

# Greens/EFA position on European Citizens' Panel 1 Recommendations



MEP Monika Vana and Niklas Nienass- members of the WG "A Stronger Economy, Social Justice & Jobs"

## Stream 1: Working in Europe

**1. We recommend the introduction of a minimum wage to ensure similar quality of living across all Member States. We acknowledge the existing efforts in the EU directive COM(2020) 682 to standardise the way of living. The minimum wage needs to secure a minimum net income to achieve an essential objective: everyone in need should have more money to spend. The minimum wage should take into consideration the following aspects:**

- The EU should ensure the effective implementation because currently not all Member States apply worker protection adequately.
- Special attention should be put on monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living.
- The minimum wage must factor in the purchasing power in different countries. A regular review cycle is necessary to adjust for the changing cost of living (e.g. by inflation). We recommend this because a minimum wage enhances social justice in the labour market and improves the concrete living conditions of employees in all Member States. This is especially important in the context of a fast changing working environment, e.g. by digitalisation.

We recommend this because a minimum wage enhances social justice in the labour market and improves the concrete living conditions of employees in all Member States. This is especially important in the context of a fast changing working environment, e.g. by digitalisation.

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation.**

**We need to ensure that statutory minimum wages guarantee that each worker can earn a decent and similar quality of standard of living for themselves and their families across all Member States in order to combat in-work poverty and provide for social protection. Clear criteria (e.g. living costs in different countries on the basis of a basket of goods and services at real prices, inflation, above the poverty line in work poverty, the 50 % of the average and 60 % of the median wage) need to be taken into account applied when setting minimum wages level should be set up. The levels of minimum wages should be annually reviewed in light of these criteria in order to ensure and preserve the adequacy of minimum wages. Special attention should be put on effective implementation of these rules and monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living. At the same time, collective bargaining should be strengthened and promoted throughout the EU.**

2. There is already an EU regulation (EU's Working Time Directive - 2003/88/EC) in place. However, it is not sufficient to ensure a healthy work life balance. As a first step, we recommend that the existing framework needs a review if it is adequate for the current circumstances. Secondly, the EU should establish a stricter monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation in all Member States. Special attention needs to be paid to different sectors that have different levels of stress and burdens, both psychologically and physically. However, at the same time, other sectors rely on more flexibility from their employees to adjust for specific corporate needs.

We recommend this because an improved work-life balance is important because it enhances social cohesion and contributes to a level playing field among employees. Also, it positively affects the individual well-being of employees.

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation.**

**We urge the Commission to monitor annually, closely and systemically the implementation by the Member States of the Work-Life Balance Directive and call on the Commission to ensure equal participation and opportunities in the labour market for men and women, and to address the feminisation of poverty in all its forms, including poverty in old age, particularly by factoring gender into the availability of and access to adequate pension entitlements in order to eliminate the gender pension gap, and by improving working conditions in feminised sectors and professions such as the care sector. All of that needs to be complemented with legislation at EU level on The Right to Disconnect to ensure the protection of worker's mental health.**

7. We recommend that the EU introduces or reinforces existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' [= working online and remotely, e.g. home office or from another location connected online]. Further, we recommend that the EU legislates to incentivise companies to be socially responsible and to keep high-quality 'smart working' jobs within the EU. The incentives can be financial and/or reputational, and should take into account existing internationally recognised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For this to happen, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all interested stakeholders to explore and strengthen such legislation.

We recommend this because we need to promote high quality 'smart working' jobs and avoid their relocation to lower-cost, non-EU countries. The Covid-19 pandemic and the global economic trends increase the urgency to protect jobs in the EU and regulate 'smart working'.

**Greens/EFA position: we are in favor of regulating this, but this needs to be clear and we need to make sure that it doesn't only impact people with higher economic standards in jobs that can be easily done remotely**

**We should distinguish between:**

- **Teleworkers i.e. those working from home / remote office / shared space in the country of their employment**

- Cross border remote workers i.e. cross-border workers who telework
- Remote workers i.e. working from home / remote office / shared space irrespective of where the office is located (meaning there is no country limitation)

This implies lots of complications in terms of taxes and social security coverage. We are in the process of making a position paper, but this has a very discriminatory angle:

- Incentivising telework, means companies reducing working spaces, wifi, equipment, and more people having to pay for it from their pocket, which de facto, is a wage reduction. Imagine working from home, you need a separate room that is not your bedroom or living room/kitchen, for R2D reasons. That means having houses/apartments with more rooms. That also means more spending on energy, which is a huge expense, especially now with the energy crises.
- It also has a gender aspect, where women are expected to multitask and do care / domestic work.

**9. We recommend that the EU creates opportunities for different entities (universities, corporations, research institutes, etc.) to invest in research and innovation aiming to develop:**

- new materials, intended to serve as more sustainable and biodiverse alternatives to those currently in use,
- innovative uses of existing materials (also based on recycling and state-of-the-art techniques which have the smallest environmental footprint).

**We recommend this to be an ongoing, long-term commitment from the EU (at least until 2050).**

We recommend this because we live on a planet with finite resources. If we want to have a future, we need to protect the climate and look for planet-friendly alternatives. We also want the EU to become a leader in this field with a strong, competitive advantage in the international arena. The intention of the recommendation is to produce innovative results that can be applied broadly and implemented across various fields and countries. It would also positively impact the economy and the labour market by creating new job opportunities in the field of sustainable innovation. It could contribute to combating social

**Greens/EFA position:**

**We support the intentions of the recommendation but would like to caution against focusing too much on R&D and innovation.**

**While R&D and innovation is of course always interesting and worth being supported, we can move to (more) sustainable alternatives respectful of biodiversity already now.**

**Amongst others, as formulated in the 2021 European Parliament resolution on the new circular economy action plan, this should include elements such as decoupling of growth from resource use; binding EU targets for 2030 to significantly reduce the EU material and consumption footprints and bring them within planetary boundaries by 2050; and to introduce harmonised, comparable and uniform circularity indicators, consisting of material footprint and consumption footprint indicators.**

**10. We recommend that the EU makes a long term, ongoing commitment to largely increase its share of sustainably sourced energy, using a diverse range of renewable sources that have the lowest environmental footprint (based on a holistic life-cycle assessment). Furthermore, the EU should invest in improving and maintaining the quality of electrical infrastructure and the electrical grid. We also recommend that access to energy and energy affordability are recognised as a basic right of citizens.**

We recommend this because:

- Diversifying energy sources (including solar, wind, hydrogen, seawater, or any future sustainable methods) would make the EU more energy independent,
- it would lower electricity costs for EU citizens,
- it would create jobs and restructure the energy market (especially in regions that were thus far dependent on fossil fuels),
- it could encourage scientific development of innovative techniques of energy sourcing,
- the quality of the electric infrastructure and the electrical grid are as important as energy sources, allowing for smooth, efficient, and affordable distribution and transport of energy.

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation.**

**11. We recommend that the EU actively promotes greener production processes, through subsidising or otherwise rewarding companies that invest in lowering the environmental costs of their production. Furthermore, we require an effort to recultivate post-industrial sites and establish protected green zones around existing sites. Companies should be required to finance these efforts, at least in part, from their own pocket.**

We recommend this because production processes are an important element in the supply chain. Making them more environmentally friendly could greatly reduce our climate impact. We believe companies and industries should be held accountable for how they produce their products (including recultivation and environmental protection measures). Making production processes greener also prepares companies for the future and makes them more resilient (which protects jobs).

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation.**

**Beyond that we think that any subsidization or any other form of support to undertakings should be subject to green conditionality. A sustainable reconfiguration of the EU economy necessitates that state aid expenditures promote not only the economic but also the environmental viability of companies. Therefore, the Commission shall design and monitor green conditions as part of its for state aid measures. These conditions can be based on the EU emissions reduction targets or linked to the design of sustainable products and circular production processes by reducing the use of virgin materials in the new Circular Economy Action Plan. When granting state aid, undertakings shall be required to implement these reduction targets for carbon emissions and materials usage in their business models after the crisis and in case a company breaches the agreed green conditions, the aid granted would have to be partly or fully recovered, depending on the severity of the breach.**

## Substream 2.2 Sustainable Economy / Substream 2.3 Taxation

**13. We recommend having the same fiscal rules in Europe and harmonising fiscal policy across all the EU. Tax harmonisation should allow leeway for individual Member States to set their own tax rules but still prevent tax evasion. It will end harmful fiscal practices and tax competition. Taxes should concern commercial transactions in the location where they occur. When a company sells in a country they should pay taxes in this particular country. These new rules would aim to prevent delocalisation and ensure that the transactions and production take place between European countries.**

We recommend this to protect and develop jobs, economic activities in Europe and with equity between the Member States. It will bring a common understanding within Europe of the fiscal system. It intends to end the absurd monopoly situation of giant companies who do not pay enough taxes compared to smaller companies. It will also bring the money where commercial activities are carried out.

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation**

**14. We recommend getting rid of the system of planned obsolescence of all electronic devices. Change should happen both on an individual and commercial level, to guarantee that we can own, repair, and upgrade in the long term. We recommend the promotion of refurbished devices. Through regulation, it would be compulsory for companies to guarantee the right to repair, including upgrades and software updates, and to recycle all devices in the long term. It is also recommended that every company should use standardised connectors.**

We recommend this because in the modern world, products tend to last 2 years, we want them to have a much longer lifespan of about 10 years. This proposition will have a positive impact on climate change and ecology. It will also reduce costs for consumers and reduce consumerism.

**Greens/EFA position: we support this recommendation**

## Substream 3.1 Social Security

**19. We recommend promoting social policies and equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory.**

We recommend this because there are big disparities between Member States regarding social policies that need to be reduced to achieve a decent life for all citizens, and to carry out the care and support needed by vulnerable people for various reasons (health, age, sexual orientation, etc.).

**Greens/EFA position: we support this recommendation, although it is very broad**

**20. We recommend promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the Member States, and providing the appropriate funding. We need to reinforce collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.).**

We recommend this because there are many areas in which we need to advance and deepen our knowledge. The pandemic experience shows us an example in which research is essential to improve life and in which public-private and government-to-government collaboration is essential and financial support is necessary.

**Greens/EFA position: we support this recommendation, although it is very broad**

**21. We recommend the EU should have stronger competences in social policies to harmonise and establish minimum rules and pension benefits across the EU based on a thorough diagnosis. Minimum pension needs to be above the poverty line of the country. The retirement age should differ based on categorisation of professions with mentally and physically demanding professions being able to retire earlier. At the same time, there should be a guaranteed right to work for the elderly who wish to continue working on a volunteer basis.**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing. The European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

**Greens/EFA position: we support, and it is also important to ensure equal pay in order to close the gender pay gap, which by default creates a gender pension gap.**

**22. We recommend a set of agreed measures to encourage an increase in the birth rate as well as to ensure appropriate childcare. These measures include, among others, affordable and accessible childcare (at the workplace, overnight, reducing the VAT on child equipment), housing, stable work, supporting motherhood, specific support and protection of work for young people and parents and supporting mothers and fathers with access to knowledge at the return to work.**

We recommend this because the low birth rates in the EU stand out which further contributes to the ageing of the European population and on which immediate measures should be taken. The proposed set of measures aims to ensure stability for young families necessary to provide for children.

**Greens/EFA position: we agree with this recommendation**

**23. We recommend to guarantee social and health care for the elderly at home as well as in nursing homes. In addition, there is a need for improved support for those who take care of elderly (relatives).**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing, the European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation, long-term care is a fundamental right but also the protection of care workers (huge gender aspect here), we welcome the Strategy on Care that the commission will publish this year.**

### **Substream 3.2 Equal Rights**

**25. We recommend the EU to support targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs. Financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and the European Union. The aim should be to facilitate the construction/repairing of the existing social housing stock, including by cooperative association, rental, and purchase. The support should be granted based on clear criteria (e.g., the max. surface/person to be subsidised, incomes of the beneficiaries etc.).**

We recommend this because improved housing access would ensure that EU citizens benefit from tangible equal rights. It would help to ease social tensions. While the EU is mainly called upon to oversee the support mechanism, national and local authorities should more actively solve the housing problems.

**Greens/EFA position: we support, we need renovation for sustainable housing and also free from asbestos products. Regulating the price of the housing market and increasing social housing is also key. Our goal is to end homelessness by 2030.**

**26. We recommend that the EU improves the regulation and uniform implementation of support measures for families with children in all Member States. Such measures include: increasing the length of parental leave, childbirth and childcare allowances.**

We recommend this because we think that the measures would alleviate the demographic problem that the EU is facing. They would also improve gender equality between parents.

**Greens/EFA position: we agree with this recommendation**

**27. We recommend that the EU takes action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. Such rights include the right to marriage and adoption.**

We recommend this because we think all EU citizens should enjoy equal rights, including family rights. The family is the basic form of social organisation. A happy family contributes to a healthy society. The recommendation aims to ensure that all citizens enjoy family rights regardless of their gender, adult age, ethnicity, or physical health condition.

**Greens/EFA position: we support with this recommendation, for all families including single parents and rainbow families.**

### **Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports**

**28. We recommend that the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy is strongly prioritised and incentivised as an urgent matter that is effectively addressed by Member States. The EU should (a) define indicators (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and (b) put an Ombudsman in place to get feedback directly from citizens.**

We recommend this because we think that gender equality is far from what we would like to see in the EU. There should be harmony in gender equality and civil rights at European level, so that they are achieved in all countries, and not only in the ones with a stronger compromise with the topic. We value the presence and contribution of women in power positions, and in any kind of profession, in order to have a diverse and fulfilling EU. Women are disadvantaged in many situations (even in the case they have good/ higher education or other privileges), so such a strategy is strongly needed.

**Greens/EFA position: we support the recommendation of a strong prioritisation 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy and an increase of ambition on achieving gender equality at European level; we also welcome the focus on concrete steps, noting that further progress should be achieved immediately in this regard, such as on the pay transparency directive and the unblocking of the Women on Boards Directive**

**30. We recommend that the EU should obligate every Member State to have a defined minimum wage related to the cost of living in that state and is considered a fair salary that can allow minimum life conditions, over the poverty line. Each Member State must monitor this.**

We recommend this because it is not fair that you cannot reach the end of the month if you are working. Fair salaries should contribute to life quality at a social level. Unfair wages have a high cost for the states (security, tax avoidance, higher social costs, etc.).

**Greens/EFA position: We support this recommendation**



**European Citizens' Panel 1:  
"Stronger economy, social justice and jobs /  
Education, culture, youth and sport / Digital  
transformation"**



**Recommendations adopted by the panel  
(to be taken forward to the plenary)**

## **Stream 1: Working in Europe**

### **Substream 1.1 Labour Market**

- 1. We recommend the introduction of a minimum wage to ensure similar quality of living across all Member States. We acknowledge the existing efforts in the EU directive COM(2020) 682 to standardise the way of living. The minimum wage needs to secure a minimum net income to achieve an essential objective: everyone in need should have more money to spend. The minimum wage should take into consideration the following aspects:**
  - **The EU should ensure the effective implementation because currently not all Member States apply worker protection adequately.**
  - **Special attention should be put on monitoring and tracking improvement in the standard of living.**
  - **The minimum wage must factor in the purchasing power in different countries. A regular review cycle is necessary to adjust for the changing cost of living (e.g. by inflation).**

We recommend this because a minimum wage enhances social justice in the labour market and improves the concrete living conditions of employees in all Member States. This is especially important in the context of a fast changing working environment, e.g. by digitalisation.

- 2. There is already an EU regulation (EU's Working Time Directive - 2003/88/EC) in place. However, it is not sufficient to ensure a healthy work life balance. As a first step, we recommend that the existing framework needs a review if it is adequate for the current circumstances. Secondly, the EU should establish a stricter monitoring mechanism to ensure implementation in all Member States. Special attention needs to be paid to different sectors that have different levels of stress and burdens, both psychologically and physically.**

**However, at the same time, other sectors rely on more flexibility from their employees to adjust for specific corporate needs.**

We recommend this because an improved work-life balance is important because it enhances social cohesion and contributes to a level playing field among employees. Also, it positively affects the individual well-being of employees.

## Substream 1.2 Youth and Employment

- 3. We recommend the harmonisation of the level of all different education programs in the EU with acceptance of the national content. Accordingly, we recommend that the professional degrees are validated and mutually recognised in all EU Member States.**

We recommend this because we want to facilitate European labour mobility and reduce the administrative burden.

Greens/EFA: **We wholeheartedly support the idea that there should be mutual recognition of professional degrees across the member states.** Indeed there are already a number of measures in place that facilitate the mutual recognition of certain qualifications. As Greens/EFA we would like to even go a step further to ensure that all forms of education, be they formal or informal, academic or vocational, benefit from mutual recognition across the union.

- 4. We recommend that high school students (from 12 years old on) should have an insight into their future labour market by giving them the opportunity to have several high quality observatory visits in profit and non-profit organisations. We propose to encourage companies to accept observing students by granting them subsidies. In remote areas where there is less opportunity, local schools, governments, organisations and companies must work closely together to realise that those observatory visits are also effective.**

We recommend this because we want youngsters to gain insight into the different possibilities in the labour market so that they can make a better choice for their studies and their professional future and understand the importance of the right study. It also teaches them what responsibility is and that they should have respect for the labour market. It will help youngsters with the integration in the labour market. It is a win-win situation for both sites.

- 5. We recommend that practising soft skills should be integrated in all the courses in the curricula in schools. By soft skills we mean: listening to each other, encouraging dialogue, resilience, understanding, respect and appreciation for others, critical thinking, self-study, remaining curious, result-oriented. Teachers should be trained in the transmission of these skills by collaborating closely with social workers and/or psychologists. Other suggestions for execution: organise exchange programs for students between schools, organise participation in sports and cultural events cross-schools etc.**

We recommend this because soft skills are basic skills needed, which are lost in the digital age and are absolutely necessary in the future life of our youth. Therefore we stress bringing them in the curriculum so it helps them to be resilient and helps them to avoid and overcome mental issues they might experience in their future life. Social skills strengthen inter-human relations and therefore help people find their place in society.

**We GreensEFA** are very aware of the role soft skills play in people's everyday life. That is why **advocate to not solely understand education and learning as a tool to serve the labour market but to acknowledge its full potential to serve and prepare the European citizens for the challenges ahead**. Soft skills may be developed throughout life starting in early stages of education and can happen in formal, non formal and informal settings. There are some initiatives in the EU targeting students and teachers, notably through Erasmus +, that aim to improve students' ability to recognise and develop relevant transversal skills but more needs to be done. Also, we believe that the teacher-students interaction is crucial to the well-being and development of students so even if during the pandemic online courses may have been a temporary solution digital can never replace **in person learning** and the former can only be complementary to the latter.

- 6. We recommend that in case of a serious crisis (e.g. health crisis, war, etc.) well prepared plans with detailed scenarios are ready to deploy in a flexible way to minimise the impact on our youngsters in their studies, vocational training, mental wellbeing etc. By impact we mean: higher cost of studying or training, obliged prolongation of studies, internships that could not be carried out, increase of mental health problems. The scripts have to be rolled out to minimise the impact on youngsters and their transition to the labour market.**

We recommend this because the position of the youngsters is very vulnerable in times of crisis.

**Greens/EFA support this recommendation.** The CULT committee is presently drafting a report on the impact of covid-19 closures on young people during the pandemic. Various research shows that governments were unprepared for the impact of the crisis, and as such, large numbers of children and young people missed out not only on their education but also numerous other activities and opportunities. **We would say that such a plan should not only take into account the transition of young people into the labour market but also their ability to take part in society in general, as well as their mental health and well being, independent of employment opportunities.**

### **Substream 1.3 Digitalization at Work**

- 7. We recommend that the EU introduces or reinforces existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' [= working online and remotely, e.g. home office or from another location connected online]. Further, we recommend that the EU legislates to incentivise companies to be socially responsible and to keep high-quality 'smart working' jobs within the EU. The incentives can be financial and/or reputational, and should take into account existing internationally recognised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For this to happen, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all interested stakeholders to explore and strengthen such legislation.**

We recommend this because we need to promote high quality 'smart working' jobs and avoid their relocation to lower-cost, non-EU countries. The Covid-19 pandemic and the global economic trends increase the urgency to protect jobs in the EU and regulate 'smart working'.

8. We recommend that the EU guarantees the right to digital training for all EU citizens. In particular, young people's digital skills could be boosted with the introduction of an EU certification in schools that would prepare them for the future job market. We also recommend specific training at the EU level to re-train and up-skill workers to remain competitive in the job market. Lastly, we recommend the EU raises more awareness about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and to help them find jobs in the EU, e.g. EURES.

We recommend this because certified digital skills are fundamental for people to enter the job market and for workers to re-skill and stay competitive.

**GreensEFA supports the right to digital training for all citizens. However, we would like to ensure that basic skills are also included** in any kind of EU wide training. The digital transition is important, and strong basic skills will enable people to be able to follow such digital training. In terms of EU wide certification, **the mutual recognition of diplomas and qualifications** is something that GreensEFA has long advocated for. We also support **the recognition of vocational training and the introduction of micro-credentials**, to enable wider mutual recognition of learning, especially for those outside of formal, tertiary institutions.

## Stream 2: An Economy for the Future

### Substream 2.1 Innovation and European Competitiveness

9. We recommend that the EU creates opportunities for different entities (universities, corporations, research institutes, etc.) to invest in research and innovation aiming to develop:
- new materials, intended to serve as more sustainable and biodiverse alternatives to those currently in use,
  - innovative uses of existing materials (also based on recycling and state-of-the-art techniques which have the smallest environmental footprint). We recommend this to be an ongoing, long-term commitment from the EU (at least until 2050).

We recommend this because we live on a planet with finite resources. If we want to have a future, we need to protect the climate and look for planet-friendly alternatives. We also want the EU to become a leader in this field with a strong, competitive advantage in the international arena. The intention of the recommendation is to produce innovative results that can be applied broadly and implemented across various fields and countries. It would also positively impact the economy and the labour market by creating new job opportunities in the field of sustainable innovation. It could contribute to combating social injustices by replacing current, exploitative production means with new, more ethical ones.

**10. We recommend that the EU makes a long term, ongoing commitment to largely increase its share of sustainably sourced energy, using a diverse range of renewable sources that have the lowest environmental footprint (based on a holistic life-cycle assessment). Furthermore, the EU should invest in improving and maintaining the quality of electrical infrastructure and the electrical grid. We also recommend that access to energy and energy affordability are recognised as a basic right of citizens.**

We recommend this because:

- Diversifying energy sources (including solar, wind, hydrogen, seawater, or any future sustainable methods) would make the EU more energy-independent,
- it would lower electricity costs for EU citizens,
- it would create jobs and restructure the energy market (especially in regions that were thus far dependent on fossil fuels),
- it could encourage scientific development of innovative techniques of energy sourcing,
- the quality of the electric infrastructure and the electrical grid are as important as energy sources, allowing for smooth, efficient, and affordable distribution and transport of energy.

**11. We recommend that the EU actively promotes greener production processes, through subsidising or otherwise rewarding companies that invest in lowering the environmental costs of their production. Furthermore, we require an effort to recultivate post-industrial sites and establish protected green zones around existing sites. Companies should be required to finance these efforts, at least in part, from their own pocket.**

We recommend this because production processes are an important element in the supply chain. Making them more environmentally friendly could greatly reduce our climate impact. We believe companies and industries should be held accountable for how they produce their products (including recultivation and environmental protection measures). Making production processes greener also prepares companies for the future and makes them more resilient (which protects jobs).

### **Substream 2.2 Sustainable Economy / Substream 2.3 Taxation**

**12. We recommend that plastic containers are abandoned and to generalise reusable ones. There should be incentives for consumers and companies, so it will not be more expensive to buy goods in bulk ("en vrac" in French or "sfuso" in Italian) for a consumer as opposed to packaged ones. Companies contributing to this transition should have fiscal benefits and those that do not should pay more taxes. For those products that cannot be reused, they should be recyclable and/or biodegradable. A public or oversight institution to monitor everything is required, to set the rules and to share them with everyone. It is recommended to educate, communicate - also through social media - about these actions to both companies and consumers to change their behaviours in the long term. Companies should be encouraged and helped to find the best solutions with their own waste (construction companies for example).**

We recommend this because we all have to be responsible for our actions. So we have to rethink all production processes. Recycling requires a lot of resources (water, energy), so it cannot be the only answer. This is why we propose to commercialise bulk goods. Recycling should only be used for easily recyclable materials. And we know with the Finnish example that it is possible to recycle a very large part.

- 13. We recommend having the same fiscal rules in Europe and harmonising fiscal policy across all the EU. Tax harmonisation should allow leeway for individual Member States to set their own tax rules but still prevent tax evasion. It will end harmful fiscal practices and tax competition. Taxes should concern commercial transactions in the location where they occur. When a company sells in a country they should pay taxes in this particular country. These new rules would aim to prevent delocalisation and ensure that the transactions and production take place between European countries.**

We recommend this to protect and develop jobs, economic activities in Europe and with equity between the Member States. It will bring a common understanding within Europe of the fiscal system. It intends to end the absurd monopoly situation of giant companies who do not pay enough taxes compared to smaller companies. It will also bring the money where commercial activities are carried out.

- 14. We recommend getting rid of the system of planned obsolescence of all electronic devices. Change should happen both on an individual and commercial level, to guarantee that we can own, repair, and upgrade in the long term. We recommend the promotion of refurbished devices. Through regulation, it would be compulsory for companies to guarantee the right to repair, including upgrades and software updates, and to recycle all devices in the long term. It is also recommended that every company should use standardised connectors.**

We recommend this because in the modern world, products tend to last 2 years, we want them to have a much longer lifespan of about 10 years. This proposition will have a positive impact on climate change and ecology. It will also reduce costs for consumers and reduce consumerism.

- 15. We recommend helping everyone to learn about our environment and its connection to everyone's individual health through education. Educational courses will help everyone to define their own personal strategies to integrate these topics into their lives. This education should start at school with specific subjects addressing all ecological issues, and we should continue to be educated throughout our entire lives (at work for instance). It will contribute to reducing waste and protecting the environment and human health. This education will promote local consumption of healthy and non processed products, sourced from local producers. Those who do not act to reduce waste will have to take a free training course on these issues. To enable this lifestyle adaptation, prices need to be fair for the producer and the consumer. Consequently, we propose that small, local and environmentally friendly producers will have tax exemptions.**

We recommend this because we believe that many people do not yet feel concerned by these issues. This is why we need education about this for everyone. Furthermore, local and healthy

products tend to be unaffordable for many. We have to ensure that locally made products are more widely available to all.

**We, the GreensEFA, believe that the post-pandemic recovery and revitalisation of the European education policy is strictly connected to the other challenges that the European Union and the world are facing, starting with the climate crisis; we are convinced that the future education policy has to be deeply interconnected with social challenges as well as the green and digital transitions;** we think education for sustainability and/or citizenship education, for example, can play a key role in raising awareness as long as they are taught following a whole-school approach and also involve the whole community;

#### Substream 2.4 Agriculture / Substream 2.5 Digital Infrastructure

- 16. We recommend the implementation of a common European easy-to-understand labelling system for consumption and nutrition products (the information would contain allergens, country of origin, etc), transparency about ongoing approval processes, digitalisation of product information through a standardised European app which would allow for more user friendly access and would provide additional information on products and production chain. We also see the need for a truly independent body that regulates food standards across the EU, that has legislative powers, so as to be able to apply sanctions.**

We recommend this because EU citizens should expect the same standard of food. The integrity of food products is a necessity to ensure the safety of citizens. These recommendations have been made to enhance the approval monitoring and transparency of food production in a harmonised way.

- 17. We recommend infrastructure to be a state asset to prevent the rise of telecommunications and internet service monopolies. It should be a right to have access to the internet, it should be a priority to bring internet connection to ‘whitezones / dead zones’ (areas with no internet access). Children and families are a priority when it comes to accessing the internet and hardware, particularly in terms of education, and especially in times of a pandemic. An initiative is needed to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training.**

We recommend this because we must ensure that the digital transformation is done in an equitable manner. Access to the internet is fundamental to democracy and is a right of all European citizens.

**GreensEFA support this recommendation. We believe that high speed broadband and technological equipment must be accessible for all citizens.** The pandemic proved that the internet is a necessary commodity, especially in terms of access to education, and especially for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, and those in rural and outermost areas.

- 18. We recommend local insects to be respected and protected against invasive species. We also propose to incentivise and advocate for new construction developments to have obligatory green spaces. We call for the introduction of biodiversity as a mandatory subject in schools through the use of curricular activities, e.g. through practical activities. It is important to**

**highlight awareness for biodiversity through the use of media campaigns and incentivised ‘competitions’ across the EU (local community scale competitions). We recommend the establishment of binding national targets across the EU Member States for reforestation of native trees and local flora.**

We recommend this because biodiversity is key for the environment, the quality of life and to combat climate change.

**We, GreensEFA, believe that the fight against climate change is one of the greatest and most urgent challenges facing the European Union. We are convinced that when it comes to environmental issues, it is key to engage institutions at all levels as well as civil society organizations; As you rightly point out a greater awareness of civil society is necessary. To this end, we **strongly support the recommendation** and we advocate for courses and activities to be introduced in schools to teach students about the importance and the respect for the environment and biodiversity. We also support the idea that the protection of biodiversity must also pass through the adoption of specific measures, at local, national but also European level to **include education to sustainability, environment and climate change at all levels of education, from childcare to tertiary education and in all forms of educational settings including non-formal and informal education.****

**See recommendation 15 and 35.**

## **Stream 3: A Just Society**

### **Substream 3.1 Social Security**

- 19. We recommend promoting social policies and equality of rights, including health, harmonised for the entire EU, which take into consideration agreed regulations and the minimum requirements throughout the territory.**

We recommend this because there are big disparities between Member States regarding social policies that need to be reduced to achieve a decent life for all citizens, and to carry out the care and support needed by vulnerable people for various reasons (health, age, sexual orientation, etc.).

- 20. We recommend promoting research in social matters and health in the EU, following priority lines that are considered to be of public interest and agreed on by the Member States, and providing the appropriate funding. We need to reinforce collaboration across fields of expertise, across countries, centres of studies (universities, etc.).**

We recommend this because there are many areas in which we need to advance and deepen our knowledge. The pandemic experience shows us an example in which research is essential



to improve life and in which public-private and government-to-government collaboration is essential and financial support is necessary.

- 21. We recommend the EU should have stronger competences in social policies to harmonise and establish minimum rules and pension benefits across the EU based on a thorough diagnosis. Minimum pension needs to be above the poverty line of the country. The retirement age should differ based on categorisation of professions with mentally and physically demanding professions being able to retire earlier. At the same time, there should be a guaranteed right to work for the elderly who wish to continue working on a volunteer basis.**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing. The European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

- 22. We recommend a set of agreed measures to encourage an increase in the birth rate as well as to ensure appropriate childcare. These measures include, among others, affordable and accessible childcare (at the workplace, overnight, reducing the VAT on child equipment), housing, stable work, supporting motherhood, specific support and protection of work for young people and parents and supporting mothers and fathers with access to knowledge at the return to work.**

We recommend this because the low birth rates in the EU stand out which further contributes to the ageing of the European population and on which immediate measures should be taken. The proposed set of measures aims to ensure stability for young families necessary to provide for children.

- 23. We recommend to guarantee social and health care for the elderly at home as well as in nursing homes. In addition, there is a need for improved support for those who take care of elderly (relatives).**

We recommend this because life expectancy is increasing and the natality is reducing, the European population is ageing which is why we need to take further measures to avoid the risk of marginalisation of elderly and ensure their decent life.

- 24. We recommend the EU should support palliative care and assisted death [euthanasia] following a concrete set of rules and regulations.**

We recommend this because it would reduce the pain of the patients and families and it would ensure a decent end of life.

### **Substream 3.2 Equal Rights**

- 25. We recommend the EU to support targeted access to decent social housing for citizens, according to their specific needs. Financial effort should be shared among private funders, landlords, housing beneficiaries, Member State governments at central and local levels, and**

**the European Union. The aim should be to facilitate the construction/repairing of the existing social housing stock, including by cooperative association, rental, and purchase. The support should be granted based on clear criteria (e.g., the max. surface/person to be subsidised, incomes of the beneficiaries etc.).**

We recommend this because improved housing access would ensure that EU citizens benefit from tangible equal rights. It would help to ease social tensions. While the EU is mainly called upon to oversee the support mechanism, national and local authorities should more actively solve the housing problems.

- 26. We recommend that the EU improves the regulation and uniform implementation of support measures for families with children in all Member States. Such measures include: increasing the length of parental leave, childbirth and childcare allowances.**

We recommend this because we think that the measures would alleviate the demographic problem that the EU is facing. They would also improve gender equality between parents.

- 27. We recommend that the EU takes action to guarantee that all families enjoy equal family rights in all Member States. Such rights include the right to marriage and adoption.**

We recommend this because we think all EU citizens should enjoy equal rights, including family rights. The family is the basic form of social organisation. A happy family contributes to a healthy society. The recommendation aims to ensure that all citizens enjoy family rights regardless of their gender, adult age, ethnicity, or physical health condition.

### **Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports**

- 28. We recommend that the 2020-2025 EU Gender Equality Strategy is strongly prioritised and incentivised as an urgent matter that is effectively addressed by Member States. The EU should (a) define indicators (i.e. attitudes, salary gap, employment, leadership, etc.), monitor the strategy yearly and be transparent with the achievements; and (b) put an Ombudsman in place to get feedback directly from citizens.**

We recommend this because we think that gender equality is far from what we would like to see in the EU. There should be harmony in gender equality and civil rights at European level, so that they are achieved in all countries, and not only in the ones with a stronger compromise with the topic. We value the presence and contribution of women in power positions, and in any kind of profession, in order to have a diverse and fulfilling EU. Women are disadvantaged in many situations (even in the case they have good/ higher education or other privileges), so such a strategy is strongly needed.

- 29. We recommend that the EU promotes and raises awareness of sports and physical activity in all Member States due to its health benefits. Sport and physical activity should be included within social, physical and mental health, education and labour policies (i.e. promote sports and/or physical prescription by doctors and, when done, guarantee access to sports facilities; 1 hour of working time/week for physical activity, etc.).**

We recommend this because it is an investment in the long term. Investing in sport and physical activity reduces costs and burdens to health services. For example, sport and physical activity as a health intervention would shorten treatment periods and make the treatment more effective. This is already being implemented successfully in some countries like Germany. Sports are a way to build values like commitment, effort, self-esteem, respect or companionship. Sedentary lifestyles are now more common than previous generations due to more desk jobs, and/or change habits in leisure among others.

**Greens/EFA supports this recommendation.** Beyond its obvious **health** benefit, Sport can also be a driver for equality and inclusion. Grassroots sports initiatives can be especially important in **bringing together people** who may not ordinarily have contact with one another and helping to build more **cohesive communities**. Furthermore, we believe it is important that sport is included within the New European Bauhaus and that MS invest into **infrastructure that makes physical activity available to all citizens**. Furthermore, it should be easy for citizens to walk and cycle, so as to increase everyday physical activity in terms of transport and not just through dedicated sports activities.

- 30. We recommend that the EU should obligate every Member State to have a defined minimum wage related to the cost of living in that state and is considered a fair salary that can allow minimum life conditions, over the poverty line. Each Member State must monitor this.**

We recommend this because it is not fair that you cannot reach the end of the month if you are working. Fair salaries should contribute to life quality at a social level. Unfair wages have a high cost for the states (security, tax avoidance, higher social costs, etc.).

- 31. We recommend tax harmonisation in the Member States within the EU (to avoid tax havens within EU, and to target offshoring within Europe), and a tax incentive to discourage offshoring of jobs outside of Europe.**

We recommend this because we are worried about the impact of offshoring jobs outside of Europe, and this would prevent tax competition between Member States of the EU.

## **Stream 4: Learning in Europe**

### **Substream 4.1 European Identity / Substream 4.2 Digital Education**

- 32. We recommend promoting multilingualism from an early age, for example, starting in kindergarten. From elementary school onwards, it should be mandatory that children reach a C1 level in a second active EU language other than their own.**

We recommend this because multilingualism is a tool that connects people and is a bridge to other cultures, as it makes other countries and their cultures more accessible. It strengthens European identity and intercultural exchange. It is important to get to know the other cultures in the context of the European Union. Therefore, being able to converse in two languages at a great level would help create a common European identity and understanding of other European cultures. The EU must ensure that there is close cooperation between itself and

educational institutions to develop successful educational outcomes. In addition, there needs to be a dedicated program (e.g digital platforms, expanded Erasmus+ programs, etc.) to exclusively promote multilingualism. The current European Schools can serve as a model in this regard. The EU should establish more such schools and actively promote them.

**Indeed, sharing experiences, ideas and opinions with people from different cultures and lifestyle create a lifelong value and foster intercultural understanding.** Languages and language learning can play a key role in this regard. **When it comes to multilingualism we need to be broad and include the learning of migrant languages and minority and regional languages as well** since exchanges with speakers of those communities not only open doors to cultures that are present among us but can help us understand the world better and foster inclusion. Even though students are learning their second language at a younger age than before progress has been slow and there are huge differences among and within Member States. **We advocate for language learning strategies that take place in all kinds of education settings, including non-formal and informal as well as in vocational education and training and at all levels of education** therefore the European Schools model falls short in our view. We understand, though, that there are very interesting language learning systems currently in place in the Member States that can serve as models so we would encourage more best practice sharing among them and the Commission.

- 33. We recommend that the EU raises more awareness about the dangers of the internet and digitalisation for young people through the creation of a mandatory subject in elementary school. The EU should create tools and establish common training spaces for young people to learn together.**

We recommend this because the current initiatives or programs in this area are not sufficient. Moreover, many EU citizens are not aware of existing EU initiatives in these areas. Children are not sufficiently aware of the dangers of the Internet, so we should do much more to promote and raise awareness amongst the younger generation.

**We, GreensEFA, believe that in the digital era the education systems need to conform to the needs of learners and not the other way around;** we do not want to see learners ending up as passive technology consumers but rather want them to become active digital citizens and for that the place of the learner has to stay at the centre in their learning processes. **We think that in partnership with parents, health professionals, civil society and non-formal education providers, educational institutions need to develop an age-appropriate curriculum, to train people to be critical users of electronic media, to be able to make relevant and informed choices and avoid harmful behaviour;** we see there is a need to reflect on the negative impacts of prolonged “screen time” on the well-being of learners and that minors and adults need to balance the use of digital technologies well with time for other activities such as sports, arts and music;

- 34. We recommend that the EU put effort into making technology more accessible to the older generation by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. The EU should guarantee the right to use digitalisation for those who wish it and propose alternatives for those who do not.**

We recommend this because the EU should ensure that older people can participate in the digital world and that no one is discriminated against. Simplified tools should be introduced for generations that are not as experienced with the use of certain technologies in order to integrate them into today's world. We recommend that initiatives that already exist be better promoted, so that citizens are aware of those opportunities. The EU should

not discriminate against the older generations concerning the use of computer tools. (As a side note, this means that citizens should be able to live their lives without being obligated to go through an internet network). The EU should organise and make free permanent assistance available to older generations to facilitate access to digital tools.

**GreensEFA support this recommendation.** We believe it is important that **no one is left behind during the digital transition.** This means having training that is accessible to all, and available throughout the union. At the same time, we believe that people should not be forced to use digital tools. As such, there should always be **alternatives for people who cannot or do not want to use such applications.**

#### **Substream 4.3 Cultural Exchange / Substream 4.4 Environmental Education**

**35. We recommend that the EU creates a platform on which teaching material about climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues will be made available for educational purposes. This information should be fact-based, checked by experts, and tailored to every Member State. The platform:**

- **Should include lessons for multiple target groups; for example people who live in an urban or a rural context, for all age groups, and for all levels of prior knowledge,**
- **Must be available to all Member States and should be easily accessible,**
- **In its implementation it should include a plan for promotion; this should be done in collaboration with relevant companies,**
- **Could be made available together with a funding program to support the usage of, and implementation, of the information on the platform. This funding should also provide support for field trips to show relevant real life examples.**

We recommend this because people of all ages need access to fact-based information on how to address climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues. Important concepts, e.g. the ecological footprint, must be understood by everyone, particularly young people, since what we learn as children is used throughout our lives. These topics are complex and misinformation is widespread. We need a source that is trustworthy and the EU has the credibility and resources to provide this. This is also important because knowledge levels and easy access to credible information differs across Member States.

**We, the GreensEFA believe that, even if the idea of a platform for fact checking purposes is a good idea, it is the teaching of climate change, sustainability and environmental issues as one of the key policy actions what will allow us to comply with the objectives in the European Green Deal and fight against disinformation in this field.** The Commission has several initiatives in place: the [Education for Climate Coalition](#) is a growing community of learners and teachers active on climate change and sustainability issues; the new [European sustainability competence framework](#) sets out knowledge, skills and attitudes learners of all ages will need for the green transition: the [researchers at Schools initiative](#) allows young researchers to engage with teachers and pupils on climate change and sustainable development. There are other initiatives such as the GreenComp Organisation, a civil society umbrella organization that advocates for the involvement of civil society and multilevel governance. **A holistic, sustainable and just transition is only possible if we cooperate across sectors, making lifelong learning for sustainable development a reality for all.**

**36. We recommend that the EU prioritise making exchange programs accessible for all (age groups, Member States, levels of education, and people with different financial capabilities) and allow for exchanges or internships between sectors, countries, educational institutions, cities, and companies. The EU should be responsible for initiating, mediating, and funding cultural and social exchanges across the EU - both physically and digitally. The EU must actively promote these initiatives and target people who are not already aware of cultural and social exchange programs. The Conference on the Future of Europe, in which people were randomly selected, is the perfect example of a European exchange. We want more of this - but also initiatives of a smaller scale, as well as exchanges within sports, music, (social) internships, etc.**

We recommend this because it is important to create a feeling of togetherness and cohesion, and to advance tolerance for all our beautiful differences/different perspectives, as well as for the development of individual skills. In the process this will enable the development of friendships, mutual understanding, and critical thinking. We would like to promote the engagement of all members of our communities, even those that have not been involved in such initiatives to date.

**Greens/EFA support this recommendation.** We wish to see the extension of exchange programmes beyond formal settings, and also the accreditation of such programmes, so as to enable the recognition of all forms of all learning experiences - of which exchange programmes are one. **We also agree with the idea that exchanges should be accessible for all people and all age groups, irrespective of location, socio-economic background or means.** However, although digital exchanges can provide opportunities to those who may otherwise not be able to experience such programmes, we do not believe that **digital experiences should ever replace physical experiences. To that end, we feel that exchanges should be broadly inclusive, and accessible to all people, ensuring that no one is left behind.**

#### **Substream 4.5 Quality, Finance and Access to Education / Substream 4.6 Harmonisation of Education**

**37. We recommend that all Member States agree and adopt a certified minimum standard of education in core subjects commencing in primary school. This is to ensure that all citizens have equal access to a standard quality of education, ensuring fairness and equality.**

We recommend this because:

- The presence of a minimum standard would give parents, teachers and students greater confidence in their education systems while leaving capacity for initiative and diversity.
- If implemented our recommendation would reinforce and strengthen a common European identity, fostering togetherness, unity and sense of belonging.
- Implementation of this recommendation would generate greater cooperation and exchange between schools across the EU and this would improve relations between teaching staff and pupils and assist greatly with exchange programmes.

**We, GreensEFA, wholeheartedly agree that all citizens across the member states should be offered the same standard of educational opportunities.** Rather than implementing a uniform minimum standard across member states, we believe that a more effective way to foster diversity, but ensure transferability of educational experiences would be to ensure mutual recognition of all kinds of educational experiences across the Union.

**38. We recommend that English is taught, to a certifiable standard, as a core subject in primary schools across all EU Member States in order to facilitate and strengthen the ability of European citizens to communicate effectively.**

We recommend this because:

- This would provide greater unity and equality through increasing citizens' abilities to communicate with each other and support a stronger common European identity.
- This would allow for a broader, flexible and more accessible labour market allowing citizens the confidence to work and communicate in all other Member States providing greater personal and professional opportunities.
- A commonly held European language could be achieved in a very short period of time were this to be implemented.
- The use of a common language expedites information sharing which would benefit cooperation, reacting to crises together, aid humanitarian efforts and bring Europe and Europeans closer.

We, Greens/EFA, understand the importance English plays, as a widely spoken language. We think, though, that multilingualism and multiculturalism require thinking beyond English. It is also very important, for cohesion purposes for example, **that language learning strategies promote the learning of languages of neighboring countries or regions in border areas or that the learning of minority and regional languages** are also promoted. In the case of the latter, we GreensEFA believe that it is crucial we promote not only the learning of those languages but also that they are the **vehicular language at schools and at all levels**. According to several studies many European languages are at the verge of digital extinction, among them some EU official languages and minority and regional languages. It goes without saying this may impact hugely on the health of those languages as well as on linguistic diversity so **digital policies must go hand in hand with language policies**. policies **We GreensEFA advocate for the establishment of a European Language Diversity Center**. To be noted, that the Center was one of the recommendations in the Minority SAFepack Citizens' Initiative and is also coming from the citizens' contributions to the platform of the COFE.

## **Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation**

### **Substream 5.1 Democratisation of Digitalisation / Substream 5.2 Cyber Security**

**39. We recommend that the EU should have more powers to deal with illegal content and cyber criminality. We recommend the strengthening of capacities in Europol/the European Cybercrime Centre including:**

- **Increased financial resources and manpower**
- **Ensuring punishment in similar ways in each country**
- **Ensuring that enforcement should be quick and effective**

We recommend this to guarantee freedom on the Internet, while ensuring that discrimination, abuse and harassment are punished. We support the idea of having a European public body because we do not want to leave the regulation of online platforms solely to private companies. Online platforms have to take responsibility for the content that is distributed, but we want to make sure that their interests do not come first. The regulation of content and the prosecution of those responsible must be effective and swift, so that it also has a deterrent effect on the criminals.

**40. We recommend that the EU should invest in high-quality and innovative digital infrastructures (such as 5G being developed in Europe) in order to ensure Europe's autonomy and prevent dependence on other countries or private companies. The EU should also pay attention to investment in underdeveloped regions of the EU.**

We recommend this because digital infrastructure plays a vital role in Europe's economy and in facilitating everyday life in Europe. Europe therefore needs high quality digital infrastructure. If Europe is dependent on others it may be vulnerable to negative influences by private companies or foreign countries. Europe should therefore invest in digital infrastructures to improve its autonomy. It is also important to ensure digital inclusion by making sure that less digitally developed regions receive investment.

**41. We recommend that the EU promotes education on fake news, disinformation, and online safety across Europe's schools. It should draw on examples of best practices from across the EU. The EU should establish an organisation specifically to promote this work and to provide recommendations to education systems. It should also promote non-formal education as well as innovative and creative teaching techniques (e.g. participative games).**

We recommend this because introducing lessons on online safety and digital safety literacy (dealing with online scams, false information etc.) at school are important to give everyone the tools to protect themselves from online threats. It is important to target the younger generation as they are very exposed to online threats. Schools can also communicate with parents to promote good practices. This course can draw from examples of best practice across Europe (e.g. such as Finland) while also being adaptable for each country's needs.



**GreensEFA** shares your concerns in this recommendation. Indeed, innovative education methodologies, enhanced through digital technologies, can equip citizens with **life skills** such as creative thinking, curiosity and problem-solving skills. **Media literacy** must play a key role here. **The EU should take the lead in this regard but national, regional and local institutions and organizations** have to get involved as well. In this regard **civil society organizations** are making a difference and fostering media literacy with great initiatives. We ask the Member States and the Commission to include them in their dialogues with stakeholders.

The revised **Audiovisual Media Services Directive** requires **Member States** to promote measures that develop media literacy skills and to ensure that video sharing platforms provide effective media literacy measures as well. The ball is now on the roof of the Member States. Also, the European Commission brings media literacy stakeholders together in a Media Literacy expert group to extend good practices, facilitate networking with stakeholders and coordinating EU policies.

It is also worth looking at the newly established European Digital Media Observatory and projects they carry out for the promotion of media literacy.

### Substream 5.3 Data Protection

42. **We recommend further limiting the misuse of data by 'data giants' through better enforcement of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and creating more standardised mechanisms throughout the EU and by ensuring that even non-European companies that operate in the EU comply with it. The improvement should require clear and short explanation of terms of use to avoid ambiguity, provide more information on how and by whom it will be used, avoiding default consent to re-use and resell of data. It should ensure that data is permanently deleted when a citizen requests it. It also should improve enforcement of consistent compliance around profiling of individuals based on their online activities. We propose two types of sanction: a fine proportional to the company's turnover, limitations of company's operations.**

We recommend this because currently there is very limited transparency on what kind of data is collected, how it is processed, and to whom it is sold to. We need to further limit the abuse of power by data giants and make sure that consent citizens give for data processing is well-informed.

43. **We recommend creating an independent pan-EU agency that would have to clearly define intrusive behaviour (e.g. spam) and create guidelines and mechanisms for how citizens can opt-out and revoke data, especially from third parties. It must have a mandate to identify and sanction fraudsters and non-compliant organisations. It should work on ensuring compliance with the EU regulations for non-EU based entities operating in the EU. It would be funded by the EU institutions and composed of a mixed council of independent bodies (i.e. experts from universities and entities representing professionals). It should have a rotation praesidium. We propose two types of sanctions: a fine proportional to the companies' turnover, limitations of companies' operations.**

We recommend this because there is no central agency with a strong mandate that can help citizens especially when they have an issue and need help, advising, or support. There are no

clear and mandatory rules for companies to follow and sanctions are either not enforced or negligible for the companies.

- 44. We recommend creating an EU certification system that would reflect compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in a transparent way and it should ensure that information on data protection is presented in an accessible, clear, and simple way. This certificate would be mandatory and visible on websites and platforms. This certificate should be issued by an independent certifier at European level, possibly existing or specially created, which is not linked to national governments or the private sector.**

We recommend this because there is currently no or little transparency about how well data is protected by each company and users / customers cannot make informed choices.

- 45. We recommend better explaining GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and improving communication around it by creating standard text on compliance that uses simple and clear language understandable by everyone. This text should present a core message and/or core principles. The process of providing consent should be more visual (i.e. like an App that asks explicit permission for access on the phone). It should be accompanied by an information campaign (including on TV) and consistently providing mandatory courses (at least those who work with data) and advising those who need assistance.**

We recommend this because at the moment, the language of GDPR is too vague and technical, the amount of information is overwhelming, and is not accessible for everyone. The communication is also not similar across different countries and it often excludes different cohorts mainly elderly people and non-digital natives.

#### **Substream 5.4 Healthy Digitalisation**

- 46. We recommend that the EU addresses the problem of ‘fake news’ through two means:**

- **Legislation for social media companies to implement machine-learning algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact- checked information. We recommend that the algorithms are kept in check by experts to ensure their well-functioning;**
- **The implementation of a digital platform that rates the information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) independently from political and economic interests, and informs citizens about the quality of the news without applying any kind of censorship. The platform should be open to public scrutiny and adhere to the highest standards of transparency, and the EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because different types of media need to be addressed and we believe that sanctions or removing content could lead to censorship and infringe on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We recommend that experts check and monitor the proper functioning of the algorithm to ensure its proper working. Finally, we recommend that the platform should be apolitical and independent to ensure transparency and freedom of

expression. Furthermore, since it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, providing these tools to citizens will help to diminish their effects in Europe.

We **Greens EFA** are very much in line with the ideas you outline here above. Recommendation systems often promote extremist content and disinformation which endangers our democracy. We need to **tackle disinformation preserving freedom of speech and freedom of the press**. Algorithms can become censorship machines. The Digital Services Act is currently being negotiated and we are taking these ideas to the negotiations table. **Platforms have to start becoming liable for their own behavior** not for the expressions of their users. The Greens EFA believe that we must go **against** the business model based on **surveillance advertising**. With **clear procedures and independent reviews, platforms would no longer be able to arbitrarily delete user content and accounts, while also being required to show transparency around their algorithms. NGOs and academic researchers should have access to data collected by platforms.** It will be interesting to see what the newly established European Digital Media Observatory proposes and how they coordinate with Member States.

**The Greens/EFA Group will continue the fight for EU-wide protection from online hatred and disinformation, in addition to a European regulator with strong supervisory powers.”**

**47. We recommend that the EU implements different actions in order to ensure a healthy use of internet:**

- **First of all, the EU must address the lack of infrastructures and devices that prevents citizens from accessing the Internet.**
- **Then, we also recommend that the EU encourages the Member States to implement training about the internet and its risks for all age-groups. This could be done by introducing classes in schools for children and young people, and creating different programs and curricula to reach adult and elder citizens. The content of these classes should be decided at the European level by a group of independent experts.**
- **Finally, we demand that the EU takes all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people, ensuring that essential services can also be accessed in person.**
- **The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because there is a lack of infrastructure and hardware (e.g. devices) in some places in Europe, and connection needs to be ensured before educating citizens, as we know there are certain regions and profiles that have limitations on internet access. We recommend classes in order to help children achieve digital literacy, to include other programs to help older generations in this digital transformation and to take the needed measures to reassure that elderly population's rights are not diminished by the digital transformation.

**The Greens EFE endorse these recommendations. See responses to recommendations 17,33, 34 and 41.**

**48. We recommend that the European Union promotes the education of citizens in every Member State to improve critical thinking, scepticism and fact- checking in order to teach them how to evaluate independently whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and it should also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages that willingly want to profit from this training. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because we think that it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, so this training will help the citizens to recognise them by themselves. By doing so, the effects of fake news on society and on the citizens themselves will be lessened. This would also give the individuals more agency, rather than depending on the institutions to acquire reliable information.

**The GreensEFA endorse this recommendation.** See responses to recommendations 5, 8, 17, 33, 34, 35, 41.

## Annex: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE PANEL AND NOT ADOPTED

### Stream 3: A Just Society

#### Substream 3.2 Equal Rights

**We recommend that the EU creates a mechanism to ensure the monitoring and enforcement of minority rights (e.g., a portal or office where people might lodge complaints).**

We recommend this because we believe that every individual can express their opinion and has the right to seek and receive help. Such an office is necessary in order to reduce the tension between minorities and the majority.

#### Substream 3.3 Fairness / Substream 3.4 Access to Sports

**We recommend that the EU should raise awareness of physical activity by "role modelling" through public figures (e.g. Parliament events should include some form of physical activity or gesture for a few seconds like stretching, walk the talk or jumping).**

We recommend this because engagement from public figures on physical activity will raise awareness.

### Stream 5: An Ethical and Safe Digital Transformation

#### Substream 5.3 Data Protection

**We recommend creating a Web ID that will store personal and sensitive data but will make it available only to the authorities and the police. Online platforms and sellers will use online code associated with a Web ID and the data that is relevant for a given activity. The default setting for data sharing through this ID should be non-consent. The data should be only given to the parties directly involved and not a 3rd party. If the data is given to a 3rd party a citizen should be able to easily opt out. The data should be available only for a limited time or a specific transaction. The authorisation to use data should have expiration or clear definition on what actions that can be taken by a company with this data.**

We recommend this because at the moment companies can harvest all the data including personal and sensitive data and can use it for many purposes without disclosing how and why exactly. So, the actors get more information than they actually need to provide us with services and then can re-sell or re-use other data without our consent. At the same time it will guarantee accountability of internet users while preserving their relative anonymity.

## Greens/EFA position on European Citizens' Panel 1 Recommendations

MEP Marketa Gregorová - member of the WG Digital transformation in the COFOE



**7. We recommend that the EU introduces or reinforces existing legislation that regulates so-called 'smart working' [= working online and remotely, e.g. home office or from another location connected online]. Further, we recommend that the EU legislates to incentivise companies to be socially responsible and to keep high-quality 'smart working' jobs within the EU. The incentives can be financial and/or reputational, and should take into account existing internationally recognised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria. For this to happen, the EU should set up a working group composed of experts from all interested stakeholders to explore and strengthen such legislation.**

We recommend this because we need to promote high quality 'smart working' jobs and avoid their relocation to lower-cost, non-EU countries. The Covid-19 pandemic and the global economic trends increase the urgency to protect jobs in the EU and regulate 'smart working'.

### Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation

As the last 2 years of Covid - 19 pandemic proved, a significant amount of work can be done remotely. Many studies showed that employees reach the same level of performance outside of the office, thus we do not see obstacles continuing such a trend for *some* of the professions.

The European Commission can serve as a leading example by reducing their office spaces to half of their current capacity by 2030. Such a solution is perceived as "more green" by reducing building emissions and "more digital" by keeping home working as a standard practice after the coronavirus pandemic ends.

We suppose that such a solution can be an inspiration to various types of organisations, and businesses. Firstly, reducing the high amount of costs for rental or building of office spaces can prevent relocating to cheaper countries outside of the EU. Secondly, the possibility to hire people from various countries across the EU open to employers a new market with a higher offer of quality employees.

While smart-working poses a lot of advantages, we would like to highlight that remote working should not subject employees to invasive tracking and surveillance methods that impact their mental health and/or infringe on their rights (ie. right to privacy).

**8. We recommend that the EU guarantees the right to digital training for all EU citizens. In particular, young people's digital skills could be boosted with the introduction of an EU certification in schools that would prepare them for the future job market. We also**

**recommend specific training at the EU level to re-train and up-skill workers to remain competitive in the job market. Lastly, we recommend the EU raises more awareness about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers and to help them find jobs in the EU, e.g. EURES.**

We recommend this because certified digital skills are fundamental for people to enter the job market and for workers to re-skill and stay competitive.

#### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

With the rising age of digitalisation we are aware how important and crucial it is to have properly digitally skilled citizens among all the age groups. Ensuring proper digital education, starting at the elementary school level, should be a priority at every school and education centre across the EU.

We agree with the recommendation, however it should be kept in mind that unless every citizen has the possibility to attend school with such certification, not having the certification can't be seen a discrimination. Re-training of the workers in order to remain competitive in the job market should be a very important part of the EU policies.

We also support the idea of raising awareness about existing digital platforms that connect people to employers. Every employment department should be able to promote and connect European job platforms together.

Lastly, we recommend that such educative and re-skilling initiatives should be targeted in order to ensure that existing gaps (ie. digital gender gap) are closed to counter the already exististing shortage in workforce and ensure diversity in digital industries.

**17. We recommend infrastructure to be a state asset to prevent the rise of telecommunications and internet service monopolies. It should be a right to have access to the internet, it should be a priority to bring internet connection to 'whitezones / dead zones' (areas with no internet access). Children and families are a priority when it comes to accessing the internet and hardware, particularly in terms of education, and especially in times of a pandemic. An initiative is needed to help support remote working, such as office spaces with access to a reliable, fast internet connection and digital training.**

We recommend this because we must ensure that the digital transformation is done in an equitable manner. Access to the internet is fundamental to democracy and is a right of all European citizens.

#### **Greens/EFA position: not against however state asset should not be perceived as an solution**

Infrastructure does not have to be necessarily a state owned asset as long as fair conditions and accessible prices are guaranteed to the citizens. If the instracturue is built and owned by the state (or regional, or municipal authority) licence offered to the private companies with guaranteed fair conditions allowing entry to any internet provider.

The State, or EU in this case, should take the role of the regulator that enters only in case a monopoly or oligopolies are formed. In the case of natural monopoly regulation from the side of the state is also desired. This is needed to ensure a fair competition on the market at ISP level and avoid any exploitation of the natural monopolies that the infrastructure can create.

We suppose that all EU citizens, regardless of age, geographical distribution, or gender should have equal access to the internet and hardware.

**33. We recommend that the EU raises more awareness about the dangers of the internet and digitalisation for young people through the creation of a mandatory subject in elementary school. The EU should create tools and establish common training spaces for young people to learn together.**

We recommend this because the current initiatives or programs in this area are not sufficient. Moreover, many EU citizens are not aware of existing EU initiatives in these areas. Children are not sufficiently aware of the dangers of the Internet, so we should do much more to promote and raise awareness amongst the younger generation.

#### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

We are aware of the dangers of the internet that kids and young people have to face on a daily basis. We support the recommendation however we would like to stress that elderly people belong to the risk group too. More precisely, they are often more prone to such dangers.

In terms of the education at the elementary schools across the whole EU, we suppose that raising awareness about the danger, as well as learning of media literacy, recognition of disinformation and fake news should be taught within the special subject. Such topics can be introduced as a part of the IT classes or can complement already existing courses. We believe that nowadays most of the schools across the EU provide IT or such oriented classes already.

Creation of mandatory subject on the EU level is not currently possible as the EU education and training policy system is based on cooperation between Member States. The EU is to contribute to the development of quality education and training by promoting cooperation between Member States. Member States *remain* responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of the education and training system and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

**34. We recommend that the EU put effort into making technology more accessible to the older generation by fostering programs and initiatives, for instance in the form of classes tailored to their needs. The EU should guarantee the right to use digitalisation for those who wish it and propose alternatives for those who do not.**

We recommend this because the EU should ensure that older people can participate in the digital world and that no one is discriminated against. Simplified tools should be introduced for generations that are not as experienced with the use of certain technologies in order to integrate them into today's world. We recommend that initiatives that already exist be better promoted, so that citizens are aware of those opportunities. The EU should not discriminate against the



older generations concerning the use of computer tools. (As a side note, this means that citizens should be able to live their lives without being obligated to go through an internet network). The EU should organise and make free permanent assistance available to older generations to facilitate access to digital tools.

### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

We strongly support such an idea, especially mentioning that usage of the digital tools and technologies should be treated as a right, not as an obligation. We have to respect that not everyone can learn how to use specific tools or have access to digital platforms.

The EU is trying to support digital education of the older generation via various programs and tools. Currently, under the programme [Erasmus+](#) are running projects supporting digital literacy of older people. For example Digital Generations, focused on online interaction with their peers, DISK - platform bringing together training courses and many more.

Idea of free permanent assistance available for older generations can be realised through websites managed by the EU institutions (Commission mainly), available in all EU languages. Providing free permanent assistance in a physical presence should be in the competence of lower self-governing units, such as regions or cities. And can be also supported from the EU, however final decisions should rely on the local authorities.

### **39. We recommend that the EU should have more powers to deal with illegal content and cyber criminality. We recommend the strengthening of capacities in Europol/the European Cybercrime Centre including:**

- Increased financial resources and manpower
- Ensuring punishment in similar ways in each country
- Ensuring that enforcement should be quick and effective

We recommend this to guarantee freedom on the Internet, while ensuring that discrimination, abuse and harassment are punished. We support the idea of having a European public body because we do not want to leave the regulation of online platforms solely to private companies. Online platforms have to take responsibility for the content that is distributed, but we want to make sure that their interests do not come first. The regulation of content and the prosecution of those responsible must be effective and swift, so that it also has a deterrent effect on the criminals.

### **Greens/EFA position: Agree with raising the topic as an important issue however we do not agree with suggested solution**

We think that cyber criminality and online abuse and harassment are serious and important issues. We also support bigger cooperation of member state's institutions with Europol in and with platforms in finding those who are committing crimes, be it offline or online. However, Online platforms should not have the responsibility for the uploaded content, otherwise they would be forced to start using mass upload filters and practically censor the internet as we know

it, regardless of legality of the content. Legality of content should be decided only by independent courts.

We call for a bigger cooperation from the side of the platforms in terms of finding the culprits/harraseres (based on the court order).

**40. We recommend that the EU should invest in high-quality and innovative digital infrastructures (such as 5G being developed in Europe) in order to ensure Europe's autonomy and prevent dependence on other countries or private companies. The EU should also pay attention to investment in underdeveloped regions of the EU.**

We recommend this because digital infrastructure plays a vital role in Europe's economy and in facilitating everyday life in Europe. Europe therefore needs high quality digital infrastructure. If Europe is dependent on others it may be vulnerable to negative influences by private companies or foreign countries. Europe should therefore invest in digital infrastructures to improve its autonomy. It is also important to ensure digital inclusion by making sure that less digitally developed regions receive investment.

#### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation with small adjustment**

Having high quality digital infrastructure is the premise for digitally skilled and fully developed EU society. In order to keep pace with other countries, such as the USA or fastly developing Asian countries, it is necessary to take the lead in the digital infrastructure.

It is important to mention, that having infrastructure built by a private companies is not problematic as long as company is:

- chosen within public transparent procurement
- having no connection to public figures e.g. politicians
- following rules imposed by the government / EU

Investments in the underdeveloped regions of the EU are provided through Cohesion policy. As stated in the latest [Cohesion report, differences](#) between regions are narrowing and we can expect growth of about 5 % of GDP per capita in the less developed regions by 2023.

We support this recommendation but it is necessary to stress that support of long term sustainable growth of less developed regions has been one of the main goals of EU policies for decades now.

**41. We recommend that the EU promotes education on fake news, disinformation, and online safety across Europe's schools. It should draw on examples of best practices from across the EU. The EU should establish an organisation specifically to promote this work and to provide recommendations to education systems. It should also promote non-formal education as well as innovative and creative teaching techniques (e.g. participative games).**

We recommend this because introducing lessons on online safety and digital safety literacy (dealing with online scams, false information etc.) at school are important to give everyone the tools to protect themselves from online threats. It is important to target the younger generation as they are very exposed to online threats. Schools can also communicate with parents to promote good practices. This course can draw from examples of best practice across Europe (e.g. such as Finland) while also being adaptable for each country's needs.

### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

We support this proposal, although it needs to be taken into account that education policies are a Member State's competency and the EU has a limited reach. The European Parliament established a Special Committee for foreign interference in all democratic processes in the EU, including disinformation (INGE). This Committee is to assess the level of these threats in different spheres: major national and European elections across the EU; disinformation campaigns on traditional and social media to shape public opinion; cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure; direct and indirect financial support and economic coercion of political actors and civil society subversion.

The INGE Report recognises that disinformation and other foreign interference tactics must be met with a "whole-of-society-approach" to be effectively countered. Increased funding for civil society, independent fact-checkers, researchers, quality media and journalists, and NGOs researching and investigating information manipulation and interference are key; as well as promoting media, digital and information literacy, media pluralism and education.

**42. We recommend further limiting the misuse of data by 'data giants' through better enforcement of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and creating more standardised mechanisms throughout the EU and by ensuring that even non-European companies that operate in the EU comply with it. The improvement should require clear and short explanation of terms of use to avoid ambiguity, provide more information on how and by whom it will be used, avoiding default consent to re-use and resell of data. It should ensure that data is permanently deleted when a citizen requests it. It also should improve enforcement of consistent compliance around profiling of individuals based on their online activities. We propose two types of sanction: a fine proportional to the company's turnover, limitations of company's operations.**

We recommend this because currently there is very limited transparency on what kind of data is collected, how it is processed, and to whom it is sold to. We need to further limit the abuse of power by data giants and make sure that consent citizens give for data processing is well-informed.

### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

We support the proper implementation and enforcement of the GDPR. In the past largely US-based 'data giants' were able to ignore their basic responsibilities in the proper handling of European data, motivated solely by profits to its shareholders. Meaningful, transparency and independent scrutiny of the handling practices of data giants are long overdue and needed right now. Equally, the EU-US new Trans-Atlantic Data Privacy Framework must not repeat the

mistakes of earlier attempts of transatlantic data exchange, which lacked transparency and any ability for European data subjects to appeal.

**43. We recommend creating an independent pan-EU agency that would have to clearly define intrusive behaviour (e.g. spam) and create guidelines and mechanisms for how citizens can opt-out and revoke data, especially from third parties. It must have a mandate to identify and sanction fraudsters and non-compliant organisations. It should work on ensuring compliance with the EU regulations for non-EU based entities operating in the EU. It would be funded by the EU institutions and composed of a mixed council of independent bodies (i.e. experts from universities and entities representing professionals). It should have a rotation praesidium. We propose two types of sanctions: a fine proportional to the companies' turnover, limitations of companies' operations.**

We recommend this because there is no central agency with a strong mandate that can help citizens especially when they have an issue and need help, advising, or support. There are no clear and mandatory rules for companies to follow and sanctions are either not enforced or negligible for the companies.

#### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

The EU should establish a body of law that deals with commercial practices such as spam or other intrusive behaviour. A user-friendly, EU-uniform platform for citizens to be able to opt-out and shield themselves from such practices is generally a good idea. Institutionally speaking the subsidiarity principle and current national competent authorities are in charge of these matters. Increased harmonisation and EU-wide enforcement are desirable in this area.

It is necessary to mention that the EU has a directive governing the area of Unfair commercial practices (e.g. spam), more information [here](#).

**44. We recommend creating an EU certification system that would reflect compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in a transparent way and it should ensure that information on data protection is presented in an accessible, clear, and simple way. This certificate would be mandatory and visible on websites and platforms. This certificate should be issued by an independent certifier at European level, possibly existing or specially created, which is not linked to national governments or the private sector.**

We recommend this because there is currently no or little transparency about how well data is protected by each company and users / customers cannot make informed choices.

#### **Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation**

Websites and platforms that are operating within the EU cyber space have to be transparent and data of their users have to be protected, without any exceptions. Such a certificate would inform users and give them a choice whether they want to visit and use such platforms.

**45. We recommend better explaining GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and improving communication around it by creating standard text on compliance that uses simple and clear language understandable by everyone. This text should present a core message and/or core principles. The process of providing consent should be more visual (i.e. like an App that asks explicit permission for access on the phone). It should be accompanied by an information campaign (including on TV) and consistently providing mandatory courses (at least those who work with data) and advising those who need assistance.**

We recommend this because at the moment, the language of GDPR is too vague and technical, the amount of information is overwhelming, and is not accessible for everyone. The communication is also not similar across different countries and it often excludes different cohorts mainly elderly people and non-digital natives.

**Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation however as explained below, information regarding GDPR are provided also in the simplified version on special website**

We believe that the official [website](#) dedicated to GDPR provides to citizens all necessary information, also in the simplified way and is updated on the regular basis. We understand that lack of the other language mutations can be problematic. We would support translation to the EU official languages or ask Member states to provide such information on the national level.

**46. We recommend that the EU addresses the problem of ‘fake news’ through two means:**

- **Legislation for social media companies to implement machine-learning algorithms that can highlight the trustworthiness of information on social media and new media, providing the user with sources of fact-checked information. We recommend that the algorithms are kept in check by experts to ensure their well-functioning;**
- **The implementation of a digital platform that rates the information from traditional media (e.g. television, printed press, radio) independently from political and economic interests, and informs citizens about the quality of the news without applying any kind of censorship. The platform should be open to public scrutiny and adhere to the highest standards of transparency, and the EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because different types of media need to be addressed and we believe that sanctions or removing content could lead to censorship and infringe on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. We recommend that experts check and monitor the proper functioning of the algorithm to ensure its proper working. Finally, we recommend that the platform should be apolitical and independent to ensure transparency and freedom of expression. Furthermore, since it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, providing these tools to citizens will help to diminish their effects in Europe.

**Greens/EFA position: does not support this recommendation for reasons stated below**

Issue of fake news and their fighting became a very serious and widely discussed topic in our society over the last few years. Fake news and disinformation find their way to infiltrate society through various channels such as social media, radio, tv, printed media and many more.

We understand and fully agree this topic has to be addressed and raised among all EU population and we have to do our best in order to be able to face it and fight it.

However we *strongly disagree* with using machine-learning algorithms that can do anything but properly highlight trustworthiness of information on social and new media. Artificial intelligence has a high error rate and cannot be used as a fact-checking mechanism. Artificial intelligence does not recognize satire, sarcasm, emotional expressions etc. For those and many other reasons, only human beings are reliable as a fact-checking source.

Across the EU there are many organisations focused on the detection of fake news and those should be actively supported by the governments and EU institutions. Financially and by their promotion on the EU level.

Recommendation number 2 - implementation of the digital platform that rates information from traditional media can be partly supported. Firstly, the condition that fact-checkers are people, not an AI has to be filled. Secondly, the platform should be analysing all the media, not the traditional only. Especially in western countries fake news and disinformation are spread through alternative and new media. We also think that a preferred way should be increasing transparency of media's funding and ownership structures. If we can see who is funded by Russian, Chinese or other regimes and built a disinformation business on it, we can sanction that business.

**47. We recommend that the EU implements different actions in order to ensure a healthy use of internet:**

- **First of all, the EU must address the lack of infrastructures and devices that prevents citizens from accessing the Internet.**
- **Then, we also recommend that the EU encourages the Member States to implement training about the internet and its risks for all age-groups. This could be done by introducing classes in schools for children and young people, and creating different programs and curricula to reach adult and elder citizens. The content of these classes should be decided at the European level by a group of independent experts.**
- **Finally, we demand that the EU takes all the necessary measures to ensure that the digitalisation of society does not leave out older people, ensuring that essential services can also be accessed in person.**
- **The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because there is a lack of infrastructure and hardware (e.g. devices) in some places in Europe, and connection needs to be ensured before educating citizens, as we know there are certain regions and profiles that have limitations on internet access. We recommend classes in order to help children achieve digital literacy, to include other programs to help older generations in this digital transformation and to take the needed measures to reassure that elderly population's rights are not diminished by the digital transformation.

### Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation

We agree that lack of infrastructure is a key issue while building a resilient, digital society. Also, it is important to point out that access to the internet has increased significantly over the last decade. Compared to 2011 where 72 % of households had access to the internet, in 2021 it was already 92 %. We believe that lack of devices is a matter of social status of citizens and can be solved within usage of EU social funded programs or social funds at the national level of the Member states.

Proper media training for all age groups is strongly supported by Greens/EFA however as pointed out in the previous comments, the EU has no mandate to force Member states to introduce classes at the schools. The EU can only support the creation of such classes and provide their support.

We agree that the EU should ensure that dedicated funding is properly used by the Member states. This should be done by proper communication and media coverage.

**48. We recommend that the European Union promotes the education of citizens in every Member State to improve critical thinking, scepticism and fact-checking in order to teach them how to evaluate independently whether a piece of information is trustworthy or not. This should be implemented in basic education as a specific class and it should also be offered in other public spaces for citizens of all ages that willingly want to profit from this training. The EU should ensure that the dedicated funding is used by the Member States for the intended purposes.**

We recommend this because we think that it is impossible to completely get rid of fake news, so this training will help the citizens to recognise them by themselves. By doing so, the effects of fake news on society and on the citizens themselves will be lessened. This would also give the individuals more agency, rather than depending on the institutions to acquire reliable information.

### Greens/EFA position: support of the recommendation

As already mentioned in the comment to the recommendation n. 46, fighting of fake news and disinformation should be key factors in the further development of the EU. Education of citizens and building their resilience towards those issues is considered as the most important and very effective weapon. Unfortunately it is impossible to get rid of fake news completely but their impact can be weakened within a fully informed and educated society.

As mentioned in the comment to recommendation number 33 is it not possible to force Member states to implement mandatory subjects into the education system.

Is it important to stress that EU is aware of the need to fight disinformation and especially after COVID pandemic breakout promoting and higher attention occurred. Within the Horizon2020, current research and innovation programme, EU has funded [several projects](#) focused on digital and media literacy, understanding how to fact check information.