

**Scenario 6:
Sustainable Europe for its Citizens**

THE EUROPEAN UNION BECOMES A
DRIVER TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY
IN EUROPE AND BEYOND



Why and how?

In a scenario where sustainability lies at the heart of the European project, the EU27 will prioritise the interest of citizens, in the EU and beyond. Europe will have a stronger focus on Europe's core social values – democracy and participation, social justice, solidarity and sustainability, respect for the rule of law and human rights, in and outside of Europe.

Citizens seek economic, social and environmental well-being. Economic well-being in the form of prosperity for all, starting with redistribution of wealth. Social well-being in the provision of quality, inclusive and affordable public services, promoting cultural diversity and a caring society. Environmental well-being residing in a healthy natural environment that sustains all life on Earth and protects our soils, waters and air, tackles climate change and provides nutritious, healthy food.

As a result, the EU27 will ensure a better life for its citizens. This will increase public trust in European institutions. It will move away from the current focus where commercial and corporate interests are prioritized over the public interest. Transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions will be the norm.

The EU27 will ensure that policies agreed by the member states are fully implemented and strictly enforced. Scandals like Dieselgate, causing tens of thousands of premature death, can't be allowed to happen again.

By 2025, this means:

Delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on the 17 goals and principles, leaving no one behind, living within the fair share of our planetary boundaries and respecting human rights at the core of EU and national policy-making.

The full implementation of the Paris Agreement by decarbonising our economy, enhancing energy efficiency, and accelerating the just and sustainable transition to clean and affordable renewable energy in order to keep global warming to 1.5°C and based on principles of climate justice.

Better Regulation implies that all EU policies, laws and regulations are refocused on ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development and enforcement of strong standards on jobs, health, safety and the environment, delivering tangible benefits to all citizens and the regeneration of environmental capital. Policy coherence as key objective will result in ending negative externalities of domestic policies for the Global South and phasing out perverse public subsidies, especially for unsustainable food and fossil fuels.

Companies and their subsidiaries outside the EU and throughout their supply chains are under a legal obligation to assess and mitigate negative environmental and human rights impacts of their business activities globally.

International trade is recognised as a means to achieve social, environmental and economic objectives, not an end in itself. A positive agenda for trade and investment agreements will be designed primarily to advance wellbeing and the public interest instead of cost reduction for companies. Europe will raise the bar for other regions, thus not attempting to win a race to the bottom.

Through strengthening representative and participatory democracy and ensuring civic space for people's participation beyond elections, citizens can better re-engage with the European project and shape a positive European vision for the future.

EU27 and the Member States will consider education as a public responsibility that offers lifelong learning for all in order to develop active citizenship, critical thinking, social inclusion, cultural diversity and an awareness of sustainable development and human rights.

Gender equality and women's and girls' rights will be priority in all EU policies and practices, both domestic and external.

A just transition of our economy from the current extractive, polluting and unfair economic model to a green and socially just economy, in which our human and natural resources are cherished, within the planetary boundaries.

There is much greater coordination on social matters, to implement a European Social Model that provides full protection to all workers, all consumers and all generations of people living in the EU.

Better coordination on taxation measures ensure that all companies pay appropriate taxes in order to increase contributions to national public budgets for socio-economic well-being. EU27 will effectively fight tax evasion and close down European tax havens.

Pros and cons:

Europe reinvents itself and better communicates the benefits, rights and protections it delivers to citizens. Acceptance of and trust in European institutions will increase as citizens experience that they benefit from European cooperation.

Policy silos are dismantled, incoherencies and contradictions are resolved, all policies and programs are contributing to the sustainable development agenda.

Impact on policies

Capacity to address citizens' concerns & democratisation

- EU27 will introduce new methods to increase the influence of citizens and civil society on key European policy issues and get a bigger role in EU decision making, to strengthen transparency, participation and accountability.

Climate & healthy environment

- Common standards are set that will bring citizens clean air & water, renewable & community based energy, safe & healthy food. Ambitious measures to phase out fossil fuels and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources from the Global South are implemented, leading to a fair share (sufficiency) use of natural resources.

Social & inclusive policies

- All EU citizens enjoy the same level of protection, based on international human rights. Income gaps are narrowed, equality goals are achieved, well-being is improved and health disparities decrease within and between countries and across generations.

Trade policies

- Trade policies become more transparent and will contribute to achieving social and environmental objectives, also protecting health and wellbeing of citizens, and are consistent with fundamental rights.

Foreign policy, Migration & International Cooperation

- Europe assumes a leading role in ensuring a human-centered response to global migration, for the benefit and protection of all those involved. It contributes its fair share, both as a donor and as host for refugees, ensuring equal and fair access to services for all.
- The EU continues to be a key donor to implement its commitments to the protection of human rights in its international cooperation. The EU actively supports binding rules on human rights for its businesses that are operating overseas.

Budgets

- The EU Budget lives up to its potential to catalyse a sustainable economy of well-being, and to help repair some of the root causes of the problems facing Europe by introducing new priority objectives, new participatory spending tools, and improved accountability. We will develop a [budget for the people](#).

- More progressive tax policies and a tax shift from labour to environmental use result in additional income for the EU and its Member States.

Illustrative snapshots

- Trade, regional development and food policies incentivise local and regional governments to develop sustainable and locally distributed energy and food production systems: local production for local needs.
- An EU Enforcement Agency monitors if EU laws are obeyed, and quickly responds if needed. Amongst other, this body will actively monitor if real emissions from a wide range of products (including cars, household appliances, etc.) confirm with the agreed standards and applies effective sanctions in case of breaches of the norms.
- EU budget and indicators: a new narrative for economic progress in the EU is introduced, guiding and measuring impact of spending on the sustainable well-being of all citizens and their environment beyond GDP and regularly and widely published towards European citizens. All spending lines are fully sustainability proofed, resulting in more targeted spending, and greater linking of resources with performance of Member States and regions in achieving the EU's 2030 Agenda.
- Energy, climate and social policies: the EU27 introduces a fund to make 50 million houses in Europe energy neutral, thereby lowering living costs for citizens, stopping energy poverty and drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- New and effective civil society participation governance will improve democracy, transparency and trust of EU citizens in building a positive and sustainable Europe.
- Europeans consume healthier food produced by a reformed European agriculture, and they enjoy widely restored European nature and increasing green spaces in the cities.
- Europe's ecosystems are sufficiently protected and restored to deliver the necessary socio, economic and health benefits. Nature based solutions are at the center of Europe's development.
- Free movement: the EU guarantees effective free movement to all people living in Europe.
- There is 80 million of persons with disabilities in Europe who currently cannot use mainstreamed products and services available. EU accessibility legislation will be adopted to ensure persons with disabilities can participate on an equal basis with others as consumers on the internal market.

Brussels, May 2017

Signatures:

SDG Watch members:

European partners for the Environment (EPE)