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Policy Paper on Climate Action

Adopted by the participants of the Erasmus+ Support for policy Reform European Youth Together project 'YOU.th RO.und TRIP. For climate action project during the mobility in Timișoara, Romania
Hosting Organization: FITT - Timis County Youth Foundation



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Executive Summary

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States express their commitment to protect the planet from degradation and take urgent action on climate change. At the same time Education and skills, and environmental protection and fighting climate change are considered priority topics by at least half of the respondents to European Youth Eurobarometer survey published in January 2018. President Juncker mentioned that European young people are less engaged in traditional forms of participation despite their interest in politics. The paradox which appears is that Member states must design policies to combat climate change which will affect youth's lives in a couple of years, while the latter do not seem to be very interested in voting and engaging with decision making. YOUROTRIP project (short for "YOU.th RO.und TRIP for climate action") aspires to foster youth participation in democratic procedures of decision making through discussions on the high priority topic of climate change.

Through YOUROTRIP project, young people from Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom, Denmark, Romania and Austria met, formed 'Local Youth Councils', discussed and came up with ideas which are recommending as solutions to climate change. In the context of YOUROTRIP project young people met in October 2021 in Romania and discussed about the topic of "Deforestation prevention", and in this document, are their policy recommendations on this matter.

Introduction

Long-term modifications to Earth's climate and weather patterns are referred to as climate change. To persuade the majority of scientists that human activity can change the temperature of the entire globe, it required nearly a century of investigation and evidence. Ice ages and other natural changes in the paleontological environment weren't originally suspected until the early 19th century, and that's also when the natural greenhouse effect was first recognized. In addition to setting a target for reaching net zero emissions by





2050, the UN climate conference reaffirmed that "1.5" is the socially, economically, politically, and scientifically acceptable limit for global warming by the end of this century.

So, in order to even have a chance of maintaining our environment, humanity is said to be through one of the fastest changes in daily life. Unfortunately, climate change cannot be prevented, but it can be slowed down with the right policies, programs, and education so that the world can adjust to the changes in temperature. Therefore, if mankind hopes to have a chance against climate change, action must be taken.

Deforestation prevention is beneficial to the climate crisis in the following main ways:

- Millions of native plant and animal species that live in tropical forests and are in risk of going extinct can be safeguarded by maintaining tropical forests, many of which have contributed significantly to the development of human medicine. By controlling local rainfall, maintaining intact forests also contributes to the prevention of floods and drought. Forests and trees store carbon. When they are degraded or completely cleared, e.g. by fire – a process referred to as deforestation – this stored carbon has the potential to be released back into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide and contribute to climate change.
 - Significant emissions come from tropical forests. Tropical deforestation is responsible for around 10% of carbon emissions, or the annual tailpipe emissions of 600 million typical American cars. A tropical forest acre is destroyed every second due to the alarming rate of deforestation. If we don't address 90% of the issue, we won't be able to effectively combat global warming.
 - Our climate needs to be stabilized by tropical forests. In comparison to temperate forests, tropical forests store far more carbon and remove CO₂ from the atmosphere than do forests there (like those in the United States). The ability of Earth to absorb carbon from the atmosphere and avert the worst impacts of global warming is severely hampered by the loss of such forests.
 - Multiple issues are addressed by halting deforestation. Millions of native plant and animal species that live in tropical forests and are in risk of going extinct can be safeguarded by maintaining tropical forests, many of which have contributed significantly to the development of human medicine. By controlling local rainfall, maintaining intact forests





also contributes to the prevention of floods and drought. Investments in decreasing deforestation also give indigenous and forest peoples the resources they need for sustainable development free of deforestation because many of them depend on tropical forests for their livelihoods.

Analysis

Some of the effects of deforestation are the following:

- The Effects of Deforestation on Biodiversity

Threats to biodiversity are deforestation's most well-known side effect. In actuality, woods are among the most significant centers of biodiversity. The forest is the habitat of several rare and vulnerable species, whether they are animals, birds, insects, amphibians, or plants. Forests are home to 80% of the land animals and plants on Earth.

Human actions are endangering entire ecosystems, causing natural imbalances, and endangering life by destroying the woods. Trees serve a variety of purposes in the natural world, including providing shade and cooler temperatures for animals and smaller trees or vegetation that might not be able to withstand the heat of direct sunlight. The natural world is complex, interconnected, and made of thousands of interdependencies. Besides, trees also feeding animals with their fruits while providing them with food and shelter they need to survive.

- Deforestation's effects on local residents' livelihoods

One billion of the 1.6 billion individuals who depend on healthy forests for their livelihoods are among the world's poorest. This indicates that many people rely on woods for their survival and use them for hunting and gathering unprocessed agricultural inputs. However, land tenure arrangements are not very strong in developing nations like Borneo, Indonesia, Vietnam, Brazil, or Mexico. This enables large corporations to acquire these lands and exploit them for other purposes, upsetting the lives of the local populace. The locals are then faced with two options. They can choose to migrate away from "their" land in order to escape strife and take on the challenge of a new, different existence. Alternately,





people can remain and work on isolated plantations for the corporations doing the research, frequently receiving unjust pay and having to put up with appalling conditions. In some nations, such as Mexico, plantation owners are frequently compelled to split their income with neighborhood cartels in order to support their families and prevent having their crops destroyed.

- Future food insecurity may result from deforestation for food.

Today, soil erosion has a moderate to severe negative impact on 52% of all agricultural land. In the long run, poor soil quality might result in low yields and food poverty.

- One of the effects of deforestation is soil erosion

The soil is weakened and degraded by deforestation. Forested soils typically contain higher levels of organic matter and are also more resilient to weather extremes, erosive conditions, and erosion. This occurs mostly as a result of the roots holding down trees and the sun-blocking tree canopy allowing the soil to slowly dry up. Deforestation will likely result in the soil being more unstable, leaving the area more vulnerable to natural disasters such as landslides and floods.

- Deforestation Impacts Climate Change and Contributes to It

Additionally, deforestation makes a significant influence to climate change. Why? Keep in mind that trees absorb and store CO₂ all of their life. According to WWF, tropical forests contain more than 210 gigatonnes of carbon. Worryingly, there are two significant drawbacks to cutting down these trees.

First off, cutting down trees causes them to release the CO₂ they were storing back into the environment. Second, the planet's capacity to absorb and store CO₂ will decline as fewer trees are present. Both of these factors have a negative impact on climate change and the greenhouse effect. In reality, whereas food and agriculture are thought to be responsible for 24% of greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation is thought to be responsible for 10-15% of all anthropogenic CO₂ emissions.



Overall, in the last decade, the largest amounts of deforestation occurred across the humid tropics. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that around 129 million hectares of forest – almost equivalent to the area of South Africa – were lost between 1990 and 2015. Overall, the annual rate of net loss has slowed: from 0.18% in the 1990s to 0.08% (3.3 million hectares a year) from 2010 to 2015. But the area lost in 2016 was 51% higher than in the previous year, primarily due to forest fires. Other significant causes of deforestation include the clearance by agribusinesses of huge tracts of forest to make way for monoculture farms producing high-value cash crops like palm oil and soya, and for cattle ranching.

Deforestation contributes up to 10% of the carbon dioxide emissions caused by human activity, according to 2013 figures from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This figure rises to 15% if forest degradation (changes that negatively affect a forest's structure or function but that do not decrease its area), and tropical peatland emissions are included. Tropical forests now emit more carbon than they capture, due to deforestation and degradation, so that they are no longer a carbon 'sink', according to a study published in 2017 using satellite data from 2003–14." (The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2018)

Good practices

Good practices concerning Climate Action and Deforestation prevention were presented in workshops. Also, the participants discussed good practices existing in their home countries. The exchange of ideas occurred in an intercultural level where the participants used some EU countries as an example concerning protection of forests and deforestation prevention practices in relation to the other present countries. Some good practices that were presented and discussed were the following:

The Environmental Paper Network (EPN) is a global alliance of more than 150 NGOs that promotes environmental and social responsibility in the paper, pulp, and forest industries. It also supports efforts to use biomass from forests as a source of energy. In order to strategically leverage the knowledge and resources of these strong coalitions of independent organizations and to



strategically expedite change and environmental betterment, EPN links them together. Three non-hierarchical regional hubs of the network exist: EPN-North America, EPN-International, and EPN-China.

Rainforest Alliance

This global non-profit organization was established in 1987, and it operates at the nexus of commerce, agriculture, and forestry. They form partnerships to safeguard forests, enhance farmer and forest community livelihoods, advance human rights, and assist localities in reducing the effects of climate change and adjusting to them. In 2018, the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ amalgamated. It now encourages the certification of a number of tropical agricultural products and works on grassroots community forestry projects with indigenous peoples and nearby communities.

European Wilderness Society (Austria)

The group, which was established in 2014, locates, recognizes, protects, and promotes Europe's final wilderness. Strengthening the conservation of primary and old-growth forests is one of their objectives. Together with Austria's top foresters, they are leading a project to examine contemporary challenges to forest biodiversity from a variety of angles, including biomass energy.

"Armenian Forests" Environmental NGO (Armenia)

Nature protection, community development, the protection of environmental rights, and sustainable development are the objectives of AFNGO. The AFNGO's goals include, but are not limited to, preserving and growing healthy forested areas, restoring landscapes, switching to sustainable forest management, conducting surveys and assessments, increasing public involvement and civic activism among the populace, raising awareness, advocating for change, lobbying for the protection of environmental rights, writing environmental laws, promoting ecological education, and putting effective alternative energy solutions into practice.

South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA)

To safeguard Australia's distinctive forest environmental values, SERCA works for new native forest management. It recognizes that excessive logging has seriously harmed forests, and it opposes Commonwealth and State governments that want to use native forest biomass for large-scale energy



production, which would add yet another destructive use. In addition to supporting local and regional activists, scientists, and economics working to preserve priceless public native forests, SERCA also works with indigenous and conservation organizations.

Verdens Skove (Forests of the World)

In order to sustainably manage and maintain the world's forests, Forests of the World was established in Denmark in 1983. Through campaigns, consumer education, training, collaboration, and hands-on work in and near the rainforest, they try to demonstrate the worth of the living forest. They were initially founded to just concentrate on conserving tropical forests, but they have subsequently expanded their efforts to include all forests in the world, including the forest and nature in Denmark.

Envol Vert

The organization Envol Vert works to protect forests and promote rural development. In order to advance their conservation initiatives, take part in sustainable rural development, and develop workable economic alternatives to deforestation, they have been fighting for the preservation of forests and biodiversity in Latin America and France since 2011. At the same time, they have developed strong relationships with the local populations. Through campaigns and educational resources, Envol Vert is also actively involved in promoting political and social consciousness.

OroVerde – Tropical Forest Foundation

Projects aimed at protecting tropical forests are actively started, supported, and promoted by the nonprofit organization OroVerde. The implementation is handled locally by well vetted and reputable partners, always in collaboration with the local community. Permanent support is provided and the management of the financial resources is under the control of specialists from OroVerde. The foundation in Germany focuses on promoting information exchange between organizations that protect nature and the economy, science, and politics while also educating people about tropical forests and the environment.

Achterhoek Tree Foundation (Netherlands)

The Achterhoek region, where people are becoming more concerned about the economic direction of local forestry, is where this organization of tree





enthusiasts got together as a resource. They prepare lectures and outings, instruct locals on how to submit logging protests and appeals, and protect and replace trees and other forms of natural greenery. For assistance in protecting the trees and forests they love, many communities call out to them.

Woudreus Foundation

The foundation was started by locals who wanted to protect two national parks in their area against "redevelopment" proposals. It works at the local and regional levels to save forests and heaths in national parks and on Natura 2000 holdings. They coordinate letter-writing campaigns, keep tabs on species extinction and deforestation, educate the public about the natural and cultural histories of the regions being destroyed, and alert them to laws and subsidies supporting biomass plants and "nature development" that are contributing to the destruction of Dutch forests.

Fundacja Dzika Polska / Wild Poland Foundation (Poland)

The Foundation, which was founded in 2006 by progressive Polish ecological organizations, concentrates its efforts on the preservation of Poland's most precious natural areas and on environmental education. The preservation of the Bialowieza Forest is presently a top concern. Monitoring the administration of the Forest, communicating with the European Commission and the UNESCO Secretariat, taking part in natural forest inventories, and educating the public about the Forest's state are only a few of their activities.

Protect the Forest (Sweden)

This group defends Sweden's old-growth forests and other globally significant woods with high conservation importance. They are perhaps best known for their successful battle to stop IKEA's old-growth logging in northwest Russia. They are now fighting to defend a nature reserve in Swedish Lapland from a greenwashed logging program and aggressively oppose Sweden's "Wood be Better" campaign, which promotes the burning of wood as a replacement for fossil fuels.

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (Ukraine)

To safeguard biodiversity and establish new nature reserves, this group integrates the work of professionals and scientists. It is crucial to promote sustainable forestry. They monitor and report illegal logging, seek to restrict



logging using the ATS method, protection zones, FSC certification tools, and citizen education, among other things, to regulate felling in valuable Ukrainian forests. They have been working to enhance the legislation in Ukraine that governs forest management since 2019.

Size of Wales

Wales' size contributes to the global protection of tropical forests as part of its response to the problem of climate change. In South America, Africa, and South East Asia, they aid in the development of forests. To encourage kids and teenagers to understand and share responsibility for the preservation of the world's forests, they work in schools and colleges. To reform Welsh law and corporate practices, they also engage in policy and advocacy activities in Wales.

Conclusion

One of the most significant ecosystems on Earth is the forest. Forests are home to 80% of all terrestrial plants, insects, and mammals. The livelihood of around one third of people worldwide is directly dependent on forests.

Trees protect soils against erosion, filter water through their roots, trap airborne pollutants and dust, and help to control the climate. They provide these essential services to all people equally, regardless of their location or level of money.

We utilize the resources that woods supply us on a daily basis, including wood for building, food and medicine, and firewood. However, if we keep destroying our forests at the current rate, there won't be any more woods on our "green" earth in 80 years.

Everywhere in the earth, deforestation occurs for a variety of regionally specific reasons. Huge tracts of rainforest have been cleared to make way for cattle ranches, soy plantations, and palm oil plantations in a number of tropical nations, including Indonesia, Brazil, and Malaysia. Many historic forests across the world are in danger due to the rising global demand for wood products, whether it be for furniture, fuel, or paper.





Trees invariably hold a significant part of the solution as the world strives to reduce the speed of climate change, protect species, and support billions of people. But deforestation—the systematic killing of trees—continues, abandoning the long-term advantages of standing trees for immediate gain.

About 30% of the earth's surface is still covered in forests, although their numbers are declining rapidly. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the globe has lost 420 million hectares, or roughly a billion acres, of forest since 1990, mostly in Africa and South America. Over the past 50 years, the Amazonian rainforest has lost around 17 percent of its area, and the rate of loss has been increasing recently. According to the group Amazon Conservation, there was a loss the size of Israel in 2020, when devastation increased by 21%.

We need trees for many reasons, not the least of which is that they absorb both the heat-trapping greenhouse gases produced by human activity as well as the carbon dioxide that we exhale. These gases cause an increase in global warming, which is now more commonly referred to as climate change. According to one estimate, tropical tree cover alone can supply 23% of the climate mitigation required over the following ten years to achieve targets set forth in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are the following:

Declare more forests as 'under protection' areas

Protected areas (PAs) are viewed as fortresses to defend delicate ecosystems, maintain biodiversity, and prevent headwater catchments from degradation as forest loss is quickening in tropical slopes around the world. This way we protect biodiversity, help balance the ecosystem, therefore help create climate change resilience.



Each country guided by the EU should restore ravaged woods and forests

The ability of the ecosystem to completely recover and give us a fresh start is what makes forest restoration so remarkable. While this doesn't directly stop deforestation, it can mitigate many of its harmful effects on the planet. Forest Restoration improves air quality, regional climate, forest protection and restoration, soil conservation, water source protection, and biodiversity preservation.

Encourage the use of technological means and tools and reduce the demand of paper products.

Reduced paper use is a key strategy for lessening the environmental effect of our TV and film productions, especially in light of the rapid rate of deforestation and the 26 million tons of paper that are thrown away annually in the US (16% of landfill garbage).

Promote recycling

The main cause of ongoing deforestation is logging. Logging is less necessary when paper is recycled. Dalton recycled enough paper to save 2,122 trees if all that was recycled in the previous month was paper. 53 acres of forest, to be exact! 101,856 pounds of carbon may be absorbed annually by this many trees.

Invest in research for better utilization of recycled materials

Recycling lessens carbon footprint and aids in the fight against global warming. Recycling reduces the demand for virgin materials during production. An item can be reused in the production process when it is recycled as opposed to being thrown away as trash. When compared to recycled materials, virgin materials often demand more energy during the manufacturing process and more energy during mining or extraction.

Another great method to lessen the carbon footprint is to put in place a program for recycling food waste. Food waste can be turned into compost, which is excellent for improving the soil, or it can be turned into compressed natural gas, which can be used to power machines or produce electricity. Only 6% of the



estimated 41 million tons of food waste that were produced in 2017 were diverted from landfills, according to the EPA. More than 20% of the waste that ends up in landfills is food waste. In order to cut greenhouse gas emissions, we must simultaneously reduce overall food waste and remove organic waste from the landfill.

Promote ecoforestry

Eco-forestry is a technique of forest management that focuses on restoration rather than economic productivity. In this method, certain trees are deliberately cut down while causing the least amount of harm to the forest as a whole. The long-term goal of this approach is to steadily cut down mature trees while largely preserving the forest ecology.

<https://ecoplan.ie/what-is-ecoforestry-forest-biodiversity-management/>

Raise awareness

Major environmental issues like deforestation frequently persist due of a lack of awareness and understanding of the issue. The amount of deforestation can be decreased by educating people about the consequences of their behavior, such as the consumption of palm oil. Better education and awareness are crucial, even for farmers. It will be less necessary to clear forest land for farming if local farmers are educated about how to manage their property most efficiently. Farmers are after all the guardians of our soil.

For example, Gardening Sessions could be implemented in school to raise awareness about the issues regarding deforestation and climate change. Their action plan consists of implementing a school legislation, creating a school community for parents and teachers, making the right land available and creating partnerships.

<https://youmatter.world/en/5-steps-to-stop-deforestation/>



Encourage community forestry projects

In the context of community forestry projects, local citizens, volunteers, and schools could plant trees, clear land and conserve forests, under the guidance of the government. This benefits the community both environmentally as well as socially.

Set up monitoring systems in order to prevent unauthorized logging, wildfires, etc.

Through the use of technological means such as motion and heating sensors situated throughout forests, Forrest Watchers can monitor all activity from a distance, gather useful information for the forrest, and of course prevent any unauthorized activity such as logging, or a wildfire.

Apply the method of Monocultures

Monocultures are the cultivation or growth of a single crop or organism especially on agricultural or forest land. Their action plan consists of changing the management of forestry by enforcing the planting of more mixed-species, plantations and farmers can be more productive and an effective factor for capturing carbon. Monocultures are very basic agricultural and farming practices. With a specific plant species in mind, it mainly entails soil preparation, watering, and the use of chemicals as necessary. Each plant in a monoculture farm experiences the same uniform planting, care, and harvesting procedures. Consequently, it leads to increased yields and lower costs. The plants specifically, use synthesized fertilizers, reducing the amount of additional land needed to produce food. When one distinct crop is grown at the same time, it means only one method of harvesting will be needed. It is efficient and more profitable for the farmer.



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