

## Bluebook M23 Trainees for Climate: Open Letter



# Why the Commission Must do Everything in its Power to Keep 'Green' Issues High on the Agenda

14 July 2023

Dear President Von der Leyen College; Dear future College of the European Commission,

We are writing to you as a group of Bluebook M23 Trainees.

Through this traineeship, you welcomed a select few motivated Europeans into one of the most powerful and prestigious institutions of the European Union. Over the last five months, we have come to better understand the realities and complexities of the EU decision-making process, seeing first-hand why changes often need to happen gradually. This experience has also shown us the high responsibility borne by you, EU decision-makers, whose actions tangibly affect millions of (future) lives. It is *this* responsibility we are addressing today when we demand:

### **Don't let the Green Agenda die!**

In the Trainee Welcome Conference, your colleagues addressed us as “the future of the EU”: we do wonder, however, if the future of Europe that is envisaged by the course of the Commission is one that we want to be part of. Given that our planet is in a state of almost irreversible environmental collapse, it is hard to hold any realistic future vision of the EU. The effects of the [‘triple planetary crisis’](#) (climate change, biodiversity and pollution) have become increasingly visible over the last few decades and [are only set to increase](#). To name just one example, half of Europe is suffering from [extreme drought conditions since 2018](#), causing losses in agriculture and peaking wildfires. We acknowledge the Commission is not solely responsible for tackling this crisis; the recent controversy of the [Nature Restoration in Parliament](#) demonstrates that there is a strong political lobby continually seeking to undermine core elements of the Green Deal for short-term gain. But nature is deaf to our political squabbles, and the Commission must do everything in its power to treat collapse as an existential crisis and steer the Union to act accordingly.

There is also strong social support to do more on this topic, since according to a [Eurobarometer survey](#) from 2021, European citizens identify climate change as “the single most serious problem facing the world”. Moreover, in a [survey](#) we conducted to measure climate concern among the M23 trainees (206 responded), 86% of the participants believe that the EU’s response to the crisis is insufficient.

Although the Commission states in the Green Deal that [“all EU policies should contribute to preserving and restoring Europe’s natural capital”](#) in practice, it continues to uphold a form of economic development that is incoherent with this ambition for several reasons. Firstly, we have seen that there is a lack of staff and resources dedicated to ensuring that the EU delivers on its environmental and climate commitments. Secondly, we witnessed that top-level decision-makers in the Commission repeatedly chose to prioritise the Union’s short-term economic interests, at the expense of ensuring long-term environmental and social security. Progressive green initiatives are also often watered down because the Commission's policy framework disproportionately favours pro-business interests by

cutting down the “burden” of environmental legislation and by maximising the competitiveness of the single market at all costs. Therefore, we see the need for shifting to an economic model that prioritises the wellbeing of people and planet over an unrestricted form of economic growth that exceeds planetary boundaries. As echoed in the [Beyond Growth Conference](#), we need “a green and just transition that halts overproduction and –consumption, prioritises resource redistribution, wellbeing, and social services, integrates intergenerational justice, dismantles the fossil fuel industry, and rethinks our financial monetary system”.

Many of us began our traineeships with high expectations of making a meaningful contribution to solve the challenges of our time, or at least to learn more about how the EU is addressing them. For a lot of young people today, this means engaging in policy that will in some way address the environmental and climate crisis, but many of us feel generally unsatisfied with the opportunities available for people who want to work in the field of climate and environmental protection ([approximately 75% of the trainees from our survey](#)). We feel that the gravity of the triple planetary crisis requires that environmental and climate frameworks are systematically integrated into all EU policy areas, going beyond hollow and ‘tick-the-box’ references to the Green Deal and SDGs and truly address the root causes of the crisis. Failing to do so will likely push young talent away from the institutions, as almost half of the trainees from our survey agree that addressing the environmental crisis is a requirement for their future career.

In light of the unprecedented challenges posed by the acceleration of the triple planetary crises, we ask you once again to maintain and increase the priority of green issues on your political agenda. This is not a question of simply acquiring more technical knowledge, but of conjuring up sufficient political determination to reach a consensus on the need to act urgently and collectively to meet this monumental challenge. The Commission has proven through its rapid and efficient response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion in Ukraine that it can effectively mobilise its resources if it wants to: we demand that you apply the same urgency and importance to addressing the triple planetary crisis as this is a matter of existential importance.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks and support to [EU Staff for Climate](#) (EUS4C) for giving us a platform to work on environmental issues and giving us a sense of meaning throughout our traineeship. We also fully support similar calls for climate action from other youth groups such as the Schuman Trainees and ask our decision-makers to deliver an ambitious ‘Green’ agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Bluebook M23 Trainees for Climate

Bluebook M23 Trainees for Climate is a group of trainees from the March 2023 session. It is a subgroup of EU Staff for Climate, a bottom-up initiative bringing together colleagues from the EU institutions who are deeply concerned about the climate, ecological and social crises facing our planet.