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epp european people's party

A Sustainable Europe

Policy Paper 3

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We only have one planet to live on so we have to manage its limited resources in a responsible and sustainable way for the sake of present and future generations. The Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda 2030 established a framework to pursue a more sustainable future. The European People's Party will continue to support the European Union's leadership in driving the policies globally and domestically based on the principles of the social market economy. It is in this big-picture domain that the European Union plays the key role in addressing the concerns of our citizens and working to improve their lives.

Committed to combatting climate change

While the concern for future generations is pertinent, the impacts of climate change are already being felt today. We want the European Union to push for increased ambition vis-à-vis our partners.

Internally, the EPP welcomed the adoption of the EU targets for reducing CO2 emissions by 2030 and the legislative instruments to achieve them in the industrial, non-industrial and forestry sectors. An effective carbon price combined with adequate carbon leakage protection will be crucial for these policies to offer the right balance and incentives to invest in low carbon solutions and to shape our energy system of the future. The targets need to be accompanied by improved coordination, therefore the EPP encourages all levels of governance to cooperate with the relevant stakeholders including citizens, industries, universities and NGOs. The EPP supports all efforts to implement an effective carbon price on the international level or at least in the group of 20 (G20).

The effects of global warming will be most severely felt in already vulnerable regions. Climate change will increase levels of poverty, migratory pressures and conflicts in the developing world.

Paving the way for clean transition

Energy production and consumption account for roughly two-thirds of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In the EU, 55% of its emissions come from the energy sector. Ambitious, yet realistic and flexible targets for deployment of renewable energy and energy efficiency, including in buildings, are important in the next decade, for EU to achieve its CO2 reduction targets. Reaching the EU's climate and energy targets will require a bulk of investment that will continue to be a fundamental contributor to the decarbonization of the whole economy. Hence it is paramount to ensure that these investments are made and at the least cost both at European and national level. The EPP supports accelerating the Energy Union and enhancing the utilization of low carbon energy to lower EU's dependency on energy imports from unstable regions in line with the Member States' right to determine their energy mix. It is essential that all Member States take steps to decarbonize their energy sector and that the Union facilitates this transition.

The EPP will give the market scope for long-term planning and investments in innovation. Strategic vision for EU's industrial policy will be needed to safeguard the competitiveness of Europe's industry throughout the low-carbon transition from fossil fuels. Technologies for capturing, storing and the re-using of CO2 can further advance the reductions of CO2 emissions and will be essential in regions still reliant on coal. In addition, low carbon hydrogen could play an important role in decarbonising the energy and industry sectors. The social dimension of the transition cannot be omitted, and the EPP will promote requalification schemes so that citizens can upskill throughout the technological progress.

Towards low-carbon mobility

Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU's GHG emissions and, in contrast to other sectors, their levels have been risen in recent years. For the EPP, the EU's road transport sector has massive potential for fuel efficiency, clean and low-carbon innovation in line with realistic proposals for CO2 and NOx and particle matter emission reductions to drive long-term change. We therefore aim towards a form of mobility that is sustainable, energy-efficient and respectful of the environment. Many promising new technologies are rapidly advancing, including the electrification of vehicles, the use of hydrogen or the advanced biofuels. However, there is no silver bullet solution and, rather than betting on a single technology, the EPP believes it will be the market and the consumers that will determine the successful approach. Further, it is not certain that all technology will be appropriate in all Member States given the difference in energy mix, therefore all approaches to low-carbon mobility must be explored. Along the same line of thought, it is essential to combine various modes of freight transport with a preference to non-road transport such as by rail and boat. Such a modal shift towards less polluting and more energy efficient modes of transport can help to reduce the overall environmental impact of the transport sector. Smart cities and efficient urban planning, sharing economy or the advancements in self-driving technology will all further contribute to lower transport emissions. The EPP wants the EU to push for increasing the international efforts to curb emissions from the aviation and marine sectors. Following this global effort, a strong commitment at EU level is needed to maintain the contribution of these sectors to the European climate objectives.

Achieving a circular economy

Technological developments have paved the way for the development of a circular economy, where waste can be a valuable resource. The life cycle of a product needs to be planned from the manufacturing until the end of its use, for products to stay in circulation rather than be thrown away. The EPP welcomed the recent adoption of legislation to increase the recycling rates and limit landfilling, so that the EU does not throw away 2.5 billion tons of raw materials. Moreover, 80,000 new jobs and billions in economic growth can be created.

The rising public concern over plastic pollution, particularly in the oceans, must be further addressed. The EPP will support initiatives to ensure that all plastic packaging on the EU market is recyclable by the end of next decade. The consumption of single-use plastics will be reduced and the intentional use of microplastics will be restricted. Development of a bio-economy will further boost the EU's efforts to reduce waste while boosting its competitiveness and creating relevant jobs. Safeguarding the quality of our drinking water is also a step on our path to a circular economy. Since the huge amount of waste and the plastic pollution are global problems the EPP supports increasing international cooperation on these challenges.s.

Sustainable agriculture

The role of European agriculture is to provide our citizens with sufficient, safe and quality food at reasonable price, while ensuring a viable farm income by improving the competitiveness of the sector and developing EU's rural areas. The EPP supports the ongoing shift towards a more sustainable agricultural model focused on quality production while using less land, water and energy, minimising emissions and adapting to climate change. Future Common Agricultural Policy shall continue to enable farmers to safeguard the EU's soil, water and air, protect biodiversity and improve animal welfare. Sustainable use of pesticides should be further embedded in farming practices in line with a scientific based policy. The future Common Agricultural Policy shall ensure that farmers receive adequate support in order to reach these goals. Emphasis on healthy nutrition will help to tackle obesity and malnutrition. At the same time, for the EPP it is crucial that our citizens can enjoy the same quality of foods in all Member States. Smart farming and precision agriculture can further contribute to the greening of agriculture while creating new jobs in the rural areas and enabling a generational renewal.

Creating green jobs and spurring innovation

Transitioning to a low carbon economy presents a great opportunity for the EU. Investments in industrial innovation and clean technology will spur growth and competitiveness, boost future skills and create millions of jobs. In this context, it is essential that the EU and its Member States support targeted education and in particular fosters a policy to include more women in these fields of education. The EPP wants the European industry to remain in Europe and drive the change. Supporting research and development in the EU can place us on a path to catch up with our competitors and become the world leader in innovation. Achieving energy efficiency and lowering CO2 emissions will further boost our economies by cutting costs and creating savings. The EPP will ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises are ready for the low carbon transition and can acquire the necessary new skills. The future EU budget should also reflect these priorities.