

European Grandparents for Climate Newsletter

Number 2 – January 2023



European Grandparents for Climate: we owe all children a planet Earth as wonderful as the one we have enjoyed!

In a number of countries worldwide, senior citizens have created or joined organizations that act on climate change issues in order to try to influence local, regional and national policies.

Here in Europe, the European Green Deal is the embodiment of these ambitions at the level of the European Union (EU). Therefore, several European Grandparents for the Climate organizations have decided to create a cooperative network focusing on the implementation of the Green Deal with the aim of exchanging information, knowledge and strategies while supporting actions across Europe.

Self-organized and politically independent, we are connected to many pro-climate organizations in our home countries.

What's going on in Europe today

At the very end of 2022, the European Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional agreement on the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** (CBAM). The objective of CBAM is to prevent that the greenhouse gas emissions reduction efforts of the EU be offset by increased emissions outside its borders through relocation of production or by increased imports of carbon-intensive products. This agreement appears particularly important because it puts pressure on Europe's commercial partners to adopt equally effective climate policies. The agreement needs to be confirmed by the member states, and by the European Parliament, and adopted by both institutions before it is final. (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/13/eu-climate-action-provisional-agreement-reached-on-carbon-border-adjustment-mechanism-cbam/>).

The European Commission has published its **highlights of 2022** concerning environmental issues. It reports on the critical role played by the EU in the agreement to halt destruction of the natural world at COP 15, after the world wildlife conference (CITES COP 19). The EU's economy promises to become more circular, with proposals to reduce packaging and to make products more sustainable, including batteries, thanks to a new EU agreement. The European Commission proposes to reduce industrial emissions, to make air and water cleaner and to revise rules on classifying and labelling chemicals. It also urges the EU countries to better apply EU environmental rules; with this aim it has launched an interactive infringements dashboard and maps showing both former and on-going violations per country and sector: (<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/env/newsletter-archives/42810>).

According to the organization **Transport and Environment**, Europe made history on October 27th 2022. Late in the evening, negotiators for the EU governments and MEPs reached an agreement on ending sales of new combustion engine cars and vans by 2035. Furthermore, the organization mentions changes to regulations for the aviation sector. As the EU Fit for 55 legislation went from proposal to law and policy makers and citizens realized the unfair privileges from which aviation had been benefiting, there were signs that the supremacy of the aviation industry is starting to weaken: (<https://www.transportenvironment.org/>).

Actions that are down to Earth

A Successful Norwegian campaign

The Norwegian oil and gas giant Equinor has been under considerable pressure throughout 2022 to reconsider its plans to open a new huge oilfield close to the Arctic ice sheet.

A unified Norwegian environmental movement, together with several of the youth wings of the major political parties, joined forces to pressure both the company and the Parliament to stop this project, which would contravene everything the Paris agreement stands for.

Furthermore, just before Christmas it was announced that Equinor has shelved the whole plan and now awaits further developments on the world scene.

Having mobilized all of its local branches during a national week of action the Norwegian Grandparents Climate Campaign prides itself for having played an important role in all of this valuable activity.

Bumper sticker campaign in Belgium



The image here is a copy of the bumper sticker of GPC Belgium (French speaking) for its new campaign in favour of lower speed limits on highways.

Climate exhibition in libraries – Belgium

Limburg, the easternmost province of Flanders, is the cradle of our traveling climate exhibition: *Leven op aarde redden nu het nog kan* (Saving life on earth while we still can). The project was carried out in close co-operation with the United Nations Regional Information Centre, UNRIC. With this travelling climate exhibition, the Limburg Grandparents are reaching out to young children through an accessible and interactive initiative within the public domain, involving, in particular, public libraries. Apart from awareness raising, the project will also be able to allow input into local policy making. Currently the exhibition is travelling through the province of Limburg; in a later stage it will travel through Flanders.

Our European newsletter

In order to keep as many as possible sister organizations and interested individuals informed about our common actions, views and positions, we publish this Newsletter at least three times a year.

We have a “**down to Earth**” section to signal remarkable local initiatives; a “**what’s going on in Europe**” section to bring news from the European level; and an “**events and links**” section to call for common European actions and activities.

Each issue includes the latest news about policy and practice developments at the European level. We focus on European Union institutions, including civil society organizations and NGOs: their vision, positions and actions with regard to climate change.

A short portrait of one or two national or regional Grandparents for Climate organizations are included as well.

Participating organizations are invited to signal important national developments in policies, but also to describe innovative practices.

We most welcome your contributions for our next newsletter by the 1st of May 2023.

National Grandparents for Climate organizations – two examples

Switzerland: Grands-parents pour le climat Suisse / Klima-Grosseltern Schweiz.



Inspired by the example of the Norwegian grand-parents, our Swiss counterpart was founded on September 16, 2014. Today we have roughly 1,400 active members organized in regional groups in both the French and German speaking parts of the country. Our national committee is presided by two co-chairpersons.

We engage in activities and projects informing the population about the issues of climate change and encouraging good practices. Present themes: training in the consumption of sustainable food, a key to the transition; promoting an ethical digital world; informing the public on the issue of Earth overshoot day. The latter campaign was reported on the national radio.

We have a scientific commission which includes specialists from the academic world. Among other activities, the commission organizes in cooperation with the academic community an annual conference on a climate related subject.

Our political workgroup is active in supporting national campaigns for the signature of pro-environment initiatives. Popular initiatives are a Swiss specialty that gives the possibility for any group of citizens who collect 100,000 signatures to submit to the people a text to become law, if approved. In periods of legislative elections, as will be the case next year, the workgroup questions candidates on their intentions as regards environmental issues, so as to inform voters.

www.gpclimat.ch/fr/

Belgium: Grand-parents pour le Climat (GPC)



GPC was created in 2015 in the French speaking part of Belgium and counts 1,200 members. With an official not-for-profit-organization status and no link to any political party, it has neither philosophical position nor religious affiliation. The board consists of twelve members who convene on a monthly basis to decide on future actions of the movement and to assess the results obtained from previous events. There are three lines of action:

- personally adopting and/or advocating a way of life that respects the resources and limits of the planet by espousing the values of sobriety, social justice and intergenerational and international solidarity;
- cultivating and transmitting the values of respect and solidarity for the planet to grandchildren; making other seniors aware of the environmental and climate emergency through dialogue and the dissemination of information while highlighting positive individual and collective choices that promote a just transition;
- exerting public and political advocacy to put pressure on decision makers at all levels of political and economic power so that they act to protect future generations from the dangers of climate change. To this end, GPC seeks, as far as possible, to act in synergy with other organizations pursuing similar or complementary goals. In this respect, our motto is: "Acting faster, stronger, more fairly."

Grand-parents pour le Climat maintains a website (www.gpclimat.be), publishes a monthly newsletter and regularly writes open letters or letters to the editor in various media. It organizes field activities with young people in schools, along with training sessions, conferences and events for other grandparents or for the wider public. To support actions on climate justice issues it participates in demonstrations and protests. GPC writes letters to ministers and politicians and monitors the votes of political representatives in both the Belgian and European parliaments. In actions directed at the Belgian government or the European Union, GPC joins forces with its Dutch-speaking sister organization "Grootouders voor het Klimaat."

Events and links

Norway

At the online meeting of European Grandparents for Climate, 11th of January, 2023, the following proposed action, forwarded by the Norwegian Grandparents' Climate Campaign, was approved. We hope many of you will act on it.



Proposed action: That all national branches sign up to the two international initiatives [Beyond Oil and Gas Initiative \(BOGA\)](#) and the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#).

Both initiatives are intended to stimulate a fair international transition to a carbon-neutral life, where rich countries assume a shared responsibility vis-a-vis poor countries. They are supported by several civil society organizations, cities and institutions and are fully in line with our basic vision. **BOGA** was initiated ahead of COP26 in Glasgow. Several states are core members, including fossil fuel producers, who are now setting end dates for new exploration licenses. The **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty** received its second state member during COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh.

The Norwegian Grandparents' Climate Campaign BKA will actively promote that Norway as a state support both initiatives and will write opinion pieces endorsing this position. Even though the initiative is mostly a symbolic move, we deem it to be part of the diversified tool-box we need to use in order to sway public opinion.

Switzerland

A workgroup on climate urgency was created at the second online meeting of the European Grandparents for Climate (EGC) with the aim of adopting a common "Call for Action". It was presented to the EGC meeting of 16 November 2022 and each national GPC association was asked whether it would endorse it or not.

Proposed action: Endorse the "Call for Action" individually or at the level of your organization and please let us know about it!

The Swiss national committee has endorsed the Call for Action, taking into consideration several elements which are summarised in the following statement to be found in the United Nations Environmental Program's 2022 Emissions Gap Report: *"the international community is falling far short of the Paris goals, with no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place. Only an urgent system-wide transformation can avoid climate disaster."*



What can a system-wide transformation consist of if not a slowdown of the world economy? This slowdown should be understood as implying the closing of as many non-essential sources of GHG emissions as possible compatible with maintaining a decent life for all. For all practical purposes it would mean, among other things, dramatically reducing private automobile circulation and air transport, while postponing non-essential construction and public works.

Judging from past experience, public authorities will not take the required decisions unless they are put under heavy pressure. The purpose of the "Call for Action" is therefore to motivate individuals and NGOs to demand that public authorities take the specific measures required. These would be most efficiently and rapidly taken by the municipal councils of European cities rather than by the European Commission or the national parliaments and governments. Here is the link to the document:

English: <https://www.gpclimat.ch/wp-content/uploads/sites/1049/2023/01/callforaction220907.pdf>

French: <https://www.gpclimat.ch/wp-content/uploads/sites/1049/2023/01/callforaction220907-f.pdf>

German: <https://www.gpclimat.ch/wp-content/uploads/sites/1049/2023/01/callforaction220907-d.pdf>

Belgium



Les Grandparents pour le Climat in Belgium joined the campaign by Stop Ecocide International for getting ecocide recognized as a crime (see: <https://www.stopecocide.be/manifesto>).

Proposed action: The Belgian GPC invite all fellow activists to join the international campaign.

Stop ecocide International argues that unlike suing and fining corporations (who simply budget for this possibility), making ecocide a crime creates an arrestable offence. It makes those individuals who are responsible for acts or decisions that lead to severe environmental harm liable to criminal prosecution. Right now, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) lists four crimes: Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes and Crimes of Aggression (recently added). The Statute can be amended to add a fifth crime: ECOCIDE. More information at: <https://www.stopecocide.earth/become>.