For a European Union that puts people and planet first.

Manifesto
I. Introduction

Today, the European Union stands at a crossroads.

One of the EU’s overarching objectives is to generate economic prosperity. This has been pursued by promoting productivity and consumption, which was expected to increase social cohesion, stimulate employment, reduce poverty and advance environmental protection.

But economic growth and competitiveness became objectives in themselves, rather than means to an end. Social and environmental policies proved too weak to achieve their goals. On top of social and ecological challenges, the EU today faces an unprecedented economic downturn.

The lesson from these events is clear: we need a major re-thinking of Europe’s strategic direction. This year will bring a new Commission and newly-elected Parliament, and in 2010 we will see the adoption of a new political guidance for the EU by its Heads of State. The time to influence the strategic direction of the EU is now. We have a unique opportunity to ensure that the EU puts the economy at the service of people and planet – instead of the other way round.

The Spring Alliance has been formed to do exactly this. It is a joint campaign initiated by four leading European civil society organisations: the European Environmental Bureau, the European Trade Union Confederation, Social Platform and Concord. The Spring Alliance Manifesto is also supported by organisations from all corners of civil society and beyond, including fair-trade associations, anti-poverty and health campaigners, consumer organisations and representatives from the research community.

This Manifesto outlines 17 proposals for an EU that puts people and the planet first. We explain why these recommendations should be taken, and list concrete steps that illustrate how decision makers can turn our proposals into reality.

If you’d like to help steer the EU onto a course that benefits its people and the planet, join us! Please see our website at www.springalliance.eu for further information on how you can support the campaign.
II. Challenges

The following five trends reflect the reality of today’s European Union.

i) Our climate is changing and we are witnessing an unprecedented rapid and irreversible loss of biodiversity and natural resources

Years of climate policy and environmental protection have done little to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions, and globally they continue to rise. The impact of these emissions on the Earth is much more serious today than scientists thought a decade ago, and their effects on humankind will be irreversible.

Over-consumption of natural resources has caused the diversity of plant and animal life on our planet to decline. The EU’s ecological footprint, which measures the human impact on natural resources, is more than twice its capacity. The EU holds considerable responsibility for the swift depletion of the Earth’s resources.

ii) Global inequalities between North and South are growing, and fundamental rights violations remain widespread

The EU’s economic policies have had serious impacts1 on the livelihood of local communities everywhere in the world. Trade, agriculture, fisheries, extractive industries, environment, migration and other European policies impede on the opportunities of those communities to achieve sustainable development: in the last year, the number of those going hungry in the world rose by another 40 million to a total of almost one billion2.

The economic model contributed to increasing poverty and inequality, global inequity, and environmental catastrophe even before the current economic crisis, which is hitting developing countries hard3. Africa will suffer a drop in income that’s predicted to reach US$49 billion4.

Despite the commitments to the Millennium Development Goals and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, human rights violations are increasing. In the EU, the law does not yet give full protection from discrimination in all areas of life, such as healthcare. Also, we also see increasingly restrictive and intrusive migration policies and Member States’ employment strategies that limit and deny fundamental rights to those seeking to move to and around the EU. Meanwhile, each year thousands of people die trying to reach the EU in search of a better life.

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1 EU Coherence project
2 Hunger Free Campaign
3 World Bank, March 2009
4 Action Aid, March 2009
iii) The EU’s focus on competitiveness and deregulation has failed to serve the public good

The global economic crisis, caused by lack of financial regulation, irresponsible lending and the negligence of regulatory bodies, demonstrates that insufficient regulation can have serious economic and social consequences.

Since 2005, the EU’s ‘growth and jobs’ strategy, and its push for increased deregulation of markets, including labour markets, has had a detrimental effect on European society: today, unemployment is rising, low-quality work and poverty are spreading and public debt is increasing as a result of the financial crisis.

iv) Inequalities in wealth distribution are increasing, putting the cohesion of our societies at risk

79 million people in the EU are living in poverty, affecting one child out of five. Although many of these people have full-time jobs or receive pensions or benefits, their income is still too low to stop them from falling into poverty.

This, in turn, raises the risk of their being excluded from society. Meanwhile, inequalities continue to grow, resulting in a loss of social cohesion and important differences in the access to and use of resources between social categories and between countries.

At the same time, the wealth of Europe’s richest people is increasing, and this wealth is becoming concentrated in fewer hands. Additionally, despite the EU’s commitment to gender equality and while progress is being made, the gap in pay between women and men persists – it currently stands at an EU average of 17%.

v) The gap is widening between the EU and its citizens

The majority of the EU population feels disconnected from EU decision-making processes. National politicians often consider “Brussels” as an external power, and use it as scapegoat for unpopular decisions. This further undermines the EU’s credibility and its capacity to lead citizens through difficult times.

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5 Joint report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2009  
6 Joint report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2009  
7 Social Protection and Social Inclusion Indicators, European Commission, 2008  
9 “Equal Pay” campaign, European Commission, 2009
At the same time, the people of Europe are increasingly becoming self-organised to make their voices heard, most notably through associations and trade unions. However, the EU has yet to put in place an effective strategy to engage civil society in decision-making.

These trends can be reversed – and the EU can take the lead.

The EU can move from being part of the problem to part of the solution. Although we are in the worst crisis since 1929, it also presents us with an opportunity to change, specifically because:

- There is an increased support to design a new global architecture with more regulation of markets and in particular financial markets
- There is an increased awareness of ecological and social challenges
- Civil society movements and entrepreneurs are active in developing alternative solutions to these challenges

The EU is the world’s biggest economy and has powerful instruments to set environmental targets, reduce inequalities, and regulate the market. What’s needed now is the political will to make a sustainable and fairer Europe a reality. The EU also has strong civil society movements that are ready to take part in this project.

Read on for our recommendations to achieve this.
III. Our proposals

Europe needs to reverse its current economic paradigm and put people and the planet at the heart of its policy-making. The economy should become a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. We propose the following five overall objectives for the EU:

- Establish inclusive societies
- Avoid ecosystem collapse
- Promote green and quality jobs
- Improve democracy
- Assume global responsibility

These five objectives (sections A-D and F) should be served by a new economic and governance strategy (section E). We’ve developed 17 recommendations which are essential to making both a reality.
A. Preserve ecosystems

We are living beyond our means, consuming more than double what Europe’s bio capacity can regenerate. Continuing as before is not an option. Europe can do better – if it commits to an absolute reduction in energy, land, water and resource use, by setting targets and aligning budgets to those priorities, it can stay within a fair share of the Earth’s capacities and create quality jobs.

1. Reduce resource use and energy consumption

Why?

Although Europe has increased the efficiency of using energy and resources in production and consumption, no net savings have been achieved. This is due to increasing consumption and production patterns, which have lead to an increasing ecological deficit and ecosystem collapse.

How?

- Measure resource use and set absolute reduction targets by 2010 in line with a globally equitable and sustainable share of the Earth’s capacity. This should cover total material consumption, water and land use and include an EU waste prevention policy which halts and reverses increasing household waste volumes.
- Set harmonised and binding targets in 2010 for reducing overall primary energy consumption by at least 20%
- Achieve a significant energy and water use reduction of the domestic sector. Specifically:
  - Set an EU wide minimum standard for all new housing to be energy passive or positive by 2015
  - Launch a refurbishment programme for the housing stock which substantially increases today’s renewal rate, includes professional training and retraining strategies of builders and installers and provides targeted support to refurbish housing for people living in poverty
  - Set and enforce dynamic EU-wide minimum energy efficiency requirements for space cooling and heating equipment and systems and expand the scope of respective EU policies to set minimum water efficiency requirements
2. Prevent dangerous climate change

Why?

Global warming and climate change is happening quicker than expected. It threatens security, wealth and wellbeing in Europe within the coming decades. Although climate change has primarily been caused by the consumption and industrial practices of the developing world, it is the poorest regions and people who will be hit hardest.

How?

- Invest substantially higher percentages of the national investment budgets, including economic recovery plans and structural funds, into reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Reinforce domestic EU greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in line with the global objective to keep global warming below 2 degrees centigrade to prevent dangerous climate change. Set a specific target for the transport sector and include aviation and shipping in the post-2012 climate agreement. Complement this with further EU domestic actions and ensure sustainability of fuels
- Set a mandatory share of 40% of renewables in electricity supply EU-wide by 2020 and promote decentralized production and consumption of electricity and heating and cooling. Specifically:
  - Remove barriers to renewable energy development, including market operation practices
  - Put in place strategic planning to avoid negative environmental and social impacts
  - Explicitly support local generation and use of renewable energies, including 'net metering'
  - Put in place a regulatory and financial framework to promote the development of smart grid capacity to save energy and for the optimal integration of renewable energy, decentralized production and combined heat and power
3. Make agriculture and fisheries sustainable

Why?

The loss of biodiversity, the collapse of fish stocks, the degradation of land and disproportionate subsidies to large firms demonstrates that EU policies on agriculture and fisheries are not sustainable. EU agricultural imports – mainly protein – cause social and environmental problems outside the EU and contribute to the global food crisis.

How?

• Adopt a comprehensive reform of the Common Agriculture Policy by 2013 to secure a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable farming sector. Specifically:
  o Give priority to certified organic farming
  o Reward farmers for the delivery of public goods, such as social cohesion and employment in rural areas, ecosystems services, landscapes and nature protection or a healthy diet
  o Introduce concrete measures to help move farming away from industrial practices based on agro chemicals and GMOs towards sustainability, reducing water use by 40%, using less fossil fuels, conserving soils and carbon, and restoring biodiversity, supported by obligatory Environmental Priority Areas at farm level to compensate for the loss of set-aside and as a key climate change adaptation measure
  o Establish a hierarchy of uses for agriculture products. Priority should be given to food production for a healthy diet, then raw materials and finally energy products based on regional EU production
  o Phase out export subsidies

• Protect and rebuild wild fish stocks by eliminating overfishing under a revised Common Fisheries Policy in 2012. Specifically:
  o Set catch limits for target and non-target species in line with scientific advice and within the biological limits of the marine ecosystem
  o Ban destructive fishing practices and ensure that environmentally and socially sustainable practices are given priority access to fisheries resources
  o Ensure that the capacity of the EU fleet does not exceed the biological capacity of the stocks
  o Reform EU fisheries into a certified, more regionally oriented sector, providing local employment and social cohesion, based on a more equitable distribution of quota between fishermen

10 Green Paper on the Reform of the CFP, European Commission, 2009
4. **Adopt a “Biodiversity Rescue Plan”**

**Why?**

The EU is losing biodiversity; it is losing the ecosystems and the services they provide. This in turn reduces our ability to adapt to climate change and requires replacing these natural services, like clean water and food, by expensive and risky technologies – if they are replaceable at all.

**How?**

- Propose a “Biodiversity Rescue Plan” strategy by 2010 to restore ecosystems, closely integrated with climate change policies. The strategy must include:
  - Set up ambitious new biodiversity targets to be met by 2020 and a baseline to measure progress
  - Ensure full implementation and enforcement of the Birds/Habitats, Water Framework, Marine and Environmental Impact Assessments /Strategic Environmental Assessments Directives, developing a ‘green infrastructure’ and supported by sufficient EU and MS funding
  - Establish new legislation on soils and Invasive Alien Species
  - Ensure “ecosystem proofing” of sectoral policies, like transport, energy and agriculture, and spatial planning
- Call for an international scientific platform for biodiversity similar to the International Panel on Climate Change
B. Establish inclusive societies

The contradiction between increasing inequalities and economic growth questions the European capacity and responsibility to redistribute wealth fairly and effectively, and to promote social cohesion and well-being for all. Social protection systems, access to universal essential and public services, redistribution of wealth and combating discrimination are concrete political responses to putting European values and fundamental rights into practice.

5. Reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty

Why?

Although they live in the richest economic area on the planet, 79 million people in Europe live in poverty today, 20% of whom are children. Despite the European Council’s commitment in 2000 “to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty”, the level of poverty in Europe has not decreased and inequalities have continued to grow. Member States have used the Open Method of Coordination on social protection and social inclusion to coordinate their efforts; however, its methodological advances are not fully exploited.

How?

- In the post Lisbon Strategy, establish an explicit EU goal of reducing social exclusion and inequality and make the open method of coordination on social protection and social inclusion (“social OMC”) a central tool of the Strategy
- Together with civil society, develop and disseminate guidelines and benchmarks for Member States on how to strengthen the governance of the social OMC at national level and on how to more effectively involve national parliaments and the European Parliament.
- Adopt a Directive on guaranteeing an adequate minimum income for all, following up the implementation of the 1992 Recommendation and the 2008 Active Inclusion Recommendation
- Establish ambitious quantified European and national targets on poverty eradication across the EU accompanied by effective policy measures
- Establish surveillance systems to monitor national health inequalities in Member States, specifically indicators of poor health (including sexual and reproductive health needs) and act on the results

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11 Joint report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2009
6. **Guarantee universal access to essential and public services**

**Why?**

Accessing essential and public services is a fundamental right and a pillar of the European model of society. There is a growing demand for these services due to the ageing population and evolving family patterns such as single-parent units. Yet, these services are increasingly unavailable to people and are often poorly adapted to their changing needs. Social progress can only be achieved if people have access to quality essential services that respond to their needs. Investing in these services will also provide more and better jobs.

**How?**

- Enforce implementation of universal affordable access to services in existing EU sectoral directives, and revise EU internal market and competition legislations as necessary to ensure universal access to services
- Adopt a directive on financial inclusion to establish a universal access to a bank account and to fair and sustainable credit and loan facilities for all
- Strengthen the EU framework on essential services by developing a new Framework Directive on Services of General Interest and implementing the European Parliament request for an independent assessment of the impact of liberalisation and privatisation on essential services involving all stakeholders, particularly users
- Earmark European Social Fund and European Regional Development Funds to invest in education, social housing, social and health services, and ‘energy savings’ services (energy advice and investment to reduce energy consumption), particularly for the most disadvantaged
- Implement the EU Energy Package requirements to develop National Action Plans to reduce energy poverty, and coordinate them with the National Action Plans for social inclusion and social protection
- Renew the commitments to achieve the Barcelona targets on childcare facilities
- Evaluate and revise as necessary Regulations on State Aid that could be barriers to the development of social services provided by non governmental actors
- Provide an appropriate EU financial and legislative framework to support social economy initiatives

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13 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, 1948
14 White Paper on Services of General Interest, European Commission, 2004
7. Combat discrimination and racism and respect migrants and ethnic minorities' rights

Why?

Europe today is composed of people with diverse cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins, people with disabilities, different sexual orientations, and different ages and religions. While this diversity is increasingly recognized and valued, many people still suffer from discrimination and women are not treated equally as men. This is against the basic principle of equal treatment in the EU’s current Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

How?

- Adopt and implement a comprehensive EU anti-discrimination Directive providing protection against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination listed in Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
- Prioritise developing indicators to chart the discrimination of these groups and progress made to respect their rights
- Prioritise the EU policy commitment to advance gender equality at all levels from policy design to implementation and back it up with adequate financial and human resources
- Adopt and implement a new multi-annual justice and home affairs policy programme (Stockholm) that puts respect for migrants at its core
- Pursue stringent policies to combat the trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, for the purpose of sexual exploitation
C. Promote green and quality jobs

Policies and investments are needed to provide more and better jobs, while responding to needs for essential services, social inclusion and a better environment.

8. Reinforce quality jobs and improve access for all

Why?

People often face multiple barriers to employment, especially those furthest from the labour market like people with disabilities, long-term unemployment or those who are homeless. These people risk ending up permanently excluded from the labour market.

In addition, people are increasingly forced to take on low-quality jobs, which do not provide a guaranteed route to a decent life.

How?

- Set targets for quality work including adequate income, good social protection systems, combat discrimination and ensure that multinational companies respect human rights and fundamental norms of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), support decent work all around the world
- Establish and implement national strategies to develop lifelong learning and vocational training policies, taking into account volunteering, non-formal education, recognise and validate skills acquired by people through non- and informal learning, and implement outreach programmes to ensure that all have access to high-quality education and training opportunities - in particular focusing on green jobs and the care sector
- Use Community Funds to develop green and quality jobs and support the implementation of integrated active inclusion strategies
- Establish and implement active inclusion roadmaps for people furthest from the labour market and establish priority targets, at European and national level, with the three pillars of guaranteeing adequate minimum income, access to quality services and access to quality jobs. Subsequently, develop a new European Employment Guideline on active inclusion
- Mainstream the gender pay gap in EU macro economic policies and adopt a gender pay gap indicator
9. **Ensure a just transition to quality jobs, and help workers move into new emerging activities**

**Why?**

Today, there is already a gap between the qualifications the workforce has today and those it will need in the future. This is due to societal and environmental demands and the restructuring of existing sectors of work. To ensure a socially sustainable outcome of all these changes, a just transition framework towards quality jobs for all is needed.

**How?**

- Develop programmes addressing anticipation of changes in employment and skills
- Provide training opportunities to develop new sustainable industries and services as well as research and development
- Enlarge the Globalisation Adjustment Fund to limit the negative consequences for workers of measures to combat climate change and support for the provision of alternative employment and income protection for displaced workers
- Invest in key sectors (transport, housing, social, health, care services, energy) guaranteeing that jobs created are quality jobs
- Develop a European framework by 2011 that ensures the adaptation of education curricula and programmes to the climate challenge. The framework should also ensure training for the entire chain of providers, installers and suppliers in energy efficiency and renewable energy.
- Promote quality jobs and sustainable enterprises through public procurement which reward companies that uphold social, labour and environmental policies
D. Assume global responsibility

This is a critical moment for global social and economic development and justice. There must be decisive action from the European Union to address the basic problems of unequal and unsustainable development at global level and to ensure a coherent EU approach to achieving an equitable globalization strategy.

10. Reform global governance

Why?

Current economic and financial policies and institutions have managed an economic system which has prioritised high economic growth, benefiting primarily corporations and the wealthy instead of leading the world towards a shared, sustainable prosperity. This economic model contributed to increasing poverty and inequality, lack of decent work, global inequity, and an environmental catastrophe even before the current crisis.

How?

• Contribute to the continuing development of a global approach to financial management, as started at the G20 negotiations in April 2009, to establish Global Financial Governance mechanisms which are democratic and put interests of people before the market.

• Implement fundamental governance reform of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ensure they are democratised and made fully transparent, and respect international standards on human rights, including gender equality, the environment and labour. Give a more important role and the associated financial means to the United Nations and the ILO.

• Agree on commitments on the reform of the international tax system to eliminate tax havens, put in place strict regulation on information disclosure and implement new accounting standards on a country-by-country basis to put an end to tax competition.
11. Guarantee policy coherence to achieve development goals

Why?

Trade, agriculture, fisheries, environment and many other European policies have an impact\textsuperscript{15} on developing countries. Yet, these policies have not sufficiently and directly contributed\textsuperscript{16} to poverty eradication and sustainable development in the EU as well as globally. Additionally, policies that are inconsistent with development goals are costly and can overshadow the money spent on development aid.

How?

- Secure predictable financing needed for climate action in developing countries, likely to be a minimum of 35 billion EUR each year by 2020 in addition to existing Official Development Aid (ODA) commitments and to any purchasing of carbon credits that offset EU emissions.
- Develop by 2015 an alternative trade mandate based on an independent study and broad stakeholder debate and consultation to evaluate the real impact of these strategies on the economy, poverty, gender and the environment, both within the EU and in the globalised world.
- Negotiate trade agreements and investment treaties that respect the sovereignty and the economic and social cohesion policies of developing countries and drop all demands for the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) plus provisions. Require EU-based multinationals to apply home-state environmental and social regulations when operating in developing countries, challenging the current EU ‘Global Europe – competing in the world’ strategy.
- Introduce Corporate Accountability beginning with allocating resources for this and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the EU institutions and Member States in relation to it. By 2014, implement mandatory social and environmental reporting and binding rules to ensure lobbying transparency. Establish a clear path to implementing Direct Liability of parent companies for abuses by their subsidiaries, Duty of Care of EU based companies for their sphere of influence and unrestricted access to justice for victims of corporate abuses in the long term.
- Develop fisheries partnership agreements which do not include access to fishing grounds to stop the plundering of these grounds in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of non-EU countries. Ensure that fish imported from outside the EU meet the same standards of sustainability that the EU sets for its own producers.

\textsuperscript{15} European Commission, 2007
\textsuperscript{16} EU Coherence project / Aprodev
12. Increase and improve development aid

Why?

The European Union provides most of the development aid\(^\text{17}\) in the world, which gives it a crucial responsibility in the fight against global poverty. The EU has clearly committed\(^\text{18}\) not only to further increasing the volume of aid, but also to increasing the quality of the aid. Development aid is more important than ever, since the financial crisis has shrunk other sources\(^\text{19}\) such as private capital flows, remittances and export revenues to developing countries.

How?

• Deliver 0.7% of Gross National Income in Official Development Aid (ODA) by 2015 at the latest and to agree annual and binding timetables to reach this target. Dedicate at least 20% of all Community assistance to the basic social services, such as health and education as repeatedly called for by the European Parliament.

• Cancel the illegitimate debt of developing countries

• Phase out all economic or trade policy conditionality attached to development aid

• Report annually on the progress made in the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action Commitments to improve the quality of development aid

• Deliver the EU Gender Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s empowerment in External affairs by 2010 through an inclusive process involving permanent and structured policy dialogue with all stakeholders.

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\(^{17}\) European Commission, April 2009

\(^{18}\) European Consensus on Development, November 2005

\(^{19}\) World Bank, 2009
E. Economy and governance

In the past, the EU concentrated on activities to increase GDP and productivity and generating wealth, which has failed to tackle poverty, inequalities and unemployment in Europe and is the root cause of the ecosystem collapse. This strategy led to a social and ecological crisis long before the financial and economic one today. We must refocus Europe’s economic and market policies to put people and planet first.
13. **Put in place a new economic strategy**

**Why?**

Europe’s growth and competitiveness based economic strategy has not delivered quality jobs, equality, prosperity or sustainability. We need an economic strategy that enables us to carry out our proposals.

**How?**

- Adopt a new EU economic strategy in 2010 which is driven by societal objectives of social inclusion, equality for all, well-being, quality employment and environmental protection, respecting the planet carrying capacity and thus establishes a clear balanced architecture reflecting the new article 3(3) of the Treaty of Lisbon. The strategy should:
  - Be based on a road map for policy investment, assessing the potential for green jobs and monitoring progress
  - Be based on indicators going beyond GDP, including multiple indicators on well-being, the eradication of poverty, gender equality, equality for all (between the regions and rich and poor), and energy and resource use
  - Establish a transformative investment programme through coordinated Economic Recovery Plans and a Revised Lisbon Strategy, which delivers an economy based on clean energies and resource efficiency, with more and better jobs
  - Promote strong public investment in social protection systems and key public services as pre-requisites for stable, cohesive societies and encourage countries to promote progressive redistributory mechanisms
  - Promote investment in social economy enterprises, which are driven primarily by social benefit motives rather than individual profits
  - Work towards EU harmonization of corporate and other business taxes to avoid fiscal, social and environmental dumping
  - Refocus EU structural and cohesion funds on tackling poverty and social exclusion by investing in local social infrastructure and shift them away from mega (road) projects to smaller, space and resource efficient transport and energy systems
  - Achieve by 2020 a 10% shift of the tax-base away from labour to environmental pressures, resource use and capital, by applying the Open Method of Coordination combined with Enhanced Cooperation. This would encourage more efficient resource use, taxing what we want less (resource depletion and pollution) instead of taxing what we want more (income and employment)
  - Cut off or redirect any funding that harms the EU’s environmental and social objectives, including global impacts, or increases EU’s energy and resource use. Review the rules of EU institutions to this end
14. **Revise the Better Regulation instruments**

**Why?**

The current economic crisis reveals the shortcomings of global and European economic governance structures. Sound economic policy-making requires decision makers to better assess the potential economic, social and environmental consequences of these actions.

**How?**

- Reorient the Better Regulation Agenda on the overarching social and sustainable goals
- Introduce and strengthen compulsory social and sustainability assessments, such as gender budgeting, Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments, and Cost Benefit Analyses, for all EU expenditures and improve its stakeholder consultation
- Systematically access costs of action and inaction so that social and environmental impacts are fully taken into account, even if they cannot be monetized
- Follow up funding decisions with monitoring and evaluation and undertake a mid-term review of the current Financial Perspectives in 2010.
F. Improve democracy

In a democratic system, the method to reach a decision is as important as the result: decisions are taken for the people, by the people and with the people. The EU has yet to demonstrate that this is the case at EU level. It needs to advance its democratic governance by improving access to and scrutiny of decision-making, investing in dialogue with European citizens, civil society, and trade unions and strengthening Open Method of Coordination systems.

15. Invest in dialogue with European citizens, trade unions and civil society

Why?
95% of Europeans participate in either voluntary or informal organisations, or both\(^{20}\). At a time when an increasing number of citizens feel disengaged from European politics, these organisations are a clear asset in making sure people are active in shaping their society.

The value of these organisations is also recognised by the EU in its renewed Lisbon Treaty, which considers participatory democracy to be a fundamental democratic principle of the EU and proposes ways to organise dialogue with “representative associations and civil society”.

How?

- Agree on an EU regulation on the implementation of the people’s initiative and civil dialogue provisions, irrespective of when the Lisbon Treaty enters into force
- Adopt practical guidelines for civil dialogue and revise the minimum standards for consultation to expand the timing of consultations and dialogue to 16 weeks, and provide feedback
- In the Council and for each presidency of the EU, appoint a high level official in charge of developing the collaboration with civil society during the preparation, implementation and follow-up of each presidency
- Establish Commission cross-sectoral minimum standards on funding for civil society organizations.
- Reinforce social dialogue starting from dialogue within companies up to the EU level

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\(^{20}\) Quality of Life Survey, Eurofound, 2006
16. Improve access to and scrutiny of decision-making

Why?

Transparency and publicity are basic principles of democracy, allowing citizens to understand who takes what decisions on their behalf. For a democratic debate to take place, information and documents in different languages must be publicly accessible and public authorities should not withhold information that is necessary to participate in decision making.

How?

- Make all stakeholder consultations and lobbying efforts public and transparent
- Limit the use of the exceptions provided by the Access to Documents Regulation to the minimum
- Make public preparatory working groups of the Council of Ministers and meetings of the College of Commissioners
17. **Strengthen the governance of EU strategies and of the Open Method of Coordination**

**Why?**

EU strategies (i.e. “growth and jobs” and the Open Method of Coordination) have been used to advance on common EU objectives in fields where there is limited European competences - i.e. economy, employment, education, social protection and social inclusion.

However, to deliver on agreed objectives these “soft instruments” need political support, visibility at national level and the active participation of social partners and of civil society organisations.

**How?**

- Set up a regular European Parliament report and national parliament debates/reports to ensure that people elected by citizens have a say on the European strategies and their delivery.

- Together with social partners and civil society organisations, develop specific principles, guidelines and benchmarks on how to strengthen the governance of EU strategies and promote a more effective participation of social partners and representative of civil society actors.