



WHERE: **Brussels, Belgium**

WHAT: **Citizens' Deliberation Event**

WHEN: **20–21 April 2024**

# EU-WIDE, BRUSSELS FEMINIST FESTIVAL: A CITIZENS' DELIBERATION ON THE GREEN TRANSITION

On **20 and 21 April 2024**, 71 citizens from across Europe participated in the Feminist Festival in Brussels. The event, titled “Feminist Festival: A Citizens' Deliberation on the Green Transition”, was organised by Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) as part of the REAL DEAL project. WECF is an ecofeminist network of over 250 women's and civil society organisations in 70 countries. EEB is the European association of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on environmental policies at all levels.

The goal of the festival was to create a diverse, safe, and brave space for participants to explore intersectional feminist approaches to the climate crisis.

## BEFORE THE EVENT: PREPARATION

### AIMS AND CONCEPT

The festival aimed to test the theory and methodology of the course “[Feminist Moderation: How to Facilitate Safe and Inclusive Discussions](#)”, as developed by [WECF](#).

It sought to go beyond diverse participation, focusing on maintaining equity in participatory spaces by ensuring representation of structurally excluded groups. This was reflected in:

- **Agenda setting:** We brainstormed with REAL DEAL consortium partners on which intersectional topics affecting gender equality to discuss, and decided to apply this lens to the EU's green transition as this was a broad topic that could unite diverse themes.

Following this, participants helped decide event topics, as we had a mandatory security question: “What would you like to discuss in this event?”

- **Format:** We tested how one can recognise diverse ways of processing information and how to change traditional notions of “expertise”.



- **Moderator selection:** Priority was given to representatives of NGOs working with issues affecting marginalised communities. They received training on handling sensitive issues and balancing power in discussions in order to foster a 'brave' space.
- **Awareness and accessibility team:** This team was present and key to ensuring the friendly and inclusive tone of the event.

Another aim of the event was to reimagine the landscape of EU policy through the lens of ecofeminism by championing a bold approach that acknowledges the interconnectedness of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, extractivism, and capitalism in impacting the EU's green transition.

### TOPIC FRAMING

The framing theme of the event was "gender and climate", with three subtopics focused on the interconnectedness with gender justice. To facilitate this, participants were asked to indicate during the preparation process which topics they would like to discuss at the event. As the overarching theme was already established as gender and the green transition, participants overwhelmingly suggested related discussion topics. The issues of climate migration, environmental racism, and energy access/energy poverty came up repeatedly and were therefore selected by the team as subtopics for the afternoon sessions.

Allowing the participants to set the agenda fostered greater agency over the process of the festival. People often want to talk about topics that are personal to them, and so, by following participants' wishes, the festival could incorporate their individual expertise in a bottom-up manner.

### RECRUITMENT

The registration process for the festival included optional questions on gender, age, race, disability status, nationality, country of residence, household composition, occupation, and sexual orientation, along with a mandatory security question: "In one sentence, what would you like to discuss at this event?" This question helped filter out trolls and those with malicious intent while at the same time gathering discussion topics for the event (see above).

The event was promoted by targeting marginalised groups through social media adverts. An outreach plan mapped traditionally excluded groups and provided tips for how REAL DEAL partners could reach them.



A dissemination volunteer posting the event flyer on a student campus in Istanbul.

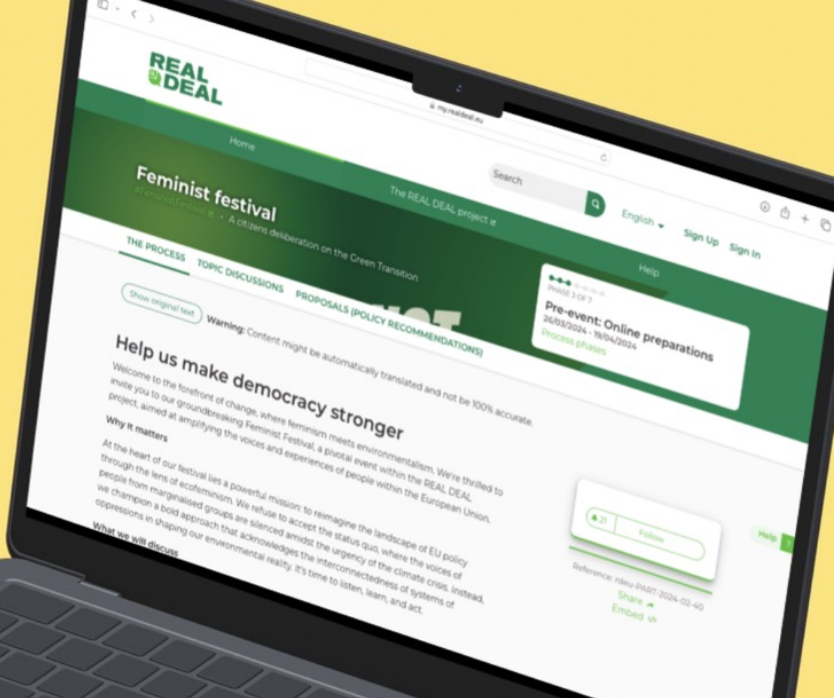
The invitation flyer was available in 10 languages: Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Macedonian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

Participants were selected using diversity criteria to ensure representation of various experiences, with EU citizenship not being a requirement. Individuals affiliated with NGOs and those who failed the security question were excluded. Priority was given to people from the Global Majority, gender diverse, queer, disabled, youth, older persons, unemployed, low-income, rural, and racialised groups. A final group was also randomly selected among all those who remained after the quota selection. As EU citizenship was not a prerequisite, participants from neighbouring countries were invited with visa support, as well as those residing in the EU without citizenship.

Accessibility, language, and care needs could be noted



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Laptop showing the Feminist Festival page on the REAL DEAL deliberation platform [my.realdeal.eu](https://my.realdeal.eu)

but did not affect selection. Out of 316 applicants, 110 were selected and 71 attended the festival.

### KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION

Participants received a link to an online deliberative platform where they could access publications and glossaries on gender and the European Green Deal, and engage in pre-event debates. They could also submit proposals with final recommendations. However, preparation was not mandatory.

## DURING THE EVENT

### KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING

The aim of the festival was to reimagine expertise, and so moderators were chosen based on their ability to work in non-hierarchical ways.

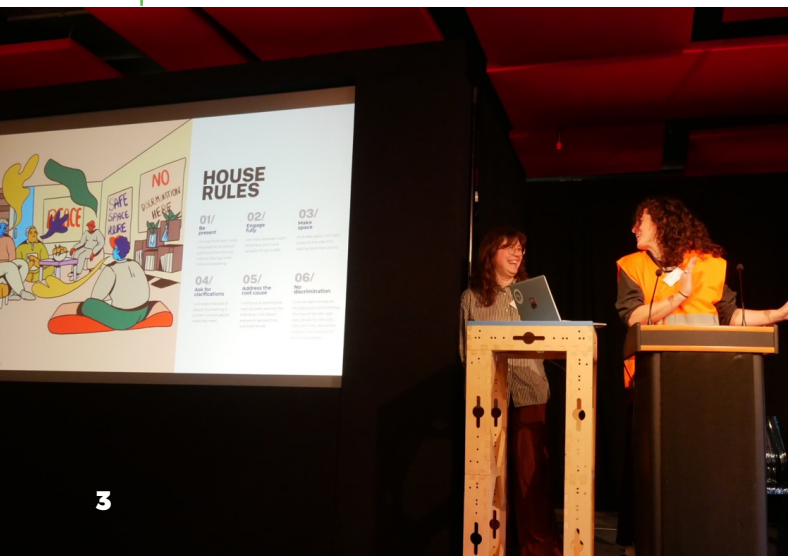
This meant that value was placed on the knowledge of the participants themselves, and the moderators' role was to facilitate their space for sharing and to clarify the topics when needed. Moderators were therefore selected based on their personal expertise in working with affected communities and their knowledge of key topic areas, about which they also gave presentations. Hence, moderators served a dual role.

### FACILITATION AND INTERACTION

The festival began with a welcoming session, introducing the accessibility coordinator, the awareness team, and the observers. Each agenda point was moderated by a different facilitator, as were the three initial briefings in the subgroups. Later in the afternoon, the three co-created spaces on different topics were staffed with a presenter, a moderator, and Real Deal support.

The Awareness Team informing participants of the house rules and on how to get in contact with them.

Participants engaging in the "four corners exercise", facing the facilitator.





## Summarised Agenda

Duration	Content
25 minutes	<b>Welcome and introduction</b>
75 minutes	<b>Gender &amp; climate: Four corners exercise</b>
20 minutes	<i>Break</i>
60 minutes	<b>Three different briefings and different formats on gender and climate (participants could choose): Embodiment theatre, Academic presentation, Craft session</b>
30 minutes	<b>Reflection of first half of the day</b>
90 minutes	<i>Break</i>
30 minutes	<b>Learning spaces on the three subtopics (participants could choose)</b>
90 minutes	<b>Drafting recommendations</b>
30 minutes	<i>Break</i>
90 minutes	<b>Presentation of recommendations &amp; voting</b>

Participants first engaged in the “four corners exercise”, where they positioned themselves in response to provocative statements. After each of their choices, discussions took place within and between the corners, serving as an ice-breaker and setting a non-formal tone for the event.

Next, participants chose one of three briefing and learning formats on gender and climate:

- **Embodiment theatre:** “Theatre that Reconnects and Embodied Dreaming”, which also included dealing with different types of ecological masculinities.
- **Academic presentation:** “How Logical is Biological?” Research on queer ecofeminism.
- **Craft session:** “Imagining a Green Feminist Future”. Developing a vision and working with crafting materials in groups to make this vision a reality.

The aim with these three sessions was to allow participants to engage with the topic of gender and climate in their preferred format. As the way in which people take in information varies, it was decided that using a mix of creative and traditionally academic formats could provide the greatest overall benefit. This allowed participants to choose the workshop they would feel most comfortable in, which also helped creating a safe space for sharing and reflection.

After the briefings, groups had an emotional check-in through the interactive software Slido. In the afternoon, participants selected one of three topics—**climate migration, energy poverty, or environmental racism**—and worked together to agree on 3–5 recommendations.

The first and main day ended with a plenary discussion and outcomes. Each of the groups had a rapporteur who reported back. They also had a “secret reporter” who, unknown to the group, had captured the discussions as a poem. After each group had presented their recommendations, participants were asked to volunteer to interpret these as visual scribes, facilitated by one of the moderators.



Morning sessions where the topic 'gender and climate' was presented in three different ways. From the left: 1) Academic lecture, 2) Craft session, 3) Embodiment theatre.

### SIDE-EVENTS

As a cultural-social side-event, the participants could opt for visiting the Parliamentarium and the House of European History on the second day.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The three topics of climate migration, energy poverty, and environmental racism were introduced to the participants in the subgroups, followed by presentations of three experts with relevant background or lived experience on these topics. The experts then acted as moderators while the groups discussed their own personal experiences with the topics and came up with 3-5 recommendations.

The recommendations were shared in the plenary and finalised in a [follow-up document](#) after the festival. The document was shared with participants after the event for their approval and comments. Each group also wrote a **poem** about their topic (see Annex).

### POEMS

#### Poem: **Climate migration**

In the voices of the future, echoes resound,  
Of Kenya, touched by climatic shifts profound.  
Some populations, their existence tied to rain,  
Yet climate change threatens, causing strife and pain.

Like a river seeking its destined path,  
Immigration flows, carrying burdens amassed.  
People depart, sometimes forgetting their roots,  
Yet a part of them lingers, in memories that refute.

In the reflections of the future, Kenya seeks its way,  
Amidst droughts and the tide of destiny's sway.  
Future generations bear the weight,  
Of today's choices, in this tumultuous state.

But in these voices of the future, a glimmer gleams,  
That nature and humanity find common themes.  
That lessons from the past, though sometimes lost,  
Sow seeds of hope where life's pathways are crossed.

## Poem: **Energy poverty**

With decentralized energy systems,  
accessibility meets hope!  
Lighting up our world  
from our own space

## Poem: **Environmental racism**

It is raining again  
Shorts, boots, trousers, pants  
In colors, in shapes, in pieces  
Was raining then too  
Bomb shells, metal and bullet  
Arms, legs, eyes and ears  
Oh yes it was raining all sorts of me



Group photo with the Feminist Festival participants and facilitators.

## **AFTER THE EVENT**

### **DOCUMENTATION AND FEEDBACK**

The event was praised for its diverse, inclusive setup and well-organised programme. Participants appreciated the smooth flow, positive atmosphere, and the warm, inviting space.

Several constructive suggestions were made, including the introduction of badges with pronouns to prevent misgendering, and a pre-festival in-person briefing for presenters and facilitators to improve preparedness. There was also a request for more time to explore and discuss recommendations, possibly through interactive methods such as theatre. Additionally, increasing diversity and engagement with contrasting viewpoints were identified as areas for further development.

### **FOLLOW-UP**

The aim of the Feminist Festival was to bring together feminist methodologies and to create a safe and accessible space. For that, a variety of methodologies were tested: the four corners method; being taught information in a variety of ways on one topic; and non-hierarchical expertise. The experiences of creating a safe space and the various challenges that arose during the festival were reflected on and incorporated into the [Feminist Moderation course](#). It is planned to follow-up with activities where that use recommendations.

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In the REAL DEAL project, researchers and civil society organisations worked together on green transition and democracy. They conducted research on deliberative methods to find out what works best for involving citizens on the European Green Deal.



REAL DEAL has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101037071. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## EU FEMINIST FESTIVAL: A CITIZENS' DELIBERATION ON THE GREEN TRANSITION, BRUSSELS

(April 2024)

### GROUP: CLIMATE MIGRATION

- MEPs should advocate for the development of an internationally recognised legal framework for climate refugees. This could involve supporting initiatives within the EU and at the international level to establish legal protections and pathways for people displaced by climate change. MEPs can raise awareness of the need for legal recognition of climate refugees and work to build consensus among EU Member States and international partners.
- MEPs should advocate for funding allocations within the EU budget to support community engagement and dialogue initiatives. This could involve earmarking resources for cultural exchange programmes, community forums, and neighbourhood projects aimed at fostering interaction and cooperation between immigrant communities and host societies.
- The EU Green Deal should integrate climate migration considerations into its mandate and activities while upholding the principles of protection, solidarity, and human rights for all migrants and refugees.
- There should be wider political, social, and economic discussions on climate migration because lack of understanding of the causes and ripple effects may fuel right-wing extremism, potentially leading to violence in future.

### GROUP: ENERGY POVERTY

- Subsidies and grants: Invest in energy storage projects such as greening hydrogen, and ensure that surplus renewable energy benefits specific populations through targeted EU Directives. Increase government funding for energy security in lower-income households, including support for social housing and energy-efficient upgrades, e.g., funds for heat pumps.
- Information and transparency: Enhance communication of energy policies to ensure citizen understanding and engagement. Combat corruption in energy policy strategies and increase transparency in decision making on energy policy. Prioritise different ways of collecting data, e.g., gender-disaggregated data. Provide education for citizens on resource management. Making green jobs more gender inclusive means ensuring flexibility for care work and training.
- De-centralisation, local contexts: Develop city planning focused on local and independent energy systems, utilising heat sources and pumps for community heating. Support democratisation of energy, e.g., through the establishment of energy cooperatives, based on models like Germany's, to promote self-sustainable and decentralised energy systems.



- **Care and wellbeing economy:** Recognise care work in pension schemes and establish a baseline for energy poverty to assist people from marginalised groups such as pensioners and single parents.
- **Inclusion in decision making:** Ensure representation in decision-making bodies with diverse expertise and sectors, including social scientists and community representatives. Implement multi-stakeholder and intersectional approaches in policy processes (such as the multi-annual financial plan), with quotas to ensure representation in the green transition.

## GROUP: ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

### Global level

- The EU should champion an “aggressor pays” principle (similarly to the “polluter pays” principle) in order to hold aggressors in armed conflicts accountable for ecocide.
- The EU should support the creation of a commission under the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with representatives of each country, who are given the ability to investigate environmental harms and hold governments and/or private companies accountable.
- The EU should help create mutual agreements with countries in the Global South, focusing on the environment, labour, human rights, gender rights, and environmental justice, and remove any harmful clauses in existing trade agreements.
- The EU should lead on ensuring the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens by conducting thorough environmental and ecological impact assessments, particularly in marginalised communities (this recommendation also applies within the EU).

- The EU should support the creation of an online platform that allows people to denounce trash dumping in developing countries.

### European level

- The EU should revisit the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive to ensure that EU-based corporations are held accountable for the damage they cause around the world and throughout the supply chain. The track record of a company should be transparent and easily accessible, to empower consumers to make the best decisions for people and the planet.
- The EU should spearhead initiatives to counter the exploitation of seasonal workers across Europe. This should include research on how climate change influences working conditions to recognise the problems, and the establishment of a legal framework to protect seasonal workers (including undocumented seasonal workers) in relation to climate change.



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