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#GREEN DEAL
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MAKING THE GREEN DEAL A EUROPEAN SUCCESS

COALITION, NARRATIVE & FLAGSHIPS



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"Nothing is more difficult to take in hand, more uncertain to succeed, more dangerous to manage, than leading the introduction of a new order of things".
Niccolò Machiavelli, 1532¹

After peace, the single market and the euro, the European Green Deal has the potential to become the defining mission of the European Union.² Its success would strengthen the relevance and the legitimacy of the EU. It would show all Europeans, especially the youngest generation, that the EU is an essential part of the solution to the challenges of the 21st century. To make the Green Deal a European success, the EU needs a coalition, a narrative and flagships that pave the way for the hard policy decisions to come.

1 ■ The European Green Deal is an historic endeavour

The European Green Deal is the top priority of the European Commission. It comes after historic youth mobilisations symbolised by Greta Thunberg, and an EU election where voters considered climate to be more important than migration or unemployment.³ Since then, the European Parliament has declared "climate emergency"⁴ and

the European Council endorsed "the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050".⁵

Delivering a climate-neutral EU entails a radical transformation of our entire societies: how we live, drive, eat, work, produce, consume. It affects virtually all sectors of our economy: energy, transport, industry, agriculture, finance, construction, food, trade, tourism, digital, etc. This is what scientists refer as a "systemic change".⁶ And all this needs to happen between 2020 and 2050. **The daunting task of the European Green Deal is thus to deliver in the coming years the policy decisions that will allow Europe to perform such a radical change in a single generation.**

This is why the European Commission recently presented an agenda of 47 policy actions including a €1Tn Green Deal Investment Plan, the first-ever EU Climate Law and a revamping of the EU legislation on energy and transport.⁷

2 ■ With whom do you make a deal?

Attempts to deliver ambitious EU decisions can quickly run into troubles. The EU is indeed a political system with a tendency to find underwhelming compromises close to the lowest common denominator.⁸ The European Green Deal is precisely here to avoid this. But with whom do you make this 'deal' exactly?

In the end, a successful Green Deal will be a deal between EU policy makers; a deal between businesses, investors, workers, consumers and activists; a deal between villages, cities and regions; and finally, a deal between the EU and the rest of the world. In this brief, we only focus on the European Green Deal as a deal between EU policy makers.

3 ■ Learning from past successes, only a broad coalition can deliver ambitious change in the EU

In its 70 years history, the EU successfully managed to deliver ambitious and far-reaching projects. This includes the consolidation of peace between its Member States, the completion of the Single Market and the creation of the Euro. **When designing its political strategy for the European Green Deal, Ursula von der Leyen's Commission can seek inspiration from the Jacques Delors Commission (1985-1995).**

More than 30 years ago, the EU started to build its Single Market. To do so, it needed a majority among 12 Member States (including Margaret Thatcher's United Kingdom), and the two main political groups in the European Parliament (Social democrats and Christian democrats). **The political strategy of the time essentially aimed at rallying pro-EU forces, pro-market forces and pro-social forces by making a broad deal** that would strengthen EU decision-making powers, open the EU economy and strengthen EU social dialogue and social funding.⁹ Obviously, those who supported this entire package deal were not necessarily ecstatic about each one of its components, but they felt it was the necessary compromise to get crucial elements across. For instance, **Margaret Thatcher was not advocating giving more powers to the European Union, but**

she supported this package deal because it was what was politically necessary for her to get what she wanted: liberating the market forces.¹⁰

Once in place, this broad deal paved the way for years of concrete policy decisions. It transformed all the national economies and the daily lives of millions, with the free movement of goods, services, capital and people.

4 ■ Building the 'European Green Deal coalition' in 2020

To adopt an EU decision in 2020 you need a triple majority: a majority within the European Commission, a qualified majority among the 27 National Governments (from both western and central-eastern Europe), and a majority in the European Parliament (which now requires the backing of three or even four political groups).

We therefore suggest that the European Green Deal needs to articulate three ambitions: climate, innovation and social justice, to gather enough support to build its coalition.¹¹ This will serve as a basis for each of the *ad hoc* majorities needed to deliver tangible policy decisions on challenging issues such as the EU Climate Law, carbon pricing or CO2 standards for vehicles.

First, climate ambition sets the direction of the Green Deal. It is also politically required to benefit from the support of climate-leaning MEPs, national governments, NGOs and citizens. Most of them will likely come from northwestern Europe.¹²

Second, innovation is vital to transform our societies. It is also essential to gather long-lasting support from businesses, pro-market politicians and citizens. It enables EU countries, including those from southern Europe and central-eastern Europe, to accelerate the modernisation of their economies.

Third, social justice is key to make the Green Deal a true European success¹³. It is also paramount to gather the support of workers and families, trade unions and social NGOs, as well as left-leaning politicians and citizens.

With the right narrative, the European Green Deal could gather the support of both Climate Strikers, Business Europe, and Yellow Vests –even if they would support it for very different reasons. It should also convince Europeans from both the left and the right of the political spectrum, as well as Europeans from both the North and the South, the West and the East of our Union.

5 ■ Strengthening a positive narrative for the Green Deal

The European Green Deal needs a powerful narrative to motivate elected officials and citizens. The EU Climate Law will be a key opportunity to develop a narrative that enshrines different decisions into one story that makes sense of reality.

Building on elements already present in the European Commission's speeches and documents, we suggest that a successful **'European Green Deal narrative'** would integrate three ambitions: climate, innovation and social justice.¹⁴

First, climate. President von der Leyen rightly underlines that protecting our climate is an "existential issue for Europe –and for the world".¹⁵ Building on this, we encourage EU leaders and National Governments to reflect on climate, energy and mobility as **European public goods**. In practical terms, the European Commission could launch a new 'Cecchini report', i.e. the 1988 report that showed the cost of non-Europe and paved the way for the creation of the Single Market.¹⁶

Second, innovation. President von der Leyen presents the Green Deal as Europe's "new growth strategy", the opportunity to seize Europe's **"first-mover advantage"**¹⁷ in key green economy sectors. Europe indeed already has an excellent crew of entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators, with enough public and private investment capacity that can blow in its sail to navigate towards a climate-neutral future.¹⁸ With the appropriate policy framework in place, public and private sector innovation will help European companies to grow into the global clean economy leaders. Innovation should thus be a key element of the European Green Deal narrative. Any EU leader could for instance state that 'because the US was at the frontier of digital innovation,

it became the birthplace of the digital revolution enabling it to dominate the global digital market. **Today in Europe, we are at the frontier of clean economy innovation. If we move now, if we act big, we can make Europe the birthplace of the clean economy revolution and dominate the global clean economy markets'.**

Third, social. The European Commission calls for a "social Green Deal"¹⁹ to ensure that "no one is left behind". While it is indeed paramount to ensure that no one is left behind, **the sad truth is that the current system based on the wasteful use of fossil fuels has already left millions of people behind: the 50 Million European families experiencing energy poverty.**²⁰ The European Green Deal offers the opportunity to create a better future for them. To do so, the European Green Deal narrative should include an objective as simple as ensuring that **'not a single European family suffers from cold at home in winter'.**

Climate, innovation and social justice can therefore become the key pillars of a positive narrative on the European Green Deal. Yet, ambitious narratives and grand plans for a distant future can rightly induce scepticism. To show that the European Union is serious about its Green Deal, it needs to act now by implementing concrete flagship initiatives that prove to policy makers, businesses and citizens that the Green Deal is not just a good communication campaign. It is a serious endeavour that will shape Europe for the decades to come.

6 ■ Launching emblematic Green Deal flagships: the case for renovating buildings to lift one million European families out of energy poverty

European Green Deal flagships should be important enough to matter, and tangible enough to embody the Green Deal narrative. The European Commission, which has branded a 100-days first deadline to put its agenda on track in due time, already hints at some flagships, including charging points for electric vehicles, schools, clean energy for EU islands, NaturAfrica biodiversity network.²¹ Here we suggest to add one flagship on the deep renovation of buildings.

'Change the life of one million families, by 2024, by deeply renovating one million buildings where families experiencing energy poverty live'. Renovating buildings is a no-brainer of the transition. To deliver climate neutrality by 2050, we need to modernise 97% of existing EU buildings,²² and do this in a cost-effective, swift and appealing manner.

The main way forward is the deep renovation of buildings: taking a crappy old and inefficient building and making it a modern near-zero energy building in a short time span –say, one week, like [EnergieSprong](#) already does in four European countries. Doing this at the required scale demands a lot of innovations, not in some new distant technology, but in processes, business models and financing schemes to deploy at scale the processes and technologies that already work. We know how to foster such innovations. We did it for solar panels and wind turbines back in the 2000s: by providing a niche market as the necessary first step to make those innovations better and cheaper, and thus fit to go mainstream.²³ As part of the forthcoming 'renovation wave', the European Green Deal Investment Plan can support the **renovation of one million buildings (i.e. a big enough scale for companies to innovate and cut costs²⁴) by 2024** (i.e. the end of the mandate of these European Commission and Parliament). Such renovation can furthermore be socially fair if focused on energy poor families. If implemented, it would mean that, **by 2024, millions of parents and children will finally be able to heat properly their home while being financially better off** as they will save the money they currently spend on buying fossil fuels for heating.

To conclude, **the European Green Deal is the most important EU endeavour since the creation of the Single Market.** We believe that **a narrative articulating climate ambition, innovation and social justice can help make the Green Deal a European success.** We further suggest investing in one flagship project to deeply renovate buildings to the benefit of one million European families currently experiencing energy poverty.■

Endnotes

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