



Make Europe the World Leader of Sustainable Development: A Unique Opportunity to Build a Stronger European Union

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DRAFT

Participatory Democracy in the Digital Age and Common Goods

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In view of the challenges of the 21st century, Europe must transform itself by equipping itself with the policies and instruments to face the challenges that the interdependent environmental risks inherent in “planetary limits” and the impact of inequalities impose on society and to citizens, at European and global level, to withstand the shocks to come and build a better future.

The European Green deal is fixing only a part of the agenda. Surprisingly it is not addressing governance while we must very quickly equip ourselves with new instruments of governance and encouragement of "transformation" for a "leap forward" of Europeans towards greater resilience and well-being. Among other things, they will build on the potential of inclusive management of companies, economy and finance in the digital age in support to the Green Deal.

It is about moving from a dialogue or multi-stakeholder partnerships to a systemic approach based on digital tools, such as blockchain, for decentralized management. It is about empowering and holding accountable all actors in value chains and the Green deal. .

As this key dimension is not addressed by the Green deal, the Conference on the Future of Europe should address this Green deal gap and lay the foundations for a 'new social contract' ¹with the management of the commons as the main objective and - echoing the struggles against inequalities and for gender equality - with a central place in the fight against inequalities both globally and within countries

The Green deal needs to go together with a double paradigm shift : towards the management of the commons and a "true democratic digital future"². And let me remind you that the The United

¹ The 'sustainable development goals' are the basis of this 'new social contract'.

² The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. Professor Shoshana Zuboff. Barack Obama's Books of 2019





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Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) [Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#) was the follow up of a UN conference on related guidelines which took place in Sofia, here in the Balkans after an NGO preparatory meeting in Croatia. This is why I'm inviting you to encourage your Member States and Conference on the Future of Europe representatives to give special attention to this double paradigm shift.

Why so ? In March 2020, the European Council made resilience to crises and shocks a major objective of the EU. We have indeed entered an era of new shocks which call for a set of societal innovations. Our civilization will emerge transformed.

Already in 1972, the first report to the Club of Rome, presented to the United Nations conference in Stockholm which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022, highlighted that faced with the 'wall' scenarios of runaway crises in the 21st century (climate , food, raw materials, etc.) new technologies alone would not be enough. Its author Denis Meadow stressed that we are going to need "societal innovations" in the service of the collective.

Over the past 50 years, international conventions (climate, biodiversity, access to information), treaties (on the objectives of the EU, its values and fundamental rights, social pillar), legislation on the impact on the environment, access to information and justice, court rulings on climate, air and water, initiative referendums, changes in practice by part of the business and financial world, the creation of a 'market for sustainable products, technologies, services', the Green Deal etc have advanced humanity in its quest for resilience and sustainability. But much too slowly. We are overtaken by catastrophes and tragedies witnessing the lack of proactivity. Worse still, key frameworks for the future such as the post-Covid recovery strategies of certain countries and the new Council-Parliament agreement on the new 'Common Agricultural Policy' will constitute additional obstacles to a necessary transformation. It would be extremely dangerous to ignore the risks of chaos. The painful experience of 2008 and the impacts in terms of growing inequalities and rising populism are there to remind us. The same is true of the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing dangerous cracks for the social, political and diplomatic cohesion of Europe and the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic is only the first in a series to come due in particular to the accelerated degradation of the Commons of our only planet, and the loss of biodiversity. The melting ice, the floods here, the fires there are only the weak signals of tragedies to come. Faced with these new challenges, the COVID-19 crisis has fortunately revealed our capacity for very rapid changes in "economic and financial models" as well as in behavior. It has also upset the hierarchies 'in public opinion. In anticipation of the other crises that await us, it has also demonstrated that solidarity is the condition for resilience.

But this "solidarity" must be organized around "Common Goods", be systemic and be part of a "value chain" and multi-actor partnership perspective that is not limited to borders and mandates.





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In the field of monitoring the commitments of each and everyone, the blockchain opens the way to new methods of contracts and management of "Common Goods" and the funds allocated to their valuation and conservation, building the basis of a "Digital democracy". This will be one of the objectives of this alliance between new technology and societal innovation.

The Conference on the Future of Europe should

- stress that the management of natural ecosystems must be part of the management of "Common Goods",
- demand that this management of the "Common Goods" and ecosystems be part of a strategy in the digital age in particular the blockchain, which allows transparency and trust.
- set the framework for "participatory democracy in the age of Digital and Common Goods". This would concern "commons of various types, each with their own characteristics in terms of institutionalization and governance":
 - (i) shared access to natural resources (fisheries, pastures, forests, etc.)
 - (ii) common of universal access to internet (Wikipedia, free software, etc.)
 - (iii) "social commons" necessary for the exercise of fundamental rights, including public goods and services and their access (water, energy, housing, education, health, etc.).
- demand that the uses of Blockchain come in support of citizen-centric finance. See www.the-epe.org.
- ask the European Commission and the Member States to innovate by launching three European laboratories "blockchain, transparency, trust, innovation": (i) the climate strategy (and its "pact Europe for the Climate ", (ii) the biodiversity strategy and (iii) the "farm to fork "strategy.
- demand that blockchain be associated with "public procurement" by States, Regions, Cities and Municipalities

Development by Design. We don't just need green growth, we need a change in business practices and development (what the COVID-19 crisis will have shown is that these changes are possible without delay). In this framework, the management of common goods which are, as the Nobel Prize winner E. OSTROM defines them, "*common reservoirs of resources*" should have a central place alongside the means to fight against inequalities and for gender equality. This management should be eco-systemic and be based on a common technological base, including a blockchain strategy, for transparency, accountability and the trust of each stakeholder part of the Green Deal.

