



## EEYP

The **Erasmian European Youth Parliament (EEYP)** is a part of the 'European Youth Capital' program. The 'European Youth Capital' is a title granted each year to a European city. Torino is proud to be The European Youth Capital for 2010. As Marta Levi, Councillor on Youth Policies in Torino, pointed out this title "brings together the past, the present and the future of Torino. It confirms the fact that the city of Torino has a leading role in the innovation of youth policies and gives us an even bigger incentive to invest more in young people, as protagonists of the future of our city". The European Commission strongly supports this initiative. More information can be found on the official Torino Youth Capital website: <http://www.pyoulife.com/>.

The aim of the Youth Capital program is the empowerment of young people and to encourage the implementation of innovative ideas with regard to the active participation of young people in society.

The EEYP for example makes you - students - aware of common problems in different European countries. You soundly analyse these problems and discuss and present possible and realistic solutions. The EEYP aims to become a source of ideas taken seriously by European politicians and to be a role model for networks of (ex) students in Europe.

The EEYP differs from other European Youth Parliaments as it focuses on topics related to major European cities. Furthermore the EEYP gives you the opportunity to discuss these issues with professionals and experts such as CEO's and politicians during a 'meet the boss' session.

The overall theme for the specific subjects you will be researching and debating for the EEYP Torino 2010 is **Environmentally Sustainable Cities in Europe**. The region of Torino, Piemonte, has taken the Kyoto Protocol objectives seriously and is a staunch supporter of environmentally friendly solutions.

The name 'Erasmian' comes from the well-known Rotterdam born writer, philosopher and humanist Desiderius Erasmus, who lived in the 16th century and who, for his time, was a role model for the 'European thinker'. Furthermore Erasmus graduated at the Torino University.

## Objectives:

EEYP is an exciting educational activity that allows young people to attain the following personal objectives:

- Improve independent research skills
- Develop organizational skills
- Strengthen ability to negotiate and debate
- Improve public speaking skills
- Meet young people with interesting and varied backgrounds
- Expand knowledge of European environmental issues related to city life
- Enhance ability to find solutions to local environmental problems
- Become good European citizen models

## **How to use the booklet:**

This booklet, by no means wanting to limit your research, is intended to give you an initial starting point for your committee work i.e. writing the resolutions.

To prepare properly it is important to point out that the subjects highlighted are very broad and are a general framework for your initial research. For each committee subject various practical and concrete issues are presented in the booklet, and these are just some examples within the framework. This framework is necessary to give a general overview of some of the various aspects in each subject you might want to focus your research on.

The aim of your research is to be able to write practical realistic resolutions for city life, which will have an environmentally sustainable impact both on the immediate future and on the long-term.

## **Environmentally Sustainable Cities Introduction**

“European urban areas face a number of environmental challenges. Although the scale and intensity of the problems vary, a common set of issues can be identified. These comprise poor air quality, traffic volumes and congestion, high levels of ambient noise and scarcity of quiet areas as sport, play and recreational areas, neglect of the built environment, high level of greenhouse gas emissions, urban sprawl and generation of large volumes of waste and waste water. These environmental challenges are serious and have significant impacts on health, the environment and economic performance.”

How might these environmental challenges be addressed and solved? A starting point could be by changing attitude as Serge Latouche, university professor at Paris-Sud has explained. Western society and thus city life is very much based on growth, i.e. the accumulation of riches, which however leads to the destruction of the environment and worsens social inequality.

“Maybe we need to aim to create a society that is based on quality not quantity, on cooperation and not competition.”

Even though quality - of life - depends on the individual, and each and every one of has a different definition, it could be defined as existing when people can live a healthy, pleasant and safe life.

However this quality cannot be obtained without natural resources i.e. common goods, energy, infrastructure etc, which in the end all come from the environment. This makes it very difficult to distinguish between quality of life and sustainability, i.e. conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of the natural resources.

So if the aim of any citizen is a good quality of life, he or she in the long run has also to take into consideration how much is being taken from the environment. In other words if we are to avoid the complete depletion of our natural resources and still have a good standard of life shouldn't we -citizens - change attitude and aim towards a sustainable quality of life?

Advocates believe citizens and policy-makers can find solutions by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as possible, thus limiting their ecological footprint, which is the sum of an individual's impact on the environment based on consumption and pollution.

As three quarters of European citizens live in cities and towns and the number of people living in cities is expected to increase further, it is plausible to focus on improving European urban areas.

Many European cities and citizens have already started changing attitude, for example there is an award for the greenest European city.

European Green Capital Award:  
Stockholm 2010  
Hamburg in 2011

Eight Finalists:

- Amsterdam
- Bristol
- Copenhagen
- Freiburg
- Hamburg
- Münster
- Oslo
- Stockholm

What characteristics do these cities have that make them 'greener' i.e. more sustainable than other European cities? The evaluation panel for the European Green Capital Award assessed:

1. Local contribution to global climate change
2. Local mobility and passenger transport
3. Availability of green areas open to the public
4. Quality of local ambient air
5. Noise pollution
6. Waste production and management
7. Water consumption and
8. Waste water management
9. Sustainable management of the local authority
10. Sustainable land use

What more can be done?

You – the inheritors of this planet and more specifically of the cities you live in - what would you like your cities to be like tomorrow? This question can only be addressed if first of all you are able to answer what quality of life means to you.

“ A great human revolution in just a single individual can help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and enable a change in all humankind.

” Daisaku Ikeda

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/home\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/urban/home_en.htm)

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/sustainable-cities/article-175936>

<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27/081.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serge\\_Latouche](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serge_Latouche)

[http://www.eukn.org/eukn/news/2008/04/ecologic-footprint-cities\\_1020.html](http://www.eukn.org/eukn/news/2008/04/ecologic-footprint-cities_1020.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple\\_living](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_living)

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/quality-of-life-in-Europes-cities-and-towns>

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/green\\_cities\\_submenu/finalists\\_2010\\_2011.html](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/green_cities_submenu/finalists_2010_2011.html)

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/press\\_submenu/081002\\_applicants.html](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/press_submenu/081002_applicants.html)

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/how\\_to\\_submenu/evaluation.html](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/how_to_submenu/evaluation.html)

## Economy

Economy is the wealth and resources of a country or region, especially in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services. The current economy is based on the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) This is good for measuring the pace of the economy, showing how quickly we are earning money, regardless of whether this delivers useful products and services or whether it causes damage to people and the environment.

In all of Europe and in the rest of the world the headlines are now focused on the current economic crisis we are all facing. The economy is at a standstill, meaning that this economic system is failing. Crisis derives from the Greek word “krisis”, which means to decide. Economy also means careful management of the resources available.

Could the economic crisis be seized as an opportunity to change and decide on another economic system? Should GDP continue to be the guiding policy for Europe? Could we strive for a more sustainable economic system?

### Degrowth

(in French: décroissance, in Italian: decrescita) is a political and economic ideology advocating a gradual decrease in economic output. Degrowth supporters believe that downscaling production is the only solution to the environmental issues currently faced by mankind.

Proponents of de-growth argue that current economic growth is not sustainable over the long term because it depletes natural resources and destroys the environment, and because it fails to help populations improve their welfare significantly.

So is it possible to live with less money, i.e. get citizens to think more about their quality of life and less about the quantity of money they are earning?

### Taxes

They are a compulsory contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions.

Who should be paying more taxes from an environmental point of view?

Should there be perhaps a tax for products imported from non-Kyoto signing countries?

Let us look at one example of environmental tax:

Italy is among the 12 European countries that has been fined by the European Council for not meeting their Kyoto 2012 carbon dioxide(CO<sub>2</sub>) emission targets. The state government will thus increase the private citizens electricity bill by adding a tax to pay the fine (Repubblica 20 august 2009).

Why haven't these countries met their targets? Do you think it is right to have the citizens pay these fines? Are all the member states adopting the same measures to pay their fines? Could there be other forms of payments that do not necessarily come directly from the citizen's pocket?

Furthermore Torino's region – Piemonte - has promised to meet the Kyoto 2012 CO<sub>2</sub> emission targets.

Should its citizens be paying the state fine if it has been able to meet with the European standards? In other words should this be a regional or state tax?

### Cars

Modern economy, among other things, revolves very much around the production of cars. Furthermore to then maintain the car, i.e. pay insurance, taxes, fuel etc, an average citizen spends 5 months of his/her annual salary, which once again for the economy is all very good. Cars though are one of the biggest emitters of pollution.

It seems that citizens are conscious of the problems related to pollution caused by driving and would very much like to reduce their ecological footprint, i.e. one's impact on the environment based on consumption and pollution. However when buying a car, for example, eco-cars are not always a top priority, all one has to do is look at the number of SUVs on the street to realize that the priority is not to pollute less.

In Italy the only incentive to change to supposedly more ecological cars was to ban the first 3 Euro models (Euro 0, 1 and 2) from city centers or to lower car taxes for these greener models. The result was that in less than a year most Italians had changed to the Euro 4 model. Not even the petrol crisis had had this effect. The conclusion apparently is that citizens are still not persuaded by their ecological opinions but by specific laws.

In your opinion what can governments and specifically local authorities do to further persuade the citizens- and in particular the new generations, who are about to get their first cars- to change to greener models?

Furthermore are green models really environmentally friendly – i.e. are the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> really lower, do these cars in actual fact consume less petrol?

### **Shopping centers and local businesses**

Torino, like all major European cities, has many local shops and small supermarkets in the city centre where citizens can buy their everyday food, but it is also surrounded by many shopping centres. Buying goods in supermarkets is generally less expensive than buying from local retailers.

Why are supermarkets less expensive?

Shouldn't local governments protect local retailers?

How can local economies survive in cities that count more and more on big, 'globalized' shops and brands?

What can local governments and their citizens do to attract and keep local businesses in business?

### **Banks**

They are the core of our current economic system. These invest money deposited by costumers.

What kind of companies should banks invest in?

Should banks perhaps invest in more ecological solutions and ideas?

Could Banks invest in local business that reduce, reuse and recycle instead of investing in big corporations.

### **Microcredit**

It is a growing opportunity where small loans are given to open new local businesses,.

Is microcredit a realistic opportunity?

Can microcredit help environmentally friendly businesses?

Have governments found incentives for microcredit?

Are there more effective ways of informing the general public of this opportunity?

<http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/faq.html>

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20026786.100-special-report-why-politicians-dare-not-limit-economic-growth.html?full=true>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De-growth>

<http://www.energy.eu/#non-renewable>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microcredit>

## Education and Labour

The society we live in today teaches us to go to school to find a job. The jobs citizens then seek are mainly jobs that create money, which is then spent on for example purchasing goods, paying the taxes or going on holiday. This though is a vicious circle from the environmental point of view, i.e. it is not sustainable. In the long run, as we can now see with the loss of jobs due to the current economic crisis this system is flawed, and probably needs new standards. The starting point could be the new generations seeking jobs. The young adults leaving school perhaps need a new set of values to start their working lives. These values possibly could be connected less with earning big salaries and wanting to drive posh cars and more with a healthier, simpler quality of life. Furthermore there are millions of jobs linked to the environment but in general, either they are not taken into serious consideration or are not considered worthy jobs by European standards.

### Education

Schools are the place where most future generations come into first contact with society as a whole. Students at school should be learning, first of all, to respect one another and everything that surrounds them, i.e. school desks, toilets etc. Only recently, though, has the environment started becoming a topic in classes. Environmental education is a vast subject but it can be summarized into knowing what nature provides and respecting the fact that there are limits to the number of resources the planet can produce in a given time.

Do you agree with the fact that schools are not only about finding jobs thus a place in society? Or do you believe education is also a place where to learn to become better citizens?

Should schools develop along the lines of giving a broad general education or should they also be teaching more practical ways of living? Shouldn't the younger generations leave school with the necessary skills to give real quality to their lives?

What is quality of life? Is this the ability to make money and then buy ready-made food from supermarkets, more and more clothes or is quality of life the ability to cook a homemade meal and manage a house, for example?

Furthermore the new generations are continuously bombarded by the media and by western culture in general that buying and spending brings happiness. Do you believe this to be true? Is this a sustainable way to live? What impact does this way of thinking have on the environment?

What can schools and education do to teach the future generations to help improve their environment? Shouldn't perhaps environmental studies be an integrated part of all scholastic programs?

Let's take trees as an example. Trees are a vital part of a healthy environment as they recycle CO<sub>2</sub>, release O<sub>2</sub>, give us shade in parks and make cities greener.

In one park in Torino there are a variety of big trees, like oak and beech, and smaller ornamental trees like the *magnolia sieboldii*. This is a small tree, which is a real attraction for children who love to climb on it. Problem is that the tree is rather fragile and the branches break easily. Thus the trees in the park with ever more children climbing up them have been killed off or are in terrible condition. How might this problem be solved?

### Paper and computers

An enormous amount of paper is consumed at school, due to handouts, tests, exercises etc. Most of this paperwork unfortunately ends up in the paper bins – hopefully - to be then recycled.

Can you think of ways in which the amount of paper could be reduced? When photocopying do you and your teachers for example also use the back of the piece of paper?

More and more schools are now equipped with computers. This might seem like an advantage as it could in the long run reduce the amount of paperwork for example. However this also means that the amount of computers, which are made of plastic, is destined to increase. The old hardware more often than not is dumped in Asian countries, where it causes enormous environmental and health problems.

What happens in your school to the old computers that need replacing? How can this growing number be recycled? Could schools be a starting place in finding solutions to not dump the un-serviceable hardware in India or China?

## School canteens

Most schools have a canteen or bar where students can buy a snack or lunch. Have you ever really looked at what is offered? In Torino most school bars offer not only fresh sandwiches and meals but also candies, chocolates or drinks from big international food chains. These products are considered both not very healthy and nutritional but also polluting due to their packaging.

Thus students already at school are becoming “addicted” to these types of products, certainly helping the companies make a profit but certainly not helping students to become healthy and environmentally aware.

Furthermore very often the meals are served on plastic plates or the sandwiches are wrapped in cellophane, which cause an increase in the amount of plastic waste generated by every school.

What kind of products does your school canteen offer? Are these products sustainable? What in your opinion can make canteens and bars in schools more environmentally friendly?

## Eco-labour opportunities

“Eco-friendly technologies are good for business, reduce pressure on the environment and can create new jobs. The European Commission invites all stakeholders and the public to discover and share promising opportunities to make eco-innovation an everyday reality throughout Europe.”

However most of the eco-jobs offered are not paid, thus becoming voluntary work.

Can this system be changed in any way, allowing citizens to earn a living and at the same time help improve our environment?

Is it possible and realistic for a Council to push people to seek more eco-jobs? Can or should local governments find ways of encouraging citizens to take up the various environmentally friendly job opportunities and pay the workers?

Let’s take recycling as an example, as David Morris has pointed out:

«Recycling saves money and reduces pollution. Recycling creates more jobs than landfilling or incineration. And a largely ignored but very important consideration, recycling reduces our need to dump our garbage in someone else’s backyard.»

Nowadays if something breaks or is damaged most citizens prefer to buy new appliances like the fridge or washing machine or even just a new pair of shoes. Thus there has been a steady decline in the number of repair shops and repairmen, such as cobblers. Why do you think we are prone to discard instead of repair? It is true that continuously buying new products helps the economy, but in the long run is this sustainable? From the point of view of employment what difference does it make if there are more blue collars, making new appliances or shoes, rather than repairmen? Furthermore don’t repairmen mean jobs are kept local while most appliances are built either in East Europe or as far away as China, which also creates more pollution through transport?

What other job opportunities can you think of that are more local and sustainable?

## Work environments

European urban citizens have been mainly educated into believing that the best jobs are behind an office desk and in front of a computer monitor. These working environments are a second home for the majority of urban citizens where often up to 8-9 hours of the day are often spent.

How environmentally friendly are work places? What can councils do to help working environments not only become safer but also more environmentally conscious?

Furthermore most workers travel by car to get to and from work, creating traffic congestion, thus pollution. London has tried to limit this problem by putting a fee on motorists entering certain parts of the city centre whereas in Torino you pay to park your car.

Should there be perhaps incentives to help workers find a house closer to work?

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/efe/sust\\_dev/20090510\\_etap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/news/efe/sust_dev/20090510_etap_en.htm)

<http://www.eco-jobs.info/en/startpage/>

<http://www.ilsr.org/recycling/recyclingmeansbusiness.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_congestion\\_charge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_congestion_charge)



## Housing

The general increase in salaries in the last decades has allowed European citizens to afford bigger houses and usually away from the city centres, leading to urban sprawl. This can be perceived as a gain in quality of life, i.e. an increase in the number of rooms in a house or the possibility of living in greener environments away from the chaos of the city. However from an environmental point of view these are not advantages. Cities have reached geographical limits to their possibility to grow and expand, as this is taking away vital natural habitat and agricultural land. Creative solutions need to be found to build or renovate existing buildings to avoid urban sprawl and build instead more compact neighbourhoods.

Furthermore bigger houses, if this means one family per big house, in general mean higher energy demands and more materials to build them; while living further away from the work place or shopping areas causes more traffic, thus pollution. In fact houses and cars put together consume two thirds of all fossil fuels.

On the other hand the current economic crisis is now leading to a change in housing solutions: citizens, especially the younger working generations, are having trouble paying the mortgages or rents. In Torino for example many younger generations are sharing more and more apartments or finding places to live closer to work, certainly indirectly bringing greater benefits to the environment. The question is would these new solutions be abandoned with a new economic boom? Could these changes instead lead to a new housing system centred more on environmentally friendly living standards and houses? What are local authorities doing in your city to help create sustainable buildings?

### **Renovation versus building**

There are 50,000 empty apartments in Torino even though there is a constant demand for houses. Local authorities however continue to build new houses in the suburbs or on abandoned industrial sites in and around the city centre, causing urban sprawl. In other cases though for example the ex Fiat factory Lingotto has been converted into a shopping centre, multiplex movie theatre and museum.

Do you believe it is more environmentally friendly to renovate existing houses or to build new ones? What are the advantages and disadvantages of renovating and building?

Do you think factories or other abandoned buildings should be converted into shopping centres etc or should they become houses, for example?

Furthermore what types of houses have a better ecological footprint – high-rise or two-storey buildings? Is it possible to renovate or build new houses using sustainable materials for example sustainable certified wood, thus saving natural resources? What about building using waste, like some realities in Japan or England?

### **House insulation**

Houses on average consume about 20 litres of gasoline per square meter a year just for heating. This means that an average two-bedroom apartment or 70 square meter apartment needs approximately 1,400 litres of gasoline a year. Most of the heat though is lost through the roof, walls and windows, meaning that the fuel consumed is in reality wasted.

A great number of solutions can be adopted to reduce this heat loss, for example double or triple glazed windows or natural or synthetic insulation material for roofs and walls. However houses could consume less than 2 litres of gasoline per square meter a year for heating, these are called passive houses. These houses can maintain an internal temperature of 20° even when outside it's below zero. These houses in fact are found in cities and towns in Scandinavia or Austria, which are a lot colder than Torino. Why aren't all houses built or renovated using this architecture?

### **Greening houses**

Many balconies and terraces all over European cities are full of plants, this certainly pleases the eye and even though only very little the plants do contribute to absorbing some CO<sub>2</sub>. In Paris a museum has been covered in an array of plants.

Why aren't all houses and buildings greener i.e. covered in plants, like ivy?

Run off rain water especially when there are heavy rains are a problem on the streets, one possible solution, implemented in Scandinavia, is having green roofs. These roofs both collect water and provide insulation.

### **Micro-generation**

Houses need energy to run, from heating water for the shower to cooking a meal. Most of this energy comes from burning fossil fuels, which means emitting carbon dioxide.

Are there other –more environmentally friendly - ways to produce this energy?

Many new houses in Torino are fitted with solar and photovoltaic panels.

Why aren't all roofs covered with these technologies?

There have been some steps to try and get private citizens to install solar panels and such, but many Italian citizens complain that these measures have not cut the costs of their installation or made it any easier to install renewable energy systems.

What incentives has the European Union adopted? Are these incentives viable?

Why has it been easier for German cities like Freiburg to install solar panels than in cities like Torino?

## Water

In Spain the average citizen consumes more than 250 litres of water a day, while in Lithuania a person consumes less than 100 litres a day. European citizens in general don't think about the importance of water, as this is in general a free or economic primary resource. Fresh water though is not an unlimited resource and most of the water we take for granted is wasted both in the pipelines and then in the houses. For example have you ever thought how much water is consumed when having a shower?

Moreover in the past houses used to collect rainwater in cisterns. This water was then used for all household needs from washing up to flushing the toilet. Collecting rainwater would also benefit streets during heavy rains, as very often the draining systems in streets get flooded causing many problems in cities during these periods.

Why aren't houses built with cisterns anymore? Or looking at it from another perspective how come water from washing up or from the shower is not collected and then recycled? There seems to be a lot of potential for not wasting water, what solutions do you believe authorities should implement?

Most households do not use tap water to drink, the majority of Torino's citizens buy plastic bottles, while a minority has changed to glass bottles, having these delivered to their homes.

Why don't citizens drink tap water? Is it not safe to drink? If it isn't, can't the safety standards be improved? Is drinking bottled water- plastic or glass- really safer as the general public believes?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bloom/actions/sustainabletimber.shtml>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brownfield\\_land](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brownfield_land)

<http://www.urban-logement.eu/Toward-a-European-Policy-for.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passive\\_house](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passive_house)

<http://www.greenroofs.com/projects/pview.php?id=553>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microgeneration>

[http://www.freiburg.de/servlet/PB/show/1199617\\_12/GreenCity.pdf](http://www.freiburg.de/servlet/PB/show/1199617_12/GreenCity.pdf)

[http://www.grid.unep.ch/product/publication/freshwater\\_europe/consumption.php](http://www.grid.unep.ch/product/publication/freshwater_europe/consumption.php)

<http://www.science-parliament.eu/forums/2010-how-to-address-the-topic-water/734/tap-and-drinking-water>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bottled\\_water](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bottled_water)

## 4 Infrastructure and Waste Management

Since the 1960s, cities, thanks to the general increase in salaries and rise in car ownership, as a consequence have brought to urban sprawl – the realization of low density urban expansion.

Infrastructure, and in particular motorways, which have tripled in Europe in the last 30 years, has been the driving force behind urban sprawl. This has allowed European citizens to live further away from the city centres, in greener environments, offering a perceived improvement on the quality of life. However there are a number of negative aspects, for example commuting to and from work causes traffic jams, which means pollution, stress and accidents. Furthermore transport infrastructure is usually built on cheap agricultural land. Agricultural land is not only necessary for local food production, but it is also an ecosystem – a biological community of interacting organisms and their environment. Eliminating or deteriorating these ecosystems leads to fragmentation of natural areas and thus a decrease in biodiversity. For the moment the loss of local agricultural land is not perceived as a major problem, as most European food is not produced near the cities. This though could all change due to the economic crisis where high fuel prices and thus food prices might lead to a new advantage in producing food locally.

During the Bosnian War in Sarajevo when the citizens withstood sieges, food was produced inside the city and more significantly on landfills. This example not only proves that at times of need food can be produced inside a city, but also highlights another aspect – our waste and how to manage it.

Cities produce the majority of the garbage in the world and thus it seems logical that if waste needs to be reduced and managed efficiently the right place to start is in cities. All rubbish from organic waste to packaging, if not managed properly, is highly toxic.

Let us take plastic for example: this manmade product is completely non-biodegradable, which means that all the plastic ever produced in the world still exists somewhere. Most people believe that the plastic consumed is then either recycled or ends up in the landfills for good. However this is not correct, less than 4% is recycled and because of plastics' lightweight properties it does not stay in landfills, but is carried by wind and water. Algalita Marine Research Foundation states: "in the Central North Pacific Ocean Gyre, broken, degraded pieces of plastic outweigh zooplankton by 6 to 1. Marine ecosystems are harmed by plastic debris. 90% of Laysan Albatross chick carcasses contain plastic. Fish and other seabirds mistake plastics for food. Plastic debris release harmful plasticizers and become carriers for other hydrophobic pollutants, like PCBs, DDT, dioxin, and transport them into the food chain when consumed. These pollutants bioaccumulate and biomagnify up the food chain. Indigenous cultures that thrive on hunting marine mammals for sustenance have been shown to carry the highest levels of toxins in their bodies when compared to people living in urban centres in Europe and North America." However we – European citizens - are the plastic consumers, so don't we have a moral duty to try and reduce the amount of plastic, and more in general rubbish?

### Transport

It is quite clear to all that using public transport is far better for the environment than using cars. However there are a number of limits to using public transport. For example night buses are far less frequent than daytime buses; in many cities the underground shuts down completely during the night; or simply new suburban areas are not serviced properly by local transport.

Is traffic a problem in your city? How is your local authority tackling the problem?

What environmentally friendly solutions have local governments found to reduce the citizens' need to drive around in cars? What more can be done to get the inhabitants out of their cars and use more public transport?

Why is public transport encouraged during the day but not the nights?

### Cycling

Bicycles are considered by many one of the most ingenious inventions of man. From an environmental point of view this is certainly correct. More and more European citizens are using bicycles to move around the city. This however is causing a number of problems, especially in cities that do not have adequate infrastructure for this growing trend.

La Repubblica, an Italian newspaper, in August, highlighted a problem though: "cyclists are considered dangerous in Italy. The local police has started fining or taking away points from driving licenses from cyclists for talking on their mobile phones, going in the opposite direction to the traffic flow, and for cycling their dogs on a leash. Furthermore in Italy on average one cyclist dies everyday. The Italian cyclists themselves have protested saying that their aren't enough cycling paths: while in Germany 35% of the streets have cycling paths", in Torino, for example, this is less than 10%. Building more cycling paths certainly would help solve these problems. Is your local administration moving in this direction? Moreover how can cycling in cities become safer – what measures should local governments take? Do you believe building more cycling paths would educate undisciplined cyclists or are fines necessary?

## **Pedestrian streets**

The more people walk, the less cars and the healthier the lifestyle.

Pedestrian streets in city centres are on the rise. Torino's city centre is about to close another street to traffic. Most pedestrian streets are paved allowing people to go for a stroll while shopping or sit outside a café. Can you think of ways of making these pedestrian streets even more environmentally friendly? Could local governments set some standards for all pedestrian streets?

## **Parking and shops**

Parking lots are always in high demand in city centres. Torino is continuously building new parking areas, very often having to cut down trees in parks or tearing down old buildings to make room for parking cars. On the other hand though shopping centres are being built in the suburbs, forcing the costumers to reach these by car.

How can parking lots be greener?

Can parking lots be more than just "concrete boxes"?

What have city councils done to reduce the need for parking space?

In your opinion should city councils invest money in building parking lots in city centres if the number of cars should be decreased in the long term?

Should local governments be selling public land in suburbs for shopping centres and parking lots?

What are the advantages/disadvantages to shopping in a mall verses shopping in local shops? Why are most shopping centres built in the suburbs?

How can shopping centres become more environmentally friendly?

For example shopping centres use air-conditioning to attract costumers during the hot summer months.

Is air-conditioning safe for public health or for the environment?

## **Waterways**

Most European cities are built along a river bank.

Torino's river – the Po – is not used in any practical way while, for example, London transports its rubbish on the Thames.

How is the waterway – if present – used in your city?

Furthermore is it possible to swim in your city's river? If not – why not?

In Torino only 50 years ago there were beaches along the river and citizens could swim in the Po. Some people do take a dip and come out unharmed, but the public's opinion in general remains that too much is dumped in rivers from the sewage system to agriculture.

How has the quality of your city's river changed? Is it possible to improve the quality of the river making it safe to swim again?

## **Energy**

Cities cause the Urban heat Island effect, meaning that temperatures are higher than average.

Do you believe cities have an impact on global warming? If so how can cities reduce their average temperatures?

What energy sources are really environmentally friendly i.e. cut down on emissions, and in particular CO<sub>2</sub>?

The Italian government would like to build new nuclear power plants. Torino's region, Piemonte, is one of the first strategic locations for the five planned plants. The Regional and local government do not want the government to build the plant in Piemonte.

Is this a good solution? What are the consequences of nuclear power plants?

Where would the radioactive waste be stored?

## **Waste management**

The amount of waste in Europe has increased dramatically over the last decades. This is mainly due to the amount of packaging of consumer products. Packaging is mostly plastic, which derives from petroleum. So far most of our garbage has ended up in landfills, creating around cities huge malodorous hills. Reducing the amount of waste produced seems like the most viable solution. How can this be implemented and who is responsible?

Most citizens in Torino and generally European cities recycle, as there are the appropriate bins on the streets, in courtyards or in the homes. However some cities, towns or neighbourhoods do not have these bins, thus citizens believe that recycling is just a façade, and that once the rubbish is taken to the landfills it all ends up in the same place.

What is really happening in your city?

## Plastic

Many households nowadays eat from plastic plates. Furthermore Torino's bars, nightclubs, concerts etc are now required to use plastic cups and bottles instead of glass, as glass is potentially dangerous for public safety.

What is the impact of plastic on the environment?

What should local authorities do to encourage private citizens and businesses to reduce the amount of plastic waste?

In 2010 Torino will ban plastic bags from shops, markets etc, thus shoppers will have to bring their own bags. What about biodegradable plastic bags? Are these really environmentally safe? What is their ecological footprint?

Citizens are now wondering how they will throw away their rubbish. Will they have to once again buy rubbish bags? Are rubbish bags sustainable?

## Incinerators

Efficient recycling could reduce the amount of rubbish generated destined for the landfills by about 60%, according to Guido Viale an Italian economist. The Italian government has decided though to invest in incinerators, which burn the rubbish to create heat and energy. Do you think this is a good sustainable solution? What are – if any – the negative aspects to burning garbage? Where should they be built?

[http://www.algalita.org/Maps\\_Home.html](http://www.algalita.org/Maps_Home.html)

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article\\_en.cfm?id=/research/transport/news/article\\_7042\\_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=7954](http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/transport/news/article_7042_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=7954)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban\\_heat\\_island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_heat_island)

[http://www.thamesweb.com/topic.php?topic\\_name=Waste](http://www.thamesweb.com/topic.php?topic_name=Waste)

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/49e90c2c-808e-11de-bf04-00144feabdc0.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radioactive\\_waste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radioactive_waste)

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/fresh-solutions-tested-for-plastic-waste-162533.aspx>

[http://www.smartgrowth.org/library/resident\\_const\\_waste.html](http://www.smartgrowth.org/library/resident_const_waste.html)

## Civil Liberties and Public Administration



“Citizens of the European Union enjoy unparalleled freedom to travel, work and live anywhere in the EU. To benefit fully, people need to lead their lives and go about their business in security and safety. They must be protected against international crime and terrorism, and at the same time enjoy equal access to justice and respect for their fundamental rights across the Union. In addition, immigration from third countries needs to be managed in a fair and sustainable way.”

Our Civil liberties are the rights to freedom of thought, expression, and action, and the protection of these rights from government interference or restriction. Whereas public administration denotes the institutions of public bureaucracy within a state: the organizational structures which form the basis of public decision-making and implementation; and the arrangements by which public services are delivered. At the heart of public administration in the UK is the civil service but it also includes all of the public bodies at regional and local levels.

In Europe civil liberties give us the impression that we have the freedom to do just about anything, even throw our cigarettes on the ground because anyway there will be somebody to clean it up, this being guaranteed by the public administration. Thus civil liberties explain our rights but what are our duties towards the society we live in?

Civil liberties are the hallmark of liberal, democratic “free” societies, however across Europe individual freedom does change depending on the state. For example Eastern European governments have more authority to enforce the laws compared to Western Europe, meaning that if the police in Eastern Europe asks a citizen to pick up a cigarette, it will be picked up. While in a country like Italy the police would never even notice such action. Differences between the political systems in the various European countries, due to social, liberal and democratic systems, complicates the European Union’s authority in implementing laws which take into consideration both civil liberties and public administration. The Catholic Church in Italy, Ireland and Poland, for example or subversive organizations in Eastern Europe, Greece and Spain also mine civil liberties and complicate public administration further.

However if long-term environmental solutions were the main goal of both the local authorities and the citizens, could this common goal in the name of the environment overcome these differences between countries? Furthermore freedom i.e. civil liberties are all very good but what impact does all this European freedom have on the environment and on creating more sustainable cities? Should there be specific policies that limit our freedom in the name of the environment? If creating a better, cleaner, less polluted environment is a priority shouldn’t businesses and private citizens be prosecuted on specific environmental laws?

What environmental laws exist in Europe? Are these laws sufficient and have they been implemented correctly? What has been done so far in your city? For example are ‘bad’ polluting companies prosecuted if they do not achieve environmental targets? Have private citizens ever been fined for polluting? What laws – if any - should be implemented to help make cities greener? What are the citizen’s moral duties in helping build a greener city?

### Air and Noise pollution

The EU estimates that human exposure to fine particulate matter ( $PM_{2.5}$ ) causes about 350,000 premature deaths each year. In other words, at these exposure levels the average life expectancy is reduced by almost a year – almost two years in the most affected urban areas of Belgium, Netherlands, Northern Italy and parts of Poland and Hungary. The major pollutants in urban areas are particulate matter, ozone and nitrogen oxides ( $NO_x$ ). These pollutants pose serious threats to human health, as they can cause respiratory disorders, aggravate asthma, and impair development of lung function in children.

Certainly one cause of air pollution is emissions from urban traffic, however citizens have trouble giving up the freedom to drive their cars around urban areas. Measures have been taken by public administrations across Europe to limit the number of cars in city centres. Torino for example has a limited traffic zone for the city centre and periodically on Sundays closes the centre to private cars. These limit individual freedom but in the long run prevent health problems and deaths. Why though do citizens have trouble accepting these limits? In your opinion what can local administrations do to encourage citizens to accept restrictions on their individual freedom for better air quality – thus better quality of life?

Noise is a serious problem in European urban cities. Persistent high levels of noise are associated with learning difficulties, loss of memory, inability to concentrate as well as irreversible damage to health, such as heart attacks or strokes. Traffic is the main culprit once again, however it is not

the only one. For example many cafes and nightclubs are found in highly populated neighborhoods. In the evening and very often through the night these places are crowded with people. More than often this has caused problems in the neighbourhood, as the residents are not able to sleep. What has been done in your city about this problem?

What do you think could be done to satisfy both the residents trying to sleep and the cafes and nightclubs?

In general how can ambient noise be reduced in cities in your opinion?

## Littering and Vandalism

Studies in eight European cities found that residents in areas with high levels of graffiti, litter and dog mess were 5% less likely to be physically active and twice as likely to be overweight, whereas positive perceptions of the social environment have the opposite associations. Areas with high socio-economic status have better quality recreational environments, and these citizens tend to be more active in leisure time. Thus the surrounding environment influences how one feels and acts. Once again the question seems to be focused on defining quality of life: is this the freedom for example to paint graffiti on walls or litter public places, or is quality of life living in clean and safe environments?

Torino's riverside is crowded with clubs, cafes and places for all age groups to hang out, especially in summer. Two cafes in particular are in stark contrast, but the same environment surrounds both: a wide lawn in front. In summer while on one lawn there is very little litter, the other green is strewn with cigarette stubs, plastic bottle tops, paper etc. The reason why one lawn is tidier than the other is that the staff of the first café pick up the rubbish.

In your opinion is this a good solution or should citizens be fined for littering?

If so how much should these fines be and who would be in charge of fining?

Recently a group of young anarchists in Torino held a protest. This protest went as far as writing on historical buildings using tarmac, which has been absorbed by the stone. The building will now have to be restored once again. While in parks on a more regular bases benches are ripped to pieces on weekend nights. How should the mayor deal with these protesters? What legal actions should be taken against citizens who do not respect public places?

## Public Admini- stration

It is in the nature of human beings to follow role models. Citizens thus expect local administrations to set the example and not only dictate what citizens should or shouldn't do. From an environmental point of view local authorities though are not always role models. Most politicians, for example, use cars or airplanes to travel, and bureaucracy involves a lot of paperwork. Furthermore while private houses are expected to be energy efficient, public buildings, such as city councils, do not seem to follow the same guidelines.

What should local authorities do in your opinion to set the example? Is it possible to reduce the paperwork involved in local administration? What are the advantages and disadvantages to this paperwork?

[http://europa.eu/pol/justice/overview\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/pol/justice/overview_en.htm)

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/quality-of-life-in-Europes-cities-and-towns>

[ec.europa.eu/enterprise/administration/PressReleaseHLG080530\\_EN.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/administration/PressReleaseHLG080530_EN.pdf)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1678&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



## Health and Sport

“You are what you eat” Feuerbach... and what you do.

We are all aware that our mental and physical health depends on a number of factors. European citizens believe health is the most important indicator of quality of life and expect governments to spend a lot on healthcare – the maintenance and improvement of physical and mental health.

However the choices citizens and governments are taking as regard to food and sport, for example, don't seem to be moving towards healthier lifestyles. European citizens in general prefer to buy fast ready-made meals or sweets instead of fresh fruit and vegetables; furthermore most citizens have sedentary lifestyles, becoming overweight and do very little sport. Until quite recently however Europeans ate local fresh produce, took time to cook meals at home, but did very little sport, as they were hard physical workers. Nowadays instead sport is necessary to have or improve on a healthy lifestyle. Living in cities though makes doing sport a problem, as local authorities don't generally plan cities around sport facilities or parks.

In your opinion are European city lifestyles really healthy and sustainable? What could local authorities do to improve the quality of our health, i.e. lives?

### Food... for thought

Since the Industrial Revolution, when Feuerbach lived, but especially since the Green Revolution – when crop yields increased dramatically - what we eat, our health and thus our lifestyles have become closely correlated to industry, thus petrol. Food is now mainly produced on an industrial global scale, where petrol is used not only to run the agricultural machinery but also to make chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and even ingredients such as chemical food additives. The final result being intensive farming, overexploitation of land and resources to produce cheap high-yield monocultures, which are then transported all over the world to reach our supermarkets as processed food.

“Europe is one of the world's top food importers”, says Paul Watkiss, a policy advisor from Oxford in the UK. For example, half all vegetables and 95% of fruit consumed within the UK come from overseas nowadays.

One obvious impact of Europeans buying food from outside Europe is that it has greater impact on the environment. For example, as food travels more, it has to be protected with more packaging. “This means that, on average, 5% of what we buy in supermarkets is packaging”, says Watkiss. Also, greater food transport causes more road congestion, greater damage to infrastructure, and higher emissions of pollutants, including greenhouse gases.

Furthermore supermarkets are full of ready-made cheap convenience food, which give us extra time to do other things. Meal times were once considered an important moment in daily lives, a time to sit and gather with the family and enjoy a homemade meal. Nowadays one prefers to use this time supposedly to work or go to the gym. Furthermore the younger generations cannot even cook and prefer the commodity of fast food and junk food. These foods also contain more ingredients, from flavour additives to food preservatives. Fast food also means moving away from diets with fresh fruits and vegetables, which as the general saying goes: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”

Over the past decades a number of solutions have emerged to try and encourage locally grown food. In Piemonte there is a growing trend for locally produced organic food, one initiative is called “kilometer zero”, where the consumer, by reading the food label, knows exactly where the product comes from. Another initiative in Italy is GAS – gruppo di acquisto solidale – or community supported agriculture, where local farmers sell their seasonal products on a weekly basis directly to the consumer.

How are local governments helping farmers who want to produce local organic food?

What do you think should local governments do to encourage citizens to buy more local food?

What could The European Union do to reduce the price of local food over convenience food?

What should be done to reduce the amount of packaging on food? Why are there more takeaway and fast food retailers in cities? Do you really know what you are eating i.e. do you read the food labels? Do you believe the food you eat is safe? What are the consequences of eating too much junk food?

### Genetically Modified Food

As the world population has increased exponentially, especially since the Green revolution in the 50s, and Western societies in particular have relied more and more on industrial food, governments have had to find new ways of keeping up with the ever growing food demands. One solution adopted by many countries has been genetically modified food crops, which apparently give higher yields, using less herbicide for example. However many are concerned that manipulating food genetically can bring a number of problems both for the environment as well as for our health. Europe has so far banned genetically modified food however traces have been found

in most supermarket brands. Furthermore animal feed in Europe can come from genetically modified crops.

Can we really better the quality of food through genetic modification, which nature has been selecting for millions, if not billions of years? Is GM food safe? Are GMOs sustainable?

## Meat and Factory Farming

Only 30-40 years ago eating meat was considered a luxury, food to be consumed once or twice a week or on special occasions. Nowadays instead meat is relatively cheap – a kilo of pork meat can cost as little as 2euros, as it is produced on an industrial scale, on intensive farms. However the production of a kilo of veal consumes as much energy as keeping on a 100watt lamp for 20 days.

If producing meat has such a high ecological footprint shouldn't there be limits on the amount a citizen can buy and consume?

Furthermore factory farming poses a number of ethical, health and environmental questions. Do we have the right to rear animals in inhumane conditions? What are the consequences of having a large number of animals in close confinement? Are there direct links between new virulent diseases, such as mad cow disease or bird flu, and intensive farming?

## Doctors and Hospitals

2009 will be remembered for a number of reasons, one in particular being the swine flu or H1N1. This global issue once again highlights how important health and healthcare are in our lives. However in cities local authorities to try and save money are merging hospitals, making bigger but fewer hospitals, making it difficult to reach the hospital both for the ambulances and for the patients. Doctors in hospitals are sometimes visiting 70 patients a day. How can that doctor give quality to those patients? What is more important saving money or saving lives?

On the other hand citizens are walking into hospitals asking for plastic surgery – is this an emergency? Is this necessary? Should this come from public money – from the governments?

Furthermore citizens prefer to go directly to the emergency room, instead of visiting their family doctor? Why do you believe this is happening? Isn't the family doctor reliable anymore?

## Stress

Our society has become “de-socialized” and individualized and young people are aware of this problem. Young people are put under a lot of pressure and an escape route is finding psychological problems to protect themselves. In the past social cooperative societies meant rules and parent control, nowadays instead parents have a tendency to overprotect their children. According to the ISTAT – the Italian National statistics Institute – in Italy between 2002 and 2005 the number of teenagers, and not only, with psychological problems has increased and continues to increase. These psychological problems range from panic attacks to antisocial behaviour, from apathy to nervous tics, very often these illnesses are related to sleeping disorders. What seems to be affecting citizens' sleeping patterns is for example noise pollution, traffic, and even open-space offices.

Is city-life stressful in your opinion? If so what could local governments do to make city-life less stressful? Would more rules, thus limits, help reduce stress and improve the quality of city life?

## Sport

“Prevention is better than cure”

Local governments spend more on healthcare, thus curing the problem, than on preventing health risks. Not only would an apple a day help keep the doctor away, but doing sport would certainly improve citizens' health and reduce stress.

However sport facilities can be expensive, especially if private, or they might not be near home, making them difficult to reach. If instead one wants to simply go running or cycling to stay fit, parks are few and far between, or foot and cycling paths are in congested streets, potentially causing further health risks, due to smog or accidents.

On the other hand sports like skiing, which for many Torino citizens is their favourite winter sport, also causes many environmental problems. Most skiers drive to the mountains, as buses or trains don't reach many ski resorts. Furthermore the ski slopes themselves nowadays strip mountains bare of forests.

How should local governments help citizens do more sport in a healthier environment? Is it possible to find a way of harvesting the energy produced by sport?

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community-supported\\_agriculture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community-supported_agriculture)

<http://www.esf.org/research-areas/life-earth-and-environmental-sciences/news/ext-news-single-view/article/far-flung-food-europes-distant-diets-379.html>

<http://www.ipopy.coreportal.org/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factory\\_farming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factory_farming)