

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS AND THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

DOI: 10.58867/1VEW8862

This article aims to analyze the results of the European Parliament elections held on 6-9 June 2024. The distribution of seats in the Parliament is related to the future of the Green Deal. The Greens lost some seats, which will mostly have the capacity to affect the implementation or development of the green agenda. The key factors behind these results are economy, migration, security, and war. After the elections, the Parliament elected Ursula von der Leyen as the President of the Commission with 401 votes in favor. The Greens and EFA group voted for Ursula von der Leyen because they received a promise that the Green Deal would continue as planned. This article argues that the EU must be loyal to targets regarding the green agenda in order to become independent of any foreign power in terms of energy resources.

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Keywords: Energy, European Parliament Elections,
Green Deal, Green Agenda.



TPQ

Summer 2024

Change, Security, and Sustainability in Energy

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The European Parliament elections were held in a highly problematic political atmosphere on 6-9 June 2024. While the Russia-Ukraine War is a big burden on the shoulders of European nations in terms of security, migration and economic issues are used by European far-right parties as a tool for political campaign. The Greens lost some votes in the Parliament in the 2024 elections, but they voted for Ursula von der Leyen for the post of the Presidency of the Commission. It is fair to say that the decline of voices supporting green policies in the Parliament may have dire consequences for the green agenda. Still, Ursula von der Leyen promised that a green agenda would be implemented. If far-right groups increase their share of votes and seats in the Parliament, it will be the end of the Green Deal, which is the most important future project of the EU. This article tries to mention three things. First, the decline of seats is bad for the Greens and EFA group. Second, with Leyen's election to the Presidency of the Commission, there is hope for the future of the Green Deal. Third, the EU must increase and implement green policies to become a neutral geography regarding dangerous climate effects and independent of any foreign supplier power.

The European Green Deal

For the European Union, adopting green energy policies is very important for the future. Energy is generally perceived as an issue related to the future of the European nations. For a safer world and Europe, the EU aims to battle the global climate crisis. In 2019, the European Parliament issued an emergency statement. With this statement, the European Parliament demanded that the European Commission take strict measures against the global climate crisis so that reaching and sustaining 1,5 Celsius degrees can be achievable for the EU member states to decrease the effects of the global climate crisis. After this demand, the European Commission announced the European Green Deal, aiming to make Europe an eco-friendly geography as a whole by 2050. To consolidate efforts for a greener continent, on 24 June 2021, the EU Climate Law was introduced by the Parliament. This law demands that a 55 percent decrease in emissions will be achieved by 2030. In addition to this target, the EU aims to reach the point of neutrality regarding dangerous climate effects by 2050. The EU aims to create a system that decreases the hazardous effects of carbon emissions.¹ Also, it is said that with the accomplishment of these targets, the life quality of the European citizens will improve drastically.²

In 2023, the European Union introduced a new set of climate legislation to achieve

1) Serena et al., "The European Green Deal: Challenges and opportunities for the Southern Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2023.2237295>

2) European Parliament, "Green Deal: key to a climate-neutral and sustainable EU," <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20200618STO81513/green-deal-key-to-a-climate-neutral-and-sustainable-eu>

its aims for 2030. These laws are defined as the Fit for 55. This law package includes thirteen amended laws and six laws on climate issues. European politicians are trying to decrease the percentages of emissions, create a new system based on equal responsibility between member states, and increase the percentage of renewable energy consumption. The Parliament passed a fund called Social Climate Fund for green transition that governments plan. With these policies, the EU is planning to make Europe less dependent on foreign powers and a neutral geography in terms of energy consumption.³ The Green Deal will have a systematic budget. The financing for the project will be made by the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan and the seven-year EU budget. Until 2030, it is planned that three billion trees will be planted within the borders of the EU.⁴

European politicians, who support green transformation, generally speak in favour of the project. According to Pascal Canfin, who is a member of the Renew Europe Group in the European Parliament, Europe is undergoing a complete transformation that was never realized in the past. Infrastructures that are being built today will be available for the use of future generations. With this transformation, Europe will have a decarbonized economic model. Europeans are living in a historic moment now.⁵ European green policies are essential for politicians supporting green future for European nations.

Results of the European Parliament Elections

The elections for the European Parliament deserve to be assessed. The group of the European People's Party gained 188 seats. They are the leader in terms of the number of seats. S&D (the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) won 136 seats. They are the second biggest group in the Parliament. Patriots for Europe gained 84 seats. The list of results can be seen below:

European People's Party – 188 seats,

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats – 136 seats,

Patriots for Europe – 84 seats,

European Conservatives and Reformists – 78 seats,

Renew Europe – 77 seats,

3) European Parliament, "Green Deal: key to a climate-neutral and sustainable EU,".

4) European Commission, "The European Green Deal," https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

5) La Tribune, Pascal Canfin, «Avec le Green Deal, l'Europe opère la plus grande transformation économique jamais réalisée», <https://www.latribune.fr/economie/union-europeenne/avec-le-green-deal-l-europe-opere-la-plus-grande-transformation-economique-jamais-realisee-pascal-canfin-976881.html>

Greens / European Free Alliance – 53 seats,

Left – 46 seats,

Non-attached – 33 seats,

Europe of Sovereign Nations – 25 seats.⁶

One of the most important results of the elections is that the Greens lost seats in 2024. In the previous election, the group had 70 seats in the Parliament. However, in 2024, they lost 17 members by taking 53 seats in the Parliament.⁷ This result shows that green policies and political campaigns focusing on climate issues are not as attractive as other political promises that brought votes to the first three party groups in Parliament. However, this evaluation is only valid for 2024 elections. The decline of votes is felt strongly in Germany and France, the two countries including the most ecologist European deputies in the 2019-2024 period. In 2024, the Greens gained 15 seats in Germany and 5 seats in France. In the Netherlands, the Greens gained 6 seats. In terms of numbers, the Netherlands exceeded the number of seats of France. It is a meaningful change. Compared to the previous period, in 2019, Greens gained 24 seats in Germany and 12 seats in France.⁸ There is a sharp decline in their votes.

According to Phuc-Vinh Nguyen, who is a researcher at the Jacques Delors Institute, in 2019, the Greens surprised many people by having an important share of votes. However, the political atmosphere has been undergoing a strong change since that time. Nguyen states that the Russia-Ukraine War started, intensifying the continent's security discourse. Also, the increase in prices negatively affected people. Right-wing or far-right parties instrumentalized environmental politics during the agricultural crisis. These can be reasons behind such a change. It is a defeat for the Greens.⁹ These results have the potential to affect the implementation of the Green Deal.

The European Parliament Elections and the Future of the European Green Deal

The results of the European Parliament elections must be analysed to understand Europe's future decarbonization aims. After seeing the results of the Parliament elections, it is possible to say that those, who do not want to make far-reaching reforms in the field of energy and climate, are gaining stronger ground in European politics. Financial problems and security can be defined as the main factors behind this change. This can negatively affect the implementation of the Green Deal in the near future.

6) European Parliament, “2024 European Election Results,” <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/index.html>

7) European Parliament, “European Parliament 2019-2024,” <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/european-results/2019-2024/outgoing-parliament/>

8) For more information, please check and see the website of the Parliament. See <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/seats-political-group-country/2019-2024/outgoing-parliament/>

9) Les Echos, «Européennes 2024,» Phuc-Vinh Nguyen, <https://www.lesechos.fr/monde/europe/les-verts-europeens-perdent-un-quart-de-leurs-eurodeputes-2100254>

After economic problems emerged inside the EU borders and energy costs increased, farmers demonstrated against the green policies of the EU. Especially, after Russia occupied Ukraine, security discourse emerged in a stronger way in European politics.

Moreover, inflation rates aggravated the situation. Some political leaders have negatively approached the green agenda in recent years. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni does not support strong environmental discourse in the EU. Also, she does not want to implement far-reaching environmental reforms. In addition to her, in the last year, French President Emmanuel Macron demanded that green policies should come to a stop for a moment. The Greens lost votes in the elections, so in the future, it can be argued that implementation of the Green Deal may have difficulties and may face some problems in diversifying barriers against the green agenda.¹⁰

The decline of the Greens' votes shows that right-wing groups such as European Conservatives and Reformists and Identity and Democracy will take a more leading role. These groups do not support the Green Deal, but they want to implement regional initiatives to solve climate issues and define decarbonization efforts as a utopianism. According to one argument, the Parliament in which party groups other than the Greens are stronger cannot sustain green agenda and will prevent sustainable implementation of the Green Deal. As a consequence, it can be stated that emissions cannot be decreased as it is planned. It can be stated that the implementation of the Green Deal will face problems or difficulties in the near future. The Green Deal can continue despite the fact that green agenda lost some supporters in the Parliament. However, it will have a narrower place in the minds of right-wing politicians. It can be stated that the green agenda was not attractive at the EU and national levels. Furthermore, the results of the Parliament elections are a shattering blow to the future of green agenda.¹¹

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni says that the current green agenda does not consider Europe's welfare. It will make the EU more dependent on China by harming the European automobile industry.¹² After these results, gathering support for the Green Deal will become more difficult. According to Jessica Haak, a scholar at Hamburg University, the results of elections show the importance of migration, economy, and war.¹³ In the near future, these trends will have the capacity to shape the politics of the EU. Accordingly, actions of the Parliament may be less based on green policies. However, Ursula von der Leyen was elected as the President of the Commission with 401 votes in favour despite the fact that the Parliament includes

10) Atlantic Council, "Green Deal Fatigue?" <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/how-the-european-parliament-elections-could-affect-eu-climate-policies/>

11) Atlantic Council, "Green Deal Fatigue?"

12) Politico, "Italy's Meloni Denounces 'Ideological Madness' of EU Ban on Gas and Diesel Cars," <https://www.politico.eu/article/italys-meloni-denounces-ideological-madness-of-eu-ban-on-gas-and-diesel-cars/>

13) Guardian, "Fears for Green Deal as number of MEPs from Climate-Denying Parties Set to Rise," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/10/eu-parliament-politicians-climate-denying-parties>

more voices that are not supporting a strong green agenda compared to the previous period.¹⁴ The Greens and European Free Alliance voted for Leyen because they received the promise that green agenda would be followed.¹⁵

Concluding Remarks

As a consequence, it can be stated that the Greens lost some votes in the Parliament. However, with Leyen's election to the Presidency of the Commission, it can be declared that green agenda will continue. The Green Deal is important for two things. First, with the full implementation of green agenda, the EU will use renewable energy and decrease energy costs to realize a greener Europe. Second, energy import will be reduced, and the EU will have an energy structure more independent of any foreign power when compared to the past. Therefore, it should be noted that the EU can shape its foreign policy without concerns about energy suppliers.

14) European Parliament, "Parliament re-elects Ursula von der Leyen as Commission President," <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240710IPR22812/parliament-re-elects-ursula-von-der-leyen-as-commission-president>

15) The Greens / EFA, "Greens/EFA Group Vote for von der Leyen," <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/greens-efa-group-vote-for-von-der-leyen-after-securing-major-wins-for-people-planet>