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GUEST AUTHORS

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GUEST POSTS Climate strikers: Open letter to EU leaders on why their new climate law is ‘surrender’

This is an open letter to EU leaders at the European Commission, European

Parliament and member states from 34 youth climate activists, including [Greta](#)

[Thunberg](#). The European Commission will release its proposal for the EU climate law on 4 March.

Any [climate law](#) or policy that is not based on the current best available science and does not include the global aspect of equity or climate justice – principles at the very heart of the [Paris Agreement](#) – will do more harm than good.

Such a law sends a strong signal that real, sufficient action is being taken when in fact it’s not.

It also suggests that you, our elected leaders, fully understand the situation we’re in and that we can “fix the climate crisis” within today’s system without making any sacrifices.

The hard fact is that neither the awareness nor the politics needed are anywhere in sight. We are in a crisis that has never once been treated as a crisis.

For more than 1.5 years we have been sacrificing our education, protesting against your inaction. Last September more than 7.5 million people across the globe took to the streets – demanding that you unite behind the science and give us a safe future.

But, clearly, that was too much to ask for.

Carbon budgets

Our rapidly disappearing [carbon budgets](#) are the bottom line that sum up the current best available climate science. No matter how insufficient they may be they are the most reliable roadmap we have to safeguard the future living conditions for human kind. And yet they are being completely ignored by policy makers, media and those in power.

This must change starting this very minute.

No plan, policy or commitment will be nearly enough as long as we just continue to ignore the CO2 budget which applies for today.

“Net zero emissions by 2050” for the EU equals surrender. It means giving up. We don’t just need goals for just 2030 or 2050. We, above all, need them for 2020 and every following month and year to come.

Because distant net-zero emission targets will mean absolutely nothing if we just continue to ignore the carbon dioxide budget – which applies for today, not a faraway future. If high emissions continue like now even for a few years that remaining budget will soon be completely used up.

And until we have the technologies that at scale can put our emissions to minus then we must forget about net zero or "carbon neutrality". We need real zero.

If you are to reach the commitments you signed up for in the Paris Agreement our carbon emissions must eventually come to an end. And science tells us that process must – drastically – start today.

And since these [negative emissions](#) technologies that you put all your faith in don't exist today at scale we simply need to stop doing certain things. Even if that means we have to change our economy.

This is the uncomfortable truth that you cannot escape, no matter how badly you want to and how hard you try. And the longer you keep running away from that truth, the bigger your betrayal towards future generations.

Tipping points

A very popular idea among policymakers seems to be cutting our emissions in half by 2030. But let us once again remind you: this is only for an estimated 50% chance of staying below a 1.5C global average temperature rise, [according to the IPCC](#).

And these insufficient odds do not even include most feedback loops, non-linear [tipping points](#) nor additional warming hidden by life threatening air pollution.

It does, however, include assumptions that future generations will somehow be able to suck hundreds of billions of tonnes of CO₂ out of the atmosphere with technologies that might never exist at scale, and definitely won't in the timeframe we have to stay in line with the Paris Agreement.

And since this budget is global it does not include the essential aspect of equity. This means that if the EU would go for these extremely unfavorable odds we would still need to do much more than a 50% reduction by 2030 to compensate for developing countries who need to be able to improve the standard of living for their citizens. Because this is what the Paris Agreement clearly says and this is what you have all signed up for.

Even a child can understand that these odds are way too risky. We – as the young people who will have to live with the consequences of this crisis that we did not create – find them unacceptable.

We refuse to accept these odds.

The best chance we have for staying below a 1.5C global average temperature rise, given by the IPCC, is a 67% probability. To give us those chances, we have a budget of less than [340 Gt of CO2 left](#) to emit globally to stay within that target. With today's business-as-usual that budget will only last for about eight more years.

And, again, please note that the additional risks of tipping points and feedback loops – as well as the exclusion of the aspect of equity – that apply to the 50% budget also goes for this one, making even this option very far from safe.

Climate justice

These budgets have never been taken into account in today's politics. They have never been communicated in the mainstream media. And, yet, here you are trying to create laws and policies, once again completely ignoring them.

Pretending that your plan or policy – disregarding the united science – will somehow solve the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced.

Pretending that a law that no one has to follow is a law. Pretending you can go on building and subsidising new fossil-fuel infrastructure, while maintaining loopholes for disastrous “green” deforestation.

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Pretending that leaving out the global aspect of equity and climate justice won't risk the entire Paris Agreement.

Pretending that empty words will make the emergency go away. This arrogance must come to an end.

We will not be satisfied with anything less than a science-based pathway which gives us the best possible chance to safeguard the future living conditions for humanity and life on earth as we know it.

Anything else is surrender. This climate law is surrender – because nature doesn't bargain and you cannot make “deals” with physics.

And we will not allow you to surrender on our future.

Until you take this seriously, we will remain here in the streets. Until you take this seriously, we will keep repeating the science. Until you take this seriously, we will tell you to go home, study the facts and come back when you've done your homework.

Signatories:

Greta Thunberg, Sweden

Luisa Neubauer, Germany

Adélaïde Charlier, Belgium

Anuna De Wever, Belgium

Saoi O'Connor, FFF Ireland

Bianca Castro, FFF Portugal

Valentīna Burdukovska, FFF Latvia

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