

"Climate justice at EIRENE"

A background paper

KlimAG (Climate Justice working group), 3 May 2022

What do we mean by climate crisis and climate justice? – Why we need a process.

The climate crisis is one of the biggest justice issues in human history. The source of the crisis is an economic system founded on the exploitation of people and the natural world, a system which has its historical origins in European colonialism. At EIRENE, we are becoming increasingly aware through our cooperation with partners in the global South that the climate crisis is exacerbating global injustice. EIRENE sees the climate crisis as a comprehensive threat to human survival and peaceful coexistence. The growing climate crisis will aggravate conflicts over land, water, food, and migration. Peace work must adapt to these challenges, and we have to face up to them as EIRENE. Peace work in environmental conflicts contributes toward climate justice.

We understand climate justice to mean that the losses due to climate change are distributed according to the polluter pays principle. On the whole, it is the countries that have been least involved in creating human-induced climate change that bear the brunt of its impact. And it is especially groups that are already marginalised that are worst hit. If we want to expose and overcome this injustice, we must take responsibility for the consequences of the climate crisis.

EIRENE describes itself as nonviolent, international, and spiritual. Our understanding of peace is that it includes both the struggle to overcome structural violence and action to promote positive peace and an open civil society.

Why does climate justice require peace work?

The climate crisis is directly linked to unequal power relations and racism. As in the case of the process of mainstreaming anti-racism, EIRENE needs to engage in a comprehensive process of learning and change, which starts by focusing on EIRENE as a whole rather than the work at project level. Climate justice is a building block of mainstreaming anti-racism. Tackling environmental racism within our own organisation is a necessary step toward making progress in mainstreaming anti-racism.

The climate crisis is creating and exacerbating environmental conflicts. Peace services can build a bridge from climate crisis to climate justice. So we have to take responsibility for more effective prevention of new fields of conflict by contributing to mitigation of the impact of climate change.

The aim of the process: Our contribution to climate justice should be to highlight climate-related injustice that arises from EIRENE's work and, in dialogue with partner organisations, to develop an understanding of climate-friendly action in general and specific measures in particular. For this purpose, we also want to engage in a learning process through critical reflection about ourselves and our work. We want to provide solidarity in environmental conflicts, to reduce our own footprint, and to be part of a political shift toward a climate-friendly socio-economic system.

(A) Climate action in the Voluntary Service Programme:

- A fortnight-long preliminary internship and Zoom talks with volunteers and partner organisations/placements should replace compulsory volunteer orientation trips in the North Programme. Preliminary internships and Zoom talks should be part of both the North-South and the South-North components of the Voluntary Service Programme.

- Seminar meals: transition to climate-sensitive nutrition (vegan, regional whenever possible). Exceptions may be made on special occasions (e.g., Agape celebrations). Rather than prohibiting things, we advocate inviting people to change their behaviour (leaflets with practical guidelines for shopping and cooking; information and ideas to raise people's awareness and motivate them).

- Selection of seminar venues and structures according to sustainability criteria (e.g., give priority to EIRENE House as a venue).

- In the further development of the Voluntary Service Programme as a whole (both North-South and South-North components), the selection of placements should focus increasingly on the field of climate justice. In the North-South component, there is growing demand for this from those interested in volunteering.

- In the South-North component, we want to enable climate justice activists from our partner countries to undertake voluntary service in Germany, in which the focus is on linking their activism to the climate debate in Germany. We are building contacts to facilitate this.

- No more flights within Europe or to/from neighbouring countries (Morocco) for volunteers; Revise travel policy for volunteers accordingly --> Apply Head Office travel policy to volunteers as well.

(B) Climate action in educational work:

In order to establish climate justice as a key element in all our educational work, we need a comprehensive awareness-raising process for everyone involved. The topic/issue is not only relevant as a module in theoretical units of the seminar programme. It should also be reflected in sustainable organisation of the seminars: selection of seminar venues and catering, attitudes of teachers and trainers, etc. This is the only way in which we can reach a deep understanding that climate justice is an essential part of our peace service.

The training team has set up the working group "Öko-Schlunze", which is concerned with anchoring climate justice, sustainability, environmental conflicts, and eco-social transformation more firmly in our seminars. A combination of adventure and training makes it possible for people to gain practical experience of grappling with climate issues. Especially in the case of longer courses (e.g., preparation of out-going volunteers) and intensive language courses (e.g., courses in the South-North component which require knowledge of several languages), it makes sense to employ a variety of learning methods using action-oriented approaches. Experiential learning also means thinking about alternative kinds of seminar. Instead of just making excursions to join Fridays for Future demonstrations, field courses in a natural setting would be valuable: The first week of a seminar could be held in EIRENE House, but the second week could be intentionally held in the middle of a forest where there is not much infrastructure. There would still be high quality thematic workshops, but they would now be held in a congruent setting.

(C) Climate action in cooperation with partner organisations

We want to involve our partners in the climate justice process. We will approach partner organisations that are concerned with the issue (e.g., partner organisations in the agricultural sector) and engage in discussion of open questions, such as "What does climate justice mean to you?"

Creation of a project fund for solidarity in environmental conflicts. Projects will grow out of civil peace work and will include compensation (to offset greenhouse gas emissions), eco-social measures, and measures involving critical analysis of power structures. Our idea is to set up a forum in which our partner organisations will make decisions about the purposes for which funds are to be allocated and about the prioritisation and funding of small-scale projects.

Scope / scale of funding: We envisage a fund amounting to approx. 20,000 € annually, starting with a pilot phase (e.g., in the Sahel, where Bread for the World / Brot für die Welt has gained experience of operating a fund for micro-projects).

Sources of funding: a fixed base amount per year, plus compensation per flight. The base amount is intended to take account of the fact that EIRENE has not paid any compensation for many years, so it can be understood as a retroactive compensation payment.

Additional sources of funding: BMZ funding (difficult, but may be feasible through civil peace services, which now also addresses climate issues), private donations from environmental conflict campaigns, external donors who are compensating for their private air travel.

(D) Climate action in Communication and Public Relations:

It is important for EIRENE's communications that the broad issue of climate change be addressed from a justice and peace perspective. The climate crisis is a threat to peace because it is a frequent source of conflict. Identifying new climate conflicts, and applying ways of dealing with conflict which have been developed in the context of civil peace work, are two crucial elements in a new narrative for EIRENE's communications. The process mainstreaming anti-racism can be brought to bear as a learning process for climate justice at EIRENE, because it has brought together a lot of loose threads in our organisational culture. Only when this bundling is at an advanced stage and specific fields of work, projects, and resources have been agreed as elements in the process, can people working on communications provide constructive input. From the point of view of those involved in communications, it is useful, in the first place, to be involved in processes concerned with concepts and descriptive language. Lobbying and advocacy projects can be designed and pursued later in the process.

We can also envisage fundraising and appeals for donations, especially if a post is created for a climate campaigner at EIRENE. The following ideas are currently being considered:

- Campaign for solidarity in environmental conflicts
- Fundraising for our climate justice work
- Reporting on educational work
- Political campaigning + playing an active part in social movements
- Campaigning on EIRENE's understanding of climate justice
- Giving the issue a higher profile on the website

(E) Climate action in Human Resources and Finance:

The implementation of the climate justice change process at EIRENE will also require financial and human resources. We need to be aware of the wide-ranging scope and high priority of the process. We ask ourselves: What do we want to set in motion despite the difficult financial situation?

EIRENE wants to create a post for campaigning on climate justice and peace work with the task of putting the subjects of environmental conflict (over resources, food sovereignty, etc.) and "climate crisis as a justice issue" on the public agenda, and playing a part in public relations work, project development, and educational work.

How can funding be secured for the process without using up general funds or income from donations? And ensuring that we also take less money away from the process of mainstreaming anti-racism?

(F) Interdepartmental climate justice tasks at Head Office:

Climate justice as a goal entails interdepartmental tasks at Head Office. Defining and developing these tasks and defining criteria for the purposes of evaluation are parts of the process. Evaluation of nutrition and procurement with a view to climate justice is not only a task for our educational work; it should also provide guidelines for the Head Office. Other areas include mobility (travel guidelines) and project planning. And additional cross-cutting issues may be defined during the process.

The process of reducing CO2 emissions can be divided into three steps:

1. Preventing emissions
2. Reducing emissions
3. Compensating for emissions

We have given this three-step process the working title "**Climate Proviso**". It is to be implemented as follows:

As in the case of a financial proviso, a "climate proviso" could be used to veto a decision. It simply poses a different question: Instead of "Can we afford to include this in our financial budget?" we ask, "Can we afford to include this within our climate budget?"

1. **Preventing emissions:** Is the measure (e.g., air travel) essential?
 - Critical questioning of the need.
 - Weighing up of alternatives, e.g., holding a Zoom meeting instead.
 - If travel is nevertheless deemed to be necessary, we go on to the next step of the proviso:
2. **Reducing emissions:** Can the measure be carried out with reduced CO2 emissions?
 - Travel by bus, train, or ferry instead of by plane.
 - Weighing up of costs, time, and proportionality (-> Open question: Is the cost proportional to the benefit? e.g., Head Office staff should not take any flights within Europe; Is travel to or from voluntary service in Costa Rica on a container ship proportional?)
 - Alternatives must be thoroughly researched and comparable, so that they can be carefully weighed up or compared.
 - If it is not possible to reduce emissions, we go on to the third step of the proviso:
3. **Compensating for emissions:** "Compensating" for emissions by calculating a CO2 price based on CO2 equivalents.
 - After critical examination and weighing up of alternatives at steps one and two, we conclude that the measure has to be carried out "conventionally".
 - In this case, we want at least to make "compensation" by paying an appropriate price for the CO2 emissions.