



Fair and Sustainable





Fair and Sustainable

Alternattiva Demokratika — The Green Party
www.ahdar.green

Today, more than ever, all Europeans, as well as people all over the world, realise that the deep crisis caused by COVID-19 can only be overcome through solidarity and cooperation. Together we can plan a new future, not just for our country but also in Europe as well as globally. A recovery which is sustainable and just. A future of social, economic and environmental resilience.

The question that requires an answer is: what future do we want?

Assistance from the European Union in the form of grants and loans totalling a billion euro to Malta (loans repayable by 2058) which can be increased and supplemented by locally generated loans through Government bonds should be an investment aimed at transforming the economy into a circular one, reducing pollution drastically, and implementing the reforms necessary so that the economy operates within sustainable limits and at the service of people, respecting their health and the environment in which they live¹.

¹ European Commission seizes the momentum of the Franco-German initiative:
<https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/covid19-plan-de-relance-de-la-commission-europeenne/>

Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party proposes a Green Plan, to get the economy back on its feet.

1.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)² is designed to cater for large agro-industrial companies which export outside the EU. Small farmers, including Maltese farmers, barely gain from this policy, whereas large companies absorb most of the funding. The CAP has led to increased pesticide use. The Maltese Government should use local and EU financing in the agricultural sector to support small farmers, rather than subsidising big companies, thus financing environmental damage. The goal should be the support of small farmers to develop local markets; scientific and technical support to decrease use of pesticides; and sustainable farming such as training in best practices to increase the carbon retention in soil³, e.g. organic farming. Support towards sustainable fishing is also very important⁴.

2.

An increased focus on conserving water resources is essential. European Funds were misused in order to facilitate the dumping of rainwater. Thus, remedial action to preserve rainwater should be a priority. Substantial fines should be imposed in cases where new buildings are not provided with rainwater cisterns.

3.

It is unacceptable that when a crisis strikes, medical and protective equipment, medical tests and medicines are seized by a group of EU member states at the expense of others. Neither is it acceptable that no such equipment is manufactured within the European Union. Malta should insist on the establishing of an EU-based public laboratory to ensure that essential medicines, medical equipment and testing are constantly accessible. Commercialisation of scientific knowledge should not hinder public health. Cooperation should prevail over competition. Medical research should be based on universally accessible open science⁵. This includes accessibility to public entities.

2 The problems of CAP (Common Agricultural Policy): <https://www.goodfoodgoodfarming.eu/about-cap/>

3 <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/soil-carbon-storage-84223790/>

4 https://www.panda.org/knowledge_hub/?339493/evaluating-europe-course-sustainable-fisheries-by-2020

5 Open Science: <https://eua.eu/issues/21:open-science.html>



4.

Every company, especially the large ones, including: banks, insurance companies and financial sector companies that received or will receive some form of public aid, should be obliged to change their operations concretely, in order that mean global temperature increase is kept below 1.5°C. These plans, based on science, should include clear targets for companies to achieve a zero carbon target as quickly as possible.

5.

All aid given to companies must be tied to an obligation for the company to change its operations so that it becomes climate friendly, gives a commitment to job security, ensures equal pay for all genders and focuses on training for a transition towards a circular and green economy, as well as to eliminate precarious work. Companies that hide their assets and profits offshore to avoid taxation - while workers and smaller national companies carry all the burden - should not benefit from any aid.

Malta should not continue to base a good part of its Gross Domestic product on offering tax evasion 'services' to companies, this goes against the basic principle of solidarity. Malta is undermining social solidarity within other countries by encouraging tax evasion by offering heavily reduced taxes in Malta. Malta cannot expect solidarity on other issues in return should it continue undermining social solidarity.

6.

Our country, as well as other EU member states together with offering universally accessible public services and minimum wages that are really decent (a living wage), should seriously consider a Universal Basic Income, which ensures a decent standard of living, even when a crisis breaks out, including for artists and the self-employed. A European effort is needed to secure funding for such schemes. These include fair taxes on those who speculate on the financial markets, multinational companies evading and stealing taxes due on their huge profits, and fossil fuels polluters who are destroying the earth and the climate. The income from these taxes should go to people both as Universal Basic Income schemes, and through the strengthening of public services.

The COVID-19 crisis has also proved that the concept of smart working is feasible, for both public and private entities. Several models could be implemented, for example for two days a week could be work-from-home days. These kind schemes reduce pollution, reduce pressure on public transport services and improve people's quality of life.

7.

While it is necessary to make a greater effort on a European level to do as much as possible to reach zero carbon by 2030, it is probably now too late in the day to reach that target. It is a matter of urgency that, at the very least, each and every EU country commits with clear and legally binding targets, to reduce carbon emissions by at least sixty five percent (65%) by 2040, at the latest, and zero carbon by 2050. A sizeable part of the billion euro investment and other investment through Malta Government bonds must be used to achieve this goal.

A Green Deal speeds up the shift to renewable energy rapidly and leads to improved quality of life for everyone. Instead of a proper plan, in Malta we have a National Energy and Climate Plan and The National Air Pollution Control Program with low and vague targets, and with no ambition. Targets should be reviewed immediately. We need action to move quickly to a mix of different clean energy sources. We need energy from wind, including offshore and micro-turbines, mandatory solar panels on every building and factory, as well as energy from the sea by means of waves and floating solar panels. The cumulative impact of small projects, such as micro-turbines is huge. The Government should commit to also buying renewable energy from the interconnector and enter into partnerships with our neighbour, Sicily in renewable energy sources so that we have both clean energy sources and increased employment in this area.

There should be investment to improve the electricity distribution system not only to reduce energy losses but also to make it possible to better transmit and distribute a larger volumes of renewable energy generated in residential areas.



8.

Transport is a primary source of greenhouse gas emissions in Malta. The policies of past and present governments were and still are centred around car use, even though trips in Malta are short. AD has repeatedly proposed measures to reduce emissions from cars. These proposals include Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), safe and inclusive roads for clean transport, and the pedestrianisation of village cores. Such measures should decrease the six hundred yearly deaths attributable to air pollution.

There is a need for extensive and professional projects to include trees within our streets, both to make streets more welcoming for people, and to decrease the effects of climate change and the heat island effect⁶, thereby decreasing energy consumption.

A substantial part of EU investment should be utilised for implementing safe and secure routes for bicycles, microscooters, and pedelecs. The routes should connect all Malta and Gozo, and should serve to make our roads safer for people, prioritising clean forms of transport and pedestrians.

Pollution resulting from aviation and shipping needs to be addressed. A date for the phasing out of petrol and diesel needs to be set urgently. Investment plans for transport should aim to reduce the number of cars on the roads, while making sure that the remaining cars make use of sustainable electricity sources, whilst investing in transport alternatives that are affordable, safe and sustainable.

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/feb/21/urban-heat-islands-cooling-things-down-with-trees-green-roads-and-fewer-cars>

9.

All aid to economic sectors, including the tourism sector, should be based on the principle of sustainability, the use of local products and respecting residents. The obligations of the tourism industry, hotels, and catering establishments to separate their waste, should be clearer and more enforceable, with clear targets to reduce waste, and with a technical science-based plan to move towards a zero-waste target. Mass-tourism, with almost three million tourists per year is unsustainable, as it puts a large strain on our local infrastructure whilst weakening, and not strengthening the residents' quality of life. It is not currently possible, and neither should we attempt to go back to the old tourism model. The number of hotel beds should be reduced to a sustainable figure, whilst workers in the tourism industry should be trained and transitioned towards other forms of work. Public funds and public land should not be provided to expand the tourism industry. Many so-called tourist projects have in fact resulted in property speculation.

10.

Post-COVID funds from the EU and the Maltese Government should be invested, through research and cooperation with other countries, in clean technologies that focus on the most polluting sectors, and should be used to set up and implement action plans towards zero-pollution of the air, sea, and soil. There is a need for research and a clear plan to cut neurotoxic, POPs, endocrine disrupting, immunotoxins, and other harmful chemicals.

11.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown that a regulated digital revolution is important for the growth of a resilient society. Digitalisation of public services is important, with relevant risks minimised. Malta, together with EU countries, should engage in creating an open source, transparent digital ecosystem, autonomous from financial interests of big American corporations. Public investment should aim towards providing equitable access to a digital ecosystem which serves public interests.



12.

Over the coming years, the number of vacant properties will increase, due to the departure of foreign nationals. Empty property should be put on the rental market, and refusal to rent property, should result in vacant property taxes. Taxes should reflect the social value of property and disincentivise speculation and penalise those who keep property unutilised.

Investment in building renovation and the relevant jobs should increase, to decrease the amount of energy used in warming or cooling of houses⁷.

Of relevance to infrastructure and climate change, is the issue of the impact of rising sea levels⁸. In Malta coastal developments, such as residences, hotels and roads are at risk. Rather, investment should target an infrastructure which decreases emissions to zero, as explained earlier, and an infrastructure which safeguards the environment and mitigates the effects of rising sea levels⁹.

⁷ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/european-cities-target-net-zero-carbon-buildings-by-2050/>

⁸ <https://www.alternattiva.org.mt/malta-a-double-faced-climate-change-policy/>

⁹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/sea-level-rise-6/assessment>

The proposals in this document by Alternattiva Demokratika — The Green Party involve investment to bring about a change in the economy, and ensuring that a new economic model absorbs workers in new sectors of a clean and circular economy. Work should be a dignified job and yield a decent living. We cannot miss this opportunity and go back to business as usual, that is: the old normal of polluted air, degraded urban areas, road congestion, precarious work, and the old normal where polluters continue to pollute with everyone else bearing the brunt of their actions.

Nor can we turn a blind eye to the destruction, poverty, ecological disasters and the multitude of problems that climate change is causing. Whoever brings up excuses for not investing heavily in the necessary measures to change our societies and the way the economy functions, and allows polluters to carry on with business as usual is irresponsible. There is no other way out. Malta's risible climate change targets should be scrapped and replaced with a clear and legally binding science-based zero-carbon action plan now. We have to move to a new normal. Our economic and social model and the way we live must be based on respect for nature, our planet and ultimately on respect for ourselves and for each other.

ahdar.green