

EUROPE 2020 CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The startling rate of biodiversity loss, ever-increasing impacts of climate change, and the economic consumption of natural resources have posed a severe threat to economic and sustainable development. Concerns by developed and developing states in Europe to mitigate the emissions of greenhouse gases resulting from the emission of carbon dioxide emissions and other related environmental threats evolved in the decision of Europe's 2020 climate change policy. The climate change policy is a calculated attempt to avert the destructive effects of human and natural activities on ecosystems for sustainable development. In carrying out the study, some objectives were examined such as the challenges associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy and prospects linked to the policy. The study employed secondary materials such as textbooks, governments reports, the Internet, and institutions reports. Furthermore, the functionalist theory was used as our theoretical orientation for the study. It was revealed that industrial and human activities among others are the causes of global warming. We recommend that for Europe to have sustainable socioeconomic growth, European countries should holistically tackle environmental issues affecting the world without states exercising their own climate change policies.

Keywords: Europe, Climate, Policy, Challenges, Prospects.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Right from the time people have taken what they want from the environment. In the past, the damage was limited because the world's population was few and technology was underdeveloped. Industrial advancement and the world population explosion have increased the damage done to the environment. Since the 1970s, environmentalists have warned about threats to the environment. For instance, strip mining provides ores for the industry but destroys the land. Chemical pesticides and fertilizers produce larger food crops but harm the soil and water. Oil spills from exploration pollute waterways and kill marine life. Gases emitted from power plants and factories produce acid rain, pollution where toxic chemicals in the air fall back to Earth as rain, snow, or hail. Acid rain has damaged forests, lakes, and farmland. In the same vein, desertification is a major problem, especially the cutting of trees without replacement. People cut trees for firewood or shelter or sell them in markets abroad. Some burn down forests to make way for farms and cattle ranches, or for the industry. Once forests are cleared, rains wash nutrients from the soil, destroying its fertility. Furthermore, another environmental threat is global warming which refers to the rise of Earth's surface temperature over time. A rise in temperature could bring about changes such as the following: a rise in sea level, changes in the weather pattern, increased desertification in some

areas, and an increase in precipitation. Because climates in some areas could become colder, many scientists prefer to call the trend “climate change” (Ellis, Esler, 2007: 748-751)

The cumulative of all the above effects affect the economic growth and development of nations. In response to the challenges posed to the environment, the EU tried in its effort to address the crisis in some ways. One of the ways is Europe's 2020 policy strategy, which includes all efforts to develop Europe into a modern economy for sustainable development. Apart from the 2020 strategy the EU also in its endeavor carried out various climate change and environmental policies towards mitigation, adaptation, and capacity building to ameliorate the succeeding risk of climate change, to enhance entrepreneurship for smart, sustainable, and comprehensive growth in the length and breadth of Europe (Schreurs and Tiberghien; Delbeke and Vis; Strielkowski et al. cited in Nilsson, 2019:225).

The climate problem faced by the world today is caused by human and industrial activities releasing carbon dioxide and methane concentration of solar radiation by increasing the potency for global temperature. This development signaled worries to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) by expressing a fear that industrial and human activities, particularly the discharge of carbon dioxide, would lead to severe global warming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been a topic of debate on global warming policies. Its first 1990 evaluation report keyed into drafting the Convention on Climate Change for the United Nations Framework (UNFCCC) in 1991. In 1992, 166 nations signed this at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and came into force in 1994 without specific targets. The Summit climaxed in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997 with a Conference of Parties (COP) meeting. At this third Conference of Parties meeting, delegates agreed to what is known as the Kyoto Protocol. However, because developing countries also need to limit their emissions, several countries refused to ratify the Kyoto agreement. These arguments were corroborated by substantial public hearings and debates asking for scientific reasons for climate change predictions with significant investments by the oil industry, particularly in lobbying groups questioning or denying climate change (SOAS, 2021:14). From 2007 to 2009 the hazards of global warming were observed by European states with increasing empirical proof and knowledge of climate change. Following and its consequences, and adequate press representation (IPCC, 2007:14)

1.1 Statement of the problem

Global climate change is the most devastating and complex in all the environmental challenges that have evolved in the past many years. It is regarded as such because of the grievous harms associated with it. Climate affects people and all other environmental and biological habitats. As a result became a threat to other environmental issues such as air and water quality, exposing flora and fauna to a particular habitat, and threats to coastal waters, wetlands, and the high ozone layer (Andrew and Parsons, 2012:1-30). The problems appearing in the context of environmental protection and threat to civilization spreading across borders constitutes some of the large-scale challenges to mankind. The protection of our natural resources, our natural habitat, and values, as well as the preservation of the environmental balance, is putting an ever-increasing burden on our societies. Such global problems as the destruction of rain forests, damage to the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, and the increase of air, water, and soil pollution constitute a threat to our entire Earth (Hungary, 1998:20). To mitigate environmental hazards, the EU has at the front burner made

international efforts toward a new and more broad global climate agreement, such as the recent Paris Agreement. The European Commission (cited in Nilsson, 2019:225) reveals that in 2010, the EU launched its Europe 2020 maiden to achieve, among other things: sustainable advance growth, to strengthen European socio-economic prototypes with stern interest in climate change policies. However, though the entire policies on climate change of Europe 2020 were initiated by the European Commission to promote sustainable growth and advance socio-economic framework, there are still impediments to sustainable economic growth in Europe (Nilsson, 2019:225).

Therefore, the study is set to examine the prospects associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy, examine the challenges associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy and proffer solutions on how the challenges can be mitigated. It is against the grounds that some relevant questions were drawn for investigation. For example: What are the prospects associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy? What are the challenges associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy? How can the challenges associated with Europe's 2020 climate change policy be mitigated?

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The functionalist theory is used in this study since every organization has specific functions it performs to keep the system going and growing. The existence of national and international organizations, states influences and contributes to the survival of the international arena particularly as it relates to climate change policy where climate change is demanding attention (Groom and Taylor,1975:43). Also, neo-functionalism as a theory of regional integration emphasizes the political arrangement where leaders agreed to collaborate in the performance of certain tasks. In relating the theory to the study it implies that governments, institutions, and individuals need to perform some requisite functions and policies to address climate change, prevent and improve global change activities (Crane; Viotti and Kauppi, 1987:67).

Managing climate change has been an issue of high-level diplomatic negotiations involving states and international organizations. Global climate change affects everyone but individual countries have to perform some functions to confront a global problem since we need a global solution. In this case of global warming, it is expected that states need to co-operate and work together to achieve common goals of preventing global climate change. It is expected that different European institutions should perform functions of mitigating global warming to promote sustainable development. In the same way, different organs of the body need to perform their functions to keep a human being healthy (Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons cited in Thompson, 2016:1). Situating the theory in this paper implies that for the global world to be rescued from climate change, every Europe and the European Union should ensure that they play their role to maintain socioeconomic growth by tackling the causes of environmental and climate change. Therefore the study employs qualitative materials such as textbooks, journals, government documents, and the Internet as sources of data collection.

3.0 PREVIOUS RESEARCHES

The rate of carbon dioxide emissions released into the atmosphere has significantly increased because of the burning of fossil fuel, which then traps heat and raises average air temperatures. The danger is that increased air temperatures will lead to a melting of polar ice caps. Human-caused contributors to climate change include activities such as driving cars, using power from coal-powder electricity sources, home heating from natural gas and oil, and large industrial manufacturing. Large-scale deforestation by burning forests to create more agricultural land contributes to the problem of environmental change. Based on the consequences of environmental change, Traditional Western European states decided to initiate the history of environmental policies. This is because there are a number of specific environmental issues that create serious challenges such as global warming with globally devastating effects. Other issues include deforestation, land use, and water issues with local impacts and broader regional consequences. Energy resource scarcity and safety challenges assume major instability within states, place large populations at risk, and have risks of proliferation of dual-use technology applicable for both civilian and military purposes. Consequently, environmental dangers can exacerbate tensions between states already facing traditional security dilemmas while seriously stressing the capacity of government to meet the basic needs of their citizens (Kay, 2006:316-317).

But the European Union has now taken a leading role in tackling environmental and climate change issues. In 2007 the Lisbon Treaty was made and was enforced in 2009 introducing environmental and climate change policies. This equally allowed each member state to set its own environmental laws, with the EU having the capacity to make overriding laws and regulations for member states at a supranational level (Nilsson, 2019:226). Before the Europe 2020 strategy was established, the EU adopted a broad approach to climate change, aimed at incorporating clean energy, consumption, natural resources, public health, social cohesion, transportation, production, and other socioeconomic sustainability challenges into its climate change policies. Other policies equally followed such as the 2007 EU climate and energy package, 2010 reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption by 20 %, and to increase the share of renewable energy by 20 % . In 2016, the EU also set up a global strategy, where climate change was discovered as a security threat. Collaborating with the above, Krosnick and MacInnis (2020:1) stated that many Americans accepted that Earth's temperature is high, and it is caused by human activity, that warming poses a tremendous threat to the world, and that governments, businesses, and individuals should take steps to mitigate it. They further articulated specific government policies to reduce future greenhouse gas emissions. The policies include:

1. Consumer incentives. This implies rewarding people who took steps to reduce their use of fossil fuels and, by extension, reduce their carbon footprint
2. Carbon pricing policies. This requires emitters to pay a tax on their carbon emissions.
3. Regulations: This requires manufacturers to boost the energy efficiency of their products, such as
4. automobiles, appliances, and buildings
5. Tax incentives: This is to encourage manufacturers to raise the energy efficiency of their products.

4.0 ANALYSIS

4.1 The challenges associated with Europe 2020 climate change policy

Although the EU is acting in unity today the EU's climate change policies are misdirected. For example, not all EU climate change measures are directly connected to climate change problems. The misdirection of policies reflects EU-specific regulations on issues of water protection, air quality and noise, waste, chemicals, genetically modified organisms, and biodiversity. It is noted that although they are part of environmental issues which are not part of the EU's climate change policies or Europe 2020 (Langlet and Mahmoudi, 2016: 32). There is a range of challenges to EU adoption and implementation of these climate change goals. A key challenge is an opposition within the EU on energy use. For instance, states such as Poland and the Czech Republic that heavily rely on coal are worried about the economic costs of these 2020 targets, while other EU member states are pushing to adopt the European Commission proposals as soon as possible to create a steady investment climate toward a low-carbon economy.

Another problem with EU climate policy is the functioning of Europe's emissions trading scheme, making the EU carbon price low and coal resources become the preferred feedstock for electricity generation. This development has caused northwestern Europe to sustain substantial growth in greenhouse gas emissions. Also in Germany, the phase-out of nuclear power as a result of the nuclear explosion of Fukushima Daiichi made the country's greenhouse gas emissions high (Joshua and Boersma, 2014:1). Another issue is that only a few percent of the EU's own supranational legislation has the capacity to control greenhouse gas emissions, this means the EU's ability to integrate with its member states is minimal in mainstreaming climate change policies into other policy areas (Nilsson, 2019:228).

One challenge is that most of the policy areas in the EU budget at the supranational level, such as agriculture, fisheries, and structural and regional funds, normally have more negative than positive effects on the environment. In addition, the policy areas' share of the EU budget is not much related to contemporary climate change actions. For example, European Commission (cited in Nilsson, 2019:237) by 2015, it was estimated that only about 20 percent of the EU's budget, one way or another, was linked to climate actions Most climate actions in these policy areas are therefore handled through the adaptation mainstreaming EU approach, in which the agricultural sector is particularly crucial for both the climate change and sustainability aspects of Europe 2020. Agriculture is very much connected to the greenhouse gas effect, and very much dependent on clean natural resources of soil, air, and water, and on weather conditions. As a consequence, the EU understands it as a twin challenge to both produce environmentally sustainable food and to try to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

Many crucial policies concerning global climate change fall in between the EU system and national legislation in its member states. This means that when the EU uses mainstreaming policies in areas such as the common market, agriculture, fisheries, transportation, environment, research, and innovation, it only affects EU decisions. at the national level, it is left to member states to take their own policies and decisions in combating climate change. This means there are differences among the member states and respective governments. In addition, according to Böhringer et al., Strambo et al. (cited in Nilsson, 2019:238) most emissions of greenhouses in the sectors of energy production, have less capacity in getting to their objectives of having not less than 10 % from renewable energy. Therefore, despite the EU's various climate actions and adaptations measures, important sectors that are connected

to either energy or greenhouse emissions, such as transportation, agriculture, housing, and waste, are mostly dealt with at the national level. It means that these are partly out of the EU's wider control, and EU strategies cannot really reach the objectives while it is up to the member states to deal with these issues in concrete terms.

It noted that the EU has clear objectives and a strategy for addressing climate change, yet some member states are failing to key into the national agendas on climate change by coming up with their own different national agendas and objectives. Again, some wealthier Western European member states, have achieved climate change and Europe's 2020 targets better than others. In a real sense, the EU richer states are more committed than others to implementing the system and their respective national agendas (Nilsson, 2019:238). In the long run, relatively speaking, it means that the Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands, among others, have to accomplish more than other countries. However, countries, among other member states that are less friendly on climate change actions, could slow down the entire EU climate change process, in Europe 2020. There are major challenges in implementing Europe 2020, including global climate change, which is also the case in most other EU policy areas. The EU has a relatively weak capacity to implement everything initiated in documents such as Europe 2020 and regarding most climate actions. Finally, it is complex to really understand, in concrete terms, to what extent the achievement of the 20/20/20 climate objectives, as in Europe 2020, will lead to solid economic growth, particularly in relation to actions other than climate change. However, since most of the actions are related to new innovations, it will definitely stimulate new ideas and innovations in various sectors, no matter whether the objectives themselves are fully achieved or not (Nilsson, 2019:23).

So national governments were faced with confusion to agree for national assistance on international reductions in global warming and emissions of greenhouse gases. However, there is general recognition that reductions in emissions are needed governments and their electorate hesitate to bear the reductions costs of such in terms of increased costs of energy, infrastructure and technologies investments, and changes in lifestyle. Because of competitive advantages in international trade, there are fears that countries with higher emission allowances will benefit more than countries with lower emission allowances. This means they will economically suffer because of their disadvantages. Developed countries with a high propensity for emissions per capita are experiencing enormous economic and social adjustment costs if they decide to lower their emissions. Poor countries do not want to be denied opportunities for economic growth and increased standards of living associated with increasing emissions because of their lower current emissions per capita. To enable them to be able to cope with global warming impacts; poor countries need large financial and other resources. Poor countries are looking up to richer countries to provide the needed resources. Hence richer countries have the capacity to provide the needed finance, as they are primarily responsible for the greenhouse gases that have caused and continue to cause climate change (Houghton, 2009:23).

Countries' perceptions of differences have brought awareness in less developed countries, that advanced countries are the major emitters of greenhouses causing the global warming problem. Advanced countries benefit and defend against high pedestals of emissions. Developed countries also see per capita and emissions rapidly growing, rising fastest in developing states. China argues that this growth must be restricted for global emissions to be

addressed. Despite the wide publicity of the agreement being arrived at about the danger of climate change, there are still deep divisions between countries as it relates to the right distribution limits and reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. This is rooted in divergent national interests and perceptions and strongly linked to issues of ethics, justice, and development. Complex technical and political challenges continue in developing principles to guide agreement on just and acceptable national emission targets, agreeing on such targets, designing, agreeing, implementing, and monitoring mechanisms for achieving them, key issues related to financing adaptation and mitigation in poor countries and access to climate-friendly technology for poor countries.

4.2 Prospects

Europe has made significant and tremendous gains in resource efficiency and the circular economy. The variety of European policy actions provides an essential foundation for future progress. The European Environment State and Outlook (SOER) 2020 report is an adequate environmental appraisal undertaken in Europe. The report notes that Europe has already made significant progress in climate change mitigation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the past two decades. Improvements are also apparent in other areas, such as tackling air and water pollution and introducing new policies to tackle plastic waste and bolster climate change adaptation and the circular and bio-economy. The EU's sustainable finance initiative is the first of its kind in the role of the financial sector in driving the shift to a sustainable future (SOER, 2020:158). In Europe in 2020, the Commission referred to the prospect of intelligent, sustainable, and all-embracing growth. It connects this to the EU's climate change policies by promoting a more resource-efficient, greener, and competitive economy. The prospect has to do with the EU's overall 2020 target, the same ambition the EU formerly had in the past few years in its climate change policy. These are to lower greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to the 1990 levels, or by 30% if the conditions are right; increase the share of renewable energy sources in our final energy consumption to 20%; and a 20% increase in energy efficiency. The EU's climate policies are supranational policies to mitigate climate change and mainstream change measurements (Nilsson, 2019:229). The prospect will increase the EU's energy security, reduce dependence on imported energy, and contribute to achieving a European Energy Union, creating jobs, advancing green growth, and making Europe more competitive (European Union 2020:1). The most outstanding commitment to their implementation has reduced greenhouse gas emissions to the greatest extent and started the transformation towards a zero-emission economy. One of its three main priorities was sustainable development: supporting a more resource-efficient, greener, and more competitive economy European Commission (2010:4). They also condition the achievement of other targets of the strategy to include providing people with an adequate level and quality of life through, among others, healthy living conditions or reducing energy poverty.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The causes of rising emissions are burning coal, oil, and gas-producing nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide deforestation. The EU enacted legislation on a series of policy areas to foster its international obligations on climate change. EU countries have set emission targets for important sectors of the economy, decimating greenhouse gas emissions. The EU achieved its 2020 climate and energy targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent

compared to 1990 and also increased energy efficiency by 20 percent. Environmental protection should be taken very seriously by states. The degree of protection or seriousness will determine the level of preservation of the natural environment and protection of vital interests of citizens, society, the state from internal and external impact. Also, EU countries should have a common interest to mitigate adverse processes and trends in development that threaten human health, biodiversity and sustainable functioning of ecosystems, and survival of humankind. For Europe to have a stable and sustainable economy, she has to adopt a complete strategy with acceptable regulatory climate policies. All member states should submit and integrate themselves into a common policy of mitigating climate change.

They should merge the variation of policies between the states at the national level and those at the transnational level towards a common purpose of reducing global warming. This is because of the global challenge greenhouse gas emissions have on the atmosphere. This means that solving the significant problem of climate change depends on the close, real and effective cooperation of all states. Europe needs to do things more appropriately, certain challenges need to be addressed differently, and it needs to rethink its investments. Achieving Europe's goals will require better implementation and improved coordination between current policies. It will also require additional policy actions to achieve fundamental change in the key systems of production and consumption that support our modern lifestyles, such as food, energy and mobility, which have substantial environmental impacts. Finally, effective strategy requires commitments and action by all the major emitting countries to resolve global change. The prospects for reducing environmental risks to health would be improved with collective and better integration of environment and health policies.

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