POLICY BRIEF



The global impact of EU climate action

How the EU could enhance transformative policies in non-EU countries

Main recommendations:

- In addition to existing climate funding, the EU should use some of the proceeds from the expansion of the EU ETS to international shipping and introduction of CBAM to accelerate mitigation action in other countries, especially developing and vulnerable states.
- **2.** For countries with significant exposure to trade with the EU, it should provide administrative support to allow them fulfil requirements resulting from some of the measures, especially the introduction of CBAM.
- **3.** To avoid environmental degradation and human rights violations resulting from the EU's growing demand for critical and strategic materials, the EU should introduce clear requirements for companies exporting such materials to the EU.
- **4.** The EU's domestic policies and actions should be consistent with the Paris Agreement and its own legally binding commitments. This means stopping investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and phasing out fossil fuels.
- 5. The EU needs to elevate climate ambition across all levels of its diplomacy. Global multilateral action through international institutions should be prioritised. The EU should also work with likeminded countries to accelerate first moving action, where possible, and formulate tailored bilateral solutions to support developing and vulnerable countries directly impacted by its climate-related regulations.



Introduction

Through its diplomatic ties and influence in international bodies and institutions, the European Union (EU) plays a major role in climate policy development beyond its borders. As the EU progresses further towards climate neutrality, both its domestic climate policies and its diplomatic efforts will have wide ranging impacts on other countries.

Given its experience in the development of climate policy, the EU offers a number of lessons for other countries to draw on, both as success stories, but also in identifying room for improvement as other countries adopt similar policies.

While the EU has taken leaps forward in policymaking, it needs to pay close attention to the impact of its policies on third countries. Some of them will need greater assistance to deal not only with the impacts of climate change, but also the repercussions of the EU's climate policies. This policy brief develops

recommendations on how the EU can facilitate greater ambition while supporting other countries in transitioning to climate neutrality.

For this purpose, this policy brief draws on 4i-TRACTION research covering five areas of EU policy: the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) (Vasilj et al., 2023); the EU's international maritime policies (Petroni et al., 2023); the risk of bottlenecks in supply of critical raw materials (Ancygier et al., 2023); the security implications of the EU's transition to a climate neutral economy (Jakob et al., 2023); and the diplomatic role the EU plays in increasing climate ambition globally (Mace et al., 2023). Based on the work conducted in these five areas, we outline impacts the EU's transition could have beyond its borders and develop recommendations on enhancing the transformative potential of the EU's actions beyond its borders.

The impact of the EU's policies

Who will be impacted?

While each country's specific circumstances mediate the impact of the EU's climate policies, our research uncovers similarities and patterns which recur across the different EU policies. Broadly, intended or unintended impacts were found for certain groups of countries. Here we outline the categories of the different groups of impacted countries. Some countries are not exclusively linked to a single group.

1. The EU's neighbourhood

Countries neighbouring the EU will be most impacted due to their geographical proximity and high trade exposure to the EU. This is most evident in relation to the EU's CBAM and maritime climate regulations.

In *absolute terms*, the largest impact of CBAM import costs imposed on EU neighbours will be felt by Russia, Türkiye and the UK. When adjusting for the *value of product imports* relative to the GDP of a country, countries with high trade exposure and economic reliance on



the EU will be hit hardest. Out of ten countries that will be affected the most relative to the size of their economy, seven are EU neighbours. This applies especially to the Balkan countries, as well as Moldova and Ukraine (see Table 1) (Vasilj et al., 2023).

Similarly, the EU's attempt to decarbonise shipping may result in carbon leakage as some ship operators avoid the impact of the EU regulations by reloading their freight in the EU's neighbouring countries, particularly in the Mediterranean. At the same time, this will also exert positive pressures on neighbouring third countries to provide low-carbon infrastructure for the maritime sector: as the number of zero emission ships en route to the EU increases, countries will experience a growing demand to provide zero emission fuel and the associated port infrastructure.

Table 1: Top impact countries by cumulative value of imports and relative value of imports as a proportion of GDP.

| CBAM product import value in 2021 (billion EUR) | | CBAM product import value relative to 2021 GDP (billion EUR) | |
|---|------|--|-----|
| Russia | 12.2 | Bosnia & Herzegovina | 6.8 |
| Türkiye | 8.1 | Mozambique | 5.5 |
| China | 5.6 | Serbia | 4.1 |
| UK | 5.6 | Montenegro | 3.9 |
| Ukraine | 5.4 | Ukraine | 3.2 |
| India | 5.1 | Belarus | 2.3 |
| Rep. Korea | 2.9 | Bahrain | 2.2 |
| Serbia | 2.2 | Moldova | 2.1 |
| Egypt | 2.0 | Trinidad & Tobago | 1.5 |
| Taiwan | 2.0 | Albania | 1.2 |

Neighbouring nations to the EU have also been shown to provide the greatest opportunity in terms of the volume of fuel that can be replaced with zero emission fuels, and with the number of vessels interacting with EU ports (see Figure 1) (UMAS & UCL, 2022).

2. Fossil fuel exporters

The transition will negatively affect countries exporting fossil fuels to the EU, especially those whose economies are largely dependent on the proceeds from these exports. The EU's close political and economic ties to fossil exporting states may heighten risks to the EU's security interests. Based on our analysis, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia are the most at-risk during the climate transition, and therefore potentially the most in need of assistance from the EU (Jakob et al., 2023).

However, close coordination with these countries could in fact trigger greater ambition in their national climate policies in the form of a shift towards exports of clean energy, such as green hydrogen derivates.

3. Other industrialised countries

The EU's climate policy will have repercussions on other developed countries, especially the EU's largest trading partners further away, such as the United States, Canada, and Japan.

The assessment of the impact of the CBAM demonstrates that it was designed to target carbon-intensive industries in the EU's largest trading partners, regardless of the state of diplomatic relations. Apart from reducing the risk of carbon leakage for domestic industries, CBAM may encourage other countries to pursue the decarbonisation of their carbon-intensive industries, including by introducing domestic



carbon prices. In addition to some countries neighbouring the EU, in 2021 the largest cumulative value of CBAM-covered imports in absolute terms came from China, India, and the Republic of Korea (Table 1), which is driven by the energy intensity of these countries' industries and the volume of direct trade with the EU (Vasilj et al., 2023).

At the same time, the CBAM also enables higher carbon prices and more ambitious emissions reductions in the EU, by eliminating the risk of carbon leakage. This higher level of ambition will translate into development of clean alternatives to emissions intensive production processes. Cooperating with other countries to scale up such technologies and the supporting infrastructure, possibly accompanied with CBAM revenues recycling, will provide benefits to third countries, and facilitate emissions reduction beyond the EU.

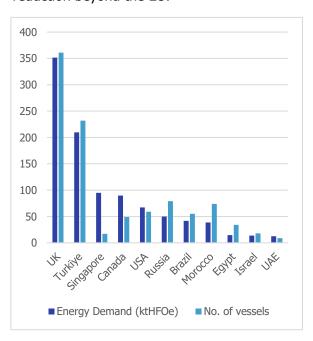


Figure 1: The volume of fuel or energy demand (ktHFOe) and the number of vessels that can be shifted from fossil fuels to zero emission fuels between the EU and third countries (UMAS & UCL, 2022)

The EU's climate policies will also have an impact on high income countries through the expansion of the EU ETS to the maritime sector and FuelEU Maritime regulation. This concerns especially highly connected shipping partners such as Singapore, Canada, and the United States (Figure 1).

4. Developing and vulnerable countries

EU climate policies will have direct and indirect impacts on developing countries, including countries that are already exposed to the effects of climate change. Mozambique and Trinidad and Tobago are among ten countries whose economies will be most affected relatively by the introduction of CBAM (Table 1). While in absolute terms, their exports to the EU are small, companies in these countries will still have to fulfil all regulatory requirements associated with CBAM compliance when exporting to the EU but may struggle to mobilise capacity and capital to invest into low-carbon alternatives.

To address these challenges, the EU should grant these countries support in terms of the administrative capacity needed to fulfil the reporting requirements introduced by CBAM and by recycling the proceeds generated by the instrument to support these countries in decarbonising affected industries (Vasilj et al., 2023).

A similar approach applies to the EU's push to regulate maritime emissions outside the EU as a result of expanding the EU ETS to the shipping sector, as well as the requirements engrained in the FuelEU Maritime regulation. Also in this case, the additional revenues generated could be used to develop infrastructure for zero emissions fuels that



could be used by more than one country (Parker et al., 2021; Petroni et al., 2023).

Apart from affecting existing trade flows, the EU's shift away from fossil fuels toward renewables and hydrogen will result in new interdependencies. Part of these will be a significant increase in demand for critical and strategic materials, many of which are situated in developing and vulnerable countries (U.S. Geological Survey, 2023). Without appropriate environmental and human rights standards, extraction of these materials may exacerbate environmental degradation and human rights violations. Apart from a worsening situation in these countries, this could also impact the

overall acceptance of the energy transition in the EU.

To avoid such situations, the EU should ensure that new trade relations and supply chains are developed that follow high environmental, social, and labour standards. The Directive on Corporate Sustainability and Due Diligence currently negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which require large European corporations to prevent and mitigate negative environmental and social impacts in the EU and abroad, is a step in the right direction if properly implemented (European Parliament, 2023).

Cross-cutting key messages and recommendations

The cross-cutting messages that emanated from the different areas of research can be condensed into four themes. When dealing with third countries, the EU and its member states should: (1) give greater weight to equity considerations while scaling up financial commitments, (2) formulate pre-emptive strategic partnership and standard setting (3) make the EU's climate messaging consistent with its own climate policies; and (4) push for more cooperative action and engagement at all levels (global, multilateral, bilateral, internal).

Equity considerations and scaling up financial commitments

The EU should pay higher attention to equity aspects in its policies, diplomatic approaches,

and policy-making processes. So far, in the EU's interactions with third countries, equity has not been sufficiently or appropriately considered, particularly for developing countries heavily reliant on trade with the EU. Moving forward, EU regulations and policies including the CBAM, the Critical Raw Materials Act (European Commission, 2023), and the maritime regulations (expansion of the EU ETS, FuelEU Maritime) (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2023a, 2023c) will need to be complemented by measures that would (1) soften socio-economic impacts on developing and vulnerable third countries, (2) grant climate initiatives targeted support for introduced in response to EU policies, and (3) help these countries in fulfilling administrative requirements resulting from these laws.



The first two of these goals could be achieved by recycling some of the additional revenues generated by CBAM and expansion of the EU ETS to the extra-EU maritime sector and delivered as additional climate finance. Additionally, the EU and its member states can exert its influence in multilateral development banks and international financial institutions to increase the scale and accessibility of funds to developing countries on more favourable terms.

Regulating international shipping emissions regionally rather than globally risks creating a global patchwork of market-based measures looking to replicate the EU's approach (Petroni et al., 2023). To help reach global consensus, the EU should continue discussions in international arenas, such as the International Maritime Organisation, and build support for global measures and higher ambition aligned the Paris Agreement. Additionally, implementing more concrete, equitable considerations in its own regulations can be supported by allocating a small portion of the revenues generated from the EU's maritime ETS towards the establishment of Green Shipping Corridors, particularly those which connect developing countries globally. The EU can support its own maritime decarbonisation needs while cooperating with third countries to help develop their capacity needs (GMF, 2023).

Financial barriers to developing green industries in these vulnerable nations include high capital costs, which stem from perceived high investment risks (Steckel & Jakob, 2018). The EU can provide direct financial assistance to these nations in the form of grants and preferential loans, or indirectly by de-risking investment through credit guarantees. However, such support should be made conditional on accelerated decarbonisation

especially in areas in where low carbon solutions are cheaper than fossil fuel alternatives.

2. Diffusion of EU's environmental and social standards

The complex and differentiated impacts of the EU's climate policies on other countries will necessitate tailored solutions. In many cases strategic partnerships will be required depending on the impact of the EU's climate policies and the specific circumstances in the given country.

This applies especially to the EU's dependency on the imports of strategic and critical minerals that will be coming from countries with various levels of economic development, environmental standards, and levels of political stability (Ancygier et al., 2023).

Domestically, the EU has stringent standards to minimise negative environmental and social impacts resulting from the extraction of critical materials or manufacturing low carbon products in the EU. However, in many cases, the EU is importing materials and products which may cause substantial environmental and social damage in other countries. The Directive on Corporate Sustainability and Due Diligence should ensure high standards that apply to the full supply chain. In this way EU trade can have a positive spillover effect on the social and environmental compatibility of investments in manufacturing and raw materials outside the EU and decrease the risk of social backlash either in the EU or in the host country.



The EU should also encourage countries investing in the extraction of critical and strategic materials needed for the energy transformation to complement it with further steps, such as processing of raw materials and whenever possible manufacturing intermediate materials. By contributing to a more diversified supply this would reduce the EU's import dependency on few exporters. Furthermore, it would facilitate the development of low-carbon industries in host countries. Finally, it would decrease the negative economic and social impacts of price volatility that will affect some of the strategic raw materials.

To decrease impacts on the environment, the EU should promote recovery and recycling of strategic and critical materials domestically and abroad. The EU's Circular Economy Action Plan and the legislation therein, such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Directive and the European Battery Regulation, include a number of standards that need to be fulfilled by the manufacturers of batteries, accumulators, and other products of relevance (European Commission, 2020; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2023b). Ambitious recycling standards in these laws will contribute to the EU's material efficiency and may mitigate the negative repercussions of expanding the supply of raw materials outside the EU.

Moreover, the EU should ensure that these standards are met also by companies outside the EU. For this purpose, the EU should jointly scale up research and share expertise in material-efficient, circular value chains and technologies that in the longer term may reduce the need for extraction by facilitating the recovery and recycling of strategic and critical materials globally.

Tailored partnerships will also be required with countries with high CBAM trade exposure, such as Mozambique or Trinidad and Tobago. Such cooperation could include financial, administrative, and technological support.

The introduction of the CBAM will come with an additional administrative burden of reporting the emissions intensity of products covered by the instrument. Countries affected, especially those with relatively small economies but high exposure to that policy, should be supported in fulfilling these requirements. Alternatively, they should be supported in introducing measures, such as carbon pricing.

Finally, the EU could consider the transfer of low carbon technologies in the sectors covered by CBAM to developing and vulnerable countries, in this way strengthening the impact of the instrument in facilitating decarbonisation. This can be done by facilitating cooperation between European companies that develop low-carbon solutions, and private or public companies in developing or vulnerable countries that could implement them as well as public-private-partnerships.

Clear and consistent messaging aligned with implementation

The EU has maintained a consistent narrative of accelerating emissions reduction in the 2020s and transforming its economy to reach the goal of climate neutrality by the middle of the century. However, its own action – especially at the level of some member states – has not lived up to this narrative. This has especially been the case in the reaction to the energy crisis, which triggered investments in new fossil fuel



infrastructure such as LNG terminals and pipelines. Even more worryingly, some EU leaders were encouraging foreign leaders to invest into new fossil fuel extraction (Climate Action Tracker, 2022). To improve this situation, the EU should send a clear message by committing to end any investment domestically in fossil fuel infrastructure immediately, and work towards phasing out coal combustion by 2030 in the EU and the rest of the OECD, and by 2040 everywhere else.

While the EU is a first mover in regulating emissions, the basket of measures introduced, particularly the FuelEU Maritime regulation, do not go far enough — their design will likely increase the uptake of LNG in the near term which risks carbon lock-in in the long term. Investments into any fossil infrastructure are inconsistent with the ambition to phase out fossil fuels and send mixed messages about the EU's commitments to investors, industry and partner countries alike.

The EU could stimulate greater global mitigation ambition by increasing its NDC emissions reduction target. In addition to its headline NDC target, it should bring forward its net zero target demonstrating progress in implementing its Fit-for-55 package (Mace et al., 2023).

4. Engagement and cooperation at all diplomatic levels

To stimulate mitigation ambition beyond its borders, the EU can lend its support to coalitions, partnerships and other initiatives that bring together fast movers to accelerate emission reductions, offering financial and technical support to developing countries.

As the first-best solution, the EU should push for reaching a global commitment to increased climate ambition and action, either at a sectoral level (e.g., for maritime or industry) or for certain fossil fuels (such as. coal phase out).

In parallel or whenever this is difficult to attain, the EU should focus on plurilateral collaboration with like-minded country partners which can work to accelerate the scaling up of solutions and subsequent spillover to other countries. In its Green Deal Industrial Plan communication, the Commission has announced that it will tech/net-zero develop clean industrial partnerships that aim to promote the adoption of clean technologies globally. Similarly, a suggested Critical Raw Materials Club is supposed to support the sustainable supply of critical raw materials (European Commission, 2023, p. 20). The Commission should follow-up with concrete proposals on such a partnership.

An existing example for such plurilateral approaches are the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs), which have been agreed or negotiated with several developing countries. To improve the implementation of the JETPs, the EU should streamline the preceding negotiations based on lessons learnt and develop a framework for delivery of successful JETPs (Mace et al., 2023). In addition, the EU should investigate building partnerships with smaller countries most affected by CBAM with the goal of accelerating decarbonisation of the sectors covered by this instrument.

At the multilateral level, the EU, in cooperation with other countries, should push for a further increase of the lending capacity of multilateral



development banks and international financial institutions to increase the scale and accessibility of funds for climate mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. The Bridgetown Initiative proposed by Barbados, which calls for reform of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank among other ideas, would support the achievement of these goals and should be strongly supported by the EU (Mace et al., 2023).

Beyond the UNFCCC, the EU should continue using G7 and G20 processes, ministerial climate meetings and other high level political events to amplify progressive positions on climate-related agenda items and bring in climate considerations on cross-cutting issues. The EU can also test and shop key messages to various configurations of countries, and rally interest in significant partnerships and initiatives.

Bilateral cooperation between the EU and individual member states and fossil fuel

exporters can be expanded to include energy and climate-related issues. Cooperation directly with vulnerable countries, such as Mozambique and Trinidad and Tobago, can also be expanded to support capacity building and financing to mitigate direct environmental and socioeconomic impacts concerning the CBAM and the EU's neighbouring countries.

The EU and its member states can further assist developing countries by sharing good practices from the EU's adaptation mainstreaming efforts, and by sharing EU member state progress in developing and implementing national adaptation strategies and plans. The EU can also enhance direct engagement with individual vulnerable countries to assist in assessing and managing climate risks, strengthening planning and policies, and producing information that can support decision making.

Conclusions

The EU's climate policy has already had important effects on other countries. As one of the early movers on climate change mitigation, it helped to drive climate action in other countries. Bv developing low-carbon technologies and lowering their costs, especially wind and solar energy, it created a basis for the transformation of the energy sector. However, it has not always lived up to its own narrative of being a leader in climate action, especially with some EU countries lagging in coal phase-out and others promoting the false narrative that gas can be used as a bridging fuel and pushing other countries to develop new gas supply in response to the recent energy crisis.

As the EU aims to reach climate neutrality by the middle of the century, its impact on other countries will increase even further. The introduction of CBAM, expansion of the EU ETS on maritime emissions beyond EU borders, complemented by the FuelEU Maritime regulation with emissions intensity targets, and a significant increase in demand for strategic and critical materials will have a direct impact on the economies of other countries.

This impact may not always be positive. In some cases, it may result in backlash against the EU and fragmentation of global trade flows increasing the costs of the transformation. Some may not be able to afford the significant



costs of climate mitigation. Finally, it may exacerbate existing risks of environmental destruction and human rights violations to satisfy the EU's hunger for strategic and critical materials.

However, these impacts should not hinder ambitious climate action in the EU. It possesses various tools to mitigate the potential negative impacts of its policies and in some cases can leverage its policies to drive emission reductions beyond its borders. The expansion of the EU ETS and introduction of CBAM will result in additional revenue, some of which should be used to support climate action in developing and least developed countries. Moreover, through targeted administrative and technological support, the EU could help other

countries, especially the smaller ones with significant exposure to trade with the EU, to meet the new requirements. The EU could also use its role in different international fora to leverage its impact and facilitate decarbonisation.

However, the EU and its member states should also ensure consistency between its narrative as a leader in climate action and its domestic policies. The "dash for gas" in response to the energy crisis significantly undermined the EU's leadership credentials. As the worst impacts of the energy crisis are over, the EU should illustrate with its own domestic actions that it takes its international obligations and its image as a leader in climate action seriously



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