

S1-1 The EU Policy Context

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On 3rd September 2009, President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, sent his political guidelines for the mandate of the next European Commission to the president of the European Parliament, among which it mentioned;

The next Commission needs to maintain the momentum towards a low emission economy, and in particular towards decarbonising our electricity supply and the transport sector – all transport, including maritime transport and aviation, as well as the development of clean and electric cars. Decarbonising electricity supply and transport will also bring additional benefits in terms of security of energy supply.

Considering the major issues at COP15; 1) targets for developed countries, 2) (nationally appropriate mitigation) actions by developing countries, 3) support in the form of finance and technologies to developing countries for both mitigation and adaptation, and 4) new crediting mechanism, the transition to a low-carbon society could be achieved by 1) a cost-effective policy mix with market-based incentives at the core such as creating robust price signal, inducing behavioral changes and creating enabling environment for technological advances, 2) stakeholder consultation and 3) a gradual approach with a strategic direction.

The EU adopted an integrated energy and climate change package in December 2008 that includes ambitious targets for 2020 as well as strengthening the price signal and technology related Directive such as CCS Directive and Renewable Directive.

Meanwhile, there is a tension in the climate negotiations about the responsibilities of developed and developing countries. EU initially called for developing countries to elaborate “low carbon development strategies” based on the notion of “common but differentiated responsibilities”. In the MEF, the term was transformed into “low carbon growth plans”.

The EU climate and energy package has shown that economic growth and climate policy go hand-in-hand, and other world regions increasingly see this link as well. For instance, developing countries aim to innovate their way out of environmental and resource constraints.

What are the current research gap and challenges?

Various scientific disciplines need to contribute to low-carbon society research, across natural and social science. However LCS research does not make for a scientific discipline of its own and needs to cover both the next steps as well as the long-term objective.

To conclude, thinking beyond Copenhagen is important. The move to a low-carbon economy and society requires a fundamental transformation at global level. This requires moving beyond the traditional policy conflicts – economy, environment, energy. In Europe, a low carbon economy is seen as a competitive, knowledge-driven economy. For this reason, climate policy has now a firm place on the agenda of prime ministers.