Green Horizons: Building Tomorrow

Main topic & European value

- **Core topips:** The European Green Deal: balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility and climate justice
- **European values:** Sustainability, solidarity and responsibility

Educational objectives

- ✓ Explain the purpose and long-term goals of the European Green Deal.
- ✓ Identify key Green Deal policies and the environmental, economic and social issues they address.
- ✓ Analyse how environmental, social, civic and economic factors influence one another.
- ✓ Apply sustainable decision-making to realistic community challenges.
- ✓ Evaluate long-term consequences of sustainability decisions.
- ✓ Balance competing priorities while designing sustainable communities.

Scenario overview

It is 2025 and the European Union has selected the player's city to become one of the first Green Horizon Cities, a flagship project demonstrating how communities can grow economically while achieving climate neutrality and improving quality of life.

As the city's newly appointed "chief sustainability manager", the player is responsible for shaping its future until 2050. With European funding, they must transform the city into a prosperous, resilient and sustainable city.

Each year brings new opportunities and unexpected challenges. New technologies emerge, European policies evolve, businesses seek investment opportunities, extreme weather events become more frequent and citizens express changing priorities. The player's decisions throughout the timeline influence every aspect of city life.

Will they prioritise affordable housing or renewable energy? How will they protect biodiversity while allowing the city to expand? Should they welcome new factories if they create jobs but increase emissions? Can they ensure that people affected by the green transition are not left behind?

Every decision affects and shapes the city's future. By 2050, the city will become a living reflection of the balance or imbalance that the player creates between economic growth, environmental responsibility, social awareness and climate justice.

Core mechanics & tasks

- **Time progression:** The game advances from 2025 to 2050. Each challenge represents a time-skip of a few years and involves different mechanics. New technologies, funding opportunities and environmental crises appear as time progresses, leading the player to face different challenges.
- **City planning:** The player builds different districts and buildings across neighbourhoods by selecting specific projects and services that shape the city's future (solar parks, wind farms, affordable housing, electric buses, cycle highways, recycling centres, green industrial parks, innovation hubs, smart energy grids, urban forests, etc).
- **Resource management:** Time passes and the player must now manage new needs with limited resources, such as budget, economic crises, energy supply, population growth, public support and environmental quality. Every investment involves trade-offs.
- **Dynamic event cards:** Unexpected events force the player to adapt to various situations and make decisions in response to challenges (heatwave, drought, flooding, energy price crisis, electric vehicle boom, breakthrough

in digital technology, public protests, biodiversity loss, factory closure, large population growth).

- **Policy decisions:** As a few years pass, the player must now make changes in city-wide policies (expand renewable energy, introduce congestion charging, protect natural habitats, renovate public buildings, invest in circular economy businesses, improve public transport, support local agriculture, launch worker retraining programmes). Every policy affects multiple indicators simultaneously.
- **City dashboard:** Between each challenge, the player can monitor various aspects of the city's environmental and socio-economic impact (CO_2 emissions, air quality, biodiversity, energy security, climate resilience, employment, economic growth, housing affordability, public happiness). At the end of the game, in 2050, the player receives a complete sustainability report showing how well the city achieved the objectives of the European Green Deal.
- **Various potential endings based on the player's choices:**
  - **Green pioneer:** The city becomes one of Europe's leading sustainable communities, combining economic prosperity, environmental protection and social fairness.
  - **Balanced progress:** Most Green Deal objectives have been achieved, although some challenges remain for future generations.
  - **Economic boom:** Rapid economic growth has created jobs, but pollution, biodiversity loss and climate risks threaten long-term prosperity.
  - **Falling behind:** Poor planning and short-term decisions leave the city struggling with environmental degradation, rising costs and declining quality of life.

Player role

The player is the chief sustainability manager of a brand new European city. Rather than controlling every aspect of the city, they coordinate long-term development by selecting projects, responding to unexpected events and deciding how public investments are used. Their role is to create a city that remains prosperous while reducing environmental impacts and ensuring that the benefits of the green transition are shared fairly among all citizens.

NPC profiles

Name	Role in the story & function in the gameplay	Personality traits
Mayor Elena Rossi	City Mayor, approves investments and expects visible results, provides guidance about European Green Deal policies	Ambitious, pragmatic
Dr Aisha Khan	Environmental scientist explaining ecological impacts of key decisions	Analytical, calm
Lucas Berger	Manufacturing company director considering green investments	Practical, cautious
Eva Stankov	Founder of a clean technology start-up	Creative, optimistic
Mako Basonki	Worker from a traditional energy sector concerned about employment	Honest, realistic
Sophie Gustav	Youth climate activist representing younger generations	Passionate, determined
Clara Dubois	Leader of a neighbourhood association, representative and spokesperson for citizens	Empathetic, community-oriented

Dialogue options, choices & consequences

Dialogue or dilemma	Available options (2-3)	Short-term & long-term consequences
The city's electricity demand is increasing due to population growth.	❍ Build a large solar park. ❍ Expand wind energy. ❍ Continue relying on fossil fuels.	Short-term: Different construction costs, public approval varies, energy reliability changes.

	❍ Invest in a combination of renewable sources	Long-term: CO_2 emissions, energy independence
A company wants to build a large manufacturing plant nearby.	❍ Approve immediately. ❍ Require strict environmental standards. ❍ Reject the project. ❍ Negotiate greener production in exchange for financial support	Balances employment, investment, pollution, innovation and public opinion
Several summers of extreme heat affect vulnerable citizens.	❍ Plant thousands of trees. ❍ Build cooling centres. ❍ Upgrade buildings. ❍ Invest in all measures but reduce spending elsewhere	Different impacts on health, costs, climate adaptation and public wellbeing
Coal and gas industries are shrinking.	❍ Create retraining programmes. ❍ Offer temporary financial support. ❍ Attract green industries. ❍ Delay the transition.	Different impacts on unemployment, emissions, economic resilience and social fairness

Summary, debriefing & reflection questions

- What is the main objective of the European Green Deal?
- Which investment had the greatest long-term impact on your city?
- How did your choices affect both the environment and the economy?
- Why is the concept of a Just Transition important?
- Which Green Deal objective proved the hardest to achieve?
- How did climate change influence your long-term planning?
- Which Green Deal initiatives could realistically improve your community?

References & additional resources

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