

## REP2019: On the Road to Effective Environment and Climate Change Policy



Europe and the world face environmental challenges of unprecedented scale, such as the alarming rate of biodiversity loss, the impact of climate change and the overconsumption of natural resources. These issues require an urgent response on all levels, from governments and industries to communities and citizens.

The European Union (EU) is determined to help raise global ambition and to take a leading role in the international efforts. EU leaders thus endorsed the objective of making the EU climate-neutral by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C. In this regard, EU countries have agreed to meet various targets in the years to come.

Yet, Europe will not achieve its 2030 goals without urgent action during the next 10 years: setting ambitious mitigation measures, ensuring that environmental concerns are taken on board in different policy areas (e.g. transport and energy) and investing in low-carbon technologies and adaptation measures.

At the end of last year, the new European Commission (EC) presented “The European Green Deal”, the most ambitious package of measures that should enable European citizens and businesses to benefit from a sustainable green transition. This was the first step of a long process.

On January 21<sup>st</sup> 2020, the Road to the European Parliament 2019 – Empowering a New Generation of EU Citizens (REP2019) set up its quarters in Alimos, Greece to discuss precisely the above-mentioned issues. High school students from Greece, Italy, Spain, Romania and Lithuania once again took on the role of the EU institutions to work on a Directive addressing the urging challenges of environmental and climate change.

In the face of such challenge, the young generation decided to lead by example. Following a warm welcome and insightful presentation of the issue by the Greek students and representatives, the European Commission (represented by the Greek students) proposed an ambitious and all-encompassing Directive with proposals on issues ranging from greenhouse gas emission reduction and energy efficiency to coherent strategic research and innovation.

The complete list of the Directive proposals can be viewed [here](#).

The European Parliament (represented by the Spanish, Italian, Lithuanian and Romanian students) presented their position on the different proposals to the rest of their colleagues. Some of the raised points included:



#### **Proposal 1: Greenhouse gas emission reduction**

- Progressive phase-out of fossil fuels in all sectors
- Development of best agricultural, agronomic and animal husbandry practices

#### **Proposal 2: Emissions trading**

- General agreement on the fact that the Emissions Trading System (ETS) helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively by putting a price on carbon
- Create a transparent public website for

citizens to know the emissions trading system (who is selling and who is buying)

#### **Proposal 3: Transport emissions**

- Increase public transport, pedestrian and cycle mobility through the construction of cycle paths and pedestrian areas; more affordable or even free public transport
- Rail freight should become more competitive compared to road/air transport through the subsidization of rail transport and a higher taxation on air transport and improvement of railway network for mobility of citizens among small and big cities. All trains must be electric by 2027
- Improve the technology used for transport systems and availability of alternative transport fuels (eg. implementing charging points for bio/e-fuel). Provide tax breaks and other forms of incentives to facilitate the transition to the use of carbon-free vehicles and promote innovative share mobility



One train can carry the cargo of 100 trucks but uses the fuel of three trucks.

- Romanian MEP

#### **Proposal 4: Forest and agriculture emissions**

- General agreement on afforestation and restoration of degraded forest lands and other ecosystems as well as use of better farming systems and techniques including agroforestry or regenerative farming techniques

- The encouragement of eco-sustainable products (with refunding systems) and reduction of livestock load, reduce meat waste
- Responsible countries should ban trading wood in order to decrease the level of clearings

#### Proposal 5: Blue economy

- General agreement on the improvement of the use of aquatic and marine resources, eg. promoting the production and use of new sources of protein, favour offshore renewable energy through subsidies and tax breaks
- Eliminate all plastic products not strictly necessary, innovate the system in order that all plastics are designed to be reused, recycled or composted safely
- Zero-tolerance approach to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing



#### Proposal 6: Energy Efficiency

- All houses should have in 2027 smart appliances management systems (eg. purchase and implementation of multimedia devices for remote control of heating systems) and improved materials for its insulation
- Establish a campaign to promote consumption of most efficient products



#### Proposal 7: Renewable Energy

- General agreement on maximizing and supporting the deployment of high-efficiency renewable technologies (eg.: Biomass energy produced by any component of biological origin; Hydroelectric energy through the use of water, marine energy through ocean currents) and fully decarbonizing Europe's energy supply system.

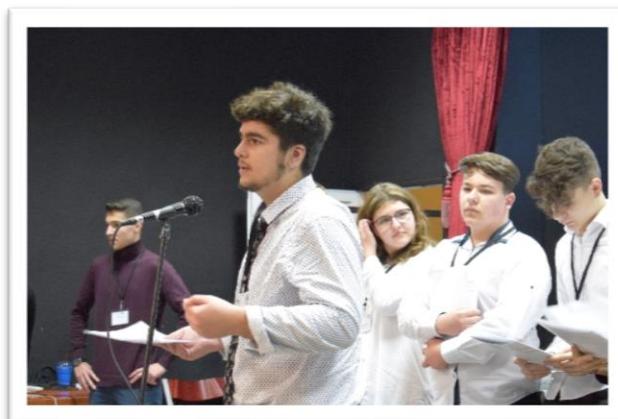
- Support the construction of

electricity production plants, in particular in self-production or cogeneration, support to end-users, farmers and industries to produce carbon-free energy with solar panels or photovoltaic, wind turbines, solid waste converters into energy, geothermal energy through the heat of earth, energy system based on fossil fuels

- Close all nuclear power and coal-fired power plants by 2027, reduce the number of power plants based on tree burning and replace them by renovated power stations that produce renewable energy - be partially financed by the government

### Proposal 8: Circular economy

- General agreement on the significant reduction in energy needs and process emissions of the production of industrial goods, particularly by increasing recycling rates
- The dispersion in landfills of raw materials should be avoided
- Expansion of deposit – refund system (eg. reverse vending machines) must be introduced everywhere
- New materials must play an important role as well, whether rediscovering traditional uses as wood in construction, or new composites replacing energy intensive materials
- Member States should provide measures to enable consumers to contribute to the circular economy, including through the dissemination of reliable, verifiable and comparable information on the sustainability characteristics of products. That could be achieved with the creation of an app which has information about circular economy
- Launch of an awareness-raising campaign on recycling will lead to reduction of materials input and will improve competitiveness and create new jobs



Refuse what you don't need!  
 Reduce what you do need!  
 Reuse what you can't reduce!  
 Recycle what you can't reuse!  
 Recover what you can't recycle!

- Romanian MEP

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### Proposal 9: Research, innovation and deployment

- We must support the creation and development of new innovative enterprises
- We must have a forward-looking research and innovation strategy that will be guided by zero solutions which have the potential to be deployed by 2050
- Experimentation and collaboration between businesses and universities must also be supported

### Proposal 10: Adapting to Climate Change

- Relocation of dwellings and artefacts from areas at risk; raising the levels of dykes, raising embankments to reduce the risk of flooding, storms and fire
- Conservation of scarce water resources more efficiently and development of drought-tolerant crops
- Creation of land corridors to help species migrate
- Establish and implement a complete workplan for period 2020-2027 in each city across Europe to be prepared for climate change
- Edit and deliver a best practice guide in adaption measures
- Organization of local volunteer workforces to fight against impact of climate change



### Proposal 11: Information

- Involvement of Schools, training Institutions and Universities as a privileged point of engagement, socialization and participation
- Empower European consumers to drive the transformation towards a net-zero greenhouse gas economy through an educational programme in schools
- Local ownership of investments
- Encourage for youth to create new inventions no matter what skeptics think
- All citizens should have a personal ID card as *Citizen Driver of Climate Change Hazards*

### Proposal 12: International climate action

- International cooperation through the Paris agreement and shift from action by the few to action by all, foster multilateral rule-based cooperation, identify areas for action to achieve global climate goals and establish stable international agreements



With imagination and unwavering determination, the students unanimously reached an agreement upon which the 'representatives of the European Commission' formulated the final version of the Directive on environment and climate change.

After taking into consideration provided feedbacks and final remarks by the 'European Parliament', the final vote was:

### Proposal 1 to 12: Approved

The final decision signalled for the end of the workday; the students adjourned from their roles and enjoyed the centre of Athens and its National Archaeological museum.

*The next simulation event will take place in Victoria, Romania (date to be announced).*

