

# The Demands in Detail

## Introduction

As Youth for Climate Luxembourg, we are in a unique position. As part of the youth's voice in Luxembourg and members of the climate justice movement, we find ourselves presented with an unprecedented perspective on the situation. There is no beating around the bush: the coronavirus pandemic has proven beyond a doubt that concrete and far-reaching action must be taken. This pandemic has highlighted especially how lacking previous steps have been, and how much work there is still left to do.

We have therefore released a new set of demands specifically created with the current emergency in mind—demands which, in addition to focusing on the environmental aspect of climate justice, also strongly focus on social justice. Both are absolutely necessary: moving forward without either would be disastrous for us and our planet.

This document serves as an elaboration of the demands, going into more detail with rationale, commentary and examples so that the dialogue on this topic can be furthered and progress can be made. Alongside a massive effort for public health, it is of utmost importance that these steps are taken as soon as possible.

## 1. The Climate

Any approach to handling the COVID-19 crisis must make the climate a top priority in every step taken. It should not be accepted that we leave this crisis how we entered it, or worse: our time is running out to tackle the Climate Crisis. We cannot “return to normal”—because normal was already a crisis.

One of our demands is that polluters—whether they be fossil fuel companies, banks, or any industry—are held strictly accountable and that any bailout they receive has to come with strict terms to protect the environment. This is a very broad but very crucial point. For example, if certain banks are given loans to bail them out, it must be absolutely clear that they cannot continue to spend any money investing in fossil fuels. Not only is it vital that corporations stop investing in pollution, but it is also vital that our government does not enable or tolerate such harmful behaviour.

Similarly, we demand that regulation on environmental protection be strengthened. The government needs to not only fulfil its promises on PNEC, it is also vital that it strengthens its climate initiatives. The government needs to be more ambitious to prevent the ecological breakdown. In addition, any temporary suspension on environmental control or protection by the government needs to be fully reinstated by the end of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, there cannot be any further suspensions or cuts to environmental regulation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Le gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. “Covid-19 : Suspension temporaire de certains contrôles et délais en matière d'environnement.” Guichet.lu, 27 Mar 2020, <https://guichet.public.lu/fr/actualites/2020/mars/20-coronavirus-suspension-delaix-environnement.html>

The European Commission and a number of its member states have approved bailouts for airlines, including Air France, Lufthansa and KLM<sup>2</sup>. We see the need for safety nets for employees. However, there cannot be a distribution of blank cheques to polluters and climate destroyers—especially when the benefits of these cheques rarely make their way to the hands of employees. Moreover, the US-based global investment management corporation BlackRock has been selected to advise the European Commission on ESG rules for European banks<sup>3</sup>. Their questionable investments into fossil fuel companies and them being the world's largest investor in the fossil fuel and weapons industry cannot be ignored. With an economy possibly in need of help, this help cannot come in the form of deregulation.

Finally, we demand that polluters are not given a free pass to break regulations or laws. The Luxembourgish government cannot allow polluters to ignore environmental laws domestically and it needs to take a strong stance against the European Union allowing for an environmentally destructive recovery strategy. In recent weeks automotive lobbyists have called upon the EU to cut CO<sub>2</sub> regulations aimed at raising fuel efficiency<sup>2</sup>, while in the US the EPA has announced a relaxation of environmental rules in response to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>4</sup>. This is not the time to cut environmental protection laws to boost the economy. Polluters need to be held accountable and there needs to be a fully green recovery.

## 2. The People's Bailout

“The People's Bailout” is a term that was first popularised in the US as a term for a non-corporate, worker-first bailout of the economy. Several activist groups, such as the Sunrise Movement<sup>5</sup>, have put forward similar platforms. Fighting for this social justice is incredibly important in the climate movement too: those who are the worst off in our society will suffer the greatest consequences of our inaction. These values of justice are the same values that guide our demands here: we should not have the working population carry the weight of either crisis on their shoulders.

This exact sentiment is our first demand: that any bailouts for corporations or industries not come at the expense of working people. The response to the 2008 economic crisis hit many working class people much harder than anyone else, and they had to carry the brunt of the burden in the years since. It is absolutely crucial that social & class relations do not worsen further as a result of this crisis. We were already living in a tense society before the crisis, and worsening these contradictions will only bear bad news. Letting corporations and

---

<sup>2</sup> Farand, Chloe. “Coronavirus: which governments are bailing out big polluters?” Climate Home News, 20 Apr 2020,

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/04/20/coronavirus-governments-bail-airlines-oil-gas>

<sup>3</sup> Jolly, Jasper. “BlackRock to advise EU on environmental rules for banks.” The Guardian, 12 Apr 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/apr/12/blackrock-eu-environmental-rules-for-banks>

<sup>4</sup> Milman, Oliver and Holden, Emily. “Trump administration allows companies to break pollution laws during coronavirus pandemic.” The Guardian, 27 Mar 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus>

<sup>5</sup> Sunrise Movement. “People's Bailout.” Sunrise Movement, 10 Apr 2020, <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/peoples-bailout>

industries, and those at the top of them, leave this crisis largely unscathed while letting the average worker suffer many multitudes worse would be absolutely unacceptable.

It is therefore also equally important that economic relief is provided directly to the people. For instance, the lack of flexibility when it comes to rent dues and prices are harmful to the country's residents. Partial unemployment has reduced most salaries by 20%, and while housing subsidies are available, they remain insufficient for many households in these exceptional conditions<sup>6</sup>. This affects disadvantaged citizens most, as they must also compensate for other costly living expenses while struggling to stay afloat in one of the world's most expensive countries, despite receiving less income. The need for economic relief is urgent for these households: we demand comprehensive and strong relief policies be implemented, such as a national rent freeze until the COVID-19 crisis is over, or that rent subsidies be significantly augmented.

Moreover, it is important that no person is left without shelter, food or water due to this crisis. Nobody should be forced out on the street because they can't pay their rent, and nobody who is already on the street should be left behind either. We must take action to prevent a lethal spread of the virus among our homeless population and we must ensure that they have all the utilities they need to make it through this with their dignity and life intact. A few ways these things could be achieved are, for example, housing the homeless in currently empty spaces (e.g. hotels), implementing a national rent freeze, etc.

The disadvantaged in our society cannot be left behind when handling the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic already disproportionately affects those less well off, and for the disenfranchised, this crisis will be many times worse. The situation is especially unacceptable for the refugees stuck in camps at the EU's border. The state of the camps was already critical before the outbreak of the coronavirus, and it has since become even worse. There is no way to "social distance" in an overcrowded camp. Keeping a sanitary environment is delusional if you don't even have enough water to drink<sup>7</sup>. It is not acceptable that in these crucial moments, refugees are left behind. Luxembourg can and has to do more.

### **3. International Solidarity**

Mirroring our national response to the crisis, our international response must also incorporate the value of putting people first. We cannot tolerate the continued pollution of our planet, mistreatment of the disadvantaged of our society, or the burdening of common people that will undoubtedly result from this crisis. Luxembourg must keep those ideals of a just and green society at the heart of any international response it participates in or otherwise has a say in. No disenfranchised people globally should be overlooked or disregarded—we must act in solidarity with those who have been or are going to be hit the hardest.

We must also not under any circumstance tolerate any blatant erosion of democracy, increasing authoritarianism, or democratic backsliding from ourselves or our allies. When our

---

<sup>6</sup> Le gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg. "*Subvention loyer.*" logement.lu, <https://logement.public.lu/fr/aides-logement/aides-indivuelles-logement/location/Subvention-loyer.html>

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch. "*Greece: Island Camps Not Prepared for Covid-19.*" Human Rights Watch, 22 Apr 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/22/greece-island-camps-not-prepared-covid-19>

fellow EU member state Hungary gives its prime minister power to rule by decree and declare an indefinite state of emergency<sup>8</sup>, we must take a stand against this and similar seizures of power. We must ensure that the democratic project of the European Union that we are so proud of is not weakened during these turbulent times.

#### 4. Our previous demands

All of the above demands are in addition to, not instead of, the demands we laid out previously in September. Those demands are still equally important—if anything, this crisis has proved them to be even more necessary. To reiterate, those demands are:

- a. *Luxembourg must achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.* The cornerstone of the climate movement, this is still of utmost importance and must be achieved as soon as possible. This crisis has highlighted several new ideas to tackle this as well: for example, many jobs have now proven doable from home. An incentive to companies to let more workers work from home could lower traffic to and from Luxembourg City, reduce congestion and slash car emissions.
- b. *Luxembourg is not too small to make a difference: tax evasion and fossil fuel investments need to be stopped.* Luxembourg's troubles here are twofold: not only has Luxembourg been found to display traits of a tax haven<sup>9</sup>, but it is also the home to many banks and companies that actively invest in fossil fuels. To progress as a climate conscious and socially just nation, we must tackle both issues.
- c. *Climate Justice means international and intergenerational solidarity.* As we move into what is undoubtedly a new epoch for our society, we must be very conscious of the impact of our actions on future generations and other countries. Younger generations will be hit harder than anyone and will have to live with the consequences of what we decide to do in this moment of crisis.
- d. *If the current system cannot meet our demands, we need system change.* Our three demands are essential for a just, well-functioning and livable society. If these demands are not feasible in our current system, we need system change.

#### Conclusion

To conclude, we want to thank you for taking the time to listen to our demands. Interactions like these, between citizen and representative, are a cornerstone of democracy even more vital during crises like these. We appreciate your openness to our calls for action and your willingness to not merely disregard our voice. Both the health crisis and the climate crisis are issues that must be handled with the utmost urgency, and these dialogues are an important part of that process. We look forward to seeing the actions you take in the future.

---

<sup>8</sup> Picheta, Rob and Halasz, Stephanie. "Hungarian parliament votes to let Viktor Orban rule by decree in wake of coronavirus pandemic." CNN, 30 Mar 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/30/europe/hungary-viktor-orban-powers-vote-intl/>

<sup>9</sup> European Parliament. "Tax crimes: special committee calls for a European financial police force." European Parliament, 27 Feb 2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190225IPR28727/tax-crimes-special-committee-calls-for-a-european-financial-police-force>