

Greens/EFA feedback on the recommendations by EU Citizens Panel 3 regarding Climate change, environment / Health¹



The Greens/EFA priorities for the Conference on the Future of Europe can be found here: <http://extranet.greens-efa.eu/public/media/file/1/7033>

Climate & Environment (Eleonora Evi)

Stream 1: Better ways of living

Substream 1.1 Healthy lifestyles

“1. We recommend that the EU provides subsidies for organic farming, including incentives for organic pesticides, to make organic goods more affordable. Furthermore, education for farmers in organic and sustainable farming needs to be supported by the EU and mono-culture farming should be avoided. Small organic farms, non-intensive farms and those with short supply chains should be given support to become more competitive.”

Greens/EFA: we support this recommendation and further developing organic farming in the EU. This is exactly why we rejected the Common Agriculture Policy because it won't promote the right agricultural model we need to move away from industrial farming. National Strategic Plans from Member States should not be validated by the Commission if they do not focus on promoting a better agricultural system, including support for organic farming. The next battle is the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive to be presented before the Summer of 2022 by the European Commission. We need to ensure that the target of -50% reduction of pesticides use is made a binding EU target and that we have a real monitoring and reporting system in place to ensure farmers reduce their use of pesticides. The focus should be put on alternatives to synthetic pesticides.

“2. We recommend that innovation in vertical farming be supported by investments from the EU.”

¹ https://prod-cofe-platform.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/nxqqase4ows6ozjo3ajx9331xv7u?response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3D%22P3S3_voted_recommendations_FINAL_v%202022.01.10%2013%2030.pdf%22%3B%20filename%2A%3DUTF-8%27%27P3S3_voted_recommendations_FINAL_v%25202022.01.10%252013%252030.pdf&response-content-type=application%2Fpdf&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIA3LJXGZPDFYVOW5V%2F20220422%2Feu-central-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20220422T084101Z&X-Amz-Expires=300&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=6d2816aea65731fbb3a18a60578a17e3f09c860d259a6449efc91ce2bd9f8bc7

Greens/EFA: in our opinion, this recommendation requires further explanation and the inclusion of some limits and conditions. Vertical farming is usually heavily dependent on farming inputs, most of which are fossil-based. Vertical farming endeavours to solve the issue of land use change by removing land from the equation of food production. However, this means needing to replace what is brought by the soil by external inputs. Additionally, the problem of land use change is mostly driven by commodities (animal feed, feedstock for biofuels...). Ending crop based biofuels, re-localising food production, decreasing food waste and transitioning farming towards agro-ecology and organic farming would mostly solve the issue while still practicing soil-based farming. Vertical farming can be an interesting complement if using mainly recycled sanitised waste streams but should not be viewed as a silver bullet solution. Funds directed towards vertical farming should not be taken from research towards a sustainable land-based farming.

“3. The EU should set minimum standards for food quality, as well as food traceability and the use of seasonal food in school canteens. Healthy ingredients for school canteens should therefore be subsidised to ensure affordable, high-quality food for pupils.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation, as food quality is a very important aspect of the debate, often forgotten compared to food “productivity”. The EU must fully apply existing GMO regulations to new GM products and any move to circumvent this ruling would undermine the precautionary principle and expose consumers and the environment to unnecessary risks. We also call on the European Commission to adopt an ambitious proposal for a harmonised mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling to enable consumers to make health conscious food choices (e.g. Nutriscore). In addition, the Commission should publish by the end of the year a legislative proposal on the country of origin labelling, to require the indication of the origin of certain products. Origin labelling on food should be (at least) at the country level (EU/non-EU is not enough) and origin labelling should become mandatory for unprocessed, single-ingredient foods and ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food.

“4. We recommend investing in new bike lanes and in improving existing ones to make cycling safe and attractive. Ensure that training on road traffic rules for all age groups is widely available across Europe, especially for e-bikes and for those without drivers’ licenses. The producers of e-bikes should be required to provide information about the use and risks of e-biking. Give legal protection to cyclists in case of accidents with vehicles (see Dutch regulation). We support dedicated car-free zones in cities (without harming commercial areas). Overall, give priority and further rights to cyclists and pedestrians over motorized vehicles while guaranteeing road safety and accordance with traffic rules.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. As Greens/EFA, we support incentives for a modal shift, one that will move us from a car-centric approach to a support for more active mobility, including walking and cycling. To ensure this modal shift, new infrastructures that are pedestrian and cyclist friendly are essential. Car-free zones, limiting speed in cities to 30km/h and improving road safety are key elements that should be taken into account in future urban planning. The European Commission published a (non-binding- communication

on urban mobility in December 2021, which is a positive initiative outlining a range of measures that need to be taken to ensure that mobility in the urban environment can become cleaner and safer with a particular focus on public transport, active mobility like cycling and walking and urban logistics. However, much of urban mobility initiatives fall under the subsidiarity principle, so the success of this initiative will in a large part be down to Member States to voluntarily deliver the calls to action.

“5. We recommend making the production of food part of public education. Subsidize and support the creation of gardens in schools, if feasible, and urban gardening projects for public and private spaces. The need for space, water and support infrastructure needs to be part of urban planning frameworks. For example, former parking lots could be used for greening, vertical gardening on buildings, or there could be mandates to include green spaces for receiving building permits. Share innovative and best practices across all member states.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation as education plays a key role to raise awareness on the need for the ecological transition. There are already many municipalities and citizen-led organisations involved in projects to help alleviate the climate crisis and move to CO₂-neutral cities in the European Union. Such initiatives should be further supported, including with increased EU funding.

Substream 1.2 Environmental education

“6. We recommend that the EU adopts a directive requiring urban development programmes to fulfill specific environmental requirements, with the aim to make cities greener. The directive must apply to private and public property and spaces, such as new buildings being developed. The directive must impose minimum standards to ensure buildings and spaces are as green as possible. "Green", here, refers to the use of renewable energy sources, reduced energy consumption, low levels of CO₂ emissions and the inclusion of plants in architectural projects.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. In December 2021, the European Commission published its revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) for which the Greens/EFA will be the lead negotiator in the European Parliament. We need an ambitious EPBD to implement the Renovation wave, ensure recovery and resilience, fight energy poverty caused by the energy price surge, and to achieve the climate neutrality target. The current energy price crises has shown once more that we need to become less dependent on fossil energy imports. Buildings can be transformed into energy sources, notably by producing renewable energy on rooftops, storing heat in well-insulated homes, and using efficient and renewable heat pump technologies for residual demand. This will help to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and therefore they reduce energy bills for citizens, which especially benefits those at risk of energy poverty. In order to make sure that vulnerable households are protected, we should have targeted funds that would act as adequate social safeguards to help ensure the affordability of housing at a national and local level.

“7. We recommend that the EU, with the assistance of the member states, develops, adopts and implements a common European charter targeting environmental issues, in their complexity. The charter will provide a framework for member states to develop regular information and training campaigns, disseminated across all available media channels and a new dedicated information portal. These campaigns should be held across the EU and at all levels to foster environmental awareness among all citizens.”

Greens/EFA: A foundation for action on sustainability is strengthening environmental law and better enforcing it at all levels – including taking legal action against those who break it. The right to information must be guaranteed and access to environmental justice improved for citizens and civil society organisations. The EU needs to produce a new and ambitious environment action programme (but not necessarily in the form of a new European charter). We also call for establishing an international environmental court to address the most serious violations of international environmental law. Regular information and training campaigns are welcome but environmental awareness is already on the rise with more and more people caring for the planet. What we need is more governmental actions to ensure EU environmental laws are implemented and respected.

Stream 2: Protecting our environment and our health

Substream 2.1 Healthy natural environment

“8. We recommend a graded unified labelling system showing the entire ecological footprint for every available product purchased within the EU. Products from outside the EU need to respect this labelling system in a transparent manner. The system should be based on clear labelling criteria on the products themselves and use, for example, a QR code that gives more in-depth information about the product.”

Greens/EFA: We support this call for a labelling system. At the end of March, the European Commission presented a communication on empowering consumers for the green transition and a revision of the Ecodesign Directive with the ambition to make sustainable products the norm. We will push for specific targets and a clear timetable in line with other Green Deal objectives. Today it is difficult for consumers, companies and other market actors to make sense of the many environmental labels and initiatives on the environmental performance of products and companies. There are more than 200 environmental labels active in the EU, and more than 450 active worldwide; there are more than 80 widely used reporting initiatives and methods for carbon emissions only. In addition, there is greenwashing by some companies, which pretend to have a positive impact on the environment. Companies making ‘green claims’ should substantiate these against a standard methodology to assess their impact on the environment. We need to ensure that environmental information become an influencer of citizens’ decisions.

“9. We recommend that more financial investment should be made to explore new eco-friendly sources of energy and until then additional investment into existing optimal solutions of energy production. We also recommend informing and educating the European public about specific sources of energy in full transparency. We strongly recommend considering the entire ecological and social impacts of the energy production process for current and future generations.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation and more information to citizen about financial investments. This is why the Greens/EFA championed the “EU taxonomy”, a classification of financial investments to determine what are sustainable investments. Unfortunately, the European Commission has proposed to include nuclear and gas as part of the sustainable investments in the future, a decision we strongly object to. We need to focus on investing in renewable energies and increase our EU target for renewable energy by 2030 (via the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive).

Substream 2.2 Protecting our biodiversity

“10. We recommend a drastic reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in all types of farms, by enforcing the application of higher common standards, by accelerating the research on the natural alternatives and by supporting the adoption of the new solutions, including the training for farmers.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. Greens/EFA fights for a toxic-free environment and the reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. The next battle is the revision of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive to be adopted around June 2022 by the Commission. We need to ensure that the target of -50% reduction of pesticides use is made a binding EU target and that we have a real monitoring and reporting system in place to ensure farmers reduce their use of pesticides. The focus should be put on alternatives to synthetic pesticides.

“11. We recommend the extension of the protected areas for the conservation of biodiversity (including mammals, birds, insects and plants), and enhancing the rule of law regarding human intervention in these areas. The protected areas will be seen not only as islands, but as a continuum with greener urban areas, following harmonised EU standards.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation as protecting nature and biodiversity is absolutely key for our future. The European Commission will soon present a nature restoration law proposal (June 2022?) to ensure legally binding EU nature restoration targets to restore degraded ecosystems. We call on ambitious and binding targets: 30% of European terrestrial, marine and freshwater areas should be restored by 2040 with an intermediate target of 15 % by 2030. Moreover, we want to halt deforestation and create a golden standard for European forests.

“12. We recommend redirecting the generic subsidies for agriculture mainly towards projects related to the development of sustainable agriculture, including the respect for nature and the workers. The beneficiaries should comply with clear environmental standards, and be strictly monitored.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation and this is why we did not vote in favour of the new Common Agriculture Policy in November 2021. National Strategic Plans from Member States should not be validated by the Commission if they do not focus on promoting a better agricultural system, including support for organic farming. Unfortunately, the current CAP does not bring us away from a generalised model of industrial farming.

“13. We recommend that the EU ensures a loyal competition for environment friendly agricultural products by establishing stricter standards for both EU and the imported products, by ensuring their traceability, labelling and quality control.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. As said, we call for a greener Common Agriculture Policy, one that would be in line with the objectives of the Green Deal, given the role of agriculture in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There is a need to reinforce controls on food safety, antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare, environmental regulations and pesticide use and presence. The EU, thanks to its place in the world food market, can play a leading role in shaping a more sustainable food system everywhere, by upping its own standards and applying them to its imports. Environmental and animals welfare standards should be an integral part of all trade agreement chapters and multilateral and regulatory cooperation could further help in this endeavour. The EU should immediately stop exporting pesticides that are not allowed for use in the EU.

“14. We recommend rapid and massive reforestation and afforestation in the EU, by maximizing the use of land. A special focus should be given to the reforestation of exploited or destroyed forests and the afforestation of the areas with degraded soil. New more responsible solutions should be promoted for a better utilization of the wood, e.g. replacing plastics and other chemical materials, ensuring higher energy efficiency from biomass, recycling of wood products.

Greens/EFA: In addition to the restoration law proposal expected before this Summer, we need to pay attention to the sustainability criteria for forest biomass, currently under revision in the Renewable Energy Directive. The Renewable Energy Directive is problematic in that it heavily incentivises the uses of biomass for energy purposes (electricity and heating). Wood-burning power plants pump more CO₂ into the atmosphere per unit of energy than coal plants. Harvesting trees to burn wood for bioenergy also leads to a reduction in the carbon sinks of forests. We support the exclusion of all forest biomass from being eligible to receive support (direct financial support or otherwise) and from being able to count towards the renewable energy targets (the overall EU target of at least 40% as well as the sectoral ones).

Substream 2.3 Safe and healthy food

“15. We recommend the swift and progressive elimination of non-sustainable forms of food packaging, including plastic packaging and those of other non-biodegradable materials. We propose achieving this through providing financial incentives to companies which change to fully biodegradable forms of packaging, investing in research into alternatives and introducing penalties for companies that do not use biodegradable packaging.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. In July 2022, the Commission will present a review of the Packaging and packaging waste directive to reinforce the essential requirements for packaging and establish EU level packaging waste prevention measures and targets. We need to make all packaging reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. We also support waste reduction measures and binding targets as well as ambitious essential requirements to reduce excessive packaging, including in e-commerce.

“16. We recommend that intensive animal farming is phased out gradually, including the elimination of disrespectful living conditions of animals. We propose introducing common norms for animal farming (e.g. maximum number of animals, appropriate outside space) and stronger investment into non-intensive methods (extensive and sustainable farming) by providing financial incentives and training to farms to support this change.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. This is exactly why we rejected the CAP: it won't promote the right agricultural model we need to move away from industrial farming. The Commission committed to revise the regulation on animal welfare during transport and the challenge will be to ensure the implementation of the European Parliament's recommendations (e.g. on a reduction in the maximum duration of journeys as well as on transport outside the EU). The Commission also announced a legislative proposal in 2023 to ban caged farming in the EU, possibly already by 2027. In addition, in the framework of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission will consider options for animal welfare labelling to better transmit value through the food chain and foresees a revision to improve the animal welfare legislation (an opportunity to follow-up on the EP resolution asking for a roadmap to phase out animal testing).

“17. We recommend tightening controls on the prohibition of the unnecessary use of antibiotics and other animal drugs in feed additives for animals: make it a reality! We propose that the use of antibiotics is only authorised in farming when absolutely necessary to protect the health and well-being of animals, instead of in a preventive way. In addition, it is necessary to invest further into research for more efficient antibiotics, developing alternatives while building upon existing research into antibiotics.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. The question on how to define reserve antibiotics and how to administer them to animals respectively humans has been heatedly debated during the summer of 2021. The trigger was the objection of the Greens/EFA group on the Commission delegated regulation 'establishing the criteria for the designation of

antimicrobials to be reserved for the treatment of certain infections in humans'. Every year there are around 33 000 people in the EU who die due to antimicrobial resistance - there is simply no antibiotics available anymore that could stop their bacterial infection. The problem of multiresistent germs is considered as one of the major health threats of our times. It is of utmost importance to reduce the use of antimicrobials in both veterinary and human medicine, as also underlined in the EU's one health concept. The objection has been voted down in the European Parliament and the decisive question now is what the final list of reserve antibiotics - which will be completely banned for animals and reserved for humans - will look like. This list will be decided via an implementing act to be presented in 2022. This is therefore a very topical issue.

"18. We recommend that European legislation requires declarations on the use of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors in the production of food: the type, quantity and exposure of the final product used. All food products including these substances must have detailed labels on their packaging displaying this information and the reasons for their use. Additionally, we have to accelerate research into the effects of hormonal substances and endocrine disruptors on human health."

Greens/EFA: We support this proposal. The Commission should present a revision of the Food Contact Materials Regulation. In this context, we call for an EU-wide harmonized authorization procedure for all food packaging materials which must include a comprehensive risk assessment procedure, resulting in positive lists for substances. Endocrine disrupting properties need to be specifically considered in the risk assessment, including long-term and low-dose absorptions. All substances, including the ones that have been in use for several decades, must be reassessed, with regard to their endocrine disrupting properties.

"19. We recommend discouraging the consumption of processed foods by taxing unhealthy food and investing the funds raised into healthy food. We propose introducing a European-wide scoring system for healthy food based upon best practices in member states to label food and inform consumers of the health properties of food."

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. We call on the Commission to adopt an ambitious proposal for a harmonised mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling to enable consumers to make health conscious food choices (e.g. Nutriscore). The Commission should publish by the end of the year a legislative proposal on the country of origin labelling, to require the indication of the origin of certain products. Origin labelling on food should be (at least) at the country level (EU/non-EU is not enough) and origin labelling should become mandatory for unprocessed, single-ingredient foods and ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food.

Stream 3: Redirecting our economy and consumption

Substream 3.1 Regulating overproduction and overconsumption

“20. We recommend that the EU takes more actions that enable and incentivise consumers to use products longer. The EU should combat planned obsolescence by lengthening products’ warranty and setting a maximum price for spare parts after the warranty period. All member states should introduce a tax break on repair services as is the case in Sweden. Manufacturers should be required to declare the expected lifespan of their products. The EU should provide information on how to re-use and repair products on an internet platform and through education.”

Greens/EFA: At the end of March 2022, the Commission presented a sustainable products policy initiative. In this context, we need binding EU targets for 2030 to significantly reduce the EU material and consumption footprints and bring them within planetary boundaries by 2050. We also need rules to require manufacturers to decrease the energy consumption of their products by establishing minimum energy efficiency standards. Finally, we should ensure the swift finalisation of existing eco-design work on electronics and ICT, notably for smartphones, tablets, computers, printers (including cartridges), mobile network stations and subsystems and networking equipment.

“21. We recommend that the EU enforces stricter environmental manufacturing standards and ensures fair working conditions throughout the entire production chain. The EU’s production standards should be more sustainable, harmonised across member states, and applied to imported goods. These should also include social standards, like a living wage for workers producing the goods and good working standards in factories. Products that do not comply with these standards should face consequences.”

Greens/EFA: We fully support the requests to set stricter environmental manufacturing standards and fair working conditions throughout the entire production chain. We are actively trying to achieve this in the context of the ongoing negotiations over the review of EU batteries legislation. As far as social standards are concerned, we support harmonised minimum standards at a high level. Imported goods should have to comply with the same standards as EU manufactured goods. Member States should put adequate resources into enforcement to ensure that there are not unlawful products on the market, and withdrawn in case such products were put onto the market. It is also important to ensure an inclusive process in the development and implementation of the EU’s production standards (including environmental NGOs for example).

“22. We recommend that the EU and member states introduce measures to limit advertising for products that damage the environment. Products with a low sustainability score should have a mandatory disclaimer in all forms of advertising that shows that they are harmful for the environment. For products that are not sustainable at all, the EU should ban advertising.”

Greens/EFA: Every year, companies worldwide spend €1.3 trillion on commercial communication and €600 billion on advertising. Whereas, in the past, advertising played an informative role in guiding consumers in their choices, today it is predominantly used to persuade them. Advertising not only drives up global consumption artificially, but also steers consumers towards the brands which invest more in advertising, rather than those that are the most sustainable and responsible. Moreover, advertising is the preserve of but a few companies – mainly large multinational corporations. VSEs and SMEs cannot compete. It is therefore fundamental that we recognise the responsibility of the advertising industry and regulate its practices. Regulating content would be a good start, with a ban on baseless claims of green credentials and on adverts for products or services that are harmful to public health or the environment. Providing transparent, accountable and accurate information will increase the trust of consumers in products and markets, leading ultimately to more sustainable consumption.

“23. We recommend that the EU puts in place and expands the infrastructure of deposit-return schemes for all primary packaging made of glass, plastic, aluminium, et cetera in a homogenous way across the EU. Whenever possible, manufacturers should re-use the returned containers by sterilizing them, rather than just recycling the material. In addition to food and drink containers, the scheme should also include other kinds of bottles and containers, like shampoo bottles.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation.

Substream 3.2 Reducing waste

“24. We recommend that an enhanced implementation of circular economy policies is promoted at the European level, targeting both corporations and citizens, in the form of financial incentives for those that comply with it.”

Greens/EFA: Circular economy is an important pillar of the Green Deal, to reduce pressure on natural resources and create sustainable jobs. The Commission has scheduled two packages in 2022 (March and July), including a revision of the Eco-Design directive with the ambition to make sustainable products the norm. We will push for specific targets and a clear timetable in line with other Green Deal objectives. The 2nd package will include a policy framework for certain plastics and a review of the packaging and packaging waste directive to establish EU level packaging waste prevention measures and targets. We need an EU market which promotes sustainable, circular, high performing and safe products all along their entire life cycle, and that these products are afterwards collected, repurposed and recycled.

“25. We recommend that the EU regulates the use of environmentally-safe packaging (i.e., packaging made out of biodegradable or recyclable products, or more durable products, where possible) and/or the use of packaging that takes up less space, which will also contain in the form of a QR-code the information pertinent to the packages’ recycling and/or disposal process once it has been used.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. The European Commission has presented in 2021 a proposal to reinforce the essential requirements for packaging and establish EU level packaging waste prevention measures and targets. We need to make all packaging reusable or recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. We also support waste reduction measures and binding targets as well as ambitious essential requirements to reduce excessive packaging, including in e-commerce.

Substream 3.3 Fair products, equal access, and just consumption

“26. We recommend the European Union to establish a legal framework to ensure affordable, and better access to local and quality food products for all European consumers.”

Greens/EFA: We support this proposal. Access to affordable, local and good quality food is an objective that should be achieved for all EU consumers. The current common agriculture policy will unfortunately not support a change of agro-economic model towards more sustainability but an implementation of the Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity strategies and their measures would be a step in the right direction already.

“27. We recommend the European Union to encourage research and development, with funding schemes, in order to introduce more sustainable and affordable products within the European market. Also, the European Union must organise consultations with citizens, at all decision-making levels including the local level, in order to identify their needs regarding sustainable products.”

Greens/EFA: We support further research and development on more sustainable and affordable products. However, we think that a lot can and should be done already now to introduce such products onto the European market. We need a legislative framework for sustainable products. This in turn also provides an incentive for R&D in this sector. We therefore welcome the Commission’s legislative proposal setting eco-design requirements for many kinds of products so as to make sustainable products the norm. We fully support public participation in decision-making.

“28. We recommend the European Union to find a regulation mechanism for fashion products entering the common market. This mechanism would aim at encouraging better consumption thanks to an indicator guaranteeing that the product meets sustainable criteria.”

Greens/EFA: At the end of March, the Commission presented its EU’s Strategy on Sustainable Textiles. The textile sector has a huge impact on both the climate, the environment and on human rights worldwide. The EU should set ambitious science- and knowledge based climate targets on greenhouse gas emissions from both EU production and for those embedded in the value chain for consumption of textiles, in line with the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5°C. We call for strong European action to reduce textile consumption by focusing on production rather than consumers. We also propose a ban on the destruction of textiles and an alignment

of the taxonomy classification. The European Environment Agency should play a greater role in assessing the measures put in place to reduce the environmental impact of the sector in relation to the COP26 objectives. Circular business models need to become the norm and replace rather than complement linear business models.

Stream 4: Towards a sustainable society

Substream 4.1 Renewable energy now

“29. We recommend that the EU takes measures to make CO2 filters mandatory, especially for the coal plants, in a transition period, as long as we still depend on conventional energy. In addition, we recommend that the EU provides financial aid to member states that do not have financial resources to implement CO2 filters. The support is conditional on compliance to EU climate policies connected to the Paris Agreement, the Green Deal and any new climate law. This is a concrete step to take alongside continued investment in research of the safe energy production and to support EU Member States to progressively achieve already adopted common reduction goals.”

Greens/EFA: We commend the idea that capturing the CO2 from fossil fuels power plants is an interesting one. However, there are a number of major concerns and barriers to the widespread introduction of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) technology that will need to be overcome prior to its widespread introduction such as:

- the guarantee of the duration of CO2 storage (which must be guaranteed for at minimum hundreds of years)
- the doubt on the large scale availability of the sequestration technology (which may take years) in comparison to the urgency to address climate change (and the need to reduce GHG emissions now). CCS should not be used as an excuse to continue (and expand) coal and other fossil fuel extraction before carbon storage is ensured as a viable solution.
- the concern on the efficiency overall: capturing and pumping CO2 through hundreds of kilometres to a suitable storage (sequestration) requires a lot of energy. The best assessment today is that 8 to 12% of the total efficiency of a coal power plant is lost by capture and storage. Therefore the gains obtained in the most modern coal power plants through innovation (40 to 45% efficiency) are absorbed.

“30. We recommend reducing the intensive industrial breeding of animals to reduce the production of methane as well as water pollution. For that purpose, the EU reviews its common Agricultural Policy to direct its subsidies towards sustainable and locally based agriculture, among others supported by a labelling scheme for consumers to recognize sustainable meat products. In addition, we encourage the EU to invest in methods to re-use waste material from animal production and other industries.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. Animal feed is one of the leading commodities leading to land use change outside of the EU, and intensive animal farming is a big part of the EU’s emissions of GHG, as well as the source of massive pollution of water and soils. The overconsumption of animal products is also a health issue. All EU subsidies to animal

farmers, and in particular CAP coupled supports, should be strictly conditioned to environmental standards, only given to extensive land-based animal farming (no feedlots) and the respect of water and nitrate regulations.

“31. We recommend that although it is a cost-intensive process to generate green hydrogen, as 75% energy should be produced in order to get 25% hydrogen, there are multiple positive sides to this type of energy. The best solution can be to produce energy without CO₂ while we develop green hydrogen. Wind energy should be used for the production of green hydrogen and the EU should make more investments and increase the production of wind energy, as well as storing the energy for future purposes.”

Greens/EFA: We support the push to develop renewable energies and we will fight in the Renewable Energy Directive to have a binding & ambitious EU target of renewable energy by 2030. We believe that green hydrogen should be prioritised for sectors where direct electrification is not possible and no other alternatives exist. These are the “hard to abate” sectors like shipping, some industries and some heavy goods vehicles. Otherwise, we should promote energy efficiency (to reduce energy consumption in the first place) and electrification where possible, e.g. in homes/buildings, in transport and in industry. We should label green hydrogen in the EU only what comes from 100% additional renewable sources of energy.

Substream 4.2 Supporting change

“32. We recommend that the EU sets up a coercion and reward system to tackle pollution like water, soil, air, and radiation. Issuing fines for polluters, in combination with the mandatory support of an expert organisation, specifically designed to help entities to eliminate pollution and restore the ecosystem. This expert organisation should have a leading role in preventing and controlling the level of pollution.”

Greens/EFA: The Commission adopted the EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil' on 12 May 2021. The plan sets out the overarching vision that by 2050, pollution is reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems. We actively call for setting harmonised criteria for enforcement of EU legislation, including with regard to pollution. The Greens are in favour of “naming and shaming” polluters. It is difficult to task agencies that are monitoring pollution (such as e.g. the European Environment Agency) with this, as that might make it more difficult for them to monitor the pollution in the first place. It is also not possible to give them enforcement powers. We therefore think that “naming and shaming” should be done by the Commission in cooperation with Member States. On the other hand, we would support extending the mandate of relevant EU agencies to become expert organisation to provide help with eliminating pollution and restoring ecosystems.

“33. We recommend the EU to set up a special website/platform verified by multiple experts -with regularly updated and diverse scientific environmental information- that is easily

accessible and transparent to all citizens. This website/platform is linked to a forum where citizens and experts can interact. We also strongly advise to initiate a media campaign to promote this website/platform (for instance through social media such as YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn).”

Greens/EFA: We are in favour of initiatives contributing to better access to information for citizens. There are already many websites/platforms existing providing science-based information, on the impact of climate change for example. However, things can always be improved and things could be worked around the establishment of the Independent Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change (as agreed in the EU climate law), the European Scientific Advisory Board, composed of 15 scientific experts who will ensure evidence-based law-making and provide ‘scientific’ advice to policymakers on the alignment of EU policies with the Union’s commitments under the Paris Agreement.

“34. We recommend that the EU reduces the amount of imported goods that don't meet EU standards in terms of ecological footprint.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation and it could start with the issue of deforestation. Soy, beef and palm oil are responsible for about 80% of tropical deforestation worldwide. The EU is responsible for 7-10 % of global consumption of crops and livestock products that are associated with deforestation in their countries of origin and is a major importer of commodities linked to deforestation. This is why we call for a broader scope and higher ambitions in the proposal for a regulation on deforestation-free products (presented in November 2021).

“35. We recommend that the EU encourages, promotes and facilitates dialogue on climate change between all levels of decision-making, from the very local level (citizens) to the global level (national, international and intercontinental), to satisfy concerns of all involved parties.”

Greens/EFA: To build a Europe that delivers to its citizens, democracy must be strengthened. The EU institutional framework must develop further into a full multi-level democracy in which all public decisions are taken in a transparent way by elected and politically accountable representatives. This framework must allow citizens to get involved actively to create the transformative power of changing Europe for the better. Therefore, lobbying needs to become transparent with binding rules. All this is why we stand with movements that promote solidarity, environmental and climate responsibility, rule of law, feminism, justice and freedom. These are core Green values that we pursue in the quest for popular democracy.

Substream 4.3 Environmentally friendly transport

“36. We recommend that the EU financially supports European member states in order to improve the connectivity of rural areas. It should be done by developing a European public transportation network based on affordable prices (prioritising railways) and with incentives

for public transportation usage. To this end, internet connectivity within a short and realistic time frame should also be developed in rural areas.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. We need a true vision of the European rail sector, from a ‘patchwork to a network approach’. The overall goal would be to facilitate the necessary ‘modal shift’ or in other words, a shift in passenger and freight from air and road to rail. We need to think railways as networks. No one travels from station to station, but from door to door. What matters is the quality, reliability and smoothness of the entire transport chain. The current focus on few high-speed projects that devour the lion’s share of public funds, drives up prices on the entire network and hinders investments in a host of smaller and smarter projects, from which a much larger amount of people would benefit on a daily basis. In addition, improving access to information about schedules and ticketing, particularly for cross-border travel, and having easily understandable and smoothly applied passenger rights, including through-ticketing, are vital. Besides effective sustainable mobility options, expanding and enhancing the quality of connectivity in the digital field beyond urban areas into the whole territory is crucial to revert the trend of rural exodus.

“37. We recommend the improvement of existing transportation infrastructures that may be in disuse or those that can still be improved from an ecological point of view (to implement electric trains). Such process should be done with the intention of not damaging environmentally protected areas.”

Greens/EFA: In order to create a real transport network we cannot only focus on the corridors between main cities, we also need to reinforce regional connections. The currently missing links, notably in rail, are particularly noticeable in cross-border areas, where in many cases previously existing lines degraded and became abandoned. The rail's market share in the EU is just 7.8% so rail should be encouraged for private and business travel by further developing night trains and banning short-haul flights where there is a train alternative for the same route under six hours. Greens/EFA promote an energy-efficient mobility: we should strengthen public transport and encourage modal shifts towards the lowest energy consuming modes for both passenger and freight transport including walking, cycling and use of e-bikes. In the context of the war in Ukraine, a targeted promotion of more energy-efficient mobility instead of promoting private driving is needed: public transport fares need to be further reduced to encourage modal shifts. In addition, further measures encouraging car sharing, carpooling and freight pooling need to be taken and incentives towards micro-mobility, walking and cycling should be created. Moreover, besides fostering electrification wherever possible, in order to comply with the climate goals, it is important to systematically perform life-cycle assessments of climate and biodiversity impacts in order to establish a clear prioritisation on the most beneficial projects in terms of overall GHG reductions by 2030 and 2050.

“38. We recommend that the EU promotes the purchase of electric vehicles complying with good standards regarding battery life. It could be done by EU incentives applying to all EU member states and by improving electric infrastructures. At the same time, it should invest in

the development of other non-polluting technologies, such as biofuels and hydrogen for those vehicles whose electrification is difficult to achieve, such as boats and lorries.”

Greens/EFA: We advocate for the end of combustion engine vehicles by 2030 and the greater uptake of electric vehicles in the European Union, coupled with the necessary charging infrastructure to support this development. However, it is clear that merely substituting one propulsion system for another will not be enough to meet our climate goals and as explained above, we also advocate for a modal shift, to move away from a car-centric approach to the development of alternative means of transport, including train, public transport, biking and walking. Advanced biofuels that are truly sustainable and hydrogen produced from renewable energy also have a role to play, but considering the challenges to their production and the demand from other difficult-to-decarbonise sectors like heavy industry, these should only be directed towards the aviation and maritime sectors as these cannot be easily electrified.

Crop-based biofuels are a major source of land-use change and their impact have been proven to be negative for climate. It is also a dangerous competition to food production, especially in countries where access to food is problematic. We advocate for a quick phase-out of crop based fuels, and a prudent development of advanced biofuels (based on waste), as long as these wastes do not have a better use for substituting fossil feedstock in other sectors. There are other solutions for mobility which are better suited to the objective.

Health (Michèle Rivasi)

Stream 5: Caring for all Substream

5.1 Reinforce the healthcare system

“39. We recommend that the European Union safeguards common health standards, but also pushes for decent minimum wages, a maximum number of working hours and same training standards, for the same certifications, for healthcare professionals across the European Union.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. The healthcare profession went through the COVID-19 crisis while protecting the population, often without the necessary equipment or means at the beginning. We should ensure that their rights are protected, their working conditions are decent and following EU standards to provide the best health care to citizens in Europe.

“40. We recommend that the European Union ensures that treatments across the EU are of equal quality and of fair local cost. This could be ensured, for instance thanks to an extension of the competences of the European Medicines Agency (EMA), or the creation of a new

specialized European procurement agency, which would be competent to negotiate and obtain more suitable prices for medicines for all the Member States. The risk of pharmaceutical industry monopolies must be minimized.”

Greens/EFA: Current regulations on the pharmaceutical sector are not appropriate to provide EU citizens with affordable and accessible medicines and treatments. The exclusivity system in the EU allows pharmaceutical companies to enjoy a monopoly position in the market to earn back investments in the development of medicines. As long as the EU system is solely based on exclusive rights- which lacks transparency about the actual costs of research and development- the system does not necessarily result in the medicines we need most urgently nor to better medicines, but to those medicines that make most business sense for pharmaceutical companies at often exorbitant prices.

We need the following:

- Develop an EU research programme to fund and coordinate public research and clinical trials for the development of medicines and vaccines that address public health needs
- Lay down requirements for public subsidies and oblige pharmaceutical companies to be transparent about the costs to develop medicines
- Step up action against abuses of dominant positions in the pharmaceutical sector

“41. We recommend the creation of a European healthcare database, in which medical records would be made available in cases of emergencies or illnesses. Participation should be optional, and personal data protection must be ensured”

Greens/EFA: We believe that health data should be stored at national level rather than via a central European database. Health data should be transferable across borders in case a patient needs to receive a treatment in a different Member State or move to live there. But by default, we shouldn't adopt a European centred approach for storing data. We would prefer to have national data sets interoperable with another and adopting the same standards, including in terms of respecting the right to privacy.

“42. We recommend that the European Union further develops and synchronizes already existing health research and innovation programs, as it is done in the framework of the existing Horizon Europe program. Academic outcomes and results should be made freely available in all member states.”

Greens/EFA: we agree with this proposal. Health research and innovation programs should be step up and we regret that the EU4Health programme saw its funding envelope decreased by half (compared to the Commission's proposal in the current Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027), reducing the funds available to fund the operations of HERA, which affects other health activities. The allocation of public funds should be transparent and accountable, so that publicly funded products and services are available for affordable price to citizens and health systems.

“43. We recommend that the European Union increases its budget dedicated for joint research and innovation projects in the area of health (without budget cuts in other EU health-related programs). This would also strengthen European scientific and research institutions overall.”

Greens/EFA: We support this proposal. See answer above.

Substream 5.2 A broader understanding of health

“44. We recommend that a health week be established as a European Union initiative across all Member States, on the same week, on all health issues with a special focus on mental health. During this week, all main topics on mental health will be collectively covered and promoted, together with other already existing initiatives, such as those from the Mental Health Europe organization.”

Greens/EFA: there are already several health days or weeks during the year to raise awareness that we do not believe this should be the priority. Mental health is of course a very important topic, which should be addressed by Member States with the necessary means (human and financial).

“45. We recommend that female sanitary products stop being considered as luxury products when it comes to taxation, as they are essential products. We also recommend that hormonal contraception products used for medical reasons, such as in the cases of fibromyalgia and endometriosis, get taxed as a regular medical treatment. We also recommend that the European Union encourages the harmonisation of medically assisted reproductive treatments for all women (single or married) across all Member States.”

Greens/EFA: we support these proposals and suggested in the past to reform the VAT directive to ensure lower VAT rates on female sanitary products. Member States should explore all existing flexibilities in the EU legislation to lower the taxation on these products / treatments to make them accessible.

“46. We recommend that the European Union takes a strong stance in influencing all Member States to include in their school curricula, as appropriate, issues on mental health and sexual education. To help Member States adopt such issues in school curricula, the European Union should developed and make available a standard program on mental health and sexual issues.”

Greens/EFA: Education is largely a national competence but the European Commission can issue guidelines and non-binding recommendations as to how approach the issues of mental health and sexual education in Member States. Such approach would be beneficial after months of lock-downs which affected a large part of the population in Europe.

“47. We recommend that the European Union develops a better communication system of all its initiatives on mental health, namely the Public Health Portal on good practices, within Member States and for all citizens. Members of the European Parliament could present these good practices to each other, in order to make them better known across Member States.”

Greens/EFA: we support any initiative aiming at raising awareness and promoting good practices to support initiatives on addressing mental health issues. Gathering all existing initiatives into one portal would be a good idea.

Substream 5.3 Equal access to health for all

“48. We recommend that the EU sets and promotes minimum standards for quality dental care, including prophylaxis, for all EU Member States. Free of charge dental care should be available for children, low-income groups and other vulnerable groups. In 15-20 years time, the EU should guarantee that affordable dental care is available to everyone.”

Greens/EFA: We support standards to ensure disease prevention in general and quality dental care in particular in this case. Focusing on disease prevention is the best way to keep the sustainability of our healthcare systems. Indeed, we have increasing and aging populations and money needs to be invested more efficiently and primarily on prevention (i.e. focusing on healthy lifestyle is the most cost-effective of interventions). Free of charge dental care for children or certain low-income groups already exists in certain Member States and should ideally be generalised to all Member States.

“49. We recommend to include Health and Healthcare among the shared competencies between the EU and the EU Member States. In order to include this new shared competence, there is a need to amend Article 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)”

Greens/EFA: While reforming the TFEU sounds a difficult exercise today in the European Union, we are generally in support of more competence at EU level to implement the One Health approach promoted by the European Commission.

“50. We recommend that the EU makes courses on providing first aid available to all EU citizens free of charge. The EU could consider making such courses obligatory for students and for workplaces (both in public and in the private sector). These courses also need to be practical, recurrent and adapted to students' age. There should also be a minimum number of defibrillators available in public places in all EU Member States”

Greens/EFA: First aid training is important and can save lives when rapid intervention is needed. This topic should deserve greater attention by Member States. Greens/EFA doesn't have a position as to where the funding for these programmes should come from.

“51. We recommend that the European Union ensures that private health care providers do not unfairly benefit from public funds and do not drain resources from public health systems. The European Union should issue strong recommendations to Member States to increase funding to public healthcare.”

Greens/EFA: We support this recommendation. Supporting the public healthcare system so that primary health services are accessible and affordable to all is a vital role for Member States and the European Union. In several Member States public healthcare is seriously underfunded and lacks the the proper resources (human and financial) to properly operate. Given the role of public services to reduce inequality, it is of utmost importance to prioritize support to public healthcare across Europe.