

The Compliance of Lithuanian Environmental NGO's Objectives with European Green Deal

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European Commission in 2019 has developed an ambitious strategy for sustainable economic growth - the European Green Deal. It sets out two key objectives: to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent, with zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and to decouple economic growth from resource use. While the responsible authorities will be taking the relevant decisions, citizens must also do their part by changing their habits, protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. The Green Deal implementation's success requires the participation and commitment of the public. There are eight main Green Deal initiatives / policy areas, which need to be transferred to Lithuanian law (Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050; Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way; From "Farm to Fork": a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system; Accelerating the shift for sustainable and smart mobility; Supplying clean, affordable and sustainable energy; Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy; Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity; A zero pollution ambition for a toxic free environment). The main tasks of this article were to identify the main goals and initiatives of the European Green Deal, to perform a content analysis of Lithuanian environmental NGOs and their activity goals and present conclusions. Primary methods used: content analysis of Lithuanian environmental NGOs objectives, data comparison with main policy areas of the European Green Deal (EGD), survey to check if organizations aligned their objectives with the EGD purposefully. The key results. After comparing the main Green Deal initiatives with Lithuanian environmental NGO's performance objectives, we can see, that most of them work in preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, also in mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy. There's only one NGO which act in clean, affordable and sustainable energy field and two NGOs which act in building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way. Estimating the size of Lithuanian population, there is a large number of environmental NGOs, but unfortunately, they are not very well known for society. That's why their performance is not very much influential on political decisions. The key barriers for the development of green initiatives should be identified and the attraction of new members with specific knowledge and with understanding the purpose for working at NGO.

KEYWORDS: environmental NGOs, green deal, green deal initiatives, environmental protection, political decisions.

European Commission in 2019 has developed an ambitious strategy for sustainable economic growth - the European Green Deal (EGD). It sets out two key objectives: to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent, with zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and to decouple economic growth from resource use. The measures accompanying the initial roadmap of key policies range from large-scale emission reductions to investment in cutting-edge research and innovation and preserving Europe's natural environment. This strategy is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals and contributes to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

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Abstract

Introduction



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There are eight main Green Deal initiatives / policy areas, for which action plans must be developed and it needs to be transferred to Lithuanian law (European Commission webpage, European Green Deal):

- 1 Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050;
- 2 Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way;
- 3 From "Farm to Fork": a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system;
- 4 Accelerating the shift for sustainable and smart mobility;
- 5 Supplying clean, affordable and sustainable energy;
- 6 Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy;
- 7 Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity;
- 8 A zero pollution ambition for a toxic free environment.

While the responsible authorities will be taking the relevant decisions, citizens must also do their part by changing their habits, protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. The Green Deal implementation's success requires the participation and commitment of the public as well as actions of the governments.

"An ENGO (environmental non-governmental organization) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in the field of environmentalism. These organizations operate both locally and internationally which makes them play an important role in dealing with different kinds of environmental issues that are happening in the contemporary world." (Doyle, 2015).

In the official site of Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (www.am.lt), there are marked 62 NGO's which declare they carry out activities in the field of environmental protection in Lithuania.

While NGOs are often viewed as altruistic organizations exclusively driven by a mission to improve the natural environment, they can be considered as policy entrepreneurs which strategically interact with corporate and public actors in order to foster environmental innovation. (Schweizer, 2016). If the goals of ENGOs and the European Green Deal would be aligned, it would be easier to achieve European environmental goals and meet interests of different citizen groups. In this case some changes, which need to be made to achieve environmental goals would be better accepted in the society.

Research object – Lithuanian environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), their objectives and compliance with the European Green Deal objectives, which are ambitious enough and could help to achieve national environmental goals faster.

The main **purpose of the research** is to analyze the main goals of Lithuanian ENGO's activities and their relevance to the European Green Deal. To see whether ENGOs have deliberately aligned their operational goals with the European Green Deal and do they see the meaning of doing that.

Research tasks:

- 1 Review the goals of Lithuanian ENGOs and compare them with policy areas of the European Green Deal.
- 2 To find out whether Lithuanian ENGOs specially coordinated their activity goals with the European Green Deal.

Research methods: literature analysis, comparative analysis, a survey.

Verification of the ENGOs' operational objectives published on their official websites was necessary to see how they interact with official Green Deal initiatives, but it was also very interesting to contact organizations and to ask how they see their activities not in a document, but in wider range.

When empirical data was collected using the document review method and summarizing results of a survey, has been clarified, that most of Lithuanian ENGOs have already adopted their objectives to the European Green Deal. Some of them has already done that without deliberately aligning its objectives with EDG.

Sometimes the distance between the decision makers and the people affected by climate change seems too long. This has the effect of questioning the legitimacy of decisions made by the governments. With existential environmental crises accelerating, we also see increasing of environmental justice movements. Local communities and nongovernmental organizations attempt to resist environmental injustices and fight against it. In climate politics, especially in discussions about the European Green Deal, attention is being focused on how to protect vulnerable communities. (Stuart, 2021). Communities can create organizations and add their own input in reaching goals of the EGD while protecting themselves.

The term NGO was first used in 1945 creating the United Nations organization that recognized the need to provide advisory role for non-profit and private groups which have raised social issues. (Willetts, 2004). NGOs are created without initiative of the government, operate under principals of volunteerism, are established by the free will of people and represent needs of members and customers. (Mikolaitytė, 2012). Actually there are many descriptions of NGO, but as P. Willetts says “the world of NGOs goes beyond of standard operational and advocacy activities, such as harmonization of technical standards, maintenance of communication systems, provision of information, professional collaboration, transnational cooperation, sustaining shared values or a common identity, protective collective interests, empowerment of a disadvantaged, cultural exchanges, and promoting communal, class, gender or ethnic solidarity”. (Willetts, 2011).

The beginning of Lithuanian NGO can be considered 1918 when a scout organization has been established. The goals of the first public organizations were educational activities, promotion of culture, national revival and social care. The activity of non-governmental organizations as we understand it today, began in 1991, after the declaration of Lithuanian’s independence. Today NGOs are called the third sector. (General Lithuanian Encyclopedia).

Environmental non-governmental organizations exist worldwide, and since the 1980s they have increasingly influenced global environmental politics and environmental discourse. (Paterlow, 2020). Environmental non-governmental organizations have been the focus of a considerable amount of research that examines how these actors influence environmental policies and the conditions that allow them to be effective. (Alcock, 2008).

According to J.R. Kees (2018) main objectives of ENGOs include, but are not limited to:

- » Establishing relations with government and other organizations;
- » Providing training and assistance in conservation of nature and agriculture, to make the best use of local recourses;
- » Development of environmental solutions, management of projects implemented to solve problems in some specific environmental area.

There isn’t complete picture on how much the ENGOs manage to influence the decision makers. Furthermore, it must be remembered that it is normal that ENGOs push for higher standards than the ones they would be realistically achieved. (Petrucci, 2020). Different segments of the ENGO community are building bridges in the quest to harmonize the value of ecological sustainability with economic efficiency or distributive equity. According to M. Marquez (2016) NGOs can and do have an impact on public policy-making and decision-making in the public sector, both by directly representing interests and by promoting democracy and enhancing social capital. So

if Lithuanian ENGOs would align their objectives with the European Green Deal, they could influence government to take some decisions, necessary for achieving the European Green Deal goals or to do that faster, and Lithuania could be one of the countries which is shaping environmental policy in the right direction and at the right pace. And according to research (Lithuanian Council of Youth Organizations, 2016) many young people (73.53 %) in Lithuania feel like the part of Europe. So declaring, that ENGO's objectives are aligned with the European Green Deal, could help attract young people to the organizations.

European Commission understands, that NGOs sometimes need some help to take actions to achieve their goals. After the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis has limited civil society's as whole and NGOs in particular their capacity to take actions and to contribute to the profound transformations needed to achieve a successful transition towards a sustainable future. For this purpose, following the framework of the LIFE Programme, the LIFE 2020 Call for Proposals from NGOs on the European Green Deal (NGO4GD) was launched to reinforce the capacity of NGOs acting at Member States' level to mobilize and strengthen civil society participation and contribution to the implementation of the European Green Deal. (European Commission webpage, LIFE 2020). Lithuanian ENGO's have also been invited to participate in this project. But only 1 application has been submitted according to the NGO call for proposals for the European Green Deal (information of Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania).

N. Miskiniene and A. Telesiene have conducted a research "Lithuanian non-governmental organizations' environmental activities" in 2007-2008, which showed "[...] that environmental activism in Lithuania has the following main features: priority to mild (rather than radical and aggressive) forms of activism, low effectiveness of the activities, low public and political attention, narrow and episodic partnership networks".

There is a fairly widespread public perception that governments and international organizations should take the most of responsibility for managing climate change. This depersonalizes responsibility. In 2020 a survey conducted in Lithuania shows that the majority of Lithuanians believe that no help is expected from them in the fight against climate change. (Telesiene, 2021) "Activism of environmental NGOs is assessed controversially in Lithuania. In many cases, environmental activities of the NGOs fail to solicit public interest and support. Society is purely informed about such activities and the problems solved" (N. Miškinienė, A. Telešienė, 2009).

R. Žiliukaitė has also conducted the research trying to find out how NGOs sector has changed in Lithuania from 1994 till 2011. This research has revealed two trends: "first of all, in the 20 years that have passed since democracy was institutionalized in the country the number of NGOs has grown significantly. Secondly, the number of citizens taking part in their activities remained stable or grew only within the boundaries of confidence interval of representatives surveys of population" (R. Žiliukaitė, 2012).

Review and comparison of Lithuanian environmental NGOs activities according to the European Green Deal

In the official site of Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania there are marked 62 NGO's which declare they carry out activities in the field of environmental protection in Lithuania, but in the register of Lithuanian NGOs (www.nvoatlasas.lt), there are 150 NGOs, which registered their activity in environmental protection field. That's quite a big number in a relatively small country with a population of 2,8 million. Most of these organizations are relatively small. Bigger NGOs have advantage, because policy-makers will be more willing to listen to it, it also helps in the sense that you may have larger communication channels, more people that follow you. (Jonaitis, 2020).

In this article it was checked and compared ENGO's from Ministry of Environment data base, considering, that these organizations work actively and their operational objectives in environmental

field have been checked. Official websites of all these organizations were checked, operational plans and objectives examined and sorted by the main objectives of the European Green Deal. All NGOs must publicly announce their regulations and objectives, so information from the websites was chosen as easy accessible and sufficiently reliable. Additional source of information was a survey of ENGO's with the aim of finding out whether organizations have specifically aligned their objectives with the European Green Deal.

When started checking information in the websites of ENGOs, there were some problems faced, because some organizations haven't renewed their websites for a long time, have presented their activities fragmentary, lacking details. But most of the 62 ENGOs have updated and detailed websites, so results should be considered as sufficiently representative.

Results of comparison of operational objectives can be found in [Table 1](#) and [Picture 1](#).

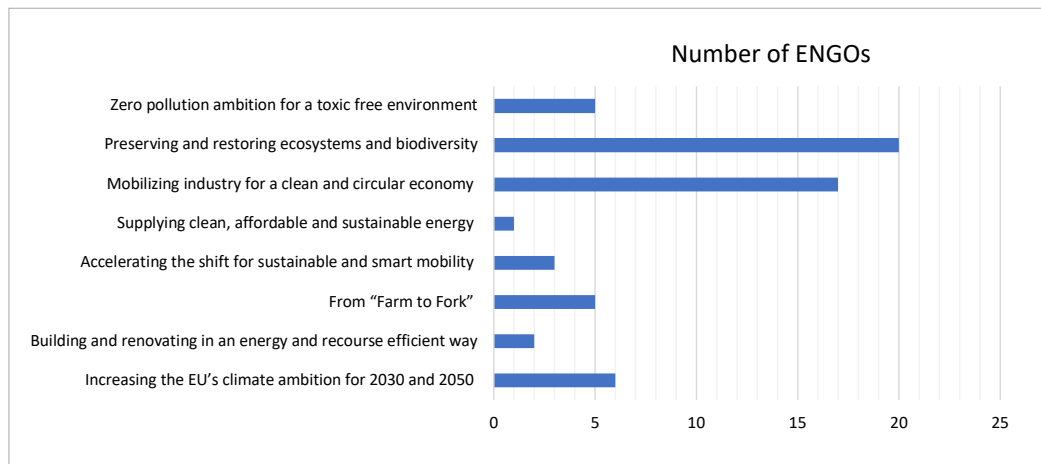
Policy areas of the EU Green Deal	Lithuanian ENGOs with the same initiatives
Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050	Environmental Information Center, Environmental Coalition, Fridays for Future Lietuva, Lithuanian Green Alliance, Organization "Žali.lt", Center for Environmental Management and Technology
Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way	"Live-Green" Association, Baltic Environmental Forum
From "Farm to Fork": a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system (<i>healthy and affordable food</i>)	Environmental Farms Association of Lithuania, Environmental Coalition, Baltic Environmental Forum, Organization "Žali.lt", Organization "Gyvi gali"
Accelerating the shift for sustainable and smart mobility (<i>more public, clean, accessible and affordable transport</i>)	Lithuanian Cyclist Association, Lithuanian Pedestrian Association, National Association of Public Transport Passengers
Supplying clean, affordable and sustainable energy	Lithuanian Green Alliance
Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy (<i>longer lasting products, recycling, re-using</i>)	Center for Environmental Policy, Institute for Environmental Management and Audit, Environmental Coalition, Klaipėda Initiative for Democracy and Ecology, Baltic Environmental Forum, Center for Physical Sciences and Technologies, Lithuanian Social Business Association, "Creative Angle 360", Sustain Academy, Initiative "CupCup", Sustainable Development Center, "Nature Future", Organization "We do", Initiative "Other Form", Social Innovations for Cleaner Environment, Organization "Circular Economy", Institute of Green Politics
Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity	Environmental Coalition, "Live-Green" Association, Baltic Environmental Forum, Nature Conservation Association Baltic Wolf, Animal Careers Association, Back to nature, Lithuanian Entomological Society, Lithuanian Ornithology Society, Organization "Žali.lt", Movement "For Lithuanian Forests", Club "Aukuras", Fund of Birute Galdikas, Public Interest Foundation, Public nature conservation association "Salmon Diary", Lithuanian Nature Fund, Social Movement "I'm against hunting", Initiative "Save Vilnius Trees", Animal Welfare Initiatives, Organization "Care", Organization "Empty Cages"
Zero pollution ambition for a toxic free environment	Environmental Coalition, Klaipėda Initiative for Democracy and Ecology, Baltic Environmental Forum, Center for Environmental Management and Technology, Organization "Save Yourself"

Table 1

Lithuanian ENGOs and their operational objectives compared with the European Green Deal policy areas. Source: made by author

Picture 1

Numerical distribution of Lithuanian ENGOs in different policy areas of the EGD. Source: made by author



As we can see from [Table 1](#), distribution of results by the EGD policy areas is not equivalent. [Picture 1](#) shows numbers, how many Lithuanian ENGOs declare their activity in every policy area of the EGD.

The number of ENGO's in [Table 1](#) and [Picture 1](#) is different, because some of NGO's declare their activities in more than one policy area.

From this comparative study, when empirical data was collected using the document review method, we can see, that most (20) of Lithuanian ENGOs declare their activity in preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. 17 ENGOs work on mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy. Considering why most of Lithuanian ENGOs work in these policy areas, it may be assumed, that it is easier to achieve specific goals, to get specific results and for these reasons, to attract new members.

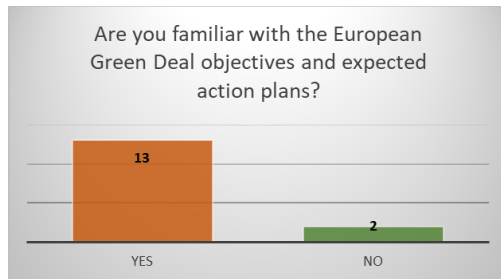
6 organizations hope to contribute increasing EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050. 5 ENGOs work on the purpose "Farm to fork" and zero pollution ambition for a toxic free environment. Only 2 ENGOs work in building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way, and 1 organization work in supplying clean, affordable and sustainable energy. We can presume, that these two fields of activity are not interesting for ENGOs or it is difficult to achieve specific results, because of lack of competencies or members with specific knowledge.

This comparative analysis allows us to understand which goals of ENGO's activities correspond to objectives of European Green Deal. It might be, that these operational objectives have been confirmed even before the European Green Deal has been developed and confirmed. So it was interesting to find out how the organizations themselves understand their performance objectives and do they know how much they meet the objectives of EGD. For this purpose a survey of four questions has been sent to 58 Lithuanian ENGOs (other 4 organizations didn't provide their emails). We have asked these questions:

- 1 Are you familiar with the European Green Deal objectives and expected action plans?
- 2 Are the goals of your organization aligned with the goals of European Green Deal?
- 3 Do you plan to align your objectives with the European Green Deal, if you haven't done that yet?
- 4 How would you name the main objective of your organization?

The survey has been answered by one fourth of ENGOs who have got invitations to answer it. As it was mentioned in R. Ziliukaite research, slightly less than half of all registered non-governmental organizations were active. This might be one of the reasons why other organizations hav-

en't filled the survey. The results of this part of research might be considered as not very accurate or as pilot, with the introduction to more detailed research other time. But from the answers we've got results, that 13 ENGOs are familiar with objectives of EGD, 2 others are not - [Picture 2](#).



Picture 2

How well Lithuanian ENGOs know objectives of EGD and have they aligned their objectives to it?

We see, that the majority of organizations who have answered are familiar with EGD objectives and action plans. 13 (87 %) organizations are familiar with objectives of EDG, but only 12 organizations have aligned their activity goals with EDG.

There was a possibility to add a comment to the questions No. 3. Some of organizations answered, that they have already done that. One comment was, that they don't want to participate in politics and would adapt their objectives only if EGD is strongly based on science. There also was an answer: "Our goals are in line with the EGD since the establishment of organization in 2018". That shows, that some organizations work on the same policy areas even without special coordination with the EGD, because the EGD was confirmed in 2019, while others don't see the reason why they should work on the EGD.



Picture 3

Plans of ENGOs to adapt their objectives to EGD

The fourth question was open and organizations could write their main activity. Most of organizations answered, that their main objective is sustainable development, climate change, circular economy, clean environment. It is worth to mention some of answers:

- » "We seek immediate change to ensure a stable climate, a healthy environment and harmony with nature. This requires an economic transformation. Lithuania must be ambitious in setting goals and implement them without a delay."
- » "The Lithuanian Cyclists' Association (belongs to the European Cyclists' Federation) is one of those organizations that encourages Europe to follow the green course."
- » "Our organization employs scientists who know green solutions. We do not align our activities with the EGD, our activities are focused on meeting the needs of our customers."
- » "Our goals are much more ambitious than the EGD, like most of NGOs!"

Answers confirm A. Petrucci statement, that NGOs usually try to push for higher standards, than it is realistically possible to achieve.

After analyzing ENGOs situation in Lithuania and comparing their objectives with the European Green Deal, these remarks can be made:

- 1 After Lithuania regained its independence, the number of NGO's has increased significantly. But, despite this, the majority of Lithuanians believe that no help is expected from them in the fight against climate change.

Concluding remarks

- 2 Most (20) of Lithuanian ENGOs declare their activity in preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, also 17 ENGOs work on mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy. Considering why most of Lithuanian ENGOs work in these policy areas, it may be assumed, that it is easier to achieve specific goals, to get specific results and for these reasons, to attract new members.
- 3 There's only one ENGO which act in clean, affordable and sustainable energy field and two ENGOs which act in building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way. We can presume, that these two fields of activity are not interesting for ENGOs or it is difficult to achieve specific results, because of lack of competencies or members with specific knowledge.
- 4 Most of Lithuanian ENGOs are familiar with objectives of the EGD.
- 5 When empirical data was collected using the document review method and summarizing results of a survey, has been clarified, that most of Lithuanian ENGOs have already adopted their objectives to the European Green Deal. Some of them has already done that without deliberately aligning its objectives with EGD. It may be assumed, that organizations who haven't aligned their goals with the EGD, don't see purpose or benefits in following the EGD.
- 6 The organizations who haven't aligned their objectives with the EGD have doubts or don't see benefits to work according to the EGD.
- 7 NGOs can and do have an impact on public policy-making and decision-making in the public sector, both by directly representing interests and by promoting democracy and enhancing social capital. So if Lithuanian ENGOs would align their objectives with the European Green Deal, they could influence government to take some decisions, necessary for achieving the European Green Deal goals or to do that faster, and Lithuania could be one of the countries which is shaping environmental policy in the right direction and at the right pace.

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