sustainability

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On European Green Deal and Sustainable Development Policy (the Case of Romania)

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Abstract: Reaching the EU climate-neutrality objective in 2050 is very ambitious, especially for the Member States from Central-Eastern Europe. All the Member States will face challenges of transformational changes, but a good preparation of their administrative capacity will be a consistent support. The aim of this article is to analyze Romania's decision-making process for the implementation of the European Green Deal Strategy, reflected in its administrative capacity. For achieving this goal, an interesting model of analysis was elaborated, which takes into consideration three levels and dimensions: strategic (with executive and legislative dimensions), administrative (national and regional dimensions) and outcomes (assessed from a well-being lens and public opinions surveys). The model will be applied at the European and national levels (Romania). It uses qualitative research strategies and methods. The transversal character of the EGD strategy, the coordination needed for its implementation, and the interdependencies and regional approach are important components that pave the way for the elaboration of the National Green Deal Plan, which becomes compulsory for an adequate design of the sustainable, adaptive, and mature Romanian administrative capacity. In addition, the article proposes a few recommendations at the national and local levels for the preparation of a better implementation of the EGD.

Keywords: Green Deal; climate action; sustainable development; interdependence; administrative capacity

Citation: Ciot, M.-G. On European Green Deal and Sustainable Development Policy (the Case of Romania). *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 12233. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112233

Academic Editors: Jun Yang, Ayyoob Sharifi, Baojie He and Chi Feng

Received: 8 October 2021
Accepted: 1 November 2021
Published: 5 November 2021

1. Introduction

The European actions against climate changes and the degradation of the natural environment is not exactly new. The European Union has long been a leader in policies to combat climate changes. It has been adopting a climate change strategy since 1992, and since 1996, it has approved the goal of limiting global warming to 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. The EU consolidated the international leader position in approaching climate changes in 2001, when it had sufficient supporters for the approval of Kyoto Protocol, despite the US's withdrawal [1]. The ambitious public policies supported the EU's global role, launching the Emission trading scheme in 2005, the world's most important greenhouse gas emission trading system and the emblem of EU climate policy [2]. Even if the international community failed to reach a global agreement on limiting greenhouse gas emissions at the UNO Conference regarding climate changes at Copenhagen in 2009, the EU continued to pursue its internal climate targets and has developed new ones for 2030 [3]. The Paris Agreement from 2015 was a success of European diplomacy and encouraged the Union to review the emission reduction targets, renewable targets, or energy efficiency targets [4]. The European Union's actions at s global level were intensified in the field of fighting against climate change [5], even though other political leaders (such as Donald Trump in the USA and Jair Bolsanaro in Brasil) treated with hostility the field of climate.

The European policies are decided in Brussels, but the implementation's responsibility belong to each Member State. In Europe, growing concerns about climate change have been reflected in stronger electoral support for green parties in 2019 European elections, espe-

cially in some Western Member States, as well as the emergence of grassroots movements such as Fridays for Future or the Youth Strike for Climate [6].

Moreover, the environmental activists consider the degradation of the natural environment as a "climate emergency", one of the strongest voices in this regard being that of Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. In her records, she emphasized the need for imperative actions against climate changes, drawing attention to the fact that our planet is only about 11 years away from an irreversible catastrophe:

> "We are not fighting for the future of young generations only; we are fighting for everybody's future. We have started to clean up this mess and we will not stop until we are done" [7]

> "The EU must lead the way. You have the moral obligation to do so. And you have a unique economic and political opportunity to become a real climate leader." [8]

Member States' efforts are also focused on strengthening the EU's leadership in meeting the long-term goal of Paris Agreement, ensuring the transition to a low carbon economy, and continuing to integrate actions to address climate change across policies of EU [9]. Attention is also paid to ensuring the quality of drinking water, the efficient use of water resources, and the promotion of biodiversity. Environment and climate change policies shape Europe's future and new development trends, and the transition to a circular economy and low-carbon development will help increase the quality of life of European citizens.

If we refer to the contribution of the Member States on the environment, during the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania has contributed to advancing the EU's agenda on decarbonisation, the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and to the promotion of sustainability and sustainable growth. It has facilitated debates on the long-term strategic vision for a climate-neutral economy and has mainly aimed at protecting the competitiveness of the EU economy, while enabling the transition to a low carbon economy [9]. Moreover, it is committed contributing to the decarbonisation of the transport sector, and the new rules on clean vehicles are an important step in this direction. Under the Romanian Presidency, CO_2 reduction targets for heavy vehicles have also been adopted for the first time in the European Union [9].

In the face of growing evidence of the climate crisis, the EU continued to make environmental policy a priority, with the European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen making the fight against climate change one of its main goals. To this end, the European Green Deal (EGD), the new growth strategy for the EU, was published by the European Commission on 11 December 2019. It supports Member States in achieving the goal of climate neutrality and sets the guideline for various European public policies for the coming years, being closely linked to a number of legislative and non-legislative initiatives in multiple areas, such as the environment, climate changes, energy, industry, transports, agriculture, digitalization, and the financial sector [10].

This paper will address the current gap and will improve the literature by focusing attention on the sustainable effects of the implementation of EGD in a Member State, offering an example—Romania. In this way, the empirical analysis will facilitate the implementation by the national and local administrations and a better understanding of this European strategy. For reaching this aim, an innovative model of analysis was designed which will provide a coordinated, interdependent, and integrated implementation. The model was inspired by the mechanisms and procedures of National coordination system of the European affairs in Romania [11]. It will use qualitative strategy for research, with specific methods (documents analysis, comparative analysis, discourse analysis, and case study). The option for the qualitative research is coming from the specificities of policy analysis, supporting the objectivity, validity, and consistency of the research. The material of investigation will consist in official public speeches of European and national leaders with responsibilities in the implementation of EGD, reports, policy briefs, and EU documents. The period of analysis is December 2019 (the launching of EGD) to present (October 2021).

The novelty of this research consists in the new model of analysis of EGD's implementation, with its multiple levels and dimensions. The conception of this model is based on the general development and sustainable international policies and new strategic European Green Deal policy, maintaining the interdependent character and taking into account the legislative and executive dimensions, which will impact the implementation and administrative capacity. Each level of this model will be described with a theoretical approach, which will create the framework for the qualitative interpretation of the results. For a better understanding of the model, an empirical analysis, applied on the European level and at a national level of a Member State (Romania), will be provided. From this perspective, it is the first article approaching the Romanian decision-making process for the implementation of the EGD based on the model that this study generates. Deeper research is not possible at this moment, due to the lack of studies on the policies' implementations under the EGD. There only a few articles and books on this topic, for example, for Romania, only one study refers in a comparative framework to Energy Policy. The contribution of the epistemic communities in this particular topic are quite missing. Due to the lack of sufficient academic bibliography, the reports and media intervention in political decisions were used. The suggested solutions are based on the professional experience of the author.

2. Research Design

The present research brings a new element into the study of sustainability through the analysis of the decision-making process, using a top-down approach: from the strategic level (elaborating a decision) to its basic level (the outcomes of the implemented decisions). The new model of analysis elaborated with this research was based on a combination between the major key elements of the EGD (which will be described further on) and on the coordination system of European affairs at a national level of a Member State (Romania), which offered a good example of the harmonization of different European policies according with common European and national interests [11]. The model is intended to be a useful instrument for the decision makers because it gives feedback on the effects of the political decisions. It opens new ways for other investigations in the field of sustainability, climate change, environmental policies, the EGD, and European Affairs. A detailed description of the new model will be provided in Section 3: New Model of Analysis.

As it was mentioned previously, the present research was organized in seven parts, beginning with the formulation of the problem and motivation of the research from the introduction chapter, continuing with the research design chapter describing the methodology used (type of strategy, methods of research, research questions, and hypothesis), the third chapter will focus on the new elaborated model of analysis, which will be used for the analysis of the EGD implementation at European and national level of a Member State (Romania); discussion and findings represents the next chapter, and the study will end with the presentation of conclusions.

The present work has been organized in accordance with reporting standards in the field of social sciences. This research is a qualitative one, and this is important and quite new in the field of sustainability studies, as well as political sciences or international relations, where quantitative research methods are present in high enough proportion. The option for the qualitative research is based on the possibility of an interdisciplinary approach to a specific topic. This type of research favours the interpretation of data, usually few in number, within the cultural and social context, for a specific period of time [12]. Another argument of the use of qualitative research is its own interpretive and creative character [13]. Qualitative research provides a holistic approach of a topic, and it is reflective regarding the role of the researcher in the researching process.

The research questions are: What are the political, social, and cultural elements that influenced the decision-making process of the implementation of the EGD to the European Union? Are there any specific characteristics for the decision-making process regarding the implementation of EGD in Romania?

The hypothesis: The impact of the EGD's implementation in Romania differs according to the political decisions at national level.

The research methods are: the case study, document analysis, discourse analysis and comparative method. The case study is represented by the Romania's decision-making process for the implementation of EGD.

The period of study is: December 2019 (the launching of EGD)–present (October 2021).

3. The New Model of Analysis of the Decision-Making Process for European Green Deal Implementation

The EGD is the integrated growth strategy of the European Commission [14], used mainly to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda, other sustainable development goals, and the political priorities of the current Commission. It aims:

> "to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use" [15]

It addresses several key issues: the energy transition (clean energy sources), changes in industry (circular economy models), the energy efficiency of buildings, organic food systems, regions that will need increased support for the transition (mining, those were agriculture is affected by climate change, etc.), and the fair transition fund. Through these directions of actions, the EC seeks to interconnect all relevant EU policies in the fight against and the prevention of pollution.

The EC's Communication is a roadmap of the key policies, actions, and measures to be followed; in fact, all of the EU actions and policies will be circumscribed to this strategy, using the synergies between them [16]. There are four important benefits that would be achieved: health, quality of life, resilience, and competitiveness. The elements of the EGD strategy are shown in Figure 1.

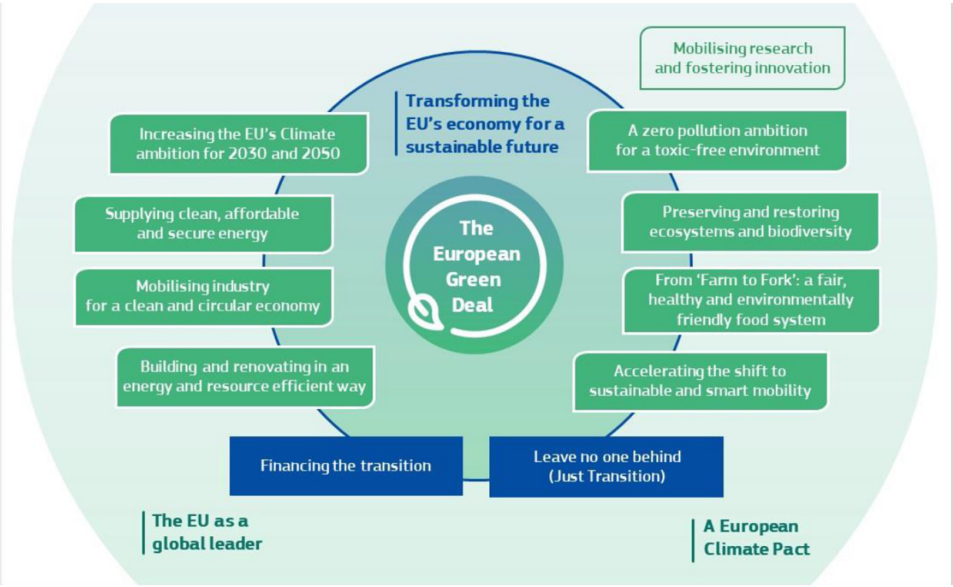

Figure 1. The elements of European Green Deal (source: COM (2019) 640 final, 11 December 2019, p. 3).

We can see that sustainability and the well-being of the European citizens represents the central elements of the strategy, along with economic policy. The EU and national policymakers should follow the sustainable development goals when they elaborate the future regional, sub-regional and sectoral strategies, actions, and measures [17–19].

By taking into account the key policies of the EGD and the coordination system of European affairs at the national level of a Member State [11], a new model is proposed; it easily could be applied in any other Member State. The model covers all the relevant elements for a policy analysis (especially on the efficacy of its implementation) (Figure 2).

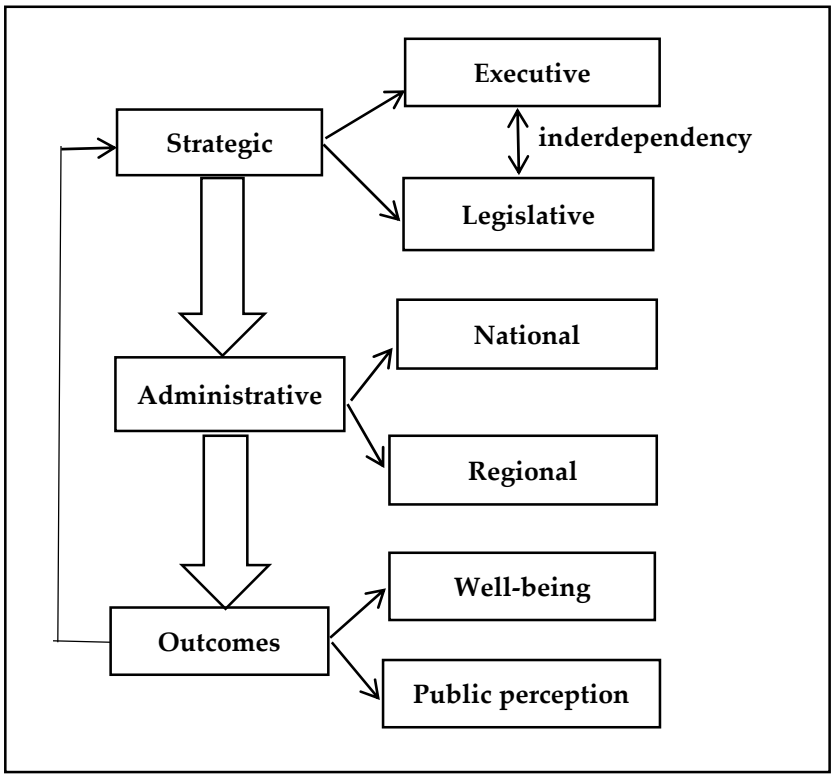

Figure 2. The model of analysis of EGD implementation.

The model is organized on three levels, from the strategic level of decision-making, through administrative level of implementation to the basis of the decision-making process, namely—outcomes. Each level has several dimensions describing its efficiency:

First level: strategic—it is the decision-making level, in which efficiency is analysed from the executive, legislative, and interdependency dimensions.

Second level: administrative—at the policy-making level, with national and regional dimensions.

Third level: outcomes—the basis of the decision-making level, which will be assessed from the lenses of well-being and public perceptions.

Each level has political, economic, and social elements and all dimensions are interconnected. The outcomes of the implementation will give feedback on the strategic level, aiming to adapt the decisions accordingly.

The model is important because it will provide a useful instrument for the measurement of the sustainability of the EGD's implementation decisions, which could be detected in its outcomes regarding the well-being of citizens and public opinions and support. By following the three levels of the decision-making process, periodical investigations (twice a year) could be organized. The limitations of the present model are the contextual and political factors, for which decisions cannot be foreseen with accuracy due to the pandemic situation. The economic implications, especially for the Central and Eastern EU, are other factors which could influenced the changes in the objectives regarding terms and conditions of EGD's implementation.

4. Analysis of the European Green Deal Decisions for Implementation at the European Level

In this chapter, the implementation of the EGD from a decision-making perspective will be analysed, according to the multilevel and dimensions models. This analysis will offer the general framework for the implementation of EGD at Member States' level, taking into consideration the interdependent effects of political decisions that will impact its sustainability in terms of outcomes and public support.

4.1. Strategic Dimension at EU Level

The key actions of the EGD strategy are organized in main field, in fact, deriving from the main European policies: climate ambition (Climate Policy); clean, affordable, and secure energy (Energy Policy); industrial strategy for a clean and circular economy (Industrial Policy); sustainable and smart mobility (Transport Policy); greening the Common Agricultural Policy / 'Farm to Fork' Strategy (for Common Agriculture Policy); preserving and protecting biodiversity (Environmental Policy); ambition towards a zero-pollution for a toxic free environment (Environmental Policy) and mainstreaming sustainability in all EU policies (to address to the integrated character between European policies); the EU as a global leader (Common Foreign and Security Policy); and working together—a European Climate Pact (as the final juridical outcome). There are seven main European policies to which the GD strategy is addressing, six of them for the internal environment and one for the external environment.

It is a very ambitious project which tries to put the EU in a leader position in the field of climate change at international scale. The investments are included in the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, committed to mobilize at least EUR 1 trillion of sustainable investments by using relevant policy levers and private and public investments. It includes the Just Transition Mechanism to administratively and financially support the regions to adapt better to the new challenges [16].

However, now, after one year from the launch of the EGD strategy, the international context is different. We experienced one of the worst health crises and economic crises since the end of the Second World War, as Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the EC and responsible for the EGD, mentioned in a speech held on 25 May 2021:

> "The Green Deal is our new strategy for sustainable growth, based on fairness, innovation, and decoupled from resource use. It is our roadmap for the EU to become climate neutral by 2050 and for addressing the biodiversity crisis. And as we build back our economy, we also need to build back our nature, because forests and oceans are being polluted and destroyed. When we first presented the Green Deal, it was relatively lonely on the world stage. But more than one year later, we are joined by many others in this global race to net zero. China, South Korea, South Africa, Japan, and most recently the United States, are joining with ambitious commitments of their own. That is great news. Because this is a race where we can all win." [20]

The Green Deal is a transversal and sectoral strategy, acting at global, European, regional, national, and local levels in a very different context than the one when it was initiated. And that means that it needs an adaptive capacity of administrative structures involved in its implementation. The intensification of the global and regional interdependencies, accelerated by the sanitary crisis, brought into attention the need for an integrated coordination in decision-making and policy-making processes between state and non-state actors and private and public actors from administration, economic, and social sector: governments and interested stakeholders (market structures, professional associations and NGOs, and other social groups, etc.).

The implementation of the EGD, at the European level, has two important dimensions: executive (concrete strategies, actions, measures of European Commission) and legislative (legislative acts adopted by the European Parliament). From this approach, specific guidelines will be derived for the national administrative structures.

The executive dimension—as a response to the effects of the sanitary crisis, the EU level begins a recovery process. Even if the current crisis is not driven by climate action, the EGD could support the recovery [21]. The present crisis has to be interpreted also from the perspective of the opportunities that it opens, including the speeding up other Green Deal targets of economic modernisation by achieving the Paris Agreement on decarbonisation but also initiating a new discussion at national levels between Member States regarding taxation, innovation, infrastructure, entrepreneurship, reforms of some of European policies, etc. [21]. In addition, it is important that the guiding principle for recovery should be the low-carbon targets for energy and materials [16]. For climate policy, possible areas for transformations mentioned by the previous authors are the creation of a low-carbon lead markets (for example, the New Industrial Strategy for Europe), the fast start of the hydrogen economy, or emphasizing the basic material value chain [21].

In the context of the crisis generated by COVID-19, the process of implementing EGD was slowed down due to the reorientation of actions to get out of the health crisis (for example, the New Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Forestry Strategy were postponed). However, the European Commission announced that the targets for 2030 remained unchanged and came with the initiative of the European Investments Plan for the European Green Pact aimed at "mobilising at least 1 billion euros of sustainable investment over the next decade". It includes a Fair Transition Mechanism, which should provide "targeted support to help mobilize at least EURO 100 billion over the period 2021–2027" in order to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition in the regions based on the use of fossil fuels. The mechanism will focus on the regions and sectors most affected by the transition, its objectives being to support investments in territories where its negative effects are most pronounced. The territories concerned will include the coal-bearing regions, but also other heavily industrialized regions [22].

In the context, is worth mentioning that the financial support will consist in EUR 1.8 trillion for a "greener, more digital and more resilient Europe" [23], from which EUR 1.0743 billion represents the amount of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and EUR 750 million represents the recovery instrument—Next Generation EU (NGEU).

The interdependent nature of the EU is another aspect to be considered for the analysis of the implementation capacity of EGD by the Member States. It is the reason for cooperation, and, for the prospections on climate actions, it will be the framework for the understanding of new policies, politics, and decisions [24]. The mentioned study considers that, in the future, regions, local authorities, and cities will become crucial players in climate change (in addition diplomacy and conflict resolution) and that alliances between states will be used for countering climate change. Power will be determined by the leaders in the new technologies (the USA and China are now leading), and so Europe will have to fill the gap [24].

The legislative dimension will consider the European Parliament assumed a role of advocating for ambitious climate actions, endorsing the EGD: The Resolution from 17 April 2020 underlined the need to align the response to the pandemic crisis with the EU's climate neutrality objective and that EGD and digital transition should be the central elements of the recovery [25], and the Resolution from 15 May 2020 mentioned that the EGD, the digital agenda, and European sovereignty should be the strategic sector [26,27].

The actions and measures which will transpose the EGD strategy in a sustainable manner will address three dimensions: social, economic, and environmental [28].

4.2. The Administrative Dimension at National and Regional Level

The EU's climate action can contribute to the recovery by concentrating the funds on the EGD at national levels, in this way taking the opportunity to accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral economy and advance toward the leading position in using green technologies [26]. The authors of the previously mentioned and referenced study identified five windows of opportunity derived from pandemic period that can be used for supporting the implementation of the EGD at the administrative level: new habits (important for

the reconfiguration of the policy-making process, taking into account the new forms of communicating and working—teleworking, virtual education, conferences, etc.—which could be used to reduce the time and costs spent in traffic business trips, reduce CO_2 emissions by developing digital infrastructure and instruments); the shift in values for European citizens (solidarity with people at risk and medical staff is similar with the solidarity for the people in vulnerable regions affected by the climate crisis and for the future of young generations—it could be addressed in the Conference Future of Europe and European Climate Pact); international cooperation (the value of it was demonstrated once again by the coronavirus crisis with sharing information about viruses, sharing equipment, coordinating the re-opening of the borders, and developing medicines and vaccines; for the EGD, there are opportunities for strengthening international cooperation by climate diplomacy, cooperation in United Nations framework, with sectoral organizations or sectoral domains with like-minded countries); preparedness (it emphasized the role of strong health system and stocks of medicines or planning but also a lesson to prevent a climate crisis and to adapt to the climate change; the EGD could be leading in risk assessment and coordination); focus on inequalities (the impact of the pandemic crisis was not the same for different age categories, economic sectors, or regions; in the same way, the climate crisis could be prevented with the EGD if the inequalities can be identified and will be addressed directly, by using, for example, the Just Transition Mechanism and the Just Transition Fund) [27]. Another important element to be taken into consideration is the EU's interdependency [29].

However, the challenges for the EU regarding the recovery and restructuring after the pandemic crisis stands not only on strategic and administrative capacities of institutions and states but also in the investment gap of EUR 180 billion yearly needed for the clean economy in order to achieve the 2030's climate and energy objectives [29]. The investments are necessary for the reductions of EU's gaps and for supporting the increase in the EU's competitiveness, its transition to a climate-neutral economy, and a more cohesive EU [30]. The administrative structures of Member States could develop public–private partnerships for a clean economy in the framework of transition policies, offering patterns of solutions for different key priorities of the EGD. Fisher proposes a useful model for the partnerships as shown in Figure 3.

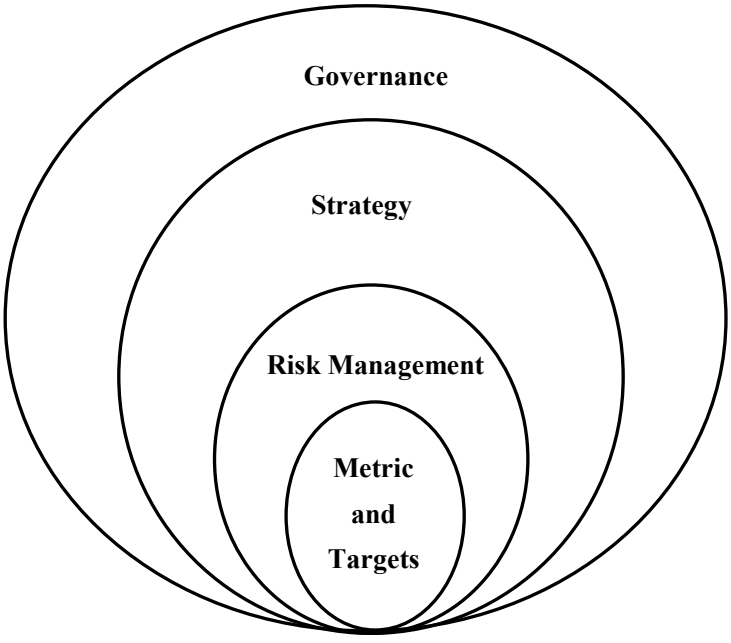

Figure 3. Core-elements of recommended climate-related financial disclosure (source: Fisher, 2019, p. 9).

In the implementation of the EGD, the regional cross-border approach provides the general framework [31]. The authors consider that a successful implementation of the EGD using a regional approach is possible because of the progress in the organization of markets and regulations. Cooperation is also needed because a climate-neutral continent requires it between the EU, the Energy Community, and neighbouring countries, including Turkey [31]. The external dimension of EGD is circumscribed not only to the Common Foreign and Security policy but also to Neighbouring Policy:

> "A regional approach is important to ensure that the transition occurs simultaneously throughout the region in order to avoid, for example, the risk that more ambitious countries replace domestic higher carbon electricity production with other carbon-intensive imports from neighbours." [31]

However, one of the challenges that the EGD faces is the lack of the regional strategies or competition for regional leadership in regard of different key priorities [31]. Previous regional initiatives could be used to prepare the administrative structures and strategic capacity for better implementation of EGD.

4.3. Outcomes of the Implementation of the EGD Will Be Assessed from a Well-Being Lens and Public Perceptions

The central element around which the implementation was designed is the well-being of the European citizens—and this adds the interdependent dimension of this strategy and a refocusing of the European policies. This approach could support Member States in the identification and implementation of the suitable measures needed for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for avoiding the blocking of carbon-intensive technologies, and reducing the CO_2 emissions in the long term to zero. It has to be adapted to the juridical and particularities of each Member State or region by taking into consideration challenges and opportunities. In this way, the achievement of climate and well-being targets will be easier. There are some specific incentives that researchers recommend [32]: placing citizens' well-being in the centre of the decision-making process is the pre-requisite for political and social support for more ambitious actions and overcoming the barriers that may come with the challenges (well-being concepts encompass not only economical aspects but also social aspects, education, health system, security, and environmental standards); reducing climate change will bring benefits for actual generations and provide resources for the future ones (decisions will create a proper balance between the objectives of mitigation of climate change and well-being objectives by using negotiations and compromises between climate policy and other circumscribed policies of EGD, in terms of affordability, competitiveness, and job constrains); a well-being approach will favour decisions to deliver multiple well-being objectives (on climate, economic perspectives, not only on individual, separate ones) and applying a well-being approach to key sectors (reassessing policies priorities, evaluations' and decisions' indicators will support authorities and their capacities in building the "two-way alignment" between climate and other objectives of well-being—for example, for electricity, heavy industry, residential, surface transport, agriculture).

The incentives that could increase the benefits of well-being for European citizens by implementing EGD and adapting the administrative capacities is well represented in Table 1.

The redesign of policy priorities needs not only political will and structural and administrative adaptations but also strong social support. The last Eurobarometer on Climate Change [33] indicated that almost one quarter of European respondents considered climate change as a serious problem of the contemporary world, placing it on the second place after "poverty, hunger and lack of drinking water" (27%). It is an increase in the proportion of respondents of 11% from the last survey in 2017, when climate action was in third place [33]. When it comes to Member States and the perceptions of climate change as a global problem, the differences are significant, especially from a geographical and economic points of view: 50% of Swedish people consider it a serious problem, 43% of

Danish people, and 33% of Finnish people, in contrast with 10% of Bulgarians, Croats, Latvians, Greeks, and Romanians [33].

Table 1. Incentives for climate actions using a well-being approach (adapted after OECD, 2019, p. 16).

Strong Climate Action Is the Foundation of Our Future Economic and Wider Well-Being					
with a production lens:				with a well-being lens:	
Material conditions	Wealth Consumption GDP Growth	Income	⇨	Education	Pollution
				Health development Material condition Wealth access Affordability Mitigation Security consumption	Natural disasters Resources Climate Change Hunger Degradation
Synergies between climate policies and larger societal goals					
Mitigation				Economic, social, and environmental goals	
Achieving climate goals and delivering societal benefits by focusing on 5 important sectors: • Electricity; • Heavy industry; • Residential; • Surface transport; • Agriculture.					
Enhanced measurement system could improve policy design					

Having analysed the EGD and its implementation perspectives, the same multilevel and multidimensional model of analysis will be applied to assess the administrative capacity of implementation for a Member State—Romania.

5. Analysis of Romania's Capacity for Implementing European Green Deal

As the health crisis is approaching the end, the European Member States should focus on emergency problems and mitigation, and finding sustainable, affordable, and efficient solutions aimed at the well-being of European citizens are the priority. When the European economies will approach the final of recovery, the emergency will not disappear, and the risk of neglecting climate actions will severely hit the administrative initiatives taken or prospected to be taken in line with the EGD's implementation or with respect to the Paris Agreement's targets.

Nowadays, there are some Member States asking for a reorientation of investments and priorities to other priorities generated by the sanitary crisis, neglecting the former engagements under the EGD. Regarding Romania, the Recovery and Resilience Plan provoked many discussions between political actors, market structures, and social groups and all interested stakeholders, but the essence of discussions was not for the recovery by deepening the European integration but for absorbing the funds. It was missing a concrete, correct, and useful dialogue with all the interested stakeholders, especially epistemic communities who supported with high quality insights.

5.1. Strategic Dimension at Romanian National Level

The executive dimension was active through strategic decisions regarding the division of European funds allocated by the EC through the NextGenerationEU fund. For Romania, for the Just Transition Fund was allocated EUR 1112 billion from NextGenerationEU and EUR 834 billion under MFF, a total of EUR 1947 billion. These funds are financial instruments for the implementation of the EGD at the national level, to which it was added interconnected projects from other fields circumscribed to EGD.

The RRP has six basic pillars [21]: transition toward a green economy; digital transformation; intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth; social and territorial cohesion; health and institutional resilience; and children, youth, education, and competences. The package of public investments and reforms is based on the Specific Country Recommendations 2019–2020. All the proposed investments and reforms of National RRP has to contribute 37% to the climate change target and 20% to the digitization target. The fields where NRRP could intervene are transport; environment, climate change, and capitalization of natural and heritage and tourism; agriculture and rural development; health; education; business environment; research, innovation, and digitization; improving the built fund; and resilience in crisis situations.

Concrete in terms of budget and allocations, the NRRP gave a total of EUR 29.2 billion to Romania with the following components: Water Management; Afforestation of Romania and the Protection of Environment; Waste Management; Sustainable Transport; Fund for the Wave of Renovation; Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Gas Infrastructure; Governmental Cloud and Interconnected Public Digital Systems; Fiscal Reforms and the Reform of Public Pensions; Support for Private Sector, Research, Development, and Innovation and Reform of State's Companies; Local Fund for Green and Digital Transition; Tourism and Culture; Fund for Hospital and for Increasing the Access to Health; Reforms in Social Field; Reform of Public Administration, Strengthening Social Dialogue and Increasing the Justice's Efficiency; and Educated Romania.

The complexity of the programs will also put pressure on Romanian's administrative capacity for implementation, generating unwanted situations in which central administration on a specific field renounced to a part of financial allocation because of the lack of administrative capacity (the case of the Ministry of Education) [33].

Regarding the legislative dimension, the intervention of a Romanian political actor, MEP, asking for the abandonment of EGD and for the reorientation of the funds for the national economies and health system is to be mentioned [21].

During the period of rotating the Presidency of the Council of the EU (January–June 2019), Romania proved its ability to contribute to the added-value of the EU [9]. On the first pillar from Romania's Rotating Presidency program, Europe of convergence, climate change was an important point. Facilitating reflections on the development of a common long-term vision toward climate neutrality and adopting the first regulation in the field of emissions standards for heavy vehicles were important achievements, along with the adoption of the proposal to amend the Directive Natural Gas, which, for the first time, provided a uniform and transparent regulatory framework for natural gas interconnections with third countries [9].

5.2. The Administrative Dimension at Romanian Level

The EGD is a strategy to interconnect the European policies in the field of climate change. The EU Climate Law proposed by the EC addresses the climate neutrality objective for 2050 and transposes it into EU legislation, encountering some obstacles from some Member States (Poland, Czech Republic and Romania), and the absence of a National Energy and Climate Plans [21]. The new initiative of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for developing a pilot network of climate diplomacy represents an important incentive [34], aiming to develop a pragmatic answer to climate change through multilateral cooperation. It is the first administrative capacity development initiative under the impact of the EGD strategy.

The need for decarbonisation has led to changes in the overall strategies of governments and companies in terms of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. In Romania, the decarbonisation of the energy sector is largely based on the support provided by the EGD, and the potential of renewable energy on the local market can become the engine of decarbonisation of the Romanian energy sector, as long as public initiatives are synchronized with business intentions [35].

In a research study dedicated to the southeastern part of Europe, a group of researchers analysed the need for a special approach to delivering the EGD (in energy field) [31]. According to the study, the energy market in Romania is fairly competitive, with too many electricity producers, the majority of producers being state-companies, and many household consumers covered by regulated tariffs (some recently opted for the competitive market). The evolution of the gas market toward liberalization was difficult. There are two main companies (OMV Petrom and Romgaz) dominating 95% of the production. The Governmental Emergency Ordinance (GEO) 114/2018 introduced a stop in the liberalization course for energy and gas price, because it introduced a 2% turnover tax on energy companies. The measures were revised, and the Romanian government is working now on defining the vulnerable consumers. In addition, the study indicates that Romania has one of the EU's biggest onshore wind farms and with a good potential on the shore of the Black Sea (announcement of the Romanian Hidroelectrica of enhancing renewable development to reach 300 MW capacity by 2026).

Romania and Slovenia are the only countries from the SEE region integrated into the EU power market, with an interconnection capacity of 7%, expected to increase to 10% [30]. The gas interconnection capacity is only 15% with other EU Member States, being the most vulnerable in the EU if Russian gas supplies are interrupted. One possible solution for additional interconnectors is the BRUA gas corridor project of the EU (linking Bulgaria, Romanian, Hungary, and Austria). The researchers concluded that for the implementation of the EGD in the SEE of the EU, a regional cross-border approach is needed, with an energy transition business and the participation of civil society driven by stakeholders' engagement. Regarding the implementation of EGD in the region, the abovementioned authors suggested a design of an organizational structure (meaning designing the administrative capacity) to sustain the "tailor made solutions jointly developed by the governments in the region and the European Commission" [31].

The development of a circular economy is an opportunity to make Europe more competitive through a modern economy and a revitalized industry which would generate new jobs. At the national level, Romania needs to move toward a clear vision and strategy, promoting research, innovation, and good practice in the field of circular economy. Buildings are a key segment of EU energy efficiency policy, as they are responsible of about 40% of final energy consumption and CO_2 emissions. This area needs trained skills, qualified staff, and major investments. With regard to organic food system, the new European provisions on organic production will guarantee food quality, environmental protection, and animal welfare throughout the whole supply chain [36].

5.3. Outcomes of Romania's Implementation of EGD

The results of the EGD's implementation will be find in the Romania's sustainable development in the next years and decades. For the moment, only Romania's National Sustainable Strategy 2030 [37] is the framework for EGD implementation.

6. Discussions and Findings

Starting from the opportunities generated by the EGD, through this paper, an analysis of the authorities' decision-making process to coordinate and implement the EGD at European and national level of a Member State was operated. Taking into consideration the novelty of this strategy and the political debates regarding its implementation in the Central and Eastern EU, it was difficult to provide sustainable evidence that supports the findings. Because the model intends to provide a framework for analysis, the findings are accompanied by some recommendations that could orient further interpretations.

For the Romanian case, the lack of a national coordination at the first two levels (strategic and administrative) is detected. The EGD topic is not present in public debates, nor in the decisions' priorities. In Romania, political parties did not incorporate the EGD subject in their political program and discourse. The media does not show an interest for qualitative consequences of EGD, and only non-relevant opinions are presented to the

public. The studies of epistemic communities are lacking. The Romanian public opinion and corporate's discourse is not convergent with the European one, and this is the reason for which the intervention of the epistemic groups is needed along with several studies with interdisciplinarity and rational approaches. The analysis model elaborated with this study on decision-making process' levels tries to offer arguments for decisions in the political and business areas and to offer a rational approach for a better analysis, understanding, and foresight of the current European debate in the field.

At strategic and administrative level, for the executive dimension, there are inaccuracies in the coordination of the decisions of political actors. The EGD is a European transversal policy requiring a transversal approach in the coordination and implementation. A good model to be used is the European affairs' coordination of Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [11]. One starting point could be the introduction of the weekly agenda of discussions on EGD-related subjects. From an administrative point of view, creating a specific structure at the central level in each ministry with clear responsibilities on the EGD's implementation will support the future complex actions and projects with members of the European affairs departments from each ministry. Subsequently, at the local level, this structure could be replicated in the County Councils and City Councils.

At the executive level, the elaboration of a National Green Deal Plan is compulsory. It has to be elaborated by political, economic, and social actors. The discussions should focus on the European policies and their implementation rather than on the allocated funds. In this way, the European integration will advance, and the European procedures and mechanisms will become the administrative normative for Romanian authorities. The policymakers will have to take the regional approach into consideration, with territorial and social specificities for each region of Romania (especially for the disadvantaged area, former coal mining).

For a better preparation for possible crisis situations, the Multistreams Model for Decision Making could be followed [38]. In essence, the model is based on regional interdependencies, which consists in the pre-elaboration of a certain solution for a specific category of problems that might arise. The model is specifically designed for the administrative sector, approaching adaptability, political innovation, and sustainability.

For the legislative dimension, there are not any legislative measures taken by the Romanian authorities for transposing the newest EU legislation in the field circumscribed to the EGD nor to begin the debates on the EGD with all political actors represented in the National Parliament. There is a need for a large consensus between political and economic structures and social groups in order to generate a national EGD. Universities and epistemic communities deserve a special role for the valuable insights they generate.

The interdependent nature of the EGD will impact its implementation at the national and regional levels, and the actions and projects will have been designed by taking into account the sustainability and impact of outcomes of the circumscribed EGD's policies. The regional approach will assure the sustainability of the projects and claims for coordination and cooperation between national and European regions. Climate diplomacy will facilitate the achieving of the goals of the projects. That is why the local initiatives will play an important role and the political decisions from the national level have to encourage these initiatives.

For the third category of the analysis model, the outcomes, the last public opinion survey indicated that Romania scores poorly for climate actions emergency. There is a need for a promotion campaign organized by the involved authorities focused on the well-being of citizens, which will support the internal climate for the future administrative measures that will be adopted. The economic factors are the main limitations and arguments used by the Romanian authorities to motivate the lack of actions and measures in the direction of the EGD's implementation.

Last but not least, the development of administrative capacity for the implementation of EGD needs, especially for Romania, a large support from the educational actors and

institutions which are called on for partnership programs and initiatives, mainly at the local level.

It can be seen that a deeper analysis could not be realized due to the lack of sufficient data for it. The topic of the present research is barely present at the strategic level, only tangential. One of the present research aims is to analyse the decision-making process for the implementation of the EGD and to signal the state of art by offering a new model of analysis and advice which could provide a useful guide and framework for action for decisions and administrative capacity. One of the directions for future research will be the observation of the progress in the EGD's implementation.

To conclude this chapter, the strengths for Romania for an efficient EGD implementation are as follows: (1) the strategic involvement in the transition to the green economy and green recovery; (2) the configuration in the NRRP of some projects which will impact important key fields of EGD, such as Water Management, Afforestation of Romania and the Protection of Environment, Waste Management, Sustainable Transport, the Fund for the Wave of Renovation, Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Gas Infrastructure, Governmental Cloud and Interconnected Public Digital Systems, and the Local Fund for Green and Digital Transition; and (3) Romania joined the four major UE's objectives as a global leader by (a) maintaining a leading position in the international negotiations regarding climate change and biodiversity, (b) consolidating the framework of international policies, (c) consolidating the network of Green Diplomacy—Romania has launched a concrete pilot project for building a network with some of its abroad diplomatic missions—and (d) intensifying bilateral efforts of international partners' actions and assuring comparative policies and actions for a Green Agenda for Western Balkans [10].

Regarding the weaknesses spotted for Romania's implementation of the EGD, the following could be mentioned: (1) the lack of a national strategy of implementation of the EGD in Romania; (2) the developmental and economic gaps for green transition; (3) the improbability of a just transitions of carboniferous regions from Romania; (4) missed opportunities of using the European funds from the Modernisation Fund—the calls from June 2021 and weakly hopeful for December 2021; and (5) many infringement procedures in the environment field opened by the European Commission for forest exploitation, for waste, and for the intervention ways on protect areas.

As "Fit for 55" [39,40] contains measures such as 40% of energy production from renewable resources, a "new price for pollution", and the renovations of buildings or zero carbon emission cars after 2035, Romania has a lot of work to do.

7. Conclusions

The EU's climate neutrality goals are very ambitious and will challenge the Member States differently. The transformational changes under the EGD will favour integrated, interdependent, and regional solutions. It is already a recognized fact that some regions will require a special attention (Central-Southeastern Europe especially) because of the different level of development, integration in the Internal Market, and political discourses. The new transversal growth model will be a good example for the entire world.

The answer to the first research question indicates that political factors are the most important for a decision, more explicit the political will. By targeting climate neutrality, the EU is aiming to become a global actor, proven with a model of good practice. In order for this to happen, political intentions have to manifest at the reginal and national levels, and cooperation projects have to start. The social factors influenced the implementation of the EGD due to the economic impact on short time well-being, but the adjustments supported by European policies, mechanisms, and measures will soften it. The public opinion support, the media debates, and constant preoccupation in this sense will reduce the reactions of "ideal strategy/dream strategy" of political decisions used to cover the lack of actions. The cultural elements impact the implementations of the EGD at European level, favouring or opposing this new way of thinking sustainably. It is about a new culture of sustainability that has to be spoken by the decisions (at strategic level) and the administrative capacity

of each Member State that will start to operationalise it, each in its own specific manner. As to conclude this answer, yes, there are political, social, cultural, and economic factors that influence and impact the implementation of the EGD at the European level, and one good model of detecting these factors is the model of analysis of decisions proposed by this study.

The second question of the research identified specific Romanian characteristics which impedet the application of eh EGD. The economic situation for harmonizing the climate neutral objectives followed by the EGD strategy are indisputable, but the specific plans of actions for each of the policies involved and activity's sectors must follow. It is the political factor's duty to establish at a national level the political mechanisms and procedures, and the administrative structures will build the frame for implementation. The topic is almost neglected from public debates, from an interdisciplinary approach. The social factors indicated anxiety regarding the implementation of the EGD from the perspective of Energy Policy because of the economic impact that it will have on a personal level. The educational sector with epistemic communities could support the understanding of EGD and its efficiency for the well-being of citizens. From the cultural factors, the group representations are presented in the arguments of political factors regarding the EGD's implementation. The membership to the EU is the only cultural factor used by political decisions, to which victimisation is added for explaining the economic burden for Central and Eastern Member States. To conclude the answer to the second question, yes, there are specific political, cultural, and social factors for Romania for EGD's implementation, but they are specific for all Member States from Central and Eastern EU.

As for the hypothesis of the study, the research confirms the political decisions' impact on the EGD's implementation in Romania, and this influence is more predominant than in other Member States or at the EU level.

The new model of analysis for the EGD's implementation is a useful instrument for political decisions and for the national and local administrations to start a complex and collaborative application of this strategy. It is a good basis for the political analysis of the effects of the decision-making process of different strategies.

The Romanian political discourse showed that it is committed to the EU's actions to become the world's leader in climate-neutrality and green technologies. It is understood that the development of its administrative capacity will favour the interdependent and sustainable approach of the EGD. The present study demonstrated that the Romanian administrative capacity needs to be reinforced with specific organizational structure, coordinated at the central and local levels. The efficiency of the implementation of the EGD in Romania requires the elaboration of a National Green Deal Plan for Romania with support from epistemic communities, especially when a European Climate Law was launch by the EC. The media vectors have to be involved in public debates in order to raise awareness and for a better understanding of the EGD's philosophy and its long-term benefits for the general public [41–43]. Regional and local solutions generated in the EGD's framework will become models of good practice that will facilitate the transfer and local adaptations, aiming at the implementation of EGD.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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