

Report

Online Expert Exchange: Visegrad perspectives on the "Fit for 55" climate package

30.05.2021



May
2021

On May 20th 2021, Think Visegrad Platform organised a closed roundtable entitled “Visegrad perspectives on the “Fit for 55” climate package”. The meeting was conducted online and was held under the Chatham House rules. The debate focused on the Central and Eastern European countries’ perceptions of the EU 2030 climate targets, establishing at least 55% emissions cut compared to 1990 levels, and the challenges the V4 countries will face when implementing this new target.

The meeting was hosted and moderated by Žiga Faktor (Head of Brussels Office, EUROPEUM). The panel consisted of representatives of the Czech and Polish governments as well as experts from the civil society of the V4 countries. We welcomed: Ambassador Jaroslav Zajiček (Permanent Representative to COREPER I of the Czech Republic), Monika Figaj (Counsellor to the Minister of Climate and Environment of Poland), Kateřina Davidová (Researcher, EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and Centre for Transport and Energy), Zuzanna Nowak (Research Fellow, PISM), Nolan Theisen (Research Fellow, GLOBSEC Policy Institute) and István Bart (Managing Director, Climate Strategy 2050 Institute). The audience comprised of experts and state representatives from the V4 countries and other Member States as well as from the EU institutions.

Unlike on other issues, the Visegrad group do not share a united position regarding the European Green Deal agenda and in particular the achievement of the 2030 climate targets. Each country has a slightly different starting position stemming from their energy mix and emission-intensity of their economy. While Poland and the Czech Republic face great challenges in their energy sectors due to their reliance on coal for power and heating, Slovakia faces more challenges in its industrial sector. Energy security and energy poverty are also issues these countries are sensitive to. Hungary, on the other hand, won’t face too many challenges when meeting its 2030 national targets.

State representatives also highlighted their wish that the European Commission prepares a detailed assessment of the socio-economic impacts the updated 2030 climate target would have on each

individual Member State, not just the EU as a whole. The panellists have also discussed the role of gas in the transition from coal to renewable energy, yet there were differing opinions on the matter among the participants.

There was more agreement when discussing the planned reforms of the EU ETS. Representatives of the V4 countries are supportive of the extension of the EU ETS to maritime and aviation sectors but are more cautious when it comes to the extension of carbon pricing to road transport and buildings sectors. The most often quoted concern is the fear of negative social impacts this new measure would have on the citizens of lower income countries. An alternative could be to strengthen regulations and standards and implement new policies and measures at both the EU and national levels for the non-ETS sectors. Furthermore, the Modernisation Fund was identified as a major financial instrument for this region, which should be adequately and fairly distributed.

In view of the negotiations following the publication of the “Fit for 55” package, clarifications from the European Commission and more specific guidance on how governments should implement the objectives are expected, as there are multiple implications to take into account. A constant dialogue should be held with stakeholders and representatives of the civil society, in order to find a balance between industrial competitiveness and environmental protection.

Some speakers have raised doubts concerning the effectiveness of a “one-fits-all” system, as they fear EU climate ambitions will not minimise but rather deepen the East-West disparity. The principle of solidarity and sharing of the efforts must be upheld to ensure a fair and just transition for everyone, as well as sufficient climate funding.

The topic of intergenerational equity has been raised as well by some of the speakers. In their view, having intermediate climate targets will better stimulate immediate action, which would alleviate the future generations from the great responsibility to reach climate neutrality by 2050. In other words, we need effort sharing not only between countries but also



May
2021

between generations. If the EU stands by this principle, it can be seen as an example to follow by the rest of the world.

All the panellists agreed that the widening of the East-West gap is not desirable and that the Central and Eastern European countries should be encouraged and supported in their decarbonisation efforts. Some speakers pointed out that the Just Transition Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Fund offer unprecedented opportunities to transform the countries' energy and industrial sectors, enact targeted reforms and allow newer Member States to catch up with older Member States. It is crucial that the V4 countries manage to attract investments in green technologies, which other countries are already benefiting from.

If the V4 countries do not commit to green technologies, they will be disadvantaged in the internal market and will lose competitiveness in the long run. In addition, it is important to consider citizens' perception: according to recent surveys, majority of citizens even in the V4 countries support more ambitious mitigation policies to tackle climate change. Therefore, public opinion should no longer be seen as an obstacle when proposing ambitious environmental policies.



May
2021

About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.

[More about us](#)

About EUROPEUM in Brussels

Building on a long history of EUROPEUM in Prague, we opened our office in Brussels in January 2016. EUROPEUM has been the first think-tank from the Central Europe to branch out to the heart of the European Union. Our motivation has been to follow the debates on EU policies and politics from close and to contribute to them by strengthening the voice of the Czech Republic and other central and east European countries. At the same time, we would like to use our Brussels presence to boost discussions on the EU back in the region, through introducing research by Brussels-based experts, offering their perspective at local events, cooperating with the media, etc.

More about [Brussels Office](#)

Contact

Web: europeum.org

Prague Office address: Staroměstské náměstí 4/1, 110 00, Praha 1

Tel.: +420 212 246 552

E-mail: europeum@europeum.org

Brussels Office address: 77, Avenue de la Toison d'Or. B-1060 Brusel, Belgie

Tel: +32 484 14 06 97

E-mail: brussels@europeum.org

More publications can be found on [our website](#).



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union

