

POLICY BRIEF



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How should we communicate the COP21 outcome and what does it mean for the EU's 2016 agenda?¹

Communicating Paris COP21

The COP21 UN climate negotiations in Paris will agree on a future global framework for cooperation to tackle climate change. The talks offer an opportunity to set a clear and long-term trajectory towards decarbonisation supported by a wide group of state and non-state actors. A strong outcome in Paris will need to be precise, concise and based on a robust system of accountability if we are to achieve an enduring regime to manage climate risk in the future and keep the rise in global temperatures below 2°C. How governments, businesses, cities, citizens and political leaders understand what the Paris agreement is, will be important for judging it. Understanding that the pledges and commitments alone will not be sufficient but we need to build a long-term and dynamic regime from Paris will be essential. The Paris agreement will be a new chapter in the global fight against climate change that has the power to accelerate the pace of transition to a low-carbon economy and influence choices in the real world. For the EU, 2016 is an important year for its climate and energy agenda, with a range of legislative proposals expected as the implementation of the Energy Union strategy gets further underway. It will therefore be important to keep

the momentum going into 2016 and communicate what the outcomes of Paris mean for the EU.

The impact of Paris for the EU's 2016 agenda

Paris can send a clear signal that the low-carbon transition is inevitable and irreversible, and shift investment away from high-carbon infrastructure into clean and smart solutions. International cooperation for a fairer transition is essential to shift the trillions, manage risks and help tap unexplored opportunities. This could be achieved by adopting stronger domestic legislation at national, regional and local level to fulfil and increase the undertaken commitments. National parliaments have an important role in holding their governments to account by calling for an ambitious review of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) before 2020.

Under the influence of the COP21 outcome, Europe will decide on reforming its Emissions Trading System and deliver on many aspects of reforming the EU energy system through the creation of an EU Energy Union. The EU should take the opportunity to make climate a key priority of the Energy Union and systematically embed the Paris package in its domestic agenda.

¹ The policy brief is based on a roundtable discussion that was held under Chatham House Rule on 17 November 2015 as part of the Brussels Dialogue Series "From Warsaw to Paris – The 2015 Momentum" on EU ambition in the international climate regime. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and E3G.

The benchmarks of “success” for the EU at COP21 in Paris

A successful agreement will give confidence that governments, citizens and businesses can work together to accelerate the low-carbon transition and manage climate risk. For the EU, some of the benchmarks of “success” include:

- A clear long-term goal and precise trajectory: A long-term decarbonisation goal should give a clear direction of the policy pathway and increase the confidence in the green transformation process. The intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) will not be sufficient to reach the existing commitment to stay below 2°C. Given the remaining uncertainties about the scope of policy measures and effort-sharing mechanisms, the Paris Agreement must illuminate the trajectory and lay out a concrete timeline for action. In view of the urgency of the challenge, civil society actors call for decarbonisation until 2050. Clarity and precision on core elements of the agreements will be crucial for a credible and ambitious climate regime.

- Ambitious and forward-looking mechanism based on a 5-year review cycle: COP21 needs to set up an ambitious and regular review process every five years to monitor performance and increase domestic climate action. This mechanism will lay out the timeframe for preparing the next mitigation commitments and unlock more dynamism through reviewing and increasing, not only for mitigation but also for adaptation and support. Predictable finance cycles are also expected to accelerate mitigation action, which in turn could guide adaptation planning based on updated temperature trajectories.

- Transparency and accountability mechanisms: A robust and comprehensive system of accountability and transparency rules is key for gaining credibility and ensuring compliance with the undertaken commitments. National decarbonisation plans should be

developed based on a set of comparable rules and criteria for reporting and monitoring policy progress. Clear and fair rules could also trigger the political appetite for more ambitious future commitments, by building confidence and mutual trust among countries that everyone is doing their fair share. In addition, it is essential to communicate to each other delivery on targets in order to avoid ambiguity in the implementation and validation of these targets.

- Political parity to support: For the EU, it is important that the differentiation between developed and developing countries is adapted in order to better reflect current geo-political realities. Building alliances and achieving political parity on major building blocks such as adaptation, “loss and damage”, technology transfer, capacity buildings, as well as financial mechanisms could boost further support for the low-carbon transformation. The discussions would benefit from looking beyond the multilateral negotiation process to initiatives such as the divestment movement and resilient cities action where civil society and sub national actors are collaborating on these issues.

- Post-2020 finance: Recognised as the “cornerstone” of the Paris Agreement by the European Parliament, reaching an agreement on the post-2020 climate finance provisions is a core demand from developing countries, including many of Europe’s traditional allies within the negotiations. In order to achieve a greater impact, the EU needs to deliver more ambitious commitments that respond to partners’ needs: a commitment to scale up climate finance beyond 2020 with \$100bn per year as the floor; an explicit balance between climate finance for adaptation and mitigation; agreement from donors to adopt common standards and rules on access, monitoring and reporting on public finance; ensure all investments do no harm and are consistent with decoupling fossil fuels from prosperity. Paris should build trust with developing countries and provide clearer support to build low-carbon, resilient economies.

Parallel to raising global awareness about the need to shift to low-carbon development pathways, Paris should provide room for discussions on managing future climate impacts. Europe is already feeling the impacts of climate change and is not ready for a 2 degree world or beyond – there will be a range of impacts on global supply chains, European security, in the cities and regions where we live. Parliamentarians, cities and citizens are powerful messengers to bring examples of the impacts and risks faced by their constituents to

EU-level discussions on building resilience and deploying adequate climate adaptation strategies.

Europe could lead on providing a strong political vision for a two-track global system uniting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda and Paris outcome into a wider foreign policy agenda. In this respect, the EU could rely on its strong international influence in a broad spectrum of international fora and become the engine of low-carbon transformation of our economies and societies.