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The European Union and International Negotiations on Climate Change. A Limited Role to Play

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Abstract

The European Union played a key role on Kyoto Protocol's entrance into force, and has been a front runner on the implementation of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within its territory. However, the slow progress achieved since the Bali Roadmap was agreed (2007) illustrated a worrying trend that was confirmed by what happened at Copenhagen Summit in 2009. The Cancun Summit in 2010 showed how developing countries also had something to say in order to achieve a positive outcome. All these facts seem to indicate that the EU is losing its influence at international negotiations in the area of climate change, which makes sense if we take into account that its participation on total emissions is smaller each day, and that it is time for the biggest polluters to commit on reduction targets and energy efficiency policies. Nevertheless, the positive results that the measures adopted by the EU are giving in terms of emissions reduction and shift towards a low carbon economy could be taken as example by these countries, reinforcing its assessment role in the future.

Keywords

Climate Change, Copenhagen Accord, decision making, emissions reduction, European Union, International negotiations, Kyoto Protocol

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The approval of Kyoto Protocol is considered the most relevant international agreement related to climate change currently in place. However, we are arriving at the end of its first commitment period (2008-2012) and, despite very small steps, there is no sign of a new binding agreement in the near future. What is more, there are voices claiming that Kyoto has not made any appreciable difference to climate change, nor would it have done so, had it been fully implemented and the targets delivered, as the framework does not include binding caps for the USA neither targets for China and India (Helm, 2009a, p. 10). It is not the purpose of this paper to dig deep into the accuracy or ambition of the Protocol, though it will be taken into account when making reference to the future negotiations about how to tackle climate change.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that European Union played a key role on Kyoto's entry into force, and it has been a front runner on the implementation of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within its territory. That has not been an easy process. In fact, one of the criticisms that the EU frequently receives is the lack of a unified voice representing EU interests (Charlemagne, 2010; Mulders, 2011). This is one of the factors that have weakened EU position in international negotiations such as the G20 or the World Trade Organization forums. Other counterparts find it difficult to determine who is talking in the name of the EU, and who is doing it to defend national interests while proclaiming to represent the EU as a whole, so the problem does not only affect climate change negotiations.

Within the context of international negotiations on climate change, it must be mentioned that the United Nations summits have been the framework where the most important agreements related to environment protection and climate change have been reached. Furthermore, it is from the United Nations that the EU received the strongest encouragement to become the leader on the negotiations to replace the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 (BusinessGreen, 2011), despite the shift on position of its Secretary-

general about his involvement on such negotiations and his lack of confidence on a positive outcome (AFP, 2011).

The fact is that the EU has proclaimed itself as the leader on the fight against climate change (European Council, 2007) and theoretically it has been playing this role while nobody else wanted to take it.

Notwithstanding the efforts that the EU has made trying to get as many countries as possible involved in the international goal of tackling climate change, the reality tells us that there are many factors and many other actors that limit the capacity the EU has for getting words translated into actions. The trial to include the aviation sector on the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) is a good example of the many factors and countries involved.

The proposal to amend the ETS Directive was first presented in 2006 (COM (2006) 818 final) and six years later it is still not clear how it is going to affect third countries. There have been protests from China mainly, but also from the USA and Russia, as it intends to apply taxes on flights coming from those countries and it would increase the price of the commodities imported from them, so it would affect the balance of international trade. There could be an opportunity to overcome this carbon tax, as per the last version of the Directive, if the third country implements similar measures at domestic level, which apparently China intends to do, although it is not clear when or how (Keating, 2012). The efforts to avoid international frictions with powerful commercial partners show how delicate and time consuming the implementation of measures in the area of climate change can be.

The slow progress achieved since the Bali (promising) Roadmap was agreed (2007), showed a trend confirmed by what happened at the Copenhagen Summit in 2009. Individual commitments were negotiated out of the official meetings by some of the biggest emitters, United States and China, while the European Union voice was almost unheard, focused as it was on its own energy dependency issues. Several factors contributed to the perceived failure of the Summit. Among them several sources (BBC News, 2009; Becker, 2009) point to the role played by the United States and Obama administration, willing to take measures but being limited by the need for approval by the US Congress. In general it was also perceived that there was a lack of any real aim to negotiate, but rather to present each country's position without listening to others. The setup of meetings among special guests, organised by the host (Denmark), upset those not invited and led to cancellation of sessions once the official round of meetings had started.

The enlargement of the EU to include countries not really convinced about the need to reduce emissions any further also did not help, nor did it help that some Member States (France and United Kingdom particularly) had made efforts to include some developing countries in the framework and did not want to see the Summit finish without signing an agreement. This could also be applied to the EU as a whole, as the EU rejection of the accord would have led other nations (developing ones) to reject it as well. So the EU ended up signing something it was not convinced about (BBC News, 2009). Others also blamed the reluctance of China to accept international verification of its climate change measures of the failure of the Summit (Becker, 2009). It was at that moment that the European leadership started being publicly questioned. The Cancun Summit in 2010 showed how developing countries also had something to say in order to achieve a

positive outcome. The announcement of Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol at the end of the Durban Summit (December 2011) illustrates the weakness of the whole process and makes observers wonder what can happen next (Vaughan, 2011).

All these facts seem to add up and indicate that the EU is possibly losing its influence at these negotiations, which makes sense if we take into account that its contribution to total emissions is smaller each day, and that it is time for the biggest polluters to act. However, these countries seem to be focused on other problems. In the case of the USA, for instance, the fact that the Obama administration was trying to get approved, at the same time, health system reform and emissions reduction was putting too much pressure on the government. In the case of China, it has been more focused on short term goals related to its commercial agenda (BBC News, 2009; Becker, 2009). Nevertheless, the positive results that the measures adopted by the EU are giving to some Member States could be taken as an example by other countries, reinforcing its assessing role in the future.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the role that the EU has really been playing at international negotiations on climate change and the role that it is foreseen it will play in the future, bearing in mind the multiple actors involved and the increasing influence of emerging countries in the international arena, together with the complexity of circumstances around international negotiations over an issue as global as climate change.

Kyoto Protocol and Fight against Climate Change in the EU

The EU tried its best to get the Kyoto Protocol into force as soon as possible, although the process took a long time after it was first approved in December 1997 (signed 1998). It finally entered into force in 2005 (Fernandez, 2010, p. 209). However, what made a difference in the EU's behaviour was its political will to start taking early action in order to be ready for what would need to be in place from 2008 onwards.

This early action gave birth to the approval of the Burden Sharing Agreement (ratified by Decision 2002/358/EC), which established emissions reduction targets for each Member State, and to the creation of an internal market for greenhouse gas emissions, the European ETS, through Directive 2003/87/EC. This Directive intended to create a market mechanism similar to the one that the Protocol suggested, and to have it operational between 2005 and 2007 as a transition period, in order to have time to detect failures and to adopt corrective actions.

It was clear that the ETS was not perfect almost from the beginning. The amount of emissions forecast for each Member State proved to be too high and thus the allowances assigned to each country did not foster the necessary investments to reduce emissions. It did not help either to keep carbon prices high and stable, which was required in order to obtain the desired outcome: CO2 emissions reduction. Subsequently modifications were included for the period 2008-2012, this time adapting the regime to fully comply with the Protocol requirements. In fact, the link of the ETS with the Kyoto Protocol was reinforced by Directive 2004/101/EC, allowing the procurements of credits through project based flexibility mechanisms (Certified Emission Reductions - CER, from the Clean Development Mechanism; and Emission Reduction Units - ERU, from the Joint Implementation Mechanism).

The progress achieved on emissions reduction during the last years across Member States has been uneven (see Table 1) and has been affected by a number of factors.

Table 1: Evolution of GHG emissions in CO2 equivalent indexed to 1990 (base year = 100)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Target
EU15	97	97	98	98	99	99	98	97	96	94	88	89	92.0
DE	83	83	85	83	83	82	80	80	78	78	73	75	79.0
BE	101	102	102	101	102	103	100	97	93	95	87	92	92.5
IT	106	106	107	108	111	111	111	109	107	104	95	97	93.5
DK	106	99	102	101	108	99	93	104	98	93	88	89	79.0
ES	130	135	135	141	143	149	154	151	154	143	130	126	115
FR	102	101	101	100	101	101	101	99	97	96	92	93	100
UK	87	88	88	86	86	86	86	85	84	82	75	77	87.5

Source: Eurostat (Data retrieved 26.11.2012)

One of these factors is that the ETS is applicable to some economic sectors that account for 45 per cent of the total emissions, so it is necessary to implement measures in other sectors such as transport, not included in the scheme, where emissions have steadily grown during the last decade up until 2008 (26 per cent increase between 1990 and 2005) (EEA, 2008, p. 10), when the economic crisis started hitting European countries. The crisis itself can be considered the main reason for emissions reduction from 2008 onwards, due to the decrease in economic activity especially in the industrial sector. It would have been desirable that part of this decrease had been caused by improvements in the levels of energy efficiency, and perhaps it has been the case, but only to certain extent, given the fact that the European Commission is repeatedly complaining about disappointing progress in this area by Member States (EC, 2010, p. 4).

Another factor that should not be forgotten when talking about tackling climate change at EU level is the fact that the Kyoto Protocol was initially signed by the then 15 Member States and the situation has changed significantly since that time. The last enlargements increased EU membership to 27 States, with the latest accession countries being transition economies. This has made, among other things, the already complex decision making process at EU level even more complex, and resulted in the setting up of special targets on emissions reduction for the new Member States, with the exception of Malta and Cyprus.

Integration of the fight against climate change on EU policies

Given the fact that climate change is a global issue that affects every area of our lives, it is not surprising that the EU has tried to integrate the measures to be taken in as many policies as possible. The approach is similar to the one given to environmental issues in general. The Fourth Action Programme on the Environment (1987-1992) advocated for the integration of environmental matters in every European policy in order to achieve a balanced development (Official Journal of the European Union, 1987).

The Fifth Action Programme (1993-2000) was the one that made a significant change, being approved after the famous Rio Summit of 1992. It embraced the integration of environmental issues within every European policy area and called for a sustainable development. The progress achieved under this programme was important but the problems and barriers encountered made it necessary to go further and get the Sixth Action Programme on the Environment approved. When the Commission presented the Sixth Action Programme (COM (2001) 31 final), the timeline considered was until 2010. However, when the Programme entered into force in 2002, a 10-year horizon was established, namely until 2012. This change made sense when considering that it covered practically the entire first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012). This Programme, in force at the time of writing but shortly to be replaced, enumerates specific objectives which include the fight against climate change and compliance with the Kyoto Protocol.

One of the policies most seriously affected by climate change issues, apart from the Environmental one, is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Agriculture plays an extremely important role in the preservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and natural spaces and, thus, suitable planning of agricultural activities may be an essential piece in the fight against climate change. Moreover, the effects of climate change, with adverse phenomena such as droughts, plagues and flooding, particularly affect the agrarian sector and can compromise the availability of food, a controversial issue since the earliest years of the CAP. It is worth noting that the European Union is the world's largest food importer and the second largest exporter. This is why decisions made to protect agriculture take on such great relevance.

One further and quite controversial element must be added to what is above mentioned. Some cereal and oil crops have ended up becoming essential raw materials for the production of biofuels, one of the European Union's clear commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the 'Energy and Climate Change Package', discussed later in this paper, one of the targets was for biofuels to represent 10 per cent of the fuel used for transport by 2020. This goal - laudable in principle - has ended up having a more sinister side. The UN (FAO, 2008) has stated that the deflection of agricultural production initially earmarked for human consumption towards biofuel production, stimulated by production premiums, is one of the elements causing the exorbitant leap in raw material prices and, therefore, in basic foodstuffs, triggering the last food crisis.

Trying to resolve this negative effect, the production of 'second generation' biofuels has started to be promoted. What is more, the last Directive on renewable energies keeps the goal of reaching a 10 per cent of renewable energies used for transport but it does not stick to the fact that those renewable sources must be biofuels (Directive 2009/28/EC).

Agricultural Policy has been reviewed and modified several times in the last decades and there will be more changes to come, as it needs to be adapted to changing circumstances, and especially to budget constraints. One of the measures that could have a great impact is the one that will suppress the premiums for energy crops. This reveals that despite the commitment to fight climate change, on the one hand biofuels do not seem the most suitable option, and on the other hand budgetary restrictions could end up compromising emission reduction objectives.

Another policy highly related to the fight against climate change is, necessarily, Transport Policy. Together with energy, the transport sector has contributed most significantly to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions in the EU, as previously stated. Both sectors are closely connected, as they use the highest amount of fossil fuels in their operations. It is estimated that transport has an environmental cost that reaches approximately 1.1 per cent of the European GDP (COM (2006) 314 final). As a means to encourage the use of more energy-efficient vehicles and reduce polluting emissions, car manufacturers voluntarily agreed at first to reduce CO2 emissions of their vehicles and in the end agreed to participate in the emission allowances market from 2012 onwards. The counterpoint is the increase in vehicle prices, as well as inequalities in the taxes that consumers pay depending on emissions.

With regard to Energy Policy, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss if such a policy exists or to what extent it is still in an early stage at European level. What it is relevant in this case is the huge number of measures approved in search for better integration, markets liberalisation and sustainable growth. The Energy and Climate Change Package (ECCP) approved in 2008 is a very good example, as it brings together climate change and energy, a key sector to reduce emissions and contribute to Europe's compliance with the Kyoto Protocol targets, although it looks beyond the first commitment period and counts on big emitters to join a new international agreement in order to achieve greater emissions reduction.

The ECCP sets up three main targets for 2020: 20 per cent decrease in energy consumption; 20 per cent increase of energy efficiency; and 20 per cent decrease on GHG emissions that could become 30 per cent if other countries also contribute to this aim. However an agreement on how to achieve these targets faced a lot of difficulties to see the light. Since it was first presented at the beginning of 2007, until it was finally approved at the end of 2008, intense negotiations took place, given the reluctance from Eastern European countries to measures that could put in risk their competitiveness. They asked for guarantees to avoid 'carbon leakages' and in the end this was translated into much weaker regulations. It is particularly worthwhile mentioning the new Directive that amends the ETS from 2013 onwards (2009/29/EC), whose main modification over the previous regime is the generalisation of the auction system to obtain emissions allowances. The benefits of such an auction appear clear, as it definitely fosters measures implementation by the affected industries to reduce emissions. However the regulation includes too many exceptions and a progressive adoption of the auction system depending on which sector we make reference to. In the end it establishes a timeframe by which the auction system will not be fully operational until 2027, which is hardly consistent with targets supposed to be reached by 2020.

This is only one example of the difficulties that adoption of measures can find at European level, and it does not apply only to climate change issues but also to the decision making process in general. This analysis could list all the Communications that the European Commission has presented related to climate change, particularly in the last two years. However, it does not matter how many measures are approved at EU level, if Member States fail to implement them at national level. It is unfortunate that this is what has been consistently happening. The European Union is good at designing measures but it fails on implementation, something that has already been acknowledged by European authorities in its Europe 2010 Strategy (European Commission, 2010a).

One of the statements included in that Strategy (COM (2010) 2020) remarks on the need to comply with the targets agreed in the Energy and Climate Change Package. Observers should wonder why was it necessary to reinforce the commitment with those goals if successive regulations had already been approved and were mandatory for Member States. Do Member States need to be constantly reminded of their responsibilities? This study suggests they should not, but the repeated discourses seem to indicate otherwise, which in itself weakens the EU image in the international arena.

Unified position at international negotiations

If the European Union wants to keep a leadership position at international negotiations on climate change, without discussing if current negotiations and climate policies are the most accurate ones (Helm, 2009b, p. 16), it needs to defend a common discourse and present a unified image in front of its international counterparts. As aforementioned, it is not an easy goal. The crisis has impacted on increasing concerns across all the Member States that seek to defend their national instead of European or international interests.

The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (OFEU, 2007) at the end of 2009 created a new momentum, and with regards to climate change it brought a fundamental novelty, assigning for the first time shared competencies between the EU and Member States in the areas of energy and environment. However, only two years after its approval, negotiations addressed changes, and in light of the current international economic crisis, its effectiveness is being put under scrutiny.

In the area of international negotiations on climate change, the first indicator of the EU's failure to play a leadership role was the result of the Copenhagen Summit at the end of 2009. It was publicly perceived as an insufficient outcome and a lost opportunity. It was far from the legally binding agreement that almost everyone was hoping for and it did not establish new targets, nor did it contribute to create an environment of certainty for future actions that, for example, investors require. The goals of the Summit targeted the reduction of emissions of countries such as the USA, Australia and Japan on one side, and on the other, how developing countries such as Brazil, China or India could limit their emissions without compromising economic growth. It also sought to stabilise funding from developed countries to developing ones in order to sustain adaptation to climate change (Dell'Amore, 2009). This is the only point where there appeared to be some progress. The EU was particularly disappointed by the fact that no collective targets were established - it failed to achieve 2010 as deadline to conclude a new treaty and, in the Accord, a legally binding treaty was not even mentioned (European Commission, 2009). Since the Bali Roadmap agreed on December 2007 set out 2009 as the deadline to reach an agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 (Pew Center on Global Climate Change, 2007), the Copenhagen Accord (UNFCCC, 2009) looked almost empty in content. However, this was not a surprising result, and before the Summit there were already doubts about the capability of the EU to present a common position (Fernandez, 2010).

When analysing the reasons for such a failure, many factors can be mentioned, at both intra-European and international levels (Eppstein et al., 2010). One factor is who represents the EU at international negotiations. Given that climate change is a shared issue, we find the Commission, the Council and national representatives trying to agree

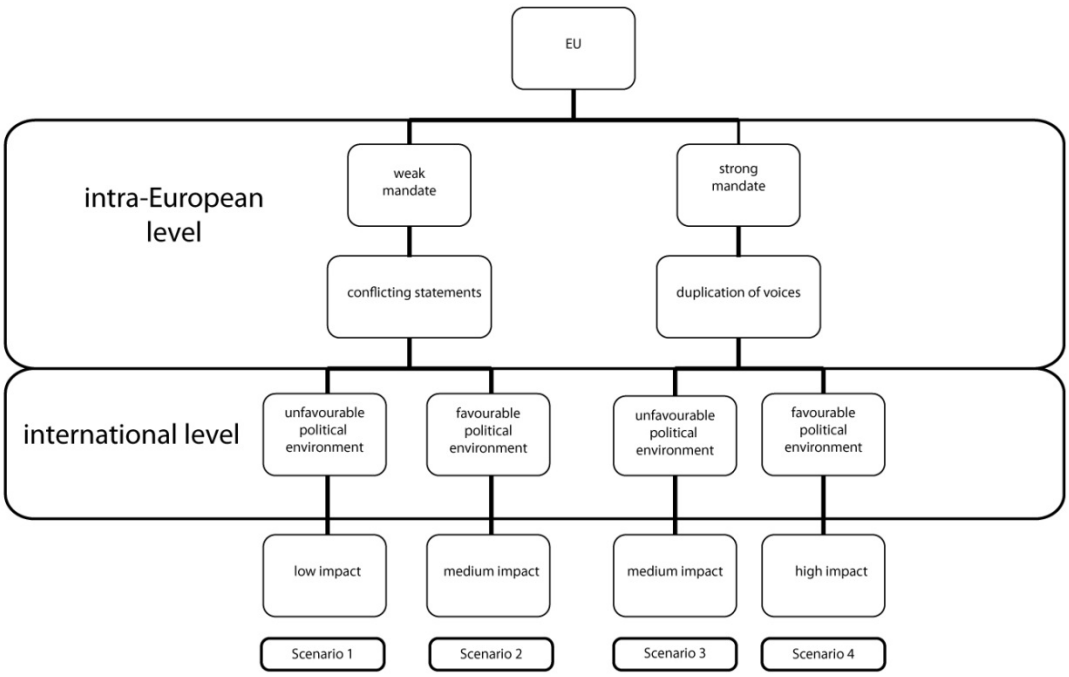
on a common position. The problem is that in recent times there is a trend showing Member States preference to appear as prime actors in the negotiations, so the results will depend on their "willingness to cooperate with each other" (Eppstein et al., 2010). The internal operational system of the EU makes it difficult to reach a consensus sometimes, especially with the rotating Presidency. The fact that the Presidency needs to keep contact with the previous one and the incoming one to coordinate efforts and agree on common discourses can be controversial.

A good example is what happened with the Copenhagen Summit. There were divergent interests in Member States and conflicting positions about the role that the EU should play, the financial resources, the type of commitments that could be signed or where the focus should be put on: climate change (France, Sweden) or energy security (Czech Republic). In the end the common position was agreed at the last minute and with only a minimum common denominator. In a situation like this, it is understandable that, when the moment to negotiate with third countries arrived, the EU position fell short of flexibility and capacity of reaction, as every movement needed to be consulted with all Member States. This shows clearly how time consuming and inefficient the decision making process can be, so it was not surprising that other countries kept conversations and negotiations apart while the EU was trying to give a common answer to the new proposals.

Nevertheless, even if the EU had managed to arrive in a more united position to Copenhagen, or if it finally manages to adopt one in future international negotiations, there are many factors out of the scope of the EU that can undermine its so called leadership role. It must be mentioned as a starting point that for the EU to play a leadership role, the rest of countries have to accept that the EU is in fact the leader. Going back to the Copenhagen Summit case, it could be observed that while in previous summits nobody else questioned European leadership, in Copenhagen the US, China and emerging economies (Brazil and India in particular) started showing doubts and even a clear reluctance to it.

With the Obama administration's interest returning to environmental and climate change issues, the US claimed for itself a leadership position and having seen the divergence in EU countries, other participants, particularly China, moved towards US as the counterpart with which to negotiate. Additionally, these other countries may have divergent interests and thus they may choose to negotiate with some individual EU Member States, with which they want to develop closer relationships, rather than negotiate directly with EU representatives. So overall we find possibilities for different scenarios where EU leadership could be constructed (see Figure 1) and the final outcome at any international negotiation would remain unclear.

Figure 1: The EU's impact in international climate negotiations



Source: Eppstein et al., 2010, p. 5

As a result of all these issues and conflicting interests, leadership roles remain undefined, and the main consequence is remains the lack of a new agreement to replace Kyoto after 2012.

In fact, the Durban Summit (December 2011) confirms that international negotiations follow the same trend as European ones: slow and poor in results, questioning the United Nations as the best framework to reach an agreement, even though they present the "achieved" results at the end of each summit as a great progress and breakthrough.

It is the opinion of this author that the EU may have transferred its own inefficiency and lack of common voice to international negotiations on climate change. The example previously mentioned about repeating goals, targets and commitments in every communication presents big similarities with UN Climate Change Summits. If the Bali roadmap in 2007 established 2009 as deadline to reach an agreement that would replace Kyoto, Durban (2011) closed with a new deadline, 2015 (UNFCCC, 2011), which in the end gets translated into new delays to take effective actions.

EU's influence on other countries behaviour - Third countries role

It has been already stated that other voices want to be heard in international negotiations on climate change apart from the EU one. In particular, emerging countries' engagement on action implementation will be necessary for a successful outcome. We could all agree that if developed countries are responsible for the majority of greenhouse

gas emissions nowadays, they are the ones which should take action and pay for the negative impacts of that development. However this should not be an excuse for a lack of action from emerging economies. In fact, the message transmitted should be: "We have grown causing great harm to the planet and big risks for the future. Please do not follow the same pattern and, now that new technologies are available, use them to do things better". Technology transmission to developing and emerging countries is still an unsolved issue, unless it happens with the necessary financing to implement projects which really contribute to sustainable development in the poorest areas of the planet. The strategies currently in place do not seem to be focused on that approach. In fact, carbon markets and credits coming from the implementation of projects under the Clean Development Mechanism, which were supposed to foster sustainable growth and reduce GHG emissions, helping both developed and developing countries, seem to give more importance to secondary markets than to real projects, as indicated by figures from the 2010 world carbon market report (World Bank, 2010).

The EU has internally established targets and regulations on how to reach a low carbon economy by 2050, and all of them being linked to energy, sustainability and climate change. While not listed here, these documents range from the Energy and Climate Change package (2008) to the Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (2010). together with the subsequent directives. However there is one aspect that it is worthwhile mentioning with regard to the EU Energy Policy. This has to do with the external dimension of that policy and how this role is being remarked in every communication.

On one side, the EU is promoting investment on renewable energies (Directive 2009/28/EC), and at the same time it is calling for the interconnection of networks and grids with third countries and for the intensification of international negotiations with those countries to guarantee security of supply. On the other side, through initiatives like the Energy Community (EC, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) or MedReg (MEDREG, 2011), it is trying to help third countries with energy regulation and in some cases trying to make those countries adopt the EU vision and rules.

Since the fight against climate change is embedded in every energy measure, the aforementioned top-down approach could help both the EU and third countries and bring those countries to the EU side at international forums. This, in fact, would contribute to reinforce a possible leadership role of the EU in international negotiations while performing an assessment role for those countries, increasing the accuracy of their legal systems and facilitating technology transfer.

Additionally, the EU has already strong Cooperation for Development and Neighbourhood policies, which play an important role for the international arena. It cannot be forgotten either, that the EU is one of the biggest markets in the world and, as such, commercial partnership with third countries could be another way of approaching EU interests towards environmental protection and climate change issues.

On the other hand, emerging economies like Brazil, China and India see how their importance at the economic level increases every day, so it is normal that they want to see their voices heard in international negotiations. The same applies to the United States, and from the United Nations they all receive the same encouragement to take action. Despite this, the main reluctances remain the same over time. The US still rejects the idea of a binding international agreement if developing countries do not commit to

reductions as well (CAPAF, 2011), though the US has committed to certain targets at national level. China remains reluctant to allow international verification of reductions (Carson et al., 2009), but it has started implementing measures as well, given the fact that pollution is becoming a real issue for health in China.

The different performance on climate policies implementation and the progress reducing GHG emissions may also have a significant influence on the perception of a country as a leader or not; and some of these results can be surprising. Table 2 illustrates this by showing the rankings awarded to a number of countries in a 2012 performance index - with the top 3 rankings left blank as no countries were considered to have performed well enough to gain one of those rankings. The ranking values the progress achieved in three different areas: GHG emissions reduction in the year considered, the trend in reductions over a number of years and the progress on climate change policies implementation. To be in the top 3, clear positive changes should have been observed in the three areas mentioned.

Table 2: Climate Change Performance Index 2012

Rank	Country
1	*
2	*
3	*
4	Sweden
5	United Kingdom
6	Germany
7	Brazil
8	France
9	Switzerland
10	Mexico
11	Slovakia
12	Denmark
13	Belgium
---	---
23	India
---	---
35	Spain
---	---
52	USA
---	---
57	China

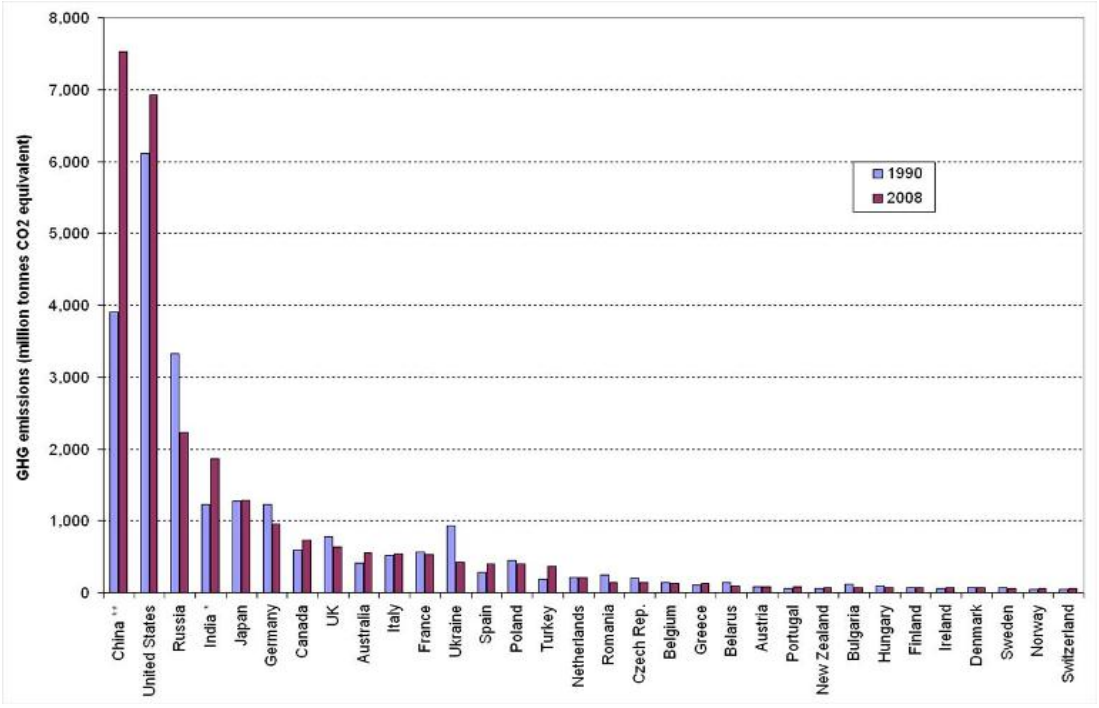
Source: Germanwatch (2011)

The ranking published by Germanwatch shows how apart from some EU countries in the first levels, Brazil and Mexico appear among the first ten countries worldwide. This means that they have achieved good progress both in their level of GHG emissions, in their reduction trend and in climate policy implementation (Germanwatch, 2011). Such an achievement could make these countries and other question why the EU (not to say the US or China - seeing their score in the list) should lead negotiations to reach an international agreement to tackle climate change.

Nevertheless the EU deserves some credit, bearing in mind that it will comply with its Kyoto target (reduction of 8 per cent in GHG emissions over 1990 levels) and is on track to comply with its targets for 2020 (20 per cent reduction of GHG emissions), according to some of the reports coming from the European Environmental Agency (2010). Having said that, it is important to remark that this positive outcome at EU level is not such a success if we take into account that not all Member States will comply with their targets with regard to the Burden Sharing Agreement, and it will be the better behaviour of some which will cover the insufficient action of others -and all of it counting on the countries with the biggest gaps to make use of the flexibility mechanisms, as measures implementation at national level would not be sufficient.

This reduction on emissions at EU level reinforces the fact that China, India and the US will continue to be the biggest emitters in the future (see Figure 2), so it is extremely important to keep them engaged on decision making processes and foster their commitment at international level. This is the only way that an agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol will have a possibility to become not only signed, but effective in the fight against climate change.

Figure 2: GHG Emissions (million tonnes CO2 equivalent)



Source: Climate Change Connection

Conclusion

Climate change is a complex issue affected by multiple factors. International negotiations, dealing with different interests and circumstances, are necessarily difficult to handle. Leading the fight against climate change is something the EU did not ask for and found itself pushed into by its own convictions and the international community lack

of such a leader. Historical reasons made the EU commit to a fight against an issue believed to involve serious negative consequences internationally. As it has been discussed throughout this paper, the EU policies started early by creating frameworks within its borders in order to improve the situation with regards to greenhouse gas emissions, and during the Eighties a lot of resources started being dedicated to issues linked to climate change, particularly in the area of energy (ALDE, 2010). This early internal action allowed the EU to be perceived internationally as a possible leader and, as it has been pointed out, it has claimed for some time to perform that role (EC, 2007) with the international arena. It is necessary to mention that the measures related to climate change and energy have also a very strong economic incentive, as they have been implemented thinking of reducing the EU energy dependency and increasing energy efficiency and thus economic competitiveness.

However, circumstances change, and performing a leadership role involves first, a consistent message coming from each of the 27 EU Member States, and second, proof of positive outcomes from implementation measures in its own territory. The EU has not performed all that well in either of those two requirements, despite making good progress on emissions reduction and great developments in renewable energies technologies.

The failure to speak with one voice, particularly at the Copenhagen Summit (2009), weakened the EU's position in front of the international community and gave the chance to other actors to claim for leadership (particularly the US). Even those who participated in the negotiations on the side of the EU recognised the lack of effectiveness on the way the EU approached the Summit (Metz, 2010). This paper has stated the need for internal and international factors to allow the EU gaining a leadership role. Internally it must find a common position and externally other countries should be willing to accept this leadership role.

Finding common positions has proved to be complex and time consuming, so the first lesson the EU should apply is the modification of its decision making process to make it more flexible and timely. We might wonder, therefore, if it is necessary for the EU to play that leadership role at international negotiations on climate change. Given the fact that EU emissions account for a small proportion of the total each day, the role of biggest emitters should be increased (see Figure 2).

Since it does not seem that a clear new leader will appear in the nearest future, there are many actions that the EU can implement in order to help that happen. As has been established throughout this analysis, there are many instruments and policies that can be used at EU level to serve as guidelines for other countries. In fact, there are some policies of the EU, such as the Neighbouring Policy, with goals in this area (Friedrichshafen, 2012) and we can suggest that the EU is already performing this assessing role.

In this regard, the assessment role of the EU is foreseen as a growing trend, and it should not be perceived as something negative or undermining EU prestige in the international arena. The positive results of the measures implemented by Member States increase EU credibility and an assessment role could be better accepted by third countries, which to some extend may have been considering the leadership assumed by the EU as patronising.

In conclusion, most countries have already recognised the need to take action in order to deal with climate change issues. A global problem requires global and unified action, and in this sense it is less important who is the leader - or even if there is one leader (or more than one) - than to have on board as many countries as possible so that there can be a real chance of an efficient agreement.

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