



To the European Parliament
The Committee on Constitutional Affairs

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The view of the “Green 10” on European integration: A Sustainable Future for the European Union



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Also on behalf of:



- BirdLife International
- Climate Action Network Europe
- CEE Bankwatch Network
- European Environmental Bureau
- European Public Health Alliance – Environment Network
- International Friends of Nature
- Greenpeace European Unit
- European Federation for Transport & Environment
- WWF European Policy Office



Friends of the Earth Europe

All organisations have their roots in national and regional organisations in Member States as well as Accession Countries. With this contribution, we wish to inspire the committee and ultimately the EU Parliament to work towards an ambitious and effective European Sustainable Development Strategy.



GREENPEACE



Dear Chairman, dear committee members,

Thank you for making this contribution possible on behalf of Green 10, the ten environmental and health organisations based in Brussels.

When Europeans voted against the constitution they sent two clear messages to their governments and the European Union:

- take our daily problems and worries seriously,
- and talk to us in a way we understand you.

People are afraid about the future of the European social and economic model in the light of globalisation. People hear politicians and Eurocrats promoting deregulation and competitiveness, and they ask themselves: How are these changes going to affect me? Are my job, our health system and my future pension endangered? Is someone taking care of the environment?

We, Europeans of the green movement share these concerns. We see irreversible environmental degradation, and consequently, human health paying the price for unrestrained free trade.

A healthy environmental policy leads to healthy, innovative, future-oriented and truly competitive economies. Environment and economy can complement each other.

The main image problem of the EU was created because these questions and many more were not answered in public. Debates in Brussels were focused on issues like how many commissioners should the EU have and about the voting system. Who among your voters cares? That is when the link with many citizens was cut.

Future public debates about the EU and its new constitution should focus on policy issues: jobs, globalisation, pension and health systems, education, participatory democracy, enlarging the EU and the environment.

Reminder: 89% of EU citizens care about the protection of the environment and its effects on their children's health, as Eurobarometers indicate.

Our constituency wants its representatives and the EU to seriously address issues such as toxic chemicals and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in crops and food, availability of freshwater, the global poverty and environmental challenges including climate change, fisheries depletion and nature protection.

We therefore welcome the European Parliament's work to revive the debate about the constitution.

Aim to regain the trust of Europeans to save a constitution, we believe, is essential to make Europe grow together and solve the many problems we face.

The strong provisions of the existing EU Treaty on environment and sustainable development were preserved in the Constitution. Some steps forward were taken in the area of legal rights, participatory democracy, transparency and the powers of Parliament.

Key provisions on environment and public health from the existing EU Treaty were also saved: polluter pays, precautionary principle, etc. And for the first time, the door to the European Court of Justice opened a little for environmental cases.

At the same time, the Constitution includes many of the Treaty's outdated provisions in areas such as agriculture and transport.

Despite its weaknesses, the Green 10 regard the new constitution as a historic document that can be adapted, supported and implemented – as long as it tackles the real problems of a resource constrained world.

The Constitution reaffirms the key overarching objectives of sustainable development and environmental policy integration. But the current consumption and production patterns in the EU are not sustainable:

- The EU has an ecological footprint 2.2 times as large as its own biological capacity.
- The per capita consumption of resources and energy in Europe is above any sustainable level. This has already led to grave consequences for the European as well as for the global environment. In Europe, one out of seven children suffers from asthma or allergies.
- Europe is exploiting at high speed the environment in other parts of the world.

Climate change is happening faster than previously expected. We are running out of time. Scientific evidence indicates: The longer we wait to actually reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, the more economically and socially drastic will be the requirement to cut emissions later to stay below 2 degree global warming compared to pre-industrial temperatures.

Improved environmental legislation in the EU is slowing down the deterioration in Europe, but not preventing the accelerated exploitation of the environment outside Europe.

Look at the destruction of Latin America's rain forests to clear the way for genetically engineered soy beans ending in the bellies of European cattle. Look at the massive industrial pollution in China, the factory of consumer products for Europe and the world.

The key sector to tackle is energy: We must make the EU the most energy and natural resource efficient economy in the world.

We must commit to significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

We need significant increases in energy efficiency and the swift and massive use of renewable energy technologies like biomass, wind and solar.

Let us be honest: The Kyoto Protocol targets will not be enough and you cannot want to stop climate change and at the same time European corporations like Statoil, Shell and BP invest massively in oil drilling.

Please, do not believe the lies about nuclear power able to solve any problem related to climate change. Twenty years after the explosion of the Ukrainian nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, time has come for the EU to lead a global and rapid phase out of nuclear energy.

The above-mentioned objectives should guide the EU's "Lisbon Strategy", therefore contributing to eco-innovation, environmental and health protection, economic performance, job-creation and social inclusion.

We need powerful, eco-market based instruments which put a real price on pollution. This could be an area that could come under the qualified majority voting.

We need environmental taxation reforms in all EU Member States.

We need effective instruments to boost eco-innovations.

We need a sustainability scrutiny test for the use of all 2007-2013 EU funds.

Dear Chairman, dear committee members, there can be no serious Sustainable Development Strategy without funds. The billions of Euros spent on environmentally harmful subsidies must be phased out or redirected.

Please scrap Euratom.

Aim for a transport system minimising the consumption of non-renewable energy sources, land use, impacts on ecosystems and human health.

Ensure a strong REACH chemicals policy including the substitution of hazardous chemicals for safer ones. That would boost eco-innovation and Green chemistry. It would also begin to alleviate a number of chemical-linked health problems.

Allocate sufficient Euros to structural funds, LIFE+, to fisheries funds and to protected species and the Natura 2000 network from the rural development programme.

Unfortunately, there are those in the EU Commission who are pushing for deregulation and promoting competitiveness above everything else – whether on chemicals, GMOs, air pollution or energy.

Globally, EU policies must apply safeguards and Impact Assessments to prevent negative impacts on the biodiversity of other countries. The EU must systematically promote sustainable development in the whole world and support this financially.

The Green 10 believe that the future of the European Union should be sustainable. We welcome all endeavours by the European Parliament to work towards this objective and debate this publicly.

A serious environmental and health protection agenda will help link European citizens with the EU.

Thank you

The following info can be downloaded online:

1. "A programme for the Sustainable Development of the European Union – proposals from environmental organisations for a realistic and ambitious Sustainable Development Strategy – to be adopted by the June 2006 European Summit". See

http://www.eeb.org/activities/sustainable_development/G10-on-SDS-March2006.pdf

2. The EU's new Constitution: Assessing the Environmental Perspective, November 2004. Evaluation by the "Green Nine" of the content of the EU Constitution as compared with the ambitions these organisations had formulated at the start of the work of the European Convention. See http://www.eeb.org/activities/european_constitution/EU-new-Constitution-Assessment-081104.pdf

See also "Towards a Green EU Constitution", August 2003:

<http://www.eeb.org/publication/2003/G8-IGC-EN-final-8-8-03.pdf>

3. "EU funds in Central and Eastern Europe: Cohesion or Collision?" See

<http://www.bankwatch.org/billions>