



**CEPS POLICY BRIEF**

**FROM GREEN TO CLEAN  
TO ECO-SOCIAL:  
HOW TO PUT WELLBEING BACK ONTO  
THE EU'S SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA**

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## SUMMARY

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Wellbeing has always been a cornerstone of the European project. Since the Green Deal and the Just Transition Mechanism, it has also been central to the EU's sustainability agenda. The 8th Environmental Action Programme explicitly calls for establishing a wellbeing economy within planetary boundaries. Arguably, wellbeing should be part of the EU's sustainability ambitions, given the strong inequality dimension of climate change and the fact that human wellbeing cannot exist without planetary wellbeing.

But wellbeing is hardly at the forefront of today's EU policy discourse. The Commission's main geopolitical concern – competitiveness – has moved beyond economic or trade policy and permeates its current flagship sustainability strategy, the Clean Industrial Deal (itself borne from the Commission's competitiveness compass).

In this policy brief, we discuss how the Clean Industrial Deal frames wellbeing considerations and how this has shifted compared to the Green Deal. While we find continuity in some areas (e.g. on re-skilling workers), there is a narrower focus on providing jobs as a means of supporting economic growth in European industries, rather than protecting people from negative impacts of the transition across different dimensions. Existing inequalities and systemic changes are also largely overlooked.

Such changes would require moving beyond GDP growth as the yardstick for success. Competitiveness could instead be measured in terms of sustainable and inclusive wellbeing – something the EU is uniquely well positioned to deliver. To re-anchor wellbeing in the EU's sustainability agenda, we suggest (1) introducing eco-social conditionalities to public funding under the CID, (2) including wellbeing indicators in the CID's Fair Transition Observatory, and (3) investing in modelling of alternative economic futures beyond GDP to inform future policymaking.



**MultiFutures**  
SUSTAINABLE. RESILIENT AND FAIR EUROPE

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## INTRODUCTION

The EU has long prided itself on delivering prosperity for its citizens. [But as housing, energy](#) prices and the overall cost of living surge once again, that promise feels increasingly hollow. This is causing uncomfortable road bumps for some, but brink-of-existence problems for others.

These immediate challenges are [exacerbated](#) by the long-term but no less urgent climate and biodiversity crises – which we shouldn't lose sight of among the countless other emergencies. Inequality plays a key role here, too. [Overconsumption by the wealthiest](#) is largely driving these crises, while [poorer households suffer most](#) from their impacts.

Ecological and social aspects therefore cannot be viewed, or tackled, in isolation. Unless policy design acknowledges these interlinkages, trying to adapt to and mitigate these pressing ecological issues will likely [impact labour markets](#), deepen inequalities and create new risks.

In the EU, the interconnections between social and ecological aspects haven't gone unnoticed. After all, the [European Green Deal's](#) (EGD) green transition agenda was explicitly based on the concept of a 'just transition'. While instruments under the EGD umbrella are of course still being implemented, new policy priorities have emerged in response to geopolitical shifts. [Competitiveness](#) has been on the Commission's menu for a while now, alongside security and strategic autonomy. This has only been reinforced by recent developments, including the US-Israeli war in Iran and its [impacts on global fossil fuel supply chains](#) and energy prices in the EU.

With von der Leyen's second term in the Commission, the EU's sustainability discourse appears to have shifted from 'green' to 'clean'. At least, that's what the title of the Commission's flagship [Clean Industrial Deal](#) (CID) strategy seems to suggest. As greater emphasis is placed on competing with the US and China in terms of economic output and industrial activity, the main sustainability question risks becoming narrower, focusing on decarbonising industrial processes. But what about the social dimension of sustainability? Is there still room for increasing people's wellbeing, one of the EGD's declared ambitions, or is wellbeing no longer being treated as a policy objective in its own right in the EU's new sustainability discourse?

## WHY WELLBEING BELONGS ON THE EU SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA

Wellbeing has always been one of the cornerstones of the European project. In fact, the [Treaty on European Union](#) (TEU) explicitly states that ‘the Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples’. Societal wellbeing has also been strongly linked to the EU’s broader sustainability agenda, particularly since the adoption of the EGD and the Just Transition Mechanism.

Building on the EGD but going beyond it, the [8<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme](#) (EAP), the legal framework for EU environmental policy until 2030, acknowledged the relevance of promoting wellbeing within planetary boundaries. Concretely, its long-term priority objective is that ‘by 2050 at the latest, people live well, within the planetary boundaries in a well-being economy where nothing is wasted, growth is regenerative, climate neutrality in the Union has been achieved and inequalities have been significantly reduced’.

This reflects the inextricable links between societal wellbeing and ecological aspirations: healthy natural environments are a prerequisite for equitable and inclusive societies, while structural changes in economic activities are in turn needed to achieve and sustain healthy natural environments. Unless climate change and biodiversity loss are halted, wellbeing will radically deteriorate.

But what does wellbeing mean in practice? Neither the 8<sup>th</sup> EAP nor the EGD explicitly defines it. Here, we understand wellbeing as a [multidimensional concept](#) encompassing aspects like satisfying needs, achieving capabilities, attaining happiness and a good quality of life. It includes objective dimensions (e.g. material living standards, access to education) and subjective ones (e.g. participation in society, spiritual satisfaction). Research generally agrees that wellbeing has a strong relational aspect – to other people, but also to the environment. *Sustainable* wellbeing is therefore achieved within nature’s limits. There’s also a time component, since current wellbeing should not come at the expense of future wellbeing. Finally, we understand wellbeing as equitable, enabling the [good life for all](#).

However, existing environmental and climate policies often [overlook these broader societal issues](#), while welfare policies tend to [ignore the ‘green’ aspects](#). As fragmented policy solutions [don’t seem to be enough](#) to tackle these challenges, wellbeing *should* continue to be on the EU’s sustainability agenda.

## FROM GREEN AND JUST...

The EGD clearly recognised that sustainability issues contain both ecological aspects and socio-economic ones. Although one can criticise the way the EGD conceptualised the nature of eco-social relationships (and we will do so further below), it had the stated aim to protect vulnerable communities from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Additionally, it acknowledged that the 'green transition' itself would have an impact on people's lives. The EGD recognised that if certain jobs became obsolete (['brown' sector jobs](#)) or change in terms of tasks and skills involved, this would leave many workers unemployed. The goal was to 'leave no one behind' by establishing the [Just Transition Mechanism](#), including the Just Transition Fund and [the Social Climate Fund](#). This was meant to [support regions](#) and sectors most affected by the green transition, including via re-skilling and employment measures but also by providing access to energy-efficient housing or public transport.

Many things can be [criticised](#) about the Just Transition Mechanism and its implementation. It [overlooks](#) intersecting existing inequalities and vulnerabilities to climate change and the green transition (e.g. [gender, ethnicity, disability](#)) that lead to disproportionate exposure to harm; it's mainly a [correction mechanism](#) for market externalities rather than systemic and pre-emptive protection; and it has rarely led to ambitious [binding policies](#). Moreover, its scope is rather limited, as it focuses on certain sectors and territories, while [not providing enough financial support](#) compared to what's actually needed.

Despite these shortcomings, the Just Transition Mechanism was an important stepping stone for firmly anchoring social and wellbeing considerations within the EU's EGD-era sustainability agenda. While the EGD adopted a compensatory rather than a protective approach to wellbeing that framed [social policies as investments in human capital](#), it also understood ecological, social and economic aspects as interlinked, at least to a certain degree. The underlying logic assumes that tackling climate change will require changes in our economic system that can be turned into an opportunity for economic growth, while leaving no one behind.

While the work on EGD-related policy priorities such as the just transition is ongoing, it's important to examine how social and wellbeing aspects are treated under the CID. After all, this policy isn't only a discursive representation of what the EU deems important, but a clear guiding light for future policy developments in the sustainability area.

## ...TO CLEAN AND COMPETITIVE

The CID was put forward in February 2025 within the second von der Leyen Commission's broader competitiveness framework (including the [competitiveness compass](#)). By design, its focus is even narrower than that of the EGD. Its main objective is to improve European competitiveness by increasing 'sustainable and resilient' industrial production in Europe. As such, the flagship actions in the CID aim to create the ideal conditions for a clean (not green, clearly) transition of the European industry, especially in energy-intensive sectors, while fostering clean-tech sectors. This includes securing access to affordable energy, creating lead markets for decarbonised products, stimulating investments, supporting the circular economy, and ensuring a level playing field for the EU industry on a global stage.

The shift from green to clean demonstrates a narrower understanding of sustainability: where the EGD wanted to 'increase the value given to protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, to the sustainable use of resources and to improving human health', the CID aims to 'accelerate decarbonisation, reindustrialisation and innovation' in the EU. Sustainability was reduced from a more systemic understanding to one focusing on decarbonising (increased) industrial production.

Unsurprisingly, social considerations in the CID are largely linked to fostering industrial capacity. One of the Deal's six flagship action areas, 'skills and quality jobs for social fairness and a just transition' aims to ensure that people, households, and businesses benefit from the clean transition. But the underlying logic is clear: because industry (and a successful clean transition) relies on a skilled workforce, it should offer quality jobs. Concrete action is therefore foreseen for supporting skills development (via the [Union of Skills](#)) and supporting workers in the transition (via the [Quality Jobs Roadmap](#)). Under these two flagship actions, the CID promises investments in lifelong learning, decent working conditions, occupational health and safety standards, collective bargaining and fair job transitions.

'Wellbeing' itself is absent in the CID legal text. Still, it might be addressed indirectly via some of the other flagship actions in this area, particularly by providing guidance on social leasing for clean products and establishing the European Fair Transition Observatory. The Observatory will use standardised indicators to monitor the socio-economic impacts of the green transition and inform policy processes. The CID also promises to involve social partners, civil society and regional and local authorities in a stakeholder dialogue on the matter.

The policy text also mentions other measures with potential wellbeing relevance that aren't flagship actions under the CID. For example, the use of social conditionalities in public funding to industry is mentioned, and the Commission wants to explore training and skills conditionalities for public funding. The policy also refers to the [European](#)

[Affordable Housing Plan](#) as a way to address workforce mobility to workplaces in metropolitan areas. Yet it doesn't discuss the potential of the plan for tackling interconnected social and ecological problems in tandem.

The CID and the EGD share a very specific understanding of how ecological, economic, and social issues are interconnected. They frame negative social impacts as a consequence of measures to combat climate change that needs to be accounted for in sustainability policy (internalised, if you will). While the CID also pays lip service to empowering people and promoting social cohesion and equity across regions, its approach to eco-social issues is largely reactive ([much like that of the EGD](#)).

Targeted skills courses are relevant tools for cushioning [employment impacts of the green transition](#). Still, concentrating only on education and training can [worsen existing inequalities](#), ultimately missing out on potential social benefits of [more integrated approaches](#).

Where the EGD prominently featured social considerations under the framework of its Just Transition Mechanism, the CID mostly considers social policy measures as a way to support the decarbonisation and competitiveness of European industry. While the CID still recognises that it's important to deliver good jobs and protect people from negative impacts of the clean transition, this also seems to reflect a persistence of the EGD's [compensatory](#) and superficial rather than [transformative](#) approaches.

As such, the CID represents both a continuation of the EGD's understanding of social wellbeing *and* a shift towards a considerably narrower framing of sustainability as decarbonising industrial processes that require a skilled workforce. Any eco-social acknowledgement the EGD contained is overshadowed by the need for economic competitiveness in the CID.

This changing focus is also apparent in the EU's Strategic Foresight agenda. While the [2023 Strategic Foresight](#) report was entitled 'Sustainability and people's wellbeing at the heart of Europe's Open Strategic Autonomy', its [2025 successor](#) shifted to 'Resilience 2.0: Empowering the EU to thrive amid turbulence and uncertainty'. Sustainable and inclusive wellbeing was not entirely left out, but was clearly sidelined to make room for issues that were deemed more urgent due to the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape. Since strategic foresight informs policy evaluation and design, this shift underscores the broader changes in the Commission's strategic orientation.

One *could* argue that these changes in the current political sustainability discourse don't mean that wellbeing has become irrelevant. After all, both the EGD and the CID are essentially strategies for economic growth – which will in turn improve the wellbeing of people and therefore fulfil the TEU's ambition. But is that true?

## WHY ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS ISN'T ENOUGH

Economic competitiveness is [predominantly measured](#) in terms of economic growth and GDP per capita. Yet evidence suggests that economic growth can support wellbeing only up to a point and not irrespective of how it's generated and distributed. In high-income contexts, like the EU, its gains for wellbeing become less direct: income above a certain threshold [doesn't improve people's happiness](#). This may be because higher general income levels (even if they *were* distributed fairly) [don't automatically improve people's health](#), relationships, sense of security or other factors that are crucial for wellbeing.

As [research on OECD countries](#) shows, once a moderate income level is reached, additional GDP brings little improvement in welfare outcomes such as infant mortality, work safety, and physical security, while some social indicators, such as overcrowding, can even worsen. Combined with severe environmental degradation [associated with economic growth](#), the argument for not explicitly tackling wellbeing in EU sustainability policy because 'growth will solve it' becomes less convincing.

This shows that a sole emphasis on economic growth and market solutions to prevailing ecological and social issues is [inadequate](#) and fails to deliver on its promises. Once economic growth becomes the main benchmark of prosperity, other core dimensions – including distributional aspects, social cohesion, (mental) health and environmental sustainability – risk being sidelined, unless these are commodified. At the same time, because GDP counts market activity without distinguishing harm from benefit, it can increase because of spending linked to cleaning up pollution, treating preventable illness, and responding to other forms of system failures.

Even if GDP growth *were* to be the yardstick of success, it's clear that there's no long-term economic growth (or even competitiveness) [under deteriorating environmental](#) and [social conditions](#). If the EU is serious about competitiveness as a means for better livelihoods, safer and healthier societies, it needs a broader measure of progress. Instead of focusing only on the economic dimension, the EU's sustainability discourse should remember its promise to bring about wellbeing within planetary boundaries by 2050. This requires more integrative and transformative approaches that combine sustainability, inclusivity and wellbeing. But if GDP doesn't tell the full story, what should Europe measure instead?

## RE-INTRODUCING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE WELLBEING

This is not a new question. At the heart of the (mostly, but not exclusively, academic) debate is the simple yet essential idea of a [wellbeing economy](#) – an economy that serves people and planet, giving greater weight to equity, social cohesion and inclusive participation, while ensuring that prosperity is pursued within planetary boundaries.

This concept isn't confined to niche academic discussions, as major international organisations have worked on this question. For example, the [OECD's Wellbeing Framework](#) suggests different indicators for measuring wellbeing and progress. It assesses not only income and material conditions but also health, education, social connections, housing, and civic engagement, alongside the environmental, human, social and economic resources needed to sustain wellbeing over time.

In the EU, this wider rethinking comes through most clearly in the Joint Research Centre's (JRC) sustainable and inclusive wellbeing (SIWB) framework. Initiated by the 2023 Strategic Foresight Report, the JRC's SIWB framework offers a more holistic way to assess economic, social and environmental developments.

The framework brings together [six connected dimensions](#): wellbeing today; social and economic resources for future wellbeing; resilience; nature and planetary boundaries; inclusiveness; and institutional capacity and quality. In doing so, prosperity is not treated as a single economic outcome, but as a balance between present living conditions, future resilience, intergenerational fairness, ecological limits and the quality of governance needed to deliver them. The SIWB framework was [operationalised with indicators](#) that range from housing affordability, participation in voluntary activities to consumption footprints and the gender employment gap.

[SIWB findings](#) suggest that although overall wellbeing usually rises with GDP per capita, this pattern isn't uniform across the EU. Sweden and Finland rank highest in overall wellbeing – not simply because of their high GDP per capita, but also because high income is paired with strong performance across several wellbeing dimensions, including current wellbeing, future resources, nature and institutional quality. Estonia and Slovakia, in turn, demonstrate that overall wellbeing can exceed what income levels alone would predict, suggesting that social, cultural, environmental factors can lift wellbeing beyond GDP. [A recent comparison to the US](#) shows that while GDP per capita has grown more pronouncedly there than in the EU, SIWB has declined between 2010 and 2023.

Since 2011, [SIWB in the EU](#) has shown a mostly positive trend, though the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how fragile that progress could be. Following a weak recovery in 2021, the overall index declined again in 2022, even as *wellbeing today* improved. This

underlines how different dimensions can have different trajectories. Even more telling is the fact that *wellbeing today's* improvement occurred as GDP per capita remained mostly stagnant, showing that progress in people's wellbeing isn't solely dependent on income growth.

Despite the broader progress captured by SIWB indicators, the objective is far from being achieved. The EU still faces deep social vulnerabilities. In 2024, [93.3 million people](#) – 21% of the population – were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while [around 1 in 11 people](#) couldn't keep their homes adequately warm.

The issue, then, isn't that indicators don't exist, but that they often [remain fragmented or sectoral](#), instead of forming a coherent toolkit to track progress, identify trade-offs and synergies, and especially guide policy. Used well, such a toolkit could shape how EU policies are defined, implemented, and assessed. This is particularly relevant for the current sustainability discourse, where the CID frames social concerns mainly in terms of skills and jobs for competitiveness, rather than as part of a broader wellbeing objective.

## HOW TO THINK BEYOND THE CURRENT PARADIGM

Taking the work on SIWB seriously would require the EU to redefine competitiveness – away from its narrow focus on GDP growth and industrial capacity, and towards a more holistic approach to human and planetary wellbeing in line with existing political agreements and ambitions (such as the TEU and the [2030 Agenda](#)).

This would, however, entail more than a change in measurement; it would require a broader paradigm shift that doesn't declare economic growth its sole imperative. It would require a discussion on our core European values and understandings of how social, economic and ecological aspects are related.

There are a range of different efforts to conceptualise these relationships. A useful way to think about such understandings, or 'paradigms', that go beyond mainstream economic growth, is provided by the [MultiFutures](#) project. It distinguishes four [alternative growth paradigms](#): Green Growth, Mission Economy, Post-Growth and Great Mindshift.

In the Green Growth paradigm, economic considerations (and GDP growth) dominate over environmental and social considerations. Environmental problems are framed as market failures. By pricing externalities (e.g. carbon markets), ecological limits are translated into economic signals. Nature is managed within the economic system, while GDP growth finances sustainability action and underpins social stability. Society continues current consumption patterns, with prices driving individual choices and market behaviour.

In the Mission Economy, ecological goals such as achieving net-zero emissions are set by governments and translated into state-led missions. The economy is actively steered through policy, regulation, and targeted innovation. GDP growth remains important, but doesn't act as the central metric for success. Society largely maintains current lifestyles but is mobilised around shared goals.

In the Post-Growth paradigm, a functioning ecological system is seen as the basis for human wellbeing. The economy must therefore operate within strict ecological limits (e.g. [planetary boundaries](#)). This may require shrinking or transforming certain sectors (e.g. fossil fuels) – as such, GDP growth is either sidelined or reversed in some sectors or well-off regions. The economy is seen as a tool for delivering wellbeing and justice, not growth for its own sake. Redistribution, reduced working time, and care work recognition reshape economic structures.

Finally, the Great Mindshift envisions a bottom-up reconfiguration where society and ecology are tightly interwoven, and the economy becomes localised. Society recognises the intrinsic value and rights of nature, with cultural and ethical shifts driving sustainability. Economic activity is embedded within ecological boundaries, often at the local level (through practices like self-sufficiency, resource caps, zero fossil fuels). The economy is community-driven, shaped by local needs, values, and participation rather than national or global growth imperatives.

According to this distinction, the CID could be characterised as a Green Growth policy, combined with some elements of Mission Economy, given its more top-down approach to steering market conditions. Neither paradigm includes wellbeing or social aspects as a central ambition, and neither does the CID. There's no attempt to address structural inequality, while the climate crisis isn't framed or tackled as the social-ecological issue that research has shown it to be. [It's an issue caused by elites](#) and suffered by the most vulnerable.

Of course, it's difficult to incorporate sustainable and inclusive wellbeing into a policy strategy when its very underlying paradigm not only separates the environmental and the social realms but also makes them subordinate to the economy. Here, the economy becomes an end in itself, rather than the means to serve the wellbeing of Europeans.

Yet this approach isn't in line with what Europeans really want. [More than four in five respondents](#) across six EU countries support beyond-GDP measures for policymaking and national performance that focuses on wellbeing, sustainability and inclusion rather than economic output alone. This support is particularly visible when the measures directly concern people's everyday living conditions such as health, safety, jobs, education and housing.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A successful European sustainability agenda is one that prioritises people's needs within planetary boundaries over economic competitiveness measured by GDP per capita. While the CID does incorporate social considerations (and the corresponding measures should be followed closely), its discursive emphasis is placed on how people can serve industry, not the other way around.

A sustainability strategy that doesn't overlook social aspects in favour of market and technological ones would need to incorporate more systemic and holistic measures that could take inspiration from the Post-Growth or Great Mindshift paradigms. Fortunately, [policy suggestions already exist](#) that combine ecological and social issues and could integrate SIWB.

Such [eco-social policies](#) explicitly aim to tackle ecological and social goals in tandem to achieve sustainable welfare – i.e. a [good life within planetary boundaries](#). To tackle both the sustainability aspect of SIWB *and* the inclusivity one, the goal is to provide a social minimum for everyone and set a maximum for environmental impacts. This often entails reducing overall consumption to address [rebound effects](#).

To provide a minimum *social floor* that ensures equitable and inclusive wellbeing, policymakers could implement universal [basic services \(UBS\)](#), [unconditional or universal basic income \(UBI\)](#), and/or a [voucher system](#). A [socio-ecological job guarantee](#) could support workers and households through structural changes in carbon-intensive industries. To achieve the *sustainability* part of SIWB, an ecological ceiling would need to be set, e.g. through the planetary boundaries framework. This could then be implemented in policy through progressive income taxation and [working time reduction](#), for example.

These proposals largely fall within Member States' competences rather than those of the EU. But given the strong social dimension of the ecological crisis (in its causes, impacts, and potential mitigation and adaptation pathways), there's a need for a holistic overarching policy framework that the EU is uniquely positioned to provide. For example, the EU could act as a coordinator and issue country-specific recommendations to Member States under the [European Semester](#). Eco-social policies could be useful measures to complement EU sustainability policy, such as the CID, lowering the ecological impacts of industrial activity while also improving human welfare.

For a more holistic approach to sustainable and inclusive wellbeing, the EU should:

- 1. Introduce eco-social conditionalities for public funding to industry:** To ensure that public funding for a clean industrial transition furthers sustainable and inclusive wellbeing, the EU should make it conditional on eco-social considerations. The CID already mentions [social conditionalities](#) to make sure that workers benefit from the support given to industry. More holistic eco-social conditionalities could therefore build on existing policy instruments. These should go beyond providing skills courses and increasing efficiency, and proactively improve working conditions and decrease various environmental impacts of production processes. SIWB indicators could be used to inform these and other conditionalities used in EU policy – for example those of [Green Public Procurement](#) or the [EU Taxonomy Regulation](#).
- 2. Include wellbeing indicators in the Fair Transition Observatory:** The CID's Fair Transition Observatory should include multidimensional wellbeing indicators like those of the JRC's SIWB framework to monitor not only employment trends and skills gaps but also whether the transition is socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. After all, transparent data are crucial for operationalising eco-social policies. Given the long-termism of these approaches, which are focused on future wellbeing as much as present wellbeing, it's important to understand how trends are developing and might unfold over the coming decades. The role of the Fair Transition Observatory could also be strengthened to actively inform eco-social policy development.
- 3. Invest in and strengthen quantitative assessments and modelling of alternative economic futures and their impacts:** To assess the long-term implications of policy choices for sustainable and inclusive wellbeing, it's crucial to have modelling capabilities and data to analyse transition scenarios. But most of the existing transition scenarios in integrated assessments and other modelling [focus on emissions reductions](#) and economic growth, sidelining societal ambitions such as wellbeing, equity and sufficiency. Existing Horizon Europe projects like MultiFutures are actively working on developing and modelling alternative scenarios that assess how the future might play out if we thought beyond GDP growth. Further investments into such projects could help pave the way for more evidence-based sustainability policies (for example under the CID framework) that tackle eco-social issues in an integrated way.

## CONCLUSIONS

Europe has always been competitive in one crucial aspect: it has consistently provided high living standards through strong public services and social protection for its citizens, not least due to its comparatively well-developed (albeit growth-dependent) welfare states. Of course, these living standards haven't been distributed equally, nor have they come without significant social and environmental costs.

This doesn't mean that Europe should give up on what has long set it apart. Rather, it should double down on its core ambition of 'promoting peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples' (Art. 3 TEU). Given that human wellbeing only exists within the context of planetary wellbeing, these two need to be tackled simultaneously and in an integrated way. There will be trade-offs, otherwise.

EU policy should critically evaluate how to pursue wellbeing so that it isn't achieved to the detriment of the most vulnerable or of the environment. The EU's broader sustainability agenda, including the upcoming flagship actions under the CID, is uniquely positioned to tackle this task. By ensuring that wellbeing is both socially inclusive *and* environmentally sustainable, Europe can pave the way to happier, healthier societies.

## ABOUT THE MULTIFUTURES PROJECT

MultiFutures' mission is to lead the transition towards a sustainable future by developing innovative policy pathways. The project aims to broaden the range of policy options available to address climate change, fostering an inclusive and forward-thinking approach to environmental sustainability. By exploring alternative paradigms and creating comprehensive transition scenarios, MultiFutures aspires to equip policymakers with the tools and insights necessary for effective and transformative action. MultiFutures aims to develop these alternative economic paradigms by investigating and integrating diverse frameworks such as degrowth, doughnut economics, and post-growth. For more information, visit the project website: <https://multifutures.eu>.

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