

## **A Youth-Powered Change: for a Green, Feminist and Inclusive Europe**

In the face of escalating climate change, widening social inequalities, tremendous conflicts around the world, and the unsettling rise of the far-right, Europe stands at a crossroads. In June 2024, EU citizens will have the chance to choose a **Europe for the people and the planet**, or one for hate and discrimination. We must provide a concrete alternative for voters; we must be protagonists of a positive change.

The European Union (EU), with all its difficulties and contradictions, still represents a lighthouse for many of us. Coming from a country where the far right is in power, with deep internal differences, an unstable job market, lack of opportunities for young people, strong organised crime, rising climate denial and profound environmental issues, I have experienced the fundamental relevance of a **green and progressive EU**.

The outstanding result of the Greens in 2019 has ignited the most ambitious EU we had ever experienced. **We pushed for change, we pushed for justice**. We naturally are the mover of progress, because we see the world from a revolutionary perspective: everything and everyone in this world is worthy of equal respect and care, we fight for social and environmental justice, as we deeply understand they are consistently interconnected. **I believe in 2024 we will do better**.

We must be politely disruptive in our ideas, proposals and communication. We must provide a vision of Europe and the world that is unprecedented, unique and desirable. In front of these sliding doors, we should not be scared of **being brave**, we should not be scared of promoting change. If we **communicate to and empower** workers, students, youth, racialized people, discriminated groups, rural populations, people living in the fringes of the EU, and whoever is in need, we will do better! We should show that we are an integral part of these communities, that we understand and live their struggle and diversity. We must **acknowledge the profound differences within our Union**, tackling the ones that represent inequalities and valuing those that are a cultural enrichment.

**Europe is a mosaic of cultures, histories, and identities**, and our green vision must be inclusive and tailored to the unique challenges faced by different regions. It is undeniable how in the South and the East, social inequalities, economic disparities, infrastructural underdevelopment and patriarchal heritage are felt much stronger than in the rest of the EU. We must give a meaning to EU citizenship, envisioning a Europe where social class, ethnicity, gender, geographic origin, are no longer a barrier to inclusion in politics, education, and the workforce. Our policies must involve everyone, be directed at everyone, and be conceived with and for the communities. This means **addressing systemic inequalities and racism, dismantling discriminatory structures, and ensuring that our green transition benefits all**. By actively engaging with and learning from diverse perspectives, we can create a more inclusive and cohesive Europe.

We must challenge the far-right narrative, which envisions us as people's enemies, and stand for a transition that is not only ecologically sound but inherently just for every individual. By recognizing our diverse socio-economic landscapes, our green policies have to be crafted with an unwavering focus on inclusivity and an intersectional approach. Our vision for a **just green transition** should extend beyond rhetoric to **tangible actions**. We must invest in an **EU common energy system** based on renewables, having the phase out from fossil fuels as a priority. The EU should define a common and updated climate adaptation strategy and push its Member States (MS) to have binding plans on it. We must continue our efforts on climate neutrality, nature preservation, regenerative agriculture, biodiversity protection, roll-out of nature-based solutions, and generally upgrade the Green Deal.

Our transition must **not come at the cost of the Global South or of the less privileged groups**. We must foster a circular economy to reuse raw materials in order to end extraction and hoarding of resources, provide concrete alternatives for all the sectors that will be phased out, force the MS to define and implement industrial transition plans, ensure no one will suffer for green policies. The **cost of the transition** must be **borne** by the ones responsible for the climate collapse: the **billionaires**, the Oil & Gas companies and all that are generating extra profit from the crisis. Our green transition must involve a **structural change of our socio-economic paradigm**, from one served by people to one at the service of people, going beyond GDP and embracing planetary boundaries.

A more just and equal Europe, must provide inclusive and human responses to the **migration** flows towards the EU, that climate change will only exacerbate. Our outer borders are witnessing thousands of deaths every year, our migration policies and externalisation of border security is a constant threat to human rights. We must end fortress Europe, towards a Europe of integration and solidarity, creating legal and humane corridors, as well as proper integration policies, to be harmonised in every MS. This cannot be separated from the continuation of a fair **enlargement process**, based on democratic and justice principles, that we as greens must be leading in collaboration with our eastern members, who are fighting to enhance democracy, justice and ecologism in their countries.

In 2019 we have experienced the **power of young people in leading change**, young activists have initiated the green wave making a huge difference in the EU Parliament fate. That enthusiasm faded away and it is now transformed into disillusionment. We are angry, worried, but we are also ready to take responsibility for building the world we deserve, a world that will allow us to have a future. We do not want to push for change, **we now want to be the change**. By involving young voices in policy-making, we can rekindle hope, demonstrating that a green and just future is not just a distant dream but an achievable reality.

We are a **generation of crisis**. Living our 20s/30s without future perspectives is scary. However, it is even more scary knowing that our present is at stake too: high unemployment, housing crisis and a spiking cost of living. This situation is worsened **in Southern and Eastern countries**. Being a young southern Italian, I face very different challenges from many of my EU peers. We live our lives frugally, being unable to leave our parents homes until we are 30. Our best opportunity lies in emigrating, with low opportunities to come back. As a young woman, I too often felt there is no space for my development, being discriminated against, not taken into account. This is not the Europe I want; this is not the Europe I believe we can build together. We must give hope to young people all over the Union and the continent. We must push the EU on more coherent policies for youth rights and participation.

We can only make a difference through a more democratic and **feminist Europe**, enhancing participation, fostering transparent governance, and prioritising the needs of the people. We must build a Europe of the people, where policies are shaped by the diverse voices that make up our Union. As a young woman fighting the far right every day in my country, I am aware of the struggle, of the hate and the abuse one can receive when forced into this patriarchal system of power.

There is a violent propulsion aimed at shrinking the rights of women and queer people, putting our existence under threat, while denying the system of oppression. They want us quiet and that's why **we must be as loud as possible**. We must fight for equal pay, equal rights and opportunities, LGBTQIA+ rights, enshrine abortion rights in our constitutional laws. We must eliminate gender violence and discrimination, through education, prevention and smashing patriarchy step by step. The EU has the enormous responsibility and opportunity to breach the gap among MS also on this issue. Women and queer people must be free and safe everywhere.

This political agenda is a pledge to navigate towards an ecologist, feminist, and inclusive Europe, that not only addresses its internal differences but also engages meaningfully with all the territories beyond the EU bubble. Together, we can create a Europe of shared values, where justice, democracy, and hope flourish for all its people.

**We don't have time to lose, but we still have time to win!**

Green Greetings,

Benedetta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benedetta".