



PODCAST 8

THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ON SOCIAL SOLIDARITY



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Welcome to our podcast. In this episode we will explore how Environmental Sustainability across the European Union is impacted by social solidarity.

Let's start with explaining what Environmental sustainability is.

Environmental sustainability refers to the responsible management of natural resources and ecosystems to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It involves maintaining ecological balance, reducing environmental degradation, and promoting long-term ecological health.

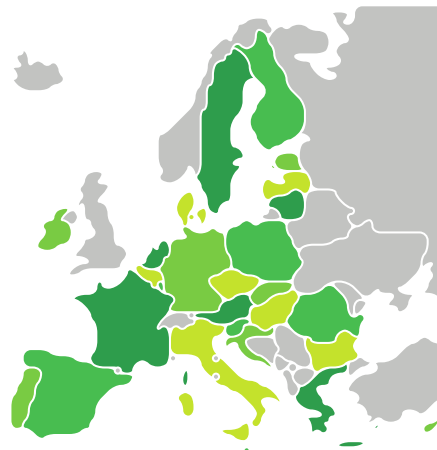
Key Principles of Environmental Sustainability include:

- Conservation of Natural Resources by using renewable resources responsibly and minimizing the depletion of non-renewable resources.
- Reducing Pollution and Waste through minimizing air, water, and soil pollution while promoting recycling and waste reduction.
- Preserving ecosystems and wildlife to maintain ecological balance.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable energy sources.
- Sustainable Development and balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility and social well-being.



Examples of Environmental Sustainability Practices include:

- Using renewable energy instead of fossil fuels
- Implementing sustainable agriculture and forestry practices
- Encouraging the use of electric vehicles
- Promoting circular economy models
- Supporting conservation efforts and habitat restoration.



Environmental sustainability is essential for protecting the planet, ensuring economic stability, and improving quality of life for future generations.

Social solidarity plays a crucial role in advancing environmental sustainability across the EU by fostering collective action, strengthening policy support, encouraging sustainable lifestyles, enhancing resilience to climate change, and bridging socioeconomic gaps.

The EU's commitment to environmental sustainability, reflected in policies such as the European Green Deal, is significantly influenced by social cohesion and solidarity among its citizens.

Now that we have mentioned the European Green Deal - let's talk about it in more detail.

The European Green Deal is the European Union's strategy to achieve a sustainable economy by making Europe climate-neutral by 2050. Launched in December 2019, the Green Deal sets ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect biodiversity, promote clean energy, and transition to a circular economy and includes over 1 trillion euros in investments over the next decade.

It is often described as Europe's "man on the moon moment" for climate policy, as it integrates environmental, economic, and social policies to drive systemic change. The first objective of the Green Deal is Climate Neutrality by 2050. This goal is legally binding under the European Climate Law, which also sets an interim target of reducing emissions by 55% by 2030.

Through the Clean Energy Transition, the Green Deal increases the share of renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydrogen while phasing out fossil fuels. It aims to improve energy efficiency by renovating buildings and upgrading infrastructure and expand the EU Emissions Trading System making polluters pay for carbon emissions.

Through the introduction of the Circular Economy Action Plan, which promotes recycling, waste reduction, and sustainable product design, the Green Deal will ensure industries adopt eco-friendly practices.

The Renovation Wave Strategy aims to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, reducing energy waste and carbon footprints and encourages green construction and smart city development.

The Green Deal also aims to reduce transport emissions by 90% by 2050 and expand electric vehicle infrastructure in order to promote rail and public transport, and phase out polluting vehicles.

The Farm to Fork Strategy aims to reduce the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and antibiotics to make food production more environmentally friendly. This in turn will promote organic farming and sustainable fisheries.

The Green Deal also aims to Protect 30% of EU land and sea areas by 2030 and restore ecosystems and expand forest coverage. The Zero Pollution Action Plan, which targets air, water, and soil pollution will introduce stricter limits on industrial emissions.

There will be additional support provided for regions and workers who rely on fossil fuel industries which will ensure a fair transition to clean energy jobs. The Just Transition Fund will make financial aid available for affected communities, especially in coal-dependent regions like Poland.

You might begin to wonder what does The European Deal have to do with social solidarity?

The European Green Deal is not just an environmental strategy; it is also a social transformation framework that fosters solidarity by ensuring that the transition to a sustainable economy is fair, inclusive, and participatory.

Through policies that promote economic equality, protect vulnerable groups, and encourage collective action, the Green Deal strengthens social cohesion across EU member states.

Just Transition Mechanism, also known as the JFT was mentioned briefly in this podcast. JFT ensures that the green transition does not disproportionately harm workers, communities, or regions that are economically dependent on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive industries.

But how does it promote social solidarity across the European Union?

The Just Transition Fund provides €17.5 billion to help coal-dependent regions such as Poland and Romania invest in green jobs, retraining programs, and job diversification. This fosters solidarity between wealthier and poorer EU nations, as stronger economies contribute more to the transition fund.

Programs under the Green Deal ensure that coal miners, factory workers, and energy sector employees are reskilled for jobs in renewable energy, electric vehicle production, and circular economy industries. This prevents social unrest and economic inequality, reinforcing worker solidarity across different industries.



Without financial aid, some regions would struggle with unemployment and economic downturns, leading to social fragmentation. The Green Deal helps prevent this by redirecting investments into sustainable industries, ensuring economic stability.

Poland, the EU's largest coal producer, will receive billions in aid to transition away from coal without causing mass job losses. This in turn has eased tensions between Eastern and Western European nations over climate policies.

The Green Deal fosters solidarity among citizens, organizations, and governments by promoting shared responsibility for climate action. EU Wide Climate Policies create a common purpose for all by requiring every EU member state is required to contribute to emissions reductions, fostering a shared sense of responsibility.

Unlike previous fragmented approaches, the Green Deal unifies Europe under a collective environmental mission. The EU funds local environmental projects, including cooperative energy grids, reforestation programs, and sustainable farming initiatives. Citizens feel empowered when they see their communities directly benefiting from climate action.

The Green Deal promotes collaboration between governments, businesses, and NGOs, reinforcing solidarity between different sectors of society.




Let's take Companies like Volkswagen IKEA as an example. They are all investing in sustainability as part of the EU's green industrial strategy, strengthening economic cooperation around climate goals. Volkswagen is committed to introducing more electric vehicles whilst Ikea is offering recycling programs at their stores so that old furniture can be reused and does not end up at a landfill.

Is there anything else that the Green Deal will do to promote social solidarity?

Yes it will! The introduction of the Social Climate Fund totals €86 billion to Support Low-Income Households and small businesses with the cost of green transition. This will include funding to help with energy-efficient home renovations, solar panel installations, and public transport subsidies. The concept of social solidarity in environmental sustainability will ensure that the burden of green policies is shared equitably rather than falling solely on one country.

However, nothing comes without a challenge!

Despite its benefits, the Green Deal faces obstacles in maintaining long-term social cohesion and social solidarity. Some workers fear job losses despite the Just Transition Fund. The challenge is ensuring that retraining programs are effective and accessible.



Some nations will feel the economic disparities more when it comes to a quick transition into the green space as they lack resources and finances. The Green Deal needs stronger financial mechanisms to close these gaps.

Green policies are often more popular in cities than in rural areas, where dependence on traditional industries is higher. The EU must improve rural engagement to avoid polarization between urban and rural populations.

The European Green Deal fosters social solidarity by ensuring that the transition to sustainability is fair, inclusive, and cooperative. By addressing economic disparities, supporting vulnerable workers, promoting collective climate action, and reinforcing EU unity, the Green Deal helps build a more cohesive Europe.

While challenges remain, the Green Deal provides a framework for balancing environmental action with social justice, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a greener future.

This concludes today and we hope you enjoyed this podcast. Please subscribe and like for more content around social solidarity. We hope to see you soon!

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