



An ActionAid Briefing

investigating manifestoes of six EU parties.

Who Will Get Your Vote in the EU Elections?

Between 6th and 9th June 2024, the EU will vote in an election set to decide the future of its people! The European Parliament adopts laws that affect more than 400 million people in Europe and have global ramifications.

By voting, you will determine which Members of the European Parliament will represent you for the next five years, as well as the EU's political direction. On issues such as the climate emergency and the future of the Green Deal. On advancing gender equality. On the public services EU citizens will enjoy, how they are paid for and what role the EU will play beyond our borders in reducing inequalities or tackling multiple global challenges like conflict and migration.

This ActionAid briefing and scorecard investigates the manifestoes of six European political parties: The Left, The Greens, Socialists & Democrats (S&D), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European People's Party (EPP) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). It provides analysis of their positions on women's rights, climate justice, global inequalities, migration, and the Gaza crisis. All these issues are on the ballot when you vote in June.

What Do We Want?

ActionAid expects the EU to address several critical issues to advance democracy, rule of law and human rights in Europe and globally during its next mandate. The EU should prioritize gender equality, climate justice, and social justice and underpinning economic plans.

ActionAid is guided by feminist principles that are reflected throughout this analysis. Feminist principles assume equality for all genders. People and nature are central, and there should be no exploitation of anyone or anything. For this reason, we call for the period of 2024 – 2029 to be governed based on these 10 points for a better future:

1. Put the **wellbeing of people and the planet first**, not the profit of multinationals.
2. Ensure the EU promotes **human rights and international law** in its internal and foreign policy on such issues as migration management and conflict crises.
3. Align the international financial system with the Sustainable Development Goals and **support a fair tax system**.
4. Make the **climate crisis a top priority**. The EU and Member States must keep their decarbonization efforts in line with their fair share to keep global warming within 1.5°C; and commit to a rapid and just phase out of fossil fuels. We demand that they pay attention to how large-scale industrial agriculture affects climate change and encourage agroecological alternatives.
5. Commit to **gender equality**. Include women, youth, and people from minorities and all backgrounds in decision-making processes especially considering rising reactionary movements and backlash against the rights of women and minorities.
6. **Oppose austerity policies** that shift care burdens onto women, push them out of secure employment and into precarious work and drive gender-based violence. Instead, the EU should increase funding for public services that work for women and their families, including healthcare, childcare, and education.
7. **Guarantee international corporate social and environmental responsibility** through legislation. Implement accountability mechanisms for companies that violate human rights, international law and cause environmental damage.
8. **Stop financing large-scale industrial agriculture and fossil fuel projects**. The EU should go further to meet its own commitments and invest in a circular economy to preserve biodiversity and food security.
9. Provide technical assistance and funding to countries in the Global South in their **transition towards agroecology and renewable energy**.
10. **Provide safe pathways for migration and respect migrant's human rights** at the border and within Europe.

What has the EU delivered in its current term?

The EU has adopted some measures in relation to women's rights, climate justice, global inequalities, migration, and the Gaza crisis.

Women's Rights

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025 was adopted, aiming to address gender-based violence, promote gender equality in economic and social life, and ensure equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions. According to the 2023 Gender Equality Index calculated by the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), the EU score for gender equality stands at 70.2 (out of 100 points), which marks the largest increase (+1.6 points) since the Index began. Improvements were primarily recorded in the domain of time, which covers indicators regarding the distribution of time across economic, care and social activities. The EU prioritized gender equality as a key element for improving representation in elections through the European Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program (CERV).

Another pivotal measure has been the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III), which aims to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all external actions of the EU. The level of ambition and impact of GAP III varies from country to country, while common challenges persist across countries, particularly in meaningful engagement and funding access for local Civil Society Organizations and gender mainstreaming across all sectors.

Climate Justice

The "Green wave" at the 2019 elections pushed the Commission to set an unprecedented framework for the green transition in Europe. The adopted Green Deal has anchored the EU on a firm path to decarbonization. While this represents a historic step forward, it remains in fact largely insufficient to address the climate catastrophe, let alone ensure a just transition. The international dimension of the Green Deal presents the same challenges. While it has sought to phase out unabated fossil fuels at COP29, its actions and commitments are weak given its historical responsibility and capability. As the world's second largest historical polluter, the European Union cannot shift the cost of the transition onto the most vulnerable and those least responsible for climate change. These risks endanger the very objectives of the Paris Agreement that the EU has strongly contributed to secure a universal commitment to.

Global Inequalities

The goal of the EU's development policy is 'to reduce poverty, ensure sustainable development, and promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law across the world'. But in recent years, the EU has used it as an instrument of influence and power, centred explicitly around the EU's short-sighted interests like migration, security, and relative economic gains. Global Gateway is the latest manifestation of this instrumentalization. This trend is particularly worrying as it undermines the rules-based multilateral system while jeopardizing the EU's own long-term influence and interests. Despite a longstanding commitment to disburse 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in development aid, the EU and its Member States have still not met this target. Blended finance has been mainstreamed in the European development finance architecture despite the lack of evidence about its capacity to raise additional private finance and no evidence about its developmental additionality.

The EU has shown poor leadership in the needed restructuring of the international financial architecture and economic governance institutions. The EU did not support the initiative led by the African Group of Negotiators at the United Nations for a multilateral tax convention to promote a progressive tax system that protects human rights and the environment. The EU has not been supportive of the cancellation of illegitimate debts and the establishment of a UN debt workout mechanism to free the most vulnerable countries from debt traps and protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

Migration

Concerning migration, the EU adopted the [PACT](#) on Migration and Asylum after years of negotiations, resulting in a worsening position for migrants and poorer asylum procedures. Despite the EU promoting the PACT as an achievement, it has put migrants under more [protection risks](#).

Furthermore, the EU is committing to [funding](#) border externalisation security and procedures. The EU has concluded various agreements with Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, supported the Albania-Italy deal and further deals are soon to come with countries bordering the EU. This has created a worrying trend of securitisation and militarisation of border control, increasing risks of human rights violations and inhuman treatment of migrants at EU borders. The EU is now supporting the removal of migrants back to third states, and/or having individuals go through administrative procedures asking for EU protection from a third state country outside the EU. These policies have created a vacuum on protection and human rights, giving license to third states, and some EU Member States, to commit human rights violations.

Crisis in Gaza

The EU, since the beginning of the crisis in Gaza, has shown clear double standards in using legal remedies and political leverage compared to other recent crises, such as the occupation of Ukraine, in which it activated all means available. The EU has been very divided, and the situation today is the result of decades of inaction to stop the colonisation and oppression of the Palestinian people.

The EU and its Member States, as signatories of international binding treaties protecting human rights, have a clear duty of action. The EU, through DG ECHO, has been one of the biggest institutional donors to respond to the human-made humanitarian and human rights crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. But that support to the humanitarian response is pointless without addressing the core of the issue leading to this humanitarian and human rights crisis in the oPt. The UN has passed numerous resolutions regarding the self-determination, freedom, and protection of the Palestinian people, without a full acknowledgement of legal and political actions from the EU. Humanitarian response needs, therefore, need to be accompanied by coherent political and legal support.



A resident of Gaza City searches the rubble for belongings in the aftermath of bombing by the Israeli army. Credit: AIN Media/ActionAid

What are parties offering you?

This scoreboard shows you how each party has positioned itself regarding ActionAid's priorities:

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

	Greens	EPP	S&D	The Left	ALDE	ECR
Intersectionality	2	0	2	2	1	0
Internationally	2	0	1	0	0	0
Cross-cutting	2	1	1	2	1	0
GBV <small>(gender-based violence)</small>	2	2	2	2	2	0
Category Score <small>(Maximum score - 8)</small>	8	3	6	6	4	0

CLIMATE JUSTICE

	Greens	EPP	S&D	The Left	ALDE	ECR
Climate Plans	2	1	1	2	1	0
Agroecology	2	0	2	2	1	0
Fossil fuels & industrial culture	2	0	0	2	1	0
Just energy transition	2	0	1	2	0	0
Category Score <small>(Maximum score - 8)</small>	8	1	4	8	3	0

GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

	Greens	EPP	S&D	The Left	ALDE	ECR
International cooperation	2	0	1	1	0	0
Tax justice	2	0	2	2	0	0
Global Debt crisis	2	0	0	2	0	0
Corporate responsibility	2	0	1	0	0	0
Intersectional feminist foreign policy	2	0	1	2	0	0
Category Score <small>(Maximum score - 10)</small>	10	0	5	7	0	0

MIGRATION

	Greens	EPP	S&D	The Left	ALDE	ECR
Safe pathways	2	0	2	2	2	0
Border control and externalisation	1	0	2	2	1	0
Migrants' rights within the EU	2	0	2	2	1	0
Category Score <small>(Maximum score - 4)</small>	5	0	6	6	4	0

GAZA CRISIS

	Greens	EPP	S&D	The Left	ALDE	ECR
Humanitarian situation	0	0	1	2	0	0
War crimes and accountability	2	0	0	2	0	0
Root causes	1	0	0	2	0	0
Way forward	2	0	1	1	0	0
Category Score <small>(Maximum score - 8)</small>	5	0	2	7	0	0

[1] <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/european-parliament-election/>

[2] <https://caneurope.org/reaction-european-parliament-urges-eu-to-ramp-up-climate-action-and-finance-ahead-of-cop28/>

Methodology

ActionAid has put together a list of 20 questions divided over five themes: **women's rights, climate justice, global inequalities, migration, and the Gaza crisis**. Party manifestoes were then given one of three ratings: good, moderate, or bad:

Good recognition of the problem, with measures to tackle it (2 points)

Limited recognition of the problem (1 point)

Bad or no recognition of the problem (0 points)

The themes and set of questions against which the manifestos were graded:

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Intersectionality: Do plans for gender equality and women's rights also h intersectional forms of privilege and oppression? This includes understanding, highlighting, and acting against all forms of racism, ableism, sexism and discrimination against sexual orientation in the government and all policy making processes.

Gender equality internationally: Is there attention to the influence/impact that EU has on the rights of women, youth and minorities worldwide? – e.g. through our international trade, taxation and investment; international treaties and participation in the UN; and International Financial Agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank? Is there any plan to have a specific budget for gender equality? Do plans for gender equality also comply with the Gender Action Plan III work plan and commitment of the EU implementing projects abroad?

Women's rights cross-cutting: Are women's rights an isolated topic and limited to the most obvious problems, or is there also attention to the structural ways in which gender inequality is reflected in many other economic and climate topics?

Gender Based Violence (GBV): Is GBV recognised as a major priority and funding commitment to address it?



Natalia, a Ukrainian volunteer at Insight, an ActionAid Partner specialising in GBV prevention. Credit: Anastasia Vlasova/ActionAid

CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate plans: Are the decarbonization efforts of the EU and its Member States in line with their fair share to keep global warming within 1.5°C? Is the manifesto committing the EU to a rapid and just phase out fossil fuels? Is the EU and its Member States providing sufficient finance and technology for developing countries to pursue a just transition away from fossil fuels and industrial agriculture?

Agroecology: Is attention paid to how large-scale industrial agriculture contributes to the climate crisis? Are there plans to encourage alternatives such as small-scale sustainable agriculture with agroecology at the center?

Phase out of funding to fossil fuels and industrial agriculture: Is the EU and its Member States willing to regulate financial markets to transition away from fossil fuels and industrial agriculture? Is the manifesto committing the EU to trigger the review clause to integrate financial services in the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDDD)? And make them adopt and align their operations with a science-based transition plan aligned with 1.5°C (through the CSDDD or the harmonization and strengthening of current regulations)?

Just energy transition: Is there recognition for the negative impact of raw material extraction on human rights and the environment? Is there a focus on a fair distribution of raw materials for the energy transition that also benefits women and local communities? Does the manifesto replicate extractivism patterns or is local sustainable production favored?

GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

International cooperation: Is there a budget for development cooperation of at least 0.7% of GNI intended? Is climate finance new and additional to this budget? Is there attention to local ownership of organizations from the Global South and women's rights organisations? Does the manifesto commit the EU to dedicate increased funding to the provision of gender responsive public service and health and education in partner countries?

Tax justice: Is there attention to fair and democratic tax agreements with countries in the Global South? Is the manifesto committing to a UN Tax Convention? Is the manifesto committing the EU to additional and new EU owned resources? And are those committed to EU international finance obligations such as climate finance or development finance? Are the revenues from Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) redistributed in international climate finance?

Global Debt crisis: Is the manifesto committing the EU and its Member States to efforts to overhaul the international financial architecture? Does the manifesto commit the EU and its Member States to deliver massive debt relief for climate action for developing countries? Is it committing the EU to support the UN's debt workout mechanism? Committing to the adoption of responsible lending and borrowing principles?

Corporate responsibility: Is the manifesto committing the EU to advance the negotiations at the United Nations for the binding treaty on Business and Human Rights? Is the manifesto committing the EU to improve the recent CSDDD to widen its scope and include a greater number of EU corporations? To extend the chain of activities? To include gender-specific provisions? To initiate any new regulation that can improve obligations of European multinational corporations.

Intersectional feminist foreign policy: Is there a focus on pursuing feminist foreign policy? Is attention paid to tackling unequal power structures and root causes of inequality?

MIGRATION

Safe pathways: Is there a commitment to promote safe pathways for migration and the respect of human rights and protections at EU borders? Migration will continue and legal safe pathways need be ensured to avoid human loss.

Border control and externalisation: Is there a position on externalisation of border control and mechanisms to ensure that human rights are protected, as well as a transparent monitoring mechanism notably of funds accessible for review by the parliament?

Migrants' rights within the EU: Is there a commitment on regularisation of the situation of undocumented migrants within Europe as well as a focus to have a more human and accessible administrative process encompassing access to legal help while applying for a status to stay in an EU Member State?

GAZA CRISIS

Humanitarian situation: Do manifestos call for opening of borders for humanitarian aid access and delivery? Is there any position on preventing humanitarian and civil shrinking space in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza?

War crimes and accountability: Are the manifestos calling for the end of war crimes and international accountability mechanisms to be effective and respected?

Addressing the root causes of the crisis: Is there any commitment to address the ongoing 75 years of military occupation depriving Palestinians of their basic rights and that lead to the ongoing severe crisis?

Way forward: The manifestos address a political and just solution based on the rights of Palestinians to self-determination, equal treatment, and freedom.



Palestinians arrive in Khan Yunis following an evacuation order by the Israeli army to leave Rafah. Credit: Majdi Fathi/ActionAid