

A Beginner's Guide to By 2020 We Rise Up

Why a Beginner's Guide?

Working together with activists and different groups, the question, "But what exactly is By2020?" comes up frequently. There seems to be some confusion about its nature, purpose and methods. In writing this document, we hope to clarify these points and give you a clearer sense of what the By2020 platform is and what it is not.

Purpose

By2020WeRiseUp is a rallying cry for coordination and strategy.

In the face of the rapidly accelerating ecological breakdown taking place at the moment, it has become an urgent necessity to dismantle our unjust political and economic systems and replace them with structures that are willing and able to address the multiple crises we now face.

Accordingly, **By2020 aims to help people believe again in the possibility of radical change, and to provide a facilitation platform and tools to connect political struggles related to climate justice, social justice, and other issues, in order to take our actions to the next level and foster a Europe-wide uprising.**

By2020WeRiseUp is not another climate justice group or superstructure.

A precise, ready-made definition of By2020 is hard to come by. Words like „platform“, „movement of movements“, „grassroots campaign“ or „coordination effort“ have been used.

Although there is a team of people acting in its name, some working mostly or exclusively in the context of By2020, **it does not coordinate or participate in actions, issue press releases, or speak in the name of participating initiatives.**

Narratives, demands, strategy documents etc. published in the name of By2020 are worked out on the initiative of participating groups, and their contents are determined either by delegates of those groups or with an explicit mandate and a final vote from them.

It is not By2020's aim to come to a shared action consensus or vision for the future.

The needs of individuals, groups, and societies are manifold, and often (ostensibly or actually) at odds with one another.

Our upbringing in authoritarian societies may lead us to think that we need to streamline these needs and present a united front so that we will be able to display strength and exert force.

This thought, however, leads directly to the suppression and marginalization of those who are already most disadvantaged in the systems we inhabit, and undermines our struggles in the long term. Rather, it is in appreciation and combination of our diversity of backgrounds, thought, and action, that we are strongest.

A series of realizations is also feeding into the work of By2020 on a daily basis:

- there is much more uniting us than dividing us
- the interconnectiveness and interdependency of our many struggles is our strength
- we have all been lacking strategy and coordination
- we have often lost sight of the bigger picture
- we have too often allowed our movements to be divided over minor ideological points, playing into the hands of those in favor of the status quo
- collective intelligence is to be trusted and this, in turn, is connected with starting to trust one another again and making solidarity a reality

Strategy

While the threat of climate change has been known at least since the 1970s and the global community agreed at the 1992 UN Earth Summit that it posed a global and existential threat, decades of inaction and wholly insufficient measures have made the climate crisis – and many other crises¹ – a brutal reality at the present day.

This situation persists even though scientists and activists around the world have raised awareness and have loudly protested by organizing marches, petitions, mass actions, and many other types of action. At this point it is abundantly clear that the current system will not take the necessary steps. Business as usual means inaction, which will lead to horrific consequences. Therefore, we have to make the system stop.

Our most powerful weapon in this struggle is the realization that we have the power to do it. We are the ones who make the system work – not the political and economic decision makers. As was said above, we know that climate justice movements have been good at fighting our fights, winning campaigns and raising awareness over the past decades. However, the system has proven resistant, and we have not come together to take stock of the general failure of our efforts when it comes to actually securing the conditions for a just and livable future for all.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter how good our fights are; if they are not enough to secure this future we keep calling for, then our strategy, the questions of where to put our energies and what to do, when, with whom, and how, need to be re-thought.

In order to stop this deadly system, we have to coordinate our efforts. No single group or person can save the world on their own: we have to come together, plan together, act together, rise up together in a coordinated and strategic manner.

The core strategical idea of By2020WeRiseUp is **coordinated, long-lasting and systemic disruption in waves of action**.

By coordinating our actions to take place within the **same timeframe**, we can combine our strength and increase pressure. Aiming for maximum disruption of political processes, infrastructure and economy rather than settling for symbolic actions will ensure that our cries for justice and life cannot be ignored any longer.

By coordinating our actions around **common, precise targets** that can potentially be held for weeks and that help all our social and climate justice struggles, we give ourselves a chance to truly disrupt the system to a point that it has to give in to our demands.

The basic idea is simple: What if everyone got together to talk, plan, and coordinate?

Coordination in the context of By2020WeRiseUp takes this form on several levels: there are local coordination efforts in cities, there are regional ones, transregional ones, national ones, and, with the European scale, transnational ones.

While having face-to-face meetings is highly preferential, they are sometimes made difficult by geographical distances. That is why, in addition to in-person meetings, mailing lists and conference calls are used to communicate in the intermediary. On the European level, for example, there are European strategy meetings happening several times a year, and, in between, European strategy calls are held. In addition, an info list is used to spread written updates on the process.

¹We clearly stand in solidarity with and acknowledge the urgency of all connected struggles in the fight against a deadly system such as social justice, workers' rights, feminist, LGBTQIA, Global South, refugees, international solidarity, anti-exploitation, frontline communities, anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-specist struggles (and many others) in Europe and beyond.

Disruption can take many forms, be it civil disobedience, demonstrations, sit-ins, reclaiming spaces, holding assemblies, covering cities with stickers, calling representatives or petitioning them, walking out of schools and work, blocking the entrance of town hall or the next roundabout, organising mass celebration actions outside, holding meetings at home, printing leaflets and spreading them, taking a megaphone to rally people on the market square, taking kids out of school or parents out of work, organising gatherings to discuss the concrete transition and demands.

Disruption also means coming to stay, to ensure change taking place. This is why the idea of waves of action was born – if we were to stay for several weeks and not go away, our actions would be exponentially disruptive. No group or individual would be able to sustain effective disruption on its own for such a long period of time. But we know that we can help each other and identify and disrupt strategical targets to make sure it would be impossible for business as usual to continue.

Demands

Facilitating the necessary coordination and strategical thinking to help bring about an uprising is only one part of our work; another one is the work done on demands.

By2020 will not push for demands as a platform. However, we all know how much knowledge is out there and how hard it can be, even for people involved in climate justice struggles, to see clearly how to move towards a fast and radical transition.

Building on the idea of having to demand what is necessary, we aim at streamlining existing documents and knowledge into pathways of different levels of radicality. These would then be handed over to groups or people's assemblies as a way to help them decide which demands they want to push for and how they can combine them with their own concerns and expertise.

Structure and methods

The internal facilitation team of the By2020WeRiseUp platform is made up of independent grassroots activists from all over Europe, coming from diverse personal and political backgrounds.

We aim to provide a framework that is as inclusive and non-hierarchical as possible – not only internally, but also in the facilitation of group processes.

We therefore work hard to mitigate for imbalances of power and privilege, and create a space for everyone to assert their needs, all the while being aware that we will only move toward this ideal, not fulfill it.

We provide facilitation and coordination work, on the ground and via internet by connecting people and facilitating meetings.

We are also a support platform working around areas such as:

- shared thematic documents
- communication work
- bringing together groups to discuss specific topics (demands, people's assemblies...)
- the website itself (information, maps...)

A short history of By2020WeRiseUp

By2020WeRiseUp developed from (but is independent of) the Climate Justice Action network as an attempt to create a framework to coordinate climate justice and related social justice and justice struggles. While climate justice action groups have been very successful in running their campaigns, many have also come to realize that their fight for justice and the future of our world are still being lost.

They felt it was necessary to come together to create the conditions for a successful uprising for climate justice to take place. After the summer of 2018, looking at the levels of mobilization reached by climate marches, other forms of protests and new movements, the focus started shifting towards helping the uprising already taking shape coordinate and find common strategies. Facilitating, encouraging and connecting became the aims of the platform.

After a meeting in Ostrava in November 2018, the campaign was officially launched on the 8th of December 2018.

Through extensive outreach work, it gained the official support of several dozen groups and networks around Europe, as well as connecting with many other groups and networks unofficially.

It is also through this work that the platform could connect individuals and groups willing to work together on coordination and strategy. In addition, it gathered ideas around which to ground a common strategy discussion, turned them into proposals and shared documents on which European and regional discussions were subsequently based. For instance, this is how the idea (among others) of waves of several weeks of actions coordinated around strategical points came up.

In-person meetings in 2019 took place in Basel, Vienna, and in the Rhineland, before the first wave of actions took place from end of September 2019 on out.

In parallel, national dynamics developed and were supported by the platform, while European coordination calls were held every month.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who are you exactly?

As said above, people from the internal team come from many different European countries and identify as climate justice, social justice, LGBTQIA, animal rights / liberation and anti-fascist activists (among others).

We are not funded by any organization on a regular basis; we have received some time-specific funds to help with covering printing communication material costs and travel costs for people to be able to attend in-person European strategy meetings.

What could a common uprising look like?

By2020 will never try to impose ideas or tactics on anyone. One of its fundamental principles is that it is by coordinating our plurality of tactics, sensitivities, levels of actions and primary focuses, in short, our diversity, that we have the best chance to win.

However, the need to visualize better what such a common effort could look like has brought groups to picture what the first wave could look like and this has been turned into the narrative for the first wave that you will find on the website. In addition, internally efforts have been put into drafting an „action wishlist“ aiming at presenting ideas of actions. Please do get in touch if you have more of these and we can then draw inspiration from one another's experiences.

I am just an individual, what can I do?

By2020 is a coordination platform. We don't plan actions in detail. However, you can join local or national specific groups around you and help them achieve more coordination by opening communication channels and strategical thinking with other groups.

You can also join an established coordination dynamics close to you. For how to do that, have a look at our supporters map or send an email to the contact email address corresponding to your country listed on the website.

Generally speaking: free yourself from obligations (work, studies...) as much as possible and join this common effort for an uprising. Time and energy are precious and we need more people dedicating more time to plan and organize this change we are all calling for. We have very little time left; if we all put as much energy as possible into this, we may still have a chance.

How to communicate about By2020?

Social media are a useful way to spread the word far and wide – don't hesitate to let others know about By2020 or encourage other groups to start coordination efforts or join existing ones. Get in touch with our social media team if you have ideas or questions. You can find the contact email address (and those of other working groups) here: <https://by2020weriseup.net/working-groups/>

Talk with groups you know and create or join a regional coordination effort.

Talk, in your own name, about the effort of coordination and strategy wished for by many groups across Europe (By2020 can provide narration elements but will not do press work in its own name). Join officially as a supporter group and help increase the visibility of this campaign.

How can I further help By2020?

If you have access to resources (websites, documents) that, according to you, could help other groups plan, organize or develop new ideas regarding actions, logistics, demands, group work, repression or any other relevant topic, please don't hesitate to send them to us so that we can put them online on the platform in order to make them available to as many people as possible. If one of the above-mentioned areas of work is of specific interest to you, please do get in touch and we can talk further about it.

How can I get more information about By2020?

Subscribe to the info list by sending an email to by2020we@riseup.net

Check the website to get information regarding core documents, contact possibilities, dates of next meetings and other relevant information <https://by2020weriseup.net>