

## *EU climate leadership after Paris: rising to the challenge?*

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### Abstract

The European Union has often been described as a leader of climate change action, and convincing arguments can be found to support this leadership claim. However, recent economic, political and institutional developments such as the decision of the UK to leave the bloc or the rise of populist parties throughout Europe have put pressure on the EU itself and pose some significant challenges to its climate leadership role, particularly since current EU policies are unlikely to meet its commitment under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2 degrees. At the same time, with US president Donald Trump turning his back on multilateral climate action, EU climate leadership is more necessary than ever. This discussion paper shows how the EU has led on climate change issues in the past, and analyses the current challenges EU climate and energy policies face. It also presents suggestions for improving internal climate and energy governance, and describes how the EU could reclaim its international leadership role by strengthening existing partnerships with non-EU countries and capitalising on its extensive governance experience and climate know-how.

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# 1 Introduction

Climate change governance involves many actors and institutions on various levels. This is no different in the European Union, which has been referred to as a “microcosmos of the international climate change *problematique*” (Jordan et al. 2010: 8). Several institutions shape and decide on policies which to a large extent have to reflect the consensus reached by 28 (and soon 27) Member States, representing a wide range of interests in terms of climate and energy policies, ranging from Danish interests in wind to the Polish predilection for coal. Notwithstanding these diverging interests, the EU has traditionally sought to exert leadership on climate change issues in international forums, and by some accounts, has done so quite successfully (Wurzel and Connelly 2011). The EU has been credited with keeping the Kyoto Protocol alive after the US refused to ratify in 2001 (Parker and Karlsson 2010) and more recently, European diplomatic skills helped to bring about the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015 (Parker et al. 2017). In addition, achieving 20 percent greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2020 while simultaneously cutting 20 percent of energy consumption and raising the share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix to 20 percent – the 20-20-20 objectives of the first energy and climate package<sup>1</sup> – is a significant achievement. Indeed, this package was a major source of the EU’s credibility underpinning its international leadership role on climate change (Oberthür and Kelly 2008) and overall, the Union is on course to meet its 2020 targets (EEA 2016). If the EU can lead by example and show that economic growth, energy security and sustainability are not mutually exclusive, other countries might follow. However, data suggests that more should be done not only to turn around recent negative trends such as the increase in energy consumption and emissions (see Table 1), but also to strengthen the EU’s climate pledges, which are deemed insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement’s objectives (Rogelj et al. 2016).

**Table 1. Key EU climate and energy statistics**

	2000	2015	Change 2014-2015
<b>Emissions</b>	4280.2 MtCO <sub>2</sub>	- 14.9%	+ 0.95%
<b>Emissions from road transport</b>	845.8 MtCO <sub>2</sub>	+ 0.8%	+ 1.6%
<b>Final energy consumption</b>	1132.9 Mtoe	- 4.32%	+ 2.1%
<b>Energy intensity</b>	155.2 toe/M€	- 22.36%	- 1%
<b>Renewables in final energy consumption</b>	49.1 Mtoe	+ 76.8%	+ 4.7%

MtCO<sub>2</sub>=Megatonnes of carbon dioxide; (M)toe=(Million) tonnes of oil equivalent.

Source: European Commission (2017b).

The EU can only be a credible leader internationally if it increases its ambition and follows through on implementation. Its leadership has become all the more important since the United States federal government under President Trump announced it would turn its back, once again, on a multilateral agreement to tackle climate change (Halper 2017), notwithstanding a great number of US states and cities that have since declared their commitment to the Paris Agreement, stating that they “are still in”.<sup>2</sup> However, ensuring

<sup>1</sup> The first climate and energy package was adopted in 2008 and consists of multiple directives and regulations to meet the 20-20-20 objectives.

<sup>2</sup> <http://wearestillin.com/>.

that the EU delivers both internally and externally faces many challenges. With the 'low-hanging fruit' of climate change mitigation (i.e. reducing emissions from the power sector) increasingly being picked, the challenge of decarbonisation moves to more difficult sectors such as heat, industry and transport.

This chapter investigates the prospects for EU climate leadership from a historical perspective, offering insights on the challenges ahead, and proposing several improvements to overcome internal challenges and strengthen external relationships in the wake of the Paris Agreement.

## 2 EU climate change governance

European action on climate change is clearly mandated by the EU's founding treaties. Since the Treaty of Lisbon, environmental policies are a shared competence, meaning that European institutions can legislate if Member States fail to do so (Article 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU). The environmental chapter (Article 191 TFEU) further offers a clear mandate that EU policy should promote measures to "combat[ing] climate change". Following the ordinary legislative procedure most of the time, EU climate mitigation policies are commonly proposed by the European Commission – taking into consideration the directions given by the European Council – and then negotiated in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Besides those core institutions, the policy-making process (and subsequent implementation) is influenced by consultative bodies such as the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, as well as a plethora of other actors including NGOs, business networks and other lobbying organisations. Those policies can take many forms, ranging from regulatory instruments such as emissions or energy efficiency standards for passenger cars or products (e.g. fridges, dishwashers or vacuum cleaners) to market-based instruments such as the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS). In addition, the Commission often uses informal instruments such as guidelines and recommendations or establishes financial instruments such as funds for research and innovation to act on climate change.

The EU's complex governance system has been captured by the concept of 'multi-level governance' (Knill and Liefferink 2007; Jordan et al. 2012), which underscores that policy is made between several institutions and on several levels, from the supranational level – as embodied by the European Commission – to the sub-national level, with the national level – i.e. Member States – in between. In the resulting multi-level dynamics, it is important to remember that – contrary to what populist detractors of the EU may argue – Member States retain a significant amount of power and often limit the influence of "Brussels" and the European Commission by pursuing intergovernmental bargaining strategies to counter the supranational elements of EU policy making.

Notwithstanding the countervailing forces in EU policy making, the multitude of actors and the various levels involved, EU climate governance can be considered quite successful. The Union is likely to meet its self-imposed emission reduction targets by 2020, and the uptake of renewable energy sources in the energy mix progresses according to plan (EEA 2016).

Externally, its long experience with consensus-seeking negotiations based on the rule of law has made the EU a staunch supporter of multilateral climate cooperation (Van Schaik and Schunz 2012; Bäckstrand and Elgström 2013). Indeed, some scholars see the aforementioned complexity of EU policy making not as a hindrance (see Section 3.4), but rather as a potential asset for EU climate leadership at the international stage (Schreurs and Tiberghien 2007; Oberthür and Kelly 2008; Jordan et al. 2012; Parker et al. 2017).

### **3 The EU and climate change leadership**

There are different conceptualisations of 'leadership'. For instance, countries might lead because of their military or economic might (structural leadership), because of their diplomatic skills (entrepreneurial leadership), through ideas (normative/cognitive leadership), or by example (symbolic/directional leadership) (Parker and Karlsson 2010: 926; Wurzel and Connelly 2011: 13). The EU has exhibited most – if not all – of them at some point during the past three decades.

The EU is the largest economic area in the world, accounting for almost 23 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) (Eurostat 2015) and exporting and importing more goods and services than the United States or China (European Commission 2014a). And while roughly 20 countries have the United States as their largest trading partner, the EU is the largest trading partner for 80 nations (European Commission 2014a). That economic weight can allow the EU to exert non-negligible structural leadership, which it did when the US withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. By supporting World Trade Organization membership of the Russian Federation, which in return signed the Protocol, the EU's effort allowed the Protocol to enter into force in February 2005 (Parker and Karlsson 2010: 929).

While the EU, as a staunch supporter of multilateralism and the rule of law, also qualifies as a normative leader (Van Schaik and Schunz 2012), it has also tried to lead by example. In 1997, the EU proposed the deepest emission cuts in the final stages of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations (Oberthür and Kelly 2008: 36); and in 2005, the bloc adopted the largest emissions trading system in the world, covering almost half of the EU's emissions. In the same vein, the first EU climate and energy package (2008) enshrining the 20-20-20 targets can be considered visionary at the time, as other large economies did not have comparable targets in place. This climate and energy package allowed the EU, among other benefits, to claim that its climate leadership was credible (Oberthür and Kelly 2008; Van Schaik and Schunz 2012).

However, in the recent past, EU climate leadership has come under fire. At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen in 2009, the EU was effectively side-lined and despite the EU's success (owing much to the French government's diplomatic skills) in Paris in 2015, its structural leadership has been dented by the United Kingdom's decision to leave the bloc (see Box 1). The EU's directional leadership has been called into question by the likely insufficiency of its 2030 climate and energy targets to limit global warming to well below 2°C (Rogelj et al. 2016) and controversies such as the Volkswagen 'Dieselgate' cast doubt over the EU's ability to take on vested interests of the fossil-fuel based economy given its lacklustre regulatory response (Neslen and Harmsen 2016).

### Box 1. Brexit and EU climate policy

A year after the United Kingdom's vote to leave the EU, the country still remains in the dark over its future relationship with the Union. Though a 'hard Brexit' may have looked likely following British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit speech on 17 January 2017, the recent elections – which took away the Conservative Party's small majority in Parliament – have cast doubt on this scenario. What the outcome for the UK and Europe will be is up for at least two years of fierce negotiations, and predicting the outcomes is charlatanerie. Nevertheless, some potential implications for UK and EU climate policy can be pointed out.

For the UK, there may be several possible negative consequences, including a lack of access to EU financing instruments, declining investment in clean technologies due to policy instability, a declining role in the EU energy market, the dismantling of European environmental regulations and a challenging process to replace them (House of Lords, 2017).

In addition, there are several possible effects for EU climate governance. For instance, the UK has traditionally been a leader on mitigation policies (Skjærseth 2014) although in some areas (e.g. renewables deployment) it has lagged behind other countries. The departure of the UK might weaken the position of other 'green' countries such as Germany, and strengthen the negotiating hand of countries more sceptical of the EU's climate ambitions, such as Poland, which may in turn affect future negotiations about climate and energy targets.

From an energy market perspective, the UK has traditionally been an advocate of market liberalisation (Froggatt et al. 2016) which, again, might put a break on further energy market integration. The UK's National Balancing Point is Europe's busiest gas trading hub, but it might lose importance compared to the Title Transfer Facility in the Netherlands (Giblom and Shiryayevskaya 2016), which might affect gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices in the EU. This could exacerbate the already existing under-utilisation of LNG infrastructure in Europe (European Commission 2016b).

Furthermore, externally, the EU would lose a political and economic heavyweight and its structural climate leadership might suffer from the reduction of its economic and political clout.

However, there may also be some positive aspects in terms of climate and energy policy. The UK has been traditionally wary of the EU's perceived political integration process. Its penchant for market-based (rather than regulatory) approaches to problem solving might make regulatory and binding climate policies and targets more likely. For example, the UK has blocked policies such binding energy efficiency targets, given the country's old and inefficient building stock (Reuters 2017). It also lobbied to keep the renewables obligation for 2030 non-binding (Waterfield 2014).

Finally, climate change might offer both the EU and UK an opportunity to continue to cooperate after Brexit. It is in the interest of both parties to tackle the issue together, and collaborating on climate change mitigation internally or on climate leadership externally might be a conduit for further cooperation in other issue areas after the UK has left the bloc.

Notwithstanding the various crises plaguing the EU, its leadership on climate change is needed more than ever, at a time in which populist resistance to science runs high and the world's second largest emitter, the United States, seems to have, at the federal level, turned its back on climate change action (Weaver and Jopson 2017). However,

strengthening European climate governance and leadership faces old and new challenges, as will be discussed next.

## 4 Old and new challenges to EU climate governance and leadership

If the EU wants to continue as a climate leader, it is essential for the bloc to get its own house in order first. Only when leading by example and showing that economic growth and (deep) emission reductions are not mutually exclusive might other nations follow. Research suggests that, overall, EU competitiveness has not suffered significantly from the bloc's past climate and energy policies (Sartor 2012; European Commission 2014b; Neuhoff et al. 2014) and, that jobs gained in developing renewables outweigh the jobs lost in other sectors (Ragwitz et al. 2009). In addition, models suggest that stringent climate policy and economic growth potentially go well together (Green 2015; Bretschger 2017). Indeed, the EU took on ambitious climate policies in the middle of the biggest financial crisis since the depression of the 1930s, when adopting its first climate and energy package at the end of 2008.

However, despite the economic woes at the time, conditions for stringent climate action were favourable, since several factors were aligned and opened a window of opportunity for ambitious climate policies (see also Kingdon 1984): EU leaders saw climate action as a less controversial way to further European integration after the failed attempts of bestowing the EU with a constitution in 2005. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had just released its Fourth Assessment Report in 2007, urging immediate and strong action (Van Schaik and Schunz 2012). New Member States who joined in 2004 were less opposed to climate action since they received side-payments in the forms of funds to modernise their energy system and the guarantee to share the burden of emission reductions fairly (Skjærseth 2014).<sup>3</sup> And, importantly, governments of the three most powerful Member States at the time, Germany, France and the UK, were all in support of ambitious climate action (Skjærseth 2014).

Conditions for strengthening climate ambitions are less conducive today. In 2016, the EU went through probably the biggest crisis since the signature of the Treaty of Rome, due to the Brexit vote, the influx of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa, the still continuing economic crisis on its Southern shores, and the generally rising level of populist criticism laid on the EU. Divergences between Eastern and Western Europe seem to increase not only concerning European values (Rupnik 2016) but also concerning the bloc's climate and energy policies (Szulecki et al. 2017). Eastern European Member States seem increasingly successful in watering down policies (Olgun 2017) and some Member States still seem to prefer national solutions to European energy and climate challenges. The case of the gas pipeline Nord Stream II illustrates this well: German interests clashed with the ones of the Baltic states and Poland (Goldthau 2017; Lang and Westphal 2017) and with the European Commission's strategy to diversify energy supply away from Russia, the EU's

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<sup>3</sup> Also, much of the EU's climate legislation dates back to the 1990s, and is thus part of the *acquis communautaire*, to which all new Member States must sign up when joining the EU.

largest gas supplier (Maznewa and Shiryayevskaya 2017). This underscores not only the differing priorities of Member States, but also the tensions between the EU's energy and climate goals. While increasing energy security by looking for more gas may contribute to short-term energy policy goals it may undermine the long-term sustainability of the EU's energy mix (Böbner 2016).

All those challenges – misalignment of policies, divergences between Member States' policies and interests, external crises, populist surges and a general low appetite for closer integration – are likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future. However, the EU can still take steps to address these challenges internally, by increasing its climate mitigation ambitions, and externally, by reclaiming the mantle of international climate leadership. Recent literature points to several options for how this could be achieved.

## 5 Addressing internal challenges

Given that EU policy making exhibits both supranational and intergovernmental traits, and taking into account the limitations of the EU's founding treaties, it is clear that the EU cannot take on all responsibilities; Member States need to do their part. But ensuring that Member States deliver and do not undercut EU climate and energy policies remains challenging, and the current mood does not seem to make a change in decision-making procedures – for example a switch from unanimity voting to qualified majority voting in the Council to outvote climate laggards – very likely.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding these constraints, several options are available to EU and Member State policy makers.

A first suggestion is to try and turn the complexity of EU decision making into a possible strength. While the multi-level nature of EU climate governance can be a weakness, it also provides 'policy entrepreneurs' such as Commissioners or ambitious policy makers from Member States with windows of opportunity to build coalitions in support of stronger climate mitigation policies (Schreurs and Tiberghien 2007; Jordan et al. 2012; Boasson and Wettstad 2013; Szulecki et al. 2017). This dynamic of 'multi-level reinforcement' seems to be particularly fruitful when taking into account the subnational level, where local governments and initiatives can help drive EU climate policies forward despite opposition at the national level (Jänicke and Quitzow 2017). For example, Polish regions increasingly oppose the central government's plans to build new lignite power plants; and Spanish and Italian communities are the majority of signatories to the Covenant of Mayors<sup>5</sup> – an initiative launched by the Commission – despite the waning support of Italy and Spain for renewables (Jänicke and Quitzow 2017).

The Commission therefore has several options to strengthen and enlarge its 'policy network' and to make use of multi-level reinforcement dynamics. On the transnational and subnational level, it can do so by facilitating a stronger interaction between EU and local initiatives. But also at the regional level it can strengthen its policy network by building on already existing forums such as the North Seas Countries Offshore Grid Initiative or the

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<sup>4</sup> Even though legislation in many policy areas could be adopted by qualified majority voting, the Council usually seeks consensus wherever possible (Wurzel 2013: 82).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/index\\_en.html](http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/index_en.html).

Pentalateral Energy Forum (Umpfenbach et al. 2015). And at the national level, EU institutions could use Council presidencies of environmentally ambitious countries to open up and seize windows of opportunity for ambitious climate mitigation action (Skjærseth 2017).

Seizing these opportunities, however, depends crucially on a more streamlined approach within the European Commission itself: different directorates often compete with each other due to their different preferences and cultures (Skjærseth 2017). For example, Directorate-General (DG) Energy's energy security and LNG strategy might clash with DG Climate's mission to tackle climate change, which can lead to sub-optimally aligned policies. It is therefore important to ensure better internal coordination and alignment within the Commission and to make sure that climate concerns are adequately reflected in other sectoral policies (see also Van Asselt et al. 2015).

To facilitate processes of multi-level reinforcement, however, it also is necessary to overcome vested national or business interests that may oppose stronger climate policies. To help overcome these interests, a third suggestion – drawing on lessons learned from the first energy package adoption in 2008 – therefore points to the importance of making side-payments and establishing policy linkages (Skjærseth 2014). Financial transfers from Western to Eastern European Member States in exchange for the new Member States' acceptance of emission reduction efforts is one example of side-payments that have been used in the past. The support for bioenergy in Eastern Europe to increase energy security is an example of a successful policy linkage, where renewable energy development was linked to energy security concerns (Skjærseth 2014). EU policy making regularly provides for opportunities to establish linkages and negotiate side payments. In January 2017, for example, the European Parliament voted to include a 'Just Transition Fund' into the reform of the EU ETS to help fossil-fuel dependent countries embrace the energy transition (European Parliament 2017). Other opportunities are the negotiations on the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework – the EU's budget - which will start in 2018. However, side-payments or policy linkages should not just be seen as a way to obtain the buy-in of Member States; there needs to be a *quid pro quo* that ensures that Member States deliver and increase their climate ambitions and use funding for purposes that do not undermine the EU's climate goals. The importance of this relationship is illustrated by new research that shows that funding meant for clean energy was used to effectively subsidise fossil fuels, particularly in Eastern European Member States (Whitley et al. 2017).

In moving forward, a certain realism should prevail. Less ambitious Member States may find a way to water down new climate policy proposals and to block stronger legislation. Moreover, the appetite for a pan-European approach to climate and energy policy might be low or overshadowed by the Brexit negotiations and national solutions to European problems. However, the EU and its institutions, such as the European Commission, might work around this opposition by focusing on less controversial issues that might still help to strengthen EU leadership on climate change mitigation.

One option is to ramp up the support for research on, innovation in, and demonstration of climate change mitigation technologies. The EU has been a leader on clean technologies – globally, 40 percent of the high-value technologies originated in the EU – and today, more

than 1.2 million people work in the renewables sector (Reinaud et al. 2016). Building on this strength might prove less controversial and therefore easier to implement, particularly if Member States and the private sector can be convinced of the economic benefits of a low-carbon economy. There is a large body of literature backing up the compatibility of economic growth and stronger climate policy (New Climate Economy 2014; Fankhauser and Jotzo 2017; OECD 2017), but creating examples that put these findings in practice will be important for scaling up low-carbon technologies. The EU could play an important part through supporting emerging mitigation technologies that show that economic growth and emission reductions can work together. The EU's NER 300 programme, using revenues from the EU ETS to fund low-carbon technologies is a case in point of how the EU could support this, and might form a basis for an even more ambitious (and more generously endowed) tool. Founding and financing research centres of excellence with a specific focus on climate change mitigation might be a concrete activity, ideally drawing on competencies and skills from several Member States and drawing on lessons learnt from the European Institute for Innovation and Technology.

Another potentially less contentious option would be to help Member States collect, process and evaluate relevant data on climate mitigation policies. Following the Paris Agreement's introduction of a pledge-and-review process (see Chapter 1), information about how those pledges (i.e. NDCs) add up and how policies to achieve these pledges are performing will become essential. Research has shown that monitoring climate policies in the EU is fraught with difficulties (Schoenefeld et al. 2016) and stakeholder consultations carried out under CARISMA reveal the often insufficient capacities of Member States to report on the impacts of specific mitigation policies (Böbner et al. 2017). By providing expertise and financial support to measure and assess the various effects (greenhouse gas emission reductions, costs, social and environmental impacts and co-benefits) of Member States' climate mitigation policies – and possibly streamline their monitoring – the Commission, along with organisations such as the European Environment Agency, could implement (relatively) low-cost and uncontroversial measures to help Member States to deliver, and in the medium term, strengthen their climate change mitigation policies to meet the Paris Agreement's long-term goals.

Complementing these efforts, another way to boost EU climate policy internally is to increase and improve the communication concerning the EU's climate actions. All too often, the EU is derided by detractors and even by environmental NGOs for its shortcomings and failure to take climate action. However, much progress has been made in the past. The supply of energy has become more secure due to legislation such as Regulation 994/2010 on gas security (Gaventa et al. 2016); emissions are down by more than 22 percent (in 2014) compared to 1990, while the EU economy is (timidly) growing; and integrating almost 30 percent of renewable energy into the European electricity grid is no small feat.

These (and other) success stories should be communicated better and more regularly to European citizens. By showing the tangible benefits of EU climate and energy policies, public support among EU citizens might consolidate, which in turn might help reduce Member State opposition to stronger climate policies at the European level. Surveys and studies suggest that support for climate action is already high among EU citizens

(Eurobarometer, 2014; 2015). It would therefore be helpful to show citizens how the EU is tackling climate change in a more transparent and engaging manner. For instance, the Commissioner for the Energy Union initiative, Maroš Šefčovič, regularly embarks on an 'Energy Union tour' to speak with policy makers and citizens. A 'climate action tour' by Commissioner Cañete with a focus on citizen engagement might be an option, particularly since research suggests that the impetus from the EU level is well received on the subnational level (Jänicke and Quitzow 2017). Providing climate data in an open, interactive and understandable manner for citizens to explore would be another low-cost option to better communicate the benefits of low-carbon policies. Here, research institutes and think tanks could help to construct and maintain a 'climate benefits' database, with regional and subnational (local) success stories. Such success stories will also be important for convincing other countries that the EU is achieving its climate policy goals.<sup>6</sup>

## 6 Reclaiming external leadership

It is this external projection of internal climate change expertise and experience which should help the EU to regain credibility as an international climate leader.

Research suggests that the EU's self-perception of a climate leader is shared by other countries. While the bloc's reputation took a significant dent in 2009 in Copenhagen and the US and China recently surpassed the EU in other countries' perceptions as leaders on climate change issues, the EU is still seen as part of the leadership group (Parker et al. 2017). But with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, the countries most likely to remain in this group are the EU and China. And although the Chinese government has made impressive progress in renewable energy investment and deployment (Rumney 2016), its environmental record is still mixed. Taken together, this strengthens the case for European climate leadership.

For European and Member State policy makers, there are several options for translating international climate leadership aspirations into concrete actions.

As the successful conclusion of the Paris Agreement has shown, the EU and its Member States have the necessary skill set to be an important player in international climate diplomacy. With the creation of the European External Action Service in 2010, the EU is able to employ a wide diplomatic network, making it well positioned to nurture old and establish new partnerships, as recognised in its climate diplomacy White Paper in 2013 (EEAS 2013). Indeed, establishing partnerships particularly with countries adopting ambitious positions on international climate policy was key in negotiating the Paris Agreement (Parker et al. 2017). Besides nurturing those and other already established partnerships in forums such as the G7, the G20 or the 'High Ambition Coalition', an 'action partnership' with China seems crucial following the withdrawal announcement by the

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<sup>6</sup> Initial stakeholder consultations were carried out in 2016 and the beginning of 2017 in the framework of CARISMA Work Package 7 on 'International Collaboration on research, innovation and the transfer of climate change mitigation technologies'. These initial consultations suggest that some developing countries outside the EU look at lessons learned from EU policies when deciding and implementing their own climate change mitigation legislation.

United States. Such a partnership can build on past collaborations such as the one established with Chinese national and subnational governments on a Chinese ETS (EEAS 2016; see also European Commission 2016a) or the China-EU Energy Dialogue 2013. Further, the suggestion of creating an office of an 'EU Envoy of Strategic Climate Change Collaboration' could help to institutionalise the EU's role in multilateral climate politics and give it a better capacity to reach out to other countries such as India (Kjellén and Müller 2017). Indeed, forming a strong partnership between China and the EU on climate change issues is seen not only as an option within EU policy-making circles but also increasingly in China itself. Recent research suggests that experts, policy makers as well as the public see an EU-China partnership, especially on renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency policies, as a good opportunity for mutual learning in a multi-polar world (Suetyi and Zhiqin 2017). And while China's human rights and environmental records may still be mixed (Phakathi 2017), strengthening support for multilateral action by reaching out to other major emitters still offers one of the best ways for the EU to exert international climate leadership.

Another pathway to strengthen leadership on climate action is for the EU and Member State policy makers to act as an 'orchestrator' of climate initiatives involving non-state and subnational actors (Hale and Roger 2014), as mentioned above. As Chapter 2 elaborates, international climate governance currently involves a wide array of international organisations and actors. To ensure that this groundswell of climate action is steered in the direction of meeting overarching governance goals (i.e. keeping temperature increases well below 2°C), some organisations with the intellectual, financial and technical capacity can coordinate (or orchestrate) intermediaries to scale up their actions (Abbott et al. 2015). The EU institutions (particularly the Commission) as well as some Member State governments are well placed to assume a more prominent role in the orchestration of international climate initiatives because of their experience, know-how and credibility (Hale and Roger 2014). For example, as mentioned above, the Commission was the driver behind the Covenant of Mayors, a voluntary network of cities undertaking climate action, and aside from the World Bank, the UK government was seen as the main orchestrator of a variety of climate initiatives (Hale and Roger 2014). And while Brexit might potentially reduce the opportunities for orchestration, other countries might fill the void (e.g. as evidenced by the French government's skilful conclusion of the crucial Paris COP in 2015).

European and Member State policy makers could strengthen new and existing international climate initiatives through (1) technical support; (2) financial support; (3) the hosting of regular events to discuss and possibly launch new actions and initiatives. The latter would particularly be beneficial if orchestration aims to fill existing gaps in climate governance. This could be done by launching initiatives to promote mitigation options and technologies that are insufficiently supported by national or EU-wide policies (e.g. tackling short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon; or fossil fuel subsidy reform) in collaboration with non-state and subnational actors. Another option would be to support initiatives that help implement national climate policies and achieve a country's climate pledges under the Paris Agreement, for instance initiatives that help to strengthen insights into the *ex-post* performance of national climate policies (cf. Schoenefeld et al. 2016). Supporting existing and new initiatives involving non-state and subnational actors in the Global South could

further strengthen the EU's credibility and offer evidence of its commitment to support other countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

## 7 Conclusion

The EU is at a crossroads. Riddled by economic, political and social crises, under attack from left and right and with potentially one member less, the bloc faces its biggest challenge since the signature of the Treaty of Rome. Although it was proposed as a possible future scenario (among five) in the recent Commission's White Paper on the *Future of Europe* (European Commission 2017a), the scenario of 'carrying on' (or 'muddling through'), often chosen as a way of least resistance, might this time be insufficient to restore trust in the EU's institutions and to deliver on the promises of improving "the living and working conditions" of its citizens (TFEU, Preamble) as well as of dealing with "worldwide environmental problems" and "combating climate change" (TFEU, Article 191).

Yet the EU has often emerged stronger from crises and has used them to give a fresh meaning to the European project. Ambitious climate policies in the past have been one vehicle of strengthening Member State cooperation in times of crises, and being a climate leader can be a unifying factor around which Member States, European institutions and its citizens can rally.

Though the context for reclaiming EU climate leadership may in some ways be challenging, much has changed for the better since the Energy and Climate Package of 2008 was adopted. For instance, renewable energy sources have become cheaper than fossil fuels in many regions (IRENA 2015; Dowling and Gray 2016); renewables employ over 1.1 million people across Europe, accounting for a turnover of €153 billion (Euroserv'ER 2016); and big business players increasingly support stronger climate action (NBC News 2017), waking up to the high costs of inaction (Carbon Tracker Initiative, 2013; Dietz et al., 2016) but also to the "biggest [economic] opportunity of our age" (King 2016). Furthermore, countries other than the United States still seem to be willing to uphold the liberal-institutionalist order and view climate change as a continuing political priority (G20, 2017). Finally, the Paris Agreement has provided the international community with a guiding framework with a comprehensive scope, and initiatives to tackle global climate change across borders have multiplied. These are developments that should facilitate multilateral, multi-stakeholder action to tackle global warming and multilateral, inclusive action is usually what the EU does best. While the recently published White Paper on Europe's future remains silent on this topic, it is perhaps time for a sixth scenario: The EU as international champion of a low-carbon, sustainable economy.

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