

# Minutes

## The Green Deal and Beyond: A Business Agenda for a Sustainable, Competitive and Resilient Europe

<b>Date:</b> 19 <sup>TH</sup> June 2024	<b>Time (GMT):</b> 9.30-13.30 CEST
<b>Objective:</b> This event marked the release of a report by CLG Europe, entitled “The Green Deal and Beyond: A Business Agenda for a Sustainable, Competitive and Resilient Europe”. This report presents a forward-thinking business perspective on key policy priorities for the incoming European Commission and European Parliament. It aims to ensure how the EU can achieve the transition towards a climate neutral, nature positive and prosperous economy, building on the legacy of the Green Deal.	
<b>Venue:</b> Royal Library of Belgium – Panorama room, Mont des Arts 28, Brussels1000, Belgium.	

## Introduction and welcome speech

**Lindsay Hooper** (Interim CEO, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership) highlighted the need for strong leadership to address sustainability and the European Green Deal over the next five years. Her speech emphasized the importance of continued efforts to transition toward a sustainable economy, despite significant progress made in recent years. Ms. Hooper pointed out the necessity of actionable government policies that support businesses to adopt sustainable practices and stressed the role of market structures to incentivize green innovation. The speech also called for inclusive decision-making processes in order to build trust and support from across society. Ultimately, the focus is on accelerating the pace of change to achieve a competitive and sustainable future for Europe.

## Keynote speech

**Andrew Prag** (Managing Director, Policy, We Mean Business Coalition) emphasized the crucial role of businesses in driving the economic green transition, supported by WMBC's network of 16,000 companies with a market cap of \$53.6 trillion. WMBC endorses the business agenda report and urges policymakers to recognize that businesses are committed to accelerating decarbonization. He raised the coalition's Fossil to Clean campaign, which saw 261 signatory businesses worth \$1.6 trillion commit to weaning off fossil fuels – of whom 78 representing \$940 billion in value were from Europe. Mr. Prag argued that European investment is strong, with renewable energy investments nearly doubling between 2019 and 2024, despite the pandemic and war in Ukraine. That figure is higher than that in the U.S., and according to the IEA is almost at the investment required to reach net-zero, he said. The speaker's message emphasized the urgency of action, the economic benefits of the green transition, and the importance of making these benefits visible to

the public. Clear regulations are needed to facilitate business efforts toward decarbonisation; the European taxonomy from 2020 is already promoting clean energy, with data proving investments into clean energy to yield greater returns than those into other areas. With this in mind, Mr. Prag accentuated the key message of his speech: business investments have already started to pay off financially, so now is not the time to cut back; investments into the clean, green transition must be consolidated. Corporate and policy leaders have both the impetus and power to push for these ambition loops.

## Video statement on the future of the EU

**Teresa Ribera** (Third Vice-President, Government of Spain & Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge) named the European Green Deal the “guiding light” of the last EU legislature but recognised that the context in 2024 is different to that of 2019. In this new phase, she called on the critical importance of accelerating the European Green Deal and its transformative agenda amid evolving global challenges such as geopolitical shifts, war, and public health crises. Denial of the climate and environmental crises, she said, will only create more problems across society at a time when citizens are already most vulnerable. The Minister called for a collaborative approach between the public and private sectors, stressing the need for an economic transformation that is socially inclusive and positively perceived by citizens. Addressing social unrest and ensuring fairness is essential, with a particular effort required to create opportunities and wealth accessible to all. The speaker advocated for proactive, transparent dialogue and investments both within and beyond Europe, building partnerships, and tackling the climate crisis effectively and equitably. “The cheapest way to address this challenge is to work together,” she said, “building partnerships instead of building conflicts.”

## Presentation of the business agenda publication

**Ursula Woodburn** (Director, CISL Europe & CLG Europe) emphasized the need to build on the past five years' work while addressing existing gaps. She advocated coalition-building to present a proactive business voice for the upcoming institutional cycle.

**Dr. Soeren Buttkereit** (Consultant & report co-author) identified the task as showing that the Green Deal is not just ‘green’, but something more. The report found four topics to link it to:

1. Security and resilience (energy, food, resources...)
2. Competitiveness (reframing away from the dichotomy that portrays sustainability and competitiveness as opposite qualities)
3. Justice and fairness (reframing from the ‘elitist’ connotations of the transition toward a sense that the transition is affordable and inclusive of those harmed most)
4. Trust (addressing declining trust in public institutions by showing genuine care from governments and their ability to adequately meet common problems)

**Ralph Pfitzner** (Consultant & report co-author), following on from this understanding, proposed four policy recommendations to complement the European Green Deal:

### 1. **Industrial Deal:** Focus on a new European industrial strategy

Taking care of the 23 million individual businesses in Europe; Creating a strategy for technologies and value chains; Simplifying support for the twin transition of innovation & digitalization; Promoting direct electrification across sectors to effect decarbonization and avoiding the lock-in of liquid fuels among non-appropriate industries; Doubling down on energy efficiency and electrical demand reduction.

### 2. **Economic Deal:** Investment into infrastructure

Investing into renewable energy infrastructure including distribution grids; Boost the transition by leveraging private finance with public funds and de-risking these investments; Moving towards valuing natural capital stock and ecosystem services

### 3. **Social Deal:** Centring activities around citizens

Assess and mitigate negative social and economic impacts among low-income households; Pair job growth in low-carbon sectors with talented young workers; Developing and communicating a compelling narrative on the green and digital transitions; Create an inspiring vision that is honest and uplifting.

### 4. **Political Deal:** Emphasizing EU leadership and implementation of legislation

Consistent EGD implementation; A deeper, more broad Single Market; Expanding European leadership in international climate diplomacy, promoting a fair playing field; Strive for more inclusive governance.

#### Q&A Session:

- Addressed the need for concrete proposals beyond general statements for commission and institutions to drive implementation.
- Highlighted the report's relevance to conservative audiences through competitiveness and resilience, especially in the context of global competition with China and the US.

## Panel 1: Transforming Industry and Society for a Sustainable Future

**Viktorias Karsberg** (VP Head of Corporate Identity and Group Communications, SSAB) called for quick permitting processes and named collaboration between corporations and society as a key driver of certainty. She urged for leaders to stray away from a subsidy race, because that will prevent smaller countries from competing.

**Jakob Dalunde** (Member of the European Parliament) stressed social acceptance and political support for the green transition as keys to avoid losing votes to far-right parties. He urged new narratives that show the opportunities of the transition while avoiding false promises that coalminers will all become PV technicians, since these are easily mocked and discredited.

**Gonzalo Saenz de Miera** (Chair, CLG Europe & Director of Climate Change, Iberdrola) reiterated the need for certainty in policies and regulations to encourage business investment in the green transition. Uncertainty in Europe will cause the bloc to lose out to strategic rivals in China and the U.S.; the contentious ICE ban embodies this danger. Opportunities can also be risks.

**Riccardo Maggi** (Senior Economic Advisor, DG CLIMA, European Commission) identified an apparent paradox between needing stable policies and driving impactful changes. The EU has developed incentives for weaning off fossil fuels, now it needs to make that process easy. De-risking was recognised as an important process.

## Panel 2: Economic Growth and Political Leadership in a Green Europe

**Martin Hojsik** (Member of the European Parliament) urged industrial leaders to advocate for proper implementation of green policies to avoid job losses and promote social cohesion. He also highlighted the need to demonstrate the social benefits of the green transition, as well as greater cooperation with African countries, particularly to secure the continent's resilience.

**Adam Elman** (Sustainability Lead, Google EMEA) labelled technology an enabler of the green transition and of competitiveness, citing Google's use of AI to optimise European aviation emissions related to contrails. Contrails are responsible for a third of the sector's emissions and Google's efforts reduced these by 34 percent, he said. Mr. Elman also stressed the importance of citizen engagement and the role of public-private partnerships in maintaining leadership.

**Natasha Lepage** (Climate youth delegate, Luxembourg) emphasized long-term sustainability and resilience, with a focus on inter-generational justice and the recognition of how class differences exacerbate the effects of climate change. She also advocated the Nature Restoration Law as a stepping stone for global leadership. Finally, Ms. Lepage urged policymakers to maintain the public at the heart of public policy, asking leaders to think of youth and the marginalised not as a box to check, but as important ends in themselves.

## Concluding remarks

**Sandrine Dixson-Declève** (Co-President, Club of Rome) gave her remarks at the end of the day:

- **Certainty and Implementation:** Businesses need certainty in policies to invest with confidence. Advocated reducing bureaucracy in the European Green Deal and focusing on actual implementation rather than excessive reporting.
- **Well-being and Inequality:** Addressing gaps in the current approach, emphasising the importance of well-being and understanding why progress is slow. Inequality and poverty

are rising, leading to social tensions. Proposes focusing on reducing inequality to enhance well-being and reduce emissions.

- **Systemic Approach:** Need to understand the relationship between social and environmental tipping points, stress-testing economies and science, and creating movements rather than just publishing reports.
- **Economic Imbalances:** Highlighted the growing income disparity and its impact on social stability. Emphasized the need for a well-being economy and integrating gender diversity and empowerment, especially in the global South.
- **Revised Economic Measures:** Criticized the current economic system's focus on productivity over well-being. Suggested new economic metrics that reflect true progress and well-being.
- **European Green Deal Communication:** The narrative around the European Green Deal needs to focus on its benefits to citizens, making it relatable and understandable. Addressing the misconception that it is bad for business and people. A poignant example is the U.S. *Inflation Reduction Act* which invests heavily in the transition but is labelled as addressing inflation – a key concern of everyday American citizens.
- **Language points for stronger narratives:** Functional benefits (personal finance, health, safety, access to work and services, legal rights); emotional benefits (sense of security, wellbeing, happiness, confidence in the future, family cohesion, sense of agency); social benefits (social status, national pride, being valued in society, fun & leisure).
- **Leadership and Policy Translation:** Urged redefining leadership and translating policy into meaningful action. Suggested using narratives that resonate with people's daily lives and emphasizing local solutions.
- **Positive and Aggressive Narratives:** Advocated for a balanced narrative that is both positive and aggressive. Urged addressing the realities of the current economic system and fostering well-being over profit.
- **Conclusion:** Championed redesigning the economy to focus on well-being, resilience, and sustainability. Encouraged using strong, clear communication to support the European Green Deal and to counter opposing narratives.