

COP 29: Youth Priorities

Luxembourg's youth recommendations and priorities for COP 29

As Climate Youth Delegates (CYD), we represent the voices and interests of young people in Luxembourg on climate issues at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP). The CYD Programme is a one-year mandate, and its core mission is to ensure the inclusion of youth perspectives during international climate negotiations.

During the national consultation phase, we consulted young people to obtain their perspectives on climate change and environmental issues. While engaging with secondary school students across Luxembourg, we found that topics related to the triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss were their primary concerns. We need to address the triple planetary crisis as a unified issue to safeguard a sustainable future. We advocate for international and national policies that align with the Rio Conventions' objectives to address biodiversity, climate change, and desertification, ensuring a comprehensive approach to environmental protection. Furthermore, many young people emphasised on the need for meaningful youth engagement in policy formulation, particularly around national climate policies. They feel that youth perspectives are often missing from these discussions.

Young people voiced the need for quality climate education to bridge the gap between policy and public understanding. Luxembourg is well-positioned to lead at this year's COP by leveraging its financial resources and promoting ambitious goals. Mitigation reduces the severity of climate change impacts, helping secure a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come. In our view, however, the Just Transition is the most critical element in achieving our climate goals, as it ensures an equitable shift to a net-zero carbon economy.

Therefore as representatives of the youth of Luxembourg, we decided to highlight priorities for COP29 on: Youth Engagement and Climate education, Climate Finance, Mitigation, and the Just Transition.

Youth Engagement and Climate Education

As Climate Youth Delegates, we advocate for active youth engagement in a meaningful and impactful manner. In our view, meaningful youth engagement involves providing input and perspectives in policy formulation, especially during the national policy-making process. As youth, we bring distinct, diverse perspectives crucial for tackling the climate crisis. We have an intergenerational approach, prioritising a future-oriented, long-term perspective that includes considerations for current and future generations and societal changes. Our goal is to ensure that these perspectives are included in both international negotiations and the implementation of national policies.

Furthermore, we advocate for the establishment of access to quality climate education, underscoring the necessity to combine public understanding and policy.

We recognised that climate education is the most effective means to bridge the gap in climate polarisation, which ranges from eco-anxiety to indifference about climate change.

For us, quality climate education also means an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates social sciences, natural sciences, technology and analytical thinking to equip young people with the tools and knowledge to address the triple planetary crisis. By fostering critical thinking and collaboration across disciplines, we can empower future generations to develop innovative solutions and engage in meaningful dialogues about climate.

Climate Finance

As young people, we seek to ensure access to sufficient, effective, and equitable financing for adaptation efforts. We urge member states to adequately respond to the financial needs and set out a more ambitious New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) moving beyond the USD 100 billion target. The NCQG must meet the actual needs of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building. Therefore, we call for the NCQG to be founded on the ‘polluter pays’ principle and be made accessible to the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. Polluters should bear the costs of their pollution, taking responsibility for covering the environmental damage they cause and managing pollution to prevent harm to ecosystems and human health. We propose polluter specific taxes that go beyond CO₂ (due to the higher potency of certain chemicals).

Furthermore, synergies between climate, biodiversity, and land management should be enhanced to ensure efficient resource use. We call on member states to allocate new and existing funds to support a just transition that leaves no one behind, paying particular attention to addressing energy poverty and marginalised communities. We highlight the importance of private finance to fund the transition to a net-carbon economy. Public funds will not be sufficient to ensure a social climate transition across all sectors. Therefore, as youth we push for accountability and transparency within climate finance across public and private funds.

Mitigation

As Luxembourg’s Climate Youth Delegates, we call for a fossil fuel phase-out, including that all fossil fuels subsidies must stop. We urge cease fossil fuel expansion and ensure that all new projects align with the Paris Agreement, promoting the terminology of “phase out” rather than “transition away” from fossil fuels. Furthermore, all subsidies must be transparent and aligned with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

We believe that the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) should be more ambitious, inclusive, and transparent, incorporating a participatory process that actively engages civil society, including marginalised communities and young people.

We would like to raise the importance of synergies between the Rio Conventions (biodiversity, climate change and desertification) and the need to address the triple planetary crisis as a unified issue. We highlight the necessity of not only integrating biodiversity into our climate strategy but also ensuring its effective implementation. Overall, the NDC must also be fully aligned with the Paris Agreement.

Just Transition

A transition is inevitable; climate justice is not. There is no time to wait for a just and inclusive transition, we must start now, as tomorrow is already too late. It is crucial to involve everyone in a low-emission and climate-resilient world, including vulnerable individuals and communities. Additionally, the transition must be ensured across all sectors not only in high-emissions sectors. We want to emphasise that the climate crisis cannot be resolved by new technologies alone. We need an integrated societal approach, including an economic, democratic and societal transition.

While ensuring an inclusive and just transition we must prioritise social justice, encompassing well-being, intergenerational justice, and socio-ecological welfare. We call for the integration of well-being indicators to assess the effectiveness of EU and national policies, as these indicators extend beyond GDP growth, which fails to adequately consider true societal, economic, and environmental well-being.

As Luxembourg's Climate Youth Delegate, we believe that the time for action is now; we must ensure that the transition towards a low-emission future is inclusive and equitable, ensuring that all voices, particularly those of young people and marginalised communities, are heard. By prioritising these voices, we can work together to create a resilient and just world for current and future generations. Youth involvement is essential to empower the next generation.