

# A post-growth Europe critical to survive and thrive, urge over 400 civil society groups and experts



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**As political leaders gather for a second conference at the European Parliament on how to move “beyond growth”, we, the undersigned academics and civil society organisations, see the geopolitical crisis as an opportunity to disengage from the socially and ecologically harmful growth competition and instead embrace a wellbeing cooperation.**

There is no empirical basis indicating that it is possible to globally and sufficiently decouple economic growth from environmental pressures. The pursuit of endless economic growth by high income nations is a problem as it either reduces or cancels the outcomes of environmental policies. The current climate chaos and unravelling web of life on which our society depends is an existential threat to peace, water and food security, and democracy.

Advancing to a post-growth economy is not only to survive, but also to thrive. This calls for a democratically planned and equitable downscaling of production and consumption, sometimes referred to as ‘degrowth’, in those countries that overshoot their ecological resources. This is Europe’s global peace project, because its current economic growth is causing conflicts both in and beyond Europe.

In the context of high-income nations, a smaller footprint does not mean worse living conditions. Sufficiency policies focusing on frugality, resource reduction, and work time reduction can significantly increase wellbeing and decrease environmental pressures, therefore creating the possibility for sustainable prosperity without growth.

In order to ensure the highest quality of life with the lowest footprint, we must completely change the goals and rules of the economic game. In a post-growth economy, the current focus on quantitative growth would be replaced by the aim of thriving in a regenerative and distributive economy, one that delivers qualitative wellbeing by meeting the needs of all people within the means of the living planet - as elaborated in the framework of Doughnut Economics.

The markets have proven to be ill-equipped to make the most crucial decisions in our society. For the economy to serve the people, rather than the other way around, people must be given back control over the economy. To change the rules of the game, we need to learn from already existing initiatives. For example, upscaling across the EU the model for not-for-profit cooperatives.

In light of these pressing challenges and stimulating opportunities, we call on the European Union, its Institutions, and Member States to implement:

1. **Post-growth European Institutions:** constitute permanent structures at the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, and within Member States to assess post-growth strategies and pathways.
2. **A European Green Deal beyond growth:** design a new flagship programme shaped around a systemic change approach that aspires to create a thriving future within planetary boundaries, with degrowth as a necessary transition phase towards a post-growth destination.
3. **Beyond growth policies** based on the four principles of:
  - **Biocapacity:** fossil fuel phase-outs, limits to raw material extraction and nature protection and restoration measures for healthy and resilient soils, forests, marine and other ecosystems. E.g., a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, a Resource Justice and Resilience Act including a binding material footprint reduction target and real, area-based nature restoration.

- **Fairness:** fiscal instruments to foster a more equal society by eradicating income and wealth extremes, as well as super-profits. E.g., a carbon wealth tax, both minimum and maximum incomes.
- **Wellbeing for all:** secured access to essential infrastructures via an improved, ecologically-sensitive welfare state. E.g., Universal Basic Services (including the human rights to health, transport, care, housing, education and social protection etc.), job guarantees, price controls for essential goods and services.
- **Active democracy:** citizen assemblies with mandates to formulate socially acceptable sufficiency strategies and strengthen policies based on ecological limits, fairness and wellbeing for all and a stronger role for trade unions. E.g., local needs forum, climate conventions, participatory budgeting.

**It has been five years since the first “post-growth” conference. Within civil society and academia, growth-critical ideas have been getting ever stronger. The details of these ideas are being discussed in the European Parliament and with the European Commission right now. Scientific knowledge and policy insights are available to make the ideas of degrowth and post-growth a reality. The crises we face are also opportunities to create a new system that can secure wellbeing for all while allowing for a thriving democratic life and a slower yet sweeter mode of living.**

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### **European Environmental Bureau**

Largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe



### **Friends of the Earth Europe**

World's largest grassroots environmental network



### **European Youth Forum**

Biggest youth platform in the world



### **Wellbeing Economy Alliance**

Global collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements and individuals

## Signatures

### Civil society organisations

1. European Environmental Bureau
2. Friends of the Earth Europe
3. European Youth Forum
4. Wellbeing Economy Alliance
5. The Club of Rome
6. International Society for Ecological Economics
7. Institute for Political Ecology
8. Commons Network
9. Economy for the Common Good
10. Degrowth in Action
11. European Policy Centre
12. Ecological Economics For All
13. US Society for Ecological Economics
14. Zero Waste Europe
15. Scientifiques en rebellion
16. WEAll Youth
17. Degrowth Collective
18. France Nature Environnement
19. Seas At Risk
20. SOMO
21. London Mining Network
22. Post Growth Institute; Southern Oregon University
23. Asociación Biodiversa
24. Steady State Manchester
25. Grands-Parents pour le Climat (Belgique francophone)
26. Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia
27. Fridays For Future South Tyrol
28. Climate Vanguard
29. Degrowth Movement Italy (MDF)
30. Les Amis de la Terre Belgique
31. ICLEI Europe
32. HERWIN
33. Vrede vzw
34. LEF/FGE
35. Focus Association for Sustainable Development
36. Policy Lab Slovenia
37. CIDSE
38. Cargonoma, Degrowth research and experimentation cooperative, Budapest
39. Estonian Green Movement
40. Associazione per la decrescita
41. Danish Committee for Health Education
42. ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System
43. Teater K
44. PowerShift e.V.
45. Amis de la Terre France
46. European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
47. SOLIDAR
48. Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability
49. An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland
50. Ecologistas en Acción
51. REScoop.eu
52. Youth for Climate Belgium
53. Poems for Parliament
54. Wellbeing Economy Lab
55. Canopea
56. Planet-N
57. EKO KROG Slovenia
58. CATAPA
59. Make Mothers Matter
60. European Society for Ecological Economics
61. Hot or Cool Institute gGmbH
62. Zero waste Žalec
63. SDG Watch Europe
64. Good4Trust.org
65. Ekumenická akademie (Ecumenical Academy)
66. Electra Energy Cooperative
67. WFTO- Home of Fair Trade Enterprises
68. Platform for Social Housing
69. CONCORD Europe
70. tools for good
71. Re-set: platform for socio-ecological transformation
72. EUROSOLAR Catalunya
73. Parma Sostenibile
74. Přátelé přírody /Friends of Nature
75. EUROSOLAR.CZ
76. Benzyme Ventures
77. Ultra sieste
78. Zsámboki Biokert Hungary

79. Bystro
80. Lipensko pro život, z.s.
81. TEREZA Educational Centre
82. Living Economies Forum
83. Fundación vanES Sabayes Spain
84. Polish Zero Waste Association
85. European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
86. Association For Promotion Sustainable Development
87. The Social Guarantee
88. Sistema B
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90. Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne EKO-UNIA
91. Bond Beter Leefmilieu (BBL)
92. Post Carbon Institute
93. Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie (Buy Responsibly Foundation)
94. ClimaTalk
95. Limity jsme my
96. Sciaena
97. African Circular Economy Network (ACEN)
98. Green Economy Coalition
99. eco-union
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101. Rede para o Decrescimento
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109. Wetlands International Europe
110. Amigos de la Tierra - Friends of the Earth Spain
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112. Friends of the Earth Cyprus
113. Friends of the Earth Estonia
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133. Energy Cities
134. New Worlds Group
135. Landsrådet för Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationer
136. Local Futures
137. Youth and Environment Europe
138. Waag Futurelab
139. The Emergence Network
140. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
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142. Začni učit!, z.s.
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