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**Sustainability and the welfare state in Green parties' manifestos:
a comparative analysis**

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Summary

Climate change and the environmental crisis required the international communities to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards a low-carbon society. Nonetheless, carbon mitigation policies have regressive effects, raising questions about fairness and distribution of burdens within and among countries.

Green parties are historically committed to ecological sustainability and social justice, making it interesting to explore how they would proceed to implement the transition to a sustainable society that respects planetary boundaries and protects the most vulnerable segments of the population. Using qualitative content analysis, I examine the Norwegian, Italian, German and French Green parties to explore what social policies are outlined in their party manifesto if they mirror the national welfare state in which they are embedded, and how they would implement the transition. Despite their commitment to ecological sustainability, they do not propose drastic measures but are aligned with other political actors, and ideological commonalities prevail over welfare state regimes theory.

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1 Introduction

Climate change and ecological decline have far-reaching effects on the environment and society. Indeed, extreme weather events in Europe, such as floods in Germany and Belgium or drought in Italy during the summer of 2022, caused visible damage, destroying houses and lands. At the same time, it impacted the agriculture sector, affecting food and water supply and, consequently, people's lives. To address climate change, various climate policies have been prioritised by governments, such as carbon pricing, which sets a price on carbon emissions, offering incentives for purchasing electric vehicles, and settling of energy efficiency standards for buildings. However, the design of these policies by national governments and supranational institutions, such as the European Union, raises concerns about social justice and the distribution of burdens. Indeed, the groups and populations likely to be most harmed by climate change are the least responsible for causing it and have the least resources to cope with the consequences. This problem is often called a "double injustice" (Gough, 2011, p. 1; Schoyen & Hvinden, 2017, p. 377). If these groups are also likely to suffer disproportionately from the negative consequences of climate mitigation policies, we might even talk about a "triple injustice" (Koch, 2018, p. 36; Schoyen & Hvinden, 2017, p. 377).

Climate change and the environmental crisis, where crisis means that human interactions with the natural world are in severe disequilibrium (Dryzek, 2022, p. 206), are nowadays on the political agenda at the international level. For instance, in 2019, the European Union announced the European Green Deal, a project to achieve a zero-carbon emission society by 2050 through a "fair and just transition" (European Commission, 2019).

On the academic level, scholars discuss which strategies are the most suitable for implementing the transition and which social policies would be needed to temper its social impact, thus, the consequences that regressive climate mitigation policies would have on the most vulnerable members of society. Vulnerable people can be individuals facing high exposure to adverse effects of mitigation policies, people suffering from health conditions related to climate physical events, or people with low incomes and socially excluded, in addition to people employed in carbon-intensive sectors.

Concerns about fairness and the environment are aligned with Green parties' principles of ecological sustainability, social justice, equality, and solidarity. Therefore, I believe it is worth exploring how Green parties would approach transitioning to a more sustainable future and which social policies they propose to protect the most vulnerable.

Green parties have been the object of many comparative studies focusing on their origins, history, evolution, ideology, and values (Bomberg, 1998; Burchell, 2002; Carter, 2013; Gahrton, 2015; Muller-Rommel, 1989; Van Haute, 2016, 2020), their participation in the national Parliaments (Müller-Rommel, 2002), their performance at European Parliament elections and their influence in the European arena (Bomberg, 1996, 1998; Brack & Kelbel, 2016; Carter, 2010; Pearson & Rüdiger, 2020; Rüdiger, 2015; Van Haute, 2016), and on environmental policies (Bomberg, 1998; Burchell, 2002; Carter, 2013). Nevertheless, little research has been done on Green parties' social policies. Two valuable contributions to research on Green parties's social policies come from Barry&Doherty (2001) and Röth&Schwander (2021). The first study explains how green movements, including Green parties, conceive social policies and how they approach the welfare state. The findings show that Green parties have a "holistic approach" to social policy, meaning that social policies are not separate areas but interrelated and mutually determining. They pursue an "environmentalism of the poor", meaning that they are genuinely concerned with poverty and inequalities (Barry & Doherty, 2001, pp. 594, 605). In addition, Green parties prefer a local welfare state over a centralised one. However, they recognise that the State's resources are essential to ensure that community-based welfare provisions are not undermined by the unregulated free market (Barry & Doherty, 2001, pp. 597-598).

The second study focuses on how influential Green parties are on redistributive policies when included in government coalitions. It shows that the Green parties' influence is relatively strong regarding social investment policies, such as education and childcare, but is weak regarding taxation measures.

To address the gap in the research on the Greens' social policies, I draw on four Green parties' manifestos: Les Écologistes, France, (Les Écologistes, 2022), Bündnis90/Die Grünen, Germany, (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021), Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, Italy, (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022), and Miljøpartiet de Grønne, Norway (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021), to identify what kind of social models or welfare systems Green parties in Europe advocate, and

how they conceptualise the links between welfare systems and their environmental goals. I rely on theoretical models developed in the traditional comparative welfare state, the more modern, and at early-stage research, eco-social welfare, which links environmental and social protection (Zimmermann & Graziano, 2020, p. 2), and theories approaching the sustainable welfare state and its implementation. My first expectation is that Green parties, because of their commitment to ecological sustainability, would implement drastic measures to implement the transition to a low-carbon society. My second expectation is to find considerable differences among Green parties' social policies, mirroring the welfare state regime in which they are embedded.

1.1 Research questions

Several academics (Bailey, 2015; Büchs, 2021b; Gough et al., 2008; Koch et al., 2016; Koch & Mont, 2016b; Schoyen et al., 2022, to cite only a few) sustain that the development of the welfare state in the Global North was possible because of the economic growth which gave the financial means to maintain its costs. If the international community is committed to cutting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to achieve climate goals, the economic model, lifestyle and society must find alternative paths. The dilemma is how to decouple the welfare state's reliance on economic growth (Büchs, 2021b), and thus develop a sustainable welfare state, defined as *“a welfare system that supports the satisfaction of human needs within planetary boundaries. Sustainable welfare systems provide a fair distribution of resources and opportunities, which are democratically governed”* (Büchs, 2021b, p. 1; Büchs & Koch, 2017). A welfare state should not be concerned with *“material satisfaction of the few living in Western countries but should grant basic needs satisfaction of all humans now and future generations”* (Koch & Mont, 2016a, p. 4). In addition, because of population ageing, fewer people will be employed, meaning that the increasing costs of pension schemes and health policies will weigh on a small portion of the population. This requires finding other financial sources than taxes on labour to finance the welfare state, for instance, by applying taxes on properties, inheritance, and large capitals (Büchs, 2021b).

Considering the Greens' value on ecological sustainability, which assumes that an ever-growing economy is impossible on a planet with finite resources, and solidarity with the

Global South, which demands a redistribution of resources between the wealthiest and poorest countries, my first research question is, “Which policies would Green parties adopt to implement the transition within planetary boundaries, ensuring, at the same time, that resources are fairly distributed between the Global North and South?”.

At the academic level, scholars are debating about the most appropriate policies and solutions to achieve a sustainable welfare state. Bridgen and Schoyen (2022) distinguish between three types of approaches: ecological modernisation, the Green New Deal (GND), and post-growth. Briefly explained ecological modernisation does not contest economic growth or capitalism, and it assumes that technological innovation and its diffusion are the means to achieve economic growth without harming the environment (Janicke, 2008). The GND sustains that capitalism should be reformed but not abandoned. It focuses on raising energy-efficiency standards and investing in renewable energy while creating “green jobs” (Pollin, 2019). Finally, the post-growth is sceptical about the possibility of decoupling growth from GHG emissions in the short term and is indifferent whether growth occurs or not. Its goal is to limit consumption within planetary boundaries by decreasing production and thus consumption, especially in the Global North (Koch, 2018).

Finally, considering the Green parties’ values regarding social justice, I compare the four Green parties’ social policies and tax reforms to address inequalities and protect the most exposed groups to climate mitigation policies, focusing on whether such policies follow ideological commonalities or tend to mirror the national welfare states. I attempt to answer the research questions: “How do Green parties leverage the welfare state to tackle inequalities and shield individuals from the repercussions of climate mitigation policies? And how would they redistribute resources through fiscal systems?”.

1.2 Master’s thesis structure

In the second chapter, I shall present a literature review of Green parties’ social policies to have an overview of existing research on their approach to social policies and the welfare state. Then, I briefly introduce how Green parties emerged, their values and how their values are embedded in contemporary party manifestos.

The third chapter is dedicated to the theoretical framework, which illustrates welfare state regime theories, eco-social welfare, sustainable welfare state, and theories about implementing it.

In the fourth chapter, I will present the research method and dataset and explain the geographical selection.

In the fifth chapter, I will present the results I have collected in analysing party manifestos, while the sixth chapter is dedicated to discussing the results.

In the conclusion, I will summarise the findings and present reflections about the weaknesses and strengths of this dissertation.

2 A brief overview of Green parties' origins and social policies

2.1 *"Environmentalism of the poor" and social investment policies*

Green parties' social policies have not been the object of much research. An interesting contribution comes from Barry and Doherty (2001), who examine how different types of green movements across Europe, for instance, local groups, direct action protestors, established environmental groups and Green parties, position themselves on social policy issues.

I have ignored the discussion on the broader green movement and focused only on Green parties. The authors sustain that, in general, Green parties adopt a holistic approach to social policy, meaning that social policies cannot be treated separately because policy sectors overlap (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 594). For instance, increasing the resources of the national health system (NHS) would only help to improve the service if the other determinants of health, such as food, transport, and housing, are addressed. Thus, implementing an extensive public transportation network would reduce the necessity to travel by personal car, reduce accidents, and improve air quality. At the same time, to minimise travelling, there is a need for better urban planning by building essential facilities, such as schools, places of work, shops and recreation centres, in each neighbourhood (Barry & Doherty, 2001, pp. 595-596).

Regarding the Greens' attitude towards the state's role in social policy, they believe that a centred bureaucratic welfare state is not the most appropriate solution. Still, instead, it should be flanked by community-based welfare states. Indeed, welfare services provided at the local level foster participation, allowing citizens to say how and when welfare services should be provided, "meeting local needs locally" (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 601). In this sense, citizens would have the opportunity to benefit from alternative safety nets based, for example, on the mutual exchange of services and informal, non-cash forms of socioeconomic activities, instead of relying on paid work or welfare benefits (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 600). Social policies such as those conceived would help increase local communities' cohesion and strengthen altruism. Nonetheless, the state and the market should continue to play a role, but the third sector should side with them. This social policy approach can be called the "partnership approach" (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 600).

In the Greens' view, economic growth increases inequalities in society. The welfare state in Western society aims to mitigate these two socioeconomic problems by redistributing the fruits of capitalism, contributing to deepening the social differences. Thus, social policies built on economic growth are inadequate for this purpose. Instead, inequalities and poverty should be handled from the roots by redistributing existing social wealth and shifting from a welfare focusing on money transfer to a welfare concentrate on well-being, quality of life and free time (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 601).

Overall, the distribution of wealth within society and not the absolute level of wealth is important in a democratic system. In a hypothetical low-growth society, resources would be scarce, and thus, to maximise the benefit for all individuals, the available wealth should be shared and used collectively (Barry & Doherty, 2001, pp. 602-604). What should be done is to shift from economic growth to sustainable development, although this is hard to implement at the practical level. First, overcoming economic growth and capitalism clash with labour and capital interests because a low-growth society implies a radical transformation of the industry and welfare that are, indeed, based on economic growth (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 603). Second, collective consumption models will inevitably be contested. A more balanced approach would be to improve technology and ecological efficiency, making individual consumption more sustainable (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 604).

In their conclusions, Barry and Doherty reject the general idea that green politics are “post-materialist” in the sense that they care only for the environment and animal protection while ignoring human welfare or needs-provision. On the opposite, the authors sustain that green politics can be described as the “environmentalism of the poor” (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 605; Guha, 1997) and are “materialist” because they are genuinely concerned with the real needs and concerns of the people, trying to tackle the socioeconomic problems at the roots (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 605).

Another contribution comes from Röth and Schwander (2021), who analysed the impact of Green parties in government on distributive policies in 34 countries from 1970 to 2015 using a quantitative method. They considered three aspects of distributive policymaking: social protection policies, social investment policies and taxation. They argue that Green parties are not single-issue parties and are part of “New Left” parties because values such as social justice, equality and solidarity are at the base of their ideology (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 663). In addition, Röth and Schwander sustain that Green parties’ distributive policies mirror voters’ preferences, which are driven by self-interest and political ideology (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 662). Self-interest is based on rational choice logic; it is linked to income level and risk exposure, with lower-income and more risk-exposed groups tending to demand more generous distributive policies. Political ideology is linked to ideological predispositions to values such as fairness, altruism and egalitarianism, which also require generous redistributive policies, even though this may come at a personal cost (Röth & Schwander, 2021, pp. 663,665).

Green voters are, in general, young, educated, professional, and urban (Pogunkte, 1989, p. 187; Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 166; Van Haute, 2020, p. 172). They are often employed in public services dealing with human individuality and diversity or in welfare state sectors such as education, health, and social services. For these reasons, they prefer social reciprocity and creativeness over monetary earnings and show solidarity with the most vulnerable. Therefore, green voters endorse redistributive policies and a generous welfare state (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 666).

The authors split distributive policies into two categories: social protection policies, including unemployment, old age, and housing, and social investment policies, including families, childcare, and education. The study shows that green voters are more supportive

towards the second category. Both self-interest and ideological reasons can explain this (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 667).

Regarding voters' fiscal preferences in general, they are driven by (i) material self-interest, with people supporting high taxes as long as they benefit from high taxes and taxes financing social spending if they benefit from welfare state provisions; (ii) fairness and trust, where the perception of a fair distribution of taxes is essential for fiscal preferences, while social and political trust help to explain the variation of fiscal preferences among people and over time; (iii) political ideology, where left-wing voters support progressive taxation, while right-wing voters are against high taxes in general. Concerning Green voters, their socio-demographic background should make them prefer low taxes or less progressive taxation. Thus, material self-interest should make them vote against progressive taxation. However, their political ideology pulls them in the opposite direction, making them support redistributive policies, even though, in general, they belong to the better-off segment of society (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 668).

In conclusion, Röth and Schwander show that government coalitions with Green parties tend to spend more on social investment policies, especially education. In contrast, the spending for social protection policies stays the same, except for housing, which the urban characteristic of green voters can explain. Although Green parties express their willingness to implement a progressive tax system, they are not successful in raising income and corporate taxes. The study shows that the effect of the Greens towards taxation is not robust, which means that Green parties in governments probably have different approaches toward tax policies (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 678). They only contribute to preventing market-liberal governments from cutting taxes on high-income and corporate taxes (Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 679).

2.2 "New politics" values and the emergence of Green parties

In the 1960s and 1970s, new social movements emerged in Western nations as a form of protest against the predominant model of industrial society based on class conflict and material wealth. They contested "old politics" values centred on growth, national security, public order, and traditional lifestyle (Burchell, 2002, p. 11; Muller-Rommel, 1989, p. 5).

Instead, they announced that “something else is possible” (Burchell, 2002, p. 11; Melucci, 1985, p. 812), focusing on the quality of life and embracing “new politics” values such as environmental quality, social equality, alternative lifestyles, women and minority rights, participation, disarmament and peace (Muller-Rommel, 1989, p. 5). New social movements are linked to the emergence of post-materialist values such as belonging, esteem and the realisation of one’s intellectual and aesthetic potential (Burchell, 2002, p. 10).

Although activism around feminism, peace, and ecological movements existed before the 1960s, what changed during this period was the value society attached to these themes and how new social movements mediate this new consciousness. Green parties have their roots in new social movements and bring environmental and ecological concerns to the political arena (Burchell, 2002, p. 11).

Different theories explain their emergence in Western democracies. Müller-Rommel sustains that “new politics” parties emerged because of the incompatibility between the new social movements and the traditional political class and the latter's inability to capture and include the new social movements’ concerns in their political programs (Burchell, 2002, p. 16; Müller-Rommel, 1990).

Kitschelt explains the emergence of “Left-Libertarian” parties, which include the Greens, using structural change theory, that is, continuous transformation in societies generates new preferences which cannot be satisfied by the established institutions causing collective mobilisation around contemporary issues and conflict (Kitschelt, 1988, p. 196), and the presence of “favourable political opportunities” such as solid welfare state, labour corporatism and regular participation of left parties in government (Burchell, 2002, p. 17; Kitschelt, 1988, p. 209). Finally, Rüdiger agrees that values change and social context helps to explain the emergence of Green parties, but he adds the environmental factor, sustaining that the emergence and the politicisation of environmental issues is an essential condition (Burchell, 2002, p. 17; Rüdiger, 1990, p. 31).

The Green parties analysed in this paper were established throughout the ‘80s: in Germany, *Die Grünen* was founded in 1980, and in 1993, the group allied with Alliance 90 formed in East Germany, becoming Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, NA). The party received 14.8% of votes in the 2021 national elections (Nordsieck, 2023).

In France, *Les Vertes* was formed in 1984 from the union between *Confédération Ecologiste* and *Verts-Parti Ecologiste* (Prendiville, 1989). They changed their name to Europe Ecologie-Les Vertes (EELV) in 2010 and then to Les Écologistes in 2023 (Les Écologistes, NA). In the 2017 legislative elections, which are organised to elect the members of the Parliament, the French Green received 4.3%, while in 2022, they participated as part of a coalition with other left-wing parties (Nordsieck, 2023). In the 2022 presidential elections, which are organised to elect the president of the republic, Yannick Jadot, representing Les Écologistes, received 4.6% of the votes (Ministère de l'Intérieure et des Outre-Mer, 2022).

In Italy, *Liste Verdi* was founded in 1985. They changed their name to *Federazione dei Verdi* in 1990 and *Europa Verde* in 2021. In the 2022 elections, they allied with *Sinistra Italiana*, funding a joint party, *Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra (AVS)*, presenting a shared electoral list and party manifesto. The party received 3.6% of votes in the 2022 national elections (Nordsieck, 2023).

In Norway, *De Grønne* was founded in 1988 and later changed its name to *Miljøpartiet de Grønne (MDG)*. They obtained 3.8% of the votes in the 2021 national elections.

2.3 *Political participation dilemma and divisions between Green parties*

In the beginning, the participation of Green parties in politics was a dilemma. On the one hand, Green parties aimed to bring new social movements' messages to the political arena to ensure that environmental concerns are considered. On the other hand, political participation required one to take a position on the right-left spectrum and become part of the established political system, which was against new social movements' principles (Burchell, 2002; Muller-Rommel, 1989).

The participation in the European arena posed a second dilemma because the Greens consider the EU too centralised and incompatible with their democratic participation and emphasis on individualism. At the same time, they sustain that environmental issues need a transnational decision-making system and cannot be solved at the national level, which is coherent with the local-global nexus defended by Green parties (Bomberg, 1998).

Although Green parties are grassroots movements formed outside the institutionalised party system and political arena, they must find a way to translate their ideology and

aspirations into ideas that can make them win votes and thus influence the policy-making process. This process has divided Green parties into two main streams: the ideologue, which is anchored and committed to the roots of the movement, and the pragmatic, which is willing to find compromises to gain support and survive within the party system. These differences shape the division between *fundis* Green, which adopts the ideologue approach and *realos*, which, by contrast, embraces the pragmatic one (Burchell, 2002; Pogunkte, 1989).

Another way to categorise Green parties is the divide between “true” and “deep” Green and a “shallow” or “light” Green approach to environmental issues. The “deep” Green embraces an “ecocentric” and “ecologist” approach to nature, seeking to radically modify the relationship between humans and nature (Burchell, 2002, p. 12). The “light” Green is based on an environmentalist and anthropocentric attitude to nature, which tries to dominate nature by using technology (Burchell, 2002, p. 13).

A criticism that has emerged is that the theoretical and binary classification of Green parties between “realos” and “fundis” or “deep” and “light” Green does not take into consideration the empirical experiences and the societal reality in which Green parties are immersed. A research question that should be added to the research about what it means to be Green is what it means to be a small, new political party struggling for recognition and trying to implement an encompassing Green ideology within a well-established political system (Burchell, 2002, p. 29).

2.4 Greens’ values in contemporary parties’ manifestos

The environment is the backbone of Green parties’ political programs, but they are not “single-issue parties” (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 605; Röth & Schwander, 2021, p. 663). Indeed, they underpin values such as social justice, liberty, self-determination, gender equality, participatory democracy and decentralisation, solidarity, pacifism, and multiculturalism (Gahrton, 2015; Muller-Rommel, 1989; Pogunkte, 1989; Price-Thomas, 2016; Röth & Schwander, 2021). Besides, they are not the only political actors addressing environmental issues, as this theme has been taken up by other political forces (Price-Thomas, 2016, p. 284; Van Haute, 2020).

The Greens believed peaceful coexistence could be achieved only by mutually respecting and tolerating ethnic, social, political and sexual minorities (Bomberg, 1998, p. 65). This core belief still stands today and emerges in contemporary party manifestos, where equality and multiculturalism are extensively addressed by policies addressing discrimination based on gender, race, social background, or disability. For instance, Die Grünen would enshrine the statement “Unity in Diversity” in German laws to create an antiracist and equitable immigration society (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 162), and are primarily concerned with protecting Jewish, Muslim and Roma people. Les Écologistes also emphasise anti-discrimination measures by proposing to establish a High Council for Combating Discrimination composed of different national entities engaged against racism and gender discrimination (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 85). AVS is in favour of adopting a law against violence towards LGBTIQ+, which in Italy is still controversial and an issue of debate, and introducing education programs addressing diversity in all Italian schools (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 18). MDG would enforce measures to strengthen Sami’s¹ culture and rights by reinforcing the Sametinget, which is the Parliament dealing with all matters concerning Sami people, protecting grazing areas, and increasing funds for research programs about minorities, including Roma people (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 123-124). Regarding people with disability, in general the four parties favour the implementation of measures to include them more in the labour market, increase their representativity in national institutions and grant their autonomy (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 63-64; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 155; Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 97-99; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 122-123).

Gender equality is another essential theme for Green parties, especially in granting equal opportunities and salary. For instance, AVS engage to include more women in the labour market and recognise caregiver retribution for women taking care of small children or elderly people in the family, in addition to investing in early childhood education services (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 21). Similarly to AVS, Die Grünen propose to pay a wage to household-related services and remove the obstacles that hinder women’s career advancement through an equal repartition of caring responsibilities in the family (Bündnis

¹ Sami are an indigenous population in Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland. In all countries, they have been objects of discrimination.

90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 106). Les Écologistes would take measures to grant equal wages between men and women, and equal parental leave for the two parents. In addition, they would establish a Ministry dedicated to defending women's rights (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 89-90). In Norway most of women are active in the labour market, although women are more represented than men in some sectors such as care and early childhood education; in addition, there are still issues with wage disparities between men and women in the same occupation. MDG is committed to implementing measures that promote gender balance by encouraging more men to work in traditionally female-dominated sectors, and ensuring that both genders receive equal pay (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 114).

Another principle is participatory democracy which is fundamental to implementing the transition. For instance, the four parties sustain that the transition is only possible if citizens are involved, and the natural surroundings are respected. For this purpose, they sustain citizens' local projects to produce renewable energy and ensure that the rural populations would benefit from it (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 1; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 23-24; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 11; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 21). This aspect reflects the Greens' interest in promoting local autonomy and foster democratic participation.

The respect for diversity and local communities, and the fear that Europe would become a military and economic superpower, were at the base of the Greens' Euroscepticism. These concerns went hand-in-hand with their requests for disarmament, a halt to infinite growth and warning against exploitation of the Global South (Grimaldi, 2020). At the same time, they emphasise the global-local nexus which underpins the interconnection between local and international events. In their view, the nation-state is too obsolete and unable to deal with peace, social welfare, and environmental concerns, which instead must be addressed with everyone's contribution, starting from the local and the regional level, following their original slogan "think globally, act locally" (Bomberg, 1998, p. 63; Gahrton, 2015, p. 14).

International cooperation, and especially with the European Union, is still fundamental and broadly reported in recent Green parties' manifestos (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021; Les Écologistes, 2022; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021). Furthermore, the European Union itself has changed through the years, and nowadays, ecological-related issues are at the top of the political agenda. In December 2019, the Commission led by Ursula van der Leyen announced the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019), which

pursues the aim of a just and fair transition towards a zero-emission society by 2050. The Greens support this European strategy, although they believe it should be even more ambitious (some examples are reported in Chapter 5). In addition, Green parties propose that the European Parliament change its voting system, passing from the unanimity principle to the qualified majority, especially in areas such as foreign and security policies, taxation, social rights, and energy (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 44; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 203-204; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 106).

As outlined in their manifestos, Green parties prioritise ecology as their primary concern. Nonetheless, they emphasise that the urgent issue of the climate crisis should be addressed through social participation, ensuring social justice, and reducing inequalities.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 *The development of social policy and the welfare state*

Social policy can be defined as “*the public management of social risks*” (Gough et al., 2008, p. 326), which task is attributed to the welfare state, that is “*the state commitment to providing basic economic security for its citizens by protecting them from market risks*” (Weir, 2001).

Social policies emerged in the twentieth century as a means to assess increasing social inequalities caused by capitalism (Hill & Irving, 2020, p. 19). Industrialisation and urbanisation processes exacerbated social tensions; workers acquired class awareness, asking for more rights while the influence of the French and the American revolutions enhancing the rights of the individual began to take hold in European countries. Hence, the working social class threatened political power and economic development, obliging the state to reconsider its role and take action to protect its citizens and preserve itself (Kuhnle & Sander, 2021).

In the early stages of the welfare state, the social risks addressed were old age, accidents, sickness, unemployment, public sanitation, and compulsory education. The state had much to gain in investing in health and education because they are essential tools for humans to flourish, participate in society, contribute to economic growth, and foster social progress.

Especially in the post-war period, considered the beginning of the welfare states' golden Age, social policies started to develop around the "five giants" identified by Lord Beveridge in 1942 in the Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services, which hindered people from improving their life quality: want, caused by poverty, squalor, caused by poor housing conditions, ignorance, caused by lack of education, idleness caused by lack of employment, and disease caused by poor health conditions.

3.2 Welfare state retrenchment and the emergence of new social risks

Starting in the 1970s, welfare states encountered a period of retrenchment which, according to Huber and Stephens (2001), can be divided into three phases. The first one occurred between 1973-1979, coinciding with the oil crisis and the dismissal of the Bretton Woods system, which restricted the opportunities for social policy-making at the national level and increased the pressure on the welfare state; the second is situated between 1980-1990 in the year of globalisation, which allowed corporations to invest labour and capital where it was more convenient, hindering social policy expansion; the third phase corresponds to the 1990-2000, the post-industrialism era. This phase involves the transition from industrialisation to the service economy, which entails shrinking the industrial working class, lower economic growth, less job security, more significant qualification requirements, and increased female participation in the labour market (Nullmeier & Kaufmann, 2010).

The economic model prioritising profit created new social risks (Bonoli, 2007; Nullmeier & Kaufmann, 2010; Taylor-Gooby, 2004) such as massive unemployment of low-skilled workers, in-work poverty for workers on low wages, lone-parenthood caused by higher divorce rates, and disruption in child and elderly care due to increased female participation in the labour market (Bonoli, 2007). New social risks, in addition to longevity, increased level of inequalities and poverty in OECD countries, required a reconfiguration of the welfare state, and at the same time, increased the demand for welfare provisions and consequently its maintenance costs (Büchs, 2021b; Hemerijck & Ronchi, 2021; Hill & Irving, 2020). Indeed, improved life expectancy challenges the financial sustainability of the welfare state as living longer affects pension schemes, health care provision and social participation (Hill & Irving, 2020).

3.3 *Welfare state regimes*

The development of the welfare state was uneven, and its characteristics were different across countries. A first attempt to explain these differences is Titmuss' study (1974), in which he identifies three welfare state models based on redistribution: one is the residual welfare state, which assumes that the family is the leading actor in providing social security while the state intervenes only when family capacity is exhausted; another is the industrial achievement model in which social benefits are based on productivity and finally, the institutional redistributive model which offers social insurance regardless participation in the labour market (Hill & Irving, 2020). After him, Esping-Andersen (1990) classifies welfare states into "*regimes-types*" (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 26), considering institutional structural factors and social variables instead of monetary variables such as social spending as a percentage of the gross domestic production (GDP) (Manow, 2021, p. 789).

Esping-Andersen sustains that the level of organisation of the working class, class-political coalition structure, for instance, the alliance between working-class and farmers, and the consolidation of the political systems and state institutions helps explain the differences among welfare states. Three "*regime clusters*" are identified, even though none of these regimes is entirely pure, as one cluster's elements can also be found in the others (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 29). One regime is the liberal. Within this cluster, social insurance tends to be more limited in scope, and assistance is typically means-tested. This means that the eligibility criteria for accessing welfare state provisions are strict, and in general, only those in dire need take up supportive measures. This approach often creates a stigma and discourages individuals from applying for assistance. The level of de-commodification from labour is shallow because people rely heavily on employment and wages since the welfare state does not serve as a robust safety net. The state is more inclined to support the market by subsidising private forms of welfare or maintaining minimalistic social insurance schemes. The countries belonging to this cluster are the US, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia.

The corporatist regime comprises countries such as Germany, France, Italy, and Austria. Within this regime, the welfare state is financed by social insurance contributions rather than taxes (Manow, 2021), which means that social insurance schemes are based on class and status, leading to differential benefits where "white collar" workers tend to receive more

generous benefits compared to "blue collar" workers. There is a significant reliance on families for childcare and elderly care, as the state's intervention is limited to situations where the family's ability to provide care is depleted. Furthermore, it's worth noting that housewives are typically excluded from social insurance schemes within these countries.

The social democratic regime includes the Nordic countries, characterised by a universal social security system that extends to individuals regardless of class or status. Taxes finance the welfare state and are highly redistributive (Manow, 2021, p. 790). The level of de-commodification from work and family is high as the state assumes responsibility for childcare and eldercare, while income protection is guaranteed, reducing dependence on employment. However, it is important to note that sustaining a comprehensive and universally accessible welfare system demands substantial resources and can only be effectively implemented when most individuals are actively engaged in the workforce, thereby minimising the number of people reliant on social transfers.

Although Esping-Andersen includes Italy in the corporatist model, other academics believe that Southern European countries, thus Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, belong to another regime (Manow, 2021, p. 791), characterised by the "*Southern European welfare state syndrome*" (Saraceno, 2017, p. 219). In this regime, the welfare state protects core workers and privileged groups, such as "white-collars", core "blue-collars", employed in medium-sized enterprises with permanent contracts, and public employees (Saraceno, 2017, p. 221). Other features are extensive clientelism, generous spending for pension schemes, and a preference for cash transfers over services, although income support for the poor or families is minimal, means-tested or absent. The labour market is inflexible, resulting in high youth unemployment and low levels of female employment whose role is mainly to provide for care needs in the family. Finally, the informal economy is widely diffuse, weakening the legitimisation of anti-poverty measures and reducing tax income that could be used to finance the welfare state (Manow, 2021; Saraceno, 2017, pp. 219-220). Nonetheless, compared to continental countries, the Mediterranean ones adopted a national health care system like the Scandinavian model.

3.4 *The environmental dimension in social policies*

The environment is fundamental for humans' livelihood, yet this dimension was neglected for years in the social policy domain. Social policy is not a static concept Campo (West Pedersen, 2021), and nowadays, climate change's impact on society can no longer be ignored.

The increased GHG emissions, mainly due to fossil fuels, unsustainable lifestyle and consumption, and land use such as deforestation, are causing irreversible damage to our planet (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2023). Extreme weather exposes the most vulnerable to food and water insecurity, especially in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2023, p. 5). Nonetheless, climate change effects are also tangible in Europe. For instance, extreme heat and wildfires hit the South of Italy in 2023, and Germany and Belgium experienced severe floods in the summer of 2021. In addition, environmental degradation causes epidemics and massive migration from the Global South.

Climate change is a "*new-all-encompassing social risk*" (Gough, 2013b, p. 185; Hirvilammi et al., 2023, p. 4); it is less straightforward than classic social risks because it is not linked to work or families structures, nor affect specific segments of the population. Social risks related to climate change are complex, less observable, and have ambiguous effects on populations (Hirvilammi et al., 2023, p. 4).

In an attempt to address the consequences of climate change, global leaders signed the Paris Agreement in 2015. In addition to making efforts to limit global warming from exceeding 2°C, they established a "*common but differentiated responsibility*" (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2021), which requires high-income countries to bear the majority of the costs of the transition to a low-carbon society. This would contribute to avoiding a "double injustice" (Gough, 2011, p. 1), where the poorest countries, which are generally less responsible for climate change, will not have to bear its costs.

Policymakers have been implementing carbon mitigation policies to reduce GHG emissions, the first factor causing climate change. Such policies have a broad range, including the development of renewable energy, the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, the insulation of buildings, household appliance labels, and others. Carbon mitigation policies have three main goals: explicit emissions pricing, promoting clean energy, and improving

energy efficiency (Gough, 2013a, p. 195). The downside of these policies is that they tend to have regressive effects, and they risk being socially unjust, leading to a “double injustice” even within countries in the Global North. For example, carbon pricing, that is, establishing a price on GHG emissions, would increase energy costs, hitting harder low-income households, who would spend a more significant proportion of their incomes on energy bills, exposing them to the risk of energy poverty, even though they have a lower carbon footprint than the better-off.

As environmental policies have consequences on people, the ecological dimension should be embedded in the welfare state, implementing “new pro-active, investment focussed eco-social policies” reconciling environmental goals and social justice (Gough, 2013a, p. 192). For instance, Gough (2013a, p. 197) refers to “three policy archetypes” to tackle energy poverty, consisting of better energy compensation, reduced energy bills, and energy efficiency. Thus, the provision of income allowances should be flanked by national programs addressed to improving buildings’ energy efficiency and the provision of incentives to take up renovating measures and require energy suppliers to adopt a “rising block tariff” which keeps low the cost of initial units of electricity and gas consumption and raise it progressively with consumption (Gough, 2013a, pp. 197-199).

Ambitious climate policies require financial resources, demanding a recalibration of public investments from traditional social policies to environmental policies and causing distributional repercussions, which risk making them unpopular among voters (Koch, 2018). In addition, antipollution policies adopted by governments can persuade investors to disinvest in a determined country, thus leading to recession, causing a fall in revenues and unpopularity among voters (Dryzek, 2022, p. 10).

Failure to secure contributions from the more affluent segments of society in shouldering economic responsibilities, often due to the exploitation of fiscal loopholes, places an unjust burden on the poor, resulting in what can be termed a “triple injustice”, as mentioned by Koch (2018, p. 36). This injustice emerges as the most disadvantaged individuals struggle to cover the costs associated with environmental policies. Consequently, income redistribution through equitable taxation and an equitable distribution of resources, including work and wealth, is just as crucial as implementing climate mitigation measures. This ensures a more equitable allocation of resources across the entire population.

3.5 *Environmental states and eco-social welfare states*

Nation states have been classified and grouped not only considering their welfare type but also considering how they approach environmental-related issues.

Duit (2016) sustains that although the environmental crisis is mainly approached at the global level, the state remains the principal actor when implementing climate policies and decides whether to cooperate at the international level. His work defines the “environmental state” as a state whose core responsibility is providing the environmental collective goods (Duit, 2016, p. 70). As the welfare state was conceived to correct the economy’s effect on society, the environmental state mitigates the economy’s effect on the environment by preventing the overexploitation of natural resources through environmental regulation, policies, and taxation. It mitigates environmental impacts through investments in public goods such public transportation, renewable energy, recycling system and energy efficiency plans (Duit, 2016, p. 71).

Environmental states in OECD countries, similarly to welfare states, have been grouped into four different types, established, emerging, partial, and weak, using the environmental governance regimes (EGRs) approach that considers the four faces of the environmental state: regulation, redistribution, administration, and knowledge production. The first one refers to the state's regulation power and, thus, its capacity to adopt environmental regulation, policies, and institutions. The second aspect refers to the state's ability to recalibrate public spending in favour of environmentally friendly technology, research, and conservation of natural resources. The third aspect refers to the state’s administrative capacity to implement green policies at the national and international levels, while the last aspect refers to the state’s involvement in the production and dissemination of knowledge and norms about the environmental crisis (Duit, 2016, pp. 73-75).

Established environmental states (Austria, UK, Sweden, France, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands, and Denmark) are characterised by a solid administration, functional taxation, high research spending and implementation policies to regulate both direct pollutions coming from industrial processes, and its secondary effects such as waste. The emerging environmental states (Italy, Belgium, Norway, Ireland, Portugal, and Hungary) present a weak administration but strong regulation, redistribution, and knowledge production. Partial

environmental states (Canada, Australia, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and Mexico) have low administrative capacity and below-average levels of knowledge production, regulation and redistribution, while weak environmental states (Argentina, USA, Israel, New Zealand) score low in all four aspects (Duit, 2016, pp. 83-86).

In another study, Zimmermann and Graziano (2020) use cluster analysis to group European countries according to their performance in eco-social welfare, or green welfare, which address simultaneously social and environmental protection. The environmental outcomes are measured using indicators such as ecosystem vitality, environmental health, and the use of raw materials, while the social ones are measured by inequality, unemployment rate and long-term unemployment rate (Zimmermann & Graziano, 2020, pp. 6-7). Eco-social performances are then linked to economic, political, and policy-related aspects in both the environmental and social spheres to verify whether the outcomes differ in these three areas. Structural indicators are considered for each area, for instance, the GDP, the ratio of fossil to renewable energy, the ratio of industry to service economy for the economic aspects; the level of workers' protection against individual and collective dismissal, and the stringency of environmental policies for policies aspects; the union density, and the share of green parties in national parliament for the political aspects (Zimmermann & Graziano, 2020, p. 9).

The results identify six clusters. The first cluster regroups Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Slovenia; the second cluster regroups Romania, Italy, and Bulgaria; the third cluster regroups Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland; the fourth cluster regroups Luxembourg, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, and Ireland; the fifth cluster regroups UK, Poland, Germany, and France; the sixth cluster regroups Greece and Spain. The first and the third clusters have good eco-social performance due to a healthy environment, low long-term unemployment rate and low inequalities. Nonetheless, they differ because the third cluster shows a high level of union density and strict environmental regulation, which is not the case for the first cluster. The second cluster presents a poor performance in both dimensions, which is explained by a weak environment and high inequalities; the fifth cluster performs well in the social one due to low unemployment, but it presents a problematic eco performance, which is explained by a high raw material and fossil energy consumption, which is linked to the high level of GDP; the fourth and sixth present mostly good environmental performance, but poor social

performance. Nonetheless, the reasons explaining this result differ because the fourth cluster presents low consumption of fossil fuels, while the sixth adopts stricter environmental regulation compared to the countries included in the fourth cluster. Both clusters, especially the sixth, present high unemployment and inequality levels (Zimmermann & Graziano, 2020, pp. 14-16).

3.6 Implementing the transition towards a sustainable welfare

In the attempt to design policies suitable for developing a sustainable welfare state, academics have focused on alternative financial means to sustain the welfare state's costs and the need for welfare state services. Regarding the first dimension, a proposal is to shift from labour taxation to more stable sources of income, such as taxes on properties, large financial capitals, inheritance and so on, and introduce taxes on consumption practices that have a high carbon footprint (Büchs, 2021b; Gough, 2017; Hirvilammi et al., 2023). At the same time, the need for the welfare state can be reduced by introducing a Universal Basic Income (UBI), which would offer an unconditional income for everyone reducing dependence on the labour market; Universal Basic Services (UBS), addressing basic needs satisfaction to everyone, and Universal Basic Voucher (UBV), offering a middle alternative between the first two, although UBV have been less researched (Bohnenberger, 2020; Büchs, 2021a; Hirvilammi et al., 2023).

Implementing a sustainable welfare state is far from simple and a source of academic debate. Indeed, different points of view exist about what policies and actions are the most appropriate to develop a future sustainable welfare state. Bridgen and Schoyen (2022) present the three main approaches emerging from debates: (i) ecological modernisation (EM), (ii) the Green New Deal, and (iii) post-growth or degrowth. Ecological modernisation is the prevalent approach; it allows economic growth, which should be decoupled from GHG emissions, demanding a considerable effort in investing in green technology in a short-time period. The shift towards green technology and sectors would foster the creation of "green jobs", proposing a solution to satisfy both the goal of economic growth and environmental protection. This model would accept state interventions in the economy, even though the "state's role should be limited to correct market failures" (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022, p. 363).

Market-based instruments, such as environmental taxes aimed to influence individuals and enterprises to adopt a more climate-friendly behaviour, would be largely used. Examples of policy proposals used in EM are carbon pricing, which is setting a price on GHG emissions, investing in technology, research, and development helpful to cut emissions, and controlling, informing and offering incentives to the population to remove barriers to climate-friendly behaviours. Nonetheless, this approach does not pay enough attention to addressing the potential regressive effects of carbon mitigation policies and social justice (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022).

The Green New Deal approach does not question growth but argues that the capitalistic model should be reformed. It sustains that market-based solutions alone are insufficient to challenge climate change which needs more significant national and international actions, for instance, worldwide energy efficiency plans and expansion of renewables sources (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022; Pollin, 2019); similarly to the ecological modernisation approach, technology plays an essential role in fighting climate change, especially the shift towards renewable resources. However, the Green New Deal approach is more concerned about social justice, and its centre is the creation of sustainable jobs. The state's role is essential, and it should sustain workers employed in carbon-intensive sectors by offering income, training and relocation support, guaranteeing pension schemes and providing transition programmes for carbon-intensive regions (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022).

The post-growth or degrowth does not pursue economic growth; it doubts that economic growth can be decoupled from GHG emissions and is centred on a more equal distribution of resources. In a post-growth model, the Global North is a “steady-state economy” where consumption and emissions are reduced to prioritise emissions in the Global South, where development is most needed (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022; Gough, 2017).

In the attempt to reduce growth, post-growth scholars propose to reduce working hours; thus income and consumption, helping to improve work-life balance. Other measures are the already mentioned UBI, UBS, and UBV. Nonetheless, the implementation of these policies cause friction between those preferring large and generous welfare states investing in universal needs and right-based programs and those preferring a decentralised, local welfare state encouraging participation and capable of understanding and meeting the need of the local population. So far, the total decoupling of growth from GHG emissions has not been

achieved, and no state can be considered an ecological state, that is, a state in which environmental protection prevails over economic interests. What exists, instead, are imperfect environmental states (Duit, 2016, p. 72).

4 Method

4.1 *Literature review*

I used a narrative literature review (Clark et al., 2021, p. 84) to find information about Green parties' origins, development, values, and social policies. For searching academic articles and books, I used Boolean phrases, I considered only results concerning Europe and articles written in English, Italian, French and Scandinavian languages (Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish). Regarding the background information about Green parties, I mostly used Oria database searching in Norwegian libraries. The terms I used were "green parties", "new politics", "ecological parties" which produced many relevant results. Concerning Green parties' social policies, the terms I searched for were "green party" or "green parties" or "ecological party" or "ecological parties" AND "social polic*" or welfare or "public polic*" or "social protection" or "social justice", using different databases such as Academic Search Ultimate, GreenFILE, Ebook Collection, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Furthermore, I expanded my sources by looking at relevant references cited in the articles and books I read.

For the theoretical framework, I used the literature referring to the concepts of the welfare state, welfare state regimes, social policy, the sustainable welfare state, the eco-social welfare state, climate justice and the distributional effects of climate mitigation policies. In this case, I have also used the reference lists available in each article to expand my references.

4.2 *Data and geographic selection*

The data I used to answer my research question(s) are the most recent Green parties' party manifestos in Norway, Italy, France, and Germany. For the last Italian national elections in

2022, Europa Verde, the Italian Green Party, allied with the Italian Left, presenting a shared party program. This shared program is the one I analysed for this master's thesis. For the French Green Party analysis, I used the presidential program presented by Yannick Jadot.

Although the analysis is mainly based on party manifestos, I have consulted Green parties' websites and other relevant governmental documents. I have examined party programs in their original language, except for Die Grünen, for which I have used an English version. The author translated all the reported citations, and I take full responsibility for eventual mistakes.

The choice has fallen on these countries because they belong to different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990), environmental states (Duit, 2016), and eco-social welfares (Zimmermann & Graziano, 2020). Although France and Germany belong to the same group in each case, I found it interesting to include them in the analysis because they are the two largest economies in Europe. Therefore, examining social protection policies directed to workers employed in carbon-intensive sectors is particularly relevant, in addition, to explore whether two Green parties would adopt similar social policies in similar economic contexts. Moreover, Germany has the strongest Green Party in Europe and is part of the current government coalition, making it relevant for the analysis.

4.3 Qualitative content analysis

I used qualitative content analysis and a deductive approach (Clark et al., 2021) to analyse the Green Parties program. I used Nvivo as a tool for my analysis to have a better overview of the coded text. An explanation of codes is available in Annex 1.

Starting from the Green parties' values of ecological sustainability, that is an, an ever-growing economy is unsustainable on a planet with finite resources, I have analysed what emerges in their party programs about sustainability, what their idea about growth is, and the alternatives they propose to implement the transition towards a low-carbon society. Regarding this last point, I have used the theoretical framework of the three approaches to a sustainable welfare state, that is, ecological modernisation, the Green New Deal, and post-growth, as illustrated in Bridgen and Schoyen (2022), to illuminate the Greens' preference. Furthermore, I have considered the Greens' value of solidarity and how they would redistribute resources between the wealthiest and the poorest nations.

In the second part, I have focused on the Greens' value of social justice and looked at several aspects of social policies. First, I have focused on policies addressing poverty, including energy poverty and income inequalities. In my analysis, I have included pension schemes to investigate whether Green parties have any ideas about reforming pension schemes to meet the challenges of population ageing. Regarding energy poverty, I have considered measures addressing the three "policy archetypes" (Gough, 2013a), which include better energy compensation, reduced energy bills, and improved energy efficiency. Nonetheless, high energy prices affect bills for energy consumption and other sectors, such as transportation and mobility. Therefore, I have included Green parties' measures to support the population in using public transportation or purchasing low-carbon vehicles such as electric cars. Lastly, I have examined policies enhancing work-life balance, such as parental leave, early child education, and flexible working conditions, because they contribute to analysing which of the three sustainable approaches is emerging in Green parties' manifestos.

Third, because the transition implies a shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources, workers in energy-intensive sectors will be highly impacted. Thus, I have also examined the social policies specifically addressed to them, focusing on social protection policies such as unemployment or temporary benefits and social investment policies such as re-skilling and life-long learning.

Finally, adopting climate policies and implementing the socio-economic transformation to a low-carbon society requires financial resources. Social justice cannot be achieved if the better-off will leave the financial burden of environmental policies to the worst-off, who are in general least responsible for the climate crisis and least able to sustain the costs, which may lead to a "triple injustice" (Koch, 2018, p. 36). Therefore, designing a fair fiscal policy is equally essential as implementing social policies. That is why I have investigated the Green Parties' suggestions for overhauling the fiscal systems, introducing taxes on other income resources besides labour, such as wealth and multinationals' profits, and initiatives to combat tax evasion - essential to achieve fiscal justice. I have also explored eco-taxes proposals and their redistribution to compensate consumers for higher energy costs.

5 Sustainability and the welfare state in Green parties' manifestos

5.1 How to implement a sustainable society?

5.1.1 The Greens' idea about growth and prosperity

One of the original Green parties' core values is ecological sustainability, implying that an ever-growing economy is unsustainable on a planet with finite resources. This belief is still present and emerges in the party manifestos I have analysed. For instance, Die Grünen write that planetary boundaries would be their guiding principle when designing policies to contribute to greater environmental justice, sustaining that the economic model must change because *"there cannot be an infinite growth on a finite planet"* (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 13), to which they add *"we can recalibrate our economic and financial system. Then we can ensure that growth only takes place in alignment with the planetary limits, instead of overusing our national resources"* (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 57).

MDG sustain that it is possible to reduce consumption to a level that nature can manage, work less and spend time otherwise, for instance staying with family, and friends, attend cultural events, being in contact with nature, or getting involved in volunteer activities, and still live a good life within planetary boundaries (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 5). In addition, Norway should abandon the idea that an ever-growing economy is possible and shift towards the circular economy (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 37).

Les Écologistes sustain that France should respect everything that lives in the future, and adopt a new ecologic economic model adapted to the Planet and humans' needs (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 3).

Regarding AVS' joint party manifesto, nothing emerges regarding growth. However, the Italian Green Party, Europa Verde, does express its opinion about growth in its manifesto for the European elections, affirming that human development can succeed only within planetary boundaries and that the destruction of nature and the excessive use of resources are threatening our well-being, wealth and security (Europa Verde, 2023).

Besides the growth concept, Green parties agree that GDP cannot be the only indicator used to measure prosperity, as other factors should be included. For this purpose, Die Grünen sustain that *"Prosperity is not only defined by the growth of GDP but can be understood in*

much broader terms as quality of life. We want to measure the success of Germany and its companies not only based on economic criteria, but also based on inclusive, social, ecological and societal criteria (...). To do this, an annual prosperity report should be published in (the) future alongside the annual economic report. This will also consider, for example, the contribution (that) nature protection, equitable distribution of income or good education make to prosperity in our society” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 71).

Les Écologistes have a similar point of view, affirming that “Beside growth, our reforms will be based on climate and social indicators. Pursuing economic growth cannot be the main factor determining public policies. Every reform of ours would be pre- and post-evaluated in the light of 10 new wealth indicators: employment, income inequalities, poverty reduction in life conditions, carbon footprint, land use, expectancy to live a healthy life, dropping out rate, life satisfaction, public debt and public wealth”(Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 47).

MDG does not mention any specific indicators to measure prosperity, but they affirm that the economy’s ambition cannot be only to increase GDP. Instead, economy should pursue life quality and ecologic sustainability, conciliating human need satisfaction and planet boundaries². For MDG, this is possible by making efforts towards a more effective and sustainable economy through consumption reduction, rapid technology development and innovation (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 37).

Finally, AVS does not expose any thought about growth in its joint party program, but in its manifesto for the European elections, Europa Verde does mention that GDP alone is inadequate to measure prosperity, and it should be flanked by “alternative parameters that consider social and environmental concerns” (Europa Verde, 2023).

5.1.2 Solidarity with the Global South

Solidarity may be defined as “*preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or in need and through taxation and redistribution organised by the state*” (Stjernø, 2005 p.2). Green parties have a liberal concept of solidarity, not limited to group solidarity or with people sharing the same characteristics, but encompass people of

² MDG specifically mention the «smultringmodellen» which refer to the doughnut economic model developed by Kate Raworth.

different countries, social status and economic conditions (Gahrton, 2015, p. 25). In particular, the Greens are concerned with the redistribution of resources, wealth, and opportunities between the wealthiest and poorest within and among countries to achieve social justice and face the ecological crisis. Indeed, the social and environmental costs of the richest countries' lifestyle weigh primarily on developing countries, causing climate and biodiversity crises and contributing to conflicts, violence, famine and forced migration (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 207; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 114).

The Green parties' manifestos analysed have several proposals to foster international solidarity, from establishing more equal resources to sustaining the transition in the Global South. In general, their programs are similar in economic support, establishment of fairer partnerships and efforts to offer universal access to essential welfare services, particularly education and health.

MDG sustain that a worldwide healthy climate and nature are essential for security and well-being. For this purpose, the Norwegian Green brought forward several proposals. For instance, they would devolve 1% of the Oil fund to climate mitigation, climate adaptation and nature protection in developing countries. In addition, they would adopt a global tax targeting the wealthiest 1% in the world, managed by a tax organisation under the authority of the United Nations, that would contribute to financing the UN goals for sustainability in developing countries. MDG proposes implementing a vigorous local tax administration in developing countries to improve national tax systems and increase tax revenues. This would help to finance essential welfare state services, build infrastructure, and handle criminality. Besides, MDG would contribute to the local economy by establishing strategic partnerships with local actors, ensuring that investments would directly benefit the local population while respecting climate and environmental measures across sectors. Finally, MDG agrees to debt relief in developing countries (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 150-151).

Besides economic solutions, MDG would contribute to developing energy-efficient buildings and transportation in developing countries, in addition to sustaining the UN Habitats

program³ for the development of carbon-neutral cities. At the social level, MDG would work to ensure that public schools are free for children and youth, regardless of social background, sex, ethnicity and disabilities, in addition to granting universal access to health services (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 150).

Les Écologistes propose introducing a progressive tax on flight tickets, which would finance climate change adaptation policies and the transition in the Global South (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 113). Furthermore, they would increase the national budget to international solidarity by 1%. The required financial resources would come from the increment of the taxes on financial transactions⁴ attributed to the development aid. The budget should be destined to humanitarian aid and, especially, to activities fighting climate change, sustaining local communities projects and decentralised cooperation (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 115).

Les Écologistes recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the indebtedness of the poorest countries, proposing to apply a COVID-debts relief for the poorest and most indebted countries (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 116).

The French Greens emphasise developing new partnerships with the poorest countries, especially in Africa, by adopting cooperation strategies that put the populations' well-being and interests at the centre, favouring universal access to health services, education and decent work. Finally, they would implement activities fostering local agriculture and providing nutrient food to the local population, while respecting the environment (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 114-115).

Die Grünen believe that international cooperation for climate justice is an extension of climate policies, contributing to achieving sustainable development goals, hindering conflicts over resources, and securing peace. In their opinion, diplomatic efforts should be directed towards climate justice, in addition to increase resources devolved to climate foreign policy. For instance, at the economic level, Die Grünen propose to increase the budget of existing international funds directed towards climate adaptation and protection, and enact a new

³ The United Nations Human Settlement Programme ([UN-Habitat](#)) work with local partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient sustainable cities and communities, contributing to reduce poverty, inequalities and discrimination among people and communities.

⁴ Introduced in the 1970s, it is an instrument to combat speculation derived from stock market sale. In 2012, France devolved part of this tax to development aid.

fund which income should be devolved to finance initiatives such as climate risk insurance, and compensate for climate-related damage and losses (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 211). Similarly to MDG and Les Écologistes, Die Grünen support debt relief and debt restructuring in poor countries, so that money could be used to improve their healthcare systems, education and welfare, a necessary step to implement the socio-ecological transition (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 233). In general, the German Green would reform the global monetary system. For instance, they suggest that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide more “unconditional liquidity” for countries in crisis situations, and that Germany and Europe would yield their unused monetary reserve received from IMF⁵ to the countries in the Global South, and that the voting system shifts in favour of these countries (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 233).

Die Grünen would use climate and development partnerships to prioritise innovation for climate neutrality, strengthen adaptation and expand renewable energy to meet the Global South’s energy needs while respecting global climate commitments. At the international level, the socio-economic transition should be enhanced, by including and supporting the Global South in the establishment and respect of binding goals (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 211). In addition, they support poor countries to adopt socially oriented economic and taxation policy, ensuring that all people have access to social security, education and health. They promote the expansion of sustainable social security systems, which should be designed to be easily accessible, reach the emarginated, establish gender equality and reinforce social cohesion (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 212-213).

Finally, Die Grünen endorse that all German policies should be aligned with the transition’s goals and would establish a National Council for Peace, Sustainability and Human Rights making sure that all ministries in Germany respect the commitment to achieve UN SDGs, climate goals, and human rights agreements (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 210).

Following the same line as Die Grünen, AVS proposes to reform the global finance architecture within the G20 and during the Italian presidency of the G7 in 2024 to ensure that all countries have access to the needed resources for implementing the green transition and

⁵ It refers to [Special Drawing Rights \(SDRs\)](#) introduced in 1969 by the IMF to supplement the official monetary resources of its member states.

repristinates the North-South equilibrium. In addition, they emphasise the essentiality of developing new partnerships in the Mediterranean region, Africa, South America and emerging Asian economies, based on the development and the use of renewable resources to produce energy, adopt new industrial and agricultural models that respect the environment, human and workers' rights (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 10).

5.1.3 Green parties' proposals for a transition to a low-carbon society

The strategies of the Green parties here analysed to implement a low-carbon society pivot around three pillars: the role attributed to the State, the investment in technology, innovation and research in areas that would contribute to speed up the transition process, and the creation of green jobs.

Die Grünen sustain that the achievement of climate neutrality is possible through a massive expansion program for renewables following the capacity of the industry and workers, although the political framework should not hinder the process. The implementation of measures such as building renovation to improve thermal efficiency or discouraging car use is essential because, if less energy is needed, it would be faster to shift to clean energy and achieve climate goals (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 14-15). In addition, investment in new technology, especially start-ups, and research in climate-friendly sectors would contribute to achieving these objectives (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021). According to Die Grünen, the State must lead the transition because the economy needs clear conditions, a reliable political framework and incentives (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 57). Besides technology and investments, Die Grünen underline that transition's costs must be fairly distributed and people must be protected through social protection schemes, such as unemployment benefits, training and education programs (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 93). In addition, the German Greens support the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), a program educating the young generations in adopting a sustainable lifestyle and building a socially just society (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 136,144).

Die Grünen points out that the transition can only happen if the international community works together, starting from the European Union and involving ambiguous countries such as China, Russia, and Brazil. The United Nations also has a crucial role in driving the transition

forward; its involvement was fundamental to achieving the Paris Agreement and establishing the Sustainable Development Goals.

AVS believe that the State should encourage the abandonment of gas as the primary energy source and invest in renewable sources. Investments in building renovation programs would improve thermal efficiency and save energy while increasing the capacity to recycle waste and re-use material, especially in the building and industrial sectors would decrease consumption, accelerate the transition towards clean sources of energy having a lower environmental impact (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 3-4). In addition, the State should reinforce publicly owned enterprises which are already strong and can lead the transition. Finally, the State should hold essential services such as electricity and water distribution (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 30-31). At the international level, AVS suggest that Italy works on a shared policy on gas with the European Union to share gas sources in time of need and contribute to strengthening the Green Deal by boosting the goals of the Fit for 55 package, in particular by bringing the share of renewable energy to 50% (nowadays the goal is 42.5% by 2030), and save at least 45% of energy through more ambitious plans for energy efficiency (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 8-9).

Les Écologistes are aligned with the Italians regarding the energetical sector because energy is an essential need (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 9). The State should also invest in research and innovation oriented towards the ecological transition, finance the enterprises that have a low carbon footprint, respect biodiversity, keep their employees and create employment, and be active against discrimination practices (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 43-44). To benefit public funds, the enterprises must sign an agreement for a just transition in which they present concrete plans for the transition to low-carbon activities and respect social criteria. Les Écologistes specify that enterprises in fiscal havens are excluded from financial help. In addition, the French Greens would destinate more public funds to the social and solidary economy (Economie sociale et solidaire, ESS), which encompasses cooperatives, foundations, and associations operating in the social sector, and offer a desirable overcome of capitalistic system (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 49). Besides, Les Écologistes insist on the importance of investing in the school program to train the young generations to develop the competencies to face ecological and social challenges and in the research, which should be a tool to find solutions to ecological and social problems (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 72-74).

At the European level, Les Écologistes would expand the Green Deal and decrease GHG emissions by 65% by 2030, boosting the effort in renewable sources and renovation plans to increase energy efficiency. Furthermore, Les Écologistes would adopt a European environmental treaty and use the law to protect the environment, biodiversity, and health. The ecocide would be recognised as a crime, and enterprises spoiling the environment would be legally punishable (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 108-109).

MDG sustain that the State should have an active role in the green shift by investing in green technologies helpful to the transition and support enterprises engaged in the development of new and embryonal technologies, even though this could be a risk investment (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 45). In addition, the State must invest in research programs and sustain universities which have a crucial role in the transition (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 52). At the international level, MDG would strengthen cooperation with the European Union for climate and environmental policies, proposing a more active role for Norway in the European Green Deal and contributing to making the European market a green and circular economy pioneer. In addition, Norway should take part in LIFE, the European project that supports local and regional activities to protect the environment and offer financial means to environmental organisations, and continue to support the development of the European Economic Area, using its right to object if some legal decisions do not respect the environment, workers' rights or food security (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 144-145).

The idea that the green transition to a low-carbon society will enhance the creation of sustainable jobs is widely emphasised in the Green parties' programs analysed (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 13; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 13; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 42; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 20). To cite few examples, new jobs would emerge in clean energy production (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 46), sustainable mobility (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 13), construction (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 17), building renovation (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 12-13), in the nature and forest sector (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 22), and in the waste management and circular economy (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 14; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 17; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 28).

Although creating new jobs is a key factor in the transition, they underpin measures to grant decent work conditions and ensure work-life balance. The four Green parties propose

to shorten the working hours, using several justifications. For instance, Die Grünen proposes to reduce working hours to distribute the workload more evenly among workers, particularly in industries with high workloads. This would help to ensure job security by preventing a small number of workers from bearing the burden of long shifts while the company justifies laying off personnel. Furthermore, employers should have the possibility to organize their working hours in a way that is conciliable with family and personal needs (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 103).

Les Écologistes have the same opinion as Die Grünen and add that in some periods of life people should have the choice of working less, for instance having the opportunity to take a sabbatic year, parental leave, attend education programs or engage in social activities (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 55).

AVS point out that technological innovation gives the opportunity to work less, maintain the same compensation and have more time for oneself, family, and friends. This is especially true for the automotive sector that is going through structural transformations (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 23-24). In addition, AVS sustain that workers should have more freedom to have flexible working hours, deciding when and where to work. Parents with small children should have the opportunity to lean on free early childhood education and the maternity should be reformed, granting 8 months retributed at 100% and giving the opportunity for a longer paternity leave⁶(Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 22,26-27).

MDG supports increased flexibility and autonomy in the workplace, proposing a 6-hour workday for sectors with high workloads and for parents with young children. Additionally, parents with children up to 12 years old should receive an extra week of holiday. The opportunity to combine work and personal life should be also given to the self-employed and workers not having a permanent job contact (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 76-77,79).

5.2 Social protection schemes: fighting poverty and income inequalities.

Green parties believe that opportunities in one's life should not depend on social background. Everyone must benefit from the conditions to participate in society and fulfil

⁶ The [paternity leave](#) last 10 days in Italy.

one's potential, avoiding falling into poverty and social exclusion (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 64-65; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 107; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 56; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 78).

Although the Green proposals have different designs and targeted populations, they are built around three main tools: child allowances to fight child poverty, income allowances to provide economic support in uncertain times avoiding poverty, and a minimum wage to prevent in-work poverty and fight exploitation. Finally, I also considered the Greens proposal on pension schemes to prevent old-age poverty.

5.2.1 Child allowances

Die Grünen sustain that every child, independently of social background, should receive allowances from birth, underpinning that “children in families with low or no income will get an additional *guarantee plus* amount” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 95). MDG and Les Écologistes would offer a universal child allowance regardless of family's incomes (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 58; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 78), but they do not mention offering additional support to children born in low-income families as mentioned by Die Grünen. AVS does not mention any kind of pecuniary child allowance, but they do propose to increase investments in services that enable all children to socialise and grow, regardless of economic conditions. These proposals include opening more kindergartens and providing families with the option to hire a babysitter paid by the State for few hours per week. Furthermore, granting access to green areas and sport facilities and providing free access to cultural attractions such as museums (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 65).

5.2.2 Income allowances

Regarding income allowances, Die Grünen would replace unemployment benefits with an income security guarantee. This would protect people from poverty, aiming to grant a minimum subsistence in uncertain times and offering people opportunities and prospects for a self-determined life, even when major changes in the world of work occur (for instance, as it was during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it could be during the transition). Another idea is to improve income allowance schemes to encourage people to work, avoiding losing their grants if they perceive a wage. In addition, Die Grünen proposes that the young living in

families perceiving social security benefits can work without paying taxes (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 108). A further proposal is to offer all students and trainees a basic income so that everyone can afford education, regardless of parents' economic conditions (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 146).

Les Écologistes propose implementing a citizen income addressed to all individuals aged 18 and above who do not reside with their parents. This measure aims to prevent anyone from living below the poverty threshold, which is set at 50% of the median income (€918/month) (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 56).

MDG consider the existing social-economic help insufficient and bureaucratic. Therefore, they propose the adoption of a fixed minimum income scheme which would provide 12300 NOK per month, corresponding to the amount necessary for a single person to cover her needs, as suggested by the Consumption Research Norway (Forbrukforskningsinstituttet – SIFO). Besides the amount, the proposed minimum income scheme differs from the existing social-economic support because it can be received even if the person benefits from other forms of economic support, such as children allowances, house allowances or energy support (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 79; 2023a). A second proposal is to extend the existing income allowances targeting the unemployed and the temporarily laid off to recent graduates, those working less than 18 hours per week, and self-employed individuals. Regarding this last category of workers, MDG would strengthen their welfare benefits such as paid parental leave, sickness benefits, and pension schemes (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 78).

AVS would continue offering the “citizenship income” (reddito di cittadinanza in Italian), an economic benefit introduced in 2019 to fight poverty, inequalities, and social exclusion. According to their views, the policy needs to be reformed as per the recommendations of the Scientific Committee, which was established by the Italian Government in 2021. The committee comprises sociologists, academics, and economists, entrusted to evaluate the current policy and suggest improvements. Their analysis has led to multiple proposals that seek to modify the eligibility criteria, benefit amounts, and labour market participation. One of their recommendations is to restructure citizenship income to provide more economic benefits to larger households based on their composition. Additionally, if one family member

is ineligible for the benefit, only that individual should be excluded from receiving it, rather than the entire family as it currently stands (Saraceno et al., 2021, pp. 2-3).

Another critical point is that the citizenship income may not motivate individuals to work, since they lose the benefit once they secure a job and receive a work income, even if it's a low wage. To address this, a proposed solution is for eligible individuals to keep receiving the benefit until they reach the income threshold that's exempted from taxation (which was €8175/year for employed income, and €4800/year for self-employed workers in 2021) (Saraceno et al., 2021, p. 4).

Finally, the current eligibility criteria for third-country nationals in Italy require them to have a 10-year residence period, which excludes many low-income households from the measure. To address this issue, the Committee has proposed reducing the residence period to 5 years (Saraceno et al., 2021, p. 1). This change would help ensure that more individuals can benefit from the measure and have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

5.2.3 Minimum wage

The Green parties support introducing a minimum wage in their countries, except the Norwegian MDG, which does not mention this point in its program.

Green parties justify the minimum wage provision by the necessity for decent work and life conditions for everyone, avoiding exploitation. For instance, Die Grünen sustain that a minimum wage would improve the work conditions of millions of people employed in low-paid sectors, especially women and immigrants. They propose to increase the minimum wage to €12/hour, which should gradually rise to protect people against poverty and be aligned to collective wage agreements (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 100). In addition, they want to act against illegal work by ensuring the same wage as German workers to foreigners, granting the right for trade unions and collective legal actions, providing a European security number and eradicating short-term working contracts without any social security (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 105).

Les Écologistes propose to increase the minimum wage to achieve €1500/month, adapting the collective wages on this amount. The plan is to increase progressively the minimum wage, allowing workers to progress in their careers (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 52-53).

Finally, AVS criticises that precarious workers, mostly the young, women and foreigners, have wages corresponding to €4.4/hour, demanding the extensions of collective wages as conceived by the workers' unions to all workers. Nonetheless, in some sectors, such as the logistic, exploitation is diffuse, so AVS proposes to grant a minimum €10/hour to all workers. In their opinion, a minimum wage should correspond to €1200/month, and this amount must be revised every six months, adapting it to inflation (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 24-25).

5.2.4 Pension schemes

The social policy expenditures allocated to pension schemes differ in the four countries analysed here. For example, in 2017, Italy devolved to pension the 32.1% of social policy expenditures, followed by France, 24.2%, Germany, 23%, and Norway, 13.6% (OECD, 2023). These differences have demographic reasons but are also influenced by policy choices, which impact how the pension schemes are designed. However, this aspect will not be further explored in this paper.

In general, pensions are an essential part of social security policy because the population is ageing in the Global North, and the labour force available to finance pension schemes is shrinking. This is the original thought behind the sustainability of the welfare state, which considers the economic and demographic aspects: how to continue to finance a welfare state system if fewer people participate in the labour market?

The space for pension schemes is scarce and not detailed in Green parties' manifestos. Nonetheless, the common trait in these countries is to grant decent life conditions for the elder when they retire, ensuring that no one lives below the poverty threshold.

Die Grünen propose to maintain a decent level of pension allowances by including more women in the labour market, adopting a genuine Immigration Law allowing immigrants to work in Germany and improving the working condition of older employees. To avoid senior age poverty, Die Grünen would increase the basic pension and introduce a minimum contribution basis of assessment paid by the employers to ensure that low-income workers receive a decent pension when they retire. The pension age would be maintained at 67 even though people wishing to work longer should be allowed to do so (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 110-111).

Les Écologistes mention their engagement to ensure that no retired people must live below the poverty threshold, granting them a decent life and the opportunity to train and engage in volunteer activities. In addition, they would allow workers in dangerous occupations to retire before the age limit⁷ (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 57).

AVS propose a minimum pension scheme of €1000. In their opinion, the elderly should retire when they are 62 years old⁸ or when they have been working for 41 years, considering the period of unwilling unemployment, not-paid care work, and parental leave. This would foster intergenerational exchange in the labour market and increase productivity (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 26).

MDG would adopt a flexible retirement age⁹, allowing the elderly to retire later if they wish to do so. Regarding the economic aspects, MDG sustains that the adaptation of the financial situation of retirees should consider the recent trend towards increasing inequalities and weaker work wage growth for large groups. Any change in the pension policy must be conceived together with labour market stakeholders, considering generational aspects to ensure economic sustainability and reduce inequalities (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 80).

5.2.5 Prevent energy poverty

In 2021, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, energy prices began to rise worldwide. In 2022, Europe witnessed a peak in energy prices, which was caused by Russian war against Ukraine and the implementation of carbon prices to reduce GHG emissions.

Besides AVS' party manifesto, written after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the other party manifestos refer mostly to the post-pandemic period when illustrating policies tackling energy poverty. What these policies have in common are the offer of economic support, despite the targeted population change, and investment in building renovation programs.

Regarding economic support, AVS proposes that “money transfers should last until 2030, and be accessible to all social classes, even though the most vulnerable must be prioritised”

⁷ In France [the retirement age](#) is 64.

⁸ In Italy, [the retirement age](#) is 67.

⁹ In Norway, [the retirement age](#) is 67.

(Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 4). Les Écologistes, propose to “transfer €400 to 6 millions of low-income households to protect them from the increasing price of energy” (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 14), which part of the resources to finance this measure should come from carbon pricing (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 49).

Die Grünen affirm “*To ensure that climate protection goes hand in hand with social justice, we want to give the revenues from the national carbon price directly back to the people (...). The energy bonus will be a transparent way of giving all additional revenues back to the people and easing their burden directly by issuing them with a per capita reimbursement*” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 20). It is possible to receive the energy bonus even when the recipients benefit from other social security incomes, such as unemployment benefits schemes. An additional measure would be the introduction of a climate bonus fund which would provide a generous bonus to low-income households adopting climate-friendly behavior, such as the use of public transportation or the purchase of an electric car. Finally, low-income households already benefiting from house allowances, would receive an additional climate housing allowance to encourage dwelling renovation (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 20).

MDG has suggested providing automatic financial assistance during times of high energy costs. The benefit would be equal for all individuals residing in the same region and unitary. This implies that a four-person household would receive four times the subsidy, while those living alone or students may be eligible for additional support (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2023b).

Building renovation to improve thermal efficiency is central in Green parties’ proposal. Die Grünen would provide additional incentive schemes to implement massive building renovation using sustainable materials, and heat pumps as heating systems. They privilege collective solutions to achieve energy efficiency as “*connected systems in which heat is sourced and stored from various renewable energies such as waste heat, geothermal and solar thermal heat*”. Industry and commerce should also be included in the system (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 27). Finally, to ensure fairness, the German Greens underpin that the costs for building renovation cannot be in charge of the landlord, but should be equally distributed among the State, landlords and tenants (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 27-28).

Les Écologistes aim to invest €10 billion per year for renovating both private and public buildings. This measure would have multiple positive consequences: it would halve the price of energy bills allowing households to save €700/year; it would decrease by 50% the level of energy consumption and GHG emissions by 17%; finally, it would create 93000 qualified employment in the construction and energy performance sectors for the period 2025-2030 (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 12,14).

MDG sustain that the best way to save energy is not to use it. On the one hand, they encourage investments in building renovation; on the other hand, they encourage households, industries and the construction sector to save energy by increasing (...) electricity taxes and requiring zero-energy and energy-positive (*plusshus*) buildings (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 22). For building renovation, MDG suggests that the state should sustain half of the costs to allow low-income households to renovate their dwellings. At the same time, it should be possible to loan the rest at reasonable conditions. Arrangements should be planned for those living in apartment buildings.

AVS also mentions that they would invest money in building renovation, especially aiming at social housing, but they do not provide any explanation of how they would achieve this goal (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 41).

Finally, the four Green parties want to reduce the price of the energy at the source. The Italians propose to establish a temporary cap on gas prices and structurally modify energy taxation to protect households from the volatility of fossil fuel prices, aiming to reach zero energy poverty by 2025 and grant access to green energy to all (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 5). The French intend to adopt progressive taxation on energy prices and grant free access to the first Kwh (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 10). The Germans propose to expand the grid network to allow energy to travel faster from producers to consumers, especially those living in rural areas. The grid network should be projected to transport renewable energy, and the State should own it to guarantee a fair distribution of energy prices and transparency and avoid people living in rural areas pay increased costs (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 26). MDG propose that energy supply offer a fixed price, but they do not want to have a too low price because this would undermine the efforts to save energy (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2023b).

An extension of social measures to address energy poverty is those providing economic support for using low-carbon transportation to encourage more environmentally friendly behaviour. For instance, Die Grünen proposes adopting a pay-as-you-go financing scheme, which means that users can purchase a travelling card and charge it the amount they want based on how often they travel instead of buying a new ticket for every journey. Young students at college or apprenticeship should be offered cheap tickets to travel by train (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 30-31).

Even though the German greens are motivated to achieve climate neutrality for transportation, they are aware that cars are still fundamental for many families, especially those living in the countryside. They plan to offer incentives to help people purchase climate-neutral cars and light electric vehicles while decreasing their price (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 36).

Les Écologistes propose to introduce a “Ticket Freedom Climate” (Ticket Liberté Climat in French), which offers free access to trains, buses, trams, metro, bikes, and public cars for the young between 16-25 years old to encourage them to use low-carbon transportation. The ticket would cost €50/month for socially vulnerable categories such as high school students, students receiving a scholarship, those receiving unemployment benefits, jobseekers, civil servants, and the differently able. The costs increase to €100 for the rest of the users. The young would also have the possibility to get a bike for free from the state. In addition, the French Greens suggest that both private and public employers should provide a bonus of €1000 per year for each worker to encourage them to use low-carbon transportation such as car-sharing and bikes. This bonus should be tax-exempt. Finally, the French would make efforts to make climate-neutral vehicles affordable for everyone and offer incentives to low-income households for purchasing one (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 16-17).

AVS propose that public transportation should be free for the young until 30 years old to promote models of sustainable mobility among the new generations; the bonuses to purchase an electric car should be offered only for the first car and should be established according to the income (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 12-13).

MDG propose that those travelling to go to work should get a tax-free travel pass to public transportation so that is more convenient to travel by train than car, decrease the price for public transportation tickets by 20%, and allow the young under 26 years old to travel for free

(Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 26-27). Bikes and electric bikes should be value-added tax exempt, and it should be free to bring bikes on public transportation. Ferries should be free for pedestrians and cyclists (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 32). In addition, MDG would establish a communal package to offer incentives to enhance leasing electric cars, booking buses, renting electric bikes, using only electric buses and increasing the charging stations (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 29).

5.2.6 Protecting workers in carbon-intensive sectors

The transition towards a low-carbon society will primarily impact workers in energy-intensive sectors. Germany is the first coal producer in Europe, Norway is second to Russia for oil production, and France is Europe's first nuclear producer (Eurostat, 2022; Statista, 2022; Trade Economics, 2023).

Green parties in these countries refer extensively to workers employed in these sectors in their party programs. They propose a range of policies to offer training and economic compensation to facilitate the transition towards sustainable jobs.

Die Grünen underpin the necessity of investing in training and re-skilling because the transition towards a low-carbon society would, on the one hand, cause massive job loss, for example, in the coal/mine and automotive sectors, and on the other, create "green jobs" which require new competences and skills. Therefore, they would provide training and financial support to workers who are undergoing qualification courses while offering vocational training to contrast the loss of skilled workers, especially to young people living in the countryside who would not be obliged to move to urban areas to find an occupation (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 66,69). At the same time, they would implement a short-time work compensation program for enterprises which will cover the expenses for reduced productivity while employees are in training. This is considered a win-win situation because it will encourage businesses to maintain their workers while allowing them to learn new skills without losing money (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 17).

Les Écologistes sustain that the ecological transition would affect people employed in transport, energy, aeronautics, and the agri-food sectors. In order to protect the workers under the transition, including those employed in nuclear plants whose competencies are necessary, they would establish agreements between the State, the local communities, the

enterprises, and both employers and workers' unions to adopt a “droit à la reconversion” (it can be translated in English as right to conversion/transition) giving the workers the possibility to attend training programs while maintaining their salary.

The French Greens also include the farmers as at-risk workers because climate change will impact the agricultural sector. For this purpose, they would enable public insurance to protect them from harvest loss caused by extreme weather conditions, avoiding them turning towards private insurance (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 40-41).

Les Écologistes sustain that the State should be responsible for supporting the costs for re-skilling and training programs, the creation of new activities and infrastructures, and for initiating explorative studies on how the existing competences and skills can be used and adapted in sustainable sectors (Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 45,55).

Even though the terms and conditions are not specified, another proposals mentioned by the French Green are to support workers willing to acquire a failed business and transform it into a cooperative (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 44).

MDG underpin the necessity to adopt a plan to gradually phase out the oil production by 2035. This process must offer security to oil workers who would receive economic security and support if they undertake training programs leading to a change in career path (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 20). In addition, they would invest in programs aimed at transferring the oil sector's skills and competencies to sustainable sectors, such as the production of clean energy, the maritime sector, and bioengineering which will help Norway to create new green jobs (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 20).

AVS also mentions that the ecological transition must consider the social dimension. They refer on re-skilling and training programs for workers at risk and encourage the mobility towards other sectors (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 13). However, they do not present proposals about how they would do to implement this plan.

5.3 Implementing a fairer taxation

The Green parties analysed attribute a great role to taxation as a tool to fight social inequalities and promote social justice sustaining that those who own more must contribute

more (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 28; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 89-90; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 42; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 39).

At this purpose, the principal actions are to reform national tax systems, fight tax evasion and fiscal havens, impose higher taxes for multinational enterprises, and increase taxes on conspicuous personal assets such as properties, inheritance, and large capitals.

5.3.1 *Reform national tax systems*

Green parties propose to reform national tax systems to adopt fairer taxation between the better-off and the worst-off. Although the fiscal system varies from state to state, the general idea is to adopt a more progressive taxation system so that the better-off would contribute more, while increasing the basic tax-free allowances for the worst-off (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 28; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 89; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 51; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 40, 78). For instance, Die Grünen sustain that in Germany “those on the top 10% of incomes contribute relatively less via taxes and levies than those on small and medium incomes” (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 89). Their suggestion is that single people with a yearly income of euro 100.000 and couples with an income of euro 200.000 would pay a tax rate of 45%, while for income corresponding to 250.000 and 500.000 respectively, the tax rate would increase to 48% (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 89). AVS is on the same line sustaining that the tax burden should be redistributed, raising the basic tax-free allowance for incomes corresponding to euro 12.000/year and raise progressively the tax rate to a maximum of 65% for incomes exceeding euro 10 billion (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 28).

Les Écologistes would abolish the couple tax rate that in France allows households to pay taxes based on the overall income level. The French Green believe that this system is more beneficial for high-income families who will pay more taxes, if the tax rate is applied at the individual level (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 51).

The adoption of measure to contrast fiscal evasion is another key aspect to reform national tax systems. Green parties mention measure such as the adoption of international agreements and strengthening international cooperation on fiscal issues (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91; Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 42-43; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 39), track every financial operation and foster electronic payments (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra,

2022, p. 29), introduce a tax liability based on nationality in addition to the existent based on residence to avoid people changing residence for fiscal purposes (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91).

5.3.2 *Tax on personal wealth*

The four Green parties would introduce higher taxes on significant personal assets, thus people benefiting from large capital would pay more taxes. The proposals in this sense are several.

Les Écologistes present a measure to enforce a climate tax on wealth exceeding €2 million, including professional assets, which would be progressive and adjusted using a bonus-malus of +/- 0.5% depending on the business activities' impact on climate (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 45). Thus, if the economic activity was polluting and having a negative impact on the environment, the taxes amount would increase, while it would decrease for climate-friendly business. Another proposal is to revise the tax on inheritances to ensure intergenerational equity by adopting a progressive tax based on the inheritance amount. For inheritance corresponding to minimum euro 200.000, the tax rate would consider the income level that the beneficiary perceived through life, regardless the kinship, and all tax loopholes would be abolished for professional goods.

Die Grünen propose to re-introduce a tax on wealth¹⁰ corresponding to 1% annually for assets exceeding €2 million per person and use these incomes to finance education. Another proposal is to abolish the existing tax exemption applicable after 10 years for capital gains on land properties, and other existing tax exemptions such as on commerce of precious metal, commodities and crypto assets (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 90).

AVS would enforce a progressive tax on all income sources, including financial and real estate annuities. They would abolish the current single municipal tax (Imposta Municipale Unica, IMU, in Italian) applied on other real estate properties than the primary house, and the stamp duty which is applicable for example on investment funds and life insurance, to replace

¹⁰ Taxes on wealth were abolished in Germany between the 1990s and 2000s, supported by the Christian Democrat (CDU) and the Social Democrat (SPD) Hilmar, T., & Sachweh, P. (2022). "Poison to the Economy": (Un-)Taxing the Wealthy in the German Federal Parliament from 1996 to 2016. *Social Justice Research*, 35(4), 462-489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-021-00383-y>

them with a progressive wealth tax including all personal assets. This measure would increase taxes on personal assets exceeding €5 million (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 28-29).

MDG would introduce a tax on inheritance with a high basic exemption and an additional progressive rate for inheritances exceeding NOK 20 million, in addition to increase taxation on secondary residences, while maintaining low taxes on the primary house. The tax on real estate properties should continue to be decided at the communal level, giving municipalities more decisional power on the amount, and must not become a national tax (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40). In addition, municipalities should have the possibility to introduce a local tourism tax that tourists must pay when staying in a hotel (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 41).

5.3.3 Confront fiscal havens and increase taxes on multinational enterprises

All four parties are proposing policies to contrast fiscal havens and in increasing taxes for multinational enterprises.

Die Grünen, Les Écologistes, and AVS agree that the minimum taxation for multinational enterprises should be fixed at 25% (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 29; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 47), to which Les Écologistes propose to add a climate bonus-malus adjustment depending on the nature of the business activities (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 47). MDG do not specify an amount, but they mention that multinational enterprises should pay an honest amount of taxes on income generated in Norway (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40). Furthermore, AVS propose an obligation for big corporations to publish where they operate and the amount of their profits, in addition to demand the Italian State to abolish the secret fiscal agreements with multinationals enterprises (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 29), referring to the so-called tax-rulings which imply a favourable tax treatment for certain companies.

The general strategy proposed by Green parties to contrast fiscal havens is a reinforced cooperation at the European level (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 43; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40). For example, a proposed measures are the establishment of an harmonised tax for companies doing business in Europe, especially large companies, to avoid they establish their activities in countries where the tax systems is more relaxed (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 47); demand

corporation to publish their profits, turnover and tax payments extensively by country (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 29; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 91), avoid that state-owned companies relocate their functions abroad for paying less taxes in Norway (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40), and interrupt financial and commercial relations with states and institutions that do not have high standards of transparency (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 43).

5.3.4 *Eco- taxes*

Besides ensuring fairer taxation, the Green parties give importance to eco-taxes. Eco-taxes, also known as environmental or green taxes, are based on the principle that “polluters pay” and try to persuade people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviour. Green parties refer to eco-taxes in their program, especially to carbon, plastic taxes, and waste.

Nonetheless, eco-taxes should be progressive, adopting a “two price system” which aims to hit harder high consumption, instead of penalising everyday consumption. Indeed, Green parties are in favour of carbon pricing, but they would introduce it in a way that is socially just and effective (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 19; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 48; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40), ensuring that the generated income will be redistributed among the population (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 20; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 49; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 39). Regarding other forms of carbon tax, Die Grünen mention enforcing a kerosene tax at the European level which they would introduce in Germany for internal flights until the European Union take a decision (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 37). Les Écologistes propose to include the textile industry in the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)¹¹, abolish free allowances within the EU ETS and accelerate the implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which sets a price on imported GHG emissions. In addition, they would abolish favourable tax conditions for internal air transportation and road freight (Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 48). MDG sustain the CBAM and would approve a binding escalation plan for a carbon tax in line with climate objectives to promote the development and adoption of zero-emission technology (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 40). Another proposal is to abolish favourable tax conditions and subsidies for fossil fuels sectors (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 5; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p.

¹¹ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets_en

11) and transfer these resources to social classes and industries most exposed to the transition (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 5).

Besides carbon prices, Green parties propose other types of eco-taxes. For instance, Die Grünen, Les Écologistes and MDG would decrease the tax-on-added value (TAV) on fruits, vegetables, biological food, fair trade coffee, and plant-based milk alternatives, low-carbon transportations, second-hand goods, reparation services transports, so that people can afford to live “green”, while the TAV would increase on meat, highly processed food, alcohol, plane tickets, thermal engine cars, and luxury products (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 51; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 46; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 39).

Green parties mention the introduction of a plastic tax to disadvantage the production of plastic products from new sources and for packaging difficult to recycle, while making recycled or re-used plastic packages more competitive (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 14; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 28; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 16), and increase taxes on non-recyclable waste (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 14).

MDG bring forward other proposals such as the introduction of a tax on the deposition of mining waste to encourage the re-use of such material (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 15), introduce a nature tax to halt harmful and unnecessary intervention on Norwegian nature and to increase the competitiveness of solutions and technology having a low environmental impact. In addition, they would adopt favorable tax conditions for enterprises and privates having low environmental impact or that contribute to increase the natural capital (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 39). Finally, MDG would combine higher eco-taxes with reductions on other taxes, such as employers’ tax or on-value-added tax, aiming to provide an overall tax relief for business adopting climate friendly solutions (Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, pp. 39, 45).

5.3.5 Summarising the findings

	France	Germany	Italy	Norway
SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY				
not only GDP, but other factors should be included				
Growth	Finance climate adaptation policies Debts-relief and restructuring Sustain local communities projects New sustainable partnerships, especially in Africa	Finance climate adaptation policies Introduce a climate risk insurance Debts-relief and restructuring Reform global financial institutions Partnerships focusing on innovation for climate neutrality	Reform the global financial institutions Develop new partnerships in the Mediterranean Region, Africa, South America and Asia emerging economy	Increase resources devolved to climate mitigation and adaptation policies in developing countries Debt-relief and restructuring
Solidarity with the Global South	Universal access to health and education enhance local agriculture, while respecting the environment	Support local financial systems to grant access to social security, health and education		Support local financial systems to improve essential welfare state services, build infrastructure and handle criminality Develop energy-efficient buildings and transportations Sustain UN-Habitats for carbon-neutral cities
Strategies for a sustainable society	Political level The state is a key actor for the transition Cooperation at the EU and international level is fundamental Economic level Invest in the social and solidary economy Invest in research and education The transition will foster the creation of green jobs Social level Reduce working hours Enhance flexible working conditions	Political level The state is a key actor for the transition, Cooperation at the EU and international level is fundamental Economic level Investment in green technology The transition will foster the creation of green jobs Invest in research and education (for instance, ESD) Social level Reduce working hours Enhance flexible working conditions Social protection schemes for workers, training and education	Political level The State is a key actor for the transition Cooperation at the EU and international level is fundamental Economic level Investment in renewable sources and in energy efficiency plan The transition will foster the creation of green jobs Social level Work less because of technological innovation Enhance flexible working conditions Improve parental leave conditions	Political level The state is a key actor in the transition, Cooperation at the international level is fundamental. Norway should participate more in the EU arena. Economic level Investment in green technology and research The transition will foster the creation of green jobs Social level Reduce working hours Enhance flexible working conditions Grant more free time to parents with young children Extend work-life balance policies to the self-employed and those in temporary occupations
SOCIAL POLICIES				
Child allowances	For all children	For all children. Those those living in low-income households must receive an increased amount.	Not mentioned	For all children
Income allowances	For all individuals >18 years old	For all individuals regardless their employment status, encouraging people to work so that those perceiving a law wage would not loose their social benefits. Students and trainee should be included	Support "citizenship income" but the measure should be modified.	Minimum income schemes can be addressed to those already perceiving other social benefits
Energy poverty	Financial benefit to low-income households Investments in energy efficiency plans Progressive taxation on energy price Ticket Freedom Climate and other benefits for using low-carbon transportation	Financial benefits to all, even if receiving other social security benefits such as unemployment and house allowances Invest in energy efficiency plans Expand the grid network and fair energy price Pay-as-you go financing scheme and incentive to purchase an electric vehicle for low-income households	Financial benefits to all, but low-income households should be prioritised. Invest in energy efficiency plan, especially for social housing Cap on gas price and modify energy taxation Free public transportation for people <30 years old Offer income-based incentives to purchase the first electric car	Financial benefits to all Invest in energy efficiency plan and encourage to save energy Fixed energy price, but it should not be too cheap Decrease the price for public transportation, people <26 years old should travel for free, and other incentive for using low-carbon transportation.
Minimum wage	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Pension schemes	Avoid old-age poverty and allow workers in dangerous occupation to retire before	Increase basic pension	Increase basic pension and change pension system	Flexible retirement age and adapt pension schemes considering the social and market situation
Workers in carbon-intensive jobs	economic support while attending training public insurance to protect farmers from harvest loss		Training and re-skilling	
TAXATION				
Reform national tax system	Progressive taxation			
	For assets exceeding €2 million plus bonus/malus adjustment Tax on inheritance corresponding to minimum €200,000	For assets exceeding €2 million	Adopt a progressive wealth tax including all persons	Progressive rate for inheritance exceeding NOK 20 million; increase taxes on secondary residences
Tax on personal wealth		25%	25%	
Tax on multinational enterprises	25% plus bonus-malus adjustment			honest amount of taxes for income generated in Norway
Eco-taxes			Yes	

6 Discussion

In the first part of the analysis, I have focused on what strategies Green parties would adopt to implement the transition towards a more sustainable, solidary, and fairer society.

The four Green parties sustain that unlimited economic growth is impossible on a planet with finite resources, GDP cannot be the only indicator to measure the well-being of a country, and society should re-think the economy by adopting a socio-ecologic model that respects planetary boundaries. Despite these considerations, none of the Green parties have explicitly concluded that the capitalistic model must be abandoned, nor are there significant policies pointing towards the post-growth approach. Instead, it seems that the Greens' parties manifestos tend to favour a blended approach of ecological modernisation and Green New Deal. Several elements are pointing towards ecological modernisation, such as the centrality of investments in renewable energies, technological development, financing Research and Development (R&D) activities and adopting measures fostering climate-friendly behaviour. For instance, the preferred Greens' strategy to tackle energy prices and prevent energy poverty is to speed up the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, investments in building renovation and low-carbon transportation. Investing resources in green technology helping to achieve a zero-emission society is another essential measure, and Die Grünen and MDG especially underline it. Les Écologistes and AVS are less insistent on technology. For instance, Les Écologistes, instead, tend to give more importance to financing the social and solidary economy, along with supporting research in crucial areas for achieving climate goals and education to prepare future generations to face eco-social challenges; AVS insist on investments in energy efficiency plans and renewable resources. It is worth noting that the importance attributed to technology clashes with the original Green parties' idea that technologies are not the solution to solve environmental challenges (Burchell, 2002; Gahrton, 2015).

Finally, the four parties widely support eco-taxes to influence consumers to adopt climate-friendly behaviours. Green proposals to incentivise sustainable mobilities or increase taxes on waste to reduce consumption are good examples.

In presenting their strategies to implement the transition, Green parties attribute a pivotal role to the State because they believe it to be the only actor with the power and resources

necessary to implement the transition (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, p. 30; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, p. 57; Les Écologistes, 2022, p. 56; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 48). The reliance on the central state confirms the ambiguity of Green parties that, on the one hand, criticise the state for its centralisation and bureaucracy and, on the other hand, need the State's resources to implement local welfare (Barry & Doherty, 2001) and implement the transition.

Furthermore, the State should also promote action beyond the national borders. Green parties consider European cooperation and the Green Deal essential tools to tackle climate change, alongside joint efforts to involve the Global South in setting and achieving climate goals. The cooperation at the international level is in continuity with the Greens' idea that environmental issues cannot be solved by nation-states alone.

In addition, the centrality of the state and the cooperation in the international arena are compatible with the Green New Deal approach. They find support in Duit's work, which sustains that the nation-state manages natural resources, influences citizens' behaviours, and decides whether or not to cooperate at the international level (Duit, 2016, p. 69).

Solidarity with the Global South and redistribution of resources and power between the wealthiest and poorest countries find ample space in Green parties' manifestos. Even though the four Green parties are motivated to improve the social and economic conditions that would foster the transition to a low-carbon society worldwide, they do not push as far as transforming the Global North into a steady-state economy. Instead, the strategies proposed are fairer partnerships and trade of renewable energies, balancing the power in international organisations, i.e., the UN and IMF, and offering more economic support to low-income countries.

The concern for social justice is another element pointing to the Green New Deal, which is visible at the national and global levels. Indeed, the four Green parties propose compensation schemes, such as income allowances or energy incentives, and redistribution of resources through taxation to protect the worst-off. Finally, the creation of "green jobs" is widely emphasised by the four Green parties. However, it remains to be determined if "green jobs" would be effectively decoupled from GHG emissions and how they would ensure growth within planetary boundaries.

Although ecological modernisation and the Green New Deal are the predominant strategies, elements compatible with the post-growth approach emerge when Green parties present work-life balance policies. Indeed, the four parties agreed to shorten working hours to share the workload and to grant more free time, with the French Green supporting this solution from the 1990s (Barry & Doherty, 2001, p. 595). Apart from this, no concrete proposal exists to adopt a Universal Basic Income or Universal Basic Services. However, the four Green parties favour income allowances and access to universal health and education services. Income allowances are conceived to integrate incomes rather than as a total wage replacement. Die Grünen is the party that goes closer to a universal basic income, proposing a security guarantee to protect people during uncertain periods (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 107-108).

Concerning the sustainability of the welfare state, Green parties do not seem to address this problem in their party manifestos. The proposed tax reforms seem to be conceived to ensure social justice rather than an alternative way to finance the welfare state. Pension scheme reforms are limited to ensure that retirees are not exposed to old-age poverty instead of finding solutions to cope with the shrinking of the labour market. Die Grünen and MDG are the only two Green parties mentioning this problem. In this regard, the Germans propose including more women and immigrants in the labour market. Meanwhile, the Norwegians sustain that every change in pension schemes should consider generational aspects and be economically sustainable. The general lack of policies in this sense could be explained by the fact that Green parties emphasise the creation of “green jobs”, which would include more people in the labour market.

The preference for ecological modernisation and the Green New Deal may not be surprising as ecological modernisation is the most pursued approach in the Global North (Bridgen & Schoyen, 2022). As outlined in Burchell (2002), Green parties are small and marginal in a well-established political arena and must compete to receive votes. Proposing radical post-growth policies may be unattractive and encounter public resistance, as outlined in Barry&Doherty (2001). Besides, Gourley and Khamis (2023) studied whether economic conditions impact Green parties' electoral outcomes in 26 European countries, concluding that European Green parties are more popular in periods of economic growth and that voters

show more interest in environmental issues when the economy is doing well (Gourley & Khamis, 2023, p. 11).

In the second part of the analysis, I have examined the social policies proposed in the Green parties' manifestos. The results show that overall Green parties are committed to addressing social justice, presenting policies that only partially mirror national welfare states. The Norwegian Green Party is not the only one offering generous and universal social benefits as I would have expected. For instance, regarding child and income allowances, Die Grünen proposes that the young living in low-income households could work without paying taxes. Les Écologistes would offer economic benefits to all adults aged 18 and above. Nonetheless, there are considerable differences with the Italian Green Party, which dedicates little space to these two themes. The "Southern welfare state syndrome" emerges in the Italian case as there is no mention of child allowances compared to the other countries, and the "citizenship income" is barely addressed in the party manifesto. AVS mentions only that it should be edited following the Scientific Commission proposals, without presenting any suggestion to improve it or an alternative social policy.

The picture is slightly different regarding policies addressing energy poverty. AVS, Die Grünen and MDG would extend economic benefits to everyone. For instance, AVS would open them to every household, although they would prioritise low-income ones; Die Grünen proposes that a household should receive an energy bonus even when they already receive other income support such as unemployment schemes or house allowances; MDG proposes offering the same amount to people residing in the same region regardless of income level. Les Écologistes would target the neediest households.

Regarding the protection of workers employed in carbon-intensive sectors. MDG and Die Grünen underline that offering social protection to this category of workers is important. Still, they seem to have more concrete proposals for re-skilling and job-to-job transition. In contrast, Les Écologistes offer more social protection alternatives and include farmers as workers at risk. AVS limit the necessity to provide training opportunities to workers affected by the transition. Still, they are concerned about Italian labour conditions in general, addressing issues such as precarious employment, security at work, minimum wage, and unjustified layoffs.

Overall, the social policies presented by the German, French and Norwegian Green parties seem more structured and concrete than those proposed by the Italian Green Party. Even though I did not examine environmental protection policies, this result contributes to strengthening the analysis of Zimmermann and Graziano (2020), which includes Italy in the category of countries performing worst in both social and environmental protection, while Germany, France and Norway belong to groups of countries performing well in the social dimension. Nonetheless, AVS would improve social policies in Italy, for instance, by modifying parental leave conditions, improve early childhood education and include more women in the labour market, in addition to offering to retribute caregivers of small children or the elderly.

National differences also play a role in explaining why MDG does not propose a minimum wage, as in Norway only nine sectors impose a minimum wage¹², while in general, wages are established by nationwide collective agreements. By contrast, for the other Green parties, a minimum wage is an essential point, and they offer consistent examples in why and how to implement it.

Concerning taxation, the four Green parties give great importance to fiscality, and their proposal are aligned, although Les Écologistes seem to be the most radical being the only one proposing to introduce an environmental tax on wealth. The four parties emphasise the necessity to cooperate at the international level, especially concerning the taxation of multinational enterprises and challenging fiscal havens. This last point finds confirmation in Röth&Schwander (2021), who outlined that Green parties are influential in preventing market-liberal governments from cutting taxes on big corporations and high incomes.

¹² [These are](#) clean services, construction, electricians, fish processing enterprises, freight transport by road, agriculture and horticulture, hotels, restaurants and catering, the maritime construction industry, and passenger transport by tour bus.

A final observation is that the “holistic approach” to social policy as explained in Barry&Doherty (2001) emerges in the Green parties manifestos here examined. This is especially evident in their proposal to tackle energy poverty. Besides offering economic support to pay energy bills, they would invest in projects to improve housing conditions, reduce energy costs at the source, and offer incentives to use low-carbon transportation. In addition, Green parties’ manifestos contain proposals for decentralised urban planning so that people would have, in general, less necessity to travel. Indeed, essential services such as schools, cultural and shopping centres, and work offices will be in proximity in each neighbourhood (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, 2022, pp. 39-40; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021, pp. 36-37; Les Écologistes, 2022, pp. 93-94; Miljøpartiet de Grønne, 2021, p. 70). This could also be linked to Greens’ importance for local communities and de-centralisation.

7 Conclusion

This master’s thesis started with a general introduction to Green parties’ origins and values, which are important to understand their commitment to environmental protection and social justice. The aim was twofold. On the one hand, it attempted to analyse how Green parties would implement the transition towards a low-carbon society, considering their commitment to ecological sustainability and solidarity with the Global South. On the other hand, it tried to present what kind of tax reforms and social policies Green parties would implement to grand social justice while protecting the people most exposed to the adverse effects of climate mitigation policies.

Overall, my findings confirm previous research and findings. For instance, Green parties are committed to social equality and tackling poverty, as mentioned in Barry&Doherty (2001), and are willing to implement progressive taxation as mentioned in Röth&Schwander (2021).

Furthermore, even though Green parties firmly commit to ecological sustainability, their idea of transition towards a sustainable society does not draw on the de-growth approach but rather ecological modernisation and the Green New Deal approach. This result confirms the general preferences of policymakers for these two approaches. Indeed, compared to the de-growth approach that would hinder economic growth, at least in the Global North, ecological modernisation and the Green New Deal would ensure prosperity, but in an

environment-friendly way, using green and modern technology for this purpose. The de-growth approach is way more complicated to put into practice, there are few ideas on how to implement it, and it doubts that decoupling growth and GHG emissions is possible in a short time, not to mention the potential resistance that it would encounter.

Green parties propose several social policies to protect low-income households and the most exposed to climate mitigation policies, along with adopting a fairer tax system. This confirms their commitment to social justice and equality values by pursuing an “environmentalism of the poor”. Nonetheless, they also partially mirror the welfare state in which they are embedded, as, for example, AVS’ social policies are generally relatively weak compared to the other Green parties.

Parties’ manifestos contain data that help understand and analyse what kind of policies a political party is interested in and how it would implement them. Nonetheless, if I had the opportunity to interview politicians or policymakers, I would have had a deeper comprehension of the local context and a broader overview of the social policies they would adopt. In addition, considering the Greens’ support for decentralisation and participatory democracy, I believe it would have been interesting to compare the local, national, and supranational levels, i.e. the European Greens, and examine whether different approaches and social policies would have emerged. It would have been worthwhile to investigate if there have been any changes to the policies suggested for implementing a shift towards a low-carbon society and the social policies designed to safeguard the most vulnerable over the years. For instance, it is possible that such policies were more radical in the 70s and 80s but have since become less so.

Finally, Green parties are not the only ones concerned with the environment and social justice, as these two issues are widespread among left-wing parties. Therefore, it would have been interesting to compare the Greens with other political parties and explore whether significant differences would have emerged.

Annex 1: code explanation

CODES	EXPLANATION
Ecological sustainability and solidarity	This is the main theme. It includes codes capturing what living within planetary boundaries means for Green parties, including policies to recalibrate relationship between work and personal life, and proposal to redistribute resources between the Global North and the Global South.
economic growth	it refers to what Green parties think about economic growth, and what alternative to GDP they present to measure progress and well-being
solidarity with the Global South	It refers to what policies Green parties would implement to redistribute economic resources and power between the Global North and the Global South
work-life balance	It refers to policies such as child education and care, parental leave, flexible work conditions, life-long learning and long-term care, which are meant to improve working conditions and give people more free-time. This code is helpful to understand which approach Green parties support to implement the transition towards a sustainable society. Indeed, one of the ideas proposed by academics in favour of the post-growth is to make people less reliant on work, leading to less production, and thus consumption.
Green approach towards a sustainable future	This is the main theme. It includes the three most debated approaches to implement a sustainable welfare state and low-carbon society
Ecological modernisation	It distinguishes ideas about how society and economy should change, which role is attributed to the state and what social policies should be adopted, according to the ecological modernisation approach
Green New Deal	It distinguishes ideas about how society and economy should change, which role is attributed to the state and what social policies should be adopted, according to the Green New Deal approach
Post-growth	It distinguishes ideas about how society and economy should change, which role is attributed to the state and what social policies should be adopted, according to the post-growth approach
Social policies to prevent inequalities	This is the main theme
child allowances	it refers to Greens' social policies to prevent child poverty
income allowances	it refers to Greens' social policies to support people in difficult time
minimum wage	It refers to Greens' proposal to adopt a minimum wage to prevent in work-poverty
pension schemes	it refers to Green's pension schemes to prevent old-age poverty
prevent energy poverty	This is a sub-theme that is included in policies to prevent inequalities. It is composed by the three policies archetype, in addition to economic benefit to encourage people to use low-carbon transportation
better compensation	economic benefits offered to households when energy prices are high
reduced energy bills	policies to reduce the cost of energy at the source, for instance asking energy company to block their prices
thermal efficiency policies	proposal for implementing building renewal improving energy efficiency
incentive for low carbon transportation	policies to encourage people to use low-carbon transportation, such as public transportation, bikes, electric cars, car sharing etc.
workers in carbon-intensive sectors	This is a sub-theme that is included in policies to prevent inequalities. It refers specifically to social policies addressed to workers in carbon-intensive sectors.
social investment policies	policies to support workers in the transition towards green jobs. Such policies can be training, life-long learning, or assistance to find a new occupation
social protection policies	policies to support workers who may become unemployed. Such policies can be unemployment benefits, early retirement, income allowances while attending training programs
Reform tax systems	This is the main theme. It refers to tax reform to implement a fairer and suitable taxation
Eco taxes	Taxes conceived to foster behavioural change, rewarding people who adopt climate-friendly behaviour
Tax besides labour	Taxes conceived to foster behavioural change, rewarding people who adopt climate-friendly behaviour
Tax evasion and fraud	Fiscal measures conceived to fight tax evasion and fraud
Tax on multinational enterprises	Taxes reform for multinational enterprises
Tax redistribution	Measures to redistribute resources among the population

Annexe 2: codes counting

CODES	COUNTRIES				Total
	France	Germany	Italy	Norway	
Sustainability	8	12	6	15	41
idea about growth	2	2	1	2	7
solidarity with the Global South	5	7	1	9	22
work-life balance (child education and care)	1	3	4	4	12
Green approach to sustainability	16	24	14	12	66
Ecological modernisation	4	8	2	3	17
Green New Deal	11	12	8	7	38
Post-growth	1	4	4	2	11
Social policies to prevent inequalities	26	32	13	25	96
child allowances	1	2	0	2	5
income allowances	1	4	1	4	10
minimum wage	1	3	2	0	6
pension schemes	2	1	1	2	6
prevent energy poverty	13	16	8	14	51
better compensation	2	3	1	2	8
reduced energy bills	2	2	2	1	7
thermal efficiency policies	3	4	1	2	10
incentive for low carbon transportation	6	7	4	9	26
workers in carbon-intensive sectors	8	6	1	3	18
social investment policies	5	5	1	2	13
social protection policies	3	1	0	1	5
Reform tax systems	19	13	14	28	74
Eco taxes	7	7	3	19	36
Tax besides labour	3	2	5	5	15
Tax evasion and fraud	4	1	3	2	10
Tax on multinational enterprises	2	2	1	1	6
Tax redistribution	3	1	2	1	7

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