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THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL: CRITICAL ASSESSMENT FIVE YEARS LATER

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Abstract

Environmental policy has emerged as a relatively recent yet increasingly central component of European Union (EU) governance. The culmination of this evolution is the European Green Deal (EGD), launched in 2019 as the EU's most ambitious framework for sustainable transformation. Designed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the EGD promotes a circular economy, biodiversity conservation, and a just transition, structured around four overarching objectives, ten priority areas, and supported by a record €1 trillion investment. This paper argues that despite its ambition, the EGD's implementation is undermined by political compromise, funding gaps, and an over-reliance on unproven technology. Progress has been notable in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and expanding renewable energy deployment, confirming the EU's capacity for climate leadership. However, biodiversity protection and chemical risk management remain insufficiently addressed, reflecting persistent gaps between policy ambition and implementation. Moreover, the EGD faces criticism over the ambiguity of several targets, reliance on unproven or emerging technologies, and a restrictive interpretation of social equity within the just transition framework. Multiple internal and external factors further condition the effectiveness of the EGD. Internally, entrenched consumption patterns and limitations in the financing architecture constrain systemic change. Externally, climate diplomacy, geopolitical dynamics, and sensitivity to local and regional priorities shape the EU's capacity to lead globally while maintaining legitimacy domestically. Overall, the European Green Deal represents a landmark initiative in climate governance, but its long-term credibility will depend on addressing unresolved structural, social, and technological challenges.

Key words: climate, decarbonisation, environment, inclusion, pollution

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