities and regions

We, progressive locally and regionally elected politicians, firmly believe that tackling climate change and biodiversity loss isinextricably linked to combating social and territorial inequalities. Extreme weather events this summer have shown once again how climate change affects different regions, their citizens and local economies. Human-made global warming affects every aspect of our life: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the places we live in.

Air pollution alone claims the lives of nearly 300 000 Europeans prematurely each year, posing a particularly grave threat to the most vulnerable individuals.

Agriculture produces an overwhelming amount of ammonia emissions in the EU, damaging ecosystems and groundwater. At the same time, transitioning to more sustainable methods of food production places a heavy burden on farmers.

Housing is responsible for 36% of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions, while road traffic produces 40% of nitrogen oxide emissions across Europe, especially in urban areas and along busy streets. Our dependence on fossil fuels has led to increased energy and mobility poverty, which has a highly negative impact on the sustainable transition of buildings and transport.

We need to act urgently!

European Social Democrats initiated the European Green Deal, an ambitious 30-year project involving fundamental legislative and cultural changes to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, make the EU climate neutral by 2050 and secure our continent's energy and food supply. The European Green Deal has sparked an unprecedented legislative overhaul, not only by setting ambitious goals for the environment, biodiversity and agriculture, but also by addressing many societal challenges. Now it is time to implement the European Green Deal, using the multiplier effect of regional and local governments to mobilise all of society around it and ensure it brings positive social and distributional results to our societies across the EU's regions.

Progressive local and regional authorities are at the forefront of translating the EU's green objectives into reality on the ground, building climate-resilient livelihoods guided by the principle of active subsidiarity, fairness, social justice and territorial cohesion. Making the Green Deal an accessible and affordable solution for all must be a paramount priority for our political family in the upcoming EU term of 2024-2029 and drive Europe towards a framework for sustainable and inclusive well-being.

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As progressive locally and regionally elected politicians, we call for the implementation of the following 15 proposals at EU level:

1

Actively involve citizens, cities and regions in the green transition

Provide a new governance framework to safeguard the European Green Deal, actively involving citizens, cities and regions as key players in its implementation. The current energy and climate governance framework will not make it possible to achieve climate neutrality, as the main climate targets have been set at EU level while energy policy choices remain largely national prerogatives.

2

Boost green investments

New debt reduction targets constrain the green public investments needed to combat climate change and biodiversity loss. Because of insufficient public funding, the EU is at risk of failing to meet its 2030 climate change targets, the European Court of Auditors has warned. A reform of the EU's economic governance to support public and private investments in the green transition is therefore urgently needed.

3

Make full use of the opportunity for green investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility

Member States should make full use of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) for Green Deal-related investments. An extension of the timeframe for project implementation should be considered, following the model of regional policy.

4

Enhance people's skills to navigate the green and digital transition

Ensure that employers invest not only in new technologies but also in the human capital needed to make use of such technologies. The race is now on to equip people with the skills they need to successfully navigate the emerging workplace frontier in the green and digital transitions. We call for the creation of a social taxonomy in this context.

5

Ensure the right to breathe clean air

Speed up the deployment of the Zero Pollution Action Plan, accompanying the ambitious EU targets with suitably robust measures to support its effective implementation, and protect EU funds from being used to finance projects that should be the responsibility of the polluter. Citizens whose health is threatened by air pollution should have a stronger right to compensation when the rules are infringed and limits exceeded.

6

Promote the circular economy

Accelerate the transition from an extractive linear production system to a regenerative circular economy by driving the upskilling and social and technological innovation that are needed, promoting sustainable modes of production and consumption and leveraging the exemplary role of public authorities through a massive shift to circular and greener procurement rules.

7

Complete the Nature Restoration Law and reduce pesticides

The Commission's proposal for a Nature Restoration Law that aims to restore ecosystems, habitats and species across the EU's land and sea areas is under threat. Finalising this law before the end of the current legislature is absolutely essential. This battle goes together with our ambition to reduce the use and the risk of pesticides by 50% by 2030 and ensure consistent action to promote healthy soils and the use of PEST control.

8 Regulate agricultural markets

Ensure strong regulation of agricultural markets, including the constitution of stocks and fairer international trade agreements, in order to fight speculation and the inflation of food prices, which penalises the most disadvantaged Europeans and vulnerable consumers above all. Safeguard food security by ensuring the resilience of our sustainable food production and consumption.

9 Ensure accessibility of quality food

Ensure that future European policies are conducive to the development of a social security system for food to foster access to sustainable, healthy and affordable food for all in our regions and cities.

10 Reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Revise the CAP to develop frameworks to reinforce urban-rural cooperation in the field of food and agriculture and to strengthen local and regional food systems in order to improve the quality of food, the sustainability of agriculture, the quality of work in the agriculture sector and fair revenues for farmers, while ensuring access to farming land.

11 Make the Social Climate Fund work

An increase in the financial allocation to the Social Climate Fund in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) is needed to support vulnerable consumers and small businesses in overcoming energy and mobility poverty. The Social Climate Fund should be mainstreamed into cohesion policy and jointly managed with the regions. At the same time, the EU should refrain from financially supporting fossil fuel companies.

12 Increase access to affordable housing

Too many citizens are struggling with a housing cost overburden and housing insecurity due to the financialisation of housing that views housing as a commodity for trade and investment. Housing is a human right, recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined as Principle 10 of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Thus, greater ambition to increase access to affordable housing is required both in terms of State aid rules and regulations on speculative investing in housing.

13 Ensure decent housing

Ensure that the Renovation Wave improves the quality and affordability of housing across the EU and enable a human-centred urban planning. Supported by the European Responsible Housing Initiative, it should include the promotion of quality standards for housing in general and for social housing in particular. To promote sustainable urban environments and improve the future of our cities, policy-makers should pursue the densification of cities and the limitation of urban sprawl.

14 Eradicate energy poverty

Leverage the RePowerEU plan and the implementation of the FitFor55 package to continue speeding up the energy transition towards building a more decentralised and democratic energy system, which ensures sustainable, secure and affordable energy for all. Intensify investments in renewable energy and focus on the development of clean technologies, including renewable hydrogen. Initiatives such as the Local Energy Communities should be further supported as an instrument to fight energy poverty.

15 Make sustainable mobility accessible

Implement Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights by enforcing the right of all EU citizens to sustainable and affordable mobility as a basic service and establish a strategy to combat mobility poverty which is a growing problem in the EU. An indicator for the various Member States – jointly set-up with local and regional authorities – is required. This should bring together mobility challenges and energy poverty, to feed into and rethink the way we design and plan cities. Furthermore, we need to ensure subsidy schemes to help foster the uptake of electric vehicles in remote rural remote areas.