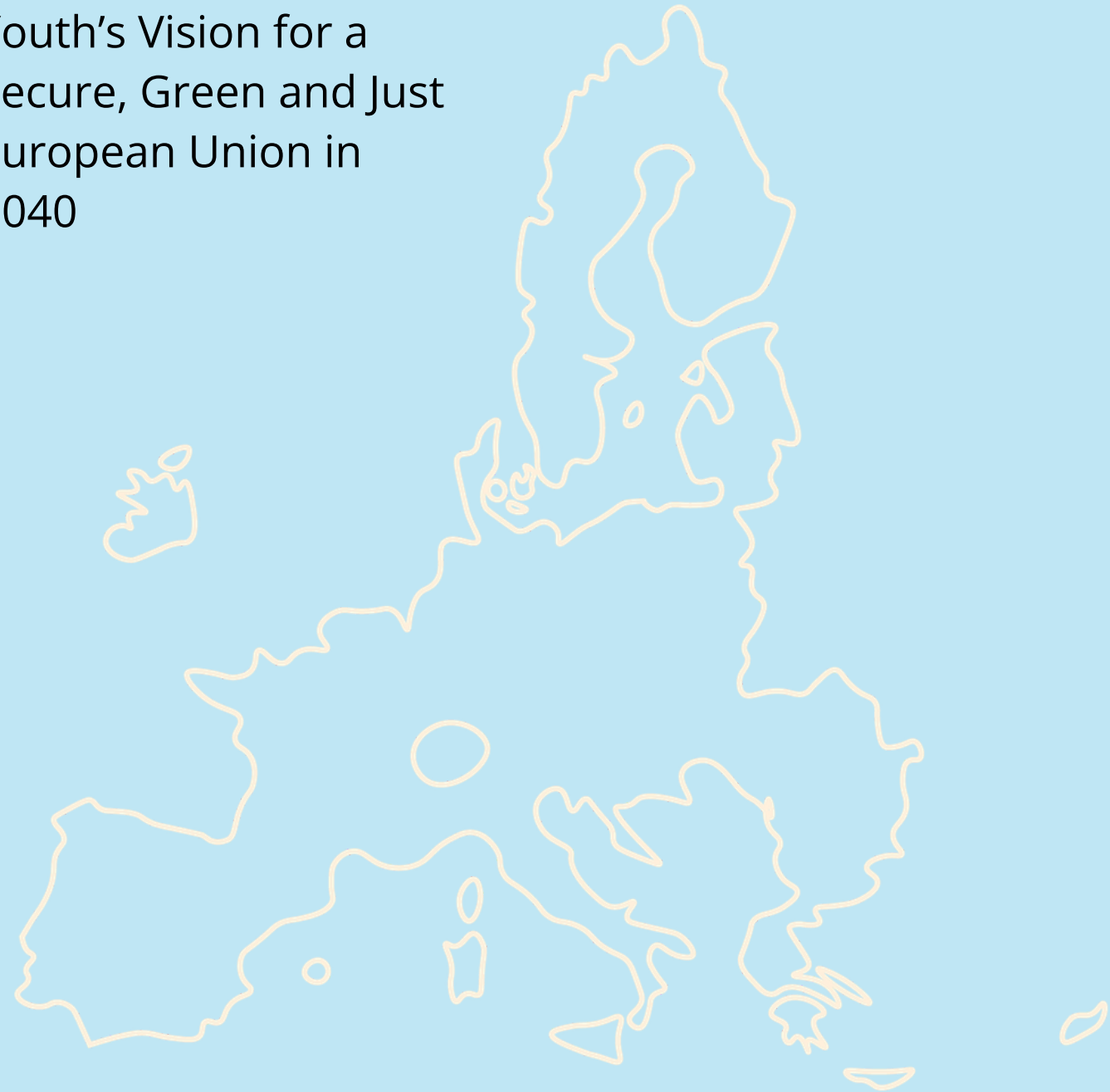
NO FUTURE WITHOUT ACTIONS

Youth's Vision for a Secure, Green and Just European Union in 2040



VISION 2040

YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION

SUMMARY

A SUSTAINABLE, SECURE AND JUST FUTURE CANNOT EMERGE WITHOUT BOLD DECISIONS — OR WITHOUT THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

The climate and energy decisions being made right now will shape living conditions for decades to come. Anticipatory, ambitious policy is both economically and socially more sustainable than delay — and the cost of waiting only compounds. The following themes outline young people's vision for decisive decisions and the means to achieve the 2040 targets.

DEMOCRACY THAT DELIVERS

Broaden participation and accessible decision-making. Uphold human rights and sustainable values. Ensure a just transition in working life as well. Invest in digital self-sufficiency and reliable access to information. Make the Sámi people an inseparable part of decision-making.

RESILIENCE MEANS SECURITY

Systematically prevent the health risks of climate change. Ensure climate-resilient infrastructure and shared adaptation plans for all member states. Introduce new forms of insurance, such as parametric or weather insurance.

NATIONAL DEFENCE AS ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE

Harness restoration efforts as part of a passive defence infrastructure. Strengthen cyber defence and adapt operational capacity to extreme conditions. Integrate energy security into climate policy and environmental impact assessment into military planning.

ENERGY AS THE FOUNDATION OF SECURITY

Diversify and decentralise the energy system. Strengthen the EU's internal energy infrastructure and market integration. Minimise strategic dependencies and protect critical infrastructure.

ENERGY BELONGS TO EVERYONE

Extend emissions trading to all sectors and make fossil energy unprofitable. Accelerate the industrial electrification and scale up the hydrogen economy. Eliminate energy poverty as a shared objective.

FROM WASTE TO WEALTH

The EU as a circular economy pioneer global leader in the circular economy. Introduce digital product passports. Make repair cheaper than buying new. Invest in sorting technology and establish an EU-level obligation to use recycled materials.

RESTORE NATURE AND REINVENT CITIES

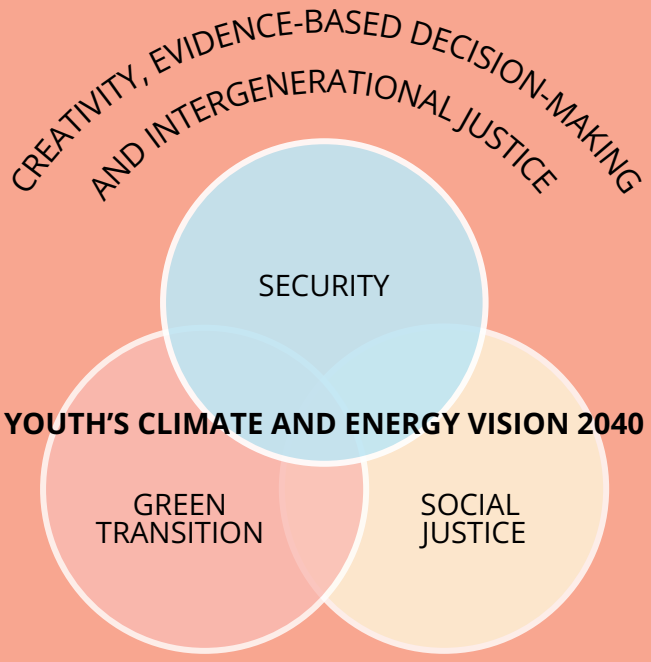
Transition to continuous cover forestry. Restore peatlands and water bodies. Secure the future of endangered species by strengthening ecosystems. Promote local and plant-based food systems. Increase urban greenery and align construction with emissions reduction targets.

A STEP TOWARDS AN EU THAT REFLECTS THE VIEWS OF YOUTH

Finnish Youth's confidence in the future has weakened, among other things, due to climate change and global crises. Youth want to be active agents in matters affecting their future, yet they are too often included in societal decision-making only superficially, inadequately, or not at all.

We, 15 Youth Visionaries, decided to take the initiative into our own hands. The European Union is currently defining the measures needed to achieve its 2040 climate targets. During the spring of 2026, we prepared our own Climate and Energy Vision to challenge and inspire decision-makers to aim higher. This vision paper outlines what kind of European Union we want to live in by 2040, as well as the climate and energy policy solutions required to make this future a reality. We seek to challenge those in power to look beyond electoral cycles and consider how long-term and courageous policies can secure the conditions for a good life in the 2040s and beyond.

In a time of overlapping global crises, imagining positive futures is more important than ever.



VISION'S THEMATIC PILLARS

COMMITMENT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CORE VALUES

Our vision therefore aims to inspire thinking, action, and engagement. Through this process, we have realised that although the path forward is uncertain and full of open questions, the most decisive action is to start. We, the visionaries, hope that by 2040, young people will no longer need to envision a better climate and energy future, because it will be a reality.

1 A RELIABLE, JUST AND SECURE SOCIETY

By 2040, democracy, security, climate and energy policy, and social justice are seen as deeply interconnected concepts in the European Union. Broad civic participation has strengthened the legitimacy of decision-making and social stability, enabling ambitious climate and energy policy.

Security is understood comprehensively. At its core are climate and energy solutions: breaking free from fossil fuels produced by authoritarian regimes and building a decentralised, emission free energy system that safeguards security of supply and the continuity of critical societal functions. In the EU of 2040, climate policy is security policy. They are not opposing, not even parallel, objectives, but fundamentally inseparable.

Even if global warming has been halted, the EU prepares for the long-term, systemic impacts of climate change. At the same time, the EU responds to geopolitical tensions by strengthening international cooperation, peace, and solidarity, and by supporting climate and energy resilience beyond its borders.

1.1. A DEMOCRATIC EUROPEAN UNION STRENGTHENS COMMITMENT

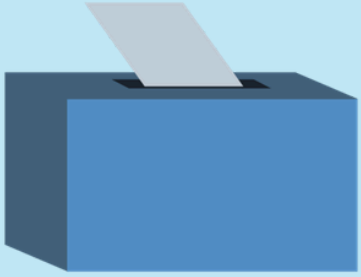
By 2040, democracy in the European Union is reliable, dynamic, inclusive, and effective at both the EU and local levels. Citizen panels, assemblies, initiatives, and participatory EU budgeting piloted by the Commission play a key role in climate and energy decision-making.

The voting age has been lowered, and democratic backsliding has been halted. **Decisions at national and EU level are no longer made one electoral term at a time**, and decisions are considered legitimate only if participation requirements are fulfilled. Civic movements are actively heard. **A democratic climate policy strengthens people's belief in change** and in the EU's capacity to build a sustainable future for generations to come.

People have real opportunities for dialogue. **Democracy is part of everyday life and is experienced as something people own.** Social exclusion has declined, and citizens feel strong inclusion and agency, including in climate and energy matters.

Participation explicitly accounts for groups at risk of marginalization and for geographic accessibility. Fundamental rights are not compromised, and anti-democratic developments are addressed early and decisively.

Dependence on fossil fuels from authoritarian states has been eliminated. Energy production is increasingly understood as a matter of democracy and security. **The fossil phase-out and a more democratic Union have strengthened trust in climate and energy policies and in the EU's cohesion, effectiveness, and strategic autonomy.**



The EU invests in a **trustworthy media environment and digital sovereignty**. Strong, binding legislation prevents hate speech, disinformation, and the harmful social and ecological impacts of social media algorithms and artificial intelligence. Democratic access to reliable information has improved people's ability to make decisions that positively impact climate.

The EU accounts for **regional differences, risks, and opportunities** through inclusive policies and future-oriented funding instruments. Historical responsibility for emissions and the dismantling of power imbalances are reflected in decisions and external relations. Companies that violate human rights cannot operate in the EU internal market. **Ambitious and binding corporate responsibility legislation mitigates harmful impacts of global supply chains.**

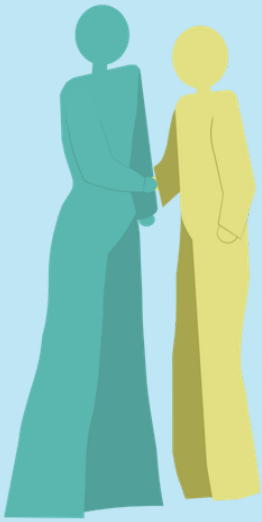
TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Expand EU democracy and accessible decision-making.** Increase meaningful participation through citizen assemblies, panels, forums, participatory budgeting, and new deliberative models at both EU and national levels. Ensure that participation mechanisms are genuinely influential, regionally inclusive, and physically and digitally accessible.
- **Invest in digital sovereignty, reliable information, and AI regulation.** Address the impacts of global production and supply chains both within and beyond EU borders.
- **Uphold human rights and sustainable values under all circumstances.**

1.2. THE SÁMI AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF DECISION-MAKING

By 2040, the Sámi, the only Indigenous people in the European Union, have genuine decision-making power over climate and energy policies affecting them. **Without the Sámi's explicit and freely given consent, green transition projects do not proceed in Sámi areas**; the green transition strengthens and respects Sámi culture.

The EU supports Sámi adaptation to climate change through long-term funding that sustains traditional livelihoods as part of climate solutions and nature conservation. Sámi traditional knowledge is valued and used in decision-making, especially regarding human–nature relations, also beyond Sámi regions.



TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Embed the Free, Prior and Informed Consent principle in EU law.** Consolidate the FPIC principle so that climate and energy projects in Sámi areas require explicit and voluntary approval by Sámi people, not merely consultation.
- **Ensure sufficient resources for Sámi participation and representation.** Guarantee that Sámi institutions and representatives have the financial, institutional, and human resources necessary to participate effectively, independently, and according to their own priorities in democratic decision-making.
- **Educate decisionmakers and officials on Sámi rights and climate solutions.** Provide systematic education on Sámi rights, culture, and traditional knowledge to ensure respectful and lawful decision-making concerning Sámi territories.

1.3. SECURITY AS THE ABILITY TO RESPOND

By 2040, physical security in the European Union means systematically protecting people, infrastructure, and vital systems from the direct and indirect impacts of climate change. Everyday security is built on local capacity to prevent risks, protect critical functions, and ensure continuity under all conditions, guided by proactive risk management and evidence-based policy.

The EU actively cooperates internationally, implementing **joint adaptation measures, strengthening security of supply**, and ensuring availability of critical resources such as energy, water, and food. Strengthened coordination enables effective responses to cross-border climate risks.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Prevent climate-related health risks and strengthen healthcare resilience.** Systematically address health risks caused by climate change and improve healthcare systems' capacity to operate under extreme conditions. Strengthen preparedness for heatwaves, pandemics, and other climate-related health threats, including sufficient staffing and adaptive infrastructure.
- **Safeguard food and water availability.** Secure access to food and water by advancing a sustainability transition in agriculture, strengthening climate-resilient food production systems, and improving water management and supply infrastructure.
- **Build climate-resilient infrastructure and emergency systems.** Ensure EU infrastructure is resilient to climate impacts and supports physical security. Mitigate the effects of extreme weather through understanding of early warning signs, climate-adapted urban planning, as well as advanced emergency response capabilities.

1.4. NATIONAL DEFENCE AS SOCIETAL DEFENCE

By 2040, the security policy of the European Union recognises climate change as an existential strategic threat. Defence, climate, and energy policies share the goal of maintaining societal functionality in all conditions. Managing climate shocks and safeguarding vital systems are integrated into military defence.

Defence resources have shifted from heavy armament toward **solutions that strengthen resilience under extreme conditions.** EU sovereignty is built on protecting ecosystems, energy networks, and data flows from both external threats and climate impacts.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Integrate ecosystem restoration into passive defence strategies.** Incorporate nature-based solutions into regional defence planning. Restore wetlands as strategic barriers to heavy military equipment and protect dense mixed forests that serve as carbon sinks and provide visual and aerial protection against drone surveillance.
- **Achieve technological independence and low-carbon defence logistics.** Invest in electrified logistics and hydrogen technologies for defence. End dependence on imported fossil energy to improve security of supply and gain tactical advantages through lower heat and noise signatures.

- **Strengthen cyber defence as a frontline safeguard.** Build redundancy and rapid recovery capacity into energy transmission and information networks. As societies become deeply digitalised, cyber defence becomes a core element of national defence, ensuring continuity of essential services in all situations.
- **Adapt operational capacity to extreme climate conditions.** Develop equipment and military strategies capable of functioning in extreme heat, severe weather, and rapidly changing climate conditions. Integrate anticipation of the impacts of reaching global climate tipping points into long-term defence planning.
- **Integrate environmental impact assessment into military planning.** Make environmental assessment an inseparable part of the decision-making process to ensure that every strategic choice enhances overall security and environmental sustainability.

1.5. ENERGY AS THE FOUNDATION OF SECURITY

By 2040, the European Union's energy system is **decentralised, emissions-free, and fully integrated across borders** which reduces strategic dependencies. Energy security rests on **proactive risk management, technological diversity, and cooperation** among member and partner states.

EU energy policy unites **net-zero targets, competitiveness, and security**. Affordable and reliable energy is ensured under all conditions, including crises, and energy systems are resilient and respond fast to any disturbances.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Diversify and decentralise the energy system.** Build an emissions-free energy production system where renewable energy sources and nuclear power form the backbone. Utilise decentralised production, responsible energy storage solutions, and demand-side flexibility mechanisms as internal system buffers during disruptions to the energy system.
- **Strengthen EU-wide infrastructure and market integration.** Develop electricity grids, cross-border interconnections, and energy markets as a unified EU-wide system to enable efficient transmission and enhance resilience across regions.
- **Minimise strategic dependencies.** Reduce dependence on external energy sources and critical materials through circular economy practices, strategic reserves, and diversified international partnerships.
- **Protect critical energy infrastructure.** Safeguard energy production facilities, grids, and subsea cables from physical and cyber threats. Ensure rapid repair and recovery capabilities are built into system design and operation, with expertise and resources located within the EU.
- **Align energy security with ambitious climate policy.** Reduce exposure to geopolitical risks and energy price volatility through an emissions-free energy system. Recognise ambitious climate policy as a cornerstone of long-term security and competitiveness.

1.6. ENERGY BELONGS TO EVERYONE

By 2040, affordable and emissions-free energy is a fundamental right in the European Union, as essential as clean water, education, and healthcare. **No EU citizen is forced to choose between food, medicine, and electricity.** No one must endure cold in their home or suffer from oppressive heat. **Energy consumption is moderated** through the sustainable design of heating and cooling systems. For example, adequate insulation reduces heat loss in winter, which lowers energy use and the costs associated with it.

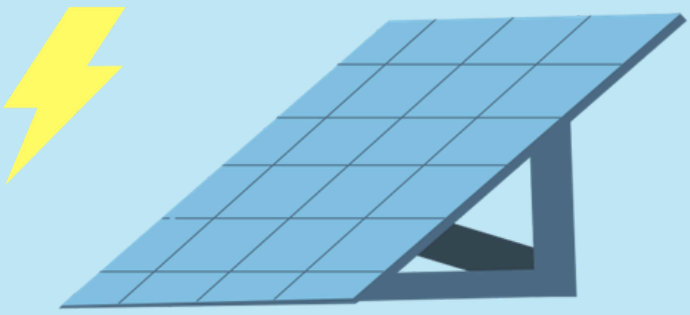
Energy is neither a privilege nor a source of insecurity. Energy costs in buildings are reduced through regulation applied across the EU, easing households' expenses. Changes in demographics and weather conditions are considered when identifying households in vulnerable positions, and these households are provided with targeted support and financing opportunities for energy-efficiency renovations.

By 2040, every EU citizen can understand where energy comes from, what it costs to produce, and gain visibility of its value chain. **The energy system is transparent**: there are no hidden fees, no unreasonable contract terms, and no market mechanisms that remain opaque to consumers. In 2040, an EU citizen can, for example, open a mobile application that clearly shows the cost and environmental impacts of the energy used in their area, and how individual energy-use choices can lead to savings or even financial benefits.

By 2040, energy is not a form of power concentrated in the hands of a few, but a shared public good. Energy is produced in homes, neighborhoods, towns, former industrial areas, and on the rooftops of cities. **Energy communities and local production models** have made energy more democratic by spreading ownership, decision-making power, and benefits more broadly across society.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Make the eradication of energy poverty a binding EU-wide goal.** Establish clear targets, indicators, and legal obligations to eliminate energy poverty across all member states.
- **Ensure transparent and accessible energy information.** Guarantee that all EU citizens have access to clear information about energy prices, sources, consumption, available support schemes, and opportunities to influence energy use and costs.
- **Target support to those most in need.** Develop indicators and practices that consider income alongside housing quality, regional differences, heat and cold risks, age, health status, functional capacity, and mobility needs.
- **Support energy-efficiency renovations.** Create accessible grant and loan schemes and strengthen advisory services so that low-income households, rental housing, housing cooperatives, and rural households can participate in the transition.
- **Promote energy communities and shared ownership models.** Support energy communities and other co-ownership structures that allow people to participate directly in energy production and benefit economically.
- **Ensure a just transition in working life.** Provide retraining, income security, and clear pathways into new professions for workers affected by the transition, and direct investments toward regions most impacted by structural change.



2 GREEN TRANSITION WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

By 2040, the European Union is climate-positive. As a result of the green transition, the EU's economy and society operate within planetary boundaries, based on ecologically sustainable principles. This transformation is particularly visible in cities, where emissions-free energy solutions, circular economy practices, and climate change adaptation are combined. Comprehensive green transition measures have ensured that global warming has been halted in line with the Paris Agreement, keeping global warming below two degrees. Biodiversity loss has been stopped, and regenerative action supports the restoration of the vitality of natural ecosystems. In monitoring economic development, binding indicators beyond GDP are increasingly used to monitor development.

The EU Emissions Trading System covers all sectors. This ensures that both **public and private actors have strong economic incentives to engage in climate- and nature-positive business practices**.

Subsidies supporting environmentally harmful practices have been redirected towards solutions that support climate and environmental objectives.

Consistent and predictable EU regulation has created an attractive investment environment for scaling up climate and environment friendly projects. **The EU's green growth markets, such as renewable energy, hydrogen, and sustainable material solutions, create jobs, support well-being and strengthen the EU's competitiveness in global markets** for green technologies and emissions-free industrial solutions. By acting as a frontrunner in the implementation of ambitious climate and energy policy, the **EU exercises climate leadership** beyond what its size alone would suggest, even outside its own borders.

2.1. AN ENERGY SELF-SUFFICIENT EUROPEAN UNION IN 2040

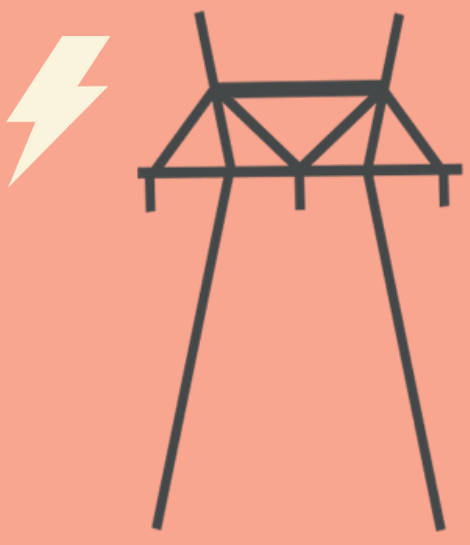
By 2040, the European Union has achieved energy self-sufficiency by increasing the production of local renewable energy such as solar and wind power, as well as hydropower and bioenergy. Because renewable electricity production is inherently variable, the flexibility of the energy system has been strengthened to ensure that energy is available where and when it is needed.

By 2040, energy storage has expanded significantly through pumped-storage power plants, large-scale battery storage, and the production of green hydrogen and its derivatives. Nuclear power supports the energy system by providing stable baseload power and balancing weather-dependent generation. **As a result of extensive electrification, industrial development and economic growth in the EU have been decoupled from the use of fossil fuels.**

By 2040, the price of carbon exceeds the cost of avoiding or capturing emissions, as all emissions across industries are priced under the EU ETS.

As a result, only hard-to-abate emissions remain, and carbon capture and utilisation technologies have developed to the point where the EU can achieve climate neutrality.

Biogenic carbon dioxide emissions that are difficult to avoid are captured from industrial processes and used as a sustainable raw material. Together with green hydrogen, captured biogenic carbon dioxide enables the production of synthetic fuels and chemicals that provide alternatives to oil-based solutions in sectors that are difficult to electrify by 2040, such as aviation and the chemical industry.



TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Make fossil energy unprofitable and accelerate investment in clean energy.** Expand emissions trading to all sectors and direct research, development, and innovation funding toward clean energy solutions, ensuring that renewable and low-emission technologies become the most cost-competitive option across all sectors.
- **Accelerate the electrification of industry.** Support investment in electric and hydrogen-based production processes, particularly in emissions-intensive and hard-to-abate sectors such as steel and chemicals, to decouple economic growth from fossil fuel use.
- **Scale up the hydrogen economy and related infrastructure.** Build EU-wide markets, infrastructure, and standards for green hydrogen and its derivatives so that green hydrogen becomes a central solution for energy storage and for decarbonising industry and heavy transport.

2.2. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A FORERUNNER OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

By 2040, the European Union operates according to the principles of a circular economy, meaning that **materials remain in circulation for long periods and valuable resources do not end up as waste**. The lifespan of materials has increased from a few years to several decades, and companies have a legal obligation to provide maintenance, upgrades, and spare parts for products throughout their entire lifetime. By 2040, **repairing a product is always cheaper than buying a new one**.

Every new product has a **digital product passport** that includes information on the raw materials used in manufacturing, its climate and nature impacts, maintenance history, and instructions for disassembly and recycling. **Through an EU-wide materials exchange, companies trade recycled raw materials in real time.** This platform enables the efficient use of surplus materials and industrial side streams, while reducing the need for virgin raw materials.

By 2040, the sorting of recyclable materials will be fully automated. **Advanced robotics and artificial intelligence accurately identify materials and separate them into clean streams for reuse.** The concept of waste has changed: it is no longer an end product but material waiting for its next use cycle. In industry, one company's byproducts serve as another's raw materials, and waste heat is systematically utilized within energy networks.

Society has shifted away from ownership-based thinking toward a **service-oriented model**, in which the sharing economy and product-service solutions have replaced traditional ownership. **Goods are acquired as services** that are updated and circulated according to need, increasing overall resource efficiency.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Accelerate the deployment of digital product passports.** Establish common standards for storing product data so that the origin of materials, maintenance history, and recyclability are transparently accessible to all actors.
- **Make repairing cheaper than buying new.** Reduce taxation on repair services and increase the price of virgin raw materials to shift economic incentives toward longer product lifetimes.
- **Invest in sorting technologies.** Develop robotics and artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency and accuracy of recycling processes.
- **Introduce an EU-level obligation to use recycled materials.** Require industry and producers to integrate recycled materials into their value chains.

2.3. ECOSYSTEMS ARE RECOVERING

By 2040, biodiversity in the European Union has been restored. People genuinely see themselves as part of nature and are motivated to act to support it. Decision-making and planning are based on cooperation between species, combining ecological values with practical solutions.

In forestry, the EU has shifted to continuous cover forestry and clearcutting is no longer practiced. Old forests, marine, and other ecosystems have been strengthened, securing the habitats and future of endangered species. Forests, soil, and marine ecosystems are protected and function as significant natural carbon sinks both within and beyond urban areas.

By 2040, the European food system no longer undermines biodiversity. The EU has also ended the import of fertilizers from third countries, supporting the decoupling of European food production from global mass production. **The focus has shifted toward healthy, plant-based local food**, which strengthens security of supply and reduces environmental impacts.

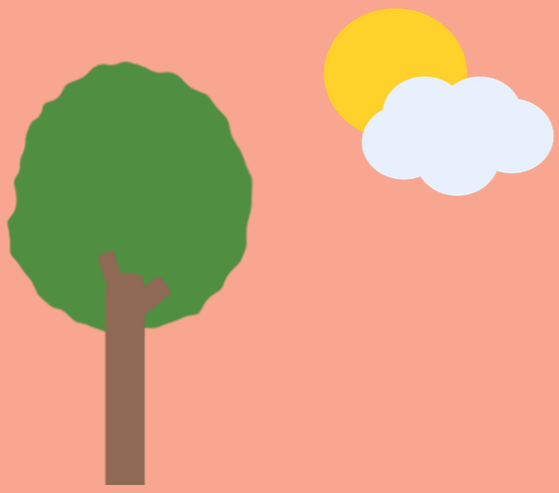
This transition has freed up agricultural land. **Released land is used for ecosystem restoration and for cultivating crops intended for human consumption, supporting ecologically sustainable land use and food security.**

Domestic and local production, such as small-scale farming, has expanded, reducing the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption in other parts of the world.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Restore ecosystems at scale and end clear-cutting.** Carry out large-scale restoration of wetlands and water bodies and phase out clear-cut forestry by transitioning to continuous cover forestry. These measures strengthen biodiversity, improve carbon sinks, and secure the long-term vitality of ecosystems.

- **Safeguard the future of endangered species.** Reinforce old forest, marine, and other ecosystems that simultaneously serve as major natural carbon sinks both within and outside urban environments.
- **Promote a local and plant-based food system.** Advance food systems that reduce pressure on nature, improve land-use efficiency, strengthen security of supply, and lower environmental impacts.
- **End fertilizer imports from third countries and decouple European food production from global mass production.** Strengthen self-sufficiency and reduce the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption beyond Europe's borders.



2.4. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION DELIVERS CO-BENEFITS

By 2040, European Union member states are resilient to crises. Adaptation measures have been implemented in a systematic manner to **minimise the impacts of climate change on society, people, and nature**. All EU member states have national and regional adaptation plans and cooperate closely with regional actors to put adaptation measures into practice. Funding for adaptation is drawn from both public and private sources.

Adaptation to climate change takes place across all sectors. In agriculture, resilient crop varieties adapted to new climatic conditions have been developed. Forests are protected, restored, and managed in ways that increase their resilience to diseases, pests, and wildfires. **The natural water-retention capacity of ecosystems has been improved, for example through the restoration of wetlands and rivers.** The impacts of climate change are also taken into account in preparedness and rescue services as well as in occupational safety.

In addition, the finance and banking sector has integrated climate risks into decision-making, financing, and insurance practices, thereby steering investments toward a climate-resilient society.

Technology and digital tools are used to support adaptation planning, enabling risks arising from a changing climate to be modelled and anticipated as accurately as possible. **Adaptation measures are, as a priority, nature-based solutions: solutions that rely on nature and ecosystem services while delivering co-benefits.**

By 2040, adaptation to climate change has not only reduced climate-related risks and damages, but has also enabled higher agricultural productivity, improved food security, new innovations, increased biodiversity, and better health and well-being for citizens.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Ensure comprehensive and harmonised adaptation planning.** All EU member states and regional actors have comprehensive adaptation plans that follow shared standards and are regularly updated. These plans serve as the first step toward implementing adaptation measures across different sectors.
- **Introduce new insurance solutions for climate risks.** New forms of insurance, such as parametric insurance and weather insurance, are put in place to reduce the financial impacts of natural disasters and extreme weather events and to help communities recover more quickly.

2.5. CLIMATE-SMART CITIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

By 2040, urban development in the European Union is based on adaptation to climate change and on combining climate change mitigation with the safeguarding of biodiversity. Regional inequality has been halted through balanced regional development. Urban areas develop in an equitable manner and are recognised as valuable living environments.

Sustainable construction requires a balance between new development, reuse, and the preservation of cultural heritage. New construction is directed primarily to areas with an existing building stock. Environmental impact assessments are prioritised, and spatial development is guided toward areas with low impacts on nature. Natural areas are recognised as valuable entities in their own right and are not assessed solely from the perspective of their construction potential.

By 2040, reuse of the existing building stock is the primary approach, and permanent demolition of buildings is a last resort. Reuse reduces land-use change, safeguards habitats, and lowers emissions from construction. It also delivers significant cost savings compared to demolition and new construction. At the same time, controlled infill and new construction can be carried out in growing urban centres.

The preservation of the built environment and cultural heritage is ensured. Protection from climate change risks relies primarily on renovation and maintenance, as these reduce the climate impacts of construction and support the preservation of local identity. The importance of protection is recognised in particularly valuable environments, but as a starting point the entire built environment is considered valuable. In EU member states, renovation is supported through economic incentives.

Access to housing is secured for all who need it, reducing regional inequality and supporting labour mobility. Housing construction has been increased to meet demand, which also helps curb rising prices across the EU.

A sustainable transport system supports regional equality, economic accessibility, emissions reductions, and healthy living environments. By 2040, major cross-border infrastructure projects have been implemented in the EU, such as the Helsinki–Tallinn tunnel, Rail Baltica, and the Seine–Scheldt canal. Public transport is electrified, energy-efficient, and accessible. Walking and cycling are prioritised as primary modes of transport. Street space freed from private car use has been converted into places for people to spend time. As a result, **urban air quality has improved and noise levels have decreased**.

The amount of carbon-sequestering, climate-smart urban green space has been maximised in cities, representing a key and cost-effective response to the impacts of climate change. Urban green areas cool cities during heatwaves and reduce flood risks. At the same time, they strengthen biodiversity, provide ecosystem services, and increase urban resilience.

Simultaneously, **the total area covered by asphalt has decreased**. In place of uniform surfaces, cities now include a greater diversity of ground layers that support biodiversity, filter water, and moderate temperature extremes.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Design societal structures to be flexible and adaptable to future risks.** Without change, emissions from the construction sector will increase, biodiversity loss will accelerate, and housing costs will continue to rise.
- **Align construction sector regulation and governance closely with emissions-reduction targets** and biodiversity protection.
- **Safeguard the built environment** as part of climate-adaptive urban planning and cultural heritage protection.
- **Establish the 3-30-300 principle for urban green space in all EU cities.** According to this principle, every home should have visibility to at least three trees, urban canopy cover should be at least 30%, and the distance to the nearest green space should not exceed 300 metres. The principle guides urban development toward climate-smart, liveable environments.

3 DECISIONMAKER: BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TOO!

By 2040, a fundamental shift has taken place in the European mindset: safeguarding the well-being of future generations is understood as a moral obligation. Citizens and decision-makers alike care about building a better future also for generations whose very existence we cannot yet imagine.

The rights of future generations are embedded in law. Decision-making is bound by an obligation to secure the conditions for life also in the future. **A European Union Commissioner for Future Generations**, together with **national Commissioners or Ombudspersons for the Future** in the member states, ensures that this principle is implemented in practice. **Youth play a significant role in society** both as voters and as decisionmakers. Futures are actively discussed in public debate, and people's capacity to act regarding their future has been strengthened.

The carrying capacity of the environment and nature sets the boundaries for all decisions. The necessity for emissions reductions is widely accepted across society. Emissions have been reduced significantly but in a controlled manner, so that risks and costs created by present-day societies are not passed on to future generations.

The transition toward a more sustainable future requires investment, but anticipation is both economically and humanly less costly than inaction.

TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

- **Create a shared direction for intergenerational justice.** Define long-term EU-level and national objectives for the promotion of well-being and for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change. Commit to these goals across electoral cycles and ensure they guide political decision-making.
- **Develop foresight and impact-assessment models.** Ensure that political decisions do not undermine the well-being or agency of future generations by strengthening long-term assessment and anticipatory governance tools.
- **Build futures literacy.** Strengthen people's ability to understand long-term impacts and risks, enabling them to imagine alternative futures and to influence how those futures are shaped.
- **Strengthen youth power over the future.** Increase youth voter turnout, support young candidates in elections, and enhance young people's opportunities to influence decision-making processes.
- **Establish a climate fund for future generations.** Channel resources into a dedicated climate fund that supports, for example, the green transition, climate adaptation, and skills development—ensuring that the transition is fair also to future generations.

We challenge every decision-maker to consider how their own actions can help ensure that a livable planet is preserved for today's young people in 2040—and for future generations beyond that.

YOUTH'S CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION 2040

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VISION 2040
YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION

WHAT IS THE YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION 2040?

The Youth Climate and Energy Vision 2040 is a politically non-partisan vision for the future of the EU, created entirely by young people. It has been developed by 15 Finnish young people from diverse backgrounds, in collaboration with experts.

This is an exceptional and unique undertaking: the vision has been produced entirely on a voluntary basis, without any dedicated funding. It has been made possible by a group of climate and energy professionals, and at its heart is the desire to bring fresh perspectives at a time when they are urgently needed.

The Vision brings a long-term perspective to decision-making and challenges policymakers to look beyond electoral cycles. Its goal is to strengthen youth agency and offer concrete guidance for decision makers toward a sustainable future.

The Youth Climate and Energy Vision is built around three key themes, which are security, green transition and social justice. At the core of the Vision are evidence-based thinking, creativity and intergenerational justice. Furthermore, respect for EU values should be at the core of all decision-making.

VISION 2040

YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION