

GreenDeal-NET

Governing the EU's Transition towards Climate Neutrality and Sustainability

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL GOVERNANCE RESEARCH FOR POLICY

1. GREEN HYDROGEN FROM NORTH AFRICA SUPPORTING EU DECARBONISATION

Green hydrogen, which is produced using renewable energy, could play a crucial role in the EU's journey to carbon neutrality. A recent study by [Pinto et al. \(2024\)](#)¹ highlights the potential of importing green hydrogen from North Africa in supporting the EU's decarbonisation:

- **Cost savings:** Importing green hydrogen from North Africa is expected to make the EU's decarbonisation cheaper.
- **Significant hydrogen supply:** By 2050, North African green hydrogen could meet around 16.5% of the EU's hydrogen demand.
- **Advantages for Southern Europe:** Importing hydrogen via pipelines will especially benefit Spain and Italy, potentially as early as 2030 through the Morocco-Spain pipeline.
- **Wider European access:** If the hydrogen is shipped, other EU countries like Poland, the Netherlands, and Germany could also benefit from North African imports.
- **Importance of North African partnerships:** Strong, strategic partnerships with North African countries will be essential for stable hydrogen trade.

2. CLIMATE MINISTRIES HELPING TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS BY DRIVING IMPLEMENTATION

Dedicated climate ministries have been established in many countries, but their exact impact is still not well understood. [Limberg et al. \(2024\)](#)² compare countries with and without climate ministries and find:

- **Clear impact on lowering emissions:** Countries with climate ministries show a substantial decrease in carbon emissions compared to those without.
- **Driving implementation:** Climate ministries achieve these reductions primarily by driving the implementation and enforcement of existing policies, rather than creating new climate policies.

3. STAKEHOLDERS' VARIED DEMANDS FOR REVISING THE GOVERNANCE REGULATION

The Governance Regulation, which is currently under review, is a key tool for coordinating energy and climate policy across the EU's member states. [Bruch et al. \(2024\)](#)³ examine stakeholder feedback from the Commission's public consultations on the Regulation and find:

- **Broad support for revising the Regulation:** All stakeholders agree on the need to revise the Governance Regulation, especially to improve reporting and monitoring.
- **Public authorities oppose stricter obligations:** While public authorities support clearer enforcement mechanisms, they oppose adding more binding obligations and sanctions.
- **Others advocate greater enforcement and participation:** Non-public stakeholders call for stronger enforcement mechanisms, such as penalties for countries that miss targets. NGOs also emphasise the need for enhanced public participation to increase transparency and accountability.

4. INCLUDING VULNERABLE GROUPS IN NATIONAL CLIMATE ACTS

National climate acts are key legal instruments designed to guide countries' climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. These acts vary greatly across EU Member States and should include mechanisms for public participation to ensure that the voices of those most affected by climate change are heard. Examining national climate acts across the EU, [Honkonen \(2024\)](#)⁴ finds:

- **Insufficient public participation provisions:** Most EU countries' climate acts do not address public participation, and none provide clear pathways for involving vulnerable groups in decision-making, highlighting the need for more inclusivity.

5. ALIGNING EU POLICIES WITH GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY GOALS TO PROTECT FORESTS

In 2022, the EU introduced a Nature Restoration Regulation to support global goals of halting and reversing biodiversity loss on Earth, as set out by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. A comparative study of the EU Regulation and the Global Framework by [Aggestam \(2024\)](#)⁵ explores the implications for forest ecosystems and finds:

- **Weakened Regulation:** Amendments to the EU's Nature Restoration Regulation have diluted its potential impact, limiting Member States' accountability and ability to meet the global biodiversity targets.
- **Need for stronger alignment with global targets:** To better protect European forests, the EU's Nature Restoration Regulation should be more closely aligned with the global Framework's goals as well as other forest-related policies.
- **Need for integrated policy approach:** The EU must ensure that forest conservation efforts are not undermined by other land-use policies, like those for agriculture and urban development. For instance, agricultural policies often prioritise farmland expansion, which can conflict with forest restoration goals.

6. ACHIEVING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY THROUGH GREATER POLICY COHERENCE

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach that makes companies accountable for managing their products' entire life cycle, including the recycling and disposal after consumer use. [Mallick et al. \(2024\)⁶](#) identify key improvements needed to make EPR more effective in supporting a circular economy:

- **Expand EPR beyond waste management:** Policymakers need to shift EPR from a simple waste management strategy to a comprehensive approach that promotes sustainability, covering chemicals, waste and circular economy law.
- **Clarify EPR goals and tools:** EPR systems should have specific goals and the right tools to meet them, such as incentives for recycling or penalties for non-compliance.
- **Encourage collaboration:** Businesses, governments, and other stakeholders need to work together to make EPR effective and improve environmental outcomes.

7. CONTEXTUALISING SHORTSIGHTEDNESS IN EU CLIMATE POLICYMAKING

Addressing the climate crisis requires long-term policymaking. [Gheuens \(2024\)⁷](#) finds that the shortsightedness of EU climate governance varies and under the right conditions EU institutions can govern for the future:

- **Fluctuating responsiveness of EU institutions:** The European Commission, Council and European Parliament have varying degrees of responsiveness to electoral and interest group concerns due to their institutional structure.
- **Variations in shortsightedness:** The shortsightedness of these electoral and interest group concerns can vary over time and between decision-making bodies. Depending on how responsive institutions are to specific interests, the shortsightedness of their positions will fluctuate as well.
- **Need for farsighted policymaking:** To facilitate long-term policymaking, the EU should hence encourage farsighted electoral and interest group concerns by protecting space for climate activism, including a diversity of actors in the decision-making process.

[1] Pinto, M. C., Simões, S. G., & Fortes, P. (2024). [How can green hydrogen from North Africa support EU decarbonization? Scenario analyses on competitive pathways for trade](#). *International Journal of Hydrogen Energy*, 79, 305–318.

[2] Limberg, J., Steinebach, Y. & Nyrop, J. (2024). [Dedicated climate ministries help to reduce carbon emissions](#). *npj Clim. Action* 3(1), 70.

[3] Bruch, N., Knodt, M., & Ringel, M. (2024). [Advocating harder soft governance for the European Green Deal. Stakeholder perspectives on the revision of the EU governance regulation](#). *Energy Policy*, 192, 114255.

[4] Honkonen, T. (2024). [Do climate acts of EU countries enable the most vulnerable to participate in climate policymaking?](#) *Npj Climate Action*, 3(1).

[5] Aggestam, F. (2024). [Crosswalking the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework: A Forest-Centred Outlook](#). *Sustainability*, 16(11), 4863.

[6] Mallick, P. K., Salling, K. B., Pigosso, D. C., & McAloone, T. C. (2024). [Designing and operationalising extended producer responsibility under the EU Green Deal](#). *Environmental Challenges*, 16, 100977.

[7] Gheuens, J. (2024). [Context Matters: Variation in the Shortsightedness of European Climate Policy](#). *JCMS Journal of Common Market Studies*.



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