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Strengthening the European Green Deal at mid-term: rebalancing policies, increasing implementation

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The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union ended on June 30 with the adoption of general approaches to almost all of the legislative proposals in the climate package known as FitFor55 ("adjustment to the -55% target") presented almost a year ago by the European Commission. This progress shows that the Green Deal remains at the heart of the European Union's priorities and has even been strengthened in recent months on its energy component in a difficult economic and security context for Europe, partly due to the war in Ukraine. However, these real advances must not overshadow the need to rebalance between sectoral transitions to better integrate synergies between environmental objectives and amplify the implementation of the Green Deal in order to put the EU on the path to the ambitious objectives it has set.

These issues were at the heart of the discussions at the Think 2030 Conference co-organized by IDDRI and IEEP on June 29-30 in Paris.

In a difficult context, the progress made on the legislative dossiers of the FitFor55 package in the European Parliament and the Council under the French Presidency is an important political signal for the Green Deal. They show that European countries want to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon energy system as a solution to the immediate and short-term energy crisis facing Europe, as well as an imperative to solve the long-term climate crisis. In detail, the compromises between Member States on the various issues have remained close to the European Commission's proposals, but have sometimes led to a delay in the entry into force of certain measures, such as the end of free allocations of CO₂ quotas within the European emission trading scheme (EU ETS) and the entry into force of the carbon adjustment mechanism for industry, or the establishment of an emissions trading system for transport and construction and the social climate fund. They have also left for the trilogue negotiations with the European Parliament the issue of strengthening the renewable energy and energy efficiency targets set out in the [REPowerEU](#) plan presented last May. Nevertheless, the political signal, reinforced by the Czech Presidency's willingness to quickly begin trilogue negotiations on all of these issues, is there and shows that the European Union is continuing to make progress in implementing its new climate objective.

This should not, however, mask the challenges of implementing the Green Deal, which are, in some respects, reinforced by the current context. The sustainable development experts responding to the [Green Deal Barometer](#) clearly identify this point: while 61% believe that the EU institutions will continue to support the Green Deal after the elections scheduled for 2024, 73% also believe that in the short term the war in Ukraine will have a negative impact on its implementation. This shows how important it is to reflect without delay on how to strengthen the Green Deal, a subject that was at the heart of the discussions at the [Think 2030 conference](#), organized by IDDRI and IEEP on June 29-30. Two priorities emerged from the discussions: a necessary rebalancing to combine the preservation of biodiversity and the fight against climate change, and a strengthening of the means to ensure an ambitious implementation to meet environmental objectives.

In this context, two key deadlines are on the horizon: on the one hand, the [nature restoration law](#), proposed by the European Commission at the end of June, which sets binding objectives for restoring degraded ecosystems and a target for reducing the use of pesticides; on the other hand, the forthcoming framework law on the sustainability of the European Union's food system, which will be proposed in 2023 and which should set out guidelines for the next common agricultural policy. To achieve this, the political attention dedicated to the transformation of the agricultural and food system should be at the same level as that which has enabled the objective of climate neutrality to be enshrined in law and ambitious measures to be implemented for the transformation of the European energy system, such as the end of the sale of thermal vehicles in 2035 or the doubling of the drop in the allocations available in the emissions trading scheme. Beyond regulation efforts though, many speakers emphasized the importance of working to create coalitions of actors capable of bringing about change, bringing together stakeholders from different backgrounds, scientists, civil society organizations, trade unions and companies that wish to move towards a more sustainable economic model. These coalitions are necessary for Member States and parliamentarians to continue to support ambitious political choices in favor of the Green Deal.

The issue of the implementation of the Green Deal was highlighted by many participants at the Think 2030 conference as, beyond the negotiation of common rules and objectives, a negotiation will be necessary on the means to achieve the set objectives. In view of the need for investment, a European debate on the long-term financing of REPowerEU should be opened now and the - larger - place of sustainability policies in the next EU budget should be determined. It is also important that the European Commission be provided with sufficient and adequate means to support the work of the Member States. As the evaluation of the national strategic plans has shown, the Commission

can push Member States to be more ambitious and can serve as a forum for the exchange of best practices on how to implement national transition policies at sector level. In this context, the evaluation of public policies needs to be strengthened, in order to focus the political debate on the key elements that have blocked or, conversely, enabled a leverage effect for the transition. The Think Sustainable Europe network can support the debate on the performance of public sustainability policies in support of the EU institutions and the EU Council presidencies.

Finally, the exchanges during the conference also pointed to the need to complete and deepen the policies of the Green Deal, mainly in two areas. First, in their internal dimension, to better take into account the social impacts of transition policies. It is thus important to provide solutions for the most vulnerable citizens and the European middle class by strengthening state action to provide sustainable and affordable mobility, energy and food services. Also in their external dimension, as the transformations carried out by European countries at home necessarily have consequences for the EU's external partners. Redefining the terms of trade with them and identifying the areas of cooperation to be strengthened and created in connection with the transformations of the European economic model and global challenges are the conditions for building trust, a necessary condition to ensuring the shared prosperity and security of the European Union.

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