

Eleventh hour for the SDGs: A just and prosperous world is still within reach – what can Europe do next?

2024 Annual Monitoring Report



REAL DEAL is a community of people living in Europe who are taking action to build a new model of environmental citizenship for Europe; a model where Europeans are placed at the heart of the decision-making process, making a REAL DEAL for both people and the planet.

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Project Summary

REAL DEAL (Reshaping European Advances towards green Leadership Through Deliberative Approaches and Learning) aims to reshape the active participation of citizens and stakeholders around the **European Green Deal (EGD)**. The transdisciplinary project brings together researchers and practitioners of deliberative democracy from a wide range of disciplines, including environmental rights and the law of public participation, ethics and responsible innovation, gender studies and ecofeminism, psychology, geography, urban planning, and sustainability studies. It includes **the EU's largest civil society networks** advocating on the **environment, climate, sustainable development, local democracy**, and the **European movement**. It teams up with youth, climate, social justice and women's organisations, SMEs, universities and research institutes, mobilising networks with thousands of **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**, uniting millions of citizens and activating contacts to thousands of policymakers. In a large co-creation exercise, REAL DEAL is currently developing, testing, and validating innovative tools and formats to propel deliberative democracy to the next level. Its innovations are being tested at citizens' assemblies for the transition in at least 13 countries. The project also examines pan-European formats ranging from digital deliberation through our online platform www.realdeal.eu to in-person processes such as an Assembly for a Gender-Just Green Deal and a pan-European Youth Climate Assembly. REAL DEAL co-creates a comprehensive protocol for meaningful citizens' participation and deliberation to work towards the objectives of the EGD. It aims to validate recommendations on how to design such processes and how they can be applied by European institutions, Member States, and Civil Society alike. Gender equality is embedded into the project's DNA. It pays specific attention to the leave-no-one-behind principle, fostering the engagement of disenfranchised groups that are disproportionately burdened by environmental damage. REAL DEAL strives to develop a new model of environmental citizenship across Europe.

The Civil Society Forum for Sustainability: Shaping the European Green Deal

This 2024 Annual Monitoring Report is produced in the framework of the **Civil Society Forum for Sustainability (CSF)**. The CSF was launched in June 2022 within the framework of the **REAL DEAL** project and is co-organised by **SOLIDAR**, the **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)** and **SDG Watch Europe** in collaboration with **Trilateral Research (TRI)**, **Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (ASviS)**, **Climate Action Network Europe (CAN E)**, **Association des Agences de Démocratie Locale (ALDA)**, **European Movement International (EMI)**, **Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS)**, **Nyt Europa (NE)**, **Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)** and **Youth Environment Europe (YEE)**.

The Civil Society Forum for Sustainability serves as an **informal agora** for discussing democratic participation in relation to the topics, policies, and processes of the European Green Deal (EGD). Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) with diverse backgrounds, including some of Europe's largest civil society networks, have joined the CSF. The main objective of the CSF is to provide a space to discuss, build synergies and deliberate on how organised stakeholders or civil society organisations with different interests and concerns can collectively contribute to achieving the goals of the EGD at member state as well as EU level through processes of civil dialogue, and in a way that benefits all of society. The CSF meets three times a year to provide **spaces for collaboration** between CSOs and other key stakeholders from all over Europe working in **the areas of the EGD** and **participatory democracy**.

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Introduction

The **European Green Deal (EGD)** is one of the broadest and most ambitious policy frameworks of the European Union, aiming to transform the EU into the first climate-neutral region of the world by 2050 and to achieve the objectives set in the **2030 Agenda** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

In an era marked by overlapping economic, political, and social crises, it is crucial that bold transformations address the needs of society as a whole, ensuring that the costs of climate action do not disproportionately burden the least privileged. While the newly elected European Commission's leadership reaffirms the EU's commitment to a **clean, just, and competitive future**, the European Green Deal – initially envisioned as a comprehensive roadmap for a sustainable and climate-neutral Europe – has increasingly shifted its focus towards **industrial competitiveness and economic growth**. The emphasis on industrial competitiveness and strategic autonomy has overshadowed commitments to inclusivity and a "just transition." Marginalised communities and civil society organisations, critical stakeholders in achieving systemic change, are increasingly sidelined as the discourse centres on large-scale industrial investments. As the EGD pivots towards industrial policies, concerns grow that its broader climate and biodiversity goals might be deprioritised. Industrial development often involves trade-offs that can negatively impact land use, ecosystems, and local communities, potentially undermining a more holistic vision for people and nature.

A **deep transformation** of our economies and societies towards climate neutrality and sustainability requires setting up meaningful and effective processes for **participatory and deliberative policymaking**. Such profound change hinges on the active engagement and meaningful participation of citizens, enabling them to shape and contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and strategies aligned with the EGD.

An assessment of civic participation in the EGD and the next steps for the European Union comes at a crucial time. As of December 2024, as the new European Commission gets underway, the EU is undergoing significant transitions in its leadership and policy direction, with a renewed commitment to sustainability and the SDGs and a strong focus on security, growth, competitiveness and climate change across its agenda for 2024-2029. The **European parliamentary elections** which took place in June 2024 set the course for how the European Union's and its people's future will take shape and direction in the hands of the newly elected European Parliament (EP). Under President Ursula von der Leyen's second term, the European Commission prioritises a free and democratic Europe, enhanced security and defence, economic growth and sustainable prosperity, industrial competitiveness, and social fairness. The new Presidency Trio of the Council of the European Union, commencing on January 1, 2025, comprises Poland, Denmark, and Cyprus with Poland naming **security and energy** as EU priorities during its first term of the Presidency.

In the Commission's first 100 days, several initiatives are expected. These include the Clean Industrial Deal, a White Paper on Europe's Defence, a Vision for Agriculture and Food, Youth policy dialogues, AI factories initiatives, and pre-enlargement policy reviews.

Several current EU policy initiatives are pivotal for CSOs engaged in climate action and sustainable development and highlight the critical role of CSOs in driving these transformations – especially so with the shift towards an industrial deal rather than a green deal. Policy developments such as the Fit for 55 Package, the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM), the Net-Zero Industry Act, or the European Climate Law offer CSOs multiple avenues to influence and contribute to the EU's climate and sustainability agenda, ensuring that the transition is just, inclusive, and effective.

CSOs play a crucial role in advocating for and monitoring the implementation of these policies to ensure they are equitable and effective. Emerging initiatives such as the European Democracy Shield, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP), the Civil Society Facility (CSF), the Digital Services Act (DSA) or the EU Support to Civil Society in External Actions highlight the EU's recognition of civil society's vital role in fostering democratic governance and societal well-being. CSOs must continue to actively engage and shape these initiatives to enhance their impact and contribute to the EU's policy landscape. By advocating for **democratic safeguards** and ensuring that **policy frameworks remain responsive and equitable**, CSOs can strengthen public trust and foster greater collaboration across societal sectors. Integrating these efforts into the broader policy landscape amplifies the capacity of participatory approaches to deliver transformative and lasting impacts. The extent to which civil society will be granted meaningful influence in shaping these initiatives, however, remains uncertain, as attacks on civic space and reasoned democratic debate increase, highlighting the need for continued vigilance and advocacy to ensure that voices of the marginalised are truly heard.

A **key element** of legitimate policy making is enabling the **meaningful participation and deliberation of citizens**, amplifying their voices, and ensuring they are heard and reflected in the process. For policies at all levels to be able to tackle real issues and propose effective solutions, citizens and their representatives must be involved through all steps of the policy-making cycle, from agenda-setting to monitoring and reformulation.

In order to ensure the development of a comprehensive EU policy framework for a **socio-ecological transition** within the EGD that puts living species at its core, addresses the needs of disadvantaged groups, reduces inequalities and ensures a sustainable environment, we as CSOs have been fostering civil and social dialogue throughout the political life of the EGD, as crucial means to guarantee both the appropriateness and the acceptance of transformative and impactful environmental and social policy.

In this context, and against the backdrop of current developments of shrinking civic space and backsliding on the 2030 Agenda, it is urgent to provide **a space for collective action** where CSOs can gather to assess the participatory dimension of the EGD, to be able to build on their synergies to influence policies and share good practices and concerns. Only then will it be possible to reshape and rethink civil dialogue to strengthen citizens' and stakeholders' active participation and deliberation in the **green and just transition for all**.

What are the current barriers to achieving the SDGs?

Despite the European Commission remaining committed to the 2030 Agenda, a complex interplay of global challenges is hindering progress toward achieving the SDGs by 2030. Europe, as a global leader for sustainable development, has a responsibility to rise to the challenge and implement as much as possible of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda in the 2024-2029 mandate. These challenges, interconnected and mutually reinforcing, can be broadly categorised in four areas: **global instability, economic crises, poor policy coherence and implementation, and ecological overshoot.**

Regarding global instability, the world is witnessing a **surge in violent conflicts and rising geopolitical tensions**, which directly impede SDG progress and divert resources away from development objectives. Ongoing conflicts, including but not limited to those in Ukraine, Palestine, and Sudan, have resulted in an unprecedented 120 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. These situations not only lead to loss of life and unfathomable human suffering but also disrupt livelihoods, undermine social cohesion, and exacerbate inequalities.

The escalating **climate crisis** poses a significant threat to sustainable development, leading to more frequent and intense climate shocks such as droughts, floods, and extreme weather events. These events disproportionately impact vulnerable communities and undermine progress across multiple SDGs, including poverty eradication (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), and sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).

Regarding the interlinked **economic crises**, wages and welfare have been stagnating and regressing in real terms for decades for many. Combined with a recent cost-of-living and energy price crisis, this further hinders progress on the SDGs. Major exacerbating factors include the COVID-19 pandemic, trade tensions, rising debt burdens in the Global South, and geopolitical zero-sum games and resource scrambles – all contributing to economic injustice as well as net resource and financial flows from the Global South to the Global North. The pandemic, in particular, has had a devastating impact, pushing millions into poverty and hunger, reversing progress on health indicators, and disrupting education systems.

The current **global financial architecture** is ill-equipped to address the scale of investment needed to achieve the SDGs and needs bold reforms. Developing countries face a staggering \$4 trillion annual investment gap, with over half required for the energy transition alone. This funding gap reflects a chronic shortfall in investments since 2015, exacerbated by the global instability and neoliberal economic doctrine. There is a need to urgently reform the global financial system to make it more equitable and supportive of the needs of the Global South. This includes increasing Official Development Assistance, reforming multilateral development banks, debt jubilees, instituting global taxation mechanisms and wealth taxes, ending fossil fuel subsidies and cancelling existing debt burdens.

While progress has been made in improving data availability for SDG monitoring, **significant data gaps remain at EU level.** Indicators at EU levels still lack the ability to track the full impact of EU policies on the Global South, whilst at global level, only 51% of indicators have good trend data (at least two data points since 2015) in more than half of all countries, making it difficult to accurately track progress and identify areas requiring urgent attention. Even if good data exists, action to

remedy these gaps are lacking. These gaps are particularly evident in areas like gender equality, climate action, and peace, justice, and strong institutions, hindering evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions. There is a need for continued investment in national and supranational statistical systems, innovation in data collection methods, and integration of diverse data sources, including from scientists and civil society, to address these challenges.

Overarching strategies are lacking at national and regional levels to effectively integrate the SDGs into policy frameworks. This often leads to fragmented approaches, with policies being developed and implemented in silos without considering their potential impacts on other SDGs. This lack of policy coherence can undermine progress on the Goals, as policies intended to benefit one area may inadvertently have negative consequences in another. Whilst the European Green Deal made strides in decarbonisation and with bold legislative ambitions, its primary focus remained on economic growth without adequately addressing social justice and global sustainability considerations. The Civil Society Forum recommends that the EU should adopt a more holistic approach that integrates social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

The **absence of robust accountability mechanisms** to track progress and hold stakeholders responsible for their commitments represents another significant barrier. Without effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting frameworks, it becomes difficult to assess the effectiveness of policies and programs, identify areas where course correction is needed, and ensure that governments and the whole of society are working collectively toward achieving the SDGs. The EU must establish clear lines of responsibility, develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems, and foster transparency and public participation in the implementation process.

In addition, **global consumption and production patterns** remain largely unsustainable, putting immense pressure on the planet's resources and undermining progress on several SDGs. Key issues to be addressed by the EU include food waste, resource depletion, and pollution. Addressing these will require a fundamental shift towards more sustainable practices, including promoting circular economy models, adopting resource-efficient production technologies, and reducing demand side factors. There is a need to move beyond a focus on economic growth and to introduce material reduction targets at EU level instead, as well as embracing an economy that prioritizes social and environmental wellbeing alongside economic prosperity.

Civil society also acknowledge the existence of **unequal power dynamics** in global partnerships, often stemming from historical injustices and legacies of colonialism. These power imbalances can undermine the effectiveness of partnerships for sustainable development by privileging the interests of more powerful actors while marginalizing the voices and needs of less powerful ones. Civil society call for a more equitable and inclusive approach to global partnerships, based on mutual respect, transparency, and a genuine commitment to addressing power asymmetries.

Addressing these overarching challenges requires a collective global effort, underpinned by political will, strong leadership, and a renewed commitment to multilateralism. There is a great urgency for Europe to act and time is running out to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Bold and transformative actions are needed across all levels of society to shift the world onto a more sustainable and equitable path.

A closer look at the Methodology of the Annual Monitoring Reports

As part of the **Civil Society Forum for Sustainability** within the framework of the REAL DEAL project, three annual monitoring reports on the EGD and the SDGs have been produced. The annual monitoring reports present **civil society's evaluation of progress** toward the objectives laid out by the EGD and the SDGs, including aspects of sustainable development not fully addressed by the EGD. Each report provides concrete recommendations to advance these goals.

To date, two reports have been published and can be accessed via the following links:

- [First Report](#): *"The People's Green Deal: Citizens' Participation in Europe's Sustainability Agenda"*
- [Second Report](#): *"How far is Europe from achieving the SDGs?"*

The first report laid the groundwork by analysing the EU's current approach to **inclusive and transparent participatory processes** in environmental policy making, through an assessment of four key processes. The second report expanded this perspective, providing an independent assessment from civil society of Europe's progress towards the SDGs in the context of the 2023 European Voluntary Review.

Together, these reports form the basis for the third monitoring report, "Eleventh hour for the SDGs: A just and prosperous world is still within reach – what can Europe do next?" This report synthesises key insights from the work of the Civil Society Forum, evaluates progress following the 2024 European Parliament elections, and proposes a forward-looking strategy for advancing the SDGs and the EGD through enhanced **civil society participation** and **policy coherence for sustainable development**. It explores the role of civil society and citizens in EGD implementation, identifies challenges in achieving the SDGs, examines the promises made by European parties in their political manifestoes regarding SDG implementation, and highlights ongoing gaps and shortcomings. The report concludes with 10 clear demands from civil society to the European Commission for the 2024-2029 political mandate, with a spotlight on SDG implementation and citizens' participation.

Before diving into the in-depth analysis of the third monitoring report, the following sections provide a summary of the previously published reports.

Assessing the EU's participatory mechanisms for environmental policy making: ["The People's Green Deal: Citizens' Participation in Europe's Sustainability Agenda"](#)

The first monitoring report assesses four participatory processes of Europe's environmental policy making and the EGD, namely, the Conference on the Future of Europe, the Just Transition Platform, the European Climate Pact, and Citizens' Assemblies at National Level that have engaged citizens and CSOs in shaping Europe's sustainability policies. This collective report provides a comprehensive analysis of these initiatives by highlighting positive elements and challenges and providing actionable recommendations to enhance future participatory mechanisms. Building on the insights from the [Gap Analysis of the European Green Deal report](#), which outlines the gaps and shortcomings of the EGD in achieving the SDGs and highlights the limitations of citizen involvement identified during the first edition of the forum, this report aims to contribute to a stronger and more meaningful participatory approach in achieving Europe's sustainability goals.

The report focuses on the role of citizen and civil society participation in shaping and advancing the EGD through deliberative processes. It examines the four key participatory instruments mentioned above, each of which has been a crucial component of the EU's efforts to include citizens and CSOs in environmental policymaking and was hence worthy of thorough analysis. The Civil Society Forum assessed whether the REAL DEAL project's five criteria for effective participatory processes (**fairness, competence, transparency, efficiency, and legitimacy**) were met within the examined instruments.

The monitoring report highlights critical deficits in the EU's participatory instruments: **Structural barriers**, including inadequate representation of marginalised groups and civil society, hinder meaningful engagement, while **technical jargon and expert dominance** further exclude diverse perspectives. **Transparency issues**, such as insufficient information sharing and opaque decision-making, undermine trust, while inefficient processes, rushed timelines, and weak monitoring mechanisms hamper productive discussions. Most critically, the **lack of binding outcomes and institutional follow-up** erodes the legitimacy of these initiatives, underscoring the urgent need for reforms to strengthen participatory democracy and ensure the EU's commitments to a sustainable future are realised.

The civil society recommendations regarding the EU's participatory mechanisms for environmental and social policymaking underscore the need for improving **citizen and CSOs' engagement, strengthening institutional support for participatory democracy**, and ensuring that sustainability policies are shaped through **inclusive and transparent** decision-making processes. The first monitoring report concludes that citizen participation is essential to achieving the EGD's ambitious goals and highlights key recommendations for improving participatory mechanisms in areas such as **inclusive participation, transparency, equality, institutional support, and efficiency and legitimacy**.

Independent Civil Society Spotlight Report: “How far is Europe from achieving the SDGs?”

The independent civil society spotlight report is acting as a shadow spotlight report on the European Commission’s European Voluntary Review process conducted in 2023. A collaborative effort by the SDG Watch Europe network, the report assesses the EU’s SDG progress and explains why the EU’s SDG reporting creates an illusion of sustainability, flagging up serious gaps and challenges in the implementation of the SDGs. It puts forward concrete policy proposals, bringing them to life with real stories, and offers key recommendation that the EU, with some political will, can easily implement to create the transformation we need.

The report is structured around the five ‘P’s’ or pillars of the 2030 Agenda: **People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnerships**. Civil society representatives analysed these themes, identifying the state of play, challenges, gaps, and opportunities to strengthen the EU’s implementation of the SDGs.

The report urges the EU to lead by example by aligning its policies with sustainability and equity goals to transform its governance, economy, and societal systems in alignment with the SDGs. Failure to act decisively, the report points out, risks undermining the entire sustainable development agenda. It also provides specific recommendations from civil society for policy improvements and greater accountability regarding the **EU’s SDG strategy, wellbeing economy, material footprint reduction, social justice, improved monitoring, and policy coherence**.

The civil society recommendations of the spotlight report emphasise the need for a bold, costed EU strategy to implement the SDGs, with **clear, measurable targets, structured dialogue mechanisms, and adequate financing**. It advocates for replacing GDP with wellbeing indicators to guide progress and decision-making, prioritising sustainable and inclusive practices. The report calls for a commitment to **reducing the EU’s material footprint by 70%** by 2050, focusing on dematerialisation and equitable ecological approaches. **Social justice** is highlighted through the promotion of progressive taxation, the elimination of harmful subsidies, and prioritising redistributive policies to combat inequality and ensure inclusivity. It stresses the importance of creating **innovative, participatory monitoring systems** to address gaps and trade-offs in SDG implementation. Lastly, the report urges for **policy coherence**, ensuring sustainability principles are embedded across all EU policies, considering their social, environmental, and intersectional impacts.

“Eleventh hour for the SDGs: A just and prosperous world is still within reach – what can Europe do next?”

The third annual monitoring report at hand provides a mid-term and forward-looking analysis of **Europe’s implementation** of the SDGs, assessing the EGD’s contribution to achieving these goals within the EU and in other countries. It monitors SDG progress based on the commitments of the main political parties following the 2024 European Parliament elections and integrates civil society recommendations from recent **Civil Society Forum for Sustainability** meetings. The report focuses

on the EU's role in implementing the SDGs during the **2024–2029 mandate**, offering a civil society assessment of the current state of play alongside actionable conclusions and recommendations for policymakers. Contributions from civil society partners are included to ensure comprehensive representation of SDG priorities, including demands for the **future of citizens' deliberation** and the EGD.

The report draws insights from **two key civil society forums** held in 2024: one preceding the European parliamentary elections in March and one following the elections in June, highlighting how civil society evaluated pre-election manifestos and formulated actionable demands post-election to bridge political promises with policy realities. These forums shaped civil society's evaluation and recommendations, which are central to the report's findings and provide critical guidance for aligning EU policies with sustainable development and **citizen priorities**.

2024 European Parliament Elections and the role of Civil Society

In 2024, the CSF hosted two forums dedicated to the European parliamentary elections as an important **participatory tool** to foster accountability and align political strategies with the priorities of civil society and sustainable development.

The 2024 European Parliament elections marked a crucial opportunity for civil society organisations to influence Europe's sustainability agenda and drive progress on the SDGs. As these elections introduced a new European Commission for the 2024–2029 mandate, CSOs played a vital role in ensuring that political commitments aligned with the transformative objectives of the SDGs and the EGD. **The 7th and 8th Civil Society Forums for Sustainability** were instrumental in the critical period surrounding the EP elections, providing key platforms for CSOs to evaluate political commitments, articulate priorities, and strategise actionable demands to shape the EU's policy agenda for the years ahead.

In March 2024, the **7th Civil Society Forum for Sustainability** brought together 80 CSOs from Europe and beyond under the title "Civil Society Organisations Assess European Political Group Manifestos for a Sustainable Future" to critically evaluate the promises outlined in the political manifestos of five major European political groups – **PES, PEL, EGP, ALDE, and EPP**. The primary focus of this pre-election forum was to ensure that their manifestos align with civil society and public priorities for a green and just transition, the SDGs, and the 2030 Agenda.

The forum employed a rigorous SDG traffic-light scorecard methodology to assess the manifestos through three thematic lenses: **Social Justice, Good Governance, and Planetary Boundaries**. This

evaluation served as a barometer of political will, measuring political promises against specific SDG targets and indicators to reveal the strengths, gaps, and inconsistencies in the commitments made by political groups ahead of the elections. The resulting comprehensive SDG Scoreboard provided a snapshot of how well political groups aligned with civil society priorities for a green and just transition. It offered critical insights to CSOs while encouraging political groups to refine their visions in line with these priorities, setting the stage for future engagement and advocacy.

Building on this momentum, the **8th Civil Society Forum**, titled “Civil Society Organisations demand a socially and environmentally just EU Green Deal,” convened in June 2024 just after the elections and brought together 40 CSOs and experts from different backgrounds to reflect on the election outcomes and strategise for the upcoming 2024–2029 EU mandate. The forum served as a platform to assess the alignment between manifesto commitments and civil society priorities and develop structured demands for the new European Commission.

Discussions spanned five key dimensions – **Social, Environmental, Economic, Participatory, and Global** – and addressed barriers and challenges to inclusive policymaking. This forum also presented preliminary findings from citizen deliberation research under the REAL DEAL project, further grounding the discussions in evidence-based insights. It culminated in ten actionable recommendations aimed at holding the EU accountable for its sustainability commitments and ensuring an equitable transition under the new mandate.

By linking the pre-election manifesto analysis to post-election demands, these forums underscored the vital connection between political commitments and civil society priorities. The analysis of political manifestos in March, ahead of the elections, served as a benchmark for assessing progress and identifying gaps in sustainability governance, while the June forum after the elections transformed these insights into actionable demands for the incoming European Commission. This report aims to bring these results together into a coherent whole, setting a clear direction for the EU to implement the SDGs in the 2024-2029 mandate. Through this synthesis, it underscores the essential role of CSOs in bridging political promises with practical, people-centred solutions for a sustainable and inclusive future.

What did Europe commit to in its election manifestos for the SDGs?

Pre-Election Engagement: “Civil Society Organisations Assess European Political Group Manifestos for a Sustainable Future”

The 7th edition of the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability, held ahead of the European Parliament elections, provided a unique platform for CSOs to critically assess and engage with political party manifestos and their commitment to a green and just transition. Five key European political groups – **European People's Party (EPP)**, **Party of European Socialists (PES)**, **Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)**, **European Green Party (EGP)**, and **Party of the European Left (PEL)** – were evaluated against the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda based on their manifestos. A comprehensive analysis was conducted with the assistance of facilitators to assess the alignment of political parties with SDGs on specific targets and with civil society's priorities for a green and just transition based on their manifestos.

One target and one indicator were chosen for each of the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and **169 targets**. The chosen targets were identified based on their relevance to civil society and people's priority for a green and just transition and the 2030 Agenda. The **manifestos** of the above-mentioned political groups were carefully reviewed by the REAL DEAL project partners, together with members of the SDG Watch Europe Steering Group. Excerpts from the parties' manifestos were selected that reflected their positions on the predetermined targets of each SDG.

CSOs assessed the manifestos using a methodology adapted from WECF's “Ecofeminist Scorecard,” focusing on three thematic areas: **Planetary Boundaries** (SDG 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15), **Social Justice** (SDG 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10), and **Good Governance** (SDG 2, 9, 11, 16, 17). This approach involved evaluating the manifestos against specific SDG targets and indicators, scoring them as **committed**, **partially committed**, or **not committed**. The specific targets and indicators are explained in section 4.1.2. - Summary and analysis of each SDG based on the scoreboard.

The preparatory work involved selecting political groups, relevant SDG targets, and thematic areas, followed by a review of political manifestos for alignment with these targets and civil society priorities. In the learning spaces, participants were organised into thematic groups, where they scored manifesto excerpts using interactive tools based on commitment levels: committed (green), partially committed (orange), not committed (red), or no data (grey). Group discussions facilitated collective evaluation, allowing participants to refine their assessments and add explanatory

comments on party performance relative to SDG targets, ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive assessment.

The results were compiled into a **Civil Society Scoreboard**, ranking the parties based on their commitment to sustainable development (see table below).

Rank	Political group	Assessment	SDGs Committed	SDGs Partially Committed
1	European Green Party (EGP)	Majority committed	15	2
2	Party of the European Left (PEL)	Majority committed or partially committed	12	3
3	Party of European Socialists (PES)	Majority committed or partially committed	1	13
4	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE)	Majority committed or not partially committed	0	8
5	European People's Party (EPP)	Majority committed or not committed	0	3

Highlights of the rankings according to the Civil Society Scoreboard

- **European Green Party (EGP)** emerged as the leader, with a majority of commitments aligning with SDG goals, particularly on climate action and social justice.
- **Party of the European Left (PEL)** showed strong partial commitments, focusing on systemic changes toward social and environmental goals but lacking some specificity.
- **Party of European Socialists (PES)** displayed partial commitment and moderate efforts but lacked comprehensive approaches, particularly in addressing systemic inequities, showing room for improvement in inclusivity and systemic reforms.
- **ALDE and EPP:** Scored lowest, with ALDE showing minimal commitment and EPP demonstrating significant gaps in critical areas like climate and social equity, particularly on social and environmental justice.

Summary and analysis of each SDG based on the scoreboard

SDG 1: No Poverty. Target 1.3 and Indicator 1.3.1

PEL advocates for housing access but lacks a comprehensive poverty alleviation strategy. EGP emphasizes universal basic income yet lacks clarity on social protection. PES prioritizes employment

protections but overlooks broader needs. **ALDE** and **EPP** lack detailed plans for poverty reduction, requiring stronger commitments.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger. Target 2.1 and Indicator 2.1.1

EGP leads with inclusive, rights-based approaches. **PEL** and **PES** are partially committed while **PEL** focuses on agroecology but neglects governance. **PES** targets production without addressing rights. **ALDE** and **EPP** lack concrete hunger strategies, emphasizing short-term measures.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being. Target 3.8 and Indicator 3.8.1

EGP prioritizes discrimination-free healthcare. **PES** supports healthcare workers but neglects mental health. **PEL** lacks specificity, while **ALDE** and **EPP** fail to address discrimination, mental health, and universal healthcare access comprehensively.

SDG 4: Quality Education. Target 4.7 and Indicator 4.7.1

EGP champions public education and anti-racism but needs clearer plans. **PEL** emphasizes higher education while neglecting non-formal programs. **PES**, **ALDE**, and **EPP** show limited commitment, focusing on skills or economic priorities over holistic education.

SDG 5: Gender Equality. Target 5.5 and Indicator 5.5.1

EGP is the most comprehensive with intersectionality and a feminist foreign policy. **PEL**, **PES**, **ALDE**, and **EPP** offer limited approaches, often neglecting overlapping discrimination and specific measures to ensure equity.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. Target 6.1

EGP demonstrates strong commitment to water access. **PEL** and **PES** are partially committed, focusing on management but lacking comprehensive strategies for equitable access. **ALDE** and **EPP** show minimal engagement, offering vague mentions without actionable plans.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy. Target 7.1 and Indicator 7.1.1

EGP shows strong commitment by linking energy consumption to social aspects. **PEL** and **PES** are partially committed, offering insufficient and unconvincing green energy strategies. **ALDE** and **EPP** overlook energy poverty with **EPP** offering vague language on green energy and lacking clear actions. **ALDE** is not committed, focusing on nuclear energy and over-relying on technology.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. Target 8.5 and Indicator 8.5.1

EGP stands out with systemic proposals and detailed commitments. **PEL** partially commits, emphasising economic system change but still focusing on economic growth. **PES** addresses key issues but lacks depth, especially on working conditions, while **ALDE** fails to address decent work entirely, and **EPP** focuses narrowly on growth and competitiveness, neglecting worker well-being and workplace conditions.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Target 9.1 and Indicator 9.1.2

EGP leads with green infrastructure and sustainable energy but lacks digital focus. **PEL** supports digital inclusion for marginalised groups but neglects infrastructure and governance. **PES** addresses public services but overlooks transborder infrastructure and governance. **ALDE** partially commits to

sustainable infrastructure and technology but neglects social measures. **EPP** offers vague decarbonization plans without concrete solutions.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. Target 10.7 and Indicator 10.7.2

PEL and **EGP** show strong commitment, advocating for fair asylum systems, safe migration routes, and dismantling Frontex. **PES** partially commits, supporting integration but avoiding radical reforms. **ALDE** and **EPP** lack commitment and exacerbate inequalities with militarised migration policies.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Target 11.3 and Indicator 11.3.2

EGP is the most committed but needs stronger support for rural communities. **PES** and **EPP** partially commit, with vague proposals and limited focus on housing and transport. **ALDE** is not committed, neglecting civil society participation and urban challenges. **PEL** provides no substantial data or proposals.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Target 12b

EGP shows strong commitment with clear goals for an inclusive green transition. **PEL** and **PES** lack global considerations for global ecological footprints. **ALDE** remains partially committed, vague and exclusionary and **EPP** focuses on material extraction neglecting social and ecological justice.

SDG 13: Climate Action. Target 13.2 and Indicators 13.2.1 and 13.2.2

EGP leads with ambitious, socially just climate goals. **PES** is partially committed, offering vague measures and overemphasizing digitalization. **ALDE** falls short, focusing on technology without systemic change. **PEL** and **EPP** are not committed, lacking concrete actions and prioritizing other concerns over climate.

SDG 14: Life Below Water. 14.1 and Indicator 14.1.1

EGP shows strong commitment with clear goals for addressing maritime-related issues. **PES** is partially committed but vague. **PEL**, **ALDE**, and **EPP** are not committed, offering insufficient or no concrete actions on biodiversity and maritime crises.

SDG 15: Life on Land. Target 15.1 and Indicator 15.1.1

EGP provides actionable restoration goals. **PES** and **ALDE** are partially committed, overemphasizing agriculture while neglecting broader restoration needs. **PEL** offers limited ideas without concrete measures. **EPP** is not committed, addressing only minor fixes without tackling systemic issues.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Target 16.7 and Indicator 16.7.1

EGP leads with a detailed approach to participatory governance, inclusivity, and rights protection. **PEL**, **PES**, and **ALDE** partially commit, advocating security or institutional reforms but lacking clear strategies for inclusive participation. **EPP** focuses on NATO alliances while neglecting responsive and participatory governance.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. Target 17.14 and Indicator 17.14.1

EGP shows strong commitment with detailed strategies for policy coherence, trade reform, and green investment. **PEL** is partially committed, focusing on social cohesion but lacking concrete

mechanisms. **PES** makes general commitments without ambitious measures. **ALDE** and **EPP** are not committed, prioritizing trade while omitting clear sustainable development mechanisms.

What we learned from assessing political manifestos

The pre-election analysis was instrumental in evaluating the alignment of five key European political groups, namely the EPP, PES, ALDE, EGP, and PEL, with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. By adopting a **systematic approach**, the 7th edition of the forum ensured a rigorous and transparent assessment, producing actionable recommendations. Facilitators guided the process, ensuring a thorough and transparent analysis that not only assessed the political manifestos but also reflected civil society's priorities for a more sustainable future.

The forum's key outcome, the **Civil Society Scoreboard** served as a critical policy tool, fostering accountability and encouraging alignment with civil society priorities ahead of the European elections. It provided an insightful analysis of party manifestos and their alignment with the SDGs, highlighting strengths and gaps across SDG targets, particularly in areas like inclusive public participation, gender equality, and post-growth economic strategies. By offering actionable recommendations, the Scoreboard facilitated informed decision-making for voters, policymakers, and stakeholders ahead of the European elections.

The analysis revealed a broad but uneven commitment to the SDGs among European political parties with **EGP** demonstrating the strongest alignment with SDGs, particularly in areas of climate action and social justice, and a strong dedication to 16 of 17 SDGs, while others, such as **ALDE** and **EPP**, stayed far behind. **PEL** and **PES** exhibited partial commitments, indicating areas for improvement in their policy proposals. **PEL** came in second with mixed full and partial commitments to 12 SDGs and partial commitment to 3. **PES** showed mostly partial commitments, fully committing to 2 SDGs. In contrast, **ALDE** remained mostly uncommitted or partially committed, and **EPP** showed minimal engagement, both lacking concrete strategies and neglecting systemic issues while often undermining holistic approaches to sustainable development. Their minimal commitment to key SDG targets raised concerns about their capacity to drive the **green and just transition** needed for Europe's future ahead of the elections.

Given the outcomes of the 2024 European Parliament elections, the findings from the manifesto evaluations conducted by CSOs become even more pertinent. While the EPP maintained its position as the largest group in the European Parliament, pro-EU centrist, liberal, social democrat, and environmentalist parties suffered **significant setbacks**, with the European Greens losing one third of their seats and anti-EU right-wing populist parties making notable gains. This change has implications for the European Union's policy direction, particularly concerning **climate action**, **social justice**, and the **green transition**. The rise of hard-right groups may influence the EU's approach to sustainability and inclusivity, potentially challenging the progress made toward the SDGs.

Key concerns raised by civil society point to critical gaps in the political manifestos of many parties, such as the absence of an **intersectional approach**, vague commitments to **global partnerships and good governance**, and inadequate mechanisms for **inclusive public participation**, particularly at the local level. These shortcomings reflect a persistent gap between political rhetoric and meaningful

action, most notably regarding **SDG 5** (Gender Equality) and adherence to the **Istanbul Convention**. Additionally, the lack of post-growth strategies for systemic economic transformation further exposed the need for a stronger focus on actionable policies.

These critiques voiced before the elections set the stage for **a broader and more urgent conversation post-election** about the future of Europe's green and just transition, emphasising the vital role of civil society in holding political groups accountable and in advocating for a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable policy framework that addresses these pressing concerns.

What should Europe do next?

After the elections: “Civil Society Organisations demand a socially and environmentally just EU Green Deal”

The **8th Civil Society Forum** set out to develop a memorandum for the EU on advancing citizens' deliberation and the EGD to drive a green and socially just transition. Participants examined barriers, challenges, lessons learned, and good practices from CSOs' engagement with EGD processes. They also analysed the findings of EU-level citizens' deliberations to understand public expectations for the EGD, developed CSO recommendations for enhancing future citizens' deliberation and the EGD, and fostered collaboration, dialogue, and advocacy strategies.

Sessions were structured around **five thematic learning spaces** – **Social, Environmental, Participatory, Economic, and Global dimensions** – designed to facilitate interactive discussions, foster targeted dialogue on sustainability and governance, and develop actionable demands. These dimensions, informed by insights from previous forums, offered a comprehensive approach to addressing the SDGs, the EGD, and related challenges. Participants engaged in sessions focused on Social and Environmental dimensions on the first day, followed by Economic, Participatory, and Global on the second. The forum also provided insights into the **REAL DEAL project's research** on citizen deliberation at the European level, and lessons from CSO engagements in EGD processes.

The forum employed a participatory and inclusive methodology designed to foster meaningful dialogue and engagement among stakeholders. Panel discussions shed light on political challenges, citizen-driven solutions, and strategies for achieving climate neutrality, while addressing post-election dynamics and the influence of extreme-right politics. Case studies showcased successful grassroots initiatives, emphasising inclusivity, gender equality, and environmental justice. Thematic groups developed actionable recommendations on key issues like citizen engagement and the green transition, supported by collaborative tools and expert facilitation. Capacity-building sessions

emphasised inclusivity, gender equality, and the importance of equipping marginalised groups to participate in climate action.

The forum's outcome-oriented structure culminated in actionable demands across five key areas: **environmental justice, citizen engagement, governance and policy, inclusivity, and capacity building**. These outcomes reinforced the importance of CSO advocacy in driving a socially inclusive and sustainable EGD.

Highlights of the Thematic Dimensions

Each dimension addressed specific challenges and opportunities within the EGD framework:

- **Social Dimension:** Emphasized intersectionality, human rights, and just transitions to promote social equity.
- **Environmental Dimension:** Advocated for community rights, sustainable food systems, and ecological accountability.
- **Participatory Dimension:** Highlighted the need for transparent accountability mechanisms and green skills training.
- **Economic Dimension:** Focused on fair redistribution, intergenerational equity, and the co-benefits of climate action.
- **Global Dimension:** Stressed policy coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and inclusive global partnerships.

Summary and Action Points of each of the Five Dimensions

1. Social Dimension

The Social Dimension emphasises social equality, diversity, and inclusion within environmental policy development. It calls for a **human rights-based, intersectional, and participatory approach** to policymaking. Central to this dimension are strategies for establishing and implementing a just transition that enhances and upholds social rights and empowers vulnerable groups.

Action Points:

- **Align EU Policies with Sustainable Development Goals:** Ensure consistency across all EU laws and policies, prioritising the SDGs, trade and investment agreements, and the regulation of Big Tech to promote sustainable development.
- **Support Green Transition through Resource Redistribution:** Establish a policy framework to redistribute resources to green sectors and fund civil society organisations and grassroots initiatives driving sustainability.

2. Environmental Dimension

The Environmental Dimension prioritises fair, healthy and sustainable food systems, community rights, and ecological accountability. It calls for robust EU legislation that integrates human rights

into climate action and advocates for a transition to agroecology and sustainable land use. Inclusive participation is essential, with green skills training aimed at marginalised groups to ensure a just and inclusive green economy. It advocates for transparent accountability mechanisms with clear timelines and stresses the importance of protecting communities' rights to land and resources. Ensuring that economic activities respect environmental sustainability is a core tenet of this dimension.

Action Points:

- **Strengthen Legislative Implementation and Oversight:** Enhance enforcement, funding, and action to ensure effective implementation of legislative initiatives, with the European Commission fulfilling its role as the Treaty's environmental and climate guardian.
- **Shift to Sustainable Food Systems:** Transition to a sustainable food system by reshaping food environments, promoting agroecology through the Sustainable Food Systems Law, and overhauling the Common Agricultural Policy. Support sustainable land use through reforestation, habitat protection, and regenerative agriculture.
- **Regulate Corporate Influence for a Green Economy:** Establish mechanisms to monitor and mitigate corporate and financial sector influence on government institutions, fostering a green economy centred on wellbeing.

3. Participatory Dimension

The Participatory Dimension promotes transparent accountability mechanisms and inclusive citizen engagement in green policies under the EGD and SDGs, focusing on marginalised groups most affected by climate change. It advocates for integrating participatory decision-making processes into environmental policies and for capacity-building through green skills training, addressing inequalities and fostering a sustainable green economy. By prioritising participation and transparency, the dimension supports an inclusive green transition that benefits and reflects all societal sectors.

Action Points:

- **Establish Transparent Accountability Mechanisms:** Set clear timelines and targets to address the needs of youth, people living in poverty, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalised groups, ensuring their voices are acted upon and fostering trust in the policy-making process.
- **Promote Active Participation of Vulnerable Groups:** Prioritise the inclusion of marginalised communities, such as those living in poverty, Roma, and LGBTQ+ groups, in the green transition. Encourage structured dialogue between policymakers and CSOs to ensure these groups are represented and their needs are addressed.
- **Invest in Green Skills Training:** Provide targeted training for marginalised communities to build their capacity to engage in the green economy, ensuring equitable access to the benefits of the green transition and promoting inclusion in sustainable development.

4. Economic Dimension

The Economic Dimension is central to the EGD. It advocates for a transformation of economic systems to ensure a fair and sustainable transition. This includes changes to fiscal, trade, and industrial policies, with input from the EU, central banks, national governments, and the private sector. It calls for policies that balance economic growth with sustainability, address inequalities, and promote intergenerational equity. Key goals include equitable resource distribution, the co-benefits of climate action, and ensuring that the green economy benefits vulnerable and low-income communities.

Action Points:

- **Promote Fair Resource Distribution and Address Inequalities:** Advocate for policies that prioritise the needs of disadvantaged communities, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities in the green transition.
- **Maximise the Co-Benefits of Climate Action:** Focus on expanding economic and social benefits, such as job creation, green innovation, and sustainable economic growth, while highlighting the long-term cost of inaction.
- **Ensure Intergenerational and Democratic Equity:** Incorporate intergenerational equity into economic planning, involve civil society in policy design, and ensure the voices of both current and future generations are heard in shaping a sustainable and inclusive economic transition.

5. Global Dimension

The global dimension complements the EGD by advocating for policy coherence with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. It calls for more inclusive global partnerships that involve CSOs and social partners at all levels. This dimension also emphasises the creation of global green standards beyond the EU and urges greater transparency in policy development and new partnership agreements.

Action Points:

- **Allocate EU Funding for Sustainable Development:** Ensure the EU leads sustainable development by dedicating financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that projects benefit the people and the planet.
- **Establish Inclusive Trade and Investment Frameworks:** Develop new trade and investment agreements through close dialogues with diverse political actors and consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs), ensuring these frameworks are equitable and sustainable.
- **Promote Policy Coherence with Global Development Goals:** Align EU policies with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, ensuring that external actions and agreements contribute to global sustainability objectives.

What we learned from the post-election dialogue: Advocating for a just European Green Deal

The **8th edition of the Civil Society Forum**, held after the European Parliamentary elections, marked a shift from political assessment to active advocacy. The forum placed a strong emphasis on shaping the EGD and its implementation, urging a socially and environmentally just transition. The post-election discussions built upon the pre-election findings, reinforcing the need for an inclusive approach to the green transition, with CSOs playing a pivotal role in ensuring no one is left behind.

Through a **collaborative methodology**, the forum balanced expert insights with active participatory engagement, ensuring that the outcomes were aligned with the core principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and democracy. The dynamic exchange in the **five learning spaces** provided valuable insights into key concerns and the need for continuous advocacy from civil society.

The discussions and insights highlighted the interconnectedness of the five key dimensions: **social, environmental, participatory, economic, and global**. These dimensions provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities within the EGD, underscoring the importance of a holistic and inclusive approach to the green transition.

The 8th forum revealed that while there are significant opportunities for positive transformation, **critical gaps** that had been highlighted earlier must be addressed. **Equitable resource distribution** requires targeted policies that prioritise vulnerable groups, such as those living in poverty, marginalised communities, and low-income workers, by redirecting resources to green sectors and funding grassroots initiatives that drive sustainability. **Transparent policymaking** must incorporate structured dialogues with civil society organisations, establish clear accountability mechanisms with timelines and targets, and ensure inclusive participation, particularly from youth, marginalised communities, and those disproportionately affected by climate change. **Strengthened international cooperation** is crucial for aligning EU policies with the 2030 Agenda, creating inclusive trade and investment frameworks through consultations with diverse stakeholders, and dedicating funding to global sustainable development projects that benefit both people and the planet. These concerns were framed within the context of the EGD, emphasising the importance of **balancing environmental sustainability with social equity**. The discussions reinforced the need for the EU to lead by example, not only in shaping policies within its borders but also in creating global partnerships and **aligning its policies** with international sustainable development goals.

The forum also reiterated the need for CSOs to be actively involved in the policymaking process to ensure that the EGD evolves into a **truly inclusive and socially just framework**. The role of CSOs, community-based organisations, and citizens was deemed essential in advocating for policies that prioritise social equity, environmental justice, and intergenerational fairness.

In conclusion, the **8th edition** of the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability highlighted the need for **stronger collaboration, inclusive decision-making, and transparency** in the implementation of the EGD. It called for a shift towards a **people-centred, just green transition**, where no one is left behind, and where both current and future generations can benefit from the economic, social, and environmental co-benefits of climate action. To achieve these goals, it is essential that the EU and

its partners continue to **prioritise inclusive policies, transparent accountability, and global cooperation.**

Shaping Europe's sustainable future: key insights from the Civil Society Forum on the 2024 European parliament elections

The **7th and 8th Civil Society Forums for Sustainability** illustrate the journey **from political assessment to action**. The 7th Forum provided a critical analysis of political manifestos, laying the foundation for the 8th Forum's focus on active advocacy for a socially and environmentally just European Green Deal. While both forums highlight the importance of **sustainability, inclusivity, and social justice** and are closely linked, they offer distinct perspectives that illustrate the shifting priorities and challenges within European political and civil society engagement.

The 7th Forum set the groundwork for the 8th by identifying key concerns in the political landscape. The findings from the 7th Forum on the **lack of commitment** to inclusive decision-making, gender equality, and environmental justice were echoed in the 8th Forum's call for stronger collaboration and inclusive policy processes. However, post-election, the tone shifted **from critique to action**, with the focus now on ensuring that the EGD is not just a political vision but a lived reality for all EU citizens. While the 7th Forum underscored the uneven political commitment to sustainability, the 8th Forum highlighted the need for an inclusive and participatory approach to implementing these policies. The call for **stronger civil society involvement** and the need to prioritise vulnerable and marginalised communities became more urgent, reflecting a deeper understanding of the challenges ahead in delivering a truly just and inclusive green transition aligned with the SDGs.

In conclusion, the two forums reflect the **evolving discourse** around Europe's sustainable future, providing critical insights into the political landscape before and after the European Parliament

elections. Both forums emphasise the need for civil society to remain engaged and hold political actors accountable.

Especially in light of the **election outcomes**, it is crucial for civil society to actively engage with the newly elected representatives to ensure that the SDGs remain a central focus of the European Parliament's agenda. The increased representation of right-wing populist parties may necessitate a more concerted effort to advocate for policies that promote sustainability, social justice, and inclusivity, ensuring that the EU's commitment to the SDGs is upheld despite the changing political dynamics.

Concluding thoughts: advancing the SDGs and the EGD – a call to action from Civil Society for a truly inclusive and sustainable future

As the global community grapples with pressing environmental, social, and economic challenges, the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the **European Green Deal** serve as critical blueprints for creating a sustainable, equitable, and resilient future. Established in 2015 by the United Nations, the SDGs offer a comprehensive vision for achieving a better world by 2030, addressing key issues like poverty, climate action, and gender equality. Similarly, the European Green Deal provides a roadmap for the EU's green transition, aiming for **carbon neutrality by 2050**, while promoting sustainability across the economy and society.

However, these ambitious frameworks must not only tackle environmental and economic goals but also prioritize **social equity, inclusivity, and participatory governance**. This is where the work of civil society becomes paramount. **Civil Society Organisations**, through initiatives like the **Civil Society Forum for Sustainability**, have played a crucial role in pushing for a green transition that is **just and inclusive**, ensuring that no one is left behind. The forum serves as a vital space for dialogue and collaboration, where CSOs, policymakers, and other stakeholders can assess progress,

identify gaps, and advocate for policies that align with the **REAL DEAL** – a green transformation that places people at the centre of the transition, ensuring fair and equitable outcomes for all.

This report is the culmination of discussions and insights gathered during the Civil Society Forum for Sustainability, where civil society came together to assess the alignment of European political parties' manifestos with the SDGs and the green agenda. It reflects a collective call from **CSOs across Europe** to the EU Commission, urging stronger commitments to a **socially just, inclusive, and sustainable European Green Deal**. The recommendations outlined in this report reflect voices of CSOs who play an instrumental role in holding the EU accountable and ensuring that policies not only meet environmental targets but also respect and promote **human rights, social justice, and intergenerational fairness**.

Building on the insights and collective aspirations of civil society, the following section outlines **10 Key Demands** directed at the EU Commission for its 2024–2029 mandate. These demands serve as a roadmap for achieving a socially just, inclusive, and sustainable future, ensuring that the European Green Deal delivers on its transformative potential.

The 10 Asks from Civil Society to the EU Commission for 2024–2029

1. Prioritise a Just Transition for All

The EU Commission must integrate a Just Transition framework into all EGD policies and ensure targeted support for vulnerable and marginalised communities. This involves establishing a **Just Transition Impact Assessment** for all major policies to evaluate and address their social impacts. The **Just Transition Fund** must include criteria ensuring resources reach those most affected by climate and economic changes, such as displaced workers and underprivileged regions. Additionally, training and reskilling programmes for green jobs should be promoted, with a focus on gender equity and inclusion of minority groups.

2. Increase Transparency and Accountability

To build trust and ensure progress, the EU Commission must implement mandatory **progress reporting on the SDGs** in its annual work programme, tying achievements to specific EGD goals. This includes creating an **independent monitoring body** comprising CSOs, academics, and

stakeholders to oversee EGD implementation and guarantee greater accountability. Moreover, transparency in trade-offs and compromises must be ensured by introducing **public consultation periods** on major policy drafts.

3. Strengthen Public Participation in Decision-Making

Inclusive participation is essential to ensure policies are responsive to all communities. To achieve this, the EU Commission should establish **local participatory platforms** in every member state, supported by EU funding, to engage communities directly in shaping green transition policies. **Representation quotas** have to be mandatory in public consultations to ensure voices from marginalised and underrepresented groups are included. In order to co-design solutions tailored to local needs, partnerships with community-based organisations are necessary.

4. Align EU Funding with Sustainable Development Goals

To meet SDG targets, the EU Commission must develop an **SDG-aligned budget framework** for the 2024–2029 mandate, ensuring EU funding explicitly supports social and environmental objectives. It is essential to redirect subsidies from fossil fuels and environmentally harmful industries toward community-driven, socially just projects that promote equity and sustainability. Funding mechanisms like Invest EU and the Cohesion Fund must prioritise marginalised regions and grassroots initiatives.

5. Ensure Policy Coherence with Global Development Goals

To lead by example in aligning its policies with the 2030 Agenda, the EU is encouraged to integrate **global impact assessments** for all EU policies, including trade, agriculture, and energy, to evaluate their effects on the Global South. Ensuring coherence between domestic decarbonisation efforts and external actions is crucial, including ending practices that undermine sustainability, such as export-driven deforestation or exploitative trade practices. The EU must also align its trade and development policies with **inclusive global partnerships** by ensuring fair terms and transparent decision-making.

6. Incorporate Intersectionality into the Green Deal

Intersectional approaches are critical to creating fair and effective policies within the Green Deal. This involves mandating **intersectional equity audits** across all EGD initiatives to ensure policies address overlapping forms of discrimination, such as race, gender, disability, and class. Targeted funding should be provided for intersectional research and policy design to identify barriers faced by marginalised communities in the green transition. Additionally, it is necessary to integrate a **human rights-based approach** in all climate and sustainability programmes to safeguard those most at risk.

7. Implement Post-Growth Strategies for Systemic Economic Change

The EU must transition away from growth-at-all-costs models by developing a **post-growth roadmap** that prioritises wellbeing, equity, and sustainability over GDP growth. The EU must also introduce **material reduction targets** to reduce resource use and environmental degradation, with clear milestones for 2025 and 2030. Instead, policies that redistribute wealth should be promoted, such as progressive taxation and resource-sharing mechanisms, to ensure fair access to basic needs and public goods.

8. Develop Global Green Standards and Partnerships

To drive a fair global green transition, it is crucial for the EU to collaborate with multilateral partners in order to create **global green standards**, ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns worldwide. To support their green transitions without replicating historical inequities, **capacity-building programmes** for the Global South must be embedded and funded through EU development aid, CSOs from all regions should be involved in the design and implementation of global green initiatives to foster equity and inclusivity.

9. Promote Fair and Inclusive Trade Agreements

Trade policies should prioritise fairness and sustainability. This is achieved by incorporating **SDG compliance clauses** in all EU trade and investment agreements to ensure alignment with global sustainability objectives. Further, mechanisms for **CSO oversight** of trade agreements have to be established to ensure transparency and accountability. It is also necessary to commit to addressing trade imbalances to ensure fair terms for countries in the Global South.

10. Commit to Gender Equality and the Full Implementation of the Istanbul Convention

Gender equality must be central to the green transition. This means that the **Istanbul Convention** is fully ratified and implemented across all EU member states. It also involves establishing a **gender equity task force** within the EU Commission to monitor and address gender disparities in EGD implementation. Lastly, specific gender-disaggregated indicators must be embedded in all monitoring frameworks to assess the green transition's impacts on women and girls.

Through these recommendations, civil society calls on the EU Commission to act with **urgency**, **coherence**, and **ambition** to achieve the SDGs and realise the full potential of the European Green Deal. These recommendations reflect the overarching priorities for the EU Commission to adopt **inclusive**, **transparent**, and **sustainable** policies that align with the SDGs, ensuring a **green transition** that is equitable and benefits all sectors of society. Ultimately, they aim to create a future where **sustainability** and **equity** go hand in hand.



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