



ESU Supports the European Green Deal, an Opportunity to Ensure a Climate-Neutral Future

The European Commission unveiled its plan for moving to a green economy and making the EU a climate-neutral continent. This effort across all policy areas is a new EU strategy, supported by investments in green technologies, sustainable solutions and businesses —transforming the economy, improving people's health and quality of life, caring for nature and leaving no one behind. The European Students' Union (ESU) agrees on these actions, but global challenges of climate change and environmental degradation urge a more global response.

Executive Committee member Monika Skadborg summarizes: “ESU applauds the Commission’s initiative for a Green Deal that has many overlaps with our wishes expressed in our last [Statement on Sustainability](#). The Green Deal sets a roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all. This means it is intended to be socially fair —leaving no individual or region behind in the great transformation ahead. Our only concern is that the deadline currently set for climate neutrality is too late. According to the IPCC, the whole world needs to be climate neutral by 2050 so for the EU to be first movers, we should be aiming for 2040.”

Education: awareness, proactive re-skilling and upskilling

Schools, training institutions and universities have an essential role in achieving a successful transition by equipping students and the wider community with the knowledge and skills needed to handle the changes.

Sebastian Berger, Vice President of ESU, remarks that: “ESU welcomes the Commission’s intention of supporting learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to empower them to work towards a more sustainable society. The Commission will integrate sustainable development into the European Competence Framework, provide support materials and facilitate the exchange of good practices in EU networks of teacher-training programmes. The Skills Agenda and the Youth Guarantee will be updated to increase employability in the green economy. As student representatives, we look forward to giving our contributions to this important agenda.”



Education institutions: building and renovating in a resource and energy-efficient way

The Green Deal includes engaging the Member States in a “renovation wave” of public and private buildings, including facilities of educational institutions. This measure ensures that the design of new and renovated buildings at all stages is in line with the circular economy and climate-proofing of the building stock. Monika Skadborg states that: “ESU is extremely pleased with this initiative because we know that lack of funding is one of the main barriers for investing in energy renovation of the buildings of education institutions.”

Supporting research and innovation

The full range of instruments available under the Horizon Europe programme will mobilise the research and foster innovation for the green transition. The knowledge and innovation communities run by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will continue to promote collaboration among higher education institutions, research organisations and companies on climate change, sustainable energy and environmentally-friendly transport. Sebastian Berger concludes that “ESU supports sustainability mainstreaming across all EU funding schemes and we look forward to giving our input on how this can be done in the most efficient manner.”

- Communication from the Commission: The European Green Deal [Accessed 10.02.2020]
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1576150542719&uri=COM%3A2019%3A640%3AFIN>

Mundo-Madou. Avenue des Arts 7/8, 1210 Bruxelles, Belgium

Facebook: @Europeanstudents Twitter: @ESUtwit Instagram: @european_students_union

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 46 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.