

The economic challenge

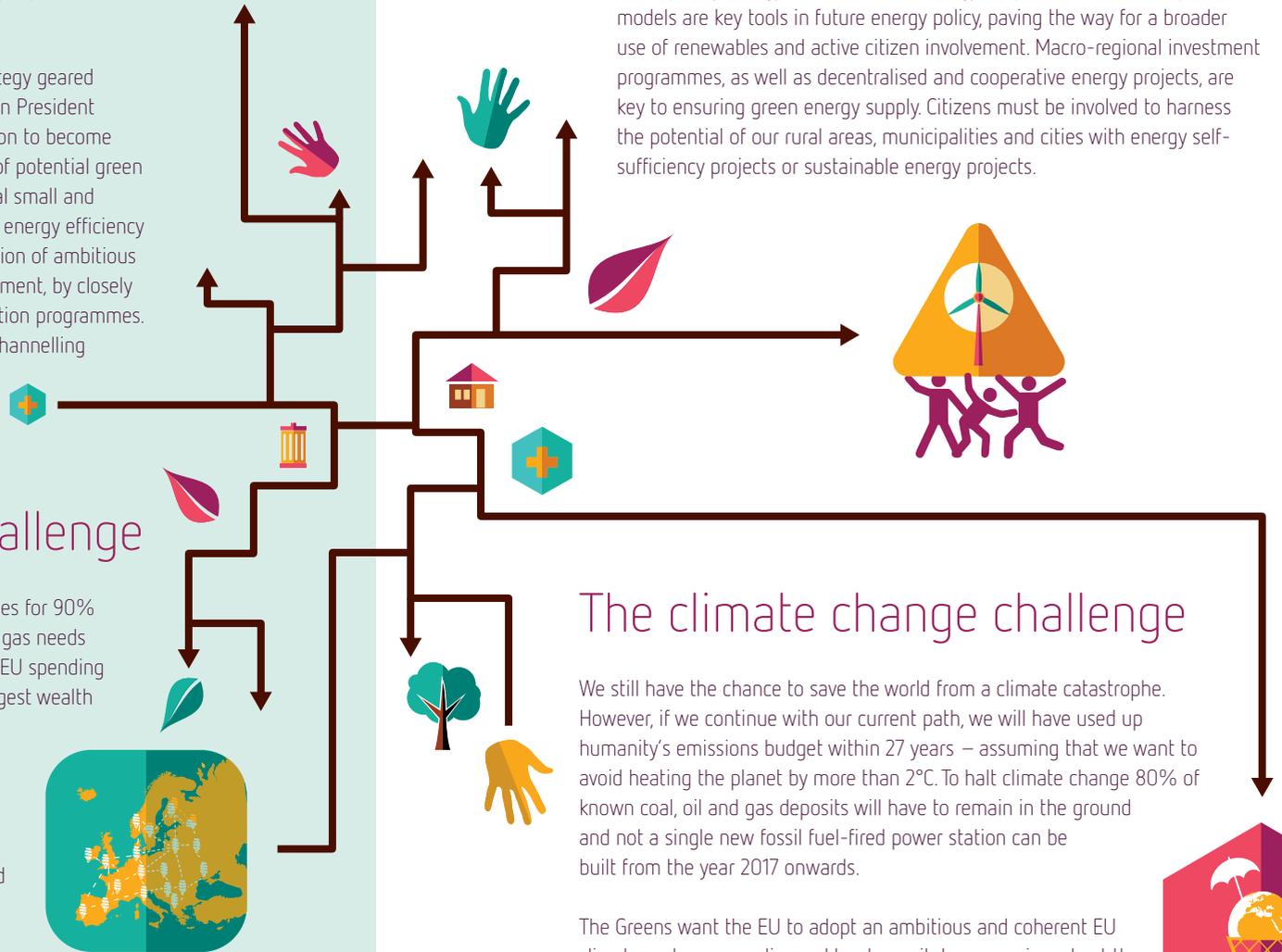
The EU's dependence on fossil fuels has aggravated the economic crisis: the high import costs of energy commodities have also contributed heavily to net new borrowings in several EU Member States. There were consequently additional economic impacts on their industries that have - combined with the crisis - led to unprecedented high unemployment rates, especially for young people in the Southern European countries.

The Greens want a radically changed, sustainable investment strategy geared towards renewables and energy efficiency projects. EU Commission President Juncker has also made this a priority: "I want Europe's Energy Union to become the world number one in renewable energies." There are millions of potential green jobs - sustainable, decent and high quality - many of them in local small and medium-sized enterprises, including in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors. This potential can be unleashed through the implementation of ambitious and stable policies designed to foster innovation and green investment, by closely involving social partners and through targeted training and education programmes. This strategy would also include ending fossil fuel subsidies and channelling pension funds towards sustainable projects.

The energy dependency challenge

EU Member States currently depend on imports from third countries for 90% of their oil needs, 95% of their uranium needs, over 60% of their gas needs and more than 40% of their solid fuel needs, including hard coal. EU spending on energy imports exceeds €400bn/year, which is the world's biggest wealth transfer from one economic zone (the EU) to a handful of oil and gas countries.

If the EU is to increase its security of supply and restore its geopolitical capital, this import dependency must be drastically reduced through a radical switch to renewable energy sources and ambitious energy efficiency measures. The energy system should shift towards an interconnected, efficient, smart and distribution-level focused grid, which enables full solidarity between Member States and their citizens. A European approach based on ensuring supply security at macro-regional level is more cost-efficient and sound than 28 national approaches.



The democratic and social challenge

The Greens are opposed to policies that shift the costs of the energy transition onto citizens while giving industries a free ride, not least because there are significant social challenges associated with the energy sector. Some 50-125 million EU citizens are affected by energy (or fuel) poverty.

Participatory energy models such as energy cooperatives or similar public models are key tools in future energy policy, paving the way for a broader use of renewables and active citizen involvement. Macro-regional investment programmes, as well as decentralised and cooperative energy projects, are key to ensuring green energy supply. Citizens must be involved to harness the potential of our rural areas, municipalities and cities with energy self-sufficiency projects or sustainable energy projects.



The climate change challenge

We still have the chance to save the world from a climate catastrophe. However, if we continue with our current path, we will have used up humanity's emissions budget within 27 years - assuming that we want to avoid heating the planet by more than 2°C. To halt climate change 80% of known coal, oil and gas deposits will have to remain in the ground and not a single new fossil fuel-fired power station can be built from the year 2017 onwards.

The Greens want the EU to adopt an ambitious and coherent EU climate and energy policy and to play a vital, progressive role at the crucial 2015 climate summit in Paris, where the world is supposed to unite around a global climate treaty.

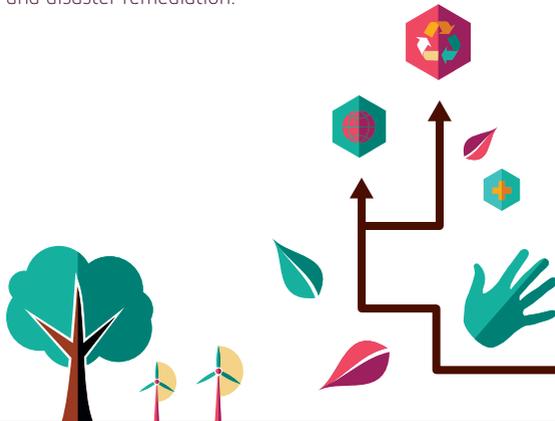


A Green Energy Union will deliver



The Green Energy Union will pool the EU's forces enabling common and unified decisions in a spirit of solidarity. It will empower citizens to make their own choices on energy generation, turning them into ‚prosumers‘. They will be able to actively participate in a sustainable energy economy and will be able to act and choose from within an economic model that allows them to reap the associated benefits.

By radically rechannelling investment into the energy efficiency and renewables sectors, we will not only substantially reduce our expenditure on imports of fossil fuels but also become less dependent on supplier countries and hence increase our geopolitical capital. We will put our economy on a sustainable path by divesting from fossil fuel-related funds and avoid the future costs associated with inaction and disaster remediation.



At the same time, we will once again put Europe at the forefront of the world in technological and economic terms. This will create millions of green, decent and local jobs for European citizens, and be accompanied by targeted measures to reduce fuel poverty in Europe, allow access to sustainable energy for all and help to protect the climate.

www.greens-efa.eu

www.stopclimatechange.net