Workshop: Measuring what matters: Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing metrics in the Clean Industrial Deal

March 26th, 09:30-11:30 am.
Joint Research Centre Policy Lab CDMA Building,
21 Rue du Champ de Mars / Marsveldstraat 21, B-1050 Brussels

Building economies that deliver wellbeing for all—now and in the future—requires complex tools. In this context, MERGE, a Horizon Europe-funded project, aims to foster science-policy exchange through developing indicators and models to strengthen sustainable and inclusive wellbeing policies.

Through its policy stream, led by ZOE Institute for Future-fit Economies and the European Policy Centre (EPC), MERGE conducts "policy deep dives"[1] to analyse how a holistic set of metrics can enhance key EU policies. Among these, the European Green Deal (EGD) and the newly adopted Clean Industrial Deal (CID) stands out as critical frameworks to accelerate the green transition and decarbonisation. The European population also supports these ambitions - according to Eurobarometer data from 2022, 88% of EU citizens support a green transition that leaves no one behind. "

The workshop aims discuss how sustainable and inclusive wellbeing indicators can help ensure that the Clean Industrial Deal aligns with the Green Deal's environmental and social objectives, enabling a just and green transition, as well as fostering sustainable prosperity and wellbeing for all, now and in the future.

The workshop discussions will feed into the further development of future MERGE project work packages, in particular, the development of case studies and a training programme for the use of a policy design toolbox.

Agenda:

9:30-9.40	Coffee and welcome
9:40-9:50	MERGE presentation ''setting the scene''.
09:50 – 10:40	discussion in groups – ''world café''
10:45 – 11:15	Discussion of the results
11:15 – 11:30	Closing remarks

[1] Other selected policies include: the EU budget, Social Europe, the European Semester, Competitiveness, and Governance.

Workshop discussion

The workshop provides an opportunity to assess to what extent the objectives outlined in the European Green Deal as well as Clean Industrial Deal are supported by sustainable and inclusive wellbeing (SIW) indicators and identify potential areas for further integration of a holistic set of metrics.

Issue:

The European Green Deal and the recently adopted Clean Industrial Deal create a comprehensive strategy for achieving sustainable economic growth while reducing environmental impact. However, their current monitoring frameworks have significant gaps, particularly in integrating SIW indicators. These gaps limit policymakers' ability to assess the Green Deal's holistic impact, including its effects on social sustainability, equity, and long-term wellbeing.

Challenges:

1. **Data limitations and fragmented monitoring frameworks –** Multiple overlapping indicator systems (e.g., Eurostat's 26 Green Deal indicators, the 8th Environmental Action Programme, and other sectoral frameworks) create difficulties in assessing overall progress. For almost a third of Green Deal targets, data is unavailable, making it difficult to track progress effectively.
2. **Limited social focus** – While the Green Deal emphasises a "just transition," current monitoring indicators focus primarily on environmental and economic metrics, neglecting key socio-ecological and wellbeing dimensions such as inequality, access to green jobs, and health impacts. The Clean Industrial Deal- launched as part of the Green Deal's implementation, prioritises industrial competitiveness and emissions reductions but lacks clear social and sustainability safeguards.

Framing questions:

1. **Addressing Data Gaps and Fragmentation:**

- How can the monitoring frameworks of the Green Deal as well as Clean Industrial Deal be streamlined to provide a more comprehensive and coherent assessment of progress, and what strategies can be implemented to address data gaps, particularly for the 28% of Green Deal targets lacking available data?

2. **Enhancing Social and Wellbeing Indicators:**

- How can socio-ecological and wellbeing dimensions, such as inequality, access to green jobs, and health impacts, be effectively integrated into the monitoring frameworks of both the European Green Deal and the Clean Industrial Deal to ensure a just and inclusive transition?

Background: Existing efforts and remaining limitations of the current monitoring framework

From the Green Deal to the Clean Industrial Deal

The European Green Deal now enters its implementation phase. In the current geopolitical context, the new Commission appears to be steering towards **a renewed focus on its links with competitiveness and industrial policy**. This reflects the vision that Europe's green transition must be economically viable and globally competitive. Central to the Commission's efforts is the **Clean Industrial Deal (CID), unveiled on February 26, 2025** which focuses on decarbonisation, reducing energy prices and supporting business by simplifying, investing and ensuring access to cheap, sustainable and secure energy supplies and raw materials[2]. Moreover, the Executive Vice-President Teresa Ribera now in charge of coordinating the work on the Clean Industrial Deal is also tasked with ensuring that this transition is just and social[i], a concern integrated in the CID through the labour and skills area.

Including strong environmental safeguards can help ensure the EU reaches the 90% emission-reduction target for 2040, set to be enshrined in European Climate Law[ii], and that the CID contributes to protecting human life, animals and plants[iii] In this regard, setting strong sustainability and resilience criteria in the Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act and the review of the Public Procurement Framework could have major positive impacts.

This is particularly relevant given the recent JRC study, which shows partial success towards the achieving the Green Deal objectives[iv]. The study notably highlights the need for improved data and monitoring systems to track progress as for almost a third of Green Deal targets, data is not yet available.

Past efforts to improve the Green Deal's monitoring framework

Since 2022, Eurostat's "Statistics for the Green Deal" have been monitoring 26 key indicators to track the progress of the EGD. While these indicators provide valuable insights, gaps remain, particularly in capturing the interconnections between social and environmental impacts[v]. Moreover, it is just one of the several frameworks in use to monitor the EGD, with other frameworks for the 8th Environment Action Program, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Zero Pollution Action Plan, as well as the 154 quantifiable targets monitored by the JRC. These frameworks integrate many of the Green Deal headlines indicators while introducing over 30 new metrics (see Figure 1). They complement the

[2] The Clean Industrial Deal is built around six thematic areas: energy security and energy price, financing, recycling and critical raw materials, labour and skills, lead markets, and global action.

Statistics for the Green Deal, but also add to the fragmented view which limits a comprehensive assessment of the Green Deal's overall progress.

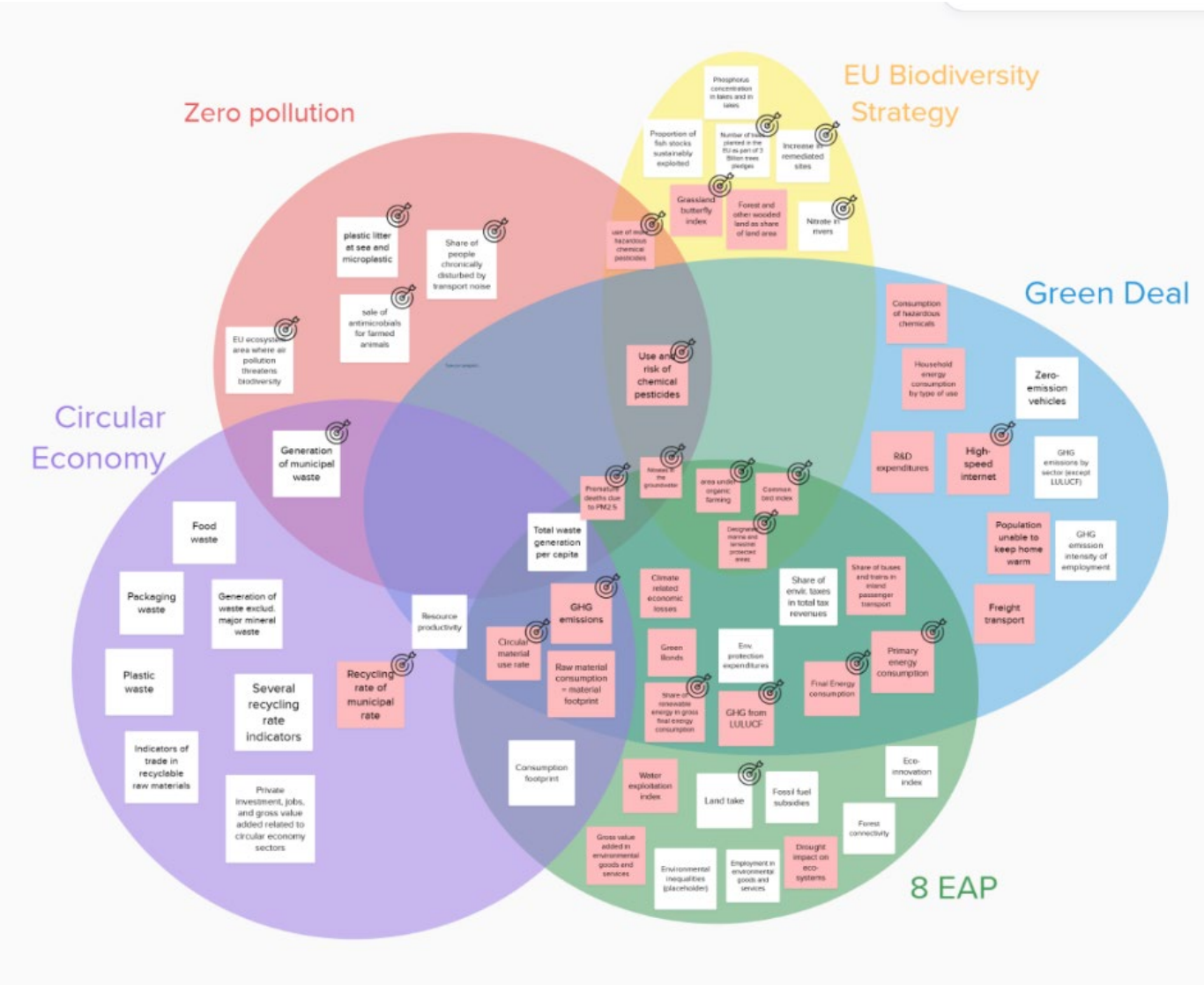

Figure 1 – Overlaps between the monitoring frameworks of the European Grean Deal and its building blocks
source: authors' own analysis from EC official documents.

Social impacts – a blind spot of the European Green Deal and Clean Industrial Deal?

The European Green Deal (EGD) and Clean Industrial Deal (CID) fall short in addressing key social sustainability issues such as inequality, poverty, health, and decent work. Despite the EGD's emphasis on a just transition, its monitoring largely focuses on environmental and economic metrics, with only two indicators directly tracking health and wellbeing.

As the transition unfolds amid multiple crises, failing to consider the social impacts of environmental policies risks deepening inequalities across regions, sectors, and social groups[vi].. The Social Climate Fund (SCF) and Just Transition Fund (JTF) lack sufficient resources and broad coverage, offering limited support beyond employment and skills. Additionally, Territorial Just Transition Plans often overlook vulnerable groups such as low-skilled workers, women, and youth[vii][viii].

A more holistic approach is needed to integrate socio-ecological indicators, ensuring that the green transition is both environmentally and socially sustainable.

The Clean Industrial Deal aims to reduce emissions by 90% by 2040. If achieved, this could challenge the notion that competitiveness and climate action are incompatible. However, the CID's simultaneous emphasis on simplification, reducing bureaucracy and bolstering industry raises concerns, especially given that the EU is not yet on track to achieve a 55% reduction by 2035.

Sustainable and inclusive wellbeing indicators

As the Green Deal shifts toward simplification and industrial competitiveness, its monitoring frameworks should integrate broader societal metrics to prevent backsliding on environmental and social goals. Sustainable and inclusive wellbeing indicators offer a more holistic view of progress, emphasizing wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability - a framework increasingly recognized in research and policy.

By measuring long-term impacts on people, communities, and the environment, Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing (SIW) metrics can enhance policy coherence and support a just transition. MERGE research has highlighted the increase in the convergence of these metrics around three key dimensions: wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability[ix] as 'Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing' becomes a new common ground for beyond GDP metrics, policies, and models[x].

Key dimensions include:

Current Wellbeing – Ensuring current quality of life (e.g., healthy life expectancy, food security, access to green spaces, public transport).

Future wellbeing (sustainability) – Securing future wellbeing (e.g., green skills, sustainability education, investments in nature-based solutions).

Inclusion (Limiting wellbeing inequalities for current and future generations) – Reducing inequalities (e.g., access to green jobs, air quality disparities, ability to finance home renovations).

While some of these indicators exist within Green Deal targets, they need greater prominence and full integration into core monitoring frameworks, particularly in the Clean Industrial Deal.

[i] Von der Leyen. (2024). *President von der Leyen's mission letter to Teresa Ribera*. European Commission.

[ii] COM(2025) 45 final. Annexes to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Commission work programme 2025*. European Commission.

[iii] European Commission. (2019). *What is the European Green Deal?* Factsheet.

[iv] European Commission: Joint Research Centre, Marelli, L., Trane, M., Barbero Vignola, G., Gastaldi, C., Guerreiro Miguel, M., Delgado Callicó, L., Borchardt, S., Mancini, L., Sanye Mengual, E., Gourdon, T., Maroni, M., Georgakaki, A., Seigneur, I., M'Barek, R., Acs, S., Listorti, G., Bosco, S., Contipelli, L., Dentener, F., Dowling, P., Grassi, G., Korosuo, A., Manca, G., … Neuwahl, F. (2025). *Delivering the EU Green Deal - Progress towards targets* (C. Black & S. Cisternino, Eds.). Publications Office of the European Union.

[v] Grossi, T., Rayner, L., Brady, D. & Dervishi, X. (2024). *The social pillar and the future of the EU social agenda.* The Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Social Platform, AK Europa and Solidar.

[vi] Miller, C. and Kormann da Silva, N. (2023). Enabling the green and just transition: principles for effective governance. ZOE Institute for Future-fit Economies: Cologne.

[vii] Moodie, J., Tapia, C., Löfving, L., Gassen, N. S., & Cedergren, E. (2021). Towards a territorially just climate transition—Assessing the swedish EU territorial just transition plan development process. *Sustainability*, *13*(13), 7505.

[viii] Peretto, M., Eichhammer, W., & Süsser, D. (2025). Just energy transition in coal regions: Innovative framework for assessing territorial just transition plans. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Transition*, *7*, 100101.

[ix] Rum, I., Hoekstra, R., Jensen, A., Eastoe, J., Kubiszewski, I., Constanza, R., Kaufmann, R. & Biggeri, M. (2024). *Are Beyond-GDP metrics converging? Consolidation of the measurement of sustainable and inclusive wellbeing.* The MERGE project.

[x] Benczur, P., Boskovic, A., Cariboni, J., Chevallier, R., Le, B. J., Sandor, A.-M., & Zec, S. (2024, July 1). *Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing, the road forward*. JRC Publications Repository. https://doi.org/10.2760/828060

MERGE

Measuring what matters – policy pathways to sustainable and inclusive wellbeing

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