

Article

European Green Deal Impact on Entrepreneurship and Competition: A Free Market Approach

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Abstract: The European Green Deal (EGD) represents a new and ambitious growth strategy proposed by the European Commission for transforming the EU into a prosperous and resilient society based on competitive economy, efficiency in terms of resource allocation and a green environment. Under these circumstances, the aim of the present research is to highlight the main criticisms of the European Green Deal by taking into consideration the competition and entrepreneurial dimensions of the common market. Methodologically, the research entails a systematic review of the specialty literature and, alongside this, a preliminary bibliometric study on the analysed topic. Therefore, several critical issues on the European Green Deal's impact on entrepreneurship and competition are highlighted. The research results illustrate that the European Green Deal affects entrepreneurial activity through a prioritization of the environmental dimension, despite the free market. Aiming to achieve the stated goals, the EGD provides the context of governmental interventions and regulations, which will distort entrepreneurship and competition processes through fiscal policies and other instruments. The lack of clarity, the ambiguous objectives and the overall costs are also weaknesses of the European Green Deal, as highlighted by the present research. Even if it seems impressive on paper, many researchers demonstrated its inefficiency and impossibility. However, the research results are far away from denying the importance of the European Green Deal, considering the long-term perspective.

Keywords: European Green Deal; EGD; entrepreneurship; competition; critique; regulation



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1. Introduction

The importance of environmental sustainability has been recognized over time, and currently defines individual and collective responsibility for protecting global ecosystems and conserving natural resources. Bringing to the fore the idea of scarce resources' efficient use in order to maximize outputs has made the ability to support sustainable development a competitive advantage of world economies.

Actually, recently, the environmental dimension has become a hot topic in political decisions and activities, but also in the field of the scientific research. The desideratum of promoting a sustainable environment resulted in new strategies dealing with reducing the impact of individual activities on climate change. In this context, it could be stated that the actions of the European Union follow global trends or, if not, the EU is a driving force in this area. To succeed in achieving the goal of sustainable environment, the European Commission launched, in March 2019, the European Green Deal (EGD).

The European Green Deal represents a new and ambitious growth strategy proposed by the European Commission for transforming the EU into a prosperous and resilient society based on competitive economy, efficiency in terms of resource allocation and a green environment. At the forefront of this strategy can be observed the tendency of "no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050, where economic growth is decoupled from resource use" by using a "roadmap of the key policies and measures needed to achieve the

European Green Deal" [1]. Rethinking European activities entails very expensive actions, for which the EU provides extensive investment, initially estimated at EUR 1 trillion. In addition, the investments will be made along with different measures and regulations, which aim to facilitate the transition to a climate-neutral continent. Both in the short and long run, this proposed green perspective will require to different transformations and challenges, not only regarding the environment, but also economic and social activities.

Since human action is inherently entrepreneurial [2], the EGD umbrella and the imminence of the broad changes have sparked new debates related to the free-market process. Assuming that (1) competition and entrepreneurship are two sides of the same coin [2–5], and that (2) the European Union is commonly known for its tendency to establish regulations [6,7] that can affect, especially, economic freedom and entrepreneurial decisions, the research aim and objectives were established. Considering the significance of the topic in question, the specialty literature has allocated considerable efforts in order to illustrate the advantages of environmental entrepreneurship [8] or, in our case, the European Green Deal. An overview of the specialty literature enabled us to identify a disproportional allocated space regarding the proposed subject: relatively few studies address the disadvantages or, in other terms, critique the EGD. There is a consistent trend of exposing the benefits of the EGD, but not the costs of implementing this strategy. Hence, the present research aims to provide a different approach related to the European Green Deal's effects on entrepreneurial activity, which are considered to be one of the dimensions most affected by the regulations [9]. In other words, the main objective is to identify the main weaknesses of the EGD, addressing the entrepreneurial dimension of the European free common market. These are strongly related to the new policy focused on solving the world's challenges associated with climate change by transforming society into a green and sustainable environment. Specifically, the European Green Deal can be included in the transformation of "government to governance" using "new environmental policy instruments" [10].

In order to achieve the proposed aim, the paper will be structured as follows: initially, a review of the scientific literature on the topics such as entrepreneurship, competition and the European Green Deal will be performed. Subsequently, a preliminary bibliometric analysis that evaluates the interest in the topic, while also identifying the dominant scientific ideas and views, will be performed. Consequently, based on the obtained information, some observations and issues relating to the impact of the implementation of the EGD on the free market, entrepreneurship and competition will be outlined. Finally, the research will provide an overview of the EGD and, additionally, considering limitations, concise future research directions will be described.

2. Linking the European Green Deal to Competition and Entrepreneurship

Each policy affects, in a way or another, entrepreneurial activity. In order to understand the effects of a new policy on the market process and, therefore, on the entrepreneurial and competition dimensions, a brief summary of the aforementioned aspects is required. Therefore, a succinct overview of entrepreneurship and competitiveness will be provided, considering a free-market context. In addition, a depiction of the EGD becomes mandatory.

Entrepreneurial activity constitutes a permanent seeking of profit opportunities, no matter if these are discovered [4,11–13] or created [14]. Mainly, entrepreneurship is defined by several key elements, namely: the permanent seeking of profit [2], bearing risks and undertaking uncertainty [15], capital owning [16–18], specific knowledge [19,20] and innovation [14,21]. All these aspects are representative of a free-market context [22], where each human action is inherently entrepreneurial [2].

From a catalytic point of view, the entrepreneur is needed to introduce uncertainty through each of the decisions he takes in order to improve his own condition. Moreover, the inter-temporal dimension of its activity, with an imminent connection with uncertainty, must be emphasized. However, what needs to be said from the outset concerns the environment in which this actor operates: the market must be guided by freedom. Entrepreneurship and economic calculation are compatible only with a market unrestricted

by government intervention. If these conditions are fulfilled, it can be stated that the process of allocating scarce resources is an efficient one (from a dynamic perspective). The fundamental character of the triad: entrepreneur—economic calculation—the free market is essential for understanding the importance of a society in which government intervention is minimal. Under these circumstances, an alteration in entrepreneurial decisions, using different policies or instruments, will result in a less competitive market.

In addition, it must be highlighted that competition is imminently related to the aspects mentioned above. In a competitive market process, the entrepreneurial result, profit or loss, represents a consequence of the entrepreneurial judgmental decision, which takes into consideration economic calculations and other entrepreneurial actors or, in other words, competitors. As Böhm-Bawerk pointed, without competition, entrepreneurs will not be able to make profits [16]. Competition, one of the characteristics of the free-market process, changes the patterns of the entrepreneurial game and constantly offers new opportunities to be discovered and exploited, new reconfigurations of the context in which heterogeneous and numerous actors work to achieve profit. Therefore, we agree that, in the market process, competition is a method of selecting the most suitable individual for each task [2]. However, what happens when governmental intervention alters the market and distorts the competition process? Finding an answer to this question constitutes the main aim of the following section, focused on observing how the European Green Deal can affect competition within the EU.

In a free market, the entrepreneur designs business projects in an attempt to anticipate future market money prices for the various goods he will want to sell, while judging the possible changes in costs (again, monetary) [23]. Starting from the mission of the entrepreneur, his decisions always take into account monetary economic calculations. Considering the previous aspects, the main question is related to the effects of the European Green Deal on a free and competitive market process.

According to the European Commission, the European Green Deal (EGD) embodies a new growth strategy, a package of proposals oriented to sustainable investments, competitive and a resource-efficient economy. Overall, the green pillar aims to transform Europe into the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 [1], achieving economic development by decoupling it from the use of natural resources. Following the strategy, the goals can be synthesized into some main directions. Firstly, by 2050 the level of net emissions of greenhouse gases will be reduced to zero; by considering the EGD strategy and policy reform, by 2050 Europeans will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60%. Secondly, there will be significant changes in consumers' and businesses' behaviour, focused on encouraging investments in the market's green and sustainable direction. In addition, a "carbon border adjustment mechanism" will be proposed for reducing the carbon leakage risk and the energy system will become acquainted with a decarbonizing process by using renewable sources, creating a smart infrastructure, and reducing waste. Additionally, national governments should reconsider their own climate and energy plans, in accordance with the EGD. The industrial sector must be transformed, given that a significant part of pollution is related to this activity. Therefore, a new circular-economy action plan, which includes sustainable-product policies, will be proposed. For all of this, an information campaign for reducing "greenwashing" and digitalization tools is mandatory [1]. The "farm to fork" strategy and Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 are key elements for facilitating the transition and the achievement of the proposed goals for a green Europe.

Considering the previous briefly discussed ambitious objectives, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stated that the European Green Deal is nothing else but "Europe's man-on-the-moon moment" [24], even if it can be seen as "a colossal exercise in greenwashing" [25]. Somehow, while green entrepreneurship has become a general trend, the disparities between the individual level (firms) and national level (countries) are still persistent [26,27] and, in this context, different authors proposed an integrated model of financial performance [28].

By analysing the specialty literature related to both competition and entrepreneurship and the European Green Deal, we built benchmarks to understand the main weaknesses of this new strategy or its main critics. The European Green Deal, defined as a set of policy initiatives, changes the rules of entrepreneurial activity and result in invariable changes, which can negatively affect the competitive market.

3. Research Methodology

The critical analysis carried out was designed to illustrate the impact of the European Green Deal on entrepreneurship and competition. From a methodological point of view, the present research focused on an outside to the inside approach, through the comprehensive analysis of existing scientific evidence, obtained by considering the theoretical and empirical research. Following a four-step process, the flow of the current research efforts can be described as follows (Figure 1):

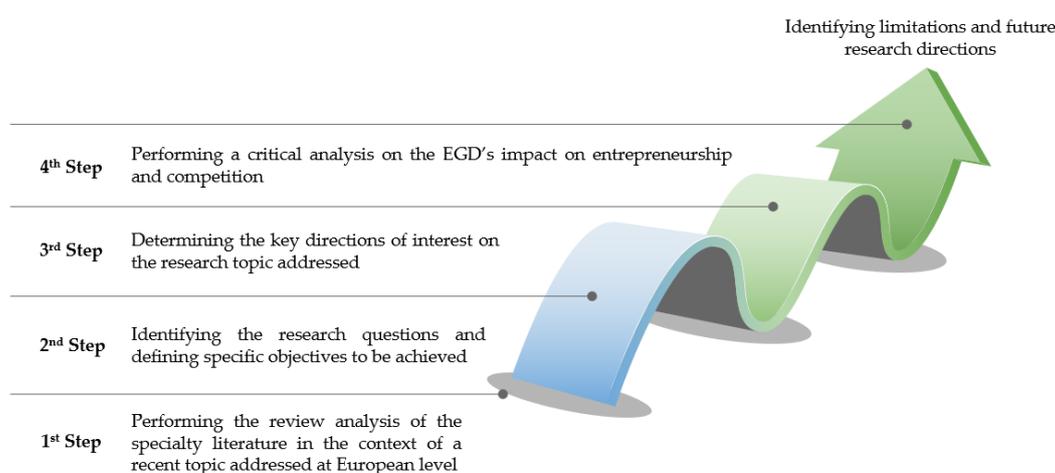


Figure 1. The four-step research process.

As a result of the specialty literature review and strongly connected with the research goal, the following research objectives were outlined:

- (1) To identify the key aspects related to entrepreneurship and competition, considering a free-market process;
- (2) To highlight the main goals of the European Green Deal;
- (3) To provide a critical analysis related to the impact of EGD on entrepreneurship and competition.

Thus, in order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the preliminary research involved conducting a first-round bibliometric analysis, highlighting the research interest in the approached topic. The bibliometric analysis was limited to the most popular and reliable global database, namely, Clarivate Web of Science. The actual data processing was performed using the VoSviewer 1.6.18 software tool, the bibliometric analysis in question being focused on the occurrence frequency of the considered keywords. Keyword frequency was measured based on keyword-specific sections, titles and abstracts of the scientific papers identified as being relevant, taking into consideration the timespan 1975–2022. Given the recent European Green Deal policy and the limited number of papers on the subject resulting after querying the database, a manual review was subsequently possible.

Following a logical flow, firstly, a systematic literature review related to the topics under analysis was performed. In this regard, for the entrepreneurial perspective, the Austrian School of Economics' opinions were considered. Secondly, based on the theoretical approach of entrepreneurship and competition, the European Green Deal was examined to illustrate its effects on a free-market process. The EGD goals were discussed considering the previous research and several main form of the critique, or the main weaknesses of

the debated problems were identified, in accordance with the arguments exposed in the specialty literature.

4. Interest in the Research Topic

Considering the approached research topic, the bibliometric analysis carried out was focused on essential character strings, reflecting, as appropriately as possible, the analysed phenomenon. Under these circumstances, the query formulated aimed to perform the advanced search within the Clarivate Web of Science database, materialized in the following form: *TS="europe*" AND TS=("green deal") AND TS=("business*" OR "entrepren*" OR "enterprise*" OR "company" OR "companies" OR "firm" OR "firms")*. In the case of bibliometric analysis, it is well-known that, as more terms are included in the search query, the chances of receiving the obtained results increase, but an approach focused on specificity can offer a greater degree of relevance. The previous premise also represented one of the main pillars underlying the present preliminary study, out of the desire to highlight aspects with a high degree of relevance, the chance of deviating from the core purpose of the research was limited as much as possible.

Within the mentioned query, the use of both main terms of interest, as well as their derivatives, can be easily observed. The character strings ending with the character "*", for example "europe*", ensure the search for all terms that include the letters before the character in question, followed by any other character string. In addition, to increase the degree of relevance of the obtained results, relative to the purpose of the current research, the group of words "green deal" was integrated into the query. The inclusion of the two different strings within quotation marks thus guarantees their associated search, which would not be identified when used individually.

The query of the chosen database led to the identification of 87 papers, related to the chosen terms, and also linked from the perspective of the defined syntax. Given the association of keywords included in the query with the "green deal" strings, the narrowed number of publications resulting is justified, as the concept of *Green Deal* itself has been discussed as an official policy at European level since 2019.

As previously mentioned, the timespan within which the publications were searched was 1975–2022, but, in accordance with the moment when the bibliometric study was carried out, only the first two months of 2022 were included. It should be mentioned that the first (chronologically) paper resulting from the query dates from 2020. Thus, even though the query took into account the period 1975–2022 for the search, as the research topic covered by the query is extremely recent, it led to a reduced number of results.

The preliminary bibliometric study involved the search for scientific publications in all languages available in the Web of Science database, but the English language was identified as predominant. Thus, over 87% of the resulting works were written in English, constituting more than 70 publications out of 87 (Table 1). Considering the inclusion of bibliometric studies in the category of quantitative research, the dissemination of papers according to the language in which they were written does not affect the obtained results. Moreover, the language should not be considered an impediment when a subsequent qualitative analysis of the publications is aimed at, through their direct review.

Table 1. Resulting publications per language of writing.

Languages	Record Count	% of 87
English	76	87.356
Russian	8	9.195
Polish	2	2.299
Ukrainian	1	1.149

Despite the limited results obtained in terms of the number of scientific publications identified after addressing the query, the research areas covered are quite diverse. As expected, closely related to the addressed topic, the main fields of study in which the

research is focused are represented by the Environmental Sciences Ecology and Science Technology fields, characterized as Web of Science research areas. Figure 2 highlights the first ten covered Web of Science research areas, as well as the number of scientific publications for each.

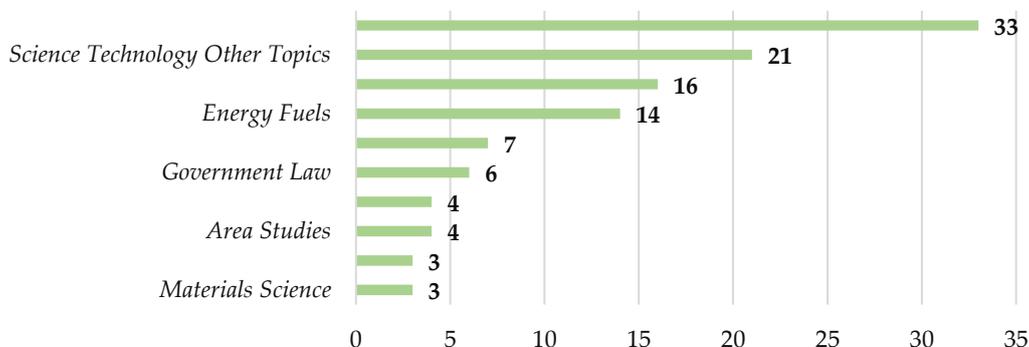


Figure 2. Web of Science main research areas for publications related to the addressed query.

At the same time, based on the analysis of the raw results obtained through the search within the database, the interest of researchers from various geographical areas around the world was observed. The map of geographical positions, depicted in Figure 3, shows the contributing countries, differentiated according to the number of scientific papers published. Therefore, dark green was used for areas with the highest number of publications, the shades becoming lighter as the number decreases, respectively, and gray for the areas from which there is no research on the considered topic.

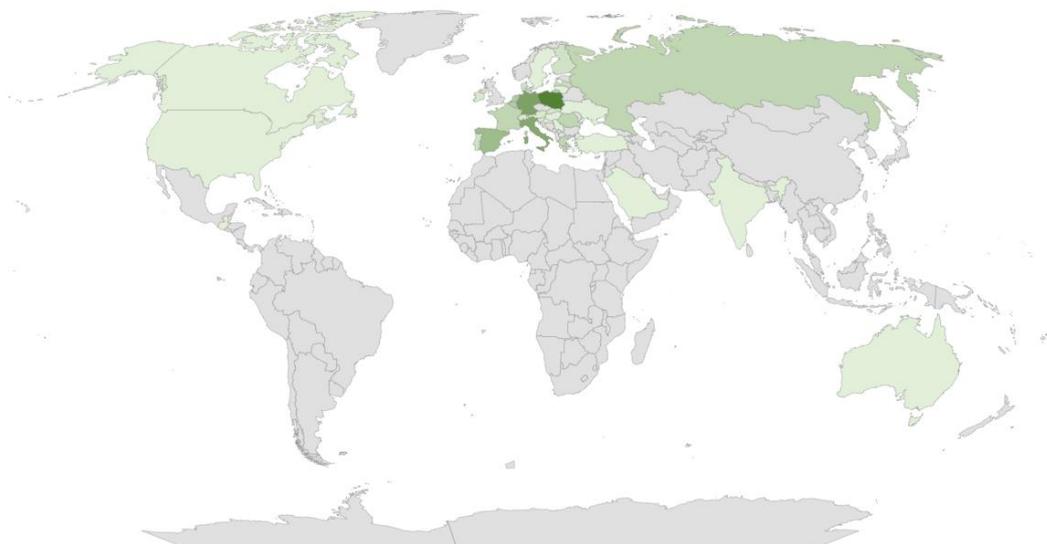


Figure 3. Research distribution based on the geographical position of the contributing countries.

Data processing was performed based on titles, abstracts and keywords related to the selected papers, resulting in 4219 keywords. In order to increase the relevance of the results, one of the main steps of the preliminary bibliometric analysis consisted in filtering the key terms resulted from extracting those with a minimum number of occurrences of 10. The process led to the selection of 20 keywords, considering the most relevant 60% of a total of 63 keywords that met the threshold (10 being the number of occurrences) and excluding those that did not serve the purpose of the current study (for example, connection words, proper nouns, etc.).

Figure 4 depicts the association of key terms in the form of different colour clusters. The frequency of keywords is represented by the size of the nodes composed of the terms included in the analysis.

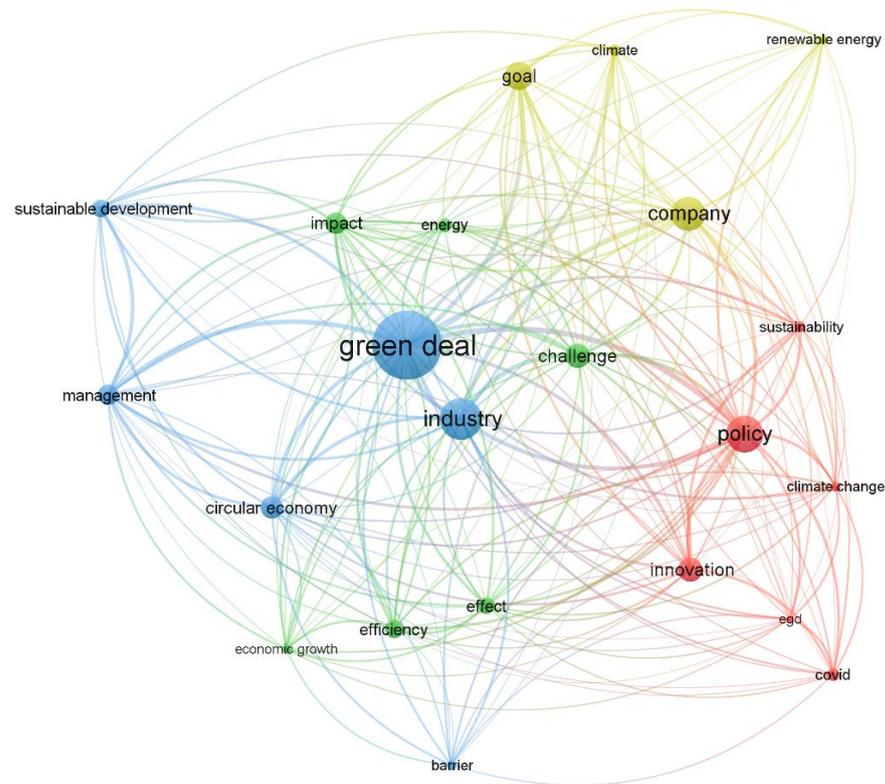


Figure 4. Keywords co-occurrence map.

In order to identify the main research directions approached, respectively, and ideas or visions presented within the analyzed papers, a significant step of the bibliometric analysis, prior to the effective review of the works resulting from the query of the database, involved the grouping of keywords based on the association between them. Thus, based on the resolution parameters, four main clusters resulted, according to Table 2.

Table 2. Keyword clusters extracted from VOSviewer.

Cluster No. (Color on the Map)	The Most Common Key Term Based on the Occurrences	Key Terms Associated with the Main Term within the Cluster
1 (red)	Policy	Innovation, Sustainability, COVID, Climate Change, EGD
2 (green)	Challenge	Efficiency, Impact, Effect, Energy, Economic Growth
3 (blue)	Green Deal	Industry, Circular Economy, Management, Sustainable Development, Barrier
4 (yellow)	Company	Goal, Climate, Renewable Energy

The resulting clusters represent a useful basis in determining the main research points addressed in the literature. Hence, to summarize the main ideas and views presented in the analyzed scientific papers, refining the main search query by adding, with a note of obligation (using the “AND” operator) the associated keywords within the clusters, was necessary. The main findings of the cluster-based analysis can be described as follows:

Cluster 1 (red). The first cluster analyzed undoubtedly highlights the overall awareness of the European Green Deal (EGD) as an official policy designed to lead to the development and maintenance of a sustainable environment. The analysis of the literature underlined the fact that the relation of the key terms included in the cluster in question was a natural one, as most of them are precisely keywords related to the European Green Deal policy.

Refining the query as *TS="europe*" AND TS=("green deal") AND TS=("business*" OR "entrepren*" OR "enterprise*" OR "company" OR "companies" OR "firm" OR "firms") AND TS=("innovation" OR "sustainability*" OR "covid*" OR "climate change")*, led to the observation of other notable visions resulting from existing research. Multiple exposed views focus on the need for innovation in supporting sustainable development, for example, by discussing opportunities to develop integrated approaches to research and innovation in general [29] or in specific areas, industries or activities, such as the food system or the battery industry [30,31].

Under the influence of recent global events, various resulting scientific papers deal with the phenomenon of green sustainable development in terms of the barriers imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic or its consequences as threats or opportunities. Consistent with Rowan and Galanakis [32], the COVID-19 phenomenon has the potential to lead to the creation of disruptive technologies that determine the relationship of the agri-food industry with areas such as ICT, health, and the environment.

Given that approximately 70% of the total papers subject to analysis, i.e., 60 out of 87, were the basis for the formation of the first cluster, the analysis resulted in the observation of particularized research in specific areas, the key terms being, rather, representations of the main concepts related to the European Green Deal policy.

Cluster 2 (green). The second identified cluster brings to the audience's attention the challenging nature of sustainable development under the European Green Deal policy. Even though the potential for energy efficiency and sustainable development to stimulate economic growth is often mentioned, the main trend observed following the review of the literature highlight the barriers to achieving this goal.

The focus was on the idea of supporting climate innovation through certain unprecedented financial-policy levers. Unsurprisingly, gaps are highlighted, particularly that, while the dynamics of macro-financing are clear, the impact of the niche dynamics of sustainable innovation financing remains unconsidered in many policies, such as those specifically proposed to address the climate emergency [33].

Cluster 3 (blue). The publications that include, among other topics, the keywords related to the third cluster, emphasise the key areas of activity presented by the European Green Deal (EGD), namely, the mobilization of industry and the transition of industrial sectors to a circular economy. Notable results show that an approach to design a "circular economy system" can reduce the impact on the environment compared to linear product systems, while illustrating the need to expand product life cycle assessment practices [34]. However, some main obstacles are mentioned, such as the lack of a well-developed industrial symbiosis and long-term support for the implementation of recovery technologies [35].

Cluster 4 (yellow). The literature related to the last cluster focuses on the microenvironment, from the perspective of the company at the individual level and its consumers, while also considering entrepreneurship. The idea of renewable energy is being intensely discussed through its direct relationship with the European Green Deal policy.

Sustaining the transition to renewable energy seems to be not only a factor of an extrinsic nature to companies, but also of an intrinsic nature. Consistent with Zuk and Zuk [36], the ownership structure of a company plays an important role in exploring savings through investments in renewable energy.

On the other hand, consumers, as citizens of EU Member States, are directly considered, since green consumption is expected to attract green production, while also supporting the consumption of renewable energy. According to recent research, the EU governance framework is not fully prepared for the inclusion of collective communities of citizens as complete participants in the sustainable energy transition [37].

Essentially, the results of the bibliometric analysis illustrate that, even though the topic is relatively new, researchers were interested in analysing the European Green Deal from different perspectives. The various approaches highlight the European Green Deal's complexity, with effects impacting all decisions and actions.

5. Results and Discussion

The European Green Deal can be seen as an important step that will improve the environment, but, at the same time, will pervert the competition and the entrepreneurial activities within the EU due to its interventionist dimension. Therefore, the responsibility of political actors will increase, not only in the environmental area [38], but also in market processes and daily life. To support our claim, further discussion will be focused on different aspects, presented in Figure 5, taking into consideration the premises related to entrepreneurship and competition illustrated in the literature review section.

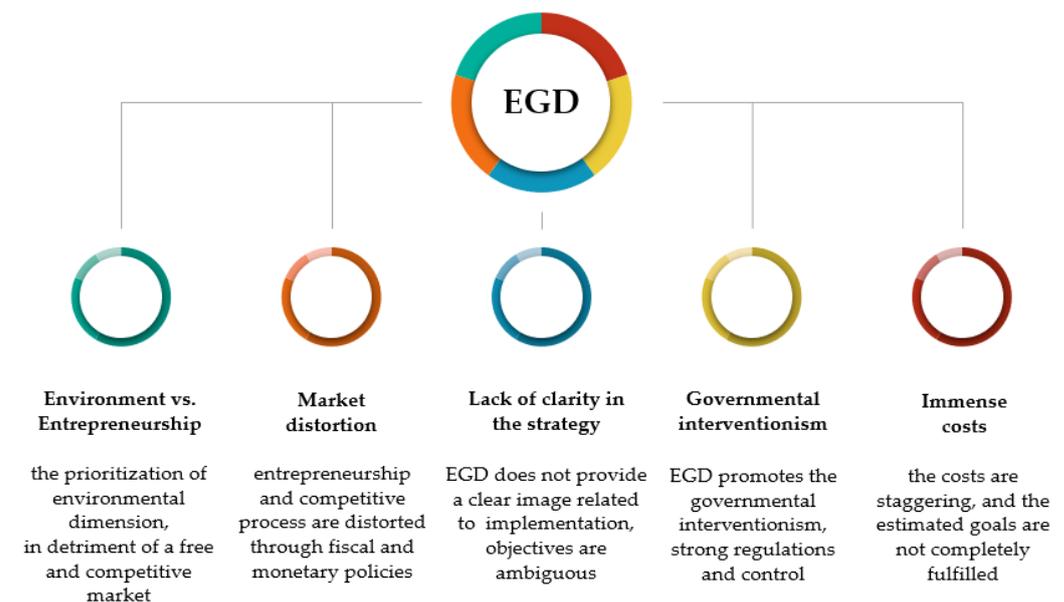


Figure 5. Main criticisms of entrepreneurship and competition in European Green Deal.

Firstly, a visible prioritization of the environmental dimension to the detriment of a free and competitive market can be stated; the entrepreneur, being the driving force of the market process, affects the entire market process. Generally, entrepreneurial decisions are oriented to increase profit, by assuming uncertainty and bearing risks. Through its objectives, the European Green Deal will force entrepreneurs to adopt new strategies that, without governmental intervention, will not be chosen, considering economic calculations. A strong environmental dimension, assuming enormous costs, will replace the entrepreneurial dimension of the market process. The highest priority of a climate-neutral continent involves restricting entrepreneurial decisions and activities. Therefore, the EGD will shift economic development's focus to environmental dominance. In other words, a new paradigm tries to add an ecological dimension by altering the production process and encouraging growth, but it does not question the objectives of unending production, consumption, and expansion [39]. To achieve the objectives imposed by the European Commission, entrepreneurs must consider a rethinking of their activities, to reduce pollution and make society green. Even if innovation and bearing risks and uncertainty are key elements in defining entrepreneurial activity, these changes can strongly affect the competitive process, especially through their interventionist character. According to the European Commission address on the European Green Deal, entrepreneurial activities mainly focus on short-term performance, instead of long-term development and, of course, sustainability [1], even if significant parts of the EU policies are short-term oriented. Aligned with

the new societal transformation, a new perspective on entrepreneurship was developed, namely, green entrepreneurship, oriented to create and implement different entrepreneurial solutions that are not discordant, but convergent with environmental changes [40,41].

Strongly connected to the previously mentioned aspect, the second critique is designed to highlight the impact of the EGD on entrepreneurship: the distortion of competition through different fiscal policies at European and national levels. A similar observation is made by Karlson et al., who argue a distortion of entrepreneurial behaviour due to the support schemes provided by the government [42]. In this regard, it can be stated that the results will result in a deterioration of the competitive process. For example, according to the existing communication related to the European Green Deal, all institutions and national governments must reform and design their fiscal policies to provide a stable and sustainable environment, to boost green economic growth and a just transition. One of the most stringent issues is related to subsidies, which are seen as an important boost in achieving the proposed goals. Entrepreneurial activities and, consequently, competition, can be distorted by the subsidies. As highlighted, economic calculations represent a major pillar in the free-market process but, if the government provides different types of incentives in order to redirect the resources in some areas, the pillar in question will be affected. To clarify, entrepreneurial decisions will not be taken in accordance with market needs, but with the structure and regulation imposed by the European Union for achieving the Green Deal. Some entrepreneurs that are competitive will be excluded from the market process and others, who are less competitive, will replace them, especially through this kind of fiscal policy. For example, if the case of the start ups that received subsidies and the case of those who did not are analysed, the wrong dimension of this fiscal instrument will be highlighted. Mainly, the firms that received subsidies died after the government stopped giving them money, compared to those that were fully founded by entrepreneurs. In this regard, it is important to establish not only an *ex-post* evaluation of the public interventions in entrepreneurial activity, but a continuous one [43].

Generally, through the intervention of the government in the market process it is difficult to achieve efficient or, at least, reasonable, cost-benefit results [44]. The European Green Deal is, as per Storm, “just another incarnation of inefficient Big-Government Keynesianism” [45]. For example, the specialty literature demonstrated, empirically and theoretically, how inefficient subsidies or other financial instruments are [46–49] and, of course, the effects of this kind of intervention. According to Schlesinger, there are doubts related to how effective and appropriate the monetary and fiscal policies are and this issue should rise some questions in the public policies [50]. Historical evidence demonstrates the failure of subsidies as economic development strategies. To a large extent, the problems determined by this instrument of intervention are related to corruption and government fiscal crises, but not only. Subsidies or other fiscal incentives establish a low interest in innovation and business improvement [51]. Taxes, seen as sources of money collection and redistribution, will have additional costs, including costs related to the competitive process. Individuals that can represent potential entrepreneurs can be constrained by fiscal issues related to procuring funds for a green and sustainable Europe. Usually, the analysis considers only the benefits of fiscal measures, without an objective evaluation of costs or with some of these costs being expressly forbidden. Due to all these aspects, it can be stated that the relationship between entrepreneurship and competition will be altered. Fuchs et al. criticized the negative effects of the European Green Deal on economic stability and global sustainability, since the strategy will deteriorate the agricultural and industrial sectors [52], but not only these.

The previous aspects illustrate a clear statement: the EGD promotes governmental interventionism and regulation. When a sector is regulated, monetary economic calculation becomes (increasingly) more difficult to achieve, and entrepreneurial activity is hampered. Klein and Foss argue that it should come as no surprise to us that, in such long-term conditions, performance is very low [13]. The erroneous signals that entrepreneurs receive because of the denaturation of economic calculation in terms of monetary prices are ob-

viously transferred to erroneous decisions and investments. The problem of uncertainty should clearly not be excluded from the analysis, being defining for profit as a result of entrepreneurial activity, but it should be admitted that interventions, which distort economic calculations, result in incorrect entrepreneurial decisions. The specialty literature highlighted the inefficient character of regulation [53], considering “unnecessary costs on businesses, undermines their competitiveness and adversely affects economic growth” [54].

Additionally, by analysing the European Green Deal, the lack of clarity in this strategy promoted by the European Commission can be easily observed. To offer a better understanding, it can be stated that the cost is very high, and the objectives are not well-defined. This is a question of cost–benefit analysis. The EGD does not provide a clear vision related to the implementation of this policy; the purposed objectives are not well-defined and, therefore, the whole plan is ambiguous. A similar observation is made by Fleming and Mauger, who state that “whether announcing big aims without having them sufficiently underpinned by detailed action plans on how they can be achieved could be considered a questionable approach” [55]. In addition, the lack of clarity in the implementation of the strategy is influenced by the discrepancies between the European Member States in terms of industrial and environmental policies. Under these circumstances, the ambitious goal of a neutral climate presented by the European Green Deal is insufficiently justified, taking into consideration the economic situation [56]. Considering that the pressure that this strategy exerts on the economic dimensions is immense, for now, there is no solid foundation for a real implementation and achieving the proposed goals.

The goal of a climate-neutral Europe involves soaring costs oriented to different investments needs. The process requires the intensive involvement of public and private institutions. All this aside, the European Green Deal states that the private sector, thus, entrepreneurial activity, will be a key factor in financing the transition to green and sustainable environment [1]. According to Storm, entrepreneurs should be reluctant to support the achievement of a neutral climate on a European scale, considering economic and political capacities, even if the amount of money estimated to be used in the initial phase is very high, exceeding EUR 1 trillion [45]. The lack of needed resources represents a challenge or a disadvantage in achieving the ambitious goals. To clarify, the European Green Deal is not just under-funded, but also technically inefficient. In Trainer’s opinion, the European Green Deal’s objectives cannot be achieved “unless there is large scale degrowth to radically different economic, social and political systems”. Therefore, a rethinking of the EGD is mandatory [57].

To sum up, the EGD represents an important step to a *life transition* [39] and not only for a green transition to a climate-neutral continent. The previous affirmation is justified by the whole strategy included in the EGD, which aims to completely change individual habits and attitudes towards a non-pollution existence. According to the European Green Deal, limitless growth seems to be a valid statement, even if there is a less detailed and rational explanation for “how environmental factors will balance with social and economic factors” [58].

Aside from the weaknesses described above, the current context brings to the fore an essential problem, strongly connected with the European Green Deal: the painful energy crisis and energy independence. As expected, the opinions related to the possibility of succeeding in achieving the green goals are divided, taking into consideration the new political and economic situation characterised by an open war with restricted international trade and economic vulnerability. On one hand, there are sceptic voices that argue the impossibility of achieving the proposed objectives, previously exposed in the present research paper as ambiguous and expensive, due to the new priorities on the European agenda. Specifically, not only the Russian–Ukrainian war, but also the economic problems (higher inflation rates, etc.) overshadow the EGD. On the other hand, outspoken climate-change activists are arguing the impossibility of achieving energy independence without the EGD, which is seen a key of success in solving problems such as the crisis. Despite all these debates, we

reiterate that importance of preserving a free common market, where entrepreneurship and competition, seen together, must be not spoiled by the governmental intervention.

Undoubtedly, the aspects presented above represent only some of the perspectives identified in the existing scientific literature, in conjunction with the results of the present research. Starting from this, we appreciate the partial character of the paper, designed to illustrate, mainly, the weaknesses of the European Green Deal policy. Considering the European Green Deal, a restructuration and a rethinking of the European environmental future is mandatory, assuming the drastic changes in economic and social dynamics. The EGD is “Europe’s man-on-the-moon moment” [24], which “bypasses the poor and helps only the rich” [59] and the beginning of an era where “business-as-usual” ended [33]. Even if it seems to be impressive on paper, many researchers demonstrated its inefficiency and impossibility, but “for each effective government intervention, there have been dozens, even hundreds, of failures, where substantial public expenditures bore no fruit” [60].

6. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

Currently, the nexus between sustainable development and economic objectives resides in the simultaneous support of protecting and maintaining natural-resource practices, and of all services of an ecosystem nature that are the basis of the economy and social progress. Confidently, historical events have demonstrated the need for constant efforts to maintain the conjunction in question.

The current context, merged with the significant events of the last decade, is characterized by unforeseen events, risk, and uncertainty. Thus, the need to support and improve the environmental dimension is increasingly identified and promoted, regardless of the field of activity being referred to. In fact, discussions often refer to the actions undertaken at the collective level, the phenomenon itself being a global one.

Therefore, it can be stated that, over time, it has been assumed that environmental sustainability represents a necessity and a responsibility both for individuals and for societies. Broad goals have already been defined, to some extent, at almost all levels of human existence. The way in which specific objectives related to the general ones can be solved, however, represents an often-questioned challenge.

As in any process of the input–output type, there is, among others, the possibility that the difference between the ability to produce the intended results and these results may be too large. In simple terms, to obtain outputs characterizing the objectives of the process, greater attention must be paid to existing resources and the possibilities or capacity of their efficient use. The results of such an analysis of inputs would, without a doubt, result in the establishment of achievable objectives. However, in the policy currently existing worldwide on different themes, contrary opinions have been outlined, contextually highlighting various barriers and actions to be taken into account. In particular, the relationship between the sustainability of the environment, competition, and entrepreneurship does not discount from such an approach.

Recently, there has been a general tendency to promote the environmental dimension in every governmental action. Under this assumption, an imminent impact on entrepreneurial activity and overall society was observed. Within the previous statement we can also frame the European Green Deal (EGD), launched by the European Commission in 2019 for achieving, by 2050, European climate neutrality by using over EUR 1 trillion for reducing the pollution, creating a smart infrastructure oriented to a sustainable environment, transforming economic activities and the European lifestyle. Despite the prominently displayed advantages, there are also many unspoken disadvantages, seldom exposed in public debates or in the specialty literature. This situation facilitated the present research proposal, which aimed to illustrate the main critiques of the European Green Deal with regards to entrepreneurial activity and, of course, the competitive process.

The main weaknesses or the criticisms of the European Green Deal related to competition and entrepreneurship are illustrated by the very ambitious objectives; this also represents the main finding of the current study. However, in order to provide a clear under-

standing on the approached subject, the results of the present research can be summarized as follows:

(1) Environmental activities are seen as key pillars in the decision process, to the detriment of a free and competitive market. In this regard, it can be stated that the EGD promotes governmental intervention, strong regulations, and control. In other words, entrepreneurial decisions will not be guided by economic calculations and, therefore, the competitive process will be affected.

(2) To achieve green goals, all efforts will be focused on the environmental dimension. As a result, entrepreneurship and the competitive process will be distorted through fiscal policies or other instruments. The new political strategy will result in a development of green entrepreneurship, which can be seen as a business compromise, in order to survive the new regulations imposed through EGD.

(3) The lack of strategy and the very ambiguous objectives hinder the implementation of the policy. In this regard, different studies identified not only doctrinal issues, but also technical problems that highlight important problems in achieving the proposed objectives.

(4) The estimated involved costs are immense (over EUR 1 trillion), and the expected results are far from being achieved.

To conclude, we are far away from contesting the importance of the European Green Deal, assuming the long-term perspective, but it must be taken into consideration its idealist dimension, which involves enormous costs and a radical change in all activities, economic and social. In brief, this is a life transition to achieve an environmental goal.

Usually, the European government interventions and regulations for achieving different goals have a Keynesian character and the European Green Deal is not an exception. Starting from this, one of the unanswered questions is based on a Keynesian affirmation. Why must we sacrifice the current European economy striving to achieve a climate-neutral continent via EGD if “in the long run we are all dead”?

The present research contributes to the specialty literature by providing a critical perspective on the European Green Deal, with a special emphasis on entrepreneurship and competition, which, in our humble opinion, will be strongly affected by the EGD’s implementation. Linked to the previously discussed aspects, the limitations of the study were as follows. Firstly, the bibliometric analysis has a preliminary character and is limited to a single database. Secondly, the critical analysis of the European Green Deal can be considered partially and subjectively performed, due to the fact that, at its roots, it is the perspective of Austrian School of Economics on entrepreneurship and competition. In addition, the lack of empirical analysis can be criticized. Overall, all the limitations previously mentioned represent a starting point for further research, oriented to the empirical demonstration of the exposed weaknesses. For this, data related to businesses situation can be analysed, considering different sectors and countries. Additionally, an extensive perspective on entrepreneurship and competition, assuming the managerial dimension, can improve the research results. Moreover, extending the bibliometric analysis to multiple databases can offer an integrated perspective and a clearer picture on how the European Green Deal is perceived by the specialty literature.

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