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**Does the EU follow a path towards Sustainable Development
when recovering from the Covid19 Pandemic?**

**The European "Green New Deal" and "Next Generation EU":
features, relations, governance**

Draft Seminar Plan

Course 14335.0205

"Schwerpunktmodul Seminar Politikwissenschaft I"

When the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, came into office in summer 2019, she launched an ambitious "European Green New Deal" project, placing the fight against climate change, protection of biodiversity and in a broader sense sustainable development at the heart of EU policies. Just when the project took shape, the COVID-19-pandemic broke out and required itself the attention and action of the EU: "Next Generation EU" is the equally ambitious recovery programme the EU put on track from May 2020 on. How do these two projects relate to each other? Is "Next Generation EU" marked by a strategy, which places recovery – understood as renewed growth – above all and relegates the "Green New Deal" to 'better times'? Or are they positively linked in a mutually reinforcing way, is "Next Generation EU" aiming at a 'Green Recovery', supporting and accelerating the transition to sustainable development in Europe? The seminar will analyze in which way both projects are intertwined and how they are being implemented together.

Our first meeting will offer an overview and introduction. The second meeting – a bloc of three days (or less, depending on the number of participants) will serve as an exchange among participants over the relevant questions of the topic, which will at the same time be the topics for seminar papers. The third and last meeting is dedicated to communicate preliminary findings of the various paper projects.

13 April: Introduction (10:00 – 12:00)

3/4/5 May: Discussion of topics (09:00 – 12:00)

15 June: Discussion of preliminary findings (09:00 – 12:00)

The meetings will take place via Zoom. Registered participants will receive further information via email and ILIAS.

(I) The EU pretends to turn to Sustainable Development, with regulation and funding:

The New President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, launched, as her core political programme, the “European Green New Deal”, when she came into office, in mid-2019, aiming at a re-definition of the EU’s political goals towards Sustainable Development:

„Protecting our planet and our shared environment is our generation’s defining task. It is an urgent moral, human and political obligation, which Europeans have resoundingly told us they want their Union to fulfil. It is also a long-term economic imperative: those who act first and fastest will be the ones who grasp the opportunities from the ecological transition. The European Green Deal should become Europe’s hallmark. At the heart of it is our commitment to becoming the world’s first climate-neutral continent. It will require collective ambition, political leadership and a just transition for the most affected.“ (Ursula von der Leyen, Mission Letter to Frans Timmermans, 1st December 2019)

- (1) *What is the European Green New Deal? Which are its objectives? How should it be put into practice?*

Readings:

- Ursula von der Leyen: A Union which strives for more. My agenda for Europe https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf
- European Commission: A European Green Deal. Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- The European Green New Deal, as convened upon by the EU institutions, December 2019: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019DC0640>
- Compared to the original Green New Deal objectives, the EU improved its goals in 2020, aiming now at 55 (instead of 40)% of CO2 emissions by 2030: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2030_en
- Financing the Green New Deal: “A European Green Deal Investment Plan”; and a “Renewed Sustainable Finance Strategy”
 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/business_economy_euro/banking_and_finance/documents/200108-financing-sustainable-growth-factsheet_en.pdf
 - <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-renewed-sustainable-finance-strategy>
- An independent summary of ten essentials of the Green New Deal, by euractiv: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/eu-commission-unveils-european-green-deal-the-key-points/>

- (2) *Who, in the Commission, is responsible for the implementation of the Green New Deal?*

Readings:

- Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the Commission, is responsible for the Green New Deal implementation; the links and cooperative structures in the

Commission are spelled out in the Mission Letter for Timmermans (as similarly for the other Commissioners):

- https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/timmermans_en
- https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/sites/default/files/commissioner_mission_letters/mission-letter-frans-timmermans-2019_en.pdf

- (3) Which are the means and methods to implement the project? Which is the timeline?

Readings:

- The governance relies on a regulation going back to 2018: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?toc=OJ:L:2018:328:TOC&uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2018.328.01.0001.01.ENG
- The European Investment Bank is responsible for the related investment, management of funds: <https://www.eib.org/en/about/priorities/climate-action/index.htm>
- The financial side is regulated under the “Sustainable Europe Investment Plan European Green Deal Investment Plan”: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0021>
- The schedule for legislative implementation, and the timeline of the European Council’s deliberations on the “Green New Deal”:
 - <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal>
 - <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/timeline-european-green-deal/>

- (4) Is this “Green New Deal” an all-embracing, a holistic concept, as ‘Sustainable Development’ is? Is it about Sustainable Development? Or is it only “Green”, i.e. oriented towards ‘environment’ (wide enough, but not holistic)? Or is it even less ambitious, aiming at stalling climate change: the overall objective is to make Europe the “first climate-neutral continent” in the world, by 2050?

Readings:

- Green New Deal – only “greenwashing”? A critical assessment of the Green New Deal (Varoufakis and Adler for The Guardian): <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/07/eu-green-deal-greenwash-ursula-von-der-leyen-climate>
- A critical analysis of “Green Deals” all over the world, and their lack of coherence, for the “degrowth” platform: <https://www.degrowth.info/en/2019/11/a-green-new-deal-for-an-ecological-economy/>
- see Frans Timmermans (further on), pretending the opposite: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1551

- (5) *Why is this shift a “shift”, or a “transition”? What was the dominant EU objective until 2019? Which role did Sustainable Development play before the launch of the Green New Deal?*
 - Readings:
 - European Parliament: The Lisbon Strategy 2000-2010. An analysis and evaluation of the methods used and the results achieved
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201107/20110718ATT24270/20110718ATT24270EN.pdf>
 - European Commission: Europe 2020. A Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
<https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>
 - A general reflection on the ongoing transition to sustainability and the label of “Green Deal”, focusing as a case study on British Labour Party:
<https://viewpointmag.com/2019/10/24/green-new-deal-for-what/>

- (6) *How comes that the EU took this step? Why did it change its objectives? Which were the causes and drivers, which explain the turn to Sustainable Development?*
 - Readings:
 - A look back to the EU elections, Fridays for future and the links to official policy, for “Foreign Policy”:
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/30/fridays-for-future-foreign-policy-bureacrats-officials-2019-greta-thunberg/>
 - A sceptical outlook on behalf of “politico”, the EU inside news platform:
<https://www.politico.eu/article/ursula-von-der-leyen-green-deal-is-doomed-climate-change-european-commission/>
 - A 23min podcast from the directors of one of Brussels’s leading think-tanks, Bruegel:
<https://www.bruegel.org/2019/09/directors-cut-the-green-new-deal/>

- (7) *How deep does this transition go? Is it affecting all EU policies, institutions, actions ...? Or is it only a gradual, superficial, or sectoral shift?*
 - Readings:
 - Speech from Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the Commission, in charge of the Green New Deal:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1551
 - Von der Leyen qualifies Green New Deal as a “cultural project” (is this a hint to the Chinese concept of “ecological civilization?”), in her first State of the Union speech”; see the speech and the essentials commented:
 - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_20_1655
 - <https://euobserver.com/green-deal/149455>
 - See above: critical assessments (“greenwashing”?)

- (8) *Does the EU have all the political competences, is it entitled, empowered by the Lisbon Treaty, to act in all the relevant fields? When pretending to steer Europe towards Sustainable Development – an all-embracing concept, a holistic approach –,*

does the EU assume/claim the state-like right to attribute competences to itself (“Kompetenz-Kompetenz”, in constitutional terms)?

Readings:

- The competences of the EU - a systematic overview:
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legissum:ai0020>
- An analysis of the EU’s legal competences in the field of environment:
<https://www.documents.clientearth.org/wp-content/uploads/library/2010-02-01-what-does-the-lisbon-treaty-mean-for-the-environment-in-europe-ce-en.pdf>

- *(9) Why was it called “Green New Deal”? What is a “New Deal”? Why should the “deal” be “green” this time? Is this a focus on environment, at the expense of the other components of Sustainable Development?*

Readings:

- “New Deal” historically – a very short introduction (5 min):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7xGy9T6g50>
- “The Not-so-New Green Deal”, by Dave Keating for Forbes:
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davekeating/2020/01/28/the-not-so-new-green-deal/?sh=2630d50775df>

- This shift of political objectives requires a transition all over the European Union – a transition, which meets different situations in different EU member states. In order to balance advantages and burdens, the Commission launched a “European Transition Fund”, end of 2019.

- *(10) What is this Transition Fund? How much money is in the Fund? Who pays, who benefits, and why? What are the objectives, and when should they be met?*

Readings:

- EU Commission: The European Green Deal Investment Plan and Just Transition Mechanism explained:
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_24

- *(11) Who decides about distributing the Fund? Which are the mechanisms of governance provided for the management of the Fund?*

Readings:

- The European Investment Bank declared itself the “EU Climate Bank” and manages the investment of the Just Transition Fund, see a case in kind here:
<https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2020-130-commission-proposes-a-public-loan-facility-to-support-green-investments-together-with-the-eib>

- *(12) What is the role of the member states? How are they involved in the implementation, management, spending of the funds (“Green Deal Investment Plan” and “Just Transition Fund”)?*

Readings:

- In fact, it is the member states who finally allocate and spend the money, as the government crisis in Italy (January 2021) illustrates:
 - <https://www.euronews.com/2021/01/13/italy-s-government-close-to-collapse-amid-row-over-covid-recovery-cash>

- <https://www.dw.com/en/political-turmoil-for-italy-comes-at-the-worst-possible-time/a-56215208>

○ (13) *Who controls the implementation?*

Readings:

- European Parliament's Resolution on the Green New Deal, 15th January 2020: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0005_EN.html
- *See above: schedule for legislative implementation*

(II) The EU is not the only region, which has launched a “Green New Deal” or something of this kind, and the United Nations still champion and cherish the move towards Sustainable Development.

- How is the EU's Green New Deal positioned in the global context? What is the role of the United Nations in the “European Green New Deal”?
 - (14) *How is this Green New Deal connected with the international commitments of the EU, namely the United Nations “Sustainable Development Goals” (to be reached in 2030), or the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), or other international commitments, e.g. regarding biodiversity and development of poorer countries?*

Readings:

 - UN Sustainable Development Goals, state of the art: “The Future is Now” (2019): https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf
- How do other countries understand and conceive their “Green New Deal” or however they call it? Three examples matter most, because of size (the first two) and/or quality (the third one):
 - (15) *What is the (US-)American “Green New Deal”? Who is the driver, manager, organizer? Which is the relation between civil society, states/federation?*

Readings:

 - “State of Play on the “Green Deals” in the EU and US”, webinar by EEFX (11/2019): <https://www.ecologic.eu/16993>
 - (16) *What is the Chinese concept of an “Ecological Civilisation”? Is it comparable to the “Green New Deal” in Western understanding? Is it a Chinese translation/adaptation of Sustainable Development or an original concept?*

Readings:

 - Berthold Kuhn, 2019, for Dialogue-of-Civilizations Research Institute: <https://doc-research.org/2019/08/ecological-civilisation-china-berthold/>
 - (17) *How does the South Korean “Green New Deal” work? Why is it relatively advanced? Which are its features in terms of governance?*

Readings:

 - South Korea's and the EU's Green Deal

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/south-korea-mirrors-european-green-deal-with-net-zero-pledge-for-2050/>

(III) The EU faces another challenge in 2020 and the following years, the Covid19 pandemic, and pretends to react with solidarity among its member states, by launching the “Next Generation EU” project:

- The Corona Pandemic interfered with the Green New Deal programme, in the first semester of 2020. Another important challenge – the unequal preparedness of member states, their health systems, the resilience of their economic fabric, to meet the challenge of the pandemic – had to be addressed. In order to live up to the new challenge, the EU launched a recovery programme called “Next Generation EU”, in July 2020.

- (18) *What is this recovery programme? Which are its aims and objectives? What means “recovery” exactly – back to the pre-crisis economic performance? ... or a shift towards other objectives, closer to the “Green New Deal” goals?*

Readings:

- The overall shape of the recovery programme, outlined by the European Commission:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en

- A comment/evaluation of “Next Generation EU” by one of the leading Brussels think-tanks, CEPS (<https://www.ceps.eu/>), July 2020:

<https://www.ceps.eu/next-generation-eu-2/>

- (19) *How did “Next Generation EU” come about? Who launched it, who was opposed, who in favour? Who succeeded in shaping the programme? How was an agreement finally reached?*

Readings:

- 17th May, France and Germany launched the initiative:

<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/dt-franz-initiative-1753890>

- 27th May, the Commission took over, by framing the legal act for the recovery plan:

<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/issues/wiederaufbauprogramm-europa-1755800>

- 18th December, Council and Parliament reached an agreement on the plan:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-recovery-plan/>

- (20) *“Next Generation EU” itself came nearly at the same time, when the new seven years “Multi-Annual Financial Framework” (MFF) had to be elaborated, shaped, and decided upon (to be put into practice from 1/2021 on) – how were these two negotiations linked?*

Readings:

- The recovery plan will be implemented in the framework of the EU budget, under the European Semester mechanism, as outlined by Miguel Álvarez for “funcas” (<https://www.funcas.es/en/home/>):

<https://www.funcas.es/articulos/eu-recovery-fund-timetable-and-links-with-eurozone-governance/>

- (21) *The combined decisions about the recovery programme (“Next Generation EU”) and the MFF had to be taken in the second semester of 2021 – how did that work? How were the decisions made possible?*
 - Readings:
 - How the Commission officially sees the link:, when launching the plan (May 2020)/when the MFF was adopted (December 2020)
 - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_935
 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2021-2027_en

- (22) *“Next Generation EU” is implemented via the “Recovery and Resilience Facility”, the financial framework for the plan. How does that work?*
 - Readings
 - “The Commission proposed the Facility on 27 May 2020 as the centrepiece of Next Generation EU, a temporary recovery instrument that allows the Commission to raise funds to help repair the immediate economic and social damage brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. The Facility is also closely aligned with the Commission’s priorities ensuring in the long-term a sustainable and inclusive recovery that promotes the green and digital transitions. – On 21 July 2020, the European Council reached a political agreement on Next Generation EU, including the Facility, and the 2021-2027 long-term EU budget”:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en

- (23) *“Next Generation EU” builds on the experience of the financial, economic and fiscal crisis of 2008 etc. – how does “Next Generation EU” relate to the measures taken during the decade before, against the crisis of 2008? Is it a similar approach or a different one? In which features is it different?*
 - Readings:
 - The European Court of Auditors analyses the measures taken between 2008 and 2012 and the lessons drawn in the Next Generation EU approach:
https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/rw20_05/rw_financial_crisis_prevention_en.pdf
 - An assessment by Joel Jäger for “greenbiz”/“World Resources Institut”:
<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/lessons-great-recession-covid-19-green-recovery>
 - A comment from The Guardian (summer 2020):
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/20/heed-lessons-of-2008-crisis-experts-warn-global-leaders>

- (24) *“Next Generation EU” has been qualified a “Hamiltonian Moment” for European integration, referring to the creation of a US Central Bank and the takeover of member states debts by the federal level, thus binding the states tightly into the*

Federation – is the historical comparison appropriate? Or what else does it mean for the EU to have this “Next Generation EU” fund?

Readings:

- About the meaning of a “Hamilton Moment”:
 - <https://fedtrust.co.uk/what-is-a-hamilton-moment/>
 - <https://www.politico.eu/article/this-isnt-europes-hamilton-moment/>

(IV) How do the “Green New Deal” (with the “Just Transition Fund”) and “Next Generation EU” (together with the MFF), relate to each other?

- *(25) Is there an official, conscious, articulated relation between the “Green New Deal” and “Next Generation EU”?*

Readings:

- The Commission is not explicit on the question, but addresses it in so far as the shares of the recovery fund dedicated to sustainability/environment are fixed; details in “Questions and Answers on the agreement on the €1.8 trillion package to help build greener, more digital and more resilient Europe” (November 2020):
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_2088

- *(26) Does “Next Generation EU” confirm the shift/transition towards Sustainable Development? Or does it emphasize the economic recovery, disregarding the means, direction, objectives?*

Readings:

- Swen Giegold, one of the leading German Greens in the European Parliament, assesses chances and limits of the Next Generation EU/Green New Deal:
<https://sven-giegold.de/en/agreement-eu-budget-green-deal-financing/>

- *(27) What is the share of Sustainable Development objectives in “Next Generation EU” and the MFF for 2021-2027? What are the other sectors aiming at?*

Readings:

- See above FAQ Commission, November 2020, and Giegold
- An outspoken critique of the Green New Deal before, and a pledge for a holistic Green New Deal after the pandemic, by GNDE (“Green New Deal for Europe”, coalition from researchers and activists all over Europe):
<https://www.gndforeurope.com/covid>

- *(28) How is the governance, management, implementation, control of the “Green New Deal” and “Next Generation EU” related? Is it the same structure/procedure for both or are there parallel governance files?*

Readings:

- See above, Timmermans’ “Mission Letter”
- Next Generation EU: See Conclusions of the European Council meetings in July and December 2020

- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

Transversal Questions

**Who are the “Principal Actors” in the EU,
responsible for the Green New Deal and Next Generation EU? ...
and which are the essential procedures for implementation and control?**

- European Commission:
 - Commission President, von der Leyen
 - Commissioner charged with Green New Deal, Frans Timmermans
- European Investment Bank
- Member States
- “European Semester” (Commission plus Member States)

Timeline(s) of “Green New Deal” and “Next Generation EU”

- Timeline of the European Commission:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en#timeline
- Timeline of the European Council concerning Green New Deal:
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/timeline-european-green-deal/>
- European Parliament: “Legislative Train Schedule”
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-european-green-deal>