The Future of Europe

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Climate Change and the Future of Europe

Views from the Capitals

Springer

The Future of Europe

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Editors

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Foreword

Climate change will not only determine the future of Europe; it is already part of our present. With devastating floods, droughts, wildfires and deadly heat waves, our continent is quickly learning about the gravity of this crisis. Moreover, science is telling us that this is merely the new normal.

If we take science seriously and want to minimise the disruption and destruction from the climate crisis, we need to act, and we need to do it now. That means keeping the planet's temperature rise to 1.5 degrees, as we committed to at COP26 in Glasgow. If we go beyond that, we will reach a number of tipping points. At that stage, the climate crisis would no longer be under our control and we then cease to be masters of our own destinies.

The European Union has set itself the goal of becoming the first climate-neutral continent on the globe by 2050. With the European Green Deal as our strategy towards climate neutrality, with the European Climate Law setting binding EU climate targets for 2030 and 2050 and with further legislation to implement it, we are equipped with the necessary framework to face this crisis in Europe.

Delivering on our targets and ambitions is not only a moral obligation to future generations and thus to the future of Europe, it is also a prerequisite for peace and prosperity in the world as a whole. Russia's brutal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic reminded us how fragile these are. It is our responsibility to build back better, to become more resilient and more sovereign in our energy choices—and avoid fossil fuels from being used as a political weapon against us.

For more than two centuries, carbon has been the basis of our wealth. It has brought great economic advances as well as an overreliance on fossil fuels, for which we are now paying the price. Turning this model around in just two decades is very difficult, but not impossible. We are making headway on all areas of the Green Deal—reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reversing biodiversity loss and advancing the circular economy.

When it comes to the success or failure of our transition, there are two elements to highlight. The first one is that it can only work if it happens in a fair and socially viable manner. This is going to be the decisive factor of our failure or success. For a peaceful and prosperous, climate-neutral Europe of tomorrow, we need to deliver on today's promise of 'leaving no one behind'.

After all, if you worry about making it to the end of the month, the end of the world is not your biggest concern. So, we need to address such insecurities and put people at the heart of this transition. This is why we set up a Social Climate Fund along with our climate policies and why we support regions in transition with the Just Transition Fund. Our transition towards climate neutrality by 2050 has to involve everyone and it has to be just. Otherwise, it just won't be.

Another risk we face is the dramatic loss of biodiversity. It is a direct threat to our survival and needs to be addressed with the same conviction as the climate crisis. Because both are two sides of the same coin: biodiversity loss is accelerated by climate change and at the same time exacerbates it. Fortunately, governments, businesses and the wider public are increasingly aware of the dangers posed by a looming ecocide.

Nature is our biggest ally in the fight against the climate crisis. We have to tackle both crises at the same time and ensure that our efforts to fight climate change help to reverse biodiversity loss—and vice versa. It is possible: when we protect and restore wetlands, peatlands, coastal and marine ecosystems, when we develop urban green spaces and install green roofs, when we manage forests and farmland in a sustainable way, we mitigate and adapt to climate change, but we also ensure clean water, healthy soils and space for nature to flourish. Instead of making nature pay the price for our pollution, we need to restore and protect nature so it can protect us.

As Europe, we need to show leadership and intensify our efforts with partners around the world to ensure a global leap in ambition—and deliver on that ambition. Furthermore, we need prove to the world that despite the pandemic and war, Europe stays the course. We remain on track, which is a socially just path towards climate neutrality.

In this decade, our overarching task is also to learn how to live within the boundaries of our planet. If we don't, Mother Earth will shed humanity as an old skin and simply get rid of all of us. This is not about saving the planet—the planet has done fine without us for billions of years. This is about saving humanity.

Time is running out, but with enough political will, we can still do it.

European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

Frans Timmermans

Keywords

Climate change, Future of Europe, Energy dependencies, EU climate policies, Public perception of the climate crisis

Why This Book?

A heat wave of over 40 °C hit Spain in May, the highest temperatures ever recorded on the Iberian Peninsula so early in the year. Around the same time, Great Britain also experienced record-breaking temperatures. Southern Europe was once again ravaged by forest fires which destroyed thousands of hectares of forest. Meanwhile, Germany's rivers have been drying up and Italy is enduring a state of emergency along the Po with a third of its harvest being threatened. According to the European Drought Observatory, large parts of southern Europe are significantly drier than normal with a consequent greater risk of fire and hence many areas are on high alert. The European Environment Agency is quoted as saying that 100 million people, almost one in seven inhabitants, are affected by water scarcity, which even includes the south of Sweden. These are not future scenarios for Europe, but current news.

This news also takes into account Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Its implications touch literally all policy areas, including the fight against global warming. There are clear interdependences between climate change, the reduction of energy dependencies and food security, signalling that transformation of our economies has never been more visible, an issue which is rapidly gaining in importance and urgency. We are once more at a major turning point.

The climate crisis undoubtedly remains the greatest challenge of our time, despite Russia's war in Ukraine and the massive risks this poses regarding energy and food security. Widespread forest fires, landslides, floods, coastal degradations, increases in temperature and changes in the rainfall regime know no borders, no cultural differences, yet deepen societal cleavages within countries, not just across Europe, but world-wide. It determines our present and future, thus impacting each and every one of today's decisions and non-decisions.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres could not have been clearer when he told delegates at COP26, the November 2021 UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, that an addiction to fossil fuels is pushing humanity to the brink of extinction: 'We face a stark choice: Either we stop it—or it stops us. It's time to say: enough. Enough of brutalizing biodiversity. Enough of killing ourselves with carbon. Enough of treating nature like a toilet'. Nevertheless, the results of COP26 remained embarrassingly modest compared with the challenge. Gleams of

hope, especially amongst young people, have been dimmed by a rather reserved level of political commitment from world leaders.

The European Union's (EU) answer to climate change is its Green Deal, setting out international environmental standards which will guide the Union on an ambitious journey to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Its climate goals and proposed package of binding legislation to transform our economies will pave the way towards climate neutrality and fast-track strategic autonomy. It is a complex and highly ambitious objective, but also extremely necessary as man-made disasters are occurring ever more frequently. Geopolitical tensions are impacting energy and food prices, supply chains are under pressure and migration is moving back into the headlines. If we are losing the fight for our climate, all those tensions will rise even further and the consequences will be catastrophic.

With the Russian war against Ukraine waging, energy security is now paramount. Short term, it may hinder green transition because of the necessity to: reopen coal power stations or extend their lifespan; invest in liquid natural gas; or recommit to nuclear energy and fossil fuels from other parts of the world. Yet, the costs of permanent wrongdoing are high. Whilst recent developments might block current efforts, nevertheless they will ultimately drive Europe towards more energy autonomy based on renewables. War in Europe and the COVID-19 pandemic have not only brought cross-country dependencies to the surface, but they are also changing our mind-set and raising public awareness regarding the detrimental effects of fossil energy dependency, geopolitical power politics and the environmental crisis.

Climate change also provides opportunities to build new more resilient economic and social models. With European climate goals set, the initial starting positions and approaches to their achievement differ from country to country. Factors such as geography, history, science, politics and civil activism are likely to be some of the driving forces in this venture and the consequences of war in Ukraine will also be felt differently. Accordingly, authors from each of the respective 27 EU member states and 12 selected countries in the EU's neighbourhood analyse in short and concise contributions a whole variety of aspects regarding their respective countries' fight against climate change, including: its level of importance; factors determining a country's path towards climate neutrality; champions and opponents of the fight against climate change; possible solutions; and public perception of the climate crisis. Hence, there are 39 contributions expressing opinions, which provide a better understanding of national differences and initial positions regarding the environmental challenge. Presented in this way, we reveal yet another kaleidoscope of diverse approaches regarding climate policies.

Despite the efforts of many, there is as yet no truly unified European approach, but rather a varying country-by-country effort, in the shape of different ambitions which give rise to unequal national climate and energy plans. Given the diverse national energy mixes, this is hardly surprising when one considers: Cyprus, for example, having a 91% dependency on fossil fuels; the important role of coal in Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia; as well as many alternating geological possibilities and energy relations. For some this has led to a rethink in regard to phasing out coal, such as: North Macedonia, which was the first Western Balkan country to reach the

decision to abandon coal, but then announced in spring 2022 the opening of two lignite mines; as well as Belgium, Finland, Romania and Slovenia, for whom the war in Ukraine has led to immediate extensions of nuclear power. The need for secure energy sources especially during cold winter months has emphasised the importance of nuclear power. This can be seen in Finland, for example, with the long overdue fifth reactor build by French Areva and German Siemens becoming fully operational by the end of 2022.

Most Europeans feel anxious about climate change. However, it frequently appears that the general public considers it to be a more serious problem than the political elites, as is the case in Czechia. Sometimes even national courts are pushing the green agenda. In spring 2021, for example, the German Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the Federal Climate Change Act of 2019 was insufficient to protect the freedoms of young people and future generations. Consequently, a revised Act now requires Germany by 2030 to have reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 65% compared with 1990 and to have achieved greenhouse gas neutrality by 2045.

In many European countries, this challenge has led to a more active civil society, often in coalition with the scientific community, pushing political and economic actors into greening their political agenda. As environmental degradation tends to affect already vulnerable strata of society disproportionately, in demographic terms the climate movement's supporters tend to be younger, rather urban, mainly women and with a high level of qualifications. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, one of the most prominent protests in recent years was named 'The Brave Women of Kruščica'. During 2017, many women from the small Bosnian village of Kruščica organised themselves and went on duty for more than 500 days, blocking the local bridge, preventing the passage of excavators and thus the construction of mini-hydro power plants on the river. Despite the authorities deciding to send in police who used physical force against activists, the women of Kruščica succeeded, with the Cantonal Court in the city of Novi Travnik annulling the relevant permits, thereby halting construction of the two planned mini hydropower plants. In other countries, such as Belgium, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland, there have been predominantly 'youth for climate initiatives' mobilising public and political support for action.

The deployment of renewable energy projects (particularly large-scale wind and hydropower), though, has also been generating increasing opposition from some local communities and environmental non-governmental organisations. In Slovenia, for example, the so-called BANANAs (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) and NIMBYs (Not in My Backyard) groups attract some public support. In Czechia, the ideological narrative of both right-wing and left-wing governments has long emphasised the economy's primacy over the environment. Correspondingly, environmental activism has often been denigrated and the green movement has been pejoratively referred to as 'eco-terrorists'.

At the same time, a growing number of subnational authorities and cities have emerged as champions in tackling climate change. Through their climate agendas, many French cities, such as Grenoble, Lyon, Nantes, Poitiers, or regions such as Grand Est, Nouvelle Aquitaine and Val de Loire, are increasingly challenging the

State in its ability to develop a holistic and country-wide transition strategy. The same seems to hold for other cities, such as Helsinki and regions such as North-Rhine Westphalia.

Moreover, in other countries, climate change became a key topic in recent parliamentary and/or presidential elections, as was the case in Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and the Netherlands. In Latvia and Lithuania, strong public support for environment movements dates back to the countries' historical heritage of resisting Soviet policies. The environmentalist movement in Lithuania criticised Soviet industrial practices as unsustainable, campaigning against expansion of the Ignalina nuclear power plant, which in the late 1980s operated two reactors of the same type as that at Chernobyl. This constituted a visible part of its independence movement. Today, the annual 'big clean up' in Latvia is a national event deeply rooted in society and also linked to the country's past Soviet oppression.

Some European countries, such as the Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Denmark and Iceland actively define themselves as frontrunners in the environmental agenda. An important part of Iceland's road towards climate neutrality, for example, is the sales ban of new fossil-fuel cars from 2030 and tax reductions for electric cars. This has already placed Iceland second behind Norway in terms of electric cars purchased per capita. For its part, Austria has successfully introduced a simple single climate ticket for all public transport in 2021. The 2020 Danish Climate Act sets a 70% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030 (compared with 1990 levels) and guarantees climate neutrality by 2050. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland, had already declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in 2019. Others, such as Hungary, Poland and Czechia, are more like passengers on this journey and still need to be convinced by external factors before they will change course. According to the climate change performance index, Czechia, Hungary and Poland have even gone into reverse of late. In North Macedonia, the air pollution in 2018 and 2019 surpassed the ceiling for air pollutants determined by national emission reductions plans (sulphur dioxide and dust, in particular) and resulted in the opening of a case against North Macedonia (and Kosovo) by the Vienna-based Energy Community Secretariat. It seems that where short-term political considerations and cost–benefit analysis prevail, sustainable medium- to long-term investments suffer. Finding the right balance between the two is key, not only through environmental and technological know-how being shared, but also by political awareness about the cost of non-action being raised.

However, there is also a crucial social component to this green transition. While an active climate policy might enjoy substantial abstract majoritarian political support, the public mood may still change once individual social costs come to the surface and concrete restrictions to levels of consumption are directly experienced, with topical referenda in Switzerland being a case in point. By contrast, half of the households in Romania still use wood for heating, the majority being in rural areas where alternative heating sources are lacking and therefore energy poverty is widespread. A particular social, rural and urban divide is also being witnessed. In Bulgaria, for instance, the 'Marica Iztok' coal mining and energy complex employs around 10,000 people

directly and 20,000 in related industries. In the Polish coal region of Śląsk, 100,000 people are still employed in the coal industry (mainly power plants and mines).

As poorer families struggle to meet their energy and food bills, pundits will be eager to argue that city-based, middle-class obsessions with climate change should not be given priority over pressing present economic needs fuelling Eurosceptic sentiments, in other words the green energy revolution is being 'forced by Brussels'. Hence, social dimensions of the green agenda and financial assistance for the more vulnerable parts of society are essential for sustainable and broad public support as well as a stable political environment. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find that many countries would rather argue for raising investment into research and innovation than discipline behaviour.

For those states which lack economic resources, international and European financial support to achieve the Paris climate goals acts as important leverage. Direct allocation of funds to recognised active civil society organisations or local governance levels as well as a stronger green conditionality would also be of tremendous help. In Cyprus, for example, it is the Cyprus-EU Partnership Agreement and the Just Transition Fund, which are part of the Union's Cohesion Policy that include the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the Cohesion Fund providing for investment of over EUR 387 million in energy efficiency, renewables and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has been active in Turkey since 2010 and has created financing facilities for various sectors, such as the Turkey Sustainable Energy Financing Facility, the Mid-size Sustainable Energy Financing Facility and the Turkish Residential Energy Efficiency Financing Facility. Ultimately, EU funds, including those related to the national Recovery and Resilience plans, will continue to help in the prioritising of green spending.

When knowledge about climate change is vague and the EU's goal of becoming a global leader in the fight against climate change appears abstract, people can quickly conclude that the problem is very distant. Societies, such as those in Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland or Slovenia, could therefore derive great benefit from information and educational campaigns which raise environmental awareness and directly impact the political agenda. In countries such as Portugal, where public interest is mostly rooted in a persisting ruralist sensibility, the deepening role of environmental education, notably in schools, and rapidly increasing media coverage could be of additional value. The current inflationary environment, especially in regard to high fossil fuel prices resulting from global mismatch between supply and demand as well as the war against Ukraine, creates strong incentives for the population and businesses to change consumption patterns and search for ways to save energy. State institutions should facilitate this process by providing information and shifting towards more sustainable practices. Other countries, such as Sweden, have set up administrative bodies to supervise effective political implementation of national plans.

As pollution does not care about national borders, more European and international cooperation is needed to counter the green governance problem. The fragmentation of climate competences is not only a test at the level of Member States, say in consociationalist Belgium due to its three regions, but also very much a European

multi-level challenge. Yet, where there is a single market, better energy interconnectedness and one single climate policy is a *sine qua non* in realising Europe's full potential and pushing for European energy solidarity. Joint energy procurement is but one step in this direction; sooner rather than later we will need a coordinated, long-term approach to a European super-grid integrating the level of renewables.

All countries face unique and exceptional circumstances to which policy-making has to adapt. Thinking 'outside of the box' and helping to improve people's understanding of these issues might be a cumbersome exercise, yet it is important not to focus on limitations, but on new possibilities, best practices and joint solutions. This holds true not only for European islands such as Cyprus, Malta, Ireland or Iceland, but it is also a matter of survival, for example in the Dutch context. Financial frugality in many EU capitals, say Copenhagen and Helsinki, poses risks to an effective European economic energy transition and may even raise costs in the medium to long term. Strategic sustainable long-term planning would be an asset. However, a reluctance to accept that green priorities must at times off-set frugal issues could inhibit the chances of advancing climate polices at European level. Starting points differ, but to fulfil our joint cross-border objectives we have to enable a just transition for everyone.

If President Macron's idea of a European Political Community is to prevail, it needs to embrace climate change as one of its key components. Our volume helps by covering European countries with diverse levels of integration and cooperation. It analyses the different EU and European experiences and approaches to climate change, the way it is perceived by its people and its overall importance for the future of Europe. This book also addresses an audience far beyond the typical academic niche interested in European politics. It is rather a guidebook in our 'Views from the Capitals' series taking us through a tremendously varying and exciting political landscape of Europe that is constantly changing. Its countries constitute the individual and unique pieces of a puzzle, which together reveal a bigger European picture. As a guidebook, it favours lexical purpose as much as comprehensive comparative reading. Students and teachers may find a score of questions, differences and common ground to explore more deeply in seminar papers and theses. Practitioners will benefit from the short overviews being presented on possibly the biggest topical issue of our times, and, for all of us who are interested readers, it demonstrates the breathtaking diversity that sometimes divides, but ultimately unites and defines this continent.

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Portugal Facing Climate Change: Deep Problems, Sluggish Responses, But Hopeful Prospects

Luisa Schmidt

In Portugal, the importance of fighting climate change is clearly acknowledged, as an expression both of public opinion and official recognition. Public interest stems largely from three key sources: a persisting rustic sensibility; the deepening role of environmental education, notably in schools; soaring media coverage. Official recognition manifested in legislation, institution mandates and supportive public policies, has emerged only over the past 15 years, with government investment in renewable energy and the publication of national plans to fight climate change, which have since then been strengthened.

Public perceptions and associated policies to deal with climate change have greatly improved in the aftermath of national catastrophes in 2014 and 2017. In January and February of 2014, a number of storms, especially Hercules, wreaked havoc on the Portuguese Atlantic Coast causing significant damage to ports, marinas and beach equipment, as well as destroying dunes and removing sand from beaches. The total cost of subsequent repairs amounted to EUR 23 million. Even worse and much more dramatic were the wildfires of 2017, which burned 540,000 ha of forest, shrubland and agricultural areas. As a result, 66 people died and over 200 were injured. In the aftermath of this tragedy, the Agency for the Integrated Management of Rural Fire was created, which reports directly to the Prime Minister. However, successive events have caused setbacks to climate change-related actions, such as the financial crisis and challenging austerity period thereafter, the COVID-19 pandemic and the current upheaval caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The country's pathway towards climate neutrality is strongly hampered by factors pertaining to geographic vulnerability, poorly managed spatial planning and high dependency on external energy sources. Regarding this third factor, the high level (65.8% in 2020) is due to the country's primary energy mix, which largely comprises

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oil (40.9%), mostly from Brazil; natural gas (25%), mainly from Algeria; coal (2.7%) and others (1.6%). Only 29.9% of this mix results from domestic renewable sources (predominantly hydropower and wind power).

Portugal is particularly prone to climate change impacts, notably: extreme sea-level changes and severe marine events; desertification, drought and water scarcity; as well as heatwaves and wildfires. Climate policies in Portugal are heavily influenced by fossil fuel-based energy dependency and ambivalent strategies to tackle this. Policy tools such as the National Energy and Climate Plan (PNEC 2030) and the Roadmap for Carbon Neutrality 2050 are currently in place. These not only encourage decarbonisation policies but have also propelled a significant expansion of renewable energy investments and accelerated the recent closure of coal-fired power plants. Greenhouse gas emissions have thus decreased, albeit with fluctuations notably in the past five years.

However, there remain awkward structural obstacles to achieving full carbon neutrality. Particularly relevant here is the dominance of road transport (for both passengers and goods), together with poorly designed spatial planning and energy-inefficient housing stocks. The growth of outer suburbs around big cities was unfortunately not accompanied by carbon-reducing mobility improvements. Portugal has been experiencing the lowest rate of public rail transport usage in the EU and is only now starting to pick up thanks to much needed investment. Meanwhile, energy requirements in ill-designed buildings continue to account for 30% of the country's final energy consumption.

In a country where the construction industry plays a major role in the economy and employment, achieving climate neutrality also entails the reconversion of heavy industries with high energy intensity and significant carbon footprints, such as cement plants. The same applies to ceramic, glass and petrochemical industries. The industrial sectors with the highest levels of total emissions are cement (20.06%) and petrochemicals (16.6%). By contrast, over the past 15 years, Portugal has witnessed development and growth in the renewable energy sector, which is ultimately contributing to greater energy autonomy for the country and consequent decarbonisation. This sector now covers 58% of electricity generation and is expected to reach 80% by 2026.

The country suffers regularly from large wildfires, due to rural abandonment and forest mismanagement. Indigenous forested areas have decreased, fire-prone non--native trees have been planted and combustible fuel is widespread. In turn, the mass tourism sector, which is heavily reliant on real estate as well as transportation and moreover encourages spatial mismanagement, hampers the achievement of climate neutrality goals.

Amongst positive strategies to combat climate change is a network of adaptive municipalities (adapt.local 2017). This network has focused on carbon-reducing planning by creating the right conditions for ensuring smooth mobility, establishing green spaces for public health and heat-stress mitigation in cities, as well as encouraging the installation of solar panels.

Poorly managed public administration, flawed bureaucratic procedures and a civil society traditionally distanced from the state provide powerful obstacles to the

effectiveness of climate change policies. Increasing public communication and expanding environmental education, as well as creating mediating agencies between citizens and public administration, would help to overcome these frictions.

Portuguese people express increasing concern over climate change. In both the last 2018 European Social Survey and 2021 Eurobarometer on the Environment, they appear as 'most concerned' with climate change and are amongst those who value renewable energies (wind and solar) very highly. However, in a country where 22% of people live at risk of poverty, where the average salary is low and where housing costs have increased tremendously, it is socioeconomic survival which has become a priority. Despite its mild weather, Portugal ranks third in the EU for energy poverty, due to rising prices and inefficient housing. The social dimensions of energy transition in Portugal are thus highly demanding in political terms, which has led to the enactment of compensatory measures. Examples include financial support for electricity bills and direct subsidy for household energy efficiency conversion. However, these measures do not tackle any social challenges associated with green transition from a structural perspective, which require more citizen-centred public investments and energy policies.

Support provided by European funds has been particularly important in overcoming some of these problems, notably those related to energy transition—the democratisation of renewable energies, thermal comfort of buildings and railway development. European funds underpinned approval of the post-COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021–26), which devotes 37% of its total allocation (EUR 16.644 million) to climate change.

In the European context, Portugal is well positioned to increase its production of green energy, either through renewables (solar and wind offshore) or through green hydrogen. Moreover, it has the third largest Maritime Exclusive Economic Zone in the EU, which is subject to enlargement. This Zone is designed to safeguard Portuguese territorial waters, with the sea being recognised as a notable carbon sink in providing important fishery and bio-marine resources for delivering the European Green Deal. Within the EU, Portugal is a biodiversity hotspot and as such can seize opportunities to restore, manage and invest in its Protected Areas, nature conservation as well as the creation of sustainable forests. Concerning agriculture, the country could provide an important contribution to the 'Farm to Fork' strategy as it holds optimal conditions for proximity farming—organic, integrated and local. Notwithstanding these positive aspects, Portugal is nevertheless still partly embarking upon intensive and unsustainable agricultural production systems.

Recommendations

To improve its contribution to European cohesion for climate action, Portugal must seek strong European support on four topics, which stimulate recommendations for further governmental measures.

Firstly, energy conversion of transportation has to be undertaken with special emphasis on power and rail connectivity with the EU, which will mean a high potential for reducing CO2 emissions. Likewise, provision of energy transport connectivity between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe is essential, both in terms of the gas pipeline and renewable electricity.

Secondly, water policies should be integrated across Iberian hydrographic basins. Greater attention and more support must be given in countering the extreme drought situation that the country is currently experiencing, a situation that is likely to worsen in the coming years due to climate change.

Thirdly, a reformed Common Agricultural Policy must be introduced to fight climate change and protect biodiversity, which converges much more closely with the European Green Deal policy 'Farm to Fork' and contributes to its organic farming goals.

Finally, the reinforcement of environmental education must be established at all levels of education and civil society organisations, as must integrate municipal and intermunicipal policies as well as strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Coping with current inflationary pressures and energy/security issues in the aftermath of the Ukraine war must be integrated with both mitigation and adaptation investment on a European scale. Portugal is part of the EU's emerging strategy for producing clean energy and collective energy security as well as tackling energy-related social poverty. Given the country's current levels of fossil fuel-based energy dependency, impacts on the availability and prices of imported primary energy sources are foreseeable, even indirectly. Moreover, impacts on land uses are expected, because of the need to increase food security, as well as a growing demand for biofuel at a time when the country is in the midst of a severe drought. Portugal is making some progress, albeit launching its net zero future from a high level of structural carbon dependency.

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