

Post-Paris EU climate policy briefings

At the Paris Climate Summit, 195 governments agreed to reduce man-made greenhouse gas emissions to zero during the second half of this century and to limit average global temperature rise to 1.5°C. As signatories to the Paris Agreement, the EU and its Member States now need to revise and strengthen their climate and energy policies, and all other relevant policies to make them coherent with the Paris objectives. Our briefing papers provide a top line overview of the processes that will contribute to the needed zero-carbon transformation.

Climate policy in Southeast Europe: Revision of INDCs

April 2016

What?

All countries of Southeast Europe (SEE) are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and have signed up to the Paris Agreement. As they all seek to join the EU well before 2030, their climate pledges need to be in line with the EU's target, which is currently to reduce emissions by at least 40% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

In the run up to Paris, SEE countries developed their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs). In the Paris Agreement, countries acknowledged that the current INDCs, from all countries, are not in line with the agreed long-term objectives to keep temperature rise well below 2°C or to limit them to 1.5°C. Therefore countries agreed to have regular reviews of their targets to assess whether they are in line with the global reductions needed, and provide for regular moments where targets can be improved and resubmitted. The first such moments are the facilitative stocktake in 2018 and the 2020 deadline for resubmitting the post-2020 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

What is at stake?

Our analysis has shown that also the mitigation pledges of the SEE countries are insufficient and do not match the EU's climate goals. Climate action in the region must be ramped up in the next years, particularly since the region is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. It may, in fact, be among the first and worst hit in Europe. The countries need both political pressure and support from the EU, including financial and technical assistance to step up their climate action.

Unfortunately, most of the countries of Southeast Europe wish to further grow their coal fleet till 2030; in fact, 6 to 8 gigawatts of new coal power capacity is planned to be developed, in countries including Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, these countries wish to accede the EU between 2020 and 2030. This means that the fossil-fuel power plants build in the meantime will become liability to EU's citizens. They may also hamper the EU achieving its targets.

Their INDCs and further climate plans will also be subject to the scrutiny of the European Commission to ensure they align Southeast Europe with the EU in terms of climate action. Coupled with local efforts to fight new fossil fuel projects, this should ensure that the region is steered towards a zero-carbon economy, in a just and timely manner. This way, a carbon lock-in would be avoided, for both the EU and the region.

Who are the key players?

For the European Commission: DG Climate Action steers the discussion and puts pressure to the countries during the accession talks and other bilateral meetings. DG NEAR (Neighbourhood and Enlargement



Negotiations) supports this process and coordinates EU development finance that the accession countries receive.

For the European Parliament: there are delegations of MEPs for every SEE country and the Parliament adopts annual resolutions on each country where reference is made to the need for increased climate action. However the EP does not have a strong voice in the process.

What has happened, will likely happen and when?

June – November 2015: All countries of Southeast Europe adopted their INDC and submitted them to the UNFCCC Secretariat; analysis showed that targets do not correspond to EU's goals. In fact, most of the countries claim to reduce emissions compared to 1990 while they're in fact increasing them, compared to current emissions (due to collapse of industry in the 1990s).

2016-2020: Some countries, like e.g. Serbia, are starting a structured process to develop their national climate plans. These will be excellent opportunities to raise the ambition of the INDCs. In other countries, NGOs will need to use the moments of accession process and the Paris Agreement to push for the ratchet up of INDCs to happen before 2020. A more detailed timeline is yet to be determined.

CAN Europe's position

CAN Europe advocates for ambitious climate targets to be adopted in Southeast Europe, leading to a phase out of greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century. We call for the EU to put both political pressure to the countries, but also provide financial and technical assistance so these countries can step up their climate action.

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