

The myth of „Green Europe“: reconciling the internal and external dimensions of EU environmental policy

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One of the many myths about Europe and the European Union (EU) in particular is the one about its successful environmental performance and its multiple activities for creating and promoting environmental policies. The aim of this paper is to analyse the foundations, the reception and the substance of the myth of “Green Europe” and to thereby situate it among other myths on Europe. Given its important external dimension compared to other myths, the paper proceeds by analysing the myth of “Green Europe” in both its internal and its external perspective. After having outlined the relevant actors in the creation of the myth and their strategies, we explore to which extent it is actually received by potential addressees. Drawing on opinion poll data, we find that the addressees overall respond to the myth creation. However, one important condition for the sustainability of this myth reception is the extent to which it is complemented by substantial politics. Drawing on various performance indicators, we find that the myth of “Green Europe” is more likely to sustain in its external than its internal dimension, since the EU is suffering from of severe implementation deficits in environmental issues internally, while still performing well at a global level. What is more, the external aspect of the “Green Europe” myth is also compatible with other myths on the EU’s international role, such as the myth of Europe as a civilian and/or a normative Power, while it is competing with other internal myths, such as the one on “Economic” or “Social” Europe. The paper concludes by stating that the myth of “Green Europe” is most likely to survive if it is complemented by a more substantial basis and successfully integrated into other myths on Europe.