

Green Deal: towards a “European regulatory pause”?



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#pauseréglementaire
#FitFor55

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• Executive summary:

Emmanuel Macron’s call for a “European regulatory pause” on environmental norms indicates an ideological hesitation towards ecological issues and demonstrates a degree of doctrinal indeterminacy as to how to respond to the rhetoric of the European right and far right. However, the use of such an expression is far from neutral; it runs the risk of being used to legitimise populist rhetoric and attacks, which are currently shifting the focus of the electoral debate to the ambition of the European Green Deal rather than addressing its actual implementation and the follow-up that should be given to it.

Clarification is therefore required.

Firstly, it should be emphasised that the President’s call for a “pause” is part of a reasoning that seeks above all to focus

on financing the transition. **Six months before the European elections, the issue of financing the energy transition must be brought up for public debate.** By adopting a financing strategy that benefits from electoral legitimacy, the Member States would give impetus to a concrete dynamic of change. It would give substance to the objective defined in the European Green Deal through investments in transport, buildings, agriculture, energy or industry. On the other hand, by failing to commit to climbing the investment ladder, the EU would jeopardise its climate ambition. Consequently, this could unravel or “pause” the objectives it has meticulously defined under its European Green Deal.

Simultaneously, France must clearly and unequivocally commit to supporting and applying the objectives adopted under FitFor55 with due diligence, as they could be reviewed and toned down during the next mandate. This would imply that

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France should put money where its mouth is, because **France has been ambivalent up until now**. Sometimes ambitious at the EU level, it has also sometimes tried to avoid living up to the expectations it has helped set up at EU level. In that regard, the discussions surrounding the Renewable Energy Directive are the perfect example of such behaviour. By backtracking previous agreements reached in trilogue in order to obtain last-minute concessions, or by seeking to unilaterally circumvent renewables objectives, **France puts its credibility on the line. France threatens European unity with the risk of setting a precedent that other Member States could seize upon: not respecting its**

objectives in the European Green Deal in order to try entering negotiations with the European Commission.

Finally, France could call for regulation to be better drafted (and therefore less subject to change), notably by systematically carrying out impact studies that include – among other topics – an assessment of the impact of climate standards on industrial competitiveness. **As scientific knowledge improves and technological progress is made, regulation must keep up the pace** with this trend and go hand in hand with a better transposition of European rules (in a compliant and timely manner).¹

• Introduction

On May 11, 2023, during a speech delivered before an audience comprising French industry stakeholders, business leaders, elected officials, representatives of local communities, and associations, President Emmanuel Macron addressed the topic of environmental standards, advocating for a “European regulatory pause”.² Adopted by the liberal Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo³, this expression raises many questions.

Firstly, because it is in line with some of the ambivalent⁴ and polemical comments made by the French President on environmental issues, such as his recent questioning of “*who could have predicted (...) the spectacular effects of the climate crisis*”.⁵ On the other hand, since such wording is reminiscent of

the request made in September 2022 by the Center-Right Political Group in the European Parliament (EPP) for a “*moratorium*”⁶ on environmental regulation. The thorny - but no less legitimate - question of **how to link European industrial and ecological policies** is thus the underlying theme of French President’s statements.

Erected as a “*new growth strategy*”⁷ by Ursula von der Leyen, the **European Green Deal** is a set of political and legislative initiatives designed to achieve climate neutrality across the continent by 2050. While most climate and energy regulations were expected to be adopted by the end of the term, the finalization of certain environmental regulations is proving to be compromised. Recent examples include the challenging adoption of the Nature Restoration Law in the European Parliament⁸ in mid-July and the recent rejection

1 To see policy recommendations, go to page 13.

2 Macron E. 2023. « *Discours du Président de la République à l’occasion de la réception Accélérer notre reconquête industrielle* », 11 May.

3 Le Monde. 2023. « *Environnement: le premier ministre belge, Alexander De Croo, favorable, comme Emmanuel Macron, à une « pause » réglementaire européenne* », 24 May.

4 To delve further into the question of « ambivalence, » see Chopin T. 2023. « The Idea of Europe in President Macron’s Perspective: A French Ambivalence, » Commentaire No. 181.

5 Macron E. 2023 « *Déclaration de M. Emmanuel Macron, président de la République, sur les réformes engagées en 2022, la solidarité avec l’Ukraine, l’ouverture des frontières de la Chine, et les priorités de la politique gouvernementale pour 2023, notamment la réforme des retraites* », Paris, 31st December

6 EPP, 2022. « *How to tackle skyrocketing energy prices?* », Parlement européen, 19 September.

7 Von der Leyen U. 2019. « *Le pacte vert pour l’Europe définit la marche à suivre pour faire de l’Europe le premier continent climatiquement neutre d’ici à 2050, tout en stimulant l’économie, en améliorant la santé et la qualité de vie des citoyens, en préservant la nature et en ne laissant personne de côté* », Bruxelles 11 December.

8 336 votes in favour, 300 votes against, 13 abstentions.

of the regulation on sustainable pesticide use.⁹ Becoming a catalyst for demagogic criticisms¹⁰ through its environmental proposals, the European Green Deal is facing its first true political test.

On February 6th, the European Commission is due to present a new communication detailing the European level of greenhouse gas reductions for 2040, and it will be up to the Member States - including France - to decide whether or not to support this initiative. Against this backdrop of intensifying climate change impacts¹¹, increasing dependence on fossil fuels, both economically¹² and geopolitically¹³, **the question arises as to how the European Green Deal should be followed up in a context of a frantic protectionism race towards green technologies.**¹⁴

France acted as a driving force in promoting the European objective of a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared with 1990) and the legislative measures (FitFor55) needed to achieve it. **Now, France needs to clarify its ecological doctrine and remove any form of ambiguity if it wishes to avoid being instrumentalized in the run-up to the European elections (I). Its credibility is at stake, both with its European partners and at home, at a time when France is implementing an “ecological planning” on its soil, whose sectoral emission reduction targets are directly derived from the targets set at European level. The start of the electoral campaign represents the ideal opportunity for France to assert itself as a leader in the European ecological transition, by showing renewed determination, perfecting its exemplarity and leading by example (II).**

I • An ecological doctrine that needs to be clarified to avoid being exploited

The “*European regulatory pause*” called for by Emmanuel Macron is proving to be a deliberately ambiguous concept. The practical and legal scope of the concept needs to be clarified i.e whether it applies to regulations adopted, in preparation or to come (1). Failing that, such a statement is liable to be exploited, whether in the context of the current negotiations on the Green Deal or during the European election campaign (2).

I 1. AN AMBIGUOUS EXPRESSION WITH VARIABLE GEOMETRY: WHAT IS WELL UNDERSTOOD MUST BE CLEARLY STATED

Before dwelling on the operational nature and potential implications for legislative files regarding the “*European regulatory pause*”, we need to put the remarks made by the French President into context.

- Better lawmaking rather than stopping lawmaking

In support of his call for a “*European regulatory pause*”, Emmanuel Macron pointed to the fact that the European Union (EU) is “*ahead of [its international competitors] in regulatory terms*”, through its “*2050-2030 objectives to decarbonise, reduce plant protection products, etc.*”. As a result, the President expressed his wish that “we get on with it, [because] we mustn’t make any new changes to the rules because we’ll lose all the players”, stressing a “*need for stability*” coupled with the fact that “we need to speed up European funding”, at the risk of “being the best bidder in terms of regulations and the worst bidder in terms of funding”. This line of reasoning calls for a number of observations.

9 Foucart S. 2023. « Pour la première fois, toute l’Union européenne a enclenché la marche arrière sur l’environnement », Le Monde, 26 November.

10 Bounds A. 2023. « Climate regulation is driving support for populism, says EU parliament chief », Financial Times, 7 September.

11 Storrow B. 2023 « World on pace to blow past Paris climate targets, UN says », Politico, 20 November.

12 Nguyen P-V., Pellerin-Carlin T. 2021 « Flambée des prix de l’énergie en Europe. Comment surmonter cette crise des énergies fossiles? » Institut Jacques Delors. Policy Brief. 6 October.

13 Nguyen P-V., Defard C. & Breucker F. 2023. « La sécurité d’approvisionnement gazière en Europe », Policy paper, Paris. Institut Jacques Delors, 30 June.

14 Fabry, E. 2023. « Comment l’Europe répond à la rivalité sino-américaine », Institut Jacques Delors, Policy paper, 8 February.

First of all, we need to consider the meaning and feasibility of a “*regulatory pause*”, i.e. how such a concept could be translated into practice.

From a legal point of view, a “*regulatory pause*” is both impractical and counterproductive. Indeed, the EU, whether through [implementing acts or delegated acts](#) that clarify legislative texts, must be able to produce public decisions, which are essential to enable economic players to continue their activities. Otherwise, certain legislative acts would be left without detailed rules¹⁵, which is a required condition for the proper application of the regulations in force. Without a guarantee of effective, harmonised implementation of the regulations throughout the EU, the private sector would inevitably find itself exposed to the risk of increased fragmentation of the single market. Consequently, a “*pause*” in the strict sense could have perverse effects. On the other hand, **a clear call for better transposition (on time and in compliance) of the rules¹⁶, as well as better drafted standards (and therefore less subject to change) would have been more appropriate** with a view to guaranteeing a more integrated single market within a European environment made more competitive.

With regard to the quality of the standards drafted, the issue is all the more pressing given that the question currently being raised is whether the emergency rules adopted in 2022¹⁷ following the war in

Ukraine should be made permanent. In addition, while the extension of the [regulation on the acceleration of permit procedures for renewable energies](#) appears¹⁸, in this case, to be relevant given the geopolitical, economic and environmental limits surrounding gas supplies¹⁹, **the renewal of crisis measures should systematically be accompanied by a prior impact study²⁰ in order to better objectivise such a need.** As crisis response mechanisms often derogate from (or make temporary exceptions to) existing law, it is paramount to ensure that the added value provided by emergency measures actually outweighs the legal instability resulting from their implementation.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the call for a “*pause*” is part of a rationale that seeks above all to underline the subject of the financing of the transition. Until now, the European Union, as a standard-setting power, has acquired the status of a figurehead in ecological matters by being the first world economy to take concrete action to achieve climate neutrality²¹ and then by deploying the related regulatory measures with its European Green Deal. According to the European Commission, €620 billion of additional investment is needed²² to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal, the REPowerEU plan, which should “*reduce the EU’s dependence on Russian fossil fuels well before 2030*”, and the *Net Zero Industry Act (NZIA)* designed to accelerate the deployment of green technologies in Europe. However, while question of how to mobilise public and private invest-

¹⁵ For example, delegated acts may concern plant health, while implementing acts may deal with rules on agricultural prices.

¹⁶ According to the [Single Market Scoreboard](#), over the period from December 2021 to December 2022, the average transposition deficit at European level is 1.1%, given that the target set by the European Council in March 2007 was 1%.

¹⁷ Fabrégat S. 2023. « *Energie: vers une prolongation des mesures d’urgence européennes* », Actu Environnement, 20 December.

¹⁸ Council of the European Union, 2023. « [Report from the Commission to the Council on the review of the Council Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2577 of 22 December 2022 laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy](#) », 29 November.

¹⁹ Nguyen P.-V., Defard C. & Breucker F. 2023. « *La sécurité d’approvisionnement gazière en Europe* », *Policy paper*, Paris. Institut Jacques Delors, 30 June.

²⁰ Mack S., Lindner J. 2023. « [Europe must improve the quality of its regulation](#) », Policy Position, Jacques Delors Centre, 21 December.

²¹ Delair M., Magdalinski E., Pellerin-Carlin T., Bergonnier M. 2020. « *5 ans après l’accord de Paris, les plus grandes économies s’engagent dans la course vers la neutralité climatique* », Institut Jacques Delors, Infographie, 9 December.

²² European Commission, 2023. « [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council, 2023 Strategic foresight report, sustainability and people’s wellbeing at the heart of Europe’s Open Strategic Autonomy](#) », 7 July.

ment remains central, but for the moment remains unresolved.²³

For its part, the US *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)*, enacted in August 2022, should make it possible to mobilise - at the very least - \$369 billion in aid over ten years (subsidies, loans and tax breaks) for the deployment of green technologies. However, this amount is uncapped (and could double).²⁴ Similarly, the long-term visibility, simplicity and speed of the instrument make **the IRA an economic response, with protectionist overtones²⁵, to the need to preserve competitiveness and security of supply in a low-carbon world.**

Now, if the EU wants to give itself the tools to achieve its climate ambitions and catch up with China in the clean technology race²⁶, it must consider how it intends to finance the climate transition. In this respect, the European elections provide an ideal opportunity to discuss the various possibilities for mobilising both private and public funding (reform of the Stability and Growth Pact²⁷, a joint European loan²⁸, new own resources²⁹), while quantifying the share of investment required from the various stakeholders. By adopting a financing strategy, the twenty-seven Member States would give impetus to a concrete dynamic of change, giving substance to the objectives defined in the Green Deal through investments in mobility, construction, agriculture, energy and industry. On the other hand, by not giving itself the means to climb the investment wall, the Union would be jeopardising its climate ambitions, forcing it to unravel the objectives it has meticulously defined.

Although the term “*pause*” has overshadowed the debate on the financing of the transition³⁰, its ambiguity and implications make it no less dangerous.

— What is the practical application of the “*break*”?

The second notable limitation is the fact that the “*pause*” put forward makes no explicit distinction taking into account the temporality of different legislative files. In other words, this wording in no way suggests whether the “*regulatory pause*” as imagined would apply only to recently adopted regulations (whose objectives could be tone down in the near future) or also to those currently being negotiated and/or those due to be presented shortly.³¹ Proof of the ambiguity inherent in the expression, Emmanuel Macron was forced to clarify his thinking the following day by declaring “*let’s apply and go to the end [of the Green Deal], but let’s not add any more*”.³² It is therefore **possible to distinguish various practical scenarios for the effective implementation of the “*pause*”,** which nonetheless go hand in hand with their share of unresolved questions:

- Scenario A: concerning laws already adopted: a risk of unravelling

If the dossier has been concluded during this EU mandate, then the President’s comments plead not to reopen it but to implement the provisions adopted. Such an assumption seems legitimate in order to ensure the necessary legal “*stability*” that will give companies the visibility they need to

²³ Defard C. 2023. « *Energy Union 2.0 to deliver the European Green Deal* », Institut Jacques Delors, Rapport, 10 November.

²⁴ Bristline, J., Mehrota, N. and Wolfram, C.: *Economic implications of the climate provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act*, Brookings, 29 March 2023.

²⁵ Defard C. 2023. « *Réveil de la politique industrielle américaine et réponse européenne* », *La Revue de l’Énergie*, n°666 mai-juin

²⁶ N. Makaroff., Kalcher L. 2023, « *Competing in the net zero-carbon industrial era* », *Strategic Perspectives*, 6 September.

²⁷ Eisl A. 2023 « *Quel degré de rigueur, et pour qui, avec le nouveau Pacte de stabilité et de croissance?* », *Décryptage*, Paris : Institut Jacques Delors, 8 June.

²⁸ I4CE, IDDRI, Institut Jacques Delors, OFCE. 2021. « *Climat : quels investissements pour le prochain quinquennat?* » Institut Jacques Delors, 14 December.

²⁹ Rubio E. 2022. « *Introduction de nouvelles ressources propres pour l’UE: où en sommes-nous?* » Institut Jacques Delors, Euroquestions, 8 June.

³⁰ Leguet B. 2023 « *Environnement : une « pause réglementaire » nécessaire ?* », *Les Echos*, 24 May.

³¹ In its *work programme for 2024*, the European Commission

³² Tonnelier A. 2023. « *A Dunkerque, Emmanuel Macron veut montrer une France qui va bien* », *Le Monde*, 13 May.

make their long-term investment decisions.³³ However, the question arises as to how long this “pause” will be valid. As scientific knowledge evolves and technological progress are made, regulation must keep pace. Otherwise, the EU runs the risk of losing the competitive regulatory advantage it has gained by being the first economic power to take concrete action to achieve climate neutrality.³⁴ As Pierre Moscovici pointed out for *Le Grand Continent*, “green power goes hand in hand with regulatory power capable of imposing rules on international trade in the name of environmental principles and economic justice”.³⁵ In this respect, the adoption of a carbon price in China³⁶ and the entry into force in 2027 of a carbon border adjustment mechanism in the United Kingdom³⁷ are both responses to the FitFor55 “carbon border tax” and illustrate the ability of European normative standards to spread internationally.

In addition, most of the dossiers passed as part of the FitFor55 legislative package have review clauses³⁸, which will mean that the laws may be reopened during the next term of office. This should make it possible to adjust - if necessary³⁹ - both upwards and downwards, the targets currently defined, and also to begin negotiations on targets for the period 2030-2040. Consequently, the possibility of having the review clauses being activated should lead France to remove the ambiguity created by the call for a “regulatory pause”. This means that, in principle, it must commit to defending the level of ambition of the 2030 sectoral

targets that have been adopted, and to implementing them at national level. The aim here is to avoid any “unravelling” of the targets set in *FitFor55*. Currently driven by the European conservative right through its call for a regulatory moratorium on European environmental laws⁴⁰, this risk appears all the more significant in the light of the first projections for the future European Parliament⁴¹, where the populist right (ECR and ID) would gain seats by capitalising on a discourse criticising European environmental standards.⁴²

- Scenario B: concerning the laws currently being negotiated: a risk of reduced ambition

If the issues are under negotiation, then the President’s remarks “do not concern them”, according to the Elysée.⁴³ Nonetheless, such a doctrine is not neutral on the fate of the ongoing discussions, since the logic of “pause” is put forward. Indeed, if France were to win its case and a suspension over the next few years were agreed, the texts currently being negotiated would be the last opportunity for France to assert its interests before the regulations were temporarily ‘frozen’. This could lead France to pull out all the stops to ensure that the final compromise serves its own interests, making its agreement conditional on obtaining favorable adjustments (as was the case with the renewable energies directive, see part II) at the risk of complicating the negotiations. Furthermore, the case study of the “Euro 7” bill limiting emissions of pollutants and

33 Kumar P., Vangenechten D., Pellerin-Carlin T., Nguyen P.-V., Besnainou J. 2022. « Can a minimum price on carbon accelerate the adoption of clean technologies? », Institut Jacques Delors, 5 July.

34 Delair M., Magdalinski E., Pellerin-Carlin T., Bergonnier M. 2020. « 5 ans après l'accord de Paris, les plus grandes économies s'engagent dans la course vers la neutralité climatique », Institut Jacques Delors, Infographie, 9 December.

35 Moscovici P. 2021. « Penser et construire l'Europe puissance », Groupe d'études géopolitiques, December.

36 Le Monde, 2021. « La Chine lance officiellement son marché du carbone », 16 July.

37 Varriale L., Franke A. 2023 « UK to launch carbone border adjustment mechanism from 2027 » S&P Global, 18 December.

38 For example, the regulation on CO2 standards that set the end of internal combustion engine for 2035.

39 Like the REPowerEU plan which, in reaction to the invasion of Ukraine and in order to « make Europe independent of Russian fossil fuels well before 2030 », amended the renewable energy and energy efficiency directives then being negotiated.

40 Simon F. 2022. « Un groupe d'entreprises européennes se dit favorable à un moratoire sur les lois environnementales », Euractiv, 11 juillet.

41 Politico, 2023. « Poll of polls », last consulted on 7th of January, 2024.

42 Barber T. 2023 « Populists seek dividends from a climate change backlash », Financial Times, 25 November.

43 Carraud S., Lamy M., Hubert A. 2023. « Avec sa pause réglementaire, Macron se projette déjà après les européennes de 2024 » Contexte, 17 May.

greenhouse gases from internal combustion engines illustrates that, despite the clarifications provided by the President of the Republic, **France's actions seem to reflect a form of "pause" with regard to certain regulations under negotiation.** Whether it be the statements made by the French Minister for the Economy, Bruno Le Maire, who **said in June** that we should "*perhaps forget about the Euro 7 standard, which is going to cost car-makers money unnecessarily*", or the position supported by France not to raise the level of ambition for internal combustion engine emissions⁴⁴, France has actively worked to avoid "*adding more regulation*".⁴⁵ Similarly, while France voted against a five-year extension of glyphosate in 2017 and Emmanuel Macron wanted to find alternatives "in three years' time at the latest", France abstained from voting on the European Commission's proposal on renewing the authorisation of glyphosate for ten years in Europe. By not positioning itself openly against the extension of the herbicide, France has tacitly supported the ten-year renewal. This could be seen as a de facto "pause" in the ambition previously mentioned. Since the facts contradict the declarations, **clarification is needed as to whether this is an isolated act or the materialisation of a tentative "pause".**

- Scenario C: concerning future legislation: a risk of contradiction

If the dossiers concern new regulations, then the President's call is for Europe to "**complete our legislative programme with the Commission, but let's not add any more!** However, the **scope of the concept of "pause" appears to be, once again, variable.** By initiating a letter sent to the European Commission at the end of October⁴⁶, France, together with eleven other Member States, asked the Commission to support the fact that small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) could "*benefit from existing and future European legislation*".⁴⁷ In essence, such an alliance would enable

progress to be made on defining shared European regulations. Not initially included in the **Commission's work programme**, this new initiative could, among other topics, have to address the issue of considerations relating to the environmental impact of SMRs⁴⁸ within "*future legislation*". If so, the logic of "pause" would de facto be contradicted, since it would be "*adding*" regulation. Once again, **clarification is required as to how the "pause" would apply in practice to future regulations.** Would the "pause" only apply to regulations adopted under this term of office as part of the Green Deal? Would it exclude from its scope regulations not previously covered by the EU dealing with subjects with an environmental component (such as SMRs)? Would it also cover regulations whose adoption has been postponed until the next parliamentary term, due to a lack of time or a lack of majority (such as the **REACH regulation**)? Finally, how should we position ourselves vis-à-vis crisis management mechanisms which, by definition, are designed to respond to an emergency by amending existing standards?

In the absence of clarification, such comments could be exploited in the forthcoming election campaign by being lumped together with the European Right's recent call for a "*moratorium*" on environmental standards.

I 2. INCREASED RISK OF THE TERM "PAUSE" BEING USED IN THE RUN-UP TO THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The call for a "*regulatory pause*" comes at a time when the Green Deal is being strongly criticised by the European Right. In September 2022, the Conservative and Christian Democrat group in the European Parliament (**EPP**) called for a "*moratorium for two to three years so as not to add to the burden on industry*".⁴⁹ Although the Elysée Palace was quick to point out that "*the President has never spoken of a moratorium or the repeal of*

⁴⁴ Malingre V. 2023 « Normes antipollution: les Européens cèdent aux arguments de l'industrie automobile », Le Monde, 25 September.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ La Tribune, 2023. « UE: les pays pro-nucléaires réclament une alliance pour le développement des petits réacteurs modulaires (SMR) », 6 November.

⁴⁷ Contexte, 2023 : « Joint letter from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden ».

⁴⁸ IAEA, 2020. « Considerations for environmental impact assessment for small modular reactors ».

⁴⁹ EPP, 2022. « How to tackle skyrocketing energy prices? », Parlement européen, 19 septembre.

standards currently in force or under negotiation”⁵⁰, the damage may already have been done.

By using a term that is sufficiently ambiguous to be likely to be interpreted as echoing the demands of the EPP, **Emmanuel Macron has taken a risk. The risk of being used to legitimise populist rhetoric⁵¹ and attacks, which are currently shifting the focus of the electoral debate onto the degree of ambition of the Green Deal rather than on the follow-up to be given to it.** Despite being part (alongside the Social Democrats, Liberals) of the alliance that brought the European Green Deal to life, the EPP is now adopting a reactionary stance⁵² towards the Green Deal in the run-up to the European elections.

This turnaround can be explained in part by recent electoral successes in Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands, which saw the populist right come out on top on the basis of rhetoric pitting ecological objectives against industrial objectives⁵³, agricultural objectives⁵⁴ or, more generally, the cost of living.⁵⁵ In fact, such results fuel the perception and feeling that climate regulations would encourage the rise of populism⁵⁶, a rhetoric on which the EPP could hope to capitalise⁵⁷ during the forthcoming election campaign. With this in mind, the Conservative group adopted a resolution⁵⁸ in May, calling for the rejection of the law on nature restoration and the proposal on the sustainable use of pesticides

(SUR) and that both texts posed a threat to food safety. By securing the adoption, in early November, of a largely watered-down version of the Nature Restoration Act - less ambitious than the European Commission’s initial proposal - **the EPP succeeded in halting the momentum of the Green Deal.** By securing the rejection of the proposal for an EU pesticide reduction plan at the end of November, **the EPP may have succeeded in halting the momentum of the Green Deal.** To achieve this, the EPP formed an alliance of convenience with Europe’s far right (as well as certain social democrats from the south and east and liberals from the north), emptying the text of its substance and forcing the European Parliament to reject the amended text.⁵⁹

What emerges from these case studies is a great deal of institutional uncertainty regarding the next term of office. On one hand, this situation is paradoxical. Indeed, it sees the EPP going against the European Green Deal, the flagship project of the President of the Commission, who nevertheless comes from its own ranks and is well placed to be reappointed. This situation is made all the more possible by the absence of tools (democratic, governance and financial) that would enable the Green Deal to be deployed rapidly.⁶⁰ Secondly, there is the question of which political forces the EPP intends to ally itself with in order to form a majority in the future. Currently leading in the polls⁶¹, the EPP could be

50 Tonnelier A., Conesa E., Malingre V., 2023, « [Industrie: Macron appelle à une pause dans la réglementation environnementale européenne](#) », Le Monde, 12 May.

51 Weise Z. 2023. « [EU environment chief warns against 'legitimizing' the far right's Green Deal attack](#) », Politico, 10 December.

52 Ehler C. 2023. « Motion for a resolution on an EU strategy to boost industrial competitiveness, trade and quality jobs », Parlement européen – au nom du PPE: « taking into account the fact that the Green Deal Industrial Plan does not fully address the failure of the European Green Deal to create a business case for industrial transformation in Europe », 8 February.

53 Bressa R., Colucci G. 2023 « [Italy moves on green transition, but fossil ties remain tight](#) », CLEW, 8 December.

54 Tulis P. 2023. « [Nitrogen wars: the Dutch farmers' revolt that turned a nation upside-down](#) », The Guardian, 16 novembre.

55 Thalberg K., Defard C., Chopin T., Barbas A. & Kerneis K. « [The European Green Deal in the face of rising radical right-wing populism](#) », Policy Paper n. 296, Paris : Jacques Delors Institute, January 2024.

56 Bounds A. 2023. « [Climate regulation is driving support for populism, says EU parliament chief](#) », Financial Times, 7 September.

57 Guillot L., Brzezinski B. 2023 « [EPP pitches itself as farmer's party ahead of 2024 European election](#) », Politico, 4 May.

58 Agence Europe, 2023. « [Le PPE rejette la proposition sur les pesticides et la loi sur la restauration de la nature](#) », 5 May.

59 299 votes against, 207 in favour and 121 abstentions.

60 Defard C. 2023. « [Energy Union 2.0 to deliver the European Green Deal](#) », Institut Jacques Delors, Rapport, 10 November.

61 Politico, 2023. « [Poll of polls](#) », last consulted on 7th of January, 2024.

tempted to build a coalition with the conservative reformists (ECR) and the far right (ID), shifting the European Parliament's center of gravity to the right of the political spectrum. The main consequence of such a conservative shift would be the "unravelling" of the Green Deal mentioned above. Consequently, **if they wish to offer an alternative to such a scenario, the political forces that supported the Green Deal will have to develop a positive counter-narrative to it, or risk having the terms of the forthcoming debate being imposed on them.**

To prosper, such a narrative cannot suffer from any ambiguity. Yet even in his own camp, that of the liberals, Emmanuel Macron's call for a "pause" has been emulated. Emulators who could nonetheless do him a disservice. For example, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo declared that he did not want to add "new nitrogen dioxide standards, new standards linked to the law on the restoration of the natural environment, new standards in the field of biodiversity".⁶² Although he has since backtracked⁶³, Germany's Liberal minister has also followed suit, calling for "a pause in any new European legislation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in this period of economic stagnation".⁶⁴ For her part, the future Czech head of list Klara Dostalova - whose party is affiliated to the Renew liberals - went further, stressing the need to "reopen the Green Deal".⁶⁵ As well as validating the multiple interpretations of the concept of "pause" as mentioned above, these three statements illustrate a **certain doctrinal indeterminacy as to the responses to be given to populist rhetoric.** It is therefore essential to clarify the ins and outs of the concept of "pause" so that these statements are not used as an instrument to

endorse and provide implicit support for the argument put forward by the EPP.

Yet the Green Deal, if only through the political signal it sent out in favor of accelerating the decarbonisation of the economy, has been a **resilience factor in tackling the energy crisis.** The operational implementation of the decisions taken in recent years will therefore need to go hand in hand with a focus on the co-benefits (environmental, social, health, etc.) induced in concrete terms by the deployment of the European Green Deal, particularly in the short term. By way of illustration, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has put a figure of €100 billion on the savings made at European level over the period 2021-2023 thanks to the additional production resulting from the addition of photovoltaic and wind power capacity.⁶⁶ These are all narratives that will need to be put forward during the campaign to demonstrate the responses to the expectations expressed by the public in 2019, as well as to the energy crisis.

In 2019, strong mobilisation on the streets⁶⁷ and at the ballot box⁶⁸, coupled with institutional political momentum⁶⁹, enabled the European Green Deal to take off. In 2024, the main challenges identified⁷⁰ in the European Investment Bank's opinion survey include the rising cost of living (68%), climate change (39%) and income inequality (28%). The legacy and future of the European Green Deal will depend on the ability to jointly articulate responses to these expectations. In 2019, France's action helped to spread the ideology behind the Green Deal like a gradual wave. In 2024, without a clear clarification of its doctrine, the scope of its voice could be reduced to that of a stationary wave, torn

62 Le Monde. 2023. « Environnement: le premier ministre belge, Alexander De Croo, favorable, comme Emmanuel Macron, à une « pause » réglementaire européenne », 24 May.

63 Gavin G. 2023 « Happy birthday, Green Deal », Politico Energy&Climate, 11 décembre.

64 Von der Burchard H., Karnitschnig M. 2023 « Germany's Lindner blasts EU over enormously dangerous green plans », Politico, 12 September.

65 Zachova A. 2023 « ANO EU elections lead candidate to oppose Green Deal », Euractiv, 9 November.

66 EA, 2023. « How much money are European consumers saving thanks to renewables? », June.

67 Pellerin-Carlin T., Chopin T., Pons G., 2019. « Climate change: at the heart of a new European political balance », Institut Jacques Delors, Décryptage, 22 mai.

68 European Commission, 2023. « Discours de la Présidente von der Leyen à la plénière du Parlement européen lors du débat sur le Pacte vert européen », 11 December.

69 European Council Conclusions on 12/12/2019 backing climate neutrality or 2019 European Commission's Communication « Parvenir à la neutralité climatique d'ici 2050 ».

70 Makaroff N., Zulfikarpasic., 2023. « Enquête climat: focus sur l'opinion en France et dans l'Union européenne », Fondation Jean Jaurès, 28 November.

between two opposing forces. However, if it wishes to continue to play an influential role in the European concert and make the Union a truly ecological power, France will also have to be irreproachable.

II • Making France the leader in Europe's energy transition

While France, like the other Member States, is entitled to assert its interests during the negotiations, the way in which this is being done risks undermining its credibility (1). Such an approach seems all the more counterproductive in that, by applying the concept of a “*regulatory pause*” to the negotiations, it risks delaying and complicating its own transition (2).

I. FRANCE SETTING A BETTER EXAMPLE FOR A MORE AMBITIOUS EUROPE

As a reminder, according to Emmanuel Macron's view that the “pause” would mean not amending recently adopted regulations, the **texts currently being negotiated represent the last opportunity for France to guarantee its interests before the regulations are temporarily “frozen”**. However, the recent examples of the revisions to the Renewable Energy Directive and the Regulation on the European electricity market illustrate the negative consequences that the extensive application of such a doctrine could have on the legislative negotiations underway.

The final negotiations on the revision of the Renewable Energies Directive, planned as part of the European Green Deal, have been the subject of final tensions directly attributable to France's action. While the dossier was at the formal approval stage, France (supported by other Member States) lodged a last-minute objection in order to obtain additional “*guarantees*”⁷¹ concerning hydrogen produced from nuclear energy. In response,

the Commission drafted a declaration⁷² in which it acknowledged that “*fossil-free energy sources other than renewables contribute to achieving climate neutrality by 2050*”. In line with this, a new recital was added to establish a derogation for existing ammonia production plants, which will be excluded from the calculation of the binding industrial sub-targets.

Disregarding the nature of the French demands, it is the *timing of their* formulation that is the main cause for concern, since the representatives of the Member States and the European Parliament had endorsed the text. This is reminiscent of the behaviour of Germany, which, on the issue of CO₂ emission standards for internal combustion cars, suspended its agreement to the introduction of a derogation for vehicles using CO₂ neutral synthetic fuels. In so doing, the **postponement of Germany's vote to approve the law set a dangerous precedent in the negotiations on the European Green Deal. By doing the same for the renewable energies directive, France is helping to establish a precedent that would see Member States (particularly those with the most political clout) threaten to go back on previous agreements reached in trilogue in order to make last-minute concessions**. The necessary clarification of the President's remarks will therefore have to go hand in hand with a French commitment to no longer use those kind of practice, or risk alienating its partners and damaging European unity.

France's concern to set an example is all the more necessary in the light of its recent actions in connection with the revision of the regulation on the European electricity market. As a fervent supporter of rapid reform⁷³, France (backed by seven other countries) has not hesitated to block negotiations between the 27 energy ministers in order to ensure that its existing nuclear power plants can benefit from a favorable legal framework. By campaigning for the pos-

71 Taylor K., Goulding Carroll S. 2023. « [La France retarde l'approbation de la directive renouvelable à cause du nucléaire](#) », Euractiv, 18 May.

72 Messad P. 2023. « [Accord sur la directive renouvelable: la France est enfin satisfaite](#) », Euractiv, 19 June.

73 La Tribune, 2021. « [Bruno Le Maire veut réformer le marché unique de l'électricité jugé obsolète et aberrant](#) », 25 September.

sibility of placing them under *Contracts for Difference (CfD)*⁷⁴, France wanted to ensure that it would be able to take advantage of the surplus profits generated by existing nuclear power plants that have already been written off. By doing so, the government would have been able to contain electricity prices by redistributing these profits to consumers (industry, individuals, local authorities). Presented by France as a “victory”⁷⁵, this political compromise, negotiated at great length with Germany, should have put an end to the debate.

However, despite the favorable agreement reached, France has made a different choice. It has opted not to use the option that has been fiercely negotiated at European level in recent months, in favor of a national system for regulating nuclear electricity prices that should make it possible to “*guarantee an average electricity price of €70/MWh*”⁷⁶ over the next fifteen years. This raises questions as to whether it is acting in good faith during the European talks. Above all, **it raises questions about the potential loss of confidence and credibility with its European neighbors.** Indeed, while the government still intends to defend in the trilogue the possibility of applying compensatory contracts for differences to existing nuclear power plants, in order to “*have a technologically neutral text*”⁷⁷, **France’s behavior could legitimately be a source of mistrust.** This mistrust is all the greater in the light of the President’s commitment at the end of September to “*regain control over the price of our electricity (...) at French and European level*”. As well as recalling the “*take back control*” slogan used during Brexit, this Conservative rhetoric is in line with the call for a “*regulatory pause*”. It also reflects a reductive vision that enshrines

the “*traditional French narrative*”⁷⁸ according to which “*France must use the EU as a power multiplier and, ultimately, an instrument to promote its domestic interests*”⁷⁹ and this, to the detriment of European cohesion.

If it wants to rebuild the bond of trust with its European partners, France will have to back up its words with deeds, both during the negotiations and in implementing its climate ambitions at home.

2. FROM A EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL TO A “FRENCH-STYLE ECOLOGY”

Alongside the call for a “*European regulatory pause*”, the President emphasised the need to “*execute*”, i.e. to implement the provisions adopted during the term of office. Unlike the call for a “*pause*”⁸⁰, this is an observation shared by the European Commission⁸¹, which has the merit of making **the Member States face up to their responsibilities.** Indeed, without the reaffirmed and unwavering support of the latter - who will now be responsible for implementing the measures decided upon - the Green Deal will not be able to achieve its full impact and would run the risk of being described as a failure.

To achieve this, France is deploying an “*ecological planning*” throughout the country, a “*comprehensive method for taking coordinated action with all French citizens, businesses and local authorities to meet the major challenges of the ecological transition*”.⁸² This ecological planning meets a need arising from European action. It is from the **European FitFor55 package and, more generally, from the European climate law that the national target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 55% (by 2030 compared with**

74 For a better understanding of how these contracts work: <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/energie-environnement/electricite-les-contrats-cfd-au-coeur-de-la-reforme-du-marche-europeen-en-cinq-explications-1988054>

75 Bayart B. 2023. « *Prix de l’électricité: comment la France a finalement fait plier l’Allemagne* », Le Figaro, 27 October.

76 Messad P. 2023. « *La France va réguler le prix de l’électricité nucléaire à 70€/MWh* », Euractiv, 14 November.

77 Hubert A., Chemel T. 2023 « *Régulation des prix: exit les CfD patiemment négociés à Bruxelles* », Contexte, 15 novembre.

78 Chopin T. 2023. « *L’idée d’Europe chez le Président Macron: une ambivalence française* », Commentaire N°181.

79 *Ibid.*

80 Hubert A., Mercier L., 2023. « *Frans Timmermans: sur le Pacte vert, on fonce jusqu’à la fin* » Contexte, 22 May.

81 Simon F. 2023. « *La prochaine Commission se concentrera sur la mise en œuvre des politiques climatiques, selon un haut fonctionnaire de l’UE* », Euractiv, 7 September.

82 Defard C. 2023. « *Energy Union 2.0 to deliver the European Green Deal* », Institut Jacques Delors, Rapport, 10 November.

1990) **has been raised**. Until now, the French Climate and Resilience Law of August 2021 only set a target of -40% for 2030. Therefore, being a vector of ambition at European level - as was the case for France during the last mandate - will have a direct impact on the French level. However, **to establish a “regulatory pause”, beyond the measures recently adopted, would mean relying solely on the goodwill of the Member States to improve their climate and environmental ambitions**. Far from being beyond reproach when it comes to applying European regulations on the environment or energy, France could then see its level of ambition stagnate.

Over the period 2018-2022, France has been the subject of 124 new infringement proceedings by the European Commission (on the grounds of late or incorrect transposition), of which 28⁸³ relate to the environment and 7 to energy.⁸⁴ Over this period, in terms of environmental infringement (air quality, water quality, public access to environmental information, etc.), France did worse than its German (13 cases), Italian (21 cases) and Spanish (24 cases) neighbors. However, the European architecture of the Green Deal and, more generally, of the policy to combat climate change is based on complementary multi-sectoral regulations with cumulative effects. As a result, **the accumulated delay in the domestic implementation of the aforementioned European legislation directly threatens the effectiveness of French ecological planning when it is intended to meet European objectives**. As a result, according to the latest modelling carried out by its administration, France will not be able to achieve the European greenhouse gas reduction target of -55% by 2030. This illustrates the need for better coordination

between decisions taken at European level and implementation at national level, particularly through improved governance.⁸⁵ This would also avoid the pitfall of France scapegoating the EU by arguing that European climate policy is too ambitious, even though it has actively helped to forge it.

Such a scenario is all the more credible given that France is currently trying to avoid paying a €500M fine to the European Commission for failing to meet its renewable energy targets.⁸⁶ In 2009, following negotiations concluded unanimously under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, France committed itself to achieving the binding target of 23% renewable energy in its gross final energy consumption by 2020. This involved three sectors⁸⁷: electricity generation⁸⁸, renewable heat (heat pumps, solar thermal) and transport. Having only achieved 19.1% by 2020, France had to make up for this delay either by purchasing “*statistical volumes [MW]*”⁸⁹ from Member States (Italy, Sweden) that had exceeded their targets, or by paying a fine. Although France is still not on track to meet the required target (20.7% by 2022)⁹⁰, it has sent a letter to the European Commission in an attempt to negotiate a compromise. This would involve France disbursing money, not to the European Commission, but to renewable energy development projects.⁹¹ In this case, the political signal sent is counterproductive, since it sets a precedent that other countries could fall back on: that of not meeting its targets and then trying to enter into negotiations with the European Commission.

While France can legitimately point to the decarbonised nature (over 90%)⁹² of its

⁸³ European Commission, 2023. « [Rapport annuel 2022 sur le contrôle de l'application du droit de l'UE](#) ».

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Defard C. 2023. « [Energy Union 2.0 to deliver the European Green Deal](#) », Institut Jacques Delors, Rapport, 10 November.

⁸⁶ Feitz A. 2023. « [Énergie renouvelables: la France discute avec Bruxelles pour ne pas être sanctionnée](#) », Les Echos, 22 novembre.

⁸⁷ IEA, 2021. « [France 2021, Energy policy review](#) », November, p.82.

⁸⁸ On this point, France has a comparative advantage, see Nguyen P.-V. 2022. « [L'avenir énergétique de la France: quelle politique pour le nouveau quinquennat](#) », Policy paper, Paris: Institut Jacques Delors, 21 July.

⁸⁹ Solution chosen by Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia.

⁹⁰ Nguyen P.-V. 2022. « [L'avenir énergétique de la France: quelle politique pour le nouveau quinquennat](#) », Policy paper, Institut Jacques Delors, 21 juillet, p.3.

⁹¹ Mouterde P., Pécout A. 2023. « [La France refuse de payer pour ne pas avoir atteint ses objectifs en matière d'énergies renouvelables](#) », Le Monde, 22 November.

⁹² Nguyen P.-V. 2022. « [L'avenir énergétique de la France: quelle politique pour le nouveau quinquennat](#) », Policy paper, Institut Jacques Delors, July 21, p.3.

electricity, it is also lagging far behind, particularly in the field of renewable heat, which, if it had been made up, could have reduced the need to import gas from Russia.⁹³ As Andreas Rüdinger of IDDRI points out, the French ecological planning is “based on a massive electrification effort in the buildings, mobility and industry sectors”.⁹⁴ However, the fact that France is lagging behind in the deployment of renewable energies, including electric power⁹⁵, threatens to halt the momentum of its planning. However, an examination of the draft French National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) submitted to the European Commission last November reveals that France remains wary of setting consumption targets for renewables. In fact, in its PNEC, France has only indicated a percentage of decarbonised energy (58%), not implementing the European *FitFor55* target of 42.5% renewables by 2030 at national level. Decided unilaterally, this choice is made at the expense of coordination with its European partners, which is essential to optimise the operation of the electricity system.⁹⁶ By stubbornly maintaining this stance with regard to renewable targets, France is persisting in this ambivalence, which sees it sometimes being ambitious at European level, and sometimes trying to avoid the level of ambition it is defending. Greater diligence in respecting and applying the European targets will therefore be essential if France intends to fully operationalise the concept of ecological planning, a concept that cannot be allowed to “pause” without losing all credibility, both at European and national level.

III • Conclusion

The French President’s call for a “*European regulatory pause*” is symptomatic of ideological hesitation on the ecological question

and bears witness to a certain doctrinal indeterminacy as to how to respond to populist rhetoric. However, the use of such an expression is not neutral and risks being used to legitimise the discourse of the European Right, which consists of shifting the focus of the electoral debate to the degree of ambition of the Green Deal rather than to the follow-up to be given to it. Unable - until now - to build a self-sustaining national political sequence around the goal of carbon neutrality (as evidenced by the three successive postponements of the Ecological Planning Councils to the summer of 2023), France is looking for a narrative that will enable it to give substance to its “*French-style ecology*”. To prosper, however, such a narrative will need to be based on democratic legitimacy. In this sense, the European elections in June 2024 should not only be an opportunity for France to clarify its position on the “*European regulatory pause*”, but also to outline the future agenda for ecological transition. Given the influence of European decisions on the national level, the strategic directions and proposals put forward during the campaign will be crucial to the French transition.

In 2017, in his speech at the Sorbonne⁹⁷, Emmanuel Macron built his energy ambitions for Europe around four pillars: “a floor price [for carbon], interconnections, a territorial transition contract and a border tax on carbon”. Six years on, the results are mixed. While the adoption of the border carbon adjustment mechanism under the French Presidency of the Council of the EU can be described as a success⁹⁸, a floor price for CO₂, despite its advantages⁹⁹, was neither adopted nor defended by France during the discussions on the reform of the European carbon market. As far as regional transition contracts and the development of inter-

⁹³ Rüdinger A. 2022. « La rénovation énergétique, levier essentiel pour se prémunir durablement contre la hausse des prix de l'énergie », IDDRI, March 23.

⁹⁴ Rüdinger A. 2023. « Contrôle du prix de l'électricité en France: enjeux et leviers dans le cadre de la planification écologique », IDDRI, October 12.

⁹⁵ https://www.ccomptes.fr/sites/default/files/2023-10/20231017-S2023-0909-Soutiens-eolien_0.pdf

⁹⁶ Cour des comptes. 2023. « Les soutiens à l'éolien terrestre et maritime – exercice 2017 et suivants » 9 March.

⁹⁷ Macron E. 2017. « Discours d'Emmanuel Macron pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique », 26 septembre.

⁹⁸ Lamy P., Pons G., Garzon I. 2022. « Le MACF de l'UE après la présidence française: où en sommes-nous ? » Europe Jacques Delors, 11 July.

⁹⁹ Kumar P., Vangenechten D., Pellerin-Carlin T., Nguyen P-V., Besnainou J. 2022. « Can a minimum price on carbon accelerate the adoption of clean technologies? », Institut Jacques Delors, 5 July.

connections are concerned, we are still waiting for them to be rolled out.¹⁰⁰ This illustrates the difficulty of keeping to an agenda that is ambitious on paper. To the President's credit, the outbreak of the COVID crisis and, above all, the war in Ukraine have disrupted the political agenda and our relationship with the energy issue. However, we can draw the following conclusion from this experience: in a world dominated by the "polycrisis"¹⁰¹, before considering the concrete proposals and operational tools to be put forward, **it is the narrative of the desirability and feasibility of Europe's ecological transition that needs to be (re)defined and supported.** If it intends to meet the expectations expressed in public opinion surveys, France will have to invest in four pillars.

Firstly, **France must make a clear and unequivocal commitment to support and diligently apply the targets voted as part of the *FitFor55* package.** This means stating its categorical opposition to any downward revision of these targets, should the *FitFor55* review clauses be activated during the next mandate. At the same time, France will also have to set an example if it wants to be credible with its partners:

- By committing to no longer calling into question the (non-formal) political agreements reached in order to obtain last-minute concessions, but by showing good faith and formulating these demands during the negotiations;
- By diligently implementing (transposing on time and correctly), the European regulations that are already applicable and on which France is lagging behind,

and by enshrining the European *FitFor55* objectives in French law from this summer onwards during the forthcoming discussions on updating the National Low Carbon Strategy (SNBC).

At the same time, by setting an example in Europe and at home, France will strengthen its legitimacy by responding to the environmental expectations expressed by European citizens at the European elections in 2019.¹⁰²

Secondly, we need to take account of the increased legislative activity on climate standards during this term of office. **In order to avoid over-regulation**, the emphasis must be placed on better drafting. In particular, this means **systematically carrying out impact studies to assess the cost-benefit of adopting new regulations** including - among other things - an assessment of the impact of climate standards on industrial competitiveness.¹⁰³ Initially, this would concern all the measures adopted during the energy crisis and likely to be renewed, on the understanding that they derogate from or make temporary exceptions to existing law. By the end of the next mandate, this recommendation would be extended to all new climate legislation. Such a practice could go hand in hand with the establishment of a European Energy Agency¹⁰⁴ to facilitate access to energy-related data and thus better assess the effectiveness of the measures adopted.

Thirdly, the debate should focus on the **methods of public financing of the energy transition** (reform of the Stability and Growth Pact¹⁰⁵, a common European loan¹⁰⁶, new own resources¹⁰⁷), because if **the EU wants to give itself the means to achieve**

¹⁰⁰ Cremona E. 2023. « [Breaking borders: the future of Europe's electricity is in interconnectors](#) », 14 June.

¹⁰¹ Whiting K., Park H. 2023. « [This is why polycrisis is a useful way of looking at the world right now](#) », World Economic Forum, 7 May.

¹⁰² Cautrès B., Chopin T., Nguyen P-V., Pellerin-Carlin T. 2021 « [Les Français et l'environnement](#) », Institut Jacques Delors, Policy Paper, 28 April.

¹⁰³ Mack S., Lindner J. 2023. « [Europe must improve the quality of its regulation](#) », Policy Position, Jacques Delors Centre, 21 December.

¹⁰⁴ Defard C. 2023. « [Energy Union 2.0 to deliver the European Green Deal](#) », Institut Jacques Delors, Rapport, 10 November.

¹⁰⁵ Eisl A. 2023 « [Quel degré de rigueur, et pour qui, avec le nouveau Pacte de stabilité et de croissance?](#) », *Décryptage*, Paris : Institut Jacques Delors, 8 juin.

¹⁰⁶ I4CE, IDDRI, Institut Jacques Delors, OFCE. 2021. « [Climat : quels investissements pour le prochain quinquennat?](#) » Institut Jacques Delors, 14 décembre.

¹⁰⁷ Rubio E. 2022. « [Introduction de nouvelles ressources propres pour l'UE: où en sommes-nous?](#) » Institut Jacques Delors, Euroquestions, 8 June.

its climate ambitions¹⁰⁸ and catch up in the clean technology race¹⁰⁹, it must ask itself how it intends to finance its transition. While 68% of French people - but also of Europeans - believe that the transition “can only be achieved if inequalities are tackled at the same time”¹¹⁰, the operational implementation of the European Green Deal will have to be based on a logic of fair transition.¹¹¹ Making the changes brought about by the Green Deal visible and concrete will make it possible to articulate a message aimed at reweaving the link between European action and national deployment, and this at a time when the French identify the EU (65%) and the government (61%)¹¹² as the main parties responsible for combating climate change.

Fourthly, following the example of Denmark¹¹³, officially support the target of a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, in line with the recommendations¹¹⁴ of the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change. In addition to removing the doubts raised by the call for a “European regulatory pause”, this would enable France to have a target trajectory for 2040, while legitimising its desire to spearhead Europe’s

energy transition. Such a stance would not only encourage its partners to follow suit, but would also meet the high environmental expectations of the French. According to a recent opinion poll conducted by Destin Commun¹¹⁵, the French “support the idea of an EU that is a global pioneer in ecological and energy transition” and see “the idea of a risk of backsliding on Europe’s green agenda [as] a real lever for mobilisation in the run-up to the elections”.¹¹⁶

Although the European Green Deal has not yet had its full impact, it is under attack just six months before the European elections. The nature of France’s response will determine the extent of its ambition, both for Europe’s ecological transition and for its own. Ambition that cannot afford the luxury of a “pause”, on pain of being rendered obsolete.

108 Pellerin-Carlin T. 2023. « Think house, not brick. Building an EU Cleantech Investment Plan to match the US Inflation Reduction Act », I4CE, février.

109 N. Makaroff., Kalcher L. 2023, « Competing in the net zero-carbon industrial era », Strategic Perspectives, 6 September.

110 Banque européenne d’investissement. 2023. « Enquête de la BEI: deux tiers de la population française estiment que la transition écologique ne peut s’opérer que si l’on traite en parallèle la question des inégalités », 28 November.

111 Defard C. 2022. « The need for a socially-just European Green Deal. Lessons from the Yellow Vests movement », Policy paper, Paris, Jacques Delors Institute, 2 June.

112 Special Eurobarometer 538, 2023. « Climate change », France.

113 Energy Watch, 2023. « Denmark wants a European climate target of 90% by 2040 », 6 December.

114 European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change. 2023. « Scientific advice for the determination of an EU-wide 2040 climate target and a greenhouse gas budget for 2030-2050 », 15 juin.

115 Destin Commun. 2023. « Elections européennes: le grand brouillard – l’opinion des français à six mois du scrutin », December.

116 Ibid.

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