



European Youth in Action: Policymakers for Climate Justice

Key asks for the Multiannual Financial Framework

Foreword

The EU believes in the importance of including the voices of youth around Europe in the decision-making. In the European Youth in Action project, funded by the European Commission, 6 different organisations in various countries have engaged youth via non-formal education with several environmental topics. During the more than 50 activities including workcamps, campaigns and youth climate meetings, we were able to talk with over 500 young people. They expressed their concerns, opinions and left recommendations for the EU on four main topics: climate justice, biodiversity, the energy transition and greenwashing. We have bundled their opinions to create an actionable plan, integrating their recommendations with current legislation and upcoming opportunities.

The voices, stories and opinions of the young people we have spoken lead to one major conclusion: increased investments are essential to shield European people and businesses from the growing impacts of the climate crises. This has also been shown in research; , investment needs for our climate and environment are [estimated by the European Commission at €520 billion per year alone until 2030](#) and the EU would need to [invest about €70 billion per year until 2050 in climate adaptation](#).

However, this evidence and these needs are [not reflected in the current Commission's proposals on the next MFF](#). On the contrary, the Commission plans significant reduction in committed funding for climate and nature, which risks threatening EU citizens and businesses' future and competitiveness itself. Therefore, we demand more investments in the following European programmes and principles.

The LIFE Programme

The LIFE programme is the EU's only funding programme exclusively dedicated to the environment and climate. For over thirty years, it has played a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of EU environmental and climate legislation, while delivering measurable benefits for biodiversity and local communities across Member States. It is a critical lifeline for biodiversity, animal protection and sustainable agriculture.

In the current standing proposals for the next MFF, the LIFE programme would be repealed and part of its activities diluted in both the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs), without a ringfenced budget. Thus, it is unclear how the EU will,

in the future, deliver on its climate and environmental commitments and address the escalating climate and biodiversity crises, which risks just increasing the already enormous costs of inaction if there is no specifically dedicated instrument.

However, the European Parliament [on 28 April 2026](#) adopted the Interim Report setting out its position for negotiations with the Council on the next MFF, highlighting the pivotal role of the LIFE programme in delivering targeted, long-term support for climate, environment and nature projects across Europe.

The report calls for dedicated, continued and predictable funding for LIFE, including earmarked resources – €3 billion under the European Competitiveness Fund and €2.4 billion under the EU Facility. This sends an important political signal ahead of the next phase of EU budget negotiations and reflects broad recognition of LIFE's effectiveness on the ground.

However, the report stops short of explicitly calling for a standalone LIFE programme, despite strong and consistent support across the political spectrum and from stakeholders. At a time when environmental pressures are accelerating, this gap risks undermining the EU's long-term resilience.

Unfortunately, the [Negotiating Box](#) drafted by the Cyprus Presidency and presented at the European Council on 19 June 2026, fails to include earmarked funding for the LIFE programme.

The message from Parliament is clear, but not up to the challenge. As negotiations with the Council move forward, policymakers must turn this important political recognition into concrete commitments – **with a standalone LIFE programme and investments in climate, nature and pollution prevention that are in line with the scale of the challenges we face. It should also remain under direct management by the European Commission and guided by multiannual work programmes** – as it is the case in the current LIFE Regulation – to ensure accessibility and predictability of the programme activities to a wide range of beneficiaries and to enable them to develop high-quality proposals for bottom-up projects.

The Climate and Environmental Spending Targets

We are particularly concerned about what appears to be a step backward by the Commission when it comes to mainstreaming and spending targets. While the Commission's proposal maintains the existence of a climate and environment spending target, its scope has been expanded to cover all six environmental objectives while being lowered from 40% to 35%. In real terms, this step will mean less money allocated to even more priorities than in the current budgetary period, together with the end of earmarking for biodiversity spending - which is 10% in current MFF for 2026 and 2027. In other words, less money for more tasks.

In its [opinion](#) on the budget expenditure tracking and performance framework, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) also identified several shortcomings in the performance model for the budget proposed by the Commission including [missing impact indicators](#) and potentially unreliable spending estimates for cross-cutting priorities like the environment. We have seen this before, with money earmarked for sustainable project being diverted elsewhere for lack of transparency.

Moreover, the transition towards more resilient agricultural systems should be supported, with explicitly including biodiversity protection as part of farm stewardship. Funding for environmental

and climate actions should be raised to 35% of total Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) spending, with the bare minimum acceptable being 28%, in line with the current CAP.

We must **ensure that at least 50% of the overall next EU budget is dedicated to genuine climate and environmental and just transition investments - including at least a dedicated 10% to genuine biodiversity objectives and that the methodology for tracking what counts as climate and environmental spending is improved to better reflect the actual environmental impact.**

We also call for **transition investments in sustainable agricultural systems, with specific biodiversity objectives. Therefore, at least 35% of total CAP spending should be for environmental and climate actions, with bare acceptable minimum being 28%.**

The Do No Significant Harm Principle

While we welcome the Commission's intention to mainstream the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle and requirements across the EU budget, we are concerned by the numerous dangerous derogations that will put at risk the effectiveness of the EU budget spending and ultimately EU's competitiveness. The exceptions are so many that they could kill the rule.

We therefore call on you to **guarantee a strict implementation of the Do No Significant Harm principle by the Commission without exemptions through a simple and consistent approach that clearly labels harmful investments and reduces the administrative burden for beneficiaries and managing authorities alike.**

Support to Civil Society Organisations

Last but not least, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), like volunteering associations and youth organisations are vital for democracy, bridging citizens and EU institutions. Operating grants enable CSOs to provide independent, evidence-based input and ensure grassroots voices are heard in Brussels. Public funding for CSOs must continue, otherwise only the voice of industry will be heard in the corridors of the EU institutions.

We therefore call on you to **provide stronger guarantees that the European Commission will continue to deliver directly managed funding for CSOs across all sectors, including for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in the areas of environment and climate.**

For more information, please contact

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