

# An Open Letter to Decision-makers and Youth in the EU

From young people about sustainability in Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI)

Creative minds are free in their imagination and the working means which sometimes can lead to the overuse of materials and over-waste. 110 participants of the Multiplier Events of the KA2 project YouCreate in Luxembourg, Greece, Sweden and Germany had their input for making the recommendations addressed to policymakers for developing encouragement systems for Creative and Cultural industry (CCI) workers.

The list of recommendations, as well as the best practice examples implemented so far, are presented in the following 2 parts.

## Part 1. Recommendations addressed to policymakers in the EU for creating encouragement systems for CCI workers

### Information

**Encourage collaboration:** Policymakers can encourage CCI companies to work together to develop and implement eco-friendly practices. This can include forming industry-wide alliances or working with local organisations to promote sustainable practices. Collaborations between CCI workers, scientists, and engineers can lead to the development of innovative eco-friendly materials (f.e. paints) and techniques.

**Raise awareness:** Educate CCI workers about the environmental impact of their practices and materials. This can be done through campaigns and educational programs that highlight the importance of eco-friendliness in the sector. Creative workers should be encouraged to use eco-friendly materials, sustainable energy systems, low-impact techniques, and online/digital alternative resources. It will also be essential to raise awareness about the consequences of the usage of non-recyclable materials.

## Opportunities

***Incentives:*** The governments can offer grants, awards, or exhibition opportunities. By rewarding eco-friendly practices, creative workers will be more likely to make environmentally conscious choices when creating their work.

***Regulations:*** Develop regulations that require manufacturers of CCI materials to produce eco-friendly products. This can be done through incentives, taxation, or penalties for non-compliance. By making it mandatory for manufacturers to produce eco-friendly materials, CCI workers will have greater access to sustainable options.

***Provide tax credits:*** Policymakers can offer tax credits to CCI companies that adopt eco-friendly practices, such as reducing their use of chemicals or adopting more sustainable methods.

***Offer research and development grants:*** Policymakers can offer grants to CCI companies that invest in the research and development of new eco-friendly technologies or products.

***Provide marketing support:*** Policymakers can provide marketing support to CCI companies that promote their eco-friendly practices to consumers. This can include funding for advertising, product labelling, or public relations companies.

***Encourage the use of local materials:*** Finally, policymakers can promote the use of locally sourced materials, which can reduce transportation emissions and also support local businesses.

***Policymakers:*** To provide realistic motivations to citizens and businesses for sustainability and financial issues. They should also provide specific measures, regulations, and frameworks that citizens can follow and organise their work accordingly. Institutional measures are of high importance, and the market alone cannot regulate such trends and frameworks.

## Actions

***Develop eco-friendly transportation options:*** The government can encourage the use of eco-friendly modes of transportation for raw materials and final work transportation, such as electric or hybrid vehicles.

***Recycling and waste management:*** Develop efficient recycling and waste management systems that minimise the environmental impact of CCI materials.



This can include the recycling of materials, as well as proper disposal of toxic materials. The promotion of sustainable materials can include the use of sustainable materials in CCI practices, such as bamboo, cork, recycled steel, and timber.

**Food consumption and waste:** According to research, toxic substances found in massive food production and based on the saying “we are what we eat” automatically means that the human body absorbs everything from the food we consume.

**Markets and food offerings:** In order to have markets that are regulated in terms of food offerings and their negative environmental impact, especially in terms of food waste, we can implement regulations similar to the French model, where it is illegal for shops to throw away edible food, and heavy fines are imposed for non-compliance. Supermarkets and stores could also give away food that would otherwise be thrown away to people, either because it is close to expiring or rotting. This could be done through organised give-aways, where people are allowed to take the food that would otherwise be thrown away.

**Plastics:** Pollution of non-recyclable plastic products is spotted in the mainland and the sea. As a result, this waste end-up floating in the ocean and at the bottoms of the ocean and being eaten by fish. According to the environmental expert, the real recycling percentage is low since not all products are recyclable. On top of that, the waste thrown in the recycling bins needs to be cleaned first by the citizens, so no recycling is being done in case of dirty waste.

**Packaging waste:** Policy makers can incentivize stores to reduce unnecessary packaging or use reusable/refilling packaging. For example, they can encourage stores to sell only the base of cosmetics in solid formats that consumers can mix with water to avoid high water content and plastic bottles. Additionally, policy makers can promote eco-friendly packaging alternatives by providing incentives to research centres and private companies, such as less tax, monetary incentives, and recognition. To encourage repairing and reusing items, policy makers can provide incentives to those who perform these actions and create accessible spaces where people can learn to repair their broken items. The goal is to make repairing and reusing more appealing than buying new items.

**Fast fashion:** Policy makers should prioritise the reintroduction of sewing as a skill taught in schools, as it was once widespread and valuable but has been lost over time. By educating children on how to repair their own clothes, they could learn about the value of clothing, its production, how to preserve clothing, and the materials used to make clothes, among other things.



In addition, policy makers could provide support for non-formal education, such as sewing and clothing workshops, to help people learn to produce and repair their clothes. These efforts could be incentivized through measures such as monetary or recognition-based incentives for organisations conducting these activities.

**Agriculture:** Unfortunately, agricultural organic waste is usually burnt, unused, or not composted. Secondly, the reduction in the use of chemical products in agriculture and on animals, replacing them with more biological products, and implementing sustainable practices in farm cultivation and stock-farming through organic waste.

**Air pollution:** Air pollution poses a major threat to health and climate. The harmful materials/ waste are released into the clean air and water without filtering.

**Deforestation:** Policy makers have a range of solutions to tackle deforestation. Firstly, they can promote dialogue between stakeholders to find solutions, build trust, and enable collaboration. Secondly, they can invest in research and technology to develop eco-friendly alternatives to wood, carton, and paper, and promote a plant-based diet to reduce the negative environmental impact of deforestation. Lastly, they can promote green education by incorporating forest and nature-related activities in school curricula to raise awareness and encourage action.

## Part 2. Additional Information on Already Existing EU Policy Papers for the Awareness of Youth

The cultural and creative industries (CCI) play a vital role in shaping society, fostering innovation, and driving economic growth across Europe. Recognizing the immense potential of this sector, the European Union has taken steps to ensure the sustainable development and preservation of cultural heritage, artistic expression, and creative endeavors. This part explores the EU's policy papers on sustainability in relation to the CCI. It shows the EU's commitment to shaping a sustainable future.

### Circular economy action plan

The paper is about the EU's new circular action plan that paves the way for a cleaner and more competitive Europe. The European Commission adopted the new circular economy action plan (CEAP) in March 2020. It is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth. The EU's transition to a circular economy will reduce pressure on natural resources and will create sustainable growth and jobs. It is also a prerequisite to achieve the EU's 2050 climate neutrality target and to halt biodiversity loss.

The new action plan announces initiatives along the entire life cycle of products. It targets how products are designed, promotes circular economy processes, encourages sustainable consumption, and aims to ensure that waste is prevented and the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible.

It introduces legislative and non-legislative measures targeting areas where action at the EU level brings real added value.

### Objectives

Measures that will be introduced under the new action plan aim to

- make sustainable products the norm in the EU
- empower consumers and public buyers
- focus on the sectors that use most resources and where the potential for circularity is high such as: electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and buildings, food, water and nutrients
- ensure less waste
- make circularity work for people, regions and cities
- lead global efforts on circular economy

# Timber Regulation

The paper is about the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) entered into application on 3 March 2013 and will be repealed by the Regulation on deforestation-free products. The Timber Regulation outlined the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market to counter the trade of illegally harvested timber and timber products. It covered a broad range of timber products, including solid wood products, flooring, plywood, pulp and paper. Not included are recycled products, as well as printed papers such as books, magazines and newspapers.

The evaluation ('Fitness check') of the EU Timber Regulation showed that it improved the situation in third countries. EU trade partners took steps to strengthen their forest governance systems and reduce illegal logging to meet the requirements of the Regulation. The due diligence approach allowed flexibility to respond to new and emerging challenges linked to illegal logging and illegal land use change. Therefore, the new Regulation on deforestation-free products integrates and improves upon the framework set up with the Timber Regulation.

## Objectives

The main objectives of the EU Timber Regulation are to

- prohibit the placement of illegally harvested timber and products derived from such timber on the EU market
- require EU operators who place timber products on the EU market to exercise due diligence to minimise the risk of placing illegally harvested timber, or timber products containing illegally harvested timber
- require EU traders to keep records of their suppliers and customers

## Action Plan: Financing Sustainable Growth

The paper is about the action plan directed at financing sustainable growth.

By adopting the Paris Agreement on climate change and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, governments from around the world including the EU chose a more sustainable path for our planet and our economy. The UN 2030 Agenda has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide us towards a future of stability, a healthy planet, and inclusive societies. The Paris Agreement aims to limit global warming. The EU is committed to sustainability and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The Commission has a Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030' and a multi-stakeholder platform to exchange best practices. The financial system can play a role in a sustainable economy, and the EU has appointed a High-Level Expert Group on sustainable finance, whose report proposes eight key recommendations. This Action Plan builds upon those recommendations to set out an EU strategy for sustainable finance.



## Objectives

The objectives of the Action Plan: Financing Sustainable Growth are:

- To mobilise private capital towards sustainable investments: The action plan aims to redirect capital towards sustainable activities and projects, helping to finance the transition to a low-carbon and sustainable economy.
- To manage financial risks related to climate change and environmental degradation: The action plan seeks to help financial institutions and investors identify and manage financial risks related to climate change and environmental degradation, ensuring the stability and resilience of financial markets.
- To promote transparency and long-termism in financial markets: The action plan aims to improve transparency and disclosure around sustainability performance, helping investors make informed decisions and encouraging companies to adopt sustainable business practices.
- To develop a taxonomy for sustainable activities: The action plan seeks to create a classification system that defines what activities can be considered sustainable, providing clarity and guidance to investors and companies on what is sustainable and what is not.
- To establish standards for green bonds: The action plan aims to develop a standard for green bonds, improving transparency and providing investors with a clear definition of what is a green bond.
- To integrate sustainability into investment advice: The action plan seeks to ensure that investment firms and advisers consider sustainability risks and opportunities in their investment advice, helping to align investments with sustainability objectives.
- To strengthen sustainability reporting: The action plan aims to develop sustainability reporting standards to help companies report on their sustainability performance in a consistent and comparable way, improving transparency and allowing investors to compare the sustainability performance of different companies.

## The European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is a priority outlined by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. The Commission presented a roadmap of policies and measures, including cutting emissions and investing in research. President von der Leyen announced a new 55% EU emission reduction target for 2030 and targets for the NextGenerationEU recovery fund. Europe aims to become the world's first climate-neutral continent, with a new EU ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.





## Elements of the New Green Deal

First climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

European Climate Law (adopted on 4 March 2020), with target for 2050. The law will enshrine the EU's 2030 and 2050 climate targets into law.

European Climate Pact to engage citizens and all parts of society in climate action  
2030 Climate Target Plan to further reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030

## Objectives

The European Green Deal has several objectives, including:

1. **Achieving climate neutrality:** The European Green Deal aims to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050. This means reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero or offsetting any remaining emissions through measures such as carbon capture and storage.
2. **Decarbonizing the economy:** The European Green Deal seeks to decarbonize the EU's economy by promoting the use of renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
3. **Promoting sustainable mobility:** The European Green Deal aims to promote sustainable mobility by promoting the use of electric vehicles, improving public transport, and encouraging active transport such as cycling and walking.
4. **Building a sustainable food system:** The European Green Deal seeks to promote a more sustainable and resilient food system by promoting sustainable agriculture, reducing food waste, and promoting healthy and sustainable diets.
5. **Protecting and restoring biodiversity:** The European Green Deal aims to protect and restore biodiversity in the EU by promoting nature-based solutions and sustainable land use practices.

## European Climate Law

The law is about setting the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

The European Climate Law writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. Climate neutrality by 2050 means achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for EU countries as a whole, mainly by cutting emissions, investing in green technologies and protecting the natural environment.





The law aims to ensure that all EU policies contribute to this goal and that all sectors of the economy and society play their part.

## Objectives

- Set the long-term direction of travel for meeting the 2050 climate neutrality objective through all policies, in a socially fair and cost-efficient manner
- Set a more ambitious EU 2030 target, to set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate-neutral by 2050
- Create a system for monitoring progress and take further action if needed
- Provide predictability for investors and other economic actors
- Ensure that the transition to climate neutrality is irreversible

## Unfolding the Single-Use Plastics Directive

In May 2019 the EU formally approved a pioneer legislation to curb single-use plastics - and no, it is not just about banning straws. This paper presents an overview of the new Single-Use Plastics Directive, and our recommendations for an effective implementation at the national level. Following the wide acknowledgment on the significant negative environmental, health, and economic impact of single-use plastics, a new directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (hereafter referred to as the SUP Directive) has been approved. The SUP Directive was proposed in May 2018, as part of the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, and in less than one year (8 months to be precise) an agreement was reached to tackle single-use plastics in the EU. The directive aims to prevent and tackle marine litter by, among other things, phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics, introducing economic incentives to reduce consumption and transition to reusable systems, and establishing high collection rates and extended producer responsibility schemes (EPR). Zero Waste Europe welcomes the Directive as a significant first step to curb plastic pollution and as an important instrument to drive and push countries, businesses, and society towards a true circular economy.

## Objectives

- The SUP Directive aims to reduce marine litter by reducing single-use plastic production and increasing plastic waste collection and recycling.
- The directive promotes a circular economy by encouraging sustainable design, production, and use of single-use plastics and promoting recycling and reuse.
- The SUP Directive aims to raise awareness about the environmental impact of single-use plastics and promote sustainable behaviour change.
- The directive aims to improve resource efficiency by reducing plastic waste production and increasing plastic recycling and reuse.



- The SUP Directive aims to harmonise national regulations on single-use plastics across the EU, reducing administrative burdens on businesses and ensuring a level playing field.

## Developing the carbon market

An international carbon market is a mechanism that allows countries and companies to meet their greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets by trading carbon credits. A carbon credit represents one metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) that has been reduced or removed from the atmosphere. Set up in 2005, the EU ETS is the world's first international emissions trading system. It has since continued to inspire the development of emissions trading in other countries and regions. The EU supports these efforts through knowledge exchange and capacity building activities. The EU also considers opportunities to link the EU ETS with other compatible systems.

In 2017, the EU and Switzerland signed an agreement on their emissions trading systems. The agreement entered into force on 1 January 2020, and the link became operational in September that year.

### Objectives

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions: The primary objective of an international carbon market is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing a mechanism for countries and companies to trade carbon credits. By incentivizing emissions reductions and creating a market for carbon credits, the international carbon market can help to achieve global emissions reduction targets.
- Promoting sustainable development: An international carbon market can also promote sustainable development by incentivizing investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other low-carbon technologies. This can lead to economic growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Encouraging international cooperation: The international carbon market can encourage international cooperation on climate change by providing a mechanism for countries to work together to achieve emissions reductions targets. This can also help to promote trust and cooperation between countries on other issues related to climate change.
- Supporting climate finance: An international carbon market can provide a source of climate finance by allowing developed countries to purchase carbon credits from developing countries that have implemented emissions reductions projects. This can help to finance sustainable development in developing countries while also reducing global emissions.



- Providing price stability: An international carbon market can provide price stability for carbon credits, which can help to provide certainty for companies and investors who are investing in emissions reduction projects. This can also help to prevent carbon credit prices from becoming too volatile, which can discourage investment in emissions reductions projects.

Acknowledging the huge impact of CCI workers on the soil and food systems, this part also includes information about the Common Agricultural Policy, as additional information.

## The common agricultural policy: 2023–27

The common agricultural policy is key to securing the future of agriculture and forestry, as well as achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. On 2 December, 2021, the agreement on reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP) was formally adopted. The new legislation, which entered into force on 1 January 2023, paves the way for a fairer, greener and more performance-based CAP.

Agriculture and rural areas are central to the European Green Deal, and the CAP 2023–27 will be a key tool in reaching the ambitions of the Farm to Fork and biodiversity strategies.

The CAP 2023–27 supports agriculture in making a much stronger contribution to the goals of the European Green Deal:

- higher green ambitions: CAP plans are in line with environmental and climate legislation. In its CAP strategic plan, each EU country is obliged to display a higher ambition on environment and climate action compared to the previous programming period (no “backsliding”) and is required to update the plan when climate and environmental legislation is modified;
- contribute to the Green Deal targets: the national CAP Strategic Plans contribute to the Green Deal targets (the CAP recommendations set out how this contribution is expected);
- enhanced conditionality: beneficiaries of the CAP have their payments linked to a stronger set of mandatory requirements. For example, on every farm at least 3% of arable land is dedicated to biodiversity and non-productive elements, with a possibility to receive support via eco-schemes to achieve 7%. Wetlands and peatlands are also protected.
- eco-schemes: at least 25% of the budget for direct payments is allocated to eco-schemes, providing stronger incentives for climate- and environment-friendly farming practices and approaches (such as organic farming, agro-ecology, carbon farming, etc.) as well as animal welfare improvements;



- rural development: at least 35% of funds are allocated to measures to support climate, biodiversity, environment and animal welfare;
- operational programmes: in the fruit and vegetables sector, operational programmes allocate at least 15% of their expenditure towards the environment;
- climate and biodiversity: 40% of the CAP budget has to be climate-relevant and strongly support the general commitment to dedicate 10% of the EU budget to biodiversity objectives by the end of the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) period.

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