

The EU weakens the rules that safeguard people and the environment

470 civil society, trade unions and public interest groups tell President von der Leyen, European Commissioners and EU Member States that our rights, planet, health and justice are not for sale

05.09.2025

The statement is also available in [French](#), [German](#), [Spanish](#), and [Dutch](#).

The EU risks a new race to the bottom. Under President Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission plans an unprecedented wave of drastic cuts to regulations that protect labour and social rights, human rights, digital rights, and the environment. The Commission and EU Member States might spend the next four years [dismantling rules](#) for companies operating in the EU.

Rules designed to ensure that we can live fair, just and healthy lives are already poorly-enforced. Despite [clear warnings](#), they're now being withdrawn, weakened or gutted of meaning at a truly unprecedented rate.

Eight months into its term, it's clear that the Commission's new "[unprecedented simplification effort](#)" really means 'deregulation'. Regulations that protect us all from the excesses of corporate greed, that ensure we can breathe clean air and put a healthy meal on our family's table are on the chopping block. Rules that ensure we can work in fair and safe conditions, protect nature, fight discrimination, tackle corruption, have access to fair and safe financial products, and stop corporations from violating our digital privacy – that keep us all safe for today and tomorrow – are being slashed.

The Commission's insistence that this is about removing 'superfluous red tape' is not backed up by reality. [They claim](#) that trusting companies to do the right thing will make the bloc more "competitive" and that slashing rules is needed to boost "innovation" for EU companies. But plenty of sad affairs from EU history tell another story, including the financial crisis and Dieselgate.

EU rules are being cut so that shareholders can exploit people and the planet with fewer limits. Our protection is being sold out for profit, and our trust in democracy eroded.

New measures [give corporations a seat at the top table of EU law-making,\[1\]](#) while [those acting in the public interest are excluded by decision-makers](#). Flawed consultation methods further privilege corporate access. Meanwhile, civil society organisations representing diverse, societal interests risk being marginalized by decision-makers. Making the situation worse, enforcement agencies and bodies are being hamstrung by austerity policies which cut their budgets and staff.

The Commission and Council of EU member states are trying to cut our protections on an almost daily basis. Several major proposals have been put rushed through [without the Commission performing their duty](#) in producing vital [Impact Assessments](#). This is worsened by [the use of the 'urgent procedure'](#) which leaves no space for a democratic debate in the European Parliament.

Principles of rulemaking are vital to democracy. By taking shortcuts, the Commission silences critical voices, and reopens legislation which already resulted from a democratic process and therefore a compromise among political forces in the EU.

This perfect storm of deregulation runs the risk of empowering the far right and anti-democratic forces, enabling corruption, increasing inequalities, slow down the urgently needed climate action and environment protection, and depriving communities and workers of essential protections and services. The 'simplification' agenda has already gone too far:

- **Corporate accountability and justice are further away than ever:** The Commission and Council have drastically undermined [climate action](#), [environmental protections and human rights obligations](#) in supply chains, by thoroughly weakening the **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive**. Transparency on companies' sustainability level and efforts is being slashed by significantly reducing the scope of reporting companies in the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the EU Taxonomy**.
- **Our habitats and biodiversity may lose essential protections, while chemicals threaten public health:** The Commission has [proposed to remove environmental obligations](#) from its **Common Agricultural Policy**, including measures to protect wetlands and peatlands. EU chemical laws over cosmetics and labelling rules for hazardous chemicals are being targeted, while there are worrying indications that the proposed comprehensive ban on 'forever chemicals' (PFAS) will be weakened.
- **Pressure is taken off polluters:** Delays in mandatory transformation plans to make polluting industrial sites cleaner, more circular, and climate-friendly are

undermining public transparency and corporate accountability in the industrial transformation.

- **Weakened climate targets serve corporate wishes instead of planetary needs:** the EC, with strong backing from EU Member States, has proposed a 2040 target to reduce emissions by 90% compared to 1990, that includes plans to weaken the policy architecture established through the climate law by introducing several forms of flexibility. Introducing international credits within the EU climate targets would weaken EU's level of ambition compared to a purely domestic target, which already lags behind its global fair share.
- **A decade of digital rights progress could be undone:** the [reopening of the backbone](#) of the EU digital rulebook – the **General Data Protection Regulation** – means [people's sensitive data could be processed without protections](#). [Further attacks on rights-based rules](#) such as the AI Act, and the planned Digital Package, could undermine rules that protect all our digital lives against AI harms and surveillance from state and corporate actors.
- **A race to the bottom for workers:** Cuts to social rights and protections loom, as the envisaged proposal for a '28th regime' would offer companies a more lenient set of European rules. This is an open door for circumvention of national labour laws and trade union rights.
- **More poverty:** [The Commission aims to redirect anti-poverty funds](#) to support corporations and industries including tech and defence.
- **The path to a just and equitable society is eroding in front of our eyes:** "The attempted withdrawal of the Horizontal Anti-Discrimination Directive clearly indicates that people and rights are not a priority for the European Commission (although there are reports that the Commission has rightly reconsidered due to civil society and political pressure). The only area where new rules are increasing are those for the punishment and surveillance of marginalised communities, in a context of increased spending, legislation and policies centred on criminalisation, surveillance and militarisation.

- **Financial reforms rolled back, paving the way for another crisis:** Delays and numerous carve-outs are being introduced to the bank **prudential capital rules** agreed internationally after the global financial crisis 2007-2009. These rules are aimed at ensuring that banks manage their risks with sufficient buffers to cushion losses. In parallel, measures intended to support sustainable finance practices could be removed.

With these steps – a small selection of the many deregulation proposals, initiatives and strategies – the Commission claims to be making Europe friendlier for businesses and more competitive internationally. In doing so, they are creating a toxic and less equal world for workers, families, and vulnerable communities, and an uneven playing field for companies that want to conduct their business responsibly. In the long-term, the falsehood that it is too costly to protect people and the environment today will have an irreversible cost on our health, safety, rights, equality and freedoms tomorrow.

Instead of deregulation, we call on EU and national lawmakers to protect and promote the rights enshrined in the EU Charter and international human rights law:

1. Pass laws for stronger protections for social welfare, workers, consumers, anti-discrimination, justice, climate and environmental justice, privacy and data protection, and against toxic chemicals;
2. Demand more transparency for and accountability on companies, as well as access to justice for those harmed;
3. Take responsibility for the negative impact of EU activities, such as mining, insufficient climate targets and toxic chemicals, on other regions and communities;
4. Enable the implementation and enforcement of laws protecting rights, justice and public interests. By providing more resources for enforcement authorities and implementation guidance and support for digital rules;
5. Reinforce protections for civil society organisations, trade unions, human rights defenders, journalists and activists

6. Guarantee that civil society, trade unions, impacted communities and other representative public interest actors are meaningfully consulted, included and respected in EU and national law-making.

In a time of extreme inequality, including wealth inequality, social and financial exclusion, climate destruction, democratic backsliding, surveillance capitalism, worker exploitation, deeply-embedded structural harms and discrimination and broad human rights violations: we call for more protections, not fewer!

Signed,[\[2\]](#)

EU

#DiasporaVote!

Access Now

ACT Alliance EU

Animal Advocacy & Food Transition

Biofuelwatch

CAN Europe

CEE Bankwatch

ChemSec

ClientEarth

Compassion in World Farming

CONCORD

Cool Heating Coalition

Corporate Europe Observatory

Counter Balance

Defend Democracy

Earth Thrive

Earthright

EConGOOD

EFFAT — the European Federation of Food, Agriculture, and Tourism Trade Unions.

Emmaus Europe

End FGM EU

Environmental Justice Foundation

Equinox Initiative for Racial Justice

EU-LAT Network

European Alcohol Policy Alliance (Eurocare)

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

European Civic Forum

European Coalition for Corporate Justice

European Digital Rights (EDRI)

European Disability Forum

European Environmental Bureau

European Grandparents for Climate - Europäische Großeltern für das Klima

European Heart Network

European Network Against Arms Trade

European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER)

European Public Health Alliance

European Public Service Union (EPSU)

European Trade Justice Coalition

European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)

European Youth Forum

Fern

foodwatch International

Fossil Free Politics

Friends of the Earth Europe

Global Witness

Greenpeace European Unit

IFOAM Organics Europe

ILGA-Europe

JEF Europe

Just Shift

Partnership for Policy Integrity

People vs Big Tech

Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Europe

Plastic Change

Red europea Oficina Internacional de Derechos Humanos Acción Colombia
(OIDHACO)

Red Europea OIDHACO (Oficina Internacional Derechos Humanos Acción Colombia)

REScoop.eu

SAFE – Safe Food Advocacy Europe

SHARE Foundation

Slow Food

Statewatch

Surfrider Foundation Europe

The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy

Union Syndicale Fédérale Service public européen et international

WeMove Europe

Wetlands International Europe

Zero Waste Europe

Global

350.org

ActionAid

Balanced Economy Project

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Clean Clothes Campaign / Schone Kleren Campagne
Climate+Tech AI Think-tank for Resilience
Ekō
EKOenergy ecolabel
Environmental Investigation Agency
Fair Finance International
International Federation for Human Rights
Mondiaal FNV
Naturfreunde Internationale
Oil Change International
Oxfam
Public Services International
Rainforest Alliance
Stichting Solidaridad
Transnational Institute
WECF International
Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)

Rest of the World

Action pour la Justice Environnementale AJE (Senegal)
Alliance pour les droits des femmes mauritaniennes ADFM (Mauritanie)
ALTSEAN-Burma (Myanmar)
ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) (Oceania)
Association Marocaine des Droits Humains (Morocco)
Association Mauritanienne des droits de l'Homme (Mauritanie)
ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INKINGI (Uganda)

California Nature Friends (USA)

Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CIPRODEH)
(Honduras)

Centro de Políticas Públicas y Derechos Humanos (Perú EQUIDAD) (Peru)

Centro Hondureño de Promoción Para El Desarrollo Comunitario (Honduras)

DERECHO, AMBIENTE Y RECURSOS NATURALES-DAR (Peru)

Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente - DHUMA (Peru)

Forest Watch Indonesia (Indonesia)

Global Justice Ecology Project (USA)

Institute for Research and Advocacy / Lingkaran Advokasi & Riset (Link-AR Borneo)
(Indonesia)

ITEKA INITIATIVE (Uganda)

Lebanese Center for human Rights (Lebanon)

Les Mêmes Droits pour Tous (Guinea)

Ligue Burundaise des droits de l'homme Iteka (Burundi)

OpenMedia (Canada)

Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales (Chile)

Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC) (Cameroun)

Snow Alliance (China)

Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR) (Taiwan)

The Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) (USA)

Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (Vietnam)

Albania

Albanian Human Rights Group

Environmental center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN)

Trade Union Federation of Building, Wood and Public Services of Albania, TUBWPSA

TUFDCWA

Armenia

Health Workers Trade Organization of Armenia

HWUA

Union of State, Local Government and Public Service Employees of Armenia -
USLGPSEA

Austria

AK EUROPA

Anders Handeln Austria

ARCHE NOAH

ARGE (Arbeitsgemeinschaft) Weltläden Österreich

Attac Austria

Austrian Alliance for Climate Justice

Austrian Trade Union Federation

Co-ordination Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference for International Development
and Mission (KOO)

Degrowth Vienna

EU-Umweltbüro

fair sorgen!

Global 2000

NeSoVe

ÖBV - Via Campesina Austria

ÖKOBÜRO - Alliance of the Austrian Environmental Movement

Protect Our Winters Austria

Südwind, Austria

transform! Europe

Umweltdachverband

Volkshilfe Österreich

younion _ Die Daseinsgewerkschaft

Belgium

11.11.11

ACV Puls

ACV-CSC Belgium

Alliance Nationale des Mutualités Chrétiennes - Landsbond der christelijke mutualiteiten

BeeLife European Beekeeping Coordination

Biodynamic Federation Demeter International

BOS+

Broederlijk Delen

Carbon Market Watch

Centre tricontinental - CETRI

CNCD-11.11.11

De Landgenoten

Entraide & Fraternité

Eurogroup for Animals

European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW)

FIAN Belgium

Finance Watch

Fonds pour la Chirurgie Cardiaque

Food & Water Action Europe

FOS

Grands-Parents pour le Climat

Grootouders voor het Klimaat: Grandparents for Climate

Humundi

Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC)

Les Amis de la Terre - Belgique asbl

Oxfam Belgie/Belgizue
Rise for Climate Belgium
Rise For Climate Belgium
ShareAction
Solidair met Guatemala
SOLIDAR
Univers santé ASBL
Voedsel Anders Vlaanderen
Vredesactie
vzw Climaxi
WSM - We Social Movements

Bulgaria

AGROLINK Association
Environmental Association Za Zemiata, FoE Bulgaria
National federation Culture Podkrepa
Trade Union Federation of the Employees in the Ministry of Interior (TUFEMI)

Croatia

ACT Grupa
Assiciation Shift/Pomak
Association "Tatavaka"
Association BIOM
Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce
Association Hyla
Association Žmergo
Centre for Civil Initiatives Porec
Centre for Peace Studies

Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights - Osijek

Community Foundation Slagalice

Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity (CROSOL)

Croatian Youth Network

DEŠA Dubrovnik

Documenta-Center for Dealing with the Past

Domino

Dugine obitelji

Eco Hvar

Forum for Freedom in Education

Gong

kolekTIRV | For the rights of trans, intersex, and gender variant persons

Life Quality Improvement Organisation FLIGHT

Politiscope

Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma

Roditelji u akciji - Roda (Parents in Action)

Terra Hub

Udruga Zelena Istra

Zagreb Pride

Zelena akcija, Friends of the Earth Croatia

Cyprus

Friends of the Earth Cyprus

Czechia

Centre for Transport and Energy

Hnutí DUHA, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic

Limity jsme my

Odborový svaz zdravotnictví a sociální péče ČR (Trade Union of Health Service and Social Care of the Czech Republic)

Society for Sustainable Living

Denmark

Bedsteforældrenes KlimaAktion - Danmark

Global Aktion - People and Planet before profit

NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark

Estonia

Association of Estonian Energetics Workers' Trade Unions

Estonian Green Movement

Finland

Attac Finland

Climate Grandparents Finland

CRASH - Coalition for Research and Action for Social Justice and Human Dignity

Fingo - Finnish development NGOs

Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

Finnish League for Human Rights

International Solidarity Foundation

Pro Ethical Trade Finland, Eetti

The Finnish Union of Practical Nurses

Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors JHL

France

Adéquations

Amis de la Terre France

Association Addictions France

ATTAC France

AVICENN @VeilleNanos

Canopée

Cgt santé action sociale CGT

Collectif Ethique sur l'Etiquette

fédération CFDT Santé-Sociaux

Fédération Française des Apiculteurs Professionnels

Fédération Interco CFDT

Federation SEPANSO Aquitaine

France Nature Environnement

Generations Futures

GIET (groupe international d'études transdisciplinaires)

Global Health Advocates

LDH (Ligue des droits de l'Homme)

No plastic in my sea

Notre Affaire à Tous

OGM dangers

Quê Me: Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR)

Reclaim Finance

Réseau Action Climat

réseau Cler

ritimo

Sciences Citoyennes

Sherpa

SNICS-FSU Syndicat National des Infirmières conseillères de Santé -FSU

Syndicat national d'apiculture

Union Nationale de l'Apiculture Française

Zero Waste France

Georgia

Georgian Health Promotion and Education Foundation

Germany

Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt (ASW) e.V.

AlgorithmWatch

Association of Ethical Shareholders Germany

bend not break

Breaking the Ice

Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz (BUND) e.V.

BUNDjugend

Bündnis für eine enkeltaugliche Landwirtschaft e.V.

Coordination gegen BAYER-Gefahren

CorA-Netzwerk für Unternehmensverantwortung

D64 – Zentrum für Digitalen Fortschritt

Democracy International e.V.

Deutscher Imkerbund

Deutscher Naturschutzring e.V.

Die Bürokratiemonster

Digitale Gesellschaft

FIAN Deutschland e.V.

Finanzwende

Forum Ökologie & Papier

Foundation on Future Farming / Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft

Global Policy Forum Europe

Goliathwatch

Health and Environment Justice Support (HEJSupport)

Informationsstelle Peru e.V.

Initiative Lieferkettengesetz

Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung / Clean Clothes Campaign Germany

Kulturland-Genossenschaft

LobbyControl

NaturFreunde Deutschlands e.V.

Neuer Imkerbund e.V.

PowerShift e.V.

Shifting Advocacy

Unverpackt e.V. - Verband der Unverpacktläden

ver.di

World Economy, Ecology and Development

Greece

ENA Institute for Alternative Policies

ECOCITY

Electra Energy

European Economists for an Alternative Economic Policy in Europe EuroMemo Group

Homo Digitalis

Naturefriends Greece

Hungary

Clean Air Action Group

EVDSZ

Nagy Tavak és Vizes Élőhelyek Szövetsége (Great Lakes and Wetlands Association)

National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary

Szakszervezetek Együttműködési Fóruma (SZEF)

Ireland

Energy Services Union

Fórsa

Friends of the Earth Ireland

Karan O Loughlin

SIPTU

Trócaire

Zero Waste Alliance Ireland

Italy

Attac Italia

FAIR

Fairwatch

FLAEI - Cisl

Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità (Forum
DD) <https://www.forumdisuguaglianzediversita.org/our-project/>

FP CGIL

Hermes Center

ISDE, International Society of Doctors for Environment Italy

LEGAMBIENTE

ReCommon

UIL PA (Unione Italiana dei Lavoratori Pubblica Amministrazione)

Union Syndicale Federale Ispra

WeWorld

Latvia

Green Liberty

Latvian Fund for Nature (LDF)

Lithuania

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' FEDERATION OF LITHUANIA

Lithuanian Industry Trade Union Federation

VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"

Luxembourg

Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (ASTM)

ASTI asbl

Initiative pour un devoir de vigilance Luxembourg

Mouvement Ecologique

OGBL

Malta

Friends of the Earth Malta

General Workers' Union

Moldova

Ecodigital NGO

ECO-TIRAS International Association of River Keepers

Netherlands

75inQ

Bits of Freedom

Comité Schone Lucht

Dutch Institute of Alcohol Policy STAP

FNV Overheid

Foodrise

Grootouders voor het Klimaat

Handel Anders!

Leefmilieu

Milieudefensie - Friends of the Earth Netherlands

Plastic Soup Foundation

Simavi

Stichting Demeter

Voedsel Anders NL

WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform

Working group Foodjustice

North Macedonia

Independent Trade Union of workers from energy and economy from Macedonia-SSESM

Norway

AVYO Vocational Union for Work and Welfare employees

Naturvernforbundet

Norwegian Nurses Organisation

The Norwegian Grandparents' Climate Campaign, District of Agder

Poland

Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie (Buy Responsibly Foundation)

Fundacja Zielone Światło

Koalicja Klimatyczna

Living Earth Coalition

Moc Korzeni

Panoptykon Foundation

Polish Ecological Club

Rodzice dla Klimatu - Parents For Future Poland

Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot

Portugal

Academia Cidadã

Campo Aberto

FAPAS - Associação Portuguesa para a Conservação da Biodiversidade

GAIA - Environmental Action and Intervention Group

Malha Cooperativa

Palombar - Associação de Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural

Plataforma Transgenicos Fora

proTEJO - Movimento pelo Tejo

Quercus - Associação Nacional de Conservação da Natureza

STE-Sindicato dos Quadros Técnicos do Estado

TROCA - Plataforma por um Comércio Internacional Justo

ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável

Romania

Asociația Mai bine

Asociația pentru Tehnologie și Internet

Ecoteca

LEAGUE FOR DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ROMANIA

ROMAPIS

Serbia

SHARE Foundation

Sindikatski zavod za zdravstvo i socijalnu zaštitu Srbije

UGS NEZAVISNOST

Slovakia

Druživa, o.z.

občianska iniciatíva Slovensko bez GMO/citizens initiative Slovakia without GMO

Občianske združenie Vidiecky parlament na Slovensku

OZ Vidiecky parlament na Slovensku

Slovenia

Danes je nov dan, Inštitut za druga vprašanja

Društvo Bodi svetloba

Društvo Ekologi brez meja

Društvo Humanitas - Center za globalno učenje in sodelovanje

Društvo Šolski ekovrtovi - AOGE

Focus Association for Sustainable Development

Institute Circle

Institute for climate solutions

Institute for Health and Environment

KSS PERGAM

Morigenos – Slovenian Marine Mammal Society

Peace Institute

PIC - Legal Center for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment

Policy Lab (Slovenia)

Povod Slovenia

Slovenian NCD Alliance

Slovenska filantropija

Trade Union of Professional Firefighters of Slovenia

Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development

Spain

Algorights

Asociación Manuel Azaña

Associació Internacional d'Enginyeria Sense Fronteres

ASSOCIACIO RAUXA

Associació SUDS

ATAEC. Arts, Cultures & Climates glocal association

ATTAC España

CGT - Confederación General del Trabajo

CICrA Justicia Ambiental

Confederación Intersindical

Ecologistas en Acción

ELA

Entrepueblos Entrepobles Entrepobos Herriarte

FSS-CCOO

Fundación Ecología y Desarrollo-ECODES

Fundación Salud y Comunidad (Health and Community Fundation)

Hogar sin Tóxicos

International Association for Engineering Without Borders

IZQUIERDA UNIDA

JUSTICIA ALIMENTARIA

La Coordinadora de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo

Lafede - Justícia Global

Lurgatz Talde Feminista

Observatori del Deute en la Globalització

Observatori DESCA

Permacultura ATTA

Reds - Red de solidaridad para la transformación social

Sare Antifaxista

UGT SERVICIOS PUBLICOS

Sweden

Act Church of Sweden

Akademikerförbundet SSR

BirdLife Sverige

Civil Rights Defenders

Fackförbundet ST

Friends of the Earth Sweden

IM Swedish Development Partner

Swedish Municipal Worker's Union

Vårdförbundet

Vision

Switzerland

Association Noé21

Bruno Manser Fonds

Gallifrey Foundation

Turkey

Alternatif Bilisim

İNSAN HAKLARI DERNEĞİ

Türkiye Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmet İşçileri Sendikası(Turkey Health and Social Worker's Union)

UK

Child Rights International Network (CRIN)

Earthsight

Fresh and Balance

GM Freeze

Mothers Rise Up

Truth About Plastic

[1] Measures such as ‘Implementation Dialogues’, ‘Targeted Consultations’ and ‘Reality Checks’.

[2] Not all signatories work on all topics in depth. Signing this letter does not mean that all these organisations share the same priorities.