

European Children & Youth Environment Manifesto 2025

Consultations 1 & 2: Fridays, 18th July & 12th September, 3-5pm CEST

European Youth Days I & II: Friday 3rd Oct, 2-4pm & Saturday 4th Oct, 10am-12pm, CEST

Preamble

We, the children and youth of the Western and Eastern European region from across **56 countries**¹, convened virtually for the [Children and Youth Major Group to UNEP \(CYMG\)](#) European Youth Days 2025 preceding the Regional Consultative Meeting for Europe, co-hosted by the European Regional Facilitators of the Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC), and UNEP Civil Society Unit (CSU), extend our appreciation to our hosts and partners for fostering an inclusive platform for intergenerational dialogue, regional solidarity, and environmental advocacy.

Reaffirming our commitments, under the UN 2030 Agenda², the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework³, and prior UNEA resolutions⁴, including the 2024 Global Youth Environmental Declaration⁵, we emphasize the irreplaceable role of children and youth in realizing a just and sustainable future.

Our demands

1. Urgent and Ambitious Climate Action

Alarmed by the insufficient progress to limit global warming to 1.5°C⁶, **we demand unprecedented political will, rapid, just, and ambitious climate action** from all Member States, and legally binding instruments to address the interconnected Triple Planetary Crisis⁷.

We call for stronger political will, actions at all national, regional, intergovernmental and international levels, and legally binding instruments to safeguard ecosystems and human health, while recognising the One Health approach⁸, and different knowledge systems as equally valuable and legitimate to inform sustainable transitions in our diverse pan-European region. We urge for rapid, just and ambitious climate action by all 193 UN Member States and a stronger UNEP Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2026-2029 to guide a more ambitious, and targeted UNEP programme to assist countries in climate action, particularly on CO2 and

¹ **The UNEP pan-European region countries 56 countries:** all European Union member states, in addition to Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Holy See (Non member state, permanent observer to the UN), Iceland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan.

² [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

³ [The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#) <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

⁴ [UNEA Resolutions, decisions and declarations](#)

⁵ [Global Youth Declaration on Environment 2024](#)

⁶ The most recent emissions gap report published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) found that even the full implementation of all Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the UNFCCC process would not limit global warming below 2°C before 2100. UNEP [2024 Emissions Gap Report \(24 October 2024\)](#)

⁷ [UN environment agency calls for urgent action on 'triple planetary crisis'](#)

⁸ [One Health Approach](#)

methane emissions, with ways for children and youth to meaningfully assist. This includes addressing the significant carbon emissions of sectors like animal agriculture on climate change mitigation and environmental protection.

2. Transformation to Sustainable Food Systems

We demand a fundamental transformation towards sustainable food systems that guarantee the right to healthy, affordable, and just food for all. This requires moving beyond intensive commercial farming, including concentrated animal feed, the ungoverned use of fertilizers and pesticides, and increased risk of zoonoses, to resilient, equitable alternatives. We call for policies that reconnect youth with their food through education and support for local farmers, especially those young and female and for governments to lead by integrating regenerative food systems into climate strategies, prioritizing programmes like "plant-based schools", zero waste programmes, including in school curricula climate-resilient agricultural education, and hands-on projects like hydroponics, agri-tech and other skills for food sovereignty. Furthermore, children and youth must be empowered through practical skills training, investment in green innovation labs, and access to financial support to scale solutions and create green jobs.

3. A Strong Global Treaty to End Plastic Pollution

We affirm the right of every child and young person to a toxin and plastic-free environment. **We call on Member States to accelerate the adoption of a comprehensive and legally binding Global Plastics Treaty. It is imperative that this process ensures active, meaningful child and youth participation in all negotiation and implementation phases. The treaty must integrate Indigenous knowledge, child- and youth-led solutions, and gender-responsive approaches to ensure holistic and impactful outcomes.** We also call upon governments to enshrine the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment into international and national law, touching upon the private sector's corporate social responsibility, given that plastics represent 3-5% emissions, and ensure that regulatory frameworks prioritise the protection of the future generation from harmful chemicals and pollutants.

4. A Just Transition to a Circular and Green Economy

We urge an equitable and gender-balanced transition to a circular economy⁹, centered on local innovation, sustainable production and consumption, and youth-led social innovation and entrepreneurship. This transition is essential to combat pollution in high-impact sectors such as textiles, electronics, and tourism. We call for support of accessible resources, hubs and training for youth-driven innovations, to scale existing efforts and spearhead new inventions and interventions.

5. Protection of Our Oceans and Water Resources

⁹ Negotiations on resolutions on environmental governance pertaining to the circular economy, including water and oceans, were EU priorities at UNEA6, led by the Belgian Presidency.

We respect the ocean as key to our survival, food systems, and cultural identity, especially for island and coastal-states in the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea. We demand full and equitable child and youth participation in ocean governance, marine ecosystems conservation, and sustainable management. We support the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement and call for stronger enforcement of Regional Seas Action Plans¹⁰, empowering children and youth as co-leaders in the sustainable blue economy.

6. Inclusive Protection of Marginalized Communities

A just transition must leave no one behind. **We call for the protection, upskilling, and meaningful inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized communities** including but not limited to: the young people, children, women, girls, gender-diverse individuals, LGBTQIA+ persons, immigrant children and youth, religious minorities, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples (especially groups whose livelihoods and human rights are threatened by industrial agriculture and deforestation), people at risk of poverty, and impoverished communities. Deliberate efforts must dismantle systemic inequalities through capacity building, accessible climate and biodiversity education, and widened access to green financing, ensuring these communities benefit from and contribute to the green land and blue ocean economy.

7. Recognition and Integration of Indigenous Knowledge

We highlight the critical and distinct contributions of Indigenous children and youth to environmental stewardship. Their Traditional Knowledge and rights must be recognized, respected, safeguarded, and meaningfully integrated into all climate and biodiversity policies and actions at all levels. Their participation as environmental defenders in national and international processes is essential to effective environmental governance.

8. Integration of Ethics and Reform of Education Systems

We recognize the value of moral, ethical, and faith-based narratives in how we understand and care for nature. These worldviews must be integrated alongside scientific and governing political frameworks in environmental decision-making. Furthermore, we demand that educational institutions integrate climate literacy and sustainable living practices into all curricula. Governments must incentivise community-based, green innovation and marketing design changes to facilitate sustainable lifestyles.

9. Meaningful Youth Engagement in European Policy

We underscore the need for inclusive, accessible, and meaningful platforms for child and youth engagement. We specifically call upon European governments and the European Union to leverage existing frameworks, such as the EU Youth Strategy¹¹, to provide sustained funding and institutional support. This must include ensuring equitable, gender-balanced child

¹⁰ [UNEP and BBNJ: UNEP Regional Seas Programme](#)

¹¹ [EU Youth Strategy](#)

and youth representation in national and international delegations to key decision-making spaces, moving beyond tokenism to genuine partnership.

10. Corporate Accountability and Anti-Greenwashing Laws

We demand a legal obligation for companies to fully disclose their environmental impacts throughout their entire supply chains. To protect consumer trust, we call for a strict ban on all “greenwashing” with severe penalties for violations. We strongly urge the expansion of extended producer responsibility¹² frameworks to hold producers accountable for the lifecycle of their products in sectors like textiles and electronics.

11. Meaningful Youth Engagement and Institutional Support

We underscore the importance of inclusive, accessible, and meaningful platforms for child and youth engagement. Governments must provide sustained, long-term and impact-driven funding and institutional support that enables meaningful and structured child- and youth-led environmental initiatives and their participation in relevant processes. This includes mandating official, gender-balanced youth representation in national and international delegations to spaces like UNEA-7, ensuring a fair, and harmonized selection process (for example, through elections, selections using standardized rubrics, nominations) for such youth delegates across all UNEP member states, implementing policies that uphold children’s rights and environmental justice, and protecting women environmental human rights defenders (WEHRDs). Young people’s voices must be actively included, not tokenized.

12. Holistic and Synergistic Environmental Governance

We emphasise the need for greater synergy between existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and Science-Policy interfaces, acknowledging the interconnectedness of climate, biodiversity, and human wellbeing under the One Health Approach. Governments must protect the interests of future generations by employing a holistic, rights-based, and gender-transformative systems-thinking approach for all environmental decision-making.

Our Commitment

We, the children and youth of Western and Eastern Europe, reaffirm our unwavering commitment to peace, justice, sustainability, and multilateralism. We welcome the recent landmark Advisory Opinion on Climate Change by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of July 2025¹³, which clarifies the legal obligations of states to protect the climate system for present and future generations, and reinforces the urgency and legitimacy of our demands.

We call on environmental ministers and authorities to not only recognize but actively champion child and youth-led initiatives, foster regional solidarity and South-South

¹² [Extended producer responsibility \(EPR, UNEP\)](#)

¹³ [ICJ, No. 2025/36, 23 July 2025, Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change](#)

collaboration, and engage us as essential co-creators of solutions. Let us build a long-term partnership to secure a thriving and just planet for all.

Definition of Terms for the European Children and Youth Environment Manifesto

- **Blue Economy:** A sustainable ocean economy, that is the sum of all economic activities in the ocean, seas and coastal region, which allows marine resources to be conserved in the long term and used sustainably.
- **Environment:** The natural world as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity and including human settlements.
- **Foresight:** A structured, multi-disciplinary approach to thinking systematically about trends and emerging changes to inform present-day decisions. Foresight is not about predicting the future, but rather uses alternative futures and collective intelligence to augment traditional analysis.
- **Gender-balanced:** A quantitative focus on ensuring equal or equitable representation of people of different genders in participation, membership, or leadership. It is about composition.
- **Gender-responsive:** An approach that actively considers and addresses the distinct needs, priorities, and experiences of people of different genders in the design of policies, programmes, and projects. It aims to respond to existing inequalities.
- **Gender-transformative:** The most profound approach. It seeks to actively examine, question, and change rigid gender norms, power dynamics, and structures that create inequality. The goal is to transform the underlying systems to create lasting gender equity.
- **Greenwashing:** Misleading claims that a product or service is environmentally friendly, leading to misinformed consumer decisions.
- **Human wellbeing:** How people feel and function on a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.
- **Indigenous:** Original land stewards with deep, essential knowledge for climate action and justice.

- **Nature-based Solution (NBS):** Using nature to fight climate change and protect people and ecosystems. These approaches address societal challenges through the conservation, restoration, or sustainable management of ecosystems.
- **Net Zero:** The state of cutting greenhouse gas emissions and balancing any remaining emissions with removals from the atmosphere to halt climate change.
- **Planetary health:** The health of human civilization and the state of the natural systems on which it depends, encompassing the Earth's geosphere, biosphere, cryosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Ancient, nature-rooted wisdom, often held by Indigenous Peoples, vital for today's sustainability solutions.
- **Triple Planetary Crisis:** The three interconnected urgent threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, waste and pollution; as well as land degradation.