



ECEN Assembly 2021:

Outline of initial contribution to the panel session

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- **Key elements of the Green Deal (I can adapt this on the spot to avoid duplicating anything said by the two MEPs):**

Scope – very wide...covers many different policy areas, made up of series of separate initiatives, but many links between them (e.g. climate action/sustainable mobility, biodiversity strategy/ farm to fork, clean energy/ just transition).

Concrete – specific targets e.g. climate neutrality by 2050, 55% emissions reduction by 2030; 25% agricultural land organic by 2030; 30% of land and 30% of sea protected) supported by mechanisms/finance (e.g. Fit for 55 package due to be adopted on 17th July)

Timeline – GD Communication sets timetable for introducing initiatives (revised energy legislation due summer 2021 – Fit for 55), targets are linked to dates (e.g. reducing pesticide use by 50% and fertiliser use by 20% by 2030).

Process – institutional procedures (EU institutions, Member States) underpinned by consultations with stakeholders and citizens. Working with global partners too. Draw on lessons learned from current policies and evaluations. Green oath “do no harm”. Climate pact (including citizens in design). Using tools coherently – policy linkages.

Importance – key global priority - we need to act (the climate crisis is real, it is caused by human activity, urgent action is needed – IPCC findings); EU should lead the way for global action (COP 26, UN decade of EcoSystem Restoration; UN Convention on Biological Diversity; Sustainable Development Goals; Europe is rich, privileged – carbon footprint compared to rest of world (but we still have big disparities within the EU...)).

- **What will be needed for successful implementation?**

Understanding both the need for action, and that we all have agency to act. Demonstrating the will of the people to decision makers. Covid has shown that fast, decisive, difficult action is both possible and acceptable.

Working together - Joint action. E.g. Climate Pact. Bringing together everyone (administrations, civil society, businesses, academia, education, young people, all citizens) who wants to take action for our planet. Empowering people.

Commitment and Belief. Vision. Hope and Sacrifice.

- **Role of civil society and faith communities: How to be involved - what can we do?**



Setting an example – e.g. net zero targets of 2030 rather than 2050 have been set by a number of churches.

Practical demonstration to communities, raising awareness, and support tools. E.g. EcoChurch, Energy Footprint Tool, Carbon365

Get involved – individually e.g. Butterfly App – use it – its fun – learn about God’s wonderful creation, and contribute to the scientific evidence base.

Campaign – e.g. for divestment from fossil fuel investments, for better local cycle networks.

As a group/church community, together with other community organisations:

Conference on the future of Europe – platform to share ideas, organise events, co-create, network, explore and communicate priorities. Open to all.

Climate Pact (3 strands: information sharing/understanding including events/citizens’ dialogues; Platforms - real and virtual – to work towards climate goals; Capacity building for grassroots initiatives).

- **Role of civil society and faith communities? Why be involved and what is the unique contribution of churches**

I can identify two strands here – firstly linked to our relationship with God and creation:

As Christians we believe that the world was created perfect, and all its imperfections are the result of sin. God rejoices in his creation, and we do too. Nature brings us joy and solace. God loves his world, we love God, so we try to love as He does, and to care for all that He loves. This encompasses the whole of creation, big and small, near and far. We talk about holding the earth in trust for future generations, and that is true, but we also recognise the impact climate change and ecological damage is already having on many communities the world over – and we heed God’s call for justice and care for all. So that is one reason why I believe church communities should be involved in climate and environmental issues.

The second reason is to do with the perspective faith gives us and how that can help others navigate the complex challenge of addressing climate change and ecological breakdown:

As Christians we are used to complexity – to believing in a reality we cannot see; we are in it for the long haul – our eyes are fixed on a long-term goal beyond our lifetime; we know that worldly status and wealth is not the be all and end all; we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves, even sacrificially.

Doesn’t this all sound an echo with the climate and biodiversity crisis, and the actions needed to address it?



And we have a sure and certain hope. Even when the outlook is bleak, we can avoid being worn down and overcome by helplessness in the face of a seemingly impossible task – because we trust in the one who is all powerful, we know that the responsibility for success is not on our shoulders, we are not responsible for the outcome, simply for playing our part faithfully (5 loaves and 2 small fish!). We can relax in the knowledge that God is in control.

So, given all this: if we can't do this, who can? If not us, then who?

This is not an easy road, for anyone, but I believe we as Christians are in a position where we can take a leading role, and set an example, by engaging in concrete, positive action.