

EU ELECTIONS TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH

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YOUR VOTE
MATTERS

PROTECT
YOUR
POWER

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SPARK

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Imprint

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www.wecf.org

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starters guide for young activists HOW TO MOBILISE YOUNG FEMINISTS FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE!

Introduction

The 2024 elections for the European Union (EU), which are the largest transnational elections worldwide, are coming up. This is the moment for you to have your voice heard. A lot is at stake: the climate and ecological crises present the biggest challenge we face. The future of the EU Green Deal is on the table and Russia continues its attacks on Ukraine. Similarly, **far-right populist parties are on the rise, who are making use of anti-gender framing, spreading hate against LGBTQIA+ people while at the same time denying the very existence of the climate crisis.** All this makes the upcoming EU elections extremely important: we need a unified and progressive European bloc, where we can rely on each other: we need a strong and feminist answer to these far-right developments and rhetoric! This year, in June, you will have the opportunity to make a choice that will influence Europe's course for the next five years. **That's why it's important that more people, especially young people, go out and vote.**

If you are wondering how the European Union works, want to get involved but don't know where to start, this toolkit is written for you. It is our guide on understanding the European Union and getting ready to actively participate in the upcoming elections. It's also a guide to help you understand why ecofeminist activism is important for these EU elections. The elections are crucial for working towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to the EU's climate goals, as those elected will influence the political agenda until 2029. **Now is a crucial time for young people to come together and take part in the upcoming elections.**

In the past elections in 2019, young voters helped to achieve a historic voter turnout, exceeding [50% of all eligible voters](#) for the first time since the 1990s. **The growth in young people voting directly contributed to an increased representation of individuals from a mixed background in the European Parliament.**

Many interconnected issues have a common origin. A system that favours one group over the other. For example, climate change and social inequalities are linked because women and girls, in all their diversity, non-binary folks and LGBTQIA+ people are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. A crisis that has been fueled by racist and (neo)colonial structures that keep existing until this day. **Ecofeminism is a transformative movement that recognizes the connections between environmental and social injustices.** At the same time, it recognizes the key role women and girls, in all their diversity, Indigenous Peoples and the LGBTQIA+ community play in a feminist system change.

Whilst the EU has done a lot on the integration of gender in its policies, we have to make sure this progress is preserved after the upcoming elections. The existence of the Green Deal is in danger and civil society in several member states face increasing repression. There is only one answer to that: more ecofeminist noise.

This toolkit will help you to understand the link between ecofeminism and the EU elections. Especially now, with disinformation on gender and climate spreading from many sides, we need to make sure we stand united and let everyone's voice (and vote) be heard. No matter what your background is, your unique experiences are valuable in the fight for another world. Everyone should engage in whatever way they can – this toolkit will help explain how to do so. **Power to the people!**

Activist voices! stoyo Tetevenski



“I believe that social injustice and the climate crisis come from intersecting systems of oppression such as colonialism, capitalism and the heteropatriarchy. I believe that in order to fight those injustices, we need to build a diverse movement that can resist those systems and produce coherent and viable alternatives.

Through the lens of climate justice and intersectional feminism, we can see that the violence and oppression suffered by people (and animals) is a product of specific historical conditions that have alternatives opposing destruction, greed, and violence. We can also use a similar critical lens to unlearn and decolonise our own thinking and relations with others.”– Stoyo Tetevenski, a political activist from Bulgaria and part of the intersectional feminist collective LevFem.



DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Before we dive into the how and what: below are some concepts and key terms you will come across in your activism or when learning about the European Union. We invite you to do your own research on these topics as well, as there is no single definition for any of them.

Climate justice: Climate justice is linked to ecofeminism as it highlights how the burden of climate change does not fall equally on everyone. Climate change is not solely a 'scientific' issue, but an ethical, political and social one. The effects of climate change impact under-represented and historically excluded groups/countries differently, as they do not have the same access to political power and are underrepresented in existing policies. Ecofeminism demands justice for these groups. [Find another toolkit on climate justice here](#)

Gender mainstreaming: The process of including gender considerations into the design, implementation, and follow-up of all policy processes - regardless of whether they are explicitly related to gender. For example, gender mainstreaming in environmental policy can look at how energy policy will impact genders differently because of the division of care work and the gendered division of economic power. [You can find a video on gender in policy making here](#) (Source: European Institute for Gender Equality).

Gender lens: Gender is taken into account in every new policy, acknowledging the existing differences among genders.

Ecofeminism: Ecofeminism is a concept that emerged in the 1970s with the second wave of the feminist movement. The concept highlights how patriarchy, and colonialism have created power imbalances in society, like cis-men/women, white-non-white, hetero-LGBTQIA+, and culture vs nature. Ecofeminism has changed a lot over time, thanks to LGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) activists who use an **intersectional** conception of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is also not just about gender, but also about these other parts of our identities such as dis/ability, migrant status, social class, income, racialized group etc. Ecofeminism means using this intersectional feminist approach when fighting structural issues that destroy our healthy environment. [You can find more information here](#)

Colonialism: Colonialism is when a country violently takes over another country, and forces its way of life (cultural practices, economic development, language, religious beliefs etc.) on the local people. Colonialism is often predicated on racism, with the aim of subordination of local groups, as well as resource extraction to benefit the colonial power. Colonialism began around the 16th century and continues in various forms today (see neo-colonialism below). The primary colonisers at that time were inter alia, the Belgian, British, Danish, Dutch, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese empires.

GENDER IN POLICYMAKING

Gender blind

No mention of or attention to gender differences or imbalances.

Gender sensitive

The policy recognises differences between men and women and the need not to aggravate gender differences, but there is no concrete plan or strategy to address them.

Gender responsive

The policy pays explicit attention to gendered differences and identifies interventions to address gender gaps, but not to the extent that addresses structural causes of inequalities

Gender transformative

The policy explicitly seeks to address root causes of inequality, such as gender roles, norms, and behaviour. It seeks to distribute more equally power and/or access to resources between women and men or between women, including one or more of the following: economic distribution of resources, participation in decision making, intersectional recognition of unique experiences and knowledge

These Western European countries colonised Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia to varying degrees. The ramifications and the power imbalance of colonialism are still reflected in the world today. Additionally, the resource extraction and overexploitation by the colonisers contributed to the climate crisis and has hindered the development of many countries so that they are now less able to handle the climate crisis themselves.

Russian colonialism: A blind spot for many people from the Global North is Russian colonialism, to explain the dynamics of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia which were part of the Soviet Union or were under Soviet influence. This is important as there is a tendency in Western European media and politics to ignore the complexities of the process of decolonisation of countries in the Global East, and the different historical development people in these countries experienced under Soviet oppression and communism.

Neo-colonialism: Neo-colonialism is the modern form of colonialism, in which colonial powers still control previously colonised spaces through markets and resource access (Faleiro, 2012). This is reflected in the fact that colonial powers still wield a lot of influence at the international level, which is often reflected in climate change decision-making, as it is unfair that many countries whose development was stunted by colonisers are bearing the burden of a climate crisis they did not create.

Activist Voices! Sarah Nasrawi



“We young people are the first generation to face the consequences of climate change. The effects of climate change manifest themselves in a world built on injustice. Through the lens of (eco)feminism, we gain a better understanding of the injustices that have been carried through generations. The climate crisis thus reveals the true nature of our system, and exacerbates

existing inequalities. Systems that we must break through, in order to build a sustainable and just future. Without understanding those systems, we won’t get there.” Sarah Nasrawi, United Nations Youth Representative on Sustainable Development

Intersectionality: People can face more than one form of discrimination at the same time, which is captured by the concept ‘intersectionality’, a term originally coined by the American civil rights advocate Kimberly Crenshaw. For example, women of colour experience multi-layered discrimination, because they are women and because they are BIPoC. Since these two forms of oppression (sexism and racism) do not happen



independently of each other, they must be looked at together. This concept can be applied to all parts of our identity, like race, ethnicity, age, social class, sex, gender identity, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status, and religion. When talking about intersectionality, it is very important to acknowledge that this concept originated in the United States as a result of hard work by Black US feminist activists, to explain the dual effects of sexism and racism. The central idea is that women in all their diversity do not experience the same level of discrimination, just because they are all women.

[You can find more information on the history of intersectionality here!](#)

Patriarchy: a social system that accepts the abled white hetero cis 'man' as the default and subject, and anything outside of this category (cis heterosexual women, lesbians, transgender folks, nonbinary people...) are viewed to be lesser to varying degrees.

Invisible for many: Imagine a room that was built for somebody who is exactly 120cm tall. All the furniture, utensils, doors, windows etc. in this room are built for people of that height. Now imagine trying to enter that room if you are 60 or 180 cm tall. You may struggle to get in, and nothing would be the right size for you. But if you were 120cm, the room would seem perfect, and the difficulties others had whilst navigating the room would be invisible to you. In the same way, those who benefit from systems of oppression often cannot or do not see them as oppressive, as the world is built for them. Our world is largely built for the straight white man due to colonialism/imperialism and the patriarchy. Feminism highlights these systems of oppression and stresses that everyone must work to fight them. Feminism does not claim that those who benefit from these systems are inherently

'bad'. Rather, as feminists we see a need to reflect on the oppressions we face as well as our privileges to create an equal world for all (*example taken from Perez, Caroline C. 2019. Invisible Women. London: Penguin Random House*).

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Plus is an umbrella term that encompasses groups living out with the dominant sexual orientation (straight) and gender identity (gender assigned at birth, aka cis gender). Also often referred to as the rainbow/queer community.

Feminist foreign policy (FFP): The adoption of an feminist approach in all external policies of a given country, which prioritises women's rights, gender equality, and social justice. Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, and Chile have embraced a feminist foreign policy strategy since 2014. A feminist foreign policy should aim for a structural transformation on eco-social and gender justice, which should go beyond only awareness raising of gender aspects. The involvement of feminist and Southern organisations is key in the process of developing a FFP. [Find more information on feminist foreign policies](#)

Specific EU election terms

European Union: The EU is a union of 27 European countries that originated in the European Coal and Steel Community. The EU was created to promote peace, stability, and cooperation among its member states after the Second World War.

European Parliament: The European Parliament is one of the European Union's seven institutions. It is the EU's directly elected legislative assembly and the only body we can vote for. The EP shares legislative power and full budgetary power with the European Council. EU countries hold elections every five years to elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), representing 450 million European citizens. The main meetings of the EP, also called plenary meetings, are held 12 times a year in Strasbourg with additional sessions in Brussels. The meetings last 4 days and the focus in these meetings is on debates and votes, with different procedures for legislative reports, budget decisions, and non-legislative reports.

Proportional representation: This voting system entails that the allocation of seats to a party closely corresponds to the percentage of votes that the party received in the elections.

Degressive proportionality: This system is used in the European Parliament to make sure that more countries with a larger population agree to be under-represented so that smaller countries can have a greater say. The larger a Member State becomes, the less effect each extra vote has on its overall representation in the parliament.



Section One: UNDERSTANDING THE EU ELECTIONS

The European Union

The European Union has 27 members that have all chosen to work together in various ways. These 27 countries, known as member states, have agreed on which issues will be tackled on a European level and which will still be done by the national government of the country. **Did you know that the EU was founded to promote peace, stability, and cooperation among member countries?** 73 years later, this is still the most important goal of EU cooperation.

However, a lot has changed over the past 73 years with the EU becoming more and more unified and connected. Nowadays, it is for example much easier for people to travel, live, and work in different countries. Besides, all these countries use a common currency, which makes trading with other countries and working abroad simpler. Representatives from the member states gather in Brussels, the capital of the European Union, for meetings. The assemblies in Brussels are a platform for representatives from all member states to

participate in diplomatic conversations and negotiations. Just before summer, we vote for the European Parliament, the only representatives we as European citizens can vote for. Actually, most of the laws in your country are based on EU decisions and the next EU parliament will influence laws for the next 5 years.

Many people see the EU elections as a way to express national frustrations, but there are many issues that go beyond national politics and can only be addressed at the EU level. This election is a make or break moment for important new legislation, such as the European Green Deal. Especially with nationalist euroscepticism and far-right movements on the rise across Europe, this election can drastically change the political landscape with the far-right parties predicted to gain a lot of seats. **Therefore it is crucial not to see the EU Elections as 27 national campaigns, but to vote with the European Union in mind.**

History of the EU

The EU was established after World War II to bring European countries together, ensure peace, and improve how they work together economically. It all started with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which was meant to place coal and steel production under a common authority. This makes sense, since the coal and steel industry



are essential to the weapon industry, so having them under common EU authority made war between EU countries almost impossible. The ECSC was followed by the European Economic Community (EEC), formed in 1958 by six countries (Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands). Making deals about coals and steel made countries work together economically, so by 1957 the time had come for more economic integration. With the establishment of the EEC, most barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital and labour were removed. This made EU trade much easier, lowered EU market competition, and even created a common external trade policy. In 1993, the EEC, by now renamed the European Community, became the European Union as we know it today. The EU was meant to increase collaboration even more and to make the member states a true Political AND Economic union. The idea of a single currency got form, a unified security policy was created, and common citizenship rights were established. But did you know that the euro as we know it was only introduced as late as 2002? As more countries joined, the EU got bigger, gaining a say in world politics.

Activist Voices! Eraitz Saez de Egilaz



“The elections are an important moment in time: we have to make a choice for the next four years. Instead of just resisting, there are people working towards creating a Europe that cares about its people and respects everyone’s important rights. It’s important for young people like us to use our votes and get involved to make this alternative a reality.” – Eraitz Saez de

Egilaz, Member of the Basque Parliament and the Youth Secretary of the EH Bildu

After a long period of unrest in the UK, resulting in the Brexit voting, it was decided that the UK would leave the EU, so now UK citizens can’t vote in the elections. With regards to gender equality, this has been a backlash for feminist movements in the UK, as its gender policy has been weakened since Brexit. Critical feminist actors are absent in the Sunak-government, with women only holding 20% of the parliamentary seats. (Sanders and Flavell, 2022)

In varietate concordia: *United in diversity*. That is the motto of the EU: each EU country has its own culture, language, and traditions, but all countries share the same common values and must respect these values as members of the European Union.

European institutions

The EU has 7 main institutions, all with their own tasks, responsibilities, and rules. You might notice that many of their names sound similar, but each one has its own unique role! But wait, there's more: across the EU, there are over 30 different bodies and agencies working tirelessly to keep the EU running smoothly. The main 7 are explained here to get you started and if you want to learn more you can always check out the website of the EU. There are 4 main decision-making institutions which set the policy direction and play key roles in EU law-making:

The European Council

Let's start with the European Council, this institution is made up of the heads of government of all EU member states, a president, and the president of the European Commission. **The European Council sets the overall political direction and priorities of the EU, offering guidance on significant issues and ensuring coordination among member states.** After the EU elections, representatives of the Member States pick a new President for the European Council. Currently the president is Charles Michel from Belgium. Choosing the new president is separate from the election results, but both happen around the same time. The European Council comes together 4 times a year, unless there is an emergency reason to meet another time.

The European Commission

The European Commission (EC) follows this political direction and acts as the executive body of the European Union. It works independently from national governments and consists of 27 members, known as Commissioners. Each member state can appoint one commissioner and each commissioner represents one policy topic in the EU. The commission is led by a President, and it is special in that it prioritises EU interests over national ones. The European Commission is the only institution in the EU that can propose new laws. While the Council and Parliament often suggest legislation, the Commission formulates laws based on these proposals and has authority to reject any proposals. After the European elections, the European Parliament appoints a new President of the European Commission, replacing the current president, Ursula von der Leyen.

The current European climate commissioner in the EC is Wopke Hoekstra. Hoekstra received a lot of criticism after he was proposed as commissioner in november 2023, as he had a track record with oil giants such as Shell and consultancy agency McKinsey. After he was voted into the position, he represented the EU at the COP29 in Dubai.

country	language	year joined	currency
Austria	German	1995	Euro
Belgium	Dutch, German and French	1958	Euro
Bulgaria	Bulgarian	2007	Bulgarian lev BGN
Croatia	Croatian	2013	Euro
Cyprus	Greek	2014	Euro
Czechia	Czech	2014	Euro
Denmark	Danish	1973	Danish krone DKK
Estonia	Estonian	2004	Euro
Finland	Finnish and Swedish	1995	Euro
France	French	1958	Euro
Germany	German	1958	Euro
Greece	Greek	1981	Euro
Hungary	Hungarian	2004	Hungarian Forint HUF
Ireland	Irish & English	1973	Euro
Italy	Italian	1958	Euro
Latvia	Latvian	2004	Euro
Lithuania	Lithuanian	2004	Euro
Luxembourg	French, German & Luxembourgish	1958	Euro
Malta	Maltese & English	1958	Euro
Netherlands	Dutch and Frisian	1958	Euro
Poland	Polish	2004	Polish Zloty (PLN)
Portugal	Portuguese	1986	Euro
Romania	Romanian	2007	Romanian Leu RON
Slovakia	Slovak	2004	Euro
Slovenia	Slovenian	2004	Euro
Spain	Spanish	1986	Euro
Sweden	Swedish	1995	Swedish Krona

Meet Ursula von der Leyen!



Named the world's most powerful woman, Ursula von der Leyen was the first woman to become European Commission President after 60 years of male dominance in 2019. She is a German gynaecologist who entered politics later on in her career for the German centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU) and is a member of

the EPP group. As president, she manages the EU budget, works with the European Council, and leads the commission in their lawmaking. However, she proposed to withdraw the *Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR)* part of the European Green Deal in February this year because of growing right-wing backlash and farmers' protests across the EU. The SUR was meant to cut pesticide use in half by 2030 and prohibit its use in sensitive areas. This is a big defeat for the Green Deal, as chemical pesticides are a major source of pollution, biodiversity loss, and health risks.

The Spitzenkandidat

Spitzenkandidat is a German term for Lead Candidate with significant implications. By using a Spitzenkandidat the selection process for the President of the European Commission is being influenced. European political parties have the opportunity to designate prominent figures as their representatives in the EU electoral campaign.

The Council of the European Union/ The Council of Ministers.

Not to be confused with the European Council, the Council of the EU is a separate institution that advises and makes adjustments to proposed laws. The Council of the EU consists of 27 ministers from the member states and is organised around ten different policy areas. It can propose legislation for the EU and works closely together with the European Parliament. Essentially, the council of the European Union has national interests in mind while the European Parliament looks more at the EU. The Council of the EU requires representatives of member states to change based on the policy they are discussing. Every six months, a member state assumes the presidency of the European Council. While the composition of many EU institutions may change after the European elections, the Council of the European Union remains consistent.

The European Parliament

This institution takes centre stage during the elections. The European Parliament or the Parliament for short is the only institution where citizens directly elect their representatives. Parliament, working alongside the Council of the European Union, does 3 things: they set the budget for EU institutions, oversee other EU institutions, and vote on proposed EU laws. The parliament will debate a proposed law and send it back to the commission with suggestions, approve, or deny it. Every five years in June, EU citizens vote, choosing who will represent them for the next 5 years. Members of Parliament (MEPs) organise themselves into political groups based on shared ideologies. There are seven political groups in the European Parliament, with some MEPs choosing non-attachment (or non-inscrits) meaning they do not join a group.

In addition to the 4 decision-making institutions mentioned above, 3 institutions support this work:

- **The European Central Bank (ECB)**, as the name suggests, is the central bank of the EU and has to stabilise prices in the eurozone.
- **The European Court of Auditors (ECA)**, serves as an external auditor for the EU. The ECA addresses the concerns of EU taxpayers and sees to it that EU money is spent efficiently. While it doesn't have the power to enforce laws, the ECA works on improving how the EU budget is handled by the European Commission. It gives reports on the money side of things in the EU to keep everything in check.
- **The Court of Justice of the European Union (ECJ)**, oversees the European legislation in all member states. It consists of 27 judges and it is the highest legal authority in the EU. They see to it that EU laws are applied in each member state and settle judicial matters between EU institutions.

Political Groups in the European Parliament

In the Parliament, national parties collaborate in political groups, here you will find a list of the political groups and their positions. This way, the political group serves as an umbrella for many national parties.

[Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament \(S&D\)](#)

The S&D group was founded in 1953, making it the second oldest group in the Parliament. The S&D are centre-left and social democratic. It advocates for social justice, workers' rights, environmental sustainability, and progressive economic policies. The group is affiliated with the Progressive Alliance and Socialist International.

The Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)

The Left group in the European Parliament, known as the GUE/NGL (Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left), represents a coalition of left-wing parties, with social, communist, and ecosocial ideologies. Established in 1995, it emerged as a result of three new countries with leftist parties joining the EU and collectively forming the confederal group. The GUE/NGL places a significant emphasis on workers' rights, climate action, feminism, peace, and human rights as key focal points of their political agenda.

Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)

This group is a big mix of five different European parties: European Green Party (EGP), part of the European Free Alliance (EFA), European Pirate Party (PPEU), Volt Europe (Volt), part of Animal Politics EU (APEU). The Greens/EFA Group holds a left and progressive ideology, advocating for environmental protection, sustainable development, social equality, and the acknowledgement of cultural and linguistic diversity within the EU.

Renew Europe Group (Renew)

This is the oldest group in the European Parliament, and it used to be called the 'Liberal and Allies Group.' This group is a liberal, pro-European group.

Meet Kim van Sparrentak!



She is an MEP and has been in Parliament since 2019 for Green Group/European Free Alliance. She is the coordinator of the LGBT working group, advocates for equal rights of the LGBTQIA+ community in Europe, and has initiated a law to make smartphones less addictive.

"The fact that I met people from all over

Europe with completely different backgrounds, but who have the same goal, namely a fairer and more sustainable future for everyone, gives so much energy! Fighting together for something is already very cool, but when you learn about other people's politics and culture in the process, that's a real plus. And besides that, it's of course incredibly fun to work on legislation that applies to 450 million (!!!!) people and will probably have influence outside of Europe." – Kim van Sparrentak.

European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)

The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) is far-right and known for their Euroscepticism. Some members of the group are not in favour of the Eurozone in general and are against referendums on whether countries enter the EU. This group is anti-climate measures, opposes the European Green Deal, and anti-migration. They have gained a lot of support from populist and nationalist movements over the last years, with the prospect of winning a lot of seats in the next election. This directly threatens the rule of law and shifts the parliament towards the far-right.

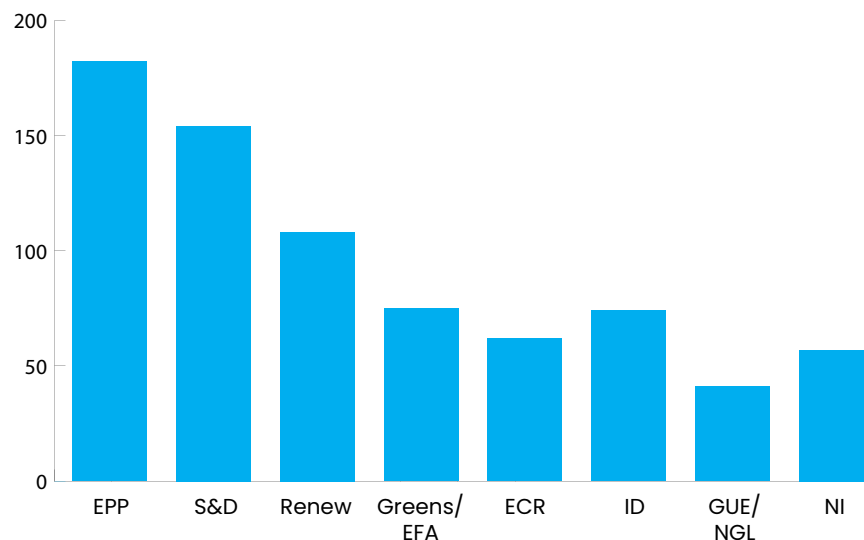
Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP)

This group started in 1976 and is the largest political group in the European Parliament at the moment. The EPP Group identifies itself as a centre-right, conservative and Christian democratic group. The parties in this group have moved further to the right from centre-right to win some far-right votes. As a result, the largest political group has been conservative and increasingly right-wing, with the risk of them collaborating with the far-right ECR and ID after the elections. This would mean the European Green Deal is put on hold, EU enlargement is blocked, and EU power reduced.

Identity and Democracy Group (ID)

The Identity and Democracy (ID) group is a right-wing populist party. Emphasising a hard stance against migration, the ID group opposes granting additional powers to the European Union. This group has gained support from nationalist movements across Europe and stands to gain a lot of votes in the upcoming elections. If this group gains this momentum, they stand to threaten the EU's values on human rights, the Green Deal, and respect for the rule of law.

Elected seats in 2019





Election process

The European elections happen every five years, giving over 400 million EU citizens the chance to choose their representatives. This year, voting takes place from June 6 to June 9. The voting process varies depending on your country, following national rules while ensuring a fair system that prevents any single nation from dominating the parliament. This ensures that smaller countries have a proportionate influence. There will be 720 MEPs elected in the upcoming elections, an increase from the previous 705 members to accommodate population growth.

Meet Maria Walsh!



Maria is a MEP affiliated with the European People's Party, and has been a strong advocate for ending the pink tax. This unfair practice involves charging more for products or services marketed to women compared to their male counterparts. Maria is actively working towards creating awareness and addressing this issue to promote fairness and equality.

"To the young people of the European Union, I urge you to recognize the significance of your votes. As you

enter the voting booths during the European elections, remember that your voices hold the power to resonate far beyond our borders, echoing in the halls where the future of Europe is determined."– Maria Walsh

So, who can vote? Anyone with EU citizenship and who meets the national minimum voting age can cast a ballot! In most countries, this age is 18, **but in Belgium, Germany, Malta, and Austria, it's 16, and in Greece, it's 17.** While you're usually automatically registered to vote in most countries, in some places you need to register with the national authorities. **That's why it's important to be aware of the registration deadlines.**

For many years, European elections haven't received much attention. Consequently, there's been a lack of enthusiasm to participate in voting, despite the significance of people voicing their opinions. Prior to the 2019 elections, there was a dedicated effort to involve young people and motivate them to vote, which proved to be effective! In 2019, voter turnout exceeded 50% for the first time, rising by 8 percentage points compared to 2014. Young people showcased their active engagement in politics, highlighting their influence in shaping the future.

Although the UK is not part of the EU anymore, young people keep being involved with the EU. The decision to break away from the EU was one that mainly got support from the older electorate. If it had been up to young people, the UK would have remained part of the EU: three quarters of them voted to remain in the EU.

Activist voices! **Dominique Palmer**



Meet Dominique Palmer, a young climate justice activist from the United Kingdom who made a big impact through her efforts in Wales and on a global scale. Her mission: empowering young people and showing the multifaceted nature of the climate crisis.

"Young people need to engage with

ecofeminism because it is our futures which are most at stake, and ecofeminism works to demand recognition of women's climate justice work, and to advocate for gender justice as well as climate justice. It is also crucial to recognise the present, the climate crisis is already here, and devastating people's lives and our ecosystem."- Dominique Palmer, climate justice activist

2024: A Very Important Year for European Politics

Next to the elections for the European Parliament, people across Europe will vote in national elections. These elections will impact the politics in those countries, but also who is in the European Council.

TIMELINE





Section Two

ENGAGING IN THE EU ELECTIONS

If you're preparing to advocate during the EU elections, it's important to know *how* to make your voice count. While voting is crucial, it's only one aspect of your advocacy arsenal. There are numerous ways to actively engage in the elections! Being involved in politics extends beyond just voting; it involves organising protests, running campaigns, promoting voter turnout, and spreading messages on social media. The following section will walk you through different methods to actively take part in the EU elections and emphasise (eco)feminist priorities.

If you do not want to become part of a political party, there are other ways to be involved in politics! **As a group of young feminists, you can directly engage in political processes without going through political parties.** You can submit petitions directly to MPs, urge them to pose questions to the cabinet, or work together with civil servants to shape new policies. The options are endless, allowing you to make a meaningful impact on EU politics through whichever way suits you best.

Practical guidance

Register to vote. One of the most straightforward ways to influence decisions is by voting. Especially during times when right-wing populism is on the rise, it's crucial to use your voice to prevent right-wing and fascist parties from gaining ground. It's important to note that not all countries automatically register you to vote, so ensure you understand and meet the registration requirements and deadlines in your country. If you reside in a different EU country, you have the option to select where you wish to cast your vote. You can decide to vote in your home country or the country where you currently reside. This opportunity enables every EU citizen to actively participate in EU politics.

Keep Up to Date with the EU Elections. This toolkit can serve as an initial step to understanding the EU and its institutions. However, for the most recent information about the elections and political parties, it's beneficial to monitor news websites. Check out our recommendations on the final page of this toolkit!

Discuss EU elections together. Voter turnout for the EU elections is usually very low, making it extra important to encourage people to vote and have their say in the elections. So, talk to all your like-minded activist friends, parents, colleagues, and neighbours to ensure that more voices are heard and parties that prioritise ecofeminism gain supporters!

Activist voices! Ines Holzegger



“We as youth need to stand up and participate when it comes to casting votes and standing for elections – after all, we are the ones affected the longest by the decisions made. It is up to us to advocate for generational fairness, economic prosperity,

and sustainability. Together, we can shape the future!” – Ines Holzegger from LYMEC

Get involved in national politics. Most folks usually choose which party to support by considering what they know about the country's politics. If you want your campaign to do well, it's handy to grasp the ins and outs of your nation's political landscape. Getting involved in national politics matters because voters tend to relate more to these parties and their concerns. Plus, national politicians are easier to reach for activists like yourself. By

gaining support and raising awareness at the national level, you set a firmer foundation for promoting your ecofeminist goals in the European Union.

Attend events about the elections. Participating in pre-election events allows you to stay informed and actively participate in the run-up to the elections. These events are also great opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals, discover various perspectives, and engage directly with political representatives.

Activist Voices! Hannah Prins



“We cannot separate the climate crisis from other issues such as capitalism, racism, and colonialism, as these factors have indeed contributed to the crisis we currently face. It is crucial to examine the roles various groups play within the climate movement, and feminism is undeniably one of them. Your vote truly makes a difference! Better laws save

lives. If you don’t vote, laws will be made that may not work in your favour. Let’s unite feminism and the climate movement as much as possible for a sustainable future.”– Hannah Prins, climate activist and spokesperson for Extinction Rebellion

Use your social media platforms. Use social media to stay updated on EU-related news and connect with other young people interested in EU politics. You can use these platforms to share information, discuss issues, and raise awareness about voting during the EU elections. This is a very effective and important way to get people to vote!

Organise or Participate in Campaigns. Get involved in campaigns related to EU elections. This could look like volunteering for a political party or supporting initiatives that promote voter turnout and political engagement, but also participating in marches and educating others in workshops. How accessible is the venue? Make sure to check with your participants what their needs are. If you organise an event yourself, make sure that it is as intersectional and inclusive as possible: use a guide for feminist communication!

Encourage others to vote. Share your knowledge about the EU and the elections with others. Educate people around you about how they can actively participate and why this is so important. The most direct way to create change is to vote: if you do not agree with EU politics, vote!



Communications Guide

Now that you've identified the cause you want to advocate for and how you plan to do it, it's important to consider how you'll communicate your message. Here are some key communication tips:

Adapt your tone to your audience: When you're trying to persuade others and have meaningful conversations, it's important to think about how you communicate and who you're talking to. Whether you're trying to get more people to vote or raise awareness about ecofeminist issues, knowing what you want to say is crucial. If you're concerned about climate change and want to raise awareness, simply demanding immediate action might not always be the best way to gain support. When dealing with big problems like climate change, scaring people often doesn't work. Instead, offering hope has proven to be a more effective way to gain support. People need to believe that things can get better, and by talking about a hopeful future, they're more likely to feel motivated to take action. Pointing out practical ways to make a difference and encouraging involvement in positive

initiatives can be more convincing than focusing on fear. When taking an intersectional and feminist approach, it's important to avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles or other discriminatory stereotypes in your communication.

“Fear is toxic for a democratic society, where people need to work together in trust.” – Philosopher Martha Nussbaum

Calls to action:

Clearly articulate your call to action and specify what you are asking for. This precision makes your advocacy in EU elections more effective and allows it to reach more people. Here are some tips to do it:

- **Make it feel achievable.** Make sure that people believe their participation will make a difference and highlight the power and ability of individuals to take action.
- **Make It Easy:** craft calls to action that do not feel like a burden. Ask people to do something they want to do and can easily accomplish.
- **Make it Personal:** Connect the action to a broader identity or community that people want to be part of.
- **Use Storytelling Effectively:** Craft compelling stories to inspire people.

Political campaigns

[An ocean of change 2024:](#) A Joint manifest of climate organisations to advocate for an ambitious EU Ocean Deal and to bring more ‘Blue’ in the European Green Deal.

Youth empowerment initiatives:

[JUST EU and ME: Empowering Youth In The EU To Advocate For Their Social Rights](#)
[European Solidarity Corps](#)

This initiative allows young people to build a community while working and making a contribution to society. The Corps is open to young people between 17 and 30 years old.

Youth networks

Check out these youth networks of European parties:

- Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament: [Young European Socialists](#)
- The Greens/European Free Alliance: [Federation of Young European Greens \(FYEG\)](#) (check out their [feminist network](#) as well!)
- Renew: [European Liberal Youth \(LYMEC\)](#)
- European Christian Political Movement (ECPM): [European Christian Political Youth](#)
- European Democratic Party: [Young Democrats for Europe](#)
- European Free Alliance: [European Free Alliance Youth](#)

Examples of existing organisations in Europe engaged in feminist climate work

Women Engage for a Common Future

WECF is an international ecofeminist organisation based in Europe. They work on three key areas: sustainable development, climate and environmental action and a nontoxic society, always from a feminist perspective. Their activities are aimed at capacity building, influencing policy, and raising awareness, to strengthen the position of women and girls in all their diversity worldwide.

Young Feminist Europe

Young Feminist Europe (YFE) is an inclusive platform that amplifies feminist voices and activities across Europe. You can pitch articles on feminist issues to be published on their website. You can also join their grassroots and digital activism.

Youth Environment Europe

Youth Environment Europe (YEE) is the largest independent European network of environmental youth organisations. As a member, you get the support of YEE's network and



can expand your organisation's connections. If you are unable to pay the membership fee, YEE offers resources and information. Their website has campaigns and projects on different environmental topics, which you can engage with in virtual advocacy.

Fridays for Future

Friday for Future is a large protest-based advocacy organisation, started by the school strike of Greta Thunberg in Sweden. You can find advice on how to strike and resources for striking on their website.

Generation Climate Europe (GCE)

GCE is the largest coalition of youth-led networks on climate and environmental issues at the European level. They work at the intersection of climate and human rights with 381 National Organizations across 46 European countries. They have several volunteer positions every now and then on different environmental topics. GCE also organises capacity-building events and workshops for young professionals to become the new European climate leaders.

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's leading NGO coalition fighting dangerous climate change. CAN Europe promotes sustainable climate, energy and development policies throughout Europe. It has a number of youth member organisations and increasingly engages with youth and mobilisers including via capacity-building sessions and webinars.

Oxfam International

Oxfam International is a worldwide non-governmental organisation that works to end injustice and poverty. They want to tackle inequality that keeps the poorest people poor and help them build better lives for themselves and others. They work in 85 countries around the world and have worked on big climate justice campaigns like [Make Rich Polluters Pay!](#) Their climate justice strategy focuses on tackling the drivers of the climate crisis, a system that puts profit above people and planet. They advocate for a just, equal and feminist transition!

Tips for organising

Organising events, debates, and workshops on (eco)feminist topics within local communities or educational institutions can be a powerful way to raise awareness. Organising an event for the first time is exciting but can also be daunting. Here are some tips to help you plan your event:

- **What is the purpose of your event?** Clearly outline the goals of your event. Whether it's raising awareness, promoting discussion, or encouraging action, having a clear purpose will guide your planning.
- **Who will participate?** Who do you want to attract to your event and why? Make sure that the content and approach align with the interests of your target audience. Also, consider the diverse backgrounds and perspectives within this group.
- **Who can be your partners?** Work together with others by connecting with local organisations, activists, educators, and community members. Collaborating on events not only makes organising more fun but it also brings diverse perspectives and resources to your event.
- **Which platform do you want to use?** Think about the platform you want to use and for which purpose. Try to also incorporate online platforms to reach more people.
- **What resources are there?** Give relevant resources to your participants. This can deepen their understanding of the discussed topic.
- **What is the call to action?** Go further than only discussing a topic, but include practical elements that encourage participants to do something with the knowledge they gained. This could involve community projects, activism, or personal lifestyle changes.



- **How can you inspire?** Always bear in mind that you are setting a positive example during your event. Exercise caution with sustainability practices, such as avoiding the use of plastic cups and embracing eco-conscious alternatives. Make every aspect of your event reflect the values you promote.

Benedetta Scuderi



Benedetta Scuderi focuses on youth participation, migration and climate, and feminism. She has co-founded the Italian Young Greens, is the co-spokesperson of the Federation of Young Europeans and is now running for the European Parliament for the Greens.

“In June 2024 we will be in front of a crucial crossroad, between a Europe of the people and for the planet and a Europe of hate and inequalities. With very few years left to address the climate and environmental emergency we are facing, the next EU Parliament mandate will determine the positioning of Europe in this framework, whether we want a European Union that achieves the green targets we have set, while putting social justice at the centre of the reforms, or we want a Europe that goes backwards and take our rights and future. In this, as young people we have a chance and a responsibility. Our voice matters more than ever, and our participation in the democratic process is crucial for building the Europe we want to see. To look at the future, we must start from Europe. Be part of this journey!”- Benedetta Scuderi

And then what? After the European elections

Once the seats have been allocated through the elections, they will remain in this distribution until 2029. But there are still a lot of opportunities for lobbying within the Parliament!

You can try establishing connections with MEPs to highlight specific issues. MEPs hold the platform to voice ideas and try to influence others in the Parliament. If you successfully convinced one MEP, they could raise the topic in the Parliament.

Sometimes connecting directly with an MEP is difficult. In such cases, consider launching campaigns to convince others of your ideas. The more people rally behind a cause and organise themselves, the faster it becomes part of the political discussion.

Advocate for the appointment of the new President of the European Parliament

Stay informed on the news from inside the Parliament



Section Three

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Differences between countries

The EU has 27 member states, each of which has its own national government. This means that when it comes to EU legislation, some laws and regulations are shared, and some are left to the national government. This also applies to elections, when, how, and who votes differs per member state. This section will break that down!

When do we vote?

- 6th of June: Netherlands
- 7th of June: Ireland, Czechia
- 8th of June: Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Czechia
- 9th of June: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

How do we vote

In some countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg) voting is mandatory, whilst in others it is not. Usually, EU elections will follow national guidelines for elections. This means each state has their “own” way of filling their allocated seats. This is because

the states, though in a union, are all autonomous national governments. The party system and representational structure differ across states, which would make it difficult to standardise the election process.

The member states have three different voting systems: preferential voting, closed lists, and single transferable vote. **Preferential voting** entails that voters can show their preference for specific candidates. A **closed list** means that voters can only vote for a list of candidates, but not change the order of the candidates on this list. The **single transferable vote** system allows voters to rank candidates according to their preference, but they only cast one vote. Most states have a single constituency, but 4 states have divided their territories into multiple constituencies: Belgium, Ireland, Italy, and Poland.

Transnational political parties

While pan-European parties might seem like a logical idea and transnational parties were taking the EU by storm in 2019, in 2024 this image has disappeared. The EU was not originally created as one political union, making democratic organisation at the EU level difficult. Pan-European parties try to change this, but they are up against a system that does not agree and has little effect on the actual policies. For the next election, two transnational movements are part of the process: DiEM25 and Volt. Volt Europe is a pan-European political party aiming at a united and federal Europe. DiEM25 identifies as a bottom-up pan-European movement, and they stand for a democratic, feminist, ecological, and non-exploitive system. .



Who votes

Member states can set their own minimum voting age. This means there are some differences across the EU:

- Minimum voting age 16: Belgium, Germany, Austria, Malta
- Minimum voting age 17: Greece
- Minimum voting age 18: all other member states

Most EU citizens can vote from anywhere in the EU, but how this is done differs across member states. Voters from Czechia, Ireland, Malta, and Slovakia cannot vote abroad. For voters from Bulgaria and Italy, voting from abroad is only allowed from another EU country and then only at the embassy/consulate. Estonia is the only country that has allowed e-voting for voters abroad and the Netherlands, France, and Belgium are the only states that allow for voting by proxy; but all of these also allow either voting by post or at the embassy/consulate. Every other state allows either voting by post, at the consulate/embassy, or both. This can get confusing if you live abroad, but it would be a shame to miss your chance to vote because of that. **So make sure to check the requirements for your nationality and the deadlines in advance!**





Section Four

ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Many issues are ecofeminist without us always releasing this because marginalised groups often bear an unfair burden of environmental pollution and climate change. This burden is not always equally visible and as a result not included. For example, some girls do not attend school when they are on their period because they lack proper sanitation facilities. Another example lies in the hazardous chemicals in make-up and skin-lightening cream that have dangerous health effects for women, the latter especially for women of colour. Ecofeminism looks at these differences and uses an intersectional approach when fighting the structural barriers that stop us from all enjoying a healthy environment.

We've decided to focus on a few topics here to show you how an ecofeminist perspective can impact policymaking. We hope this toolkit encourages you to consider the connection between the environment and gender. However, it's crucial to recognise that there are numerous feminist issues that we haven't covered, despite their significance. We've chosen to concentrate on highlighting ecofeminist subjects, but many of our partners offer valuable resources on related topics that we haven't included (please check their websites in the annex)!

Gender equality

This might be an open door, but to start: what has the EU done for gender equality? Since the EU was created, gender equality has been a core value, written down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. While groundbreaking at the time, setting standards beyond many countries, the EU has consistently prioritised principles like fair treatment, non-discrimination, and equal pay for equal work. Nevertheless, we have to recognize that a gap still exists between the policies and the practices. In 2019, something important happened - Ursula von der Leyen became the first female President of the European Commission, which was a significant step for gender equality. Adding to this, Helena Dalli was appointed as the Commissioner for Equality, showing a commitment to tackling gender disparities. In general, the EP is doing quite well when it comes to (still a binary) representation of gender in the parliamentary seats. Significant in this progress were the EU Gender Equality Strategy, the LGBTQI Strategy and the Youth strategy.

Unfortunately, gender equality and feminist movements in Europe are under pressure from far right political parties. The Gender Equality Index shows more inequalities in jobs, education, health, and access to services. Because of far right and populist stories, used by for example the far-right PVV in the Netherlands and the neo-fascist party Fratelli d'Italia in Italy, harmful ideas about gender and traditional values are making a comeback, pushing women in all their diversity, and LGBTQIA+ people, into unpaid or low-paid caregiving roles. This not only makes it harder for women and girls, non-binary folks and LGBTQIA+ people to be involved in politics and work but also encourages sexism. To address these systematic inequalities and injustices, **making sure gender equality is a big part of all policies is crucial to breaking down the barriers that are holding back feminist progress.**

The climate crisis

Climate change is a big problem that doesn't stick to one place, and we can only solve it by working together with other countries. In the last four years, the European Union has taken steps to cut down on emissions and implement new policies. The upcoming European elections are crucial for deciding if we can effectively put in place important plans and keep the EU in a leading role in tackling the climate crisis. The people we choose as MEPs must focus on the right policies for a sustainable future. In the last Parliament, many supported the European Green Deal, showing a strong desire to address the climate crisis. Looking forward, the EPP, connected to the Von der Leyen Commission, is expected to be the biggest group in the Parliament after the elections. They'll have to team up with other groups, taking the lead in deciding the EU's position on climate policies. However, they will face more opposition from the ECR and ID groups, which often vote against climate measures and are gaining support in the elections. The choices made while

building coalitions will shape the EU's path and its dedication to environmental policies. As said, these elections are crucial on the decision whether these climate policies can still be implemented and will be a make-or-break for the Paris goals as they were set in 2015.

European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is Europe's plan to achieve climate neutrality across the continent by 2050 and transform the EU into an equitable and prosperous society. To speed up the progress, there is a commitment to reduce CO2 emissions by 55% compared to 1990 levels by 2030. This ambitious plan includes different policies that focus on transforming various parts of the economy, such as energy production, transportation, and investments in eco-friendly technology. It also aims to decrease reliance on fossil fuels, aligning with sustainability goals.

Mohammed Chahim



Mohammed Chahim has been an MEP for S&D since 2019 and works primarily on the European Green Deal. He is vice of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee. He states: "European politics is about the future of all of us, but especially the future of young people in Europe. Especially when it comes to climate, it is about how we leave the earth behind for generations to come. And to make sure that that earth is habitable, we have to take action now to stop climate change. As a politician, I need the

support of young people. Thanks to the young climate activists we now also have such ambitious climate plans in parliament. The involvement of young people therefore certainly has an effect on what legislation will look like." - Mohammed Chahim

Why does the European Green Deal need ecofeminism?

For us, ecofeminism is necessary within the EU Green Deal because it emphasises the connection between environmental and gender issues. Despite the EU's dedication to gender equality, women are often disregarded in the Green Deal, which could widen the gender gap and impede progress towards sustainability. Ecofeminist theories and practices support women's participation in environmental decision-making and acknowledge the unequal impact of environmental degradation on women. It is vital to incorporate ecofeminism into the EU Green Deal to ensure that environmental policies are inclusive and tackle the challenges that women face. By embracing ecofeminist



viewpoints, the EU can advance gender equality, alleviate environmental injustices, and promote a more sustainable and fair society. Besides:

- **Environmental impacts are gendered.** For instance, women often can't switch to eco-friendly options easily because they have fewer resources. Also, women are more affected by changes in energy costs because they usually do more caregiving work.
- **Inclusive representation in the environmental sector is low.** In the environmental field, there aren't enough people from diverse backgrounds. This means policies might not work well for everyone. European policies can unintentionally keep inequalities going. For example, the Just Transition plan doesn't focus enough on helping specific groups during the shift to greener ways.

A toxic free and healthy future

Our health is affected differently by chemicals because of various biological differences we were born with (which of course does not necessarily have to correspond with our gender) tend to accumulate more toxic chemicals due to higher body fat percentages, different metabolism, and hormone systems. This can lead to health issues like breast cancer, endometriosis, and reproductive disorders.

Social class and economic status also significantly affect health outcomes. People with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be exposed to harmful chemicals and other

health hazards. In 2016, women were identified as being at a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to men. Existing risks to women's health are numerous and often poorly understood, such as the impact of nanomaterials on female reproductive health. Medication, particularly during pregnancy, can pose risks to women and their children. Historically, medication assessments have overlooked gender differences, leading to inadequate consideration of women's health. Toxicological and epidemiological studies also tend to ignore sex and gender aspects, which can undermine efforts to protect women from the risks of hazardous chemicals. It's crucial for studies to include gender considerations to ensure the safety of all individuals.

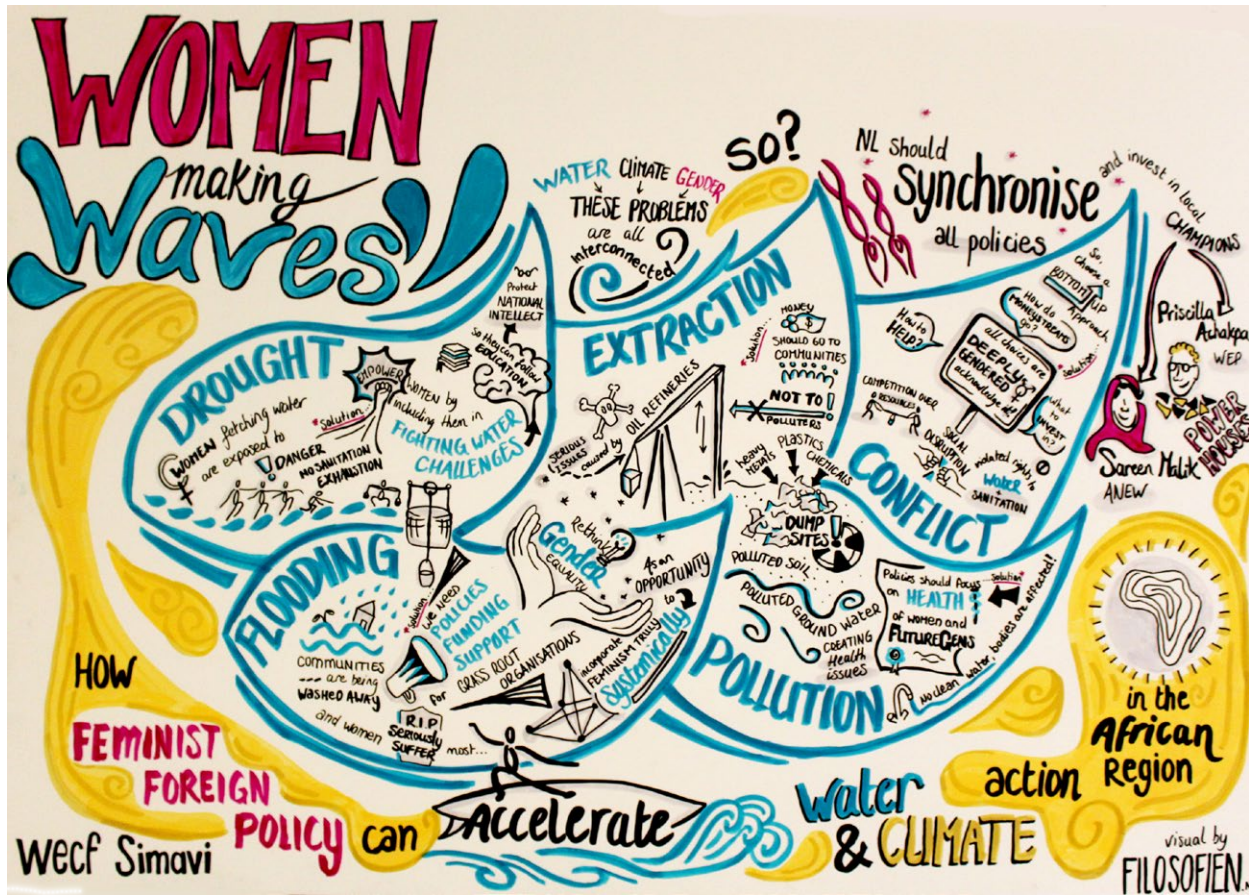
Gender roles

Social factors and gender roles play a significant role in how chemicals affect people's health. Different jobs expose women and men to different levels of hazardous chemicals. Jobs traditionally associated with women, like personal care, cleaning, and cashiering, often involve high exposure to chemicals. These sectors also employ a higher proportion of Black and women of colour, who may face even greater exposure. For example, nail care professionals, mainly women, are exposed to many harmful substances linked to various health issues like dermatitis and asthma. Even at home, women are more likely to be exposed to chemicals from cleaning products due to their role in household chores. Women still do most of the housework, increasing their exposure. Studies show that women who use cleaning products, either at home or professionally, are more likely to suffer from asthma and experience a decline in lung function. This highlights the importance of considering gender and social factors in understanding the health impacts of chemical exposure.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

On March 8, 2022, the European Commission put forward a new plan to tackle violence against women in all their diversity, including domestic violence and cyberbullying, aiming to make the most severe forms of violence a crime. The EU made a significant move towards this in 2014 with the Istanbul Convention, setting an important standard. The new proposal includes specific rules to improve how member states protect these victims.

Women who defend human rights, especially those focusing on the environment, face more threats and violence because they're at high risk of gender-based violence. In Europe, climate activists have faced increased hostility lately. Some governments are clamping down on activists, and far-right groups portray them as terrorists, which distracts from the real issues. This negative portrayal puts environmental activists in danger.



Cosmetics

Cosmetics are a significant daily source of exposure to potentially harmful chemicals for women. On average, a woman uses about 16 different cosmetics each day, often from a young age, influenced by societal beauty standards that favour stereotypical images of young, white, cisgender females. A study in Germany found that 85% of adolescents and young adults use cosmetics to boost their confidence. These products can contain substances like endocrine disruptors and allergens. Some ingredients, such as parabens, isothiazolinones, phthalates, and benzophenones, are known for their adverse effects on health. While EU regulations restrict or ban many concerning ingredients, others remain authorised for use. For example, some hair dyes, particularly those marketed to Black women have been associated with an increased risk of cancer. Although the EU has banned several problematic substances in hair dyes, many concerns still exist, with 70 to 80% of hair dyes in the EU being permanent or semi-permanent. Skin lightening products are also of concern, accounting for a significant portion of violations of EU cosmetics regulations by using ingredients like hydroquinone, mercury, and clobetasol propionate. These findings highlight the need for stricter regulation and greater awareness of the potential risks associated with cosmetic products.

Pesticides

Pesticides are a common way for all people to encounter harmful chemicals, whether through food or indoor/outdoor air. Studies in France have found that pregnant women are often exposed to pyrethroids, a type of pesticide commonly used at home. Factors such as pesticide use, living near fields, and certain dietary habits like alcohol or fish consumption contribute to this exposure. Because of traditional gender roles, men are more likely to be a farmer. Farmers can be exposed to pesticides on a daily basis. Consequently, they face the risk of neurological diseases, such as Parkinson, which are caused by constant exposure to toxics. In France, Parkinson has been officially recognized as an occupational disease.

EU Chemical Policies

Despite knowing that people are affected differently by dangerous chemicals, EU policies aimed at safeguarding against these risks don't consider gender. Two key regulations in the EU, the CLP Regulation and the REACH Regulation, govern industrial chemicals. They aim to protect human health and the environment but don't specifically address women's vulnerability to chemicals. These regulations mention women only concerning pregnancy and breastfeeding, reinforcing outdated stereotypes. The European Green Deal, which focuses on environmental policies, also overlooks gender concerns. Even though the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability aims to tackle chemical hazards, it doesn't address gender issues directly. This gap perpetuates gender stereotypes and fails to protect all vulnerable groups effectively.



Banning of greenwashing

Earlier this year, the EU introduced a new rule to tackle greenwashing. Now, companies can't just use terms like 'climate neutral' or 'sustainable' without proving that their products aren't harming the environment, maybe by getting certification like the EU Ecolabel. The European Commission did this because they found these terms were misleading and led people to buy things that harm the environment. This is all part of a bigger plan to make sure companies are honest about how environmentally friendly their products really are, so consumers can make better choices based on accurate information. Gender also plays a role in shopping habits. Women and girls tend to prefer more sustainable choices in what they buy, and companies often want to benefit from this. Additionally, since most women are the main shoppers in households, they have a big influence on how environmentally friendly the whole household is.

Activist Voices: Carola Rackete



Carola Rackete is a climate justice advocate and an independent candidate for the 2024 elections. She started her activism by witnessing the impacts of climate change in the rapidly warming Arctic. Over the next four years, Carola's main focus will be on biodiversity and climate justice, especially in the realm of agriculture.

"We are part of the natural world and depend on it and on each other for our survival and our well-being. The rights we enjoy, like freedom of speech or womens' rights, however are not natural. They're achievements of people before us. We have to defend these rights and extend them to all of humanity. In order to do that, we need to be organised together."- Carola Rackete

Access to menstrual health

One issue that brings together concerns about harmful chemicals, gender equality, access to sanitation, and plastic pollution is **menstruation**. Having the right to menstrual health is really important. The silence around menstruation has a big impact on the products we use, how we use them, and that, in turn, affects the environment, our wallets, and our health. We want the EU to do something about this silence and to talk more openly about what goes into the products we use. Disposable menstrual products aren't covered by the

new European SUP (Single Use Plastics Directive) regulation. While menstrual products and hygiene items are mentioned in the SUP, there aren't any rules yet to reduce the chemicals or plastics in these products. However, these products do come under Article 7, which means that starting from 2021, the packaging of menstrual health products must say how to dispose of them, that they might contain plastic or synthetic materials, and what happens to the environment if these products are littered. Although the EU acknowledges the negative environmental impact of these products, current policies have mainly focused on raising awareness rather than taking concrete actions.

Candidate and neighbourhood countries

The countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe that hope to join the European Union in the future will need to align their environmental policies with those of the EU. Official candidate countries like North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as well as potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, must address various environmental issues such as air and water pollution, land degradation, waste management, and biodiversity loss before they can join the EU. In Ukraine, both people and the environment suffer from Russia's devastating invasion, which has caused significant damage to infrastructure and contaminated natural and agricultural areas.

WECF and neighbourhood countries

WECF, which has a sister organisation in one of the candidate countries, WECF Georgia, has collaborated and will continue to collaborate with WECF member organisations and other environmental NGOs in EU candidate and potential candidate countries. We stand by our members and partner organisations in Ukraine as they work towards reconstruction, recovery, and EU accession, advocating for a green and sustainable future for the country. Our focus is on promoting improved environmental policies in these nations and enhancing cooperation with NGOs operating in these regions. We, as WECF, strive to enhance the commitment and capacity of NGOs to represent citizens and influence environmental reform processes from an ecofeminist perspective. Our activities include analysing and monitoring the situation and advocating for European environmental standards where they can have a positive impact. We closely monitor developments regarding accession negotiations with candidate countries in Eastern Europe, South-East Europe, and Turkey.



Section Five

OUR KEY ELECTION TOPICS

Key ecofeminist election topics

Though every topic can be approached with an ecofeminist perspective, we have chosen 6 key election topics for the 2024 EU elections where ecofeminism plays a critical role. These are: *a just energy transition, the polluter pays, youth at the decision table, say no to toxic chemicals, nature-inclusive agriculture, and sustainable and fair trade*. The overarching theme in these topics is **climate and gender justice now!** The European Union bears responsibility for solutions to and compensations for the climate crisis. They must start including this in their policies and objectives.

Why climate and gender justice now?

Climate change affects women and various marginalised groups more than others because of unfair systems. We already see that women and girls, LGBTQIA+ people, and those with disabilities are mostly the ones hurt or killed in climate disasters. With the climate changing quickly, more disasters are likely to happen. Fair rights are essential for making development sustainable. But discrimination still happens, and there are still barriers, some obvious and some not. We need everyone to take part and for our diverse society to be properly represented to tackle these challenges. **That's why it's crucial to act**

now and make sure that marginalised groups always have a say in decisions. We not only need to fight the climate crisis but also need to do it fairly, knowing that some groups suffer more because of it.

A gender-just energy transition

The move away from fossil fuels needs to happen now and needs to be fair. It's not just about getting rid of polluting industries; it's about reducing inequality and insecurity too. This means making sure the transition is fair for everyone and recognising the value of work that's often overlooked, like care work done mainly by women at home. We need to acknowledge that care work is real work! A fair transition also means prioritising those most affected by the changes, like workers in the fossil fuel industry and women in low-paid jobs or informal work. Factors like gender, ethnicity, and social class are really important when we think about how the transition affects people. For example, because women often have less economic power, they're more likely to suffer from energy poverty. We need to focus on addressing these global injustices caused by the energy sector and find ways to make things fairer for everyone.

Make Polluters Pay!

Consistently, those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis are suffering the most. The fossil fuel and high living costs crisis in Europe have put a lot of pressure on women, girls, and marginalised communities. These groups have been hit the hardest by pollution worldwide. The Global South is facing the worst consequences of the climate crisis in a systematic way. Companies aren't being held responsible for the harm they've caused and aren't being taxed for polluting the environment. **It's time for polluters to own up to what they've done.** Dealing with the crisis and starting a fair transition needs a lot of money, and it's long overdue for those who caused the pollution to pay their fair share, for example by compensating for losses and damages.

Youth at the decision table

The policies being discussed today urgently need the input of future generations, as it is our future at stake. **Why wouldn't you deserve a seat?** The EU recognizes this and has a strategy to engage and empower young people, aiming to increase their participation in democratic life. This strategy ensures that young individuals have the necessary resources to contribute meaningfully. Youth participation brings in diverse perspectives and fresh outlooks, which improve decision-making and foster policy that better addresses the needs of the younger generations. However, not everyone gets the chance to make a real impact and stereotypes surrounding gender, ethnicity, and social background are still highly present. Particularly on critical topics like climate and environment, where the input of future generations is crucial, efforts should be made to boost youth participation. In the previous EU election in 2019, voter turnout for individuals under 25 was 42% and for people between 25 and 39, it was 47%. While this is an improvement from 2025, it still fell below

50%. EU members should aim to increase this first way of participating for better policies and more diverse perspectives at the decision-making table.

Say no to toxic chemicals!

Everywhere we look, in our products, food, and even drinking water, we come across hormone-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). These pose a threat to our health and our environment, for instance by increasing the risks of breast, uterine, or prostate cancer. Some of these chemicals, like PFAS, are even called “forever chemicals” because they never leave the environment or our bodies. EDCs can be linked to gender imbalances, disruptions in the fertility cycle, early or delayed puberty in girls, neurological disorders, immune disorders, and hormone-related cancers. Women, due to social norms, gender-specific jobs, and beauty ideals, often face higher exposure to these chemicals, such as those found in cosmetics and cleaning products. We urgently need stricter regulations and oversight because companies will continue to use these chemicals if they’re allowed. That’s why we’re calling on the EU to strengthen the REACH regulations, which are meant to control hazardous chemicals, implement stricter rules, and ensure they are enforced more rigorously.

Nature-inclusive and fair agriculture

Sustainable and fair agriculture is crucial to protect our planet and personal well-being. The current agricultural system is deeply unfair, harming people in the Global South and not giving fair prices to farmers. The widespread use of pesticides damages biodiversity, while the bioindustry adds to greenhouse gas emissions, making the climate crisis worse. Importing soy from the Global South, mainly for animal feed, leads to deforestation and carbon emissions during transportation. Additionally, producing too much food in the Global North makes the Global South dependent, disrupting local markets and adding to carbon emissions. **We call for biodiversity to be protected by stopping the use of pesticides and introducing import laws.** It’s vital to monitor and prevent hormone-disrupting chemicals and pesticides for our health and the environment. To stop the need for unsustainably grown soy, the EU must reduce livestock farming. By enforcing stricter laws on imports and exports, we demand that the EU stops exporting intensive agricultural and livestock production systems and encourages the transition to a agro-ecological way of living.

Sustainable and Fair Trade

Our actions have a big impact on people all over the world because of the extensive production, consumption, and international trade. In today’s connected world, products often come from different places, creating a global economy and a shared responsibility for a healthy environment and fair working conditions. Sadly, these concerns aren’t usually reflected in the prices we pay for products, and international trade deals often don’t have clear measures to ensure such standards, especially when production is moved to the Global South. Industries must also be held responsible for fair and sustainable production. Although the recent EU ban on single-use plastics is a step forward, dealing with fast

fashion, one of the most wasteful industries, is crucial to tackle the huge amounts of waste and environmental pollution. Despite the EU's aim to ban microplastics in consumer goods, fast fashion still plays a big part because of its production process, high consumption, and the presence of plastics in materials and packaging. Textile production is responsible for 20% of global water pollution and 35% of microplastics in our environment. Stopping fast fashion can make a big difference in reducing plastic pollution.

Organising your own EU elections workshop

To prepare for the upcoming EU elections, we designed a workshop to engage youth with EU and national politics, promote ecofeminist topics, and help them understand EU parliament dynamics. **The goal of this workshop is to assess the party manifestos of your national political parties for the EU elections and score the political groups they belong to in the context of ecofeminist election topics.** Through this exercise, participants have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the national politics of parties, as well as experience EU dynamics.

Since the EU has 7 political groups and we have chosen 6 ecofeminist topics, this workshop is designed for 42 people. However, you can change the format to fit your goals, interests, and national context by for example taking out/adding a political group, or adding/removing a topic.



Workshop overview:

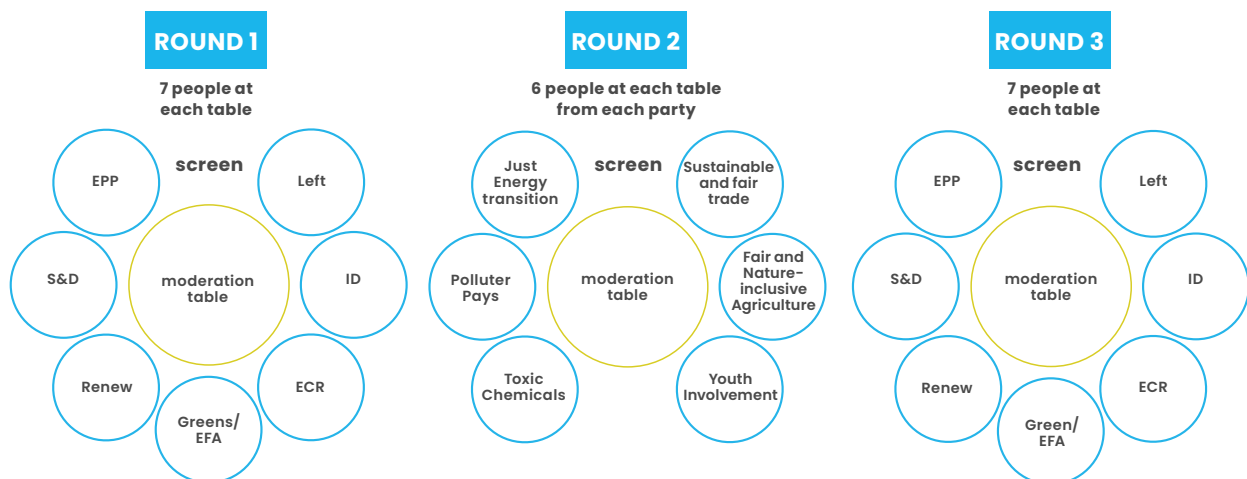
- Time: 10.00 -16.00
- Capacity: 42 participants in the standard format
- Target audience: young people falling in the age group between 18 and 30 years.
- Moderator: ideally ask someone to moderate the day
- Experts: we advise having an expert/ someone to lead at each topic table to help moderate the conversations and scoring of political groups

Workshop format:

To start the day, have a moderator/ someone from the organisation explain the context, planning, and goals of the workshop. Aside from a moderator to introduce the workshop and topics, you can choose to also invite someone to speak on citizen’s assemblies and the importance of youth participation. After the introduction, each participant is assigned one of the 7 political groups (excluding the Non-attached group). In the EU parliament, most national parties have joined a political group, participants will be looking at these groups and the national parties from your country that are in each group. Working together in these groups means that in the EU parliament parties will often have different objectives and strategies than in national politics. Since participants are divided into the 7 political groups, one table may discuss more than one national party (if they all belong to one group). The parties in one group will be similar, even though they can be very different in the national context. Whether one table will discuss one or multiple national parties depends on how the national parties of your country are divided and whether all members of parliament in one political group belong to one or more national parties from your country.

Round 1: group tables

The goal of round 1 is to understand the objectives and strategies of your political group, effectively understanding the perspectives of each national party (from your country) in



that group. The workshop takes the role play format: 6 people are at one table discussing the position of their political group and the objectives of the national (from your country) party/-ies belonging to that group. You spend this round doing research on the views of the national (from your country) party/-ies in your political group, the overall position of the group, and their position on the ecofeminist topics. You also divide the 6 topics amongst the 6 people in the group, so that each person can represent your group at each of the thematic tables in round 2.

Materials needed for each table:

- Information sheet on the political group
- Overview of which national parties (from your country) are part of this group (for example, EPP has 6 Dutch members currently, 5 from the party CDA and 1 from the CU)
- Manifestos for the EU elections of these parties.
- Information on the key election topics defined
- Potentially, a summary sheet with an index of where in the manifestos (page numbers) to find information on the key election topics.
- Potentially, relevant news articles

Round 2: thematic tables

The goal of round 2 is to discuss each ecofeminist topic in depth with “representatives” from other political groups to compare objectives and contextualise your own political group for that topic. Again, we are using the role-playing format, this time with 7 people (one person for each political group) at each thematic table (there are 6) discussing one of the 6 topics. You spend this round discussing with people from other groups on your (as divided in round 1) topic to better understand the position of your group compared to the others when it comes to that topic. This discussion can be moderated by an expert on the topic/ someone from the organisation.

Round 3: assigning scores

The goal of round 3 is to go back to the political group tables and discuss what you learned with your groupmates to give scores for your group on each of the topics (red-orange-green). You have all talked to different representatives and gained a good idea of your political group compared to the others, based on this and your own evaluation you can assign a score. This round should be monitored by someone from the organisation/ experts. To do the scoring, fill in the scorecard template.

Materials needed:

- Empty scorecards

Presenting and conclusion

Each political group then presents the scores they gave their political group for each of the 6 topics to the other political groups and this is written down on one scorecard (could be done by a moderator). After the presentations, a conclusion of the day is given by the organisation and participants are asked to reflect on roleplaying as members of the EU parliament and assessing manifestos for a day.

Workshop timeline

WHEN	WHAT
10:00– 11:00	Opening: welcome and instructions
11:00 – 12:30	Round 1: discuss political group objectives, positions, and party manifestos at group tables
12:30 – 13:30	Break: have a nice lunch together!
13:30 – 14:30	Round 2: discuss ecofeminist topics at topic tables with representatives from other groups
14:30 – 14:45	break
14:45 – 15:45	Round 3: discuss results and do final scoring at group tables
15:45 – 16:15	Present to other groups
16:15– 16:30	Conclusions: What’s next?



EU ELECTION 2024 ECOFEMINIST SCORECARD

Informed decisions matter: find out how committed different parties are to a healthy environment and gender justice. ● Committed ● Partially committed ● No commitment or no mention

OUR ECOFEMINIST DEMANDS	PARTIES >									
<p>A GENDER-JUST ENERGY TRANSITION Women and marginalized groups on average earn less money, which means for example they're for example more likely to struggle with energy poverty. The energy transition needs to be fair, decentralised and involve citizens in decision-making, while also promoting gender equality.</p>
<p>MAKE POLLUTERS PAY! People who have done the least to cause the climate crisis are suffering the most. Women and girls, in all their diversity, and marginalized communities are the ones most affected by global pollution around the world. It's time for those who are causing pollution to take responsibility for their actions!</p>										
<p>YOUTH AT THE DECISION TABLE The policies being discussed today need the input of future generations. It's our future that's on the line. EU members should strive to increase this form of participation for better policies and a wider and more diverse range of perspectives at the decision-making table.</p>										
<p>SAY NO TO TOXIC CHEMICALS Chemicals found in everyday products pose a threat to our health, research shows that 90% of all children are born pre-exposed to pollutants. We need tighter controls to make sure that hazardous chemicals don't end up on our store shelves and in our bodies.</p>										
<p>NATURE-INCLUSIVE AND FAIR AGRICULTURE The existing agricultural system is profoundly unfair, causing harm to people's health, intruding the markets in Global South countries and failing to provide fair prices to producers. The use of pesticides damages biodiversity, and the bioindustry adds to greenhouse gas emissions, worsening the climate crisis. We call for biodiversity to be protected by stopping the use of pesticides and introducing import laws.</p>										
<p>SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR TRADE Tackling fast fashion (one of the most wasteful industries) is essential to combat the mountains of waste and environmental pollution. Halting fast fashion can greatly reduce plastic pollution. Industries need to be held accountable and cover the costs of textile waste collection.</p>										



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Annex

USEFUL SOURCES FOR YOUNG CLIMATE ACTIVISTS

Books

Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens by Greta Gaard (1998)

Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development (1988), by Vandana Shiva

Feminism, Capitalism, and Ecology (2023) by Johanna Oksala

The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy (1999) by Catriona Sandilands

The Future of Foreign Policy is Feminist by Kristina Lunz (2023)

Reports

[Why the European Green Deal needs ecofeminism](#)

[Dare to Care. Ecofeminism as a source of inspiration](#)

[European elections 2024: Political Scenarios. What's the outlook for the upcoming Europe?](#)

[The Dawn of a Europe of many visions](#)

[A Feminist Foreign Policy for the european union](#)

[Tackling the challenges faced by women human rights defenders through a gender lens | OHCHR](#)

News articles

[Sandrine Rousseau France ecofeminist](#)

[Making Peace with the Earth – Through Diversity, mutuality, Care, and Nonviolence. An Ecofeminist Manifesto](#)

[Are we done now? Feminism in Europe from a Belgian perspective by Ine Tollenaers](#)

[More women in politics, you can make it happen, by Liang de Beer](#)

[Feminist activism in peace and security by Miriam M. Müller](#)

[Europe at a crossroad Manifest](#)

[Europe on the Ballot: Why Transnational Parties Failed](#)

[Human rights experts warn against European crackdown on climate protesters |](#)

[Environmental activism | The Guardian](#)

Podcasts

[Young and Powerful with Choice for Youth and Sexuality](#)

[The feminist Political Ecology Podcast](#)

[Fem-Vibes podcast](#)

[Mothers of Invention](#)

Information on the EU

[European Parliament](#)

[EU elections](#)

[Eurostat](#)

[Your guide to the 2024 European election in 9 charts – POLITICO](#)

Campaigns

[YOUTHVOTE](#)

[Don't let others choose for you: EuroDesk campaign](#)

[EurHope](#)

[Pop the Vote Campaign](#)

[16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

[MAKE RICH POLLUTERS PAY – | Home](#)



Youth organisations

[Generation Climate Europe](#)

[We are CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality » CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality](#)

Social media accounts to follow

[@europeanparliament](#)

[@euronews.tv](#)

[@european.youth.eu](#)

[@gef_europe](#)

[@intersectionalenvironmentalist](#)

[@wecf_international](#)

[@wecf_nederland](#)

[@oxfamnovib](#)

[@greenpeace](#)

[@actionaid](#)

[@earthrisestudio](#)

[@wedo_worldwide](#)

