

THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A NORM SHAPER ON BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION¹

A UNIÃO EUROPEIA COMO NORM SHAPER NA PROTEÇÃO DA BIODIVERSIDADE

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Abstract

This research starts with the contributions of the European Union (EU) as a norm shaper in the context of the European Green Deal (EGD) and COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The rules issued by the EU that influence the decisions of Member States and foreign countries are analyzed in order to examine the role of the EU as a norm shaper in environmental matters. Soft initiatives concerning the influence of the EU on the preservation of biodiversity globally are explored. The methodology used is qualitative, deductive and descriptive.

Resumo

A pesquisa parte de quais foram as contribuições da União Europeia (UE) como norm shaper no contexto do Pacto Ecológico Europeu (PEE) e da COP-15 da Convenção da Diversidade Biológica (CDB). São analisadas as normas emanadas pela UE que influenciam as decisões dos Estados-membros e dos países estrangeiros, a fim de examinar o papel da UE como norm shaper em matéria ambiental. Exploram-se iniciativas soft referentes à influência da UE quanto à preservação da biodiversidade globalmente. A metodologia utilizada é qualitativa, dedutiva e descritiva. As conclusões foram de que a

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The conclusions were that the European Commission (EC) acted in monitoring the advances and setbacks of the EGD, filling a gap. A perceived fault was the lack of commitment by Member States to meeting the goals of the EGD. Russia's invasion in Ukraine is seen as a factor slowing down the Green Deal's plans for climate neutrality and the containment of biodiversity loss. The EU is pioneering in its Proposal for a Regulation on Nature Restoration (PRNR) and it was noticed that the ambitions for the COP-15 on biodiversity were ratified in the Conference. The EU sets international sustainability standards and is an environmental norm shaper.

Keywords: biodiversity; European Green Deal; European Union; norm shaper.

Comissão Europeia (CE) tem atuado no monitoramento dos avanços e retrocessos do PEE, preenchendo lacuna de outrora. Uma falha percebida foi a falta de compromisso dos Estados-membros no cumprimento das metas do Pacto. A invasão da Ucrânia pela Rússia é apontada como fator de desaceleração nos planos do Green Deal quanto à neutralidade climática e quanto à contenção da perda de biodiversidade. Há pioneirismo da UE em sua Proposta de Regulamento sobre Restauração da Natureza (PRRN), e percebeu-se que as ambições para a COP-15 da biodiversidade foram ratificadas no âmbito da Conferência. A UE estabelece padrões de sustentabilidade internacionais, sendo uma norm shaper quanto ao meio ambiente.

Palavras-chave: biodiversidade; norm shaper; Pacto Ecológico Europeu; União Europeia.

Introduction

Considering the current climate crisis and the myriad challenges stemming from the new Anthropocene Era, the European Union (EU) has emerged as a prominent global norm shaper, both within its member states and on the international stage. This phenomenon is recurrent across various domains, including international trade, but it holds particular significance in the environmental sphere due to its transboundary complexities.

Since 2019, following the launch of its European Green Deal (EGD), the EU, already a key player in environmental negotiations, has taken a proactive stance, positioning itself ahead of other nations with its ambitious sustainability goals outlined in the Pact.

With the world's gaze fixed on its forthcoming initiatives, the EU has become a vigilant regulator of environmental conflicts. It issues communications, regulations, and directives to reinforce its objectives, compelling other nations to follow suit through its proactivity. Alternatively, it demands that the countries adhere to certain sustainability standards, subtly nudging them toward behavioral changes.

The issue of biodiversity loss plays a pivotal role in this research, as it poses

a dire consequence of human actions in the Anthropocene. Climate change, a product of these anthropogenic factors, is a catalyst for mass extinctions. In the absence of life and the essential functions performed by each species within ecosystems, these ecosystems cannot endure. Without these, life ceases to exist. The individual influences the collective, and the collective influences the individual in a cyclical chain.

With this context in mind, this research seeks to explore the EU's contributions and potential influences on environmental conservation, particularly in the realm of biodiversity protection, within the framework of the EGD. Initially, we will delve into the initiatives stemming from the EGD, scrutinizing various programs, documents, and financing mechanisms designed to meet the Green Deal's objectives. Next, we shall assess the EU's likely impact on negotiations concerning the new global biodiversity agreement, developed in Montreal during the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The second part of this article will analyze the EU's influence as a norm shaper on international decision-making processes in biodiversity negotiations.

The methodology employed is qualitative, deductive, and descriptive, relying on bibliographic and documentary analysis as key research techniques.

1 The potential impact of the European Green Deal on global biodiversity sustainability

In recent years, the European Commission (EC), the executive body of the European Union (EU), has undergone a notable transformation, shifting from being primarily an administrative manager to assuming a more proactive political role. The EU's institutional architecture, established through intergovernmental negotiations during its formation, has granted it unprecedented political authority, surpassing that of individual Member States. This evolution underscores its influence as a norm shaper (ZÜRN, 2018). Reports indicate that the Commission has taken a role of policy shaping with vigilance, softly urging Member States to periodically develop regulations. EC's approach can be characterized as employing an element of a so-called harder soft governance (KNODT; RINGEL, 2018).

The EU's competitive prowess, innovation capacity, and the collective military strength of its Member States enable it to play a leading role in various domains, particularly in economic and environmental spheres, with a strong emphasis on regulatory frameworks. Through its regulatory directives, the EU establishes international reference standards that guide interactions between public and

private entities, both internally and externally. Consequently, the EC has actively taken on responsibilities that were traditionally within the purview of individual Member States. This extends to areas such as trade policy, fighting climate change, and environmental protection. Furthermore, the political weight of the Council and the European Parliament, as well as civil society, should be highlighted in decisions on matters that are common to all countries involved (VARGAS, 2019).

The United Nations (UN) regime has been crucial to the EU's prominence as a global norm shaper. The EU staunchly supports the UN system and, through initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrates its capacity to inspire new global behaviors, particularly in domains such as climate change and sustainable development (VARGAS, 2019).

Sustainability is where the EU has increasingly exerted its political influence on the international stage. With the introduction of its European Green Deal (EGD) (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2019) in 2019, a priority of the EC presidency, the EU has championed an ambitious environmental agenda aimed at effecting systemic change, encompassing a multitude of initiatives directed toward mitigating climate change and biodiversity loss through various bodies and institutions. Currently, policymakers are diligently working to implement the commitments outlined in the Green Deal. Several strategies and standards are currently in place, including the European Climate Law framework, the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020), the Think 2030 Program (IEEP, 2023), and the Fit for 55 package (EUROPEAN UNION, 2023). The latter consists of a set of policy proposals designed to align the EU's climate objectives with a target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Furthermore, the EC has developed measures to safeguard biodiversity and restore ecosystems, exemplified by the Proposal for a Regulation on Nature Restoration (PRNR) (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022b), a groundbreaking initiative of its scale (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSSEZ, 2022).

The past two decades have solidified the EU's position as the foremost leader in international environmental policy. While the USA held this role in the 1970s and 1980s, it transitioned to a more obstructionist stance in the 1990s. The emergence of European leadership was not solely due to the inaction of the USA or other nations. In the 2000s, the EU began to assert itself as the spearhead of the new global environmental agenda (KELEMEN, 2009).

This shift towards leadership was accompanied by a growing recognition of the intrinsic link between the EU's internal and external policies; with local politic actions naturally generating increased external influence (EUROPEAN

COMMISSION, 2006). This strategic approach is now firmly established within the EU's legal framework, notably in Part 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (EUROPEAN UNION, 2016). Drawing from the provisions and the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the EU has expanded its external competencies into areas previously considered internal (COSTA, 2020). This expansion is reflected in policies such as the European Green Deal (EGD).

The EU's endeavors to globalize environmental regulation are a result of a confluence of domestic politics and international regulatory competition. It was in the EU's strategic interest to support international agreements that pressured other jurisdictions to adopt comparable environmental regulations. By promoting treaties that disseminated the EU's environmental standards globally, the EU not only legitimized its rules but also shielded them from legal challenges on the global stage (KELEMEN, 2009).

The EGD represents a sustainable long-term growth strategy for the EU, encompassing a wide range of subjects and initiatives with global implications. Many of the standards outlined in the EGD have far-reaching impacts on the behavior of other nations. Within the confines of a scientific article, this analysis will focus on some of the most recent activities related to biodiversity protection in the context of the Green Deal.

In light of the EGD's objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050, the EU has enhanced its credibility by presenting a unified front on the international stage. This has allowed the EU to exercise climate leadership, positioning itself as a central figure in the Paris Agreement negotiations. The EU has solidified its role in environmental and climate diplomacy, employing a form of harder soft governance to advocate for ambitious internal and external protection standards, thereby influencing companies through its environmental policies. Given the transnational nature of environmental challenges, environmental objectives have been integrated into other EU external policies and cooperative frameworks. Over the past two decades, the EU has established "the most comprehensive regional environmental protection regime in the world" to address climate change challenges such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, ozone layer depletion, and rising sea levels (COSTA, 2020, p. 214-215; our translation). When negotiating agreements with third countries, the EU incorporates environmental clauses to encourage closer cooperation and alignment with EU environmental standards.

Regarding the scope of the EGD, the European Commission (EC) has recently initiated the monitoring of progress toward the 2030 objectives and the

environmental and climate goals for 2050, covering a set of 26 key indicators, including metrics on climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, and the circular economy. While the first report of this type should only be delivered in 2024, this monitoring structure fills the existing gap, forcing the EC to clarify progress regarding the objectives of the Green Pact (CASERT; BAS-DES-FOSSEZ, 2022). The EU's credibility hinges on effective control and oversight of EGD implementation. Failure to do so would undermine their proposals and their global governance reputation.

One exemplary initiative illustrating Europe's norm-shaping role is the Think 2030 Program, a multi-stakeholder platform launched in 2018 and associated with the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) to engage European policy experts from think tanks, civil society, private and public sectors to generate policy recommendations aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the consistent implementation of the EGD to answer the question of how to make Europe more sustainable. Every two years, the platform convenes for a high-level conference, usually hosted in the country holding the rotating EU Council presidency. It receives support from member Think Sustainable Europe organizations based in that country (IEEP, 2023). The fact of establishing political recommendations makes this program a typical example of how the EU has disseminated its ideas around the world, whether officially, through government representatives, or unofficially, through initiatives like this.

Recently, the program released the *European Green Deal Barometer* (CASERT; BAS-DES-FOSSEZ, 2022), which identifies barriers and opportunities for EGD implementation by analyzing ongoing legislative negotiations and considering external factors such as the war in Ukraine and rising energy prices, offering insights into the progress of the EGD. During the research, the wealth of details brought by the EGD Barometer became evident, which will be analyzed below.

1.1 The European Green Deal Barometer: has the EU held up to the pressures of its commitments?

The EGD Barometer is a collaborative effort involving over 300 sustainability experts who assess the progress, challenges, and opportunities in implementing the European Green Deal (EGD). This initiative is complemented by existing monitoring efforts across various domains. Through it, the European Commission (EC) tracks key indicators related to the EGD's environmental and climate objectives. These results inform the formulation of appropriate policies for more

effective actions, making the Barometer a foundational document for both internal public management and external policy decisions (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSEZ, 2022). Examining the contents of the Barometer is essential in understanding how the EGD contributes to the EU's role as a global norm shaper.

Disseminating knowledge about the EGD is crucial for engaging civil society in holding the countries accountable for the commitments made under the Pact. Building a robust network of stakeholders and championing the Green Deal agenda is pivotal for its successful implementation. In both editions of the Barometer, a consistent lack of commitment on the part of Member States has been identified as the most significant obstacle to EGD implementation. It is reported that, during research to prepare the Barometer, there was difficulty in accessing national experts, which, in itself, already demonstrates a certain lack of interest in collaboration regarding the Green Deal (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSEZ, 2022). This obstacle poses a challenge not only to EGD implementation but also to the EU's overarching strategy of sustainability leadership.

The Barometer reveals that sustainability experts are growing increasingly skeptical regarding the ability of EU institutions to achieve Green Deal objectives, including the reduction of GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030. The European Parliament and the EU Council are engaged in extensive negotiations to translate the Green Deal into concrete legislation, but there is a noticeable divergence between the proposed measures and the optimal points recommended by scientific research (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSEZ, 2022).

The EGD operates on the premise of suggesting policies related to sustainability, creating an expectation of action among states receiving these standards and documents, who are the norm takers. This dynamic establishes a cycle of influence in which the EU, as the issuer of regulations, maintains an advantageous position by establishing criteria, values, and principles for the others involved in this exchange process.

Additionally, the Barometer includes a dedicated section on the restoration of EU ecosystems through the Proposal for a Regulation on Nature Restoration (PRNR). Progress in this area has been limited, and it does not align with the goals and commitments of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (Ebio). It is expected that the provisions of the Proposal will be effectively applied, preventing the further degradation of ecosystems.

Effective application of the PRNR is essential to prevent further ecosystem degradation and to achieve various EU policy objectives. Member States must ensure the involvement of relevant stakeholders in national restoration plans, including

citizen participation. The new Nature Restoration Law should be drafted to enable the Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) to take legal action against Member States failing to fulfill their obligations. Therefore, the new Law must establish measurable goals, so that Member States can demonstrate compliance (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSEZ, 2022).

Moreover, Member States should collaborate with the EC to develop technical work, including common methods for assessing habitat conditions, particularly those not covered by the Habitats Directive (EUROPEAN UNION, 1992). This collaborative effort is crucial to achieving quantitative restoration targets by 2030 and the broader objective of restoring all EU ecosystems in need of repair by 2050 (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSEZ, 2022).

In summary, the EU consistently strives to assert civil and normative influence on the global stage, advocating for multilateral measures to uphold a wide range of standards, including environmental ones. Rather than allowing environmental policy to be driven by the pressures of the natural process of globalization, the EU strategically implemented criteria designed to propagate its sustainability standards into other jurisdictions. The EU's leadership in global environmental governance arises from a combination of legal and political reforms and a commitment to a common foreign economic policy, allowing for coherence in the environmental agenda, which inherently calls for the pursuit of multilateral solutions. The European prominence in this regard has been further facilitated by the unsustainable behavior of the USA (KELEMEN, 2009).

1.2 The delaying impact of the Ukraine invasion on European objectives

One significant factor that has significantly slowed down progress towards European objectives is the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Periods of war invariably bring political instability, leading to delays in decision-making processes. An event titled "*Russia's War in Ukraine: Why Doubling Down on the Green Deal is the Best Strategy*", held during EU Green Week, analyzed the repercussions of the Ukraine conflict on the European Green Deal (EGD). Considering the latest assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it becomes increasingly evident that global efforts to reduce GHG emissions are crucial to preventing a temperature increase exceeding 1.5 °C. The EU, facing the consequences of the Ukraine war, is expected to intensify its commitment to EGD objectives. Despite this unforeseen event, the EGD is viewed as the solution to the environmental crisis and the path the EU must pursue to expedite

a comprehensive green transition and limit global warming to 1.5 °C. However, governments must not resort to short-term solutions that hinder long-term transformative change. Additionally, monitoring foreign nations' compliance with environmental commitments made by the EU is crucial (IEEP, 2022).

Despite the challenges posed by the war in Ukraine, the European Commission has maintained a substantial number of proposals since the inception of the Green Deal. This resilience demonstrates their enduring commitment to the green agenda, which has weathered not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also the Ukraine conflict. The conflict calls for a reassessment of the strategies to be employed in specific areas of the Pact, as decision-makers must now consider new long-term responses to the evolving geopolitical situation. The arduous task of maintaining ambitious targets for 2030 and 2050 persists, even in the face of rising prices resulting from general inflation. With approximately two years remaining until the next mandates in the European Commission and Parliament, the responsibility mainly falls on the Parliament and the Council to uphold the Pact's high-level goals (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSSÉZ, 2022). It is clear that the entire theme involves politics and diplomacy, therefore, the caveat is that many points discussed can be relativized based on new political circumstances.

1.3 Europe's role as a norm shaper through financing

The success of environmental protection in Europe is not only contingent on political will but also heavily reliant on sound financial management and external financial support. Adequate and secure financing is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the upcoming regulation on nature restoration. Member States must make the most of all available opportunities to fund restoration efforts through EU funds, particularly within the financial programming period (CASERT; BAS-DESFOSSÉZ, 2022).

Furthermore, international conservation organizations, including the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Wildlife Conservation Society, Conservation International, Birdlife International, Wetlands International, and The Nature Conservancy, among others, have jointly appealed to the EU Executive Vice President, urging the EU to lead negotiations on a robust global financial target in support of biodiversity. These organizations express their support for the EU's approach in the past decades towards combating global environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. These international entities emphasize that the investments made under the EU's leadership have yielded significant benefits for

local communities, generating jobs and economic opportunities, especially for women and young people. This initiative highlights the influential role the EU has played under the umbrella of the Green Deal. Ebio, a pivotal aspect of the EGD, marked a significant turning point in addressing the biodiversity crisis. The strategy, however, still lacks specificity and clarity regarding the implementation of effective measures for species conservation. This is particularly concerning given the pressing nature of the crisis, especially in the Global South, where the economic and social well-being, as well as the resilience of communities, are intricately tied to ecosystem health. A holistic approach to addressing environmental issues is imperative to ensure the EU's efforts are not fruitless (IFAW, 2020).

The EU's role in biodiversity financing is particularly important at this time and recently gained momentum at the CBD COP-15, which placed global targets for biodiversity and dealt with related finances, in particular, on aligning financial flows with nature's demands, as well as promoting sustainable investments (UN, 2022a). Finance played a central role in the COP-15 deliberations, with a strong focus on the financial contributions that developed countries should make to assist developing nations in mitigating biodiversity loss. The Global Environment Facility was tasked with establishing a dedicated trust fund known as the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) to ensure a steady financial flow (UN, 2022b).

It is evident that the EU, as a norm-shaping entity, plays a crucial role in setting ambitious financial targets for global biodiversity support. A reasonable target for the EU could be allocating 10% of funds under the new Neighborhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to biodiversity. Such a percentage would align with the European Parliament's request that 15% of EU NDICI funds be allocated to environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and the fight against desertification (IFAW, 2020).

Even before COP-15, new initiatives were unveiled at the "Countdown to CBD COP15: Landmark Leaders Event for a Nature Positive World" event, organized by the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People (HAC N&P), which saw commitments including €0.87 billion in new funding from the German government, a 10-point plan for biodiversity financing initially endorsed by 16 countries, including the EU, and the next phase of the HAC N&P, which aims to protect at least 30% of land and ocean globally. The event also garnered support from the Leaders Pledge for Nature, reflecting an international commitment to curbing biodiversity loss by 2030 and addressing the global environmental crisis (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022c).

In addition to four comprehensive objectives, the GBF outlines 23 targets to be achieved by 2030, including financial goals such as gradually phasing out or reforming subsidies harmful to biodiversity by a minimum of \$500 billion annually. Simultaneously, it aims to increase positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, it seeks to mobilize at least \$200 billion annually from both public and private sources for biodiversity-related financing. It also intends to boost international financial flows from developed countries to developing ones to a minimum of \$30 billion per year. Additionally, it calls for transnational companies and financial institutions to transparently monitor, assess, and disclose the environmental risks and impacts of their operations, portfolios, supply chains, and value chains (UN, 2022b).

Financing stands out as a critical aspect of the new global biodiversity agreement, with proposals to increase financial support to developing countries—a point that was previously contentious in negotiations (UN, 2022b). Economic influence is a significant factor for European countries in shaping policies on biodiversity and related issues. As Europe provides funding to other nations, these countries often become political allies and remain within the sphere of European influence. Therefore, in addition to financing, it is essential to assess other areas where the EU leads in advancing biodiversity protection.

2 The possibilities for EU Influence in the negotiations on biodiversity at COP-15

The European Union (EU) has consistently prioritized maintaining multilateralism, shouldering the responsibility of creating a complex yet cooperative global governance system. This commitment to democratic, transparent, and inclusive decision-making is believed to pave the way for sustainable solutions. In light of this perspective, it is clear that fostering incentives within partnerships is crucial to achieving consensus, harmony, and stability in collective decision-making (COSTA, 2020). This European approach to international negotiations is exemplified in its stance on the CBD COP-15, the most significant biodiversity conference in a decade.

At the aforementioned event organized by HAC N&P, which took place before the world conference, the EU reinforced its intention to increase efforts to establish an ambitious global agreement at COP-15 on Biodiversity, to reverse the massive loss of species. In this context, presidents and prime ministers were in attendance, alongside leaders of Indigenous communities, NGOs, financial leaders,

and representatives of civil society, all working to exert pressure on the responsible authorities to adopt effective measures for species protection and the subsequent mitigation of climate change. Since the new global agreement on biodiversity entered the international discussion agenda, the necessity of embracing a robust global accord has become evident, as it would contribute significantly to ecosystem maintenance through measurable goals and objectives, a fair monitoring system, and substantial funding from diverse sources. On that occasion, EC President Ursula von der Leyen underscored Europe's readiness to lead the negotiations with ambition. However, it was emphasized that the actions resulting from this new pact must be a collective effort among countries, requiring immediate and urgent action. The European Commission, whether through its actions, initiatives, or declarations and commitments, serves as an example of its determination to reverse biodiversity loss, positioning itself as a genuine influencer of decisions and standards—a norm shaper (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022c).

In the context of the EGD, it was found that, as part of Ebio, the EC, the European Parliament, and the Member States are committed to establishing a high level of EU ambition and motivating global commitments towards sustainability. The EU appears to be a frontrunner within the framework of the new post-2020 global strategy and must also determine external actions to communicate and achieve its objectives. To ensure this European leadership in the global biodiversity scenario, the EC has devised several actions, including a proposal to further tighten ivory trade regulations in the EU, negotiations for an ambitious agreement on marine biological diversity beyond national jurisdiction, and three extensive Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean starting in 2020. The EU also intends to evaluate the impact of trade agreements on biodiversity, with monitoring as necessary, and implement measures to prevent or minimize the introduction of products linked to deforestation or forest degradation into the EU market. Furthermore, the EU plans to review the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, launch the NaturAfrica initiative aimed at protecting wildlife and critical ecosystems, and engage in robust and determined negotiations during the 15th COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Regarding this last program, it is evident that the EU indeed participated firmly and ambitiously in COP-15 (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2021).

Continuing with the objectives that the EU brought to the negotiating table at COP-15, it is well-known that what is at stake is the preservation of life on Earth as we understand it. The objective is to safeguard the systems that support life, recognizing that only with thriving biodiversity can we ensure human health,

food, and water security. Additionally, species play a vital role in combating climate change. The EC set an overarching EU objective at COP-15 for all parties to agree on an ambitious biodiversity framework to halt species loss. This includes the commitment to protect at least 30% of land and oceans by 2030, restore 3 billion hectares of land and oceans, address species extinctions driven by human activities, promote sustainable agriculture, forestry, and fishing, combat factors contributing to biodiversity loss such as pesticides, invasive exotic species, and plastics, and strengthen the connection between biodiversity and climate action through nature-based solutions. Achieving these goals requires continuous monitoring and review, as well as an expansion of financing from all sources—public and private, domestic, and otherwise (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022a).

It can be said that the EU was successful in achieving its objectives in the COP-15 negotiations, given that the new global agreement establishes four comprehensive global goals to protect nature, namely: stopping the extinction of species induced by human beings and reducing the extinction rate of all species tenfold by 2050; sustainable use and management of biodiversity to ensure that nature's contributions to people are valued, maintained, and enhanced; fair sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources and their digital sequence information; and that adequate means of implementing the GBF are accessible to all parties, particularly least developed countries and small island developing States (UN, 2022b). These objectives are in line with Europe's environmental conservation goals, particularly the EGD.

It is evident, consequently, that the EU has exerted a positive global impact through its demonstrative efforts to safeguard biodiversity. Within the framework of the Ebio, it is clear that the EU has set objectives following the newly established international agreement. For instance, these objectives include planting an additional 3 billion trees, decreasing pesticide usage by 50%, mobilizing at least €20 billion annually for biodiversity preservation, and transitioning 25% of EU farmland to organic agriculture. Furthermore, there is a commitment to protect 1,700 threatened animal and plant species; 200 types of habitats; 18% of EU land; 9% of EU seas, under Natura 2000; and 30% of all land and seas by 2030. Moreover, the European Union (EU) plans to increase its external funding for biodiversity twofold. Additionally, it is committed to aiding over 145 natural parks and protected areas across Africa while contributing to the construction of an 8,000 km-long Great Green Wall across the African continent to combat desertification and ecosystem degradation. These initiatives have received positive recognition from the international community and have gone on to inspire similar

efforts worldwide. As a result, Europe has risen to the status of a hub for setting environmental protection norms (European Commission, 2022a).

Conclusion

The European Union (EU) has been steadily gaining prominence as a global influencer in shaping norms related to biodiversity, thanks to numerous high-profile initiatives and actions, particularly within the framework of the EGD.

The norms set forth by the EU are often characterized as soft, yet there are discernible elements of a harder soft governance. These norms lack coercive power but possess a substantial degree of influence on governance structures. They establish a more rigorous and ambitious international standard for environmental protection.

The EGD has served as the strategic backdrop for the EU's global influence. Across a range of activities, the EU has effectively disseminated its ideas, customs, and aspirations throughout the global community.

They have consequently emerged as a leader in both global environmental governance and biodiversity governance. This achievement can be attributed, among other factors, to the EU's internal sustainability policies, which have found expression in its external policies. In this way, the globalization of environmental regulation by the EU has become a strategic approach to sharing its objectives worldwide.

Through the EGD and other initiatives, the EU has functioned as a form of harder soft governance, establishing high levels of environmental protection, albeit through non-coercive standards. In negotiations with other countries, the EU seeks to ensure the incorporation of its environmental standards as part of cooperative efforts.

Document analysis reveals that the European Commission (EC) has recently been monitoring progress toward the 2030 and 2050 objectives. While there have been delays, this monitoring is crucial for tracking the Pact's achievements and setbacks, thus addressing an existing gap. Supervision of actions is essential to maintain the EU's credibility before the international community.

One noteworthy initiative is the Think 2030 program by the IEEP, which disseminated the 2022 edition of the EGD Barometer. This Barometer assesses the progress made in each area of activity outlined in the Pact.

It plays a vital role in analyzing and monitoring various Green Deal indicators, offering valuable insights for formulating more effective policies and

strengthening the EU's position as an influencer in global regulations.

However, persistent challenges include the lack of commitment from Member States and difficulties in accessing national experts to verify information. Addressing these obstacles is essential for the European Commission (EC) to foster greater integration and stability within the Union, thereby enhancing its role as a norm shaper.

The EU's pioneering spirit with its PRNR was highlighted through its Ebio, justifying with these documents and many others why the EU can be considered a rulemaker that other countries must follow.

The EU has effectively disseminated its sustainable standards to other nations, solidifying its status as a leader and norm shaper in the realm of environmental conservation and biodiversity.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia is an event that undoubtedly has implications for the attainment of EGD goals and, certainly, the protection of biodiversity. In this aspect, the EU needs to remain firm in its purpose of climate neutrality and the international community needs to pay attention to the EU's compliance with the objectives established in the Pact.

Another sensitive point on the topic, which was highlighted in the COP-15 negotiations, is the issue of financing, which must be emphatically addressed by the PRNR. However, the EGD's Ebio document lacks clarity and precision on this point. This gap must be rectified in the upcoming Regulation set to take effect, as it has already been addressed in the new global agreement for biodiversity.

Numerous events were underway during the COP-15 negotiations, including the "Countdown to CBD COP15: Landmark Leaders Event for a Nature Positive World", which aimed to galvanize efforts to ensure the best possible outcome for the new agreement. On this occasion, the EU ratified its intention to negotiate ambitiously, with verifiable goals, emerging as an influencer in the protection of biodiversity on the world stage, including through documents already published, such as the EGD's Ebio, and through numerous actions released by the EC.

The European ambitions for COP-15 were aligned with the provisions of the new global agreement. At COP-15, a fair and comprehensive framework of goals was established, accompanied by the allocation of necessary resources for implementation. The Conference deemed these goals sufficiently clear to address issues related to the overexploitation of natural resources, pollution, and unsustainable agricultural practices. An important victory was the inclusion of a plan to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples and acknowledge their role as custodians of nature (UN, 2022a). COP-15 ended with a historic global agreement

on biodiversity, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which, in general, aims to reduce biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems, and protect Indigenous rights. Nevertheless, there is still room for consideration as to whether the agreement could have been more ambitious, sparking further research in this direction as a potential starting point for future endeavors related to this topic.

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