



THINK 2030

Paper summary

Targets and indicators for a meaningful implementation of the European Green Deal

While the ambition to reach climate neutrality by 2050 is highly welcomed, further efforts are needed to layout concrete quantitative targets and indicators to track and enforce the enacted policies. Moreover, a coherent set of indicators should be integrated into all policies, thus harmonizing the European Green Deal, an SDGs strategy, the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This enhanced monitoring framework could be introduced by the end of 2021.

Background

To safely limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C, CO₂ emissions should be cut by at least 55% - and ideally by 60% - by 2030, while carbon neutrality should be reached by 2050.

With the approval and gradual deployment of the European Green Deal, the EU has committed to take ambitious action in order to reach climate neutrality by 2050 envisioning a new model of growth based on sustainability, wellbeing, and equity. But such ambition might be redundant if not complemented with fit-for-purpose targets, indicators and governance frameworks.

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Full paper



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Key policy recommendations

- **Headline targets and indicators must be developed and implemented as part of one coherent set on the six priorities of the European Commission:** In line with the principle of the indivisibility of the sustainability agenda, a harmonized set of headline indicators would allow to operationalize the European Green Deal framework, enabling heads of states and governments and EU leaders to be informed about the progress made in its implementation, and thus guiding decision-making. This enhanced, SDG-aligned monitoring framework could be introduced by the end of 2021 and must be coherent with other monitoring processes (e.g. 8th EAP and the semester). The green indicator framework should include two types of indicators: (a) indicators measuring the distance to targets and (b) indicators monitoring means of implementation.
- **Promote structural reform by introducing a new sustainability scoreboard within the European Semester and SDG-related targets within the Recovery and Resilience Plans.** The inclusion of a sustainability scoreboard would enable to align the European Semester, the European Green Deal policy targets and Member States' policymaking, as well as guide investment decisions in the context of the recovery. Synergies should be created with scoreboard by introducing the concept of a sustainable wellbeing economy for all, ensuring that there are no trade-offs between social, environmental and economic aspects. Lastly, targets assessing Member States' progress towards the SDGs should be introduced in order to align the recovery with sustainability (e.g. cancelling environmentally-harmful subsidies),
- **Turn objectives into legal obligations:** To ensure the delivery of the European Green Deal, objectives must be turned into obligations both on the Member State- and European level. For instance, targets that are included in Communications rather than Regulations and Directives might be taken less seriously. Triggers must exist in case of lack of compliance, and institutions should ensure the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms, as well as enhanced public access to environmental justice. Lastly,

Key policy recommendations:

- Headline targets and indicators must be developed and implemented as part of one coherent set on the six priorities of the European Commission.
- Promote structural reform by introducing a new sustainability scoreboard within the European Semester and SDG-related targets within the Recovery and Resilience Plans.
- Turn objectives into legal obligations.
- Integrate into the monitoring framework new targets and indicators regarding cross-border social and environmental spill-over effects.
- Create an annual report and conference to assess progress against the six headline ambitions of the European Commission.

quantitative targets should be promoted over qualitative ones, since the latter might lead to differences in interpretation and lack of evidence to demonstrate gaps.

- **Integrate into the monitoring framework new targets and indicators regarding cross-border social and environmental spill-over effects:** In line with the principle of universality of the SDG agenda, such spill-over indicators should be integrated into SDG monitoring frameworks. Current information on spill-over effects on third countries is sparse and inconsistent, and given the universality of the environmental emergency, this is problematic, since the European Union might simply export environmental degradation to other countries. Hence, European targets and indicators must be complimented with targets and indicators on spill-over effects.
- **Create an annual report and conference to assess progress against the six headline ambitions of the European Commission:** Well-renowned scientists from different disciplines should form an independent scientific advisory council, which would produce an annual report on the progress against headline indicators for the European Council. This initiative for an annual report could be complemented by a special summit at the level of heads of State and Government. Such a report, if the principle of publicity is applied, must be leveraged as a mechanism for democratic transparency and accountability.

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