



**mouvement
écologique**

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Coalition agreement of the new government:

Positive accents, but a fundamental approach to reform from a sustainability perspective is missing

The new government's coalition agreement includes a range of instruments in the various areas of sustainable development. These are positive. However, there are fundamental questions about the government's basic orientation and prioritization as well as the concrete implementation in practice.

According to the Mouvement Écologique, this results in the following analysis:

- **Commitment to important existing strategic plans**

First of all, a particularly positive aspect: existing important strategic plans are recognised as such and not called into question. For example, there is explicit support for prioritising the implementation of the existing National Nature Conservation Plan (PNPN3), which sets out the important guidelines and priorities of nature conservation policy. Its implementation is of fundamental importance for the protection of species and nature in Luxembourg. Furthermore, it is committed to the recently created National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) and the national mobility strategy (PNM2035). These commitments are also significant, as both documents set out important fundamental goals and instruments for reducing CO2 emissions and promoting sustainable mobility. These strategies were certainly not perfect from the perspective of an environmental organisation and even more far-reaching steps in terms of sustainable development would be necessary. Nevertheless, it is important that there is now continuity in this respect with the new government. However, it is regrettable that the coalition agreement does not specify more concrete steps for the implementation of these plans (especially in relation to the PNPN).

- **Quite a diverse catalogue of specific instruments**

The coalition agreement also contains a range of important concrete statements and instruments. The following are just a few examples: promoting regional agriculture in all public canteens (although organic products are only mentioned for school canteens), pre-financing certain energy-related projects for households with fewer financial resources, creating a "model" for greening towns and villages, stipulating the installation of solar panels on new buildings, promoting local heating networks, creating a soil protection law, promoting the "économie circulaire" and much more. The prioritisation of energy

saving and the rejection of nuclear power plants in the Greater Region should also be seen as positive, for example - although it remains to be seen whether this is actually a step in the right direction although it remains to be seen whether this is tantamount to actually questioning nuclear power or not. The "PIB bien-être" is also positively cited as the first important instrument in the economic section (sic), although the necessary link between this analysis and the budget priorities is not mentioned. However, the latter is essential if this instrument is to be of more than just symbolic use.

In this respect, the coalition agreement offers a fairly broad arsenal of instruments to be used in the various areas of sustainable development, even if these are not specified in detail in many areas.

- **Urgent structural reforms - which are also essential from a scientific perspective - are not included**

However, in addition to this positive analysis, there are considerable fundamental weaknesses. The new government is focussing on "pragmatic" environmental protection and nature conservation - as partly announced in the elections: this is the "black-blue thread" running through the entire document.

The basic idea seems to be that we can stick to the current model and orientation of our society and economy and that it would be sufficient to make them more "sustainable" in a pragmatic way by means of a series of (mainly voluntaristic) instruments.

For example, there is an argument in favour of continuous economic growth, which in the opinion of numerous scientists (both the World Climate Council and the World Biodiversity Council) is not compatible with sustainable development. Moreover, it remains unclear what the phrase "intelligent, durable and inclusive growth" in the coalition programme really means in practice...

Accordingly, the instruments required to implement the necessary changes to the current system in terms of a sustainable orientation are not included in the coalition programme: For example

- the implementation of a sustainable tax reform (i.e. greater taxation of environmental consumption);
- the implementation of "green budgeting" (i.e. an analysis of the national budget to determine the extent to which current public funds are actually fuelling the climate and biodiversity crisis instead of counteracting it) and the abolition of environmentally harmful subsidies;
- an analysis of how the current pension system can be made less dependent on growth;
- a reform of institutions and bodies so that the voice of sustainability is more strongly represented and can be heard in important (socio-)political processes ...

The fact is that even the best instruments in the individual policy areas can only have limited success if such fundamental course corrections are not made to the current system. Without tackling these key reforms, however, it will inevitably not be possible to make Luxembourg fit for the future and sustainable (!) for future generations and to tackle the biodiversity and climate crisis in a real way.

Perhaps this perspective also explains why there is no real opening up of the social culture of discussion. For example, the coalition agreement "merely" states that the direction of agricultural that the direction of agricultural policy should be discussed with agricultural circles. The statement that environmental and consumer protection organisations should also be involved is missing, even though the representatives of the current coalition parties promised this during a round table discussion organised by the Mouvement Ecologique in the run-up to the elections. The need to improve citizens'

right of access to information is also not mentioned in the coalition agreement.

The dilemma is also evident at the level of regional planning: regional planning can only succeed if it also has more legal instruments for implementation, otherwise it will remain a toothless tiger. In the coalition agreement, however, there is no clear commitment to central objectives of regional planning, e.g. with regard to prioritising the development of central locations (CDA) and limiting the population growth of other localities. The new government is sticking to the primacy of municipal autonomy over national regional planning, which means that the implementation of the regional planning programme is being called into question to some extent.

- **Relevant aspects in conflict with sustainable development**

This point of view is also reflected in the attempt to do justice to everyone: Expansion of private transport by means of numerous new road construction projects (e.g. investigation into the feasibility of widening further motorways to 3 lanes, new bypasses) while at the same time promoting public transport.

Or the fact that, although organic farming is to be promoted, there is no clear commitment that - despite all the appreciation of conventional farming - it should be given priority in funding projects.

- priority must be given to organic farming, e.g. with regard to support measures.

Equally problematic is the fact that the importance of the "green zone" is to be reduced, among other things through the possibility of extending the building perimeters, thus threatening the real danger of further urban sprawl and fragmentation of the open countryside.

In the same spirit, the government appears to be sticking to the controversial free trade agreements, such as the Mercosur Agreement. These are currently diametrically opposed to any need for sustainable development.

- **The vague wording leaves the orientation of numerous instruments open**

It is also difficult to interpret many of the statements in the coalition agreement as their wording is very general. It is very often stated that reforms are to be implemented, but without specifying the direction of these reforms. For example, the agricultural law is to be analysed and corrections made if necessary. However, the meaning of these corrections, e.g. whether or not agriculture should be more land-based in future, is not mentioned. Or when there is talk of a (thoroughly necessary) simplification of procedures in the area of nature conservation, it is not clear whether this can be at the expense of nature conservation or not. According to the coalition agreement, this at least cannot be ruled out a priori.

The treaty does not advocate a systematic reduction in the use of pesticides, but rather "durable utilisation". Only a total ban would in itself be considered "durable" in itself. In the case of glyphosate, it appears that no national ban is being sought, but rather a gradual phase-out is being advocated at EU level.

Another example: the introduction of the principle of "silence is consent" may make limited sense. However, if this principle were to apply even if third parties were affected by a decision, this would not be permissible in any form. It is unacceptable for those affected to be deprived of their rights if the

public authorities do not work within the specified time frame.

One can be particularly sceptical at the level of regional planning: a revision of the "Programme directeur" has been announced. "

In this respect, the Mouvement Ecologique has a mixed assessment of the analysis of the coalition agreement:

In addition to a whole series of important and positive instruments, which are absolutely to be welcomed, there is a very strong focus on a voluntaristic approach, on consensus-orientated instruments and, as a priority, on an incentive policy.

The fundamental orientation of a number of important reforms and measures in this context is often inadequately explained (which may seem understandable in the context of a coalition agreement). Ultimately, it is not clear whether the CSV-DP government has effectively recognised the urgency of the climate and biodiversity crisis.

The fact is that, from the point of view of the Mouvement Ecologique, these crises cannot only be solved with a pragmatic approach. Rather, rapid and structural reforms are required. The time available to implement the necessary course corrections to the current model is ultimately very short.

There is therefore no way around setting a more fundamental course for a sustainable transition! The coalition agreement does not necessarily rule these out a priori, but unfortunately does not address them with the necessary consistency.

The introduction of the "proportionality" of decisions is also likely to give rise to numerous discussions. It is inevitable that there will be different views on when climate and biodiversity protection should or should not be prioritised.

The efficiency and sustainability of the coalition agreement and the new government will be measured by whether climate neutrality is effectively achieved with the necessary speed, biodiversity loss is halted and biodiversity is restored in a comprehensible manner.

The Mouvement Ecologique will judge the government on what it subsequently does.

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