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Evaluating the Effectiveness of the European Union's 2040 Climate Target: Policy Ambitions versus Implementation Challenges

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Abstract:

As the level of ambition was increased, in July 2025, the European Commission set out a new binding greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction objective of - 90% by 2040 with respect to 1990, and it became an intermediate step on the road to climate neutrality by 2050 (European Commission, 2025). The paper is a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of this target and involves the engagement of the architecture of EU climate governance, the European Climate Law, the Fit for 55 package, the ETS, CBAM, the RE-Power-EU, and the Clean Industrial Deal and the implementation barriers: (1) economic competitiveness, (2) a political positioning difference among the member states, and (3) the pressure on simplification of regulations. The study provides qualitative research design influenced by the Comparative Public Policy Theory and Governance Theory to examine policy documents, reports of the interested stakeholders, literature reviews, and case-related information. Findings reveal the imbalance between aspiration and achievement like the poor enforcement mechanisms, lack of equality in compliance with the absence of sufficient incentives to go out of the ETS to reduce emissions. It is advisable that the enforcement be tightened, the burden sharing systems are strengthened as well as expanding the just transition plans. The paper adds new literature to the EU climate management by providing a systematic evaluation of the fidelity of the implementation and implementable policies to enhance. EU climate goal, emissions cuts in 2040, policy to be implemented, fit for 55, CBAM, and ETS, climate governance and the relative public policy. The governments have responded by coming up with worldwide agreements such as Paris (2015) agreement in which projections by governments include rising the temperature long-term too well below 2o C with 1.5o C being an ambitious focus. The need to tackle climate change has become ever more pressing over the last few decades as the global temperature rise, severe weather phenomena, and biodiversity losses have become a threat to both ecosystems and human communities alike. This ambition is relevant because it bridges the step between interim 2030 goals and long-term 2050 net-zero emissions goal. With these international obligations, the European Union (EU) has developed to be a leader in environmental governance by gaining both political and economic power to establish thorough climate policies in the region. The EU has been a climate leader since the commitments in the

Kyoto Protocol starting in the 1980s, and the establishment of the 2020 Climate and Energy Package, the 2030 Climate Target Plan and a mandate of becoming climate neutral by 2050 with adoption of the European Green Deal (2019). It is on this backdrop that the 2040 Climate Target is considered to be a very significant milestone towards the EU staying on its path to achieve its long-term goals. The Climate Target 2040, a proposal of having a net decrease of 90 percent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, in comparison with 1990 levels, was developed within the wider policy of the EU moving to strengthen its climate promises. This bilateral consideration of the environment as well as economic competitiveness brings out the character color of transformational nature of the 2040 goal. This proactive approach adopted by the EU is justified by the fact that the problem of inaction or insufficient action will not only multiply environmental hazards but will also augment economic costs and social unsteadiness going forward. In addition, the EU sees its climate policy as an opportunity to be an innovative force, generate green jobs, and lead in global green economy. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the EU has a bold vision, it is also experiencing severe problems in implementation. Not only are the EU climate structures proving to be resistant under these external forces, the latter also justifies the provision of adaptive and flexible mechanisms of policy structure. The member states have extensive variation in economic capacity, energy appetite/dependence, industrial makeup, and political will which makes consistency hard to achieve. An example of this would be the countries reliant on coal power that could be wary of strict decarbonization efforts based on possible social economic disruptions, and other countries more advanced in renewable energy might be more receptive. Further, the shift to climate neutrality is associated with profound systemic transformation, such as energy transition, transport electrification, sustainable farming, and substantial investment in the carbon capture and storage technology. The disparate rate at which these changes take place is hazardous since it may impose tensions between the member states, which may compromise the overall effort. The external forces, which impacted the EU climate policy implementation, are also acknowledged in the background of this study. The geopolitical crisis situations, including the one in Russia Ukraine, demonstrated how fragile the energy security of the EU is, and the discussion of a trade-off between urgent energy requirements and long-term decarbonization intentions wobbled. Equally, world economic cycles, trade conflicts and rivalry with other countries, not included in the EU, and less strict climate politics also complicate the climate policy of the EU. Meanwhile, programs such as the Just Transition Mechanism were implemented to address these problems; however, their actual efficiency still rests on the ability to be implemented successfully and funded accordingly. Also, efficiency in the EU climate policies is strongly linked to social equity and acceptance with regard to the atmosphere. The shift towards the low-carbon economy cannot but bring about certain expenses: the increase in the cost of energy, the structural transformation of the labor markets, and re-educational expenses of the workers engaged in the operations associated with fossil fuels. Consequently, the EU has to guarantee that climate policies are formulated to be participatory and equitable, eliminate disparities and popularize them. The target is in a maze of awkward inter-dependency of policy regimes, technological change, socio-economic conditions and global politics. Overall, the background of the current study demonstrates that the EU has a 2040 Climate Target both as a demonstration of its high level of ambition with regards to climate change and as an experiment to test its governing capacity. The target is more than a quantitative milestone between the current and bigger EU goal of the climate-neutral continent. The EU has a history of championing environmental policy development and its ability to turn its broad ambitions into real, implementable and measurable initiatives will determine whether its 2040 goal can actually be achieved. As such, this research needs to be read as a place between policy analysis

and implementation appraisal where this research paper attempts to understand how realistic the EU Climate Target in 2040 is or just a path that is aspirational.

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union comprising 27 member countries, which has always tried to portray itself as a worldwide leader in climate governance by promoting holistic policies to minimize the impact of climate change. The EU has established strongly influential goals to detach up to date economic growth to resource use, alongside with meeting climate neutrality by 2050 through frameworks such as the European Green Deal (EGD) and legally binding commitments towards the Paris Agreement. The EU has implemented a 2040 Climate Target Building on its earlier climate policies that seeks to reduce the net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 90 percent of 1990 by 2040. These obstacles are very important issues on which the fate of the Union depends. The 2040 Climate Target reflects the EU overall climate ambition, i.e. its aim to engage in deep decarbonization of industry, energy, transport and agriculture. It is an aspiration of the Union to believe that we need such active steps to prevent the utmost devastating outcomes of the climate change situation. Fundamentally, this goal is in line with the provisions of the Paris Agreement, which aims at keeping global warming less than 2 o C, preferably 1.5 o C, of pre-industrial levels. Supporting the EU to reach its target requires much more than curbing emissions; it also requires large scale energy transition (shift of energy systems that depend on fossil fuel resources to those based on renewable energy and low-carbon fuels), advancement in technologies, investments into finance and existence of effective governance arrangements. Nevertheless, the policy ambition of the EU is good; however, the implementation difficulties are huge. Such obstacles include technological constraints and funding shortages, differences in commitment levels among member states, political opposition and socio-economic inequalities. Moreover, regional politics, turbulent energy financing and generally unstable world economies may make the implementation process even more difficult. As an illustration, the more prosperous member-states might switch to renewable technologies quickly and successfully, but less financially powerful ones with fossil-based economies will not be able to change easily unless an essential amount of aid is provided. About this, the paper is a critical analysis of policy-practice chasm regarding the EU 2040 climate strategy. Thus, to be able to conclude on the effectiveness of the EU 2040 goal, one would have to perform a thorough examination of the balance between these real-life conditions and the declared ambitions. To evaluate the possibility of turning the

European Union carbon footprint reduction plans into practical results, I will have to learn related to such concepts as climate neutrality, the balance between human-generated emissions of GHG and their removal out of the atmosphere, and greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO 2), methane (CH 4), and nitrous oxide (N 2 O) that contribute to the global warming effect. The concept of the effectiveness of policies is equally crucial and under a given approach, will define the ability of the 2040 Climate Target in ensuring the ability to achieve substantial results in terms of emission reductions, maintaining economic vitality and financial stability as well as promoting social fairness among members of the states. The European Green Deal, which is at the core of the EU climate policy, reflects the approach of the Union: regulatory instruments are combined with market-based policies (such as emissions trading) and financial instruments to catalyze the transition to a sustainable future faster.

The sources available are mostly related to regulatory frameworks (e.g., European Climate Law), technology roadmaps of de-carbonization, and what the transition to the economy of a climate transition will entail. Through discussing the strength of regulatory tools, relevance of member states, rate and direction of the energy transition, and socio-economic consequences of the de-carbonization, the research will ascertain whether the climate leadership achieved by the EU is only the one of aspirations or it is actually transformational. In the end, this analysis will provide insight into whether the Union can meet its goals amid the dynamic and multifaceted climate challenges facing the globe today and add to the wider discourse on whether long-term climate commitments are really feasible. Sources available point primarily to the regulations (e.g. European Climate Law), technology roadmaps of de-carbonization and economic outcomes of climate transition. This study is justified by the fact that there is an urgent need to acknowledge the successfulness of the implementation approach to the European Union 2040 climate goal that has an ambitious target. Although the target is scientifically sound and necessary to achieve Paris Agreement expectations, the available evidence indicates the presence of gaps between policy creation and its actual implementation. The evaluation of these gaps is essential in determining the gaps in the existing mechanisms, comprehending the social-economic and technological concerns, and proposing effective strategies in fortifying the European Union on its journey towards climate neutrality. This study is hence critical in reducing this knowledge gap between aspiration and reality that helps policy makers, stakeholders and researchers to develop more effective climate strategies.

Research Gap

Although the European Union (EU) has covered up a lot of ground documenting its climate-related policies and has presented many reports on emissions reduction targets, it has a major deficiency in comprehending how effective the target of 2040 Climate Target can be in closing the existing chasm between high policy making and practice. The given sources are mostly concentrated on the regulatory frameworks (i.e. European Climate Law), the de-carbonization technology roadmap, and the climate transition economic effects. Nonetheless, little research assesses the interaction of these components in the conditions of the particular target in 2040, a transitional point on the way to the final 2050 climate neutrality target. Such absence of combined analysis creates doubts as to whether adequate policy instruments are in place to meet the challenges brought by the varied political, economic, and social realities of member states. Also, the limited number of studies so far have focused mostly on past reviews of the EU climate targets, including the 2020 and 2030 targets with much of the literature emphasizing achievement of emissions targets but with little attention to the challenges that open up in the post-2030 era. The 2040 goal is a new degree of ambition, one that needs profound de-carbonization of all sectors in a tightly-scheduled time. However, not much empirical evidence has been conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the already present mechanisms to enable such a transformational change e.g., the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), the Just Transition Fund, and the renewable energy directives. The other gap is the lack of investigating implementation issues faced at member state level. Despite the common set of policies across EU, experience of implementation varies radically, with structural disadvantages, political opposition, or technological impregnation in some states. There is little evidence assessing how such disparities may impact progress toward the 2040 goal on a collective basis. Moreover, the impact of external geopolitical and economic factors, including energy security crises or the whims of global markets, is largely neglected when it comes to the possibilities of the EU to adhere to its climate path. Also, the social aspect of the 2040 target is not sufficiently taken into consideration. Although a just transition is recognized by necessity, the interaction between social equity, acceptance, and transitions of labor markets with the effectiveness of climate policy has not received sufficiently satisfactory consideration according to major academic research or policy-oriented studies. This poses a knowledge gap regarding the wider social and political reality of how such deep emissions cuts could be achieved without further aggravating (and causing backlash to) social inequalities. Thus, the study will

attempt to address those gaps by trying to give an overall assessment of the EU 2040 Climate Target, not just based on its ambitious nature, but also with respect to the practical, political, economic and social aspects affecting its execution. Applying a policy ambition and reality lens to observe how the two interact, this paper aims to add a more refined dimension to determining, whether the European Union as the current leader of climate action can manage the knots of the next centuries well. The disparity in its execution between the member states, technology related problems, social resistance, financial limitation, and external geopolitical dependency are all a hindrance towards achieving this target. There is a high commitment on the 2040 climate target within the European Union to cut the greenhouse gas emissions by at least 90 percent of the 1990 levels, and this makes the EU a global leader in climate action. Yet, EU policy ambition is so far ahead of reality when it comes to its implementations. • To discuss the policy contextual framework that supported the EU climate goal of 2040. Although initiatives such as the European Green Deal, which has extensive frameworks, and changes to other schemes, like the ETS, have been proposed and implemented, there are doubts and concerns related to whether activities undertaken are extensive enough to achieve the necessary de-carbonization rate. The given research provides a solution to a vital issue of evaluating the efficiency of the climate policies of the EU and the extent to which they have actually translated into practice and what obstacles still should be broken down to make the goal of 2040 a reasonably achievable one.

Research Objectives

To gage the significance of these tools such as ETS, CBAM, and Clean Industrial Deal.

To ascertain political, economic, and institutional implementational obstacles.

How supportive is the EU policy framework in the nature of the ability to achieve the 2040 climate?

To provide policy recommendations on how policy coherence and effectiveness of policy implementation can be improved.

Research Questions

1. Which are some of the main political, economic and institutional implementation hurdles?
2. Which are the functions of government that can help better EU climate policies?
3. What makes the member states varies in terms of preparation and the ability to achieve these aims?
4. The article covers a great number of topics like legislative possibilities, economic viability,

future of technologies, social malleability and nature limitations.

It explains the operation of the existing policy instruments such as the EU Emissions Trading system (ETS) Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) discussing their advantages and constraints and their interconnection in terms of helping in de-carbonization. This paper deals with the full analysis of the European Union (EU) 2040 climate goal by focusing on the effectiveness of its policy frameworks and the realities of its implementation. It is aimed at getting an insight into how the stated aim of the EU, to cut its net emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 90 per cent by 2040, correlates with the realities of capacities, actions, and governance systems that are needed, to accomplish the goal. At a sectoral level, covered sectors represent those with high emissions, such as the energy sector, transport and agriculture sectors, and the natural carbon sinks, such as forests. De la Feebleness. The Flow mindibliltie Physically, the research is limited to the European Union yet addresses the international setting because the EU climate policies are directly associated with global trade relations, cross-border carbon interactions, and global carbon emissions reduction activities. It is also temporal in that it looks at the current policy pathway, beginning with implementation of European Green Deal and the so-called Fit for 55 package to mid-term of 2040, as well as the end-point of climate neutrality by 2050. The study will offer policymakers evidence-based analysis of merits and weaknesses of the current existing mechanisms, such as the Emissions Trading System (ETS), Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and Just Transition Mechanism (JTM). The findings can help the policymakers to provide less rigid and accommodative policy regimes that balance the environment demands against economic sustainability and social equity to avert policy implementation failure. The importance of this research is in making a contribution to the academic and practical work in the sphere of climate governance. Asking a vital question of how an ambitious 2040 climate target identified by the European Union can effectively be converted into a measurable result, the research responds to a burning global question: how to make ambitious climate goals a success. EU, being a large economic and political bloc, is a centrical player in the design of international climate policies; therefore, the question of the viability and constraints of its strategy does not concern people outside the EU. To the society in general, the study underscores the social legitimacy role and participation of the citizens in climate action. It gives an understanding of how governance system, economic incentives, and technological approaches influence each other and reveals the areas that some changes or other assistance might

be necessary. The research will be helpful to enlighten us on how to increase the social acceptability of radical climate action, particularly in looking at the role of equity, affordability, and fairness. To scholars and researchers, the research fills in the knowledge gap on climate policy literature as the paper balances the theoretical ambitions and the reality on the ground. It assembles different views and approaches-the modeling analysis, the social calling of de-carbonization-and provides a complete picture of the multi-dimensional nature of deep de-carbonization. Besides, it determines the places where additional research should be done, including how the dynamics of the sectors are integrated, participatory governance, and the impact of external shocks on the climate goals. Flow Weaknesses On the one hand, it puts more emphasis on secondary sources including policy documents, modeling papers, and scholarly research articles as compared to primary data collection. Besides, by analysing the EU dependence on cross-border coalitions and value chains, it points out the connected nature of international initiatives to tackle the global warming battle, with a shared obligation of states. Finally, the paper at hand is important not only in evaluating the feasibility of the EU 2040 climate target but also in providing some knowledge on how a strong climate policy can be practical in a complex and dynamic world. These conclusions will be critical in the sense that the EU course toward climate neutrality in 2050 would be credible, fair, and resilient, which could become an example to follow by other areas aiming at the same environmental goals. Sectorally the study will concentrate on the key causes of emissions; energy, transport, heavy industry, and agriculture, and does not produce a sector-wise break up of each subsector. Although the study is comprehensive in its analysis, it has a number of limitations. Such caveats allow them to provide a limited and far-ranging analysis of the key research question, that is, to what degree the EU can transcend the gap between climate ambition and reality. It is possible that this dependency constrains the power to capture the latest or context based implementation issues of the individual EU member states. Second, all the forecasts of emissions reduction, technology developments, and economic effects are somewhat uncertain because they depend on the unpredictable changes, be it a breakthrough in investigations or the political crisis or economic shocks. Third, social response and societal approaches to climate policies are multifaceted and they cannot always be formulated in the available literature, thus, there is a chance that the issues will not be well informed. Lastly, climate governance is an emerging domain, and changing policy reforms and developments might alter the field in the future or even in the process of the study, rendering some findings time-specific. As per modeling projections

such as the one by Ferrucci et al. (2023), the nearly complete decarbonization of the power sector, including the phase out of coal and speeding up use of renewable energy sources and carbon capture would be required to stay within the target. The exclusions of this study are due to the intentional limits provided by the researcher in order to stay focused. Geographically, the scope of the study is limited to the European Union, but it takes into account international relations where the EU is involved in the global processes only insofar as it directly affects the 2040 climate target of the EU. The next temporal scope of analysis is centered on the timeframe between the adoption of the European Green Deal and the so-called the package of measures of "Fit for 55" through to the middle-ground long-term perspective in 2040, and, in some instances, the final EU climate neutrality target of 2050. The trappings that can arise even with such pathways modeled are emergent risks. The methodological framework of the study is both analytical and interpretive and is focused on policy evaluation and literature synthesis over and above the quantitative modeling or field work. This risk-centered approach crosses over with the broad criticisms of governance that requires ex post evaluations of policies to restructure and realign interventions, particularly on local levels (Schoenefeld et al., 2019; Tol, 2022).

Literature Review

The EU 2040 climate target feels its scientific backing at an unusually high level. Several empirical studies have been carried out to prove the effectiveness of certain tools of the policy in real life. This is also supported by the works of Victoria, Zeyen, and Brown (2021) who imply that the solar PV and wind infrastructure will need to scale at a perilous rate during the early 2030s to support electrification in heat and transportation. According to Fernandes, Greiner, and Victoria (2024), decentralized national policies related to carbon neutrality can increase transition costs up to 1.4 per cent in comparison with a coordinated policy at the EU level. Salvagnin (2024) notes some more academic anxiety over the policy framework and carbon leakage, with Diab (2025) noting that the proposed idea of including international carbon credits to the ETS will make its integrity more challenged. Heussaff et al. (2024) address four central dimensions of risks (geoeconomic instability, technological uncertainty, inequality and the loss of policy credibility) that have to be addressed on the basis of adaptive frameworks. The CBAM will effectively consider carbon leakage, yet it raises compliance and cross-border trade concerns, at least those with the suppliers in China and Russia (Magacho et al., 2023; Dufour & Thool, 2022). According to Presno, Landajo,

and Fern dnez Gonzalez (2024), the multi-layered nature of the EU governance system frequently results in adherence to regulations related and unequal across states of diverse economic strength.

Quite a few empirical tests have been conducted to prove the efficiency of definite policy instruments in real life. They conclude that EU ETS had a 42.8 percentage additional impact on the CO 2 -equivalent emissions of EU27 between 2005 and 2022 when regression analytical models simultaneously consider the levels of investments and prices of allowances in their model. Still, a less optimistic message is sounded by Pahle et al. (2025) with the warning of looming ETS endgame that sees shortage of allowances as potentially raising volatility and distributional risks. Salvagnin (2024) refers to a certain academic debating over the accuracy of policy formulations and the issue of carbon leakage, and Diab (2025) cautions that the intentions to add international carbon credits to the ETS will complicate its integrity. Other important tools such as the CBAM, and JTM are highly questioned. The CBAM will deal with carbon leakage yet it offers compliance and international trade concerns viz-a-viz suppliers in China and Russia (Dufour & Thool, 2022; Magacho et al., 2023). Similarly, the Just Transition Mechanism cannot adequately cover the equity issue: it is criticized due to underfunding, lack of territorial planning transparency, and a preference towards industrial compensation over specific community-level social welfare (Sarkki et al., 2022; Pianta & Lucchese, 2020; CEE Bankwatch Network, 2021).

The social dynamics are another critical element of success of a policy. Energy justice scholarship argues that the ethos of distributional justice, inclusion and recognition to historically marginalized groups are needed to sustain public legitimacy (Jenkins et al., 2016; Lacey-Barnacle & Bird, 2018). As a matter of fact, recent developments, including farmer backlash against climate policies, show that perceived unfairness can easily kill mainstream backing (Chapman, 2024). The poll shows that just a small part of EU residents are banned on the present-day climate reactions, especially under cost of the living stressors (Time, 2024). There are more complex projections because of environmental constraints. Scientists have warned that biomass forests found across the EU traditionally offset 6 percent of the annual emissions; however, they are currently under pressure of surviving drought, wildfires, and pest outbreaks, which can undermine any assumptions of using natural sinks in the further carbon budgeting systems (Reuters, 2025). In a global context, the EU has recently become a minor portion sunk or only 6 7 percent of the world emissions of total

greenhouse gases, exposing the EU to the dependency on global partnerships and supply chains, especially when critical clean energy materials are required (Hoekstra, 2025; European Council on Foreign Relations, 2024).

Even though there is good research on theoretical pathways and policy instruments, important gaps exist. The ex post feasibility is somewhat sparsely as per the empirical evidence-particularly regarding the fair play and legitimacy among the member states. Few reports include such aspects of sector problematic areas as agriculture, maritime transport, and heavy industry in the general climate model despite their significant portion in the overall emission quantification (Maritime ETS Literature Review, 2025). It does not also give a proper emphasis to the exogenous shocks such as geopolitical crisis or energy price shock. Overall, although the EU climate ambition proves effective and scientific, 2040 requires a better sense of how the whole structure of governance, justice, and resilience should be.

Naïve Theoretic and Ideational

This paper is based on the Comparative Public Policy Theory that offers techniques in utilizing the ways that various institutional structures, policy instruments and governance cultures influence policy outcomes. The Theory of Comparative Public Policy allows comparing the practices of EU member states with regard to the influence of the political traditions, administrative capabilities, and stakeholder relations on climate action. This lens explains why the policies would be effective in certain situations and dead-end in other cases, bringing out the interaction of domestic politics and supranational directives. Moreover, Governance Theory is used to explain the multi-level decision-making inside EU. The importance of networks, partnerships and collective action on policy goals makes Governance Theory critically applicable to analyse how the EU is able to reconcile centralized goals with decentralized realization at member states levels. Under this structure, coordination, transparency and accountability across various levels of governance is the determinant. In conceptual terms, the study assumes policy instrument design as an independent variable, which influences the way climate actions are conducted and emissions reductions and policy effectiveness as a dependent one, which is used to quantify the outcome. The insights into how these variables relate to one another are attained through case studies and thematic analysis rendering these two points to present an informative description of the mechanisms supporting or hindering progress to attain the 2040 target. The theory of Comparative Public Policy and the

Theory of Governance will be used in the analysis because they assume the interaction between the institutional environments, policy levers and relationships with stakeholders in order to affect climate dynamics. Policy instrument design, emissions cut and policy effectiveness are dependent variables whereas policy instrument design is independent.

Methodology

This study takes a qualitative comparative policy analysis framework to explore in detail the way the various EU member states with varying energy mixes look at the 2040 climate goal. The research is based on a relatively high amount of data sources which comprise EU legislative texts, official policy reports, scholarly articles and policymakers and stakeholder interviews in order to develop a full-scale characterization of the policy processes. When identifying data, only those policies that were closely associated with the 2040 climate target were used. Policies not related to the reductions of emissions or those set other than the EU context were excluded to be concentrated. It uses thematic coding and content analysis to gather common patterns and the notable themes over the instances. Cross-case analyses make the results more solid and provide a detailed picture of the influence of differences in institutions on implementation outcomes. This methodological strategy makes sure that triangulation of the data reinforces the validity of outcomes. It offers a long-term perspective not only on the legal framework but also on the social-political context in which policy performance has taken place, providing both a comprehensive view on what has been achieved but also on remaining gaps in EU climate governance.

Data Analysis

Discussions of policy document data and member state case studies indicate there are several dimensions of both advancing and challenges. Trends reveal that the extent of the general ambitions of the EU is strong but implementation of the same is significant in terms of regional and sectoral variance. Germany and Sweden represent the Western European countries in which tremendous improvement performances are being achieved by using aggressive investment in renewable sources technologies, strict regulatory implementation, and the political contribution. Such countries present an example of how a correspondence of the policy with economic incentives may speed the de-carbonization process. On the other hand, Poland and Hungary, to name two countries that are on the Eastern part of the continent, face severe economic limitations because of the fact that the country continues to use coal and needs much slower talkover to clean

sources. This unwillingness to apply such drastic measures demonstrates the difference in the ability and readiness in the EU context.

It is questionable whether the initial phase of the CBAM has resulted in quantifiable reductions in emissions and whether this approach is sustainable and equitable as it has caused trade tensions with international partners. ETS reforms have been effective in increasing carbon prices but also bear an extreme burden on energy-intensive sectors where there have been demands to adopt protective measures which would undermine climate targets. Bulldozing of regulations has also lowered the amount of corporate reporting that undermines transparency and makes them difficult to monitor. It is a phenomenon that risks devaluing accountability measures required in the achievement of climate targets. Lastly, the analysis highlights that there is a likelihood of increasing socio-economic differences between member states without additional funds in terms of just transition funding. This would undermine political legitimacy and jeopardize the overall success of the target reached in 2040, which will emphasize the importance of policies that will match the environmental ambition with socio-economic reality.

Conclusion

The analysis of the EU 2040 climate target shows that policies are hard to distinguish between intention and reality. The EU has been on the cutting edge of climate action and it has also outlined a very ambitious goal that emissions of greenhouse gases should be reduced aggressively to the tune of 90 percent until the year 2050 by comparison to the year 1990. This goal is scientifically consistent, is aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and is strongly model-consistent, pointing to the technical viability of realizing deep de-carbonization. There is however, no easy way to attain this target and this is not assured. The study lends credence to the fact that the desire to introduce such frameworks as the European Green Deal, the Emissions Trading System (ETS), the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) is an essential component of EU climate policy, yet still has many thorns in the areas of enforcement, equity, and resilience. One of the major lessons to draw as a result of the analysis is that ambition, although important, is never enough without strong, flexible implementation systems. Policy coherence in the EU is crippled by inequalities in enforcement between the member states, poor ex post examinations on policies, and lack of incorporation of the social equity aspect in the policies. Each of these is complicated by the presence of technological uncertainty

and economic stress and social resistance, particularly when those resisting are the same people who have been adversely affected by efforts to curb climate change. The potential impact on the chances of meeting the 2040 target associated with environmental limitations (e.g. the diminishing carbon sink absorption ability of the EU forests) and external risk factors (reliance on global supply chains and international trade) also increases it.

The most important observation to be made with regard to the study is that the success of the EU in delivering its climate goals not only relies on enhancing existing instruments but also it has to lead to much more coherence between climate policy and other socio-economic policies. Policies should be flexible to change, accommodating to various interests of society and supported with enough financial and technological resources. Participatory governance should be given more weight to make sure that affected communities are not only safeguarded but also involved heavily in transition pathways construction. Also, by implementing the principles of just transition in every sphere, the resistance and support of the population will be maintained. At a more general level, whether the EU is successful or not in achieving its 2040 objective on climate change will rebound far beyond the borders of the EU. Being one of the largest world economies and one of the leaders in climate regulation, the EU also could be considered an example to other regions. Its capacity to honour its modernization efforts will affect global climate negotiations, rate of adoption of clean technologies and sincerity of international climate leadership. Thus, the study points out that there should be a comprehensive approach by EU to balance between the environmental ambition and economic feasibility, social justice, and geopolitical stability. To sum up, the EU plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 can be considered an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is that the world needs us to provide leadership in making de-carbonization sustainable, whereas the challenge is to turn the goals that appear more ambitious than current conditions into realistic outcomes in a complex and dynamic environment. A political commitment that are a long term, stronger systems of governance, technology as well as the involvement of citizens in closing the gap that has always existed between the policy dream and the reality on the ground. When such factors coincide, it will not only enable the EU to reach its 2040 target, but also lead to an example of how climate action can be conducted successfully on a global scale.

Recommendations

- Pass laws and give penalties in case of non-adherence.

- Invent less strict but just systems of burden-sharing.
- Increase high standards of transparency amid simplification of the regulations.
- Reduce dependence on fossil fuel through just transition investment.
- Open up the policy adoption to the suggestions of the citizens.
- Properly allocate CBAM revenues so as to speed de-carbonization.

The study has intricate repercussions on policy development, studies, and opinion towards climate action in the society. This knowledge can be used by policymakers to develop stronger regulatory tools, enforce more successfully at member states levels, and/or allocate resources more promptly. The research offers a number of important findings that are of great real-life value because it systematically examines the mismatch between what the European Union plans to achieve in its 2040 climate ambitions and how such realities will play out in practice. To policy makers, the results of this study will provide helpful information on how to improve the climate governance systems. Examination of the current policies like the ETS, CBAM, and JTM will determine which of the mechanisms are performing successfully and which are in need of structural adjustment. Its impact to the academic world is also a problem. Also, the study can help in creation of adaptable policies that react to external shocks e.g. energy crisis, geopolitical tensions or economic recessions, so that climate goals can be realized despite uncertain circumstances. Observing the need to promote social equity and fairness, the study is reminding the possibility of considering the distributional impacts of de-carbonization with regard to the vulnerable populations and industries in terms of climate measures. The proposed investigation will add to the body of knowledge of climate governance by appealing to empirical standards together with theoretical opinion regarding the implementation of a policy, its equity, and sustainability. It brings into focus its gaps in areas where research is already scanty on ex post assessment of climate goals, sectoral de-carbonization pathways and social legitimacy of policy actions. Finding such gaps, the study will prompt further studies that will add more insight and suggest leading solutions to the problem of climate governance. Socio-economically, the findings of the study suggest that climate policies are the subject of acceptance and viewpoint of the various classes in the society. Alongside this, exploring the way the EU depends on international supply chains because of clean technologies, the study shows that diversified cooperation and international collaborative strategies are essential. This knowledge is capable of informing the policymakers on creating just transition system frameworks that will encourage public endorsements instead of opposition. Internationally, the study has implications when it comes to international cooperation in terms of climate change.

Whether the EU will be able to achieve its 2040 target or not may become a litmus test that other regions with ambitious climate targets are going to follow. The outcomes of this study can be used to advise the rest of the world on the terms that can be implemented to see the achievement of the commitments made in the climate negotiations. Also, on the evaluation of the dependence of the EU in the domain of international supply chains through the existence of clean technologies, the study has been able to indicate the need of diversified collaborations and international collaborative strategies.

To sum it up, the implication of the study is not limited to academic insight and knowledge only but is involved and directly influences the process of climate policy construction, enactment, and assessment. They provide a route toward the EU and other world agents to enhance their climate plans, merge ambition and practicality, and construct robust grids that can meet extensive sustainability regulatory parameters.

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