



ActJust International Policy Hackathons (A5.2)

General Problem Statement

The climate crisis is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century. The consequences of the ever-increasing global warming include more frequent extreme weather events, such as the heat wave in the summer 2022 causing drought and massive forest fires all over Europe.

In addition to its ecological impacts, the climate crisis also has a serious social component. People in the Global South are disproportionately affected by the consequences of the climate crisis. Yet they are only responsible for a fraction of global CO₂ emissions. These are due, among other things, to the nature of energy consumption, mobility, nutrition and consumer behavior in the Global North.

The main cause of this climate crisis is mankind. In order to prevent irreversible social and economic effects of climate change, a drastic limitation of greenhouse gas emissions and the phase-out of fossil fuels is necessary.

In response to the climate crisis, structural and far-reaching changes in many areas including mobility, consumption, production, agriculture and increased technological developments in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources are essential. This requires wise decisions that simultaneously help economic development, mitigate the impacts of climate change already taking place, and strengthen resilient and sustainable production and lifestyles.

The aim of the ActJust International Policy Hackathon is to provide young people with an opportunity to shape their future, develop solutions to achieve global climate justice and connect with policy makers.

Young ActJust climate activists from seven European countries have developed a policy brief including recommendations on five topics related to the climate crisis. These topics will be also used for the ActJust International Policy Hackathon:

1. Food
2. Energy
3. Migration
4. Transportation/Mobility
5. Education

The challenge of this international policy hackathon is to come up with ideas which actions policy makers can take to implement these recommendations.

1. FOOD

Agriculture has a tremendous impact on our environment. Producing food in unsustainable ways results in overheating the earth, exploiting the nature and becomes a great threat to our future supply of food, while world population is only rising. To be more specific, we are facing mass production of food, but still 828 million people suffer from hunger.¹ Nearly 1/3 of all the food never gets eaten and we actually waste 1.3 billion metric tons worldwide every year.² On top of that, the alarming fact is that food production is responsible for more than 25% of greenhouse gas emissions.³ Conventional agriculture is also rapidly decreasing the biodiversity, while draining the soil of nutrients and making it harder to grow food. It has negative effects on our health due to high transfer of toxins to our bodies.

However, a lot of farmers still don't have motivation to produce sustainably because conventional ways are just cheaper and easier for them. In order to fix this problem we demand creation of a new law on EU-level which will support sustainable agriculture through higher subventions to farmers who decide to cast away conventional food system. We want sustainable agriculture and by that we mean sustainability as defined by the UN as good for the environment, the economy and society. That way we can and we must reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses from food production, give farmers better conditions, improve public health, and make sure the soil is fertile in the future.

In order to ensure our present and future generations have healthy food and earth to live in, it's crucial to establish this law because statistics won't change by themselves unless we don't make an effort to do so.

Recommendation from ActJust policy brief:

Implement a law on EU-level which allocates higher subventions to farmers doing sustainable agriculture and cut subventions for conventional agriculture.

Challenge:

We are looking for concrete ideas which actions policy makers can take to realise and implement a law on EU-level which allocates higher subventions to farmers doing sustainable agriculture and cut subventions for conventional agriculture.

¹ <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>

² <https://www.ucdavis.edu/food/news/why-is-one-third-our-food-wasted-worldwide>

³ <https://ourworldindata.org/greenhouse-gas-emissions-food>

2. ENERGY

The energy crisis is increasing both prices and injustice between developed and developing countries through the exploitation of their energy sources. Since 1990 more than 140 million people are entering the middle class every year, so it is expected that the need for energy will rise.⁴ However, fossil energy is unsustainable since it pushes global temperatures to the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that emissions from fossil fuels are the dominant cause of global warming. In 2018, 89% of global CO2 emissions came from fossil fuels and industry.⁵

Those effects have a tremendous impact on our health, our communities and the environment. Our recommendation is of utmost importance because conventional energy sources are unsustainable, they promote social inequality, they worsen our living conditions and the state of the environment.

Recommendation from ActJust policy brief:

Until 2050, 60% of public spaces⁶ in each European country should be powered by renewable energy and decrease energy consumption by 25%.

Challenge:

We are looking for concrete ideas which actions policy makers can take to power 60% of public spaces in each European country by renewable energy and to decrease energy consumption by 25% until 2050.

⁴ <https://www.anthropocenemagazine.org/howmuchenergy/>

⁵ <https://www.clientearth.org/latest/latest-updates/stories/fossil-fuels-and-climate-change-the-facts/>

⁶ The definition of public spaces includes town squares, traffic lights, city lights, public buildings, public schools, government buildings, landmarks and museums

3. MIGRATION

Climate refugees are people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their hometowns, because of environmental disruption. It is expected that there will be 216 million internal climate migrants by 2050. According to the EEA extreme weather events have cost Europe 142.000 lives and 510 billion over the past 40 years. Currently, there are no international legal instruments safeguarding climate-induced migrants.

The impacts of climate change that can trigger displacements are: loss of land, shelter, educational facilities, employment, food insecurity, mortality and negative psychological impacts. Also gender inequalities are likely to be exacerbated by climate change and related hazards/disasters, by entailing higher workloads.

We demand the recognition of a legal status to climate refugees through the establishment of an EU binding instrument. We aim to achieve more social justice and democratic representation for this already marginalized group. It is their fundamental human right to be seen and recognized by society. By analyzing the current data, it can be claimed that in a few years we can be the next climate refugees. It is imperative to act now.

Recommendation from ActJust policy brief:

Establish an EU binding instrument which recognizes a legal status to climate induced refugees.

Challenge:

We are looking for concrete ideas which actions policy makers can take to establish an EU binding instrument which recognizes a legal status to climate induced refugees.

4. TRANSPORTATION / MOBILITY

Transport is responsible for almost a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions,⁷ and this is the only sector which has higher emissions than in 1990. Therefore, urgent action especially in the mobility sector is necessary.

Improving public transport infrastructure can give a solution to these problems. Therefore, it needs to be enhanced, made cleaner, safer and more comfortable. European citizens should be able to use it for free or at least cheaper than the actual prices: A European "climate-ticket" should be implemented, with which people can also use other mobility services such as bike or car sharing. With more public transport in cities, people get also emotionally and physically healthier because there is less air- and also less noise pollution. Additionally, social inequalities can be reduced.

On the other hand, driving with a car should be made less attractive and less polluting. An easy way to do this would be reducing the speed limits on all European highways to 100 km/h. This would cut down emissions distinctly in this sector. For example, a speed limit reduction from 130 km/h to 100 km/h lowers fuel usage on average by 23%.⁸

Recommendation from ActJust policy brief:

We demand better public transportation with the improvement of infrastructure and the aim for it to be free.

Challenge:

We are looking for concrete ideas which actions policy makers can take to realise and implement better public transportation with the improvement of infrastructure and the aim for it to be free.

⁷ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/transport-emissions_en

⁸ <https://vcoe.at/service/fragen-und-antworten/welche-wirkung-hat-tempo-100-statt-130>

5. EDUCATION

School curriculums lack climate education, and if we don't educate the youth about climate injustice and the crisis, we will never see a change in how the climate crisis is evolving.

The goal of educating the youth about the environment is to give them an understanding of the climate crisis and to get them more aware of climate-friendly options. If we educate the people about the climate crisis, the climate injustice, and the ways to tackle the conflict they will gain the knowledge and tools to be part of the change we need. They are the future and deserve the right to have an opinion on the subject.

Furthermore, the Paris agreement, which all the participating parties in the ActJust project have signed, states that parties must implement climate change studies in their educational system. But now 7 years later only a handful of countries have implemented it.⁹

It is clear that environmental education is needed to fight climate injustice. Studies show that only 4% of pupils feel that they know a lot about the climate crisis², and that 57% of students want to learn more about sustainable solutions.¹⁰ Not only this but a survey over 23 EU countries shows that up to 85% of young people are concerned about the climate crisis.¹¹ There is a need for more environmental education and therefore we need to implement it in the school's curriculum as this statement says.

Recommendation from ActJust policy brief:

Provide teachers with tools and methods to implement environmental education in all grades of school's curriculum by 2025.

Challenge:

We are looking for concrete ideas which actions policy makers can take to provide teachers with tools and methods to implement environmental education in all grades of school's curriculum by 2025.

⁹ <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/politics-global-warming-september-2021/?fbclid=IwAR2lBBqNfZWxpng6IT36Argrx2ZvCXYtwKLVYtV4cdEXPHFkN8PG7Q89nk>

¹⁰ <https://www.teachthefuture.uk/blog/climate-education-is-lacking-across-europe>

¹¹ <https://climateofchange.info/>