International Youth Manifesto for a Just and Sustainable Future

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1.Preamble

We, young people and youth workers from **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Austria, and Italy,** brought together through the Erasmus+ WORLD project: *Our World Our Planet*, co-funded by the European Union and shaped through local meetings, structured virtual exchanges, capacity-building activities, and collaborative learning processes, **affirm our shared commitment to promoting climate justice, gender equality, and meaningful youth engagement in decision-making processes at both local and transnational levels.**

Framed within an Erasmus+ cooperation initiative designed to **strengthen intercultural dialogue between the Global North and the Global South**, this Manifesto recognizes that today's global challenges, particularly the climate crisis, are deeply **interconnected with social inequalities, gendered power relations, and unequal access to decision-making spaces.**

Inspired by local consultations involving about **400 people** and international online meetings involving **more than 100 young people from 5 different countries**, this Manifesto brings together aspirations, priorities, and evidence-based demands emerging from diverse socio-political contexts, yet united by a shared urgency for change, addressed to institutions at the local, national, and international levels.

We hereby demand political institutions at the international, national, and local levels; development partners; civil society organizations and all relevant stakeholders to **consider, support, and integrate the outcomes, recommendations, and lessons** emerging from this Manifesto into their policies, programmes, and implementation frameworks.

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2. Resolutions and Recommendations

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate justice is not an abstract concept for our generation, it is a lived reality shaped by the accelerating impacts of climate change on our environments, our livelihoods, and our futures. **We are witnessing more frequent and intense heatwaves, floods, and storms alongside prolonged droughts, rising temperatures, and unpredictable seasons as happens across Italy and Austria.** Water systems are under growing strain, with scarcity in some areas and destructive flooding in others. **These changes are already disrupting agriculture, reducing crop yields, threatening food security, and undermining the livelihoods of entire communities of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.**

At the same time, ecosystems are deteriorating, biodiversity is being lost, and pollution is increasing, with direct consequences for human health and well-being. Climate change is driving economic losses, damaging infrastructure, and raising the cost of living—burdens that fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable. It is also deepening social inequalities, forcing migration, and intensifying existing injustices, with women, youth, and marginalized groups often facing the greatest impacts. **Beyond the physical consequences, the psychological toll, including rising climate anxiety among young people, cannot be ignored.**

Yet, despite being among those most affected, **young people are too often excluded from decision-making processes.** Climate justice therefore demands not only urgent action to address these interconnected crises, but also fair, inclusive, and participatory solutions. Having been given the space to come together, share our experiences, and raise our voices, we put forward the following demands as a call for accountability, equity, and a livable future for all.

Young people worldwide call for **policies and concrete actions that protect vulnerable communities, support sustainable livelihoods, and ensure meaningful youth participation in shaping a fair and resilient future.**

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WHAT DO WE DEMAND?

Agriculture and Food Systems

- **Recognize, protect, and uplift Indigenous and traditional agricultural knowledge,** ensuring it is respected, preserved, and integrated into agricultural policies.
- **Provide strong, equitable, and long-term support for smallholder farmers**, ensuring fair access to resources, markets, training, and the tools they need to sustain their livelihoods and strengthen community resilience.
- **Protect and strengthen biodiversity** by safeguarding resilient seeds and ecosystems while restoring degraded lands, forests, and rural areas to rebuild ecological balance and long-term resilience.

Mobility and Transport

- **Expand clean, affordable, and accessible public transportation,** prioritize cycling by building safe bike lanes instead of new highways, and cut vehicle emissions through ambitious, people-centered mobility policies.

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Industry and Pollution

- **Embrace strict, binding policies** to drastically reduce industrial carbon emissions and air pollution, including the enforcement of strong carbon taxes on major polluters.
- Transit rapidly to **renewable energy sources as a standard practice by Industries.**
- **Adopt circular economy principles** to minimize industrial waste and resource use.

Housing and Urban Development

- Invest in **energy-efficient, climate-resilient housing, including green retrofitting** especially for low-income communities.
- Scale up and implement **innovative, sustainable building materials,** including waste-based construction.
- Support the **realization of climate-adaptive cities**, with expanded green areas and heat-safe public spaces
- Support **Citizen Energy Communities** to restore widespread energy autonomy to citizens

Climate Finance and Economic Transition

- Sustain **financing for climate action**, including nature-based solutions and the **transition to a green, circular economy.**
- Provide **financial support** for communities affected by extreme weather especially youth interventions
- **Redirect funding from military spending** to climate action and community initiatives.

Infrastructure and Adaptation

- Invest in **climate adaptation infrastructure** and stronger systems across the full value chain to effectively reduce climate impacts.

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Governance, Policy, and Participation

- Enforce climate policies and context-specific solutions **that reflect regional differences as the** [European Climate Adaptation Plan (ECAP)][1]
- Adopt inclusive and participatory governance, **ensuring meaningful and youth engagement,** support for grassroots and community-based initiatives, and the establishment of community climate councils with deliberative power.

Social Inclusion and Equity

- Implement **social equity in climate action**, including the protection of vulnerable groups, gender-responsive approaches, fair access to resources, and the active involvement of women, youth, children, and the elderly in decision-making.

Education, Awareness, and Community Engagement

- **Invest in climate education and awareness,** including integrating climate literacy into school curricula and promoting inclusive, intergenerational community dialogue.

[1] https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/eu-adaptation-policy/european-climate-adaptation-plan

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WHAT DO WE ASK TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (EU, AU, UN) TO ENSURE YOUTH INCLUSION IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE?

Youth Participation and Representation

- Establish **youth councils at local, national, and international levels**, including dedicated climate councils, to ensure **meaningful and institutionalized youth representation with deliberative power** in decision-making spaces.
- Implement strong **accountability and monitoring systems** to track youth inclusion and impact, alongside **regular opportunities for direct dialogue** between young people and decision-makers.
- Strengthen **support for youth networks and informal groups** to enable connection, collaboration, and the amplification of youth-led impact.
- Engage young people in a meaningful and broad manner, **including those experiencing greater marginalisation,** in the processes of identifying needs and actions within Adaptation Plans, as well as in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Implement a **Generational Impact Assessment** by requiring legislators to assess the social and environmental impact of new laws on future generations.

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Funding and Financial Support

- Allocate **dedicated funding for youth-led climate action**, including sustained support for grassroots initiatives.
- Ensure **funding mechanisms are accessible, streamlined, and flexible** over multi-year periods, allowing young people and informal groups to focus on delivering meaningful impact.

Education, Awareness, and Capacity Building

- Provide **accessible climate education for all**, starting from an early age and emphasizing practical, hands-on learning approaches.
- **Promote climate awareness** and expand opportunities for **youth leadership development** through trainings, workshops, and experiential learning.
- **Invest in training, skill-building, and the creation of safe and inclusive spaces** that empower young people to advocate and actively participate in civic life.
- Training to participate in the **planning, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation processes**.

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WHAT DO WE NEED FOR MEANINGFUL DIGITAL CLIMATE ACTIVISM?

Digital Tools and Features

- Ensure that communication uses **clear, simple, and youth-friendly language t**o enable broad understanding and inclusive participation, including for young people with migrant backgrounds or diverse linguistic profiles.
- Promote the **development of creative and accessible tools** to raise climate awareness, including at large public events and across widely used digital platforms such as social media.
- **Expand access to digital tools**—such as mapping applications, storytelling formats, and visual content—to support youth in sharing information, documenting climate impacts, and enhancing public understanding, alongside the development of independent public platforms.
- **Strengthen content integrity on digital platforms** through fact-checking mechanisms and transparent algorithms that do not suppress climate-related content.

Barriers to Digital Climate Activism

- **Increase access to affordable and inclusive public and self-organized spaces** where young people can gather, organize, and participate.
- **Improve digital equity by reducing data costs**, expanding access to reliable internet and networks, and ensuring the availability of affordable, high-quality digital devices.

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- **Promote fairness in digital platforms** through transparent algorithms that do not limit the visibility of youth content, alongside increased access to funding and resources for youth-led climate initiatives.

Skills, Knowledge, and Accessibility

- **Expand access to digital skills development and training** to enable young people to effectively use online tools for advocacy and participation.
- **Address literacy barriers** and ensure all youth (including young people with migrant backgrounds or diverse linguistic profiles) can access, understand, and engage with information.
- Provide **clear, accessible, and reliable climate information**, supported by verified online content to reduce miscommunication and misinformation.

Social and Personal Challenges

- **Strengthen protection against online harassment and political pressure** to ensure young people can safely express their views without fear of judgment, bullying, or exclusion.
- **Support youth in overcoming barriers to visibility** and reach by enabling fairer content distribution, providing resources to build influence, and fostering dialogue across diverse perspectives.
- Promote **inclusive communication approaches** that extend beyond digital platforms, incorporating traditional and local methods to ensure that communities in hard-to-reach areas are not exclude

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GENDER EQUALITY

Climate change is deepening existing gender inequalities and disproportionately affecting young women and girls across both African and European contexts. Across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, climate-related crises continue to disrupt girls' education, increase unpaid care burdens, intensify gender-based violence, and expose many to displacement, early marriage, and long-term economic insecurity.

At the same time, women remain excluded from equal access to land ownership, decent work, financial services, and climate finance, limiting their ability to build resilience and participate fully in climate solutions. In Austria and Italy, persistent gender pay gaps, occupational segregation, and the economic invisibility of unpaid care work continue to undermine women's economic autonomy and social protection**. Despite women's central role in community adaptation, food systems, and environmental stewardship, they remain underrepresented in political leadership, climate governance,** and technical decision-making spaces, while existing gender policies often suffer from weak implementation and accountability.

A just climate transition cannot be achieved without dismantling these structural inequalities and **ensuring that climate action is grounded in gender justice**, human rights, economic inclusion, protection, and meaningful participation for all women and girls.

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WHAT DO WE DEMAND?

Education and Skills Development for Gender-Just Transitions

- Eliminate **barriers to girls' education**, including early marriage and climate-induced displacement, ensuring continuous access to quality schooling through gender-responsive disaster preparedness in educational systems, consistent with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37[2] on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.
- **Integrate climate literacy and green skills into curricula**, targeting girls and young women for leadership in green sectors, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and circular economy approaches.
- **Establishment of gender-transformative vocational training programmes** that equip young women with technical skills for emerging climate sectors, supported by public-private partnerships and international climate finance.

[2] https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/GC/37

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Protection and Safeguarding Systems

- **Strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms** to prevent, investigate, and prosecute gender-based violence in climate crisis contexts, aligning with CEDAW[3] obligations and the Belém Gender Action Plan[4] (2026–2034) emphasis on rights-based approaches.
- **Expand of survivor-centered protection and support services**, including safe shelters, psychosocial support, and legal aid, with dedicated climate crisis protocols.

Economic Empowerment, Land Rights, and Financial Inclusion

- **Women's equal access to land and property rights**, including through legal reform and community-based advocacy, recognising that secure land tenure is foundational to climate resilience and economic autonomy.
- **Expansion of gender-responsive climate finance** that prioritises grassroots women's organisations and young women-led initiatives, with simplified access procedures and multi-year flexible funding, as called for by the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan[5].

Fair Labour Conditions, Pay Equity, and Care Work Recognition

- **Enforce equal pay legislation and eliminate gender pay gaps** through binding transparency requirements, pay audits, and sanctions for non-compliance.
- **Implement reforms in parental and care leave systems** to promote shared caregiving responsibilities, including incentives for paternal leave uptake and protections against labour market penalties for caregivers.
- **Recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work** through public investment in care infrastructure, universal basic services, and time-use surveys that inform policy design.

[3] Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
[4] https://unfccc.int/documents/655016
[5] https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-enhanced-lima-work-programme-on-gender

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Leadership, Political Representation, and Meaningful Participation

- **Introduce and enforce of mandatory quotas** for women's representation in climate governance bodies, national delegations, and parliamentary committees, with specific provisions for young women under 30, in line with the Belém Gender Action Plan.
- **Establish institutional mechanisms for inclusion**, such as rotating membership in community climate councils with decision-making power, not advisory status.
- **Nominate women as high-level climate champions** and ensure gender-balanced speaking opportunities at all climate negotiations, as recommended by the UNFCCC gender review.

Gender-Responsive Climate Policy and Governance

- **Integrate gender considerations into all climate policies**, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Local Adaptation Plan and Long-Term Strategies, with dedicated gender-responsive climate action plans.
- **Develop monitoring and accountability frameworks** with gender-disaggregated indicators, independent review mechanisms, and civil society participation in tracking progress.
- **Appoint national/local gender and climate change focal points** with technical capacity and authority across ministries, as encouraged by UNFCCC decisions.
- **Strengthen gender-responsiveness of climate finance** to build capacity of women and facilitate simplified access for grassroots women's organisations, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities.

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