

Energy security first THE NEW EU CLIMATE AND ENERGY STRATEGY IN A TIME OF WAR

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCM	Billion cubic meters
BOGA	Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
EGD	European Green Deal
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GWv	Gigawatt
IEA	International Energy Agency
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRA	Inflation Reduction Act
LNG	Liquefied natural gas
ΝΑΤΟ	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SCF	Social Climate Fund
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the EU
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
wто	World Trade Organization

EU leaders get ready to take part in a summit to address the fall out of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Palace of Versailles, Paris, 11 March 2022. Photo and description: Sarah Meyssonnier, AFP / Pool, Ritzau Scanpix.



INTRODUCTION



The Russian invasion of Ukraine challenges the liberal peace project that has always been at the heart of the European Union. The political project that led to the EU was founded on the idea that economic trade and political cooperation promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous Europe and world. Incrementally, the merger of interests and ideals justified closer political and economic relations among EU member states and with third countries. In its relations with Russia, the economic peace project helped to justify the development of energy imports to European countries over the course of generations. With the inclusion of several former Soviet states the EU in the early 2000s, Poland and several of the other new member states expressed their concerns with the security implications of the close trade ties with Russia. Energy imports to Germany and other key member states continued to increase despite a lack of political integration or cooperation with Russia. Now, the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine turned EU member states into co-financers of the Russian invasion through their energy imports, undermined the security of European energy supply, and caused economic turmoil across the continent. The security, economic, and political implications revealed that one of the fundamental prerequisites of the liberal peace project was not realized: the principle of interdependence. In other words, key EU member states turned out to be more dependent on Russia than vice versa. This realisation is catalysing a process whereby the EU is reconsidering its international dependencies, thereby reforging itself to become a more autonomous actor in international relations

This report sets out to analyse how the rapid changes in European security impact two decisive and inseparable policy areas: climate and energy. With the aim to tackle the dual energy and climate predicament and strengthen the European position in global politics, the European Commission presented the REPowerEU Action Plan. This plan aims to ensure stable energy supplies and catalyse the implementation of the 'European Green Deal'; the EU policy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. This response represents a tectonic shift in EU energy policy, triggering urgent actions to ensure reliable and affordable alternatives to Russian energy. REPowerEU also recalibrates EU foreign policy, considering not just the war but also a broader change in the geopolitical and -economic environment: European relations with emerging economies have worsened, which have exacerbated by disagreements over the condemnation and sanctioning of Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. And trade policy disputes with the US continue, now over the Inflation Reduction Act, which has led the European Commission to push for a more protectionist and interventionist green industrial policy.

RAPID DECISIONS AND KEY POLICY DOCUMENTS DRIVING EU ACTORNESS

When the war began in February 2022, the EU was in the midst of negotiating **'Fit for 55'** package - a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 55% before 2030 relative to 1990 levels. To tackle the linked climate, energy and security challenges triggered by the war, the EU Commission presented a **'REPowerEU Communication**' a few weeks after the invasion. This legislative proposal sets out to ensure European independence from Russian energy before 2030 through energy efficiency, energy diversification and speeding up the roll-out of renewable energy. A few days later, EU leaders presented the Versailles Declaration, which also explicitly links security, energy, and climate action and stresses the need for Europe to strengthen its strategic autonomy and become an independent actor across a long range of policy fields. To make real on those promises, the Commission presented the **'REPowerEU Action Plan'**, which proposed to further accelerate the deadlines and targets set in the 'Fit for 55' package to tackle the energy and climate challenges.

Overall, the EU has acted swiftly to pass and implement the proposals in the REPowerEU Action Plan with an emphasis on ensuring a secure and affordable energy supply. However, key climate actions in the plan, including more ambitious targets on renewable energy and energy efficiency for 2030, have yet to be reached fully due to opposition in the European Council. And to ensure the vision outlined in the REPowerEU plan, many challenges lie ahead. Disagreements persist between member states as to how uncompromising the EU ought to be in its policy towards Russia. The war has aggravated already high energy prices and inflation rates, which have hit consumers hard. States with a high dependency on Russian fossil fuels (e.g. Germany, Romania) continue to struggle to find affordable alternatives to cushion the lost energy imports. A 7% increase in coal production (Jones et al. 2023) and a scramble for new external suppliers have led to new dependencies and undermined climate diplomacy efforts to end the fossil fuel era. Short-term, national energy supply solutions therefore still risk undermining European cooperation and longer-term ambitions to lead the struggle against global warming.

Against this background, the report assesses how these developments impact Denmark's climate and energy policy in the EU. For years, the green transition has been a top foreign policy priority for Denmark, and Danish climate diplomacy has a prominent European and international position. Danish diplomacy and green businesses benefit from the emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency to resolve the energy and climate predicaments. However, the new emphasis on strategic autonomy challenges the traditional Danish economic approach to the EU and creates dilemmas for Danish foreign policy.

Considering the developments, the main recommendations of this report are that Denmark and like-minded countries should:

Recommendation 1:

Develop a strategic approach to the EU autonomy agenda

Recommendation 2:

Step up efforts to ensure Council support for unpassed climate proposals in the RepowerEU Action Plan

Recommendation 3:

Push for a stronger global dimension in European climate and energy policy

Methodology

The report is based on multiple, diverse types of data. A significant source of data used to deepen the analysis is more than 25 interviews conducted with various stakeholders: officials and politicians based in EU institutions in Brussels, as well as policymakers in national capitals working in climate, energy and security-related areas. The interviews were conducted as part of a field-study trip to Brussels in May 2022 and supplemented with follow-up interviews, either conducted online or in-person in Copenhagen and Washington DC. Moreover, an extensive mapping and analysis of key policy documents to uncover how EU policy has been negotiated has been carried out. Various actor analyses assessing position papers and secondary climate and energy policy reports further add to the analysis. The analysis focuses specifically on a set of policy documents most central to the EU response to the Russo-Ukrainian War in the climate and energy areas: the RepowerEU Communication, the REPowerEU Action Plan as well as the Versailles Declaration. As such, these initiatives are analysed in detail, and the interviews focus on the content, production and implementation of the policy proposals.

Analytically, the report distinguishes between two general settings of European and international politics. The first is the decision-making level of policy choices, where leading politicians, civil servants, and diplomats work, mostly in Brussels, to determine intentions, objectives and decisions. The second is the implementation level, where policy decisions are translated into action by the member states, together with private and civil society actors, ultimately providing feedback to the decision-making level.

Structure of the report

Following this brief introductory section, Section 2 analyses the historical context of EU security, climate and energy policy. Section 3 assesses the new EU approach to energy and climate policy focusing on the REPowerEU Plan on a decision-making and implementation level. This section begins by presenting the decision-making choices and principles that lay the ground for REPowerEU. It also discusses how such policies are contested both at the decision-making and implementation levels. On this basis, Section 4 will provide a general assessment of how Denmark can navigate the currently unfolding events. It briefly presents recent Danish strategic priorities within climate and energy policy in the context of a changing European security order. Considering the assessment, the section elaborates on three recommended priority areas in which Denmark could reconsider its position to develop its leading position in European energy and climate policy. Lastly, Section 5 offers concluding remarks that summarise the report and reflect on the prospects for European energy and climate policy considering the increasing EU emphasis on security.

Nord Stream

new gas supply route for Europe

The opening of a symbolic valve during an inaugural ceremony for the first of Nord Stream 1s twin 1, 224 kilometre gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea, in Lubmin, northeastern Germany. 8 November 2011. Photo and description: John Macdougall, AFP, Ritzau Scanpix.

A CHANGING EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER AND THE CASE OF ENERGY AND CLIMATE

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This section provides historical context to the EU's present predicament, exploring how and why we have ended up in the current situation. After a brief introduction to the EU as a security actor, it presents the EU's general approach to energy and climate policies prior to 2022, which sheds light on the EU's space for action in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

THE EU AS SECURITY ACTOR: REDEFINING PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE

The EU as a liberal economic peace project based on cooperation between the countries of Europe has helped to legitimise the political and economic integration of the member states for generations. This approach was even recognised with a Nobel Peace Prize in 2012: 'As a successful example of peaceful reconciliation based on economic integration, we contribute to developing new forms of cooperation built on exchange of ideas, innovation and research', as Herman von Rompuy, then head of the European Council, stated upon accepting this recognition on behalf of the European Union.

This basic liberal norm – peace through interdependence – has been fundamental to internal EU-cooperation and has also permeated EU's external relations. After the Cold War ended, the EU emerged as a security actor promising a freer, more peaceful world; the EU's primary mission became to carry out conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in response to regional conflicts beyond EU borders. Thus, the common security and defence policy was not created in response to any existential threat against the Union nor did it involve any actual defence of Europe; rather, this policy was about disseminating European values through cooperation and interdependence. The EU's international security role and self-perception thus became focused on promoting peace and cooperation outside the EU's own borders through international crisis management and capacity-building.

More recently, EU foreign and security policy has started being increasingly legitimised as a means to guarantee the protection of the European continent and its citizens. European leaders have come to agree that the security role of the EU must be strengthened beyond its traditional role as a crisis management actor operating outside the EU. As formulated in the EU's global strategy from 2016, 'the EU must be strengthened as a security community where European security and defence efforts enable the EU to act autonomously (...) to secure the protection of the European continent and its citizens'.

A number of external and internal factors have spurred the EU to rethink its role as a security actor. Even before February 2022, the Russian threat that re-emerged in the East following Putin's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Violent conflicts in regions neighbouring Europe contributed to increasing migration, and several terrorist attacks that have struck European capitals in recent years have been framed as threats to Europe and its citizens. On top of that, the election of Donald Trump and the uncertainty regarding the NATO alliance that followed all the while China has been asserting itself as an economic and military great power have also been key factors in shaping the EU as a security entity with an increasing focus on protecting the European continent and citizens.

Questions addressing the capacity of the EU for independent action have therefore intensified in recent years. Originally a French idea, the quest for strategic autonomy has been discussed for decades, usually met by resistance from a range of member states, not least those reluctant to further integrate within the field of security and defence in an EU framework. Nevertheless, the concept is now written into official EU documents (from Global Strategy, published in 2016, and onwards) and is generally accepted as a 'necessary evil' in an uncertain world, where increasingly complex and intractable risks of climate change, COVID-19, hybrid warfare, disinformation and migration pressures are redefining the concept of security and the instruments applied to ensure it. As one diplomat commented:

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COVID-19 revealed that suddenly you can't get a vaccine or a paracetamol. Because it turns out it's produced in India. An absurd situation when some of the world's leading medicine companies are in Europe (...) the linking of those remarks [from Trump and Macron, ed.] in security policy with the development in trade streams during the COVID-19 pandemic made us realise that we need strategic autonomy.¹

The willingness of EU leaders to act to ensure greater strategic autonomy was reflected in the €100 billion NextgenEU COVID-19 recovery package, which set in across several economic sectors.² The crises facing the European continent have resulted in the EU increasingly becoming a security actor, which sets the agenda and coordinates responses. The European Union is thus transforming into an actor who increasingly tackles security challenges, and does so through comprehensive initiatives cutting across sectors of society and economy. This also means that EU

actors are gaining new roles – most notably the European Commission – which within just a few years has gained competences within the broader field of security. A central example is the annual EU budget (drafted and managed by the European Commission), which has set aside funds for various defence policy initiatives, such as the fund for developing military capabilities and the new off-budget instrument, the European Peace Facility, which can be used to fund military equipment and operations. Since the EU military dimension remains weak, the EU has even greater capacity to reshape the political agenda in areas such as climate policy, where it can draw on its legislative and economic capacity to push common action.

The next section provides a brief historical analysis of European energy and climate policy to provide the context, which the security situation is currently reshaping.

THE EU AS ENERGY ACTOR: BETWEEN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEPENDENCIES

Historically contingent characteristics of the EU energy policy help us to understand how Europe came to find itself in its present energy predicament. For generations, Europe has been a major energy importer, obtaining more than half its energy from abroad. Finding common solutions to the European energy problem represents a major challenge, as energy remains a national prerogative. Each member state has therefore pursued the best-fitting policy, which independently aligns its economic, security and climate outlook, resulting in major differences across the EU. Although the EU is incrementally developing an internal energy market, increasing member state energy self-sufficiency and the diversification of energy imports and sources remain major challenges.

The EU member states have abundant coal resources, but most lack available domestic oil and gas supply. Consequently, as the consumption of oil and later natural gas took off in the second half of the twentieth century, a long struggle to find sufficient, stable and cheap energy supplies developed. Although countries such as the Netherlands, Italy and Denmark do have significant oil and gas resources, each member state was a net importer of energy in 2020. And the share of coal products, oil and gas being imported into the EU has increased slightly in the period from 2000-20 (Eurostat 2022; Statista 2023).



Figure 1. Energy dependency rate – total (% of net imports in gross available energy, based on terajoules)

Note: The dependency rates for Norway (2000: -723.0%; 2020: -623.1%) are significantly negative, so they are not shown to avoid distorting the graph.

Source: Eurostat. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/energy/bloc-2c.html

This dependency on energy imports has been a constant source of strife between the European countries and in their external relations. In the aftermath of World War II, a major US foreign policy goal became to secure Europe, and particularly Germany, with energy from the Persian Gulf. But when the Suez Crisis led to a halt in energy supply in 1956, Germany, Austria and Italy made their first deal with the Soviet Union on the construction of an oil pipeline. Since the 1960s, the gradually increasing infrastructure and flow of oil and later gas from the Soviet Union has frequently led US administrations to criticise the European energy dependency. However, the US was unable to meet the increasing energy demand from both the US home market and Europe. Furthermore, the oil crises of the 1970s pushed European countries to cement their reliance on the Soviet supply of cheap energy, which continued to flow even during tense periods of the Cold War (Thompson 2022).

The European Commission and many member states have sought to ensure a diversification of the EU's energy supply to overcome the excessive reliance on the Soviet Union/Russia. At the initiative of the European Commission, an internal energy market has developed incrementally since the 1980s. With the gradual development of the internal energy market, member states have liberalised and integrated their gas and electricity markets since the 1990s. Although the EU has come a long way in developing a single market for electricity, which supports the EU's climate ambitions, several challenges remain. The lack of physical integration across regions and countries is a restraint (Primova 2015). And although the development of a gas market has helped curb the use of coal, it has led to heavier dependence on gas. This reliance on gas causes new energy security challenges, as the domestic production of gas in the EU is limited. The emphasis on transitioning away from coal together with low gas prices has not helped member states to diversify away from cheap Russian energy (Pepermans 2019). Exacerbating that challenge, cooperation, and transparency regarding EU member states' energy deals with external partners remains weak. In 2000, a Commission Green Paper called for the diversification of energy sources, suppliers, and supply routes. However, the declining production of coal and - after the Fukushima accident - nuclear energy led Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands to increase their reliance on Russian energy imports.

After the EU's Eastern enlargement in 2004, not only American but also internal criticisms – especially from Poland and the Baltic States, who continued to view Russia as the main security threat – surfaced. Several security and economic conflicts in the years that followed led to deepened concerns regarding the overreliance of some member states on Russian energy. In the last days of Gerhard Schröder's chancellorship in 2005, Germany approved Nord Stream 1, which

increased the reliance on Russian natural gas imports. In January 2006, a dispute between Russia and Ukraine emerged, Russia accusing Ukraine of the intentional diversion of transitional natural gas (intended for the European market) for domestic use; this led to all supplies passing through Ukraine being temporarily cut off until a deal was reached a few days later. Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008 led the US, the Commission and several East European member states to double down on demands to diversify energy supply away from Russia. Later that year, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary were warned about supply interruptions from the Southern Druzhba oil pipeline also resulting from Russia-Ukraine disputes. However, Germany, Italy and smaller states (including Hungary and Austria) did not diversify away from Russia. Instead, new energy infrastructure was built circumventing Ukraine as a transit country because of demands for cheap energy and concerns about new energy disruptions (Pepermans 2019, 74-5).

The demands from Poland, the Baltic States and the United States to diversify away from Russian energy grew louder when Russia began its covert operation in Ukraine and annexed Crimea in 2014. Due to the growing export of liquefied natural gas (LNG), first from Qatar and increasingly also the US after its fracking boom, viable alternative suppliers of LNG were available, but at a higher price than pipeline gas from Russia and in competition with other demanders on the global market. With Nord Stream 2, however, an international conglomerate of companies from Germany, the Netherlands, France, Austria and Great Britain³ advocated for a new Russian pipeline, which further increased Russian gas exports to Europe, merely circumventing Ukraine as a transit country (Slakaityte, Surwillo, and Villumsen 2022). Justifying the project, the member states involved argued that the project, as formulated by former Chancellor Angela Merkel, was 'purely economic'. However, the project would render Ukraine practically superfluous for the European import of Russian energy and cost the Ukrainian state significant transit revenues. According to a European Commission energy advisor, Nord Stream 2 was approved despite an awareness that the pipeline would put a strain on Ukraine.

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We had a very strong strategic incentive to do these things, and Russia also had a very strong strategic incentive. The only difference being that we knew at an early stage – and I can remember it being said at the time – that once both Nord Streams were finished, there would be no strategic value for pipelines going through Ukraine (...) But somebody else has to take a decision about what to do. And the prevailing view was that Russia wouldn't take advantage of the situation.⁴



Figure 2. Energy dependency by fuel, EU, in selected years, 1990-2020, petajoule (PJ)

Note: The light coloured proportion of the column shows net imports with respect to gross available energy, which is represented by total column height. Despite the conflicts, the long-term share and mix of European imports have remained remarkably stable.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index. php?title=EU_energy_mix_and_import_dependency#Energy_mix_and_import_dependency

Summing up, the EU member states have consistently imported more than half of the energy consumed within the Union from abroad for more than a generation, with Russia accounting for roughly 40% of all gas imports into the EU in 2021. But this dependency is not distributed evenly; Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Germany have relied significantly on Russian gas, as gas is an important energy source in all four countries, most of which came from Russia in 2021 (The Economist 2022). Conversely, Poland, the Baltic States and Finland have grown increasingly independent of Russian energy by lowering their gas consumption and finding alternative suppliers. The US has also continued to warn against excessive reliance on Russian energy. The US position is based on both security concerns and a wider great power rivalry with Russia, where energy exports remains a key source of Russian economic and political power. National energy supply is a central issue for Germany and other member states concerned about supply and price instability, and they have refused to surrender energy as a national prerogative in order to reach an EU-wide energy policy on external energy deals. Thus, despite efforts from the Commission and several member states, economic interests together with political ideals helped to justify the continuation of deep energy dependency on Russia despite multiple warning signs. Although a focus on self-sufficiency and diversification had emerged in the EU Commission and among several member states, this had not translated into increased material energy independence before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

THE EU AS CLIMATE ACTOR: BETWEEN INCREMENTAL COALITION BUILDING AND URGENT ACTION

Compared to the energy area, the EU has more prerogatives in climate policy, as it has a common policy shaping both its external and internal approaches to climate action. Externally, EU global climate diplomacy focuses on developing climate action through a rule-bound climate regime, primarily anchored in the UN Framework on the Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC). Representing all member states, the EU aspires to lead and mediate international negotiations. The EU is also increasingly including climate together with other environmental and social clauses in its direct bilateral trade agreements with third countries, hereby using its market power to promote European values. The EU played a key role in forging the Paris Agreement in 2015 and is generally considered an influential actor in international negotiations (Bäckstrand and Ole Elgström 2013). Parallel to its international climate diplomacy, the EU has cut its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions significantly since the 1990s and has been able to set stable, incrementally increasing mitigation goals. The EU set a target to stabilise GHG emissions in the early 1990s. With the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the EU committed to reduce emissions by 8% in 2008-12 relative to the 1990 emissions levels. In 2007, the European Council agreed to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020, and in 2014 the figure was increased to 40% by 2030 compared to the 1990 emissions levels. Describing the EU approach to climate action, a diplomat from the European External Action Service argued that 'the EU under-commits and over-performs on its climate goals', which is confirmed by the fact that the EU has so far outperformed all the historic goals it has set.





Source: European Environment Agency https://www.eea.europa.eu/ims/total-greenhouse-gas-emission-trends

The EU's current primary instrument to meet the mitigation targets has been the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), a market-based approach to mitigating GHGs that took effect in 2005. ETS covers the power and electricity sectors and is complemented with emissions reductions targets for non-ETS sectors, including transport, construction and agriculture. Beyond mitigation targets, the EU has included targets setting a 20% goal for the renewable share of total electricity consumption and energy efficiency in 2007. In 2018, the EU again increased its ambitions, setting a 32% target for renewables and 32.5% energy efficiency increase by 2030.

In the aftermath of the 1.5°C target ratified in the Paris Agreement, a report from the UN IPCC called for climate neutrality in 2050 to meet the target (IPCC 2018). The Paris Agreement and IPCC-assessment helped to build momentum for a more ambitious climate policy. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made it an official goal for Europe to attain status as a climate-neutral continent by 2050. To meet the 2050 climate neutrality target, the EU approved the European Green Deal (EGD) in 2020, which formulated a more ambitious mitigation target: at least a 55% reduction in emissions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit just a few months after presentation of the EGD, which deepened the EU's intervention in the European economy. To tackle the economic challenge, the EU passed the NextGenEU plan, an €800 billion plan presenting unprecedented emergency measures, including collectivised debt and state support for European businesses. NextGenEU also earmarked 37% of the plan's €100 billion for climate action. The plan thus catalysed climate action but also entangled it in the EU's emerging security-oriented emphasis on crisis management. The additional funding for climate action in NexgenEU was also instrumental in ensuring support for the EGD among critical member states in the Council. This helped to ensure the ratification of the European Climate Law in 2021, which turned the EU climate ambitions into law. To meet the legally binding goal, the Commission proposed the revision of the Renewable Energy Directive (2021), which seeks to increase the current target to at least 40% renewable energy sources in the overall EU energy mix by 2030. The revised Renewable Energy Directive had not been passed when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

The EGD also significantly increases the social dimension of climate policy. To ensure broad European support and a socially equitable climate policy, the Green Deal includes a Just Transition Mechanism. As noted by Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission: 'We must show solidarity

with the most affected regions in Europe, such as coal mining regions and others, to make sure the Green Deal gets everyone's full support and has a chance to become a reality' (European Commission 2020). With the Just Transition Mechanism, the EU has initiated an umbrella of initiatives to ensure a socially just green transition. A Just Transition Fund is intended to mobilise around €25.4 billion in investments, a Public Sector Loan Facility is put in place to raise €18.5 billion of public investment, and a loan guarantee to private actors aims to raise €10-15 billion in mostly private sector investments.

Emphasising the increasingly global EU approach to climate legislation and other environmental issues, the EGD also proposed including an external dimension of the Emissions Trading Scheme: the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). CBAM puts a tariff on European companies importing goods from third countries within sectors most vulnerable to carbon leakage if the third country does not equivalently tax carbon emissions. The policy is proposed to avoid compromising European competitiveness and to incentivise third countries to put a price on carbon as well. The EU proposed the policy despite criticism from, among others, the US, China and the African Union, who labelled the policy protectionist. It remains unresolved whether the policy is compatible with the World Trade Organization. CBAM shows how the EU's market-based approach to climate action has an increasingly global scope, even when it risks policy backlash and legal counter moves.

The negotiations on expanding the ETS and introducing CBAM together with higher mitigation targets were underway in late 2021, when Russia started cutting the gas supply to European states. This contributed to exceptionally high energy prices coupled with high ETS-quota prices as it coincided with the economic boom after the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021. Consequently, the Council could not reach any agreement on key Green Deal policies, including an expansion of ETS and the new CBAM policy, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Thus, when the war broke out, the EU was in the midst of negotiating key elements of the 2030 EGD goals.

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz arrive for a news conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, 16 June 2022. Photo and description: Ludovic Marin / Reuters, Ritzau Scanpix.

MAPPING THE NEW WAY OF ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION IN THE EU





Figure 4. Timeline - EU decisions

Illustration: Lone Ravnkilde.

This section assesses how the Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed EU decision-making, both regarding its internal policy making and in its external relations. In response to the war, the European Commission has set an ambitious policy agenda to tackle the crisis. While the Commission's most urgent concern has been to ensure European energy security free of Russian energy, the development has also led to a broader catalysation of the agenda to increase European strategic autonomy, significantly impacting EU climate policy and other policy areas; a development that impinges on experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic and not least the funds and legislative framework formulated in the NextGenEU policy. By analysing the decision-making process pertaining to energy and then climate policy, however, it becomes apparent that while decision-making in the context of energy has been urgent and determined, the response to climate action is more mixed. The economic challenges and scramble among the member states to find new energy supplies raise questions about the EU locking itself into new fossil-fuel dependencies and failing to find coordinated solutions to global warming.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS: THE EU EMERGES AS A MANAGER OF INTERSECTING CRISES

In March 2022, the EU leaders chose to make their first major announcement in the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Ukrainian War in the historic halls of Versailles. In the Versailles Declaration, the European leaders announced that:

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Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history (...). Confronted with growing instability, strategic competition and security threats, we decided to take more responsibility for our security and take further decisive steps towards building our European sovereignty, reducing our dependencies and designing a new growth and investment model for 2030.

Although not legally binding, this political declaration nevertheless helped to set the frame and tone of the European response to the invasion of Ukraine and its implications for energy and climate policy. The declaration states that Europe must act urgently across policy areas and that the response is not limited to security and energy policy, as it forced Europe to tackle a wide range of 'strategic dependencies' from defence and climate to critical raw materials and semi-conductors.

Tellingly for the European Commission's agenda-setting role in forging the EU response to the crisis, it had presented the REPowerEU Communication two days before the Versailles Declaration. The communication formulates central ideas in the EU response to the crisis, such as a common gas storage policy, increased LNG imports and boosting renewable energy and energy efficiency targets in the EU's 2030 climate policy – the 'Fit for 55' package (European Commission 2022). With subtle differences, such as a slightly lower gas storage requirement, the Versailles Declaration reiterated key ideas, thereby inviting the Commission to present a REPowerEU Action Plan. The silhouette of multiple tensions can also be traced in the Versailles Declaration. The plan must reduce reliance on fossil fuels but stresses the need to consider national circumstances and energy mixes. It emphasises the need to expand LNG use and accelerate the green transition. These tensions between the need for stable and affordable energy and a green transition continue to shape conflicts over the European response to the energy crisis triggered by the war.

In the months following the invasion, the EU institutions continued to act urgently regarding the rate of meetings and actual decisions taken. A quick rate of unprecedented sanctions against Russia affected almost every area of trade, with the EU reaching the 10th round of sanctions in February 2023. However, a few economic areas have been particularly challenging to tackle. Agriculture and food products were not included in the sanctions to avoid a worsening of inflated food prices globally. Belgium has been able to exclude diamonds from the regime of sanctions, and, most importantly, it has been difficult to reach agreement on energy. Here, the Council was able to ensure support for a full boycott of coal products and a partial boycott on oil products. Piped oil was exempted due to opposition from landlocked EU countries dependent on piped oil, who struggled to find alternatives.

The lack of viable alternative short-term suppliers rendered gas a particularly hard nut to crack in the negotiations on sanctions. Here, landlocked countries, including Slovakia, Hungary and Austria, together with major consumers such as Germany and Italy in particular, effectively vetoed a complete boycott on Russian energy. Poland and the Baltic States – who for decades had regarded Russia as an existential security threat and had diversified their energy supply, defended a complete and immediate boycott. On 1 April 2022, Lithuania stopped importing Russian gas altogether. The two other Baltic states followed suit, even though Latvia started importing again over the summer as the Inčukalns underground storage facility was running low before the winter. Poland was ready to support itself even when Russia stopped sending gas to the country when they refused to pay Russia in roubles in late April 2022. Sanctions require unanimity, however, so a complete boycott did not

Figure 5. Overview of EU institutions and their decision-making procedures



Illustration: Lone Ravnkilde.

pass in the months following the invasion despite an outcry from Poland in particular over how the EU member states were indirectly but effectively funding the Russian invasion (Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air 2022).

As promised in the Versailles Declaration, the Commission presented its REPowerEU Action plan in May 2022, which set the goals of reaching independence from Russian energy and accelerating the 'Fit for 55' package targets by saving energy, producing clean energy and diversifying the EU's energy supplies. Emphasising the

gradual emergence of crisis consciousness among the EU leaders beginning before Russia's invasion, a central national representative argued that 'the COVID-19 pandemic has taught decision-makers that you can't stop everything else when a crisis hits. You have to do many things at once'.⁵ Indicative of this gradual development in crisis management among EU leaders, the Commission in particular, the REPowerEU is legally an addition to the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which is the central instrument in the EU's NextGenEU, agreed upon during the COVID-19 pandemic. The links between the pandemic and the climate and energy crises are thus not merely rhetorical, as they are mirrored in the institutional and legal framework, which the Commission activated to address the Russo-Ukrainian War. This underlines how the response to the war is integral to the EU's longer-term emergence as a security actor, which draws on experiences, legal frameworks and funding from previous crises to lead the tackling of new predicaments. As a manager of intersecting crises, EU leaders framed climate and energy issues as being on an equal footing. When analysing European decision-making, however, it becomes evident that the impetus to ensure energy supply was so strong that it occurred not just quickly but also with the use of extraordinary legal means and - at times - at the expense of climate ambitions.

Energy security above all

In the months following the invasion, the EU Commission brokered a series of unprecedented agreements intervening in the energy sector at an unprecedented scale and pace. The EU actors reached an agreement on gas storage in March 2022, gas reduction in July, crisis intervention in the electricity market in September, and a crisis intervention in gas markets in October 2022. The crisis interventions in the gas and electricity markets (September-October 2022) are particularly noteworthy. The intervention in the gas market was intended to reduce gas demand voluntarily by 15% between August 2022 and March 2023, but it also included a clause making the reduction mandatory should a 'Union alert' on energy supply occur. The electricity market intervention aimed at addressing high energy prices by reducing energy demand in peak hours in the winter 2022-23. The agreement included a requirement on energy companies to pay back a share of their windfall profits to member states through revenue caps and solidarity contributions. The revenue generated by the windfall tax is earmarked to support those hardest hit by the energy prices.

Both procedurally and substantively, the emergency decisions were controversial and subject to significant opposition. Procedurally, the decisions were taken under Article 122 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). This article is significant because it allows the Council to adopt the Commission's proposal without involving the European Parliament. It can be activated in force majeure events or 'if severe difficulties arise in the supply of certain products, notably in the area of energy'. The article has been used increasingly frequently in recent decades: in the financial turmoil of 2008-09, in response to the 2015 refugee influx, and during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In 2022, the provision was activated twice to tackle energy shortages (prices as well as gas purchasing). First, the article was activated foreseeing a 'Union alert', making a gas reduction of 15% mandatory rather than voluntary if an urgent gas shortage occurred. The second use of Article 122 in 2022 justified the proposed windfall tax on extraordinary profits in the energy sector. The proposal for the increased coordination of gas purchases and exchanges as well as price benchmarks also builds on the same article of the treaty (Laprévote 2022). Some member states are concerned about how the paragraph is used, however, and Poland even brought a case against a mandatory demand-reduction on gas. The windfall tax led to a response from the energy company ExxonMobil, which sued the General Court of the EU over the windfall profit tax, arguing that Article 122 can only be used for urgent supply shortfalls, which the windfall tax does not resolve. Consequently, ExxonMobil made the case that the EU was intervening in economic policy, where it only has a coordinating role. According to legal interpretation, the increased use of Article 122 indicates that the EU is progressively intervening in economic policy rather than merely playing a coordinating role (Chamin 2023). Importantly, looking beyond the processual and political implications, the increased use of Article 122 is an example of a concrete judicial manifestation of the EU emerging as an actor willing to take increasingly extraordinary measures to resolve ongoing economic crises, especially in the energy supply area.

More strenuous climate negotiations

The elements of the REPowerEU Action Plan focused on sustainability rather than short-term supply have been met with greater member-state opposition. A revised Renewable Energy Directive was first passed in late March 2023 – more than a year after the invasion – and key targets such as the renewable energy ambition for 2030 were passed with lower ambitions than those formulated in the REPowerEU Action Plan.

Ten months after the invasion, in December 2022, the European Council and Parliament agreed on the ≤ 20 billion funding for the REPowerEU Action Plan, 60% deriving from an EU Innovation Fund and the remaining 40% from CO₂ permit sales. That same month, an agreement on renewable energy was reached creating faster permitting procedures in designated go-to areas. The agreement built further on a deal from the previous month accelerating procedures for solar energy, repowering

energy power plants and heat-pumps, assuming that such projects are in the overriding public interest. The Council and Parliament also reached agreement on the Emissions Trading Scheme, ensuring at least 62% mitigation in the ETS sectors in 2030 (relative to 2005) and integrating shipping emissions in the ETS. The ETS agreement represents a key element in the 'Fit for 55' package, in which the Commission had doubled down on its REPowerEU Action Plan. The agreement also included a gradual phase-out of free allowances for companies from 2026-34, thereby making ETS more comprehensive and removing exemptions. An ETS II covering fuel, buildings and road transport will also be implemented by 2027.⁶

To avoid carbon leakage, the EU also agreed on CBAM. As the CBAM agreement is set up, it obliges companies to certify imported products in some of the energyintensive areas most at risk of carbon leakage (e.g., iron and steel, cement, aluminium, fertilisers and electricity) as well as hydrogen and indirect emissions under certain circumstances under the CBAM certification scheme.⁷ The agreement raises extra revenue for the Innovation Fund and the Modernisation Fund, which will establish a Social Climate Fund (SCF) of €86.7 billion to benefit the households, small businesses and transport users most negatively impacted by the green transition. According to a member state negotiator, the SCF was an important 'sugarcoating on the bitter pill' required by the poorest member states most negatively affected by the higher GHG prices.

More than a year after the invasion, key climate actions in the REPowerEU Action Plan have yet to be fully passed or less ambitious plans have been passed than those set out in the plan. The European Parliament has supported climate initiatives in the plan, which in some instances (e.g., energy reduction) set higher goals than the Commission's target. The proposal to increase the renewable energy goal to 45% in 2030 has not been passed. In the Renewable Energy Directive from March 2023, a provisional agreement was reached setting a 42.5% renewables target, including an additional 2.5% top-up ambition. This puts the Commission and Parliament's 45% 2030-target within reach without yet having agreed to it. The difficult negotiations on this goal were not just caused by traditionally hesitant member states but also France, the Netherlands and Spain, who used the current economic challenges to justify lower ambitions than those set by the Commission and Parliament. The Council also reached a provisional agreement on targets for renewables in transportation, heating and cooling. Hesitation can be traced regarding energy efficiency too. The Commission proposed an EU energy efficiency target of 13% relative to 2020 calculations in its REPowerEU Action Plan. A majority in the European Parliament endeavoured to raise that ambition to 14.5%. Due to opposition from the Council, however, the agreed target is 11.7%, which is significantly lower than the targets set by the Parliament and the Commission. According to several diplomats involved in the process, the energy and economic challenges triggered by the pandemic have caused some realignment in the Council on climate action. There, some of the countries traditionally supporting more ambitious climate action (e.g., Spain) are now more hesitant due to economic concerns, particularly higher consumer prices. Considering the significant national differences in energy supplies, the Council also proposed adjusting the support to prioritise investment and cohesion in the countries most dependent on fossil fuels. The Council proposed that states should 'limit additional administrative burdens' when justifying derogations from the do-no-significant-harm principle to meet oil and gas supply needs, thereby effectively loosening requirements.

At a decision-making level, the EU Commission has acted as a swift agenda-setter, pushing for a broad range of policy initiatives within both climate and energy policy. However, when studying decision-making in slightly greater detail than general plans and announcements, it becomes apparent that energy supply has been addressed with greater urgency than climate action, both procedurally and substantively. Procedurally, the Commission activated Article 122 (of TFEU), which sidelines the European Parliament in terms of tackling energy shortages, prices and purchasing through a qualified majority in the European Council, despite pushback from some member states and businesses. As Article 122 is designed to tackle contemporary crises in supply or force majeure events as such, it is less suited to resolve a cumulative issue such as climate change. Thus, it could be argued that there are also legal reasons why the energy crisis has been tackled with greater urgency. Such a rebuttal, however, does not change the conclusion that the energy supply issues have been tackled with greater urgency. Supporting this conclusion, the renewable energy and energy efficiency targets set by the Commission and Parliament were not supported by the Council, leading to lower EU climate ambitions.

Table 1. Decision-making and implementation status of central REPowerEUactions as of March 2023

POLICY AREA	COMMISSION	PARLIAMENT	COUNCIL	STATUS
Energy security				
Gas storage restock	Refilling storage to minimum 80% gas storage level by 1 November 2022	Same targets as Commission	Same targets as Commission	Passed
Coordinated gas demand- reduction	Voluntary reduction of gas demand by 15%, mandatory reduction in case of 'Union alert'	Not involved	Passed with qualified majority	Passed (TFEU 122)
Intervention to address energy prices	Exceptional measures of economic nature to address high energy prices	Not involved	Passed with qualified majority	Passed (TFEU 122)
Climate action				
Renewable energy target	45% of overall energy from renewable sources by 2030	Same targets as Commission	Lower target than Commission (40% by 2030)	Passed with lower target of 42.5% (possible top-up)
Energy consumption reduction target	13% by 2030 relative to 2020 calculations	14.5% by 2030 relative to 2020 calculations	Lower target than Commission	Passed with lower target of 11.7%

Sources: EU Commission and IEA.

Uniper coal-fired power station Scholven next to the Oberscholven tailings pile with wind turbines in front. Gelsenkirchen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. 7 May 2021.

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Photo and description: Agencja Fotograficzna Caro / Alamy Stock Photo.

IMPLEMENTATION – MAKING REAL ON THE PROMISES

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The section above assessed the general trends in EU decision-making in climate and energy policies in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The section argued that the EU has acted with unprecedented urgency, drawing on the funding, legal provisions and political ideas developed in response to previous crises. Beyond the general assessment, the section observed that the main proposals addressing energy supply have been passed, whereas climate actions relating to both renewable energy and energy efficiency are either unpassed or passed at a lower level of ambition than proposed by the Commission. This section assesses the implementation of the decisions taken in climate and energy policy.

National energy supply above all

The overarching goal of the REPowerEU-plan is independence from Russian energy by 2027. In fact, though, most member states are striving to do so even faster than the pace set out in the plan without causing energy shortages in Europe. In August 2022, the EU agreed to ban all coal imports and 90% of oil products from February 2023. In the course of 2022, Russia cut gas exports to EU member states by more than 80% (McWilliams et al. 2023). This occurred in a year when the generation of both nuclear energy and hydropower among the member states were the lowest for more than 20 years. The fall in nuclear and hydropower was caused by several factors, such as an extraordinary summer drought, the corrosion of cooling circuits, power-plant inspections, labour strikes and the continued closing of German nuclear power plants (Corbeau, Farfan, and Orozco 2023).

Several factors explain the quick decline in the European energy imports from Russia, some of which are promising for the green transition while others are less encouraging. The Baltic States chose to cut off imports of Russian energy in April 2022. At an informal meeting, a diplomat from a Baltic State said: 'We can get through a winter with heating from candles instead of buying Russian gas. That's fine with us'.⁸ A few weeks later, several other states, including Poland, Bulgaria and Denmark, were cut off by Russia because they refused to pay for gas in roubles. To provide alternatives to Russian fossils, the EU member state coal consumption rose by 7% in 2022; a rebound that was nonetheless smaller than initially feared and based on advice from the International Energy Agency and the Commission to limit the building of new energy infrastructure (Jones 2023). Electricity demand declined by 7.9% in 2022 compared to 2021, a greater reduction than expected. Renewable energy sources, especially solar, increased at an unprecedented pace in 2022, enabling renewable energy to become the biggest source of electricity generation, passing both gas and nuclear (Jones 2023). Beyond renewables, European fossil fuel production also increased.

Externally, EU member states engaged in what one EU diplomat formulated as a 'desperate scramble for energy everywhere thinkable'⁹ In the year following the invasion, the EU member states made more than 70 new energy deals, over 60% of which concerned natural gas imports in both gaseous and liquefied forms. This scramble was successful in its immediate objective: The EU avoided an acute energy shortage, and Russian year-to-year energy imports fell more than 50% from 2021 to 2022. This occurred despite the overall consumption of gas by EU member states increasing slightly in the same period. Particularly, piped gas from Algeria and Norway and LNG from the US, Qatar and Algeria filled the gap. Furthermore, because of the continued COVID-19 lockdown, China resold considerable LNG supplies to the EU. Paradoxically, and partly as a consequence of this Chinese resale, exports of Russian LNG increased by 60% in 2022 compared to 2021 (Kardaś 2023).

However, the frantic and largely successful struggle to secure the energy supply and economic relief has provoked several significant conflicts between member states. Germany stopped Nord Stream 2 from coming into operation when German legislators suspended its approval. However, German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz became the most prominent EU leader to decline a full and immediate boycott on Russian energy, because it is 'so essential for citizens' public good and ordinary lives' (The Local/AFP 2022). His position was shared by, among others, the Hungarian, Czech, Austrian and Slovakian governments, which remained heavily reliant on Russian energy. This criticism came especially from the Baltic States and Poland, who had sought autonomy from Russian energy for decades and had adopted an uncompromising approach to Russia following the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The conflict escalated further when Germany, Italy and several European states caved to Russian demands to make European energy companies pay for energy using Gazprombank. When the German parliament approved a €200 billion package in October 2022 to protect German consumers and businesses from the negative impact of the energy crisis backlash against Germany grew further. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the new emphasis on strategic autonomy broadly played against German leadership for substantive and procedural reasons. As one EU diplomat explained in an interview:

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Merkel's project emphasising that WTO members have never been at war with each other – the economic peace thesis – has clearly failed (...) Germany is also a huge machine with three parties in government, so they need a lot of coordination. Therefore, they are often a bit behind the ball in negotiations.¹⁰

Beyond the impact on the EU's biggest member state, Germany, several other alliances and power dynamics are shifting as a consequence of the war. And although Macron has been criticised for over-emphasising diplomatic relations with Russia, the weakening German leadership and new emphasis on strategic autonomy is playing into French hands. The consistent, decades-long endeavours made by Poland and the Baltic States for energy security and independence as well as the unrelenting support for Ukraine have given them a more prominent position in EU decision-making, particularly on foreign and security policy. Diverging national approaches have also had other significant impacts, dividing the Visegrád Group, as Poland and Hungary found themselves at opposite extremes on policies on Russia.

Long-term climate repercussions

While the EU member states have over-performed on their commitments to become independent from Russian energy, they are not on track in relation to the expansion of renewable energy, as set out in the REPowerEU Action Plan. Although the EU member states are set to expand renewable energy consumption more quickly than before, they are still not on track to reach their 2030 goals. The share of renewable energy in electricity consumption would have to increase to 69% and renewables in transportation would have to increase to at least 32% by 2030 to meet the REPowerEU goals. But action is falling significantly short of those goals, increasing instead at a trajectory towards 54% for electricity consumption and 16% in transportation in 2030, according to the International Energy Agency 2022a). Moreover, the economic crisis caused by the high energy prices undermined the climate ambitions of poorer member states. According to a national diplomat working on energy:

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You can sense that it hurts consumers, especially among poorer member states that are not as used to energy taxes. They provide inflation relief, and do not have enough budgetary space to also step-up climate actions.¹¹

Instead, the crisis exacerbated what one EU climate diplomat describes as the Brussels Bubble:

We have a Euro-centric view of how the world works, but it isn't shared by the rest of the world. Here in Brussels, we live in a two- or three-layered bubble. We are too narrowly focused on our own policies. In the end, the Council must decide. And the Council consists of nationally elected leaders focused on consumers' short-term needs; especially in the current situation.¹²

The EU member states' global scramble for energy also had several problematic climate repercussions, which were not addressed comprehensively at the European level. Of the new deals, 50% involved long-term infrastructure (e.g., LNG ports), and more than 85% were bilateral agreements with third countries rather than involving multiple member states. Although half of the deals did also include renewable energy components, the renewable elements of the deals were of varying depth – from mere exploration to building actual infrastructure (Dennison et al. 2022). At the moment, 17 LNG ports are planned, two are under construction, and five are being expanded, adding to the 17 that are already in operation, constituting €10s of billions worth of infrastructure (European Council 2022). Although LNG ports can be converted to ammonia services, with lower working capacity, the use of ammonia in shipping vessels is 'not yet commercially viable' according to IEA (International Energy Agency 2022b).

Many European decision-makers expressed concerns about the negative consequences possibly resulting from this scramble. The scramble contributed to the highest fossil fuel prices in decades, which helped spark an increase in investments in fossil fuel energy sources in 2022 (International Energy Agency 2022). This emphasis on short-term national security of supply undermined the EU's global climate diplomacy efforts: While EU diplomats called for ending fossil fuels (especially coal and inefficient subsidies), member states were buying any fossil fuel they could get their hands on from third countries. The very high prices - especially on gas - pushed less affluent countries to find alternative energy sources that typically emitted more carbon into the atmosphere. Diplomatically, the scramble undermined the diplomatic efforts emphasising the need to move beyond fossil fuels as quickly as possible. Six months into the war, the US Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides \$370 billion to support the green transition in the US. The plan primarily works through tax cuts and other forms of economic incentives for private actors, with significant use of 'Made in the USA' clauses; initiatives which the EU Commission immediately accused of being protectionist, and they called for EU counteraction.

To respond to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the EU presented the Net Zero Industry Act, which proposes channelling approximately €250 billion from the NextgenEU to provide tax breaks and other subsidies for a green transition in European industries. If the Net Zero Industry Act is passed, it will help resolve the financing issue pertaining to speeding up the transition in Europe. However, these benefits risk being outweighed by a global green trade war. With President Biden in the White House, the US has returned as a close climate diplomacy partner of the EU, which risks being undermined if the green trade conflict escalates. Further, such measures risk triggering more green trade wars - not just with the US, but also with India, China and other major economic actors. A trade war, which the EU - despite its new emphasis on strategic autonomy - is unlikely to win given that it must ensure support from 27 member states and lags far behind other major players in the extraction of rare earth elements necessary for the green transition. Further, 80% of the Commission's Net Zero Industry Act would go to German and French companies and sideline small member states. Further, even with the IRA, the EU provides more government support for the green transition than does the US.

Summing up, the EU has thus far delivered on its promise to become independent of Russian energy, as set out in REPowerEU. The implementation of its climate ambitions has been more mixed and is increasingly taking a path that is clashing with the EU's quest to create global free trade on an even playing field. Furthermore, the short-term scramble for new energy supplies is creating long-term lock-in effects. More broadly, the high fossil energy demand, which was partly caused by this scramble, has led to further investments in fossil energy and undermined the EU's diplomatic efforts to end the fossil fuel era. Thus far, the EU has passed neither the higher REPowerEU target for renewable energy nor quicker approval procedures for wind energy. Consequently, the most important source of climate optimism is now the increasingly quick rollout of renewable energy and energy-saving measures. Knowing the major impact that the EU's renewable energy targets have had, faster approval procedures and higher targets for 2030 and beyond would help to create clarity and incentivise further action from private actors.

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz, Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen, European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte at the North Sea Summit in Esbjerg, Denmark. 18 May 2022. Photo and description: Belga News Agency / Alamy Stock Photo.

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MAINTAINING CLIMATE MOMENTUM IN THE PRESENT PREDICAMENT



With the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, security politics (and energy security in particular) took centre-stage in Danish politics for the first time. With the war, a national compromise was agreed to by the main governing parties on both sides of the aisle, pledging to increase Danish defence spending to 2% of Gross Domestic Product by 2033 and organising a referendum for Denmark to opt-in to the EU's defence policy. The war also helped to justify the first centrist government featuring parties from both sides of the aisle in more than a generation. Against this background, the section analyses how the war, and with it the new emphasis on security, shaped the Danish position and strategic priorities in EU with a focus on climate and energy policy. It then develops three main recommendations for how Denmark can shape policymaking considering the current changes in the two policy areas.

Denmark used to be a net exporter of natural gas and oil. Danish oil and gas production peaked at more than 20 million cubic meters of oil and 10 billion cubic meters (BCM) of gas per year in the mid-2000s but has gradually declined since. Oil production is now less than 10 million m3 annually, and the biggest Danish gas field, Tyra, has been closed for renovations since 2019. Consequently, annual Danish gas output has been less than 2 BCM for the latest several years but is expected to rebound to about 3 BCM per year after the Tyra Field returns to operation (expected to be in the winter 2023-24). Over the past few years, this has forced Denmark to import about three-quarters of its gas consumption from Germany; gas which Germany primarily imported from Russia until the invasion. Natural gas is just over 10% of the overall Danish energy mix, but some 380,000 households in Denmark use natural gas for heating. Following the Russo-Ukrainian War, Denmark has also had to diversify away from Russian gas; in particular, after Gazprom cut off its supplies in June, when Ørsted, a Danish energy company, refused to pay in roubles, pushing Danish suppliers to purchase gas on the European gas market. The issue rendered gas prices and inflation central items on the agenda in the national Danish elections that took place on 1 November 2022.

Despite significant short-term challenges, several developments have helped to increase Danish energy security. In September 2022, Denmark, Poland and Norway finished Baltic Pipe, a joint natural gas pipeline transporting gas from the North Sea to Denmark and Poland. Denmark is among the EU leaders in terms of the share of renewables in the total national energy mix: 35% of Denmark's final energy consumption (energy supplied to the final consumer) derives from renewable energy, compared to just over 20% in the EU as a whole (Eurostat 2022b). The interconnectivity with neighbouring countries is critical for the security of supply,

especially given the strong Swedish and Norwegian hydropower sectors and Swedish nuclear energy capacity. Several new policy initiatives have been taken since February 2022. In June 2022, a large majority of political parties reached an agreement to quadruple the production of solar- and wind energy. And by 2028, half of the households using natural gas are set to be converted to district heating networks or electric heat pumps. Moreover, Denmark aims to quintuple offshore wind in 2030 relative to 2022 output. The policy goal is that all gas should be green gas in 2030, and no household is dependent on natural gas as of 2035. Overall, the country's energy security is relatively less affected by the energy market disruptions than most member states. Consequently, Denmark did not make any new major fossil fuel deals with third countries in response to the energy crisis.

As an international first mover in green energy solutions, Denmark considers climate policy a top policy area and is recognised as a climate leader by other EU member states and the EU Commission. A European Council of Foreign Relations report found that the other EU members rank Denmark third among the countries they would most like to work with, just behind France and Germany (Dennison 2022). In the 2022 State of the Union Address, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen singled out Denmark for its pioneering work in wind energy dating back to the 1970s:

When the oil crisis hit, Denmark started to invest heavily into harnessing the power of the wind. They laid the foundations for its global leadership in the sector and created tens of thousands of new jobs. This is the way to go! Not just a quick fix, but a change of paradigm, a leap into the future.

Given Denmark's energy security and leading position not only in renewable energy but also other energy efficiency technologies, the energy-climate link in the EU's response to the war in Ukraine has boosted the Danish policy agenda, pushing for more ambitious EU climate action. Acting on this agenda, Denmark organised a summit for Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark in May 2022, which resulted in the Esbjerg Declaration, announcing an increase in wind energy capacity in the North Sea to 65 GW offshore wind power by 2030 and 150 GW in 2050. Commission President von der Leyen and Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson also took the occasion to announce the REPowerEU plan. Thus, at a symbolic and decision-making level, the general response of the EU to the Russo-Ukrainian War has been a vindication of Denmark's prioritisation of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures. Both in the time leading up to and after the beginning of the invasion, Denmark has taken international leadership in the climate and energy policy areas. In the Baltic Region, Denmark organised the 'Baltic Sea Energy Security Summit' with Germany, Poland, Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States. The Summit led to the Marienborg Declaration, which pushes for the quick implementation of the REPowerEU plan through joint energy ventures in the fields of liquefied gas, renewable energy and energy infrastructure (Frederiksen et al. 2023). Although Denmark still produces fossil energy, it has pledged to end production before 2050 and co-chairs the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA) together with Costa Rica to push de-carbonisation internationally. Denmark supports accelerated climate policy actions following the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis; an increase in EU mitigation in 2030 from 55% to 57%, as well as higher energy efficiency targets. The ambition to increase the renewables goal from 42.5 to 45% and to ensure quicker procedures for wind energy projects aligns with Denmark's green political ambitions and economic agenda. Pushing for similar agreements on new on-shore and off-shore wind projects and the implementation of such policies nationally would significantly increase the EU's likelihood of success in the implementation of its mitigation and RE ambitions. As EU-level climate ambitions increase, however, Denmark will have to step up to live up to EU agreements on other areas of climate policy than renewables. In the sectors not included, like agriculture, Denmark has not shown any clear path to meeting EU targets by 2025 and 2030. This is also the case in the transport sector and construction (The Danish Council on Climate Change 2023). Thus, to stay ahead, Denmark must show how it intends to meet the EU-level targets to which it has agreed. Denmark's temporary suspension of the Open Door Policy for offshore-wind projects must be resolved to seize the current momentum for off-shore wind action. In so doing, it is relevant to keep in mind that the EU is shifting gears in its climate and energy policy, itself taking procedural risks to ensure bold action with initiatives such as CBAM and the activation of Article 122 (TFEU).

The catalysation of EU's emergence as a security actor in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine challenges and complicates the Danish climate and energy position in the EU. Denmark has traditionally legitimised its EU membership through the benefits of the internal market and free-trade agreements with third countries. During the 2019 budget negotiations and the negotiations over the EU's economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Denmark was a part of the colloquially termed 'Frugal Four', which fought calls for budget increases. However, in economic, climate and energy policy, there will be no easy fix. As one national diplomat argued, 'such policies will only get passed through redistribution, especially to the weakest consumers. Significant solidarity between the richest and poorest countries is going to be necessary. It will probably be expensive'. Denmark has moved on these issues to create grand bargains that ensure support for climate actions through support for member states less supportive of more ambitious climate action. During the budget negotiations as well as the NextGenEU discussions, Denmark strongly opposed Eurobonds and argued for more conditionality clauses on EU-spending. Meanwhile, security has been prioritised exclusively in NATO by Denmark. Consequently, Danish decision-makers have met the EU's broad security vision emphasising greater strategic autonomy across European sectors with some scepticism. This has been resolved in the area of defence, as Denmark has since changed its position, successfully holding a referendum to scrap the Danish opt-out from the military dimension in EU foreign and security policy.

RECOMMENDATION 1: DEVELOP A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE EU AUTONOMY AGENDA

The EU's development as a security actor focused on creating European strategic autonomy has emerged at an increasing pace as a consequence of a series of political crises. Consequently, the quest for autonomy is shaping every main policy area at this point, including both climate and energy. As several of our interviewees noted: For better or for worse, the EU Commission is becoming an increasingly apt and agenda-setting policy entrepreneur. This change shapes both political substance and procedures, such as the increasingly frequent activation of Article 122 of the TFEU. The Net Zero Industry Act underlines this dilemma by providing extra support for green businesses while at the same time risking global green trade wars that challenge the Danish approach to the EU and which are unlikely to benefit a small state with globally competitive green-sector companies.

While the Danish position has traditionally been to fight such support measures and interventions, Denmark's own prioritisation of energy security and climate action creates a dilemma between the emphasis on free trade and the interest in pushing climate and energy security action. To ensure a proactive and comprehensively crafted approach to resolving this dilemma, Denmark could benefit from a strategy focused on climate and energy policy in light of the new European security environment. Such a strategy would work optimally if it clarified Denmark's strategic priorities and sought out new European allies in the rapidly changing political landscape. The impending negotiation of a new Danish Political Agreement on

Europe for the first time in 15 years would provide a good occasion to conduct such strategic work. Considering the increasing links between climate, energy and security policy, these considerations would also benefit ongoing work to revise Danish foreign and security strategy in light of Russian aggression.

RECOMMENDATION 2: STEP UP EFFORTS TO ENSURE COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR UNPASSED CLIMATE PROPOSALS IN THE REPOWEREU ACTION PLAN

Since climate action is at the top of the Danish foreign policy agenda, Denmark could take greater leadership to ensure EU-wide support for the unpassed climate initiatives in the REPowerEU-plan. This could involve not least continued pressure to ensure the passing of the 2.5% top-up of the EU 42.5% renewable energy goal for 2030 as a critical agenda moving forward. To broker such a deal, Denmark will have to mediate between the more frugal member states and those calling for further redistribution. As was the case with the Just Transition Mechanism in the Green Deal and the support for green action in NextgenEU, redistribution will be a prerequisite for more climate action in the EU.

Considering the economic hardship facing many European member states, the demands for redistribution will only become more pronounced in future negotiations. However, Denmark has a multi-billion-euro green energy industry, which would benefit significantly from a higher renewable energy target and faster approval procedures on wind projects. Similarly, the Danish energy sector could benefit from a more integrated European electricity market and EU-wide climate clauses in member state deals with third countries. Consequently, comprehensive assessments must be carried out of the climate-policy implications of justice mechanisms that consider dynamic benefits both for Denmark's economy and political ambitions to push for the international mitigation of GHGs.

RECOMMENDATION 3: PUSH FOR A STRONGER GLOBAL EU CLIMATE AND ENERGY STRATEGY

As a consequence of the Russo-Ukrainian War and the economic repercussions it has had in Europe and internationally, numerous climate diplomacy setbacks took place in 2022. Global GHG emissions reached an all-time high. Investment in fossil fuels increased in 2022 over previous years. The European scramble for energy helped boost investments in fossil fuel energy and infrastructure, which increased globally in a year with historically high energy prices.

Even the Biden Administration's more ambitious climate agenda leading to the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act has strained the EU-US relationship. The EU Commission proposed a Net Zero Industrial Strategy, increasing industrial support for European companies to counter the increased support for US-manufactured green products. Along with Poland and other member states, Denmark voiced its concern with the Commission's proposed Net Zero Industrial Strategy: 'State aid for mass production and commercial activities can lead to significant negative effects, including the fragmentation of the internal market, harmful subsidy races and weakening of regional development'.¹³ In this political initiative, France and Germany are projected to receive approximately 80% of the support, which the Commission proposes should be financed through collective debt and could lead to further protectionist competition between the EU, the US and globally. These are all prospects that Denmark would find hard to swallow. This is understandable, as green trade wars could lead to inefficient solutions to the green transition, which would be detrimental for Denmark's globally competitive green-sector companies.

However, in light of the increasingly intense struggles over global free trade, which derive not only from the EU but also China and India, Denmark must recognise that state subsidies in the green sector are probably here to stay. Similarly, tax breaks and subsidies (as more than 40 years of Danish support for renewable energy and energy efficiency show) will also boost the green transition at a decisive point in time and help to keep the Paris Agreement alive. Denmark should therefore develop a pragmatic approach, endeavouring to shape how such policies are being formed. In so doing, Denmark could limit the extent of such policies and demand sunset clauses to ensure that they are only in place for a transitional period. Denmark could also endeavour to ensure conditionality clauses, oversight, earmarked research and development funds together with support for smaller European countries and companies. In its external policies, the internal European negotiations should be coupled with negotiations with the US and other major economies as well as the WTO to avoid an escalating green trade war. Here, Denmark can build on work already initiated in the EU, such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and environmental clauses in free trade agreements, which must be further developed and negotiated with external actors despite geopolitical tensions.



CONCLUDING REMARKS: BETWEEN EUROPEAN ENERGY SECURITY AND GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

In response to the war in Ukraine, European leadership – with the EU Commission at its core – has emerged as a fast-acting manager of intersecting crises, acting with urgency across several policy areas, including energy and climate policy. It has framed the war as not merely an issue of defence or Russia, but more broadly as an issue revealing how the EU must be able to act independently. With the REPowerEU Action Plan, the Commission frames the predicament as an energy-climate dual crisis, which must be resolved comprehensively. This response underlines the emergence of the EU as a security actor. This is evident in the explicit call for strategic autonomy as the overall solution to the crisis and with the use of provisional emergency law and funding allocated with the NextgenEU package.

This new security agency in European politics is a double-edged sword. The swiftness and determination with which the EU has acted has surpassed the expectations of most. The EU has negotiated wide-ranging sanctions and slashed its dependency on Russian coal, oil and increasingly also gas. Member states have significantly limited their Russian energy consumption and found alternative energy suppliers, avoiding the winter energy crisis against which many had warned. Important agreements in the EU 2030 climate plan, 'Fit for 55' package – particularly the expansion of ETS and the CBAM agreement – have also been passed. These urgent actions have the potential to boost EU climate policy, which has otherwise traditionally developed in incremental steps, focused on developing a global, market-based climate regime.

However, this is no cause for premature celebration. The provisional agreement on renewable energy is lower than the target set by the Commission and supported by the Parliament. The steep decline in Russian gas imports is partly caused by Russia cutting its energy exports to the EU, and Russian LNG imports actually increased in 2022. China's continued COVID-19 lockdown helped to limit global LNG demand, and as China re-opens its economy, global demand will likely increase in 2023 without prospects of major supply increases. Actions to prevent energy shortages in the coming winter therefore remain necessary. Further, the swift action to ensure short-term climate security has come at a price for European coherency and climate action. To avoid immediate energy shortages, German, Italian and Hungarian companies and others went along with paying for Russian energy in roubles, while others (including the Baltic countries, Poland and Denmark) refused to do so. Member states engaged in massive relief packages aimed at subsidising energy simultaneously exacerbated inflation. Germany in particular was criticised for its €200 billion rescue package aimed at protecting consumers and businesses from

soaring energy prices; a package that led to significant concern from smaller and less affluent member states, which did not have the financial means to engage in such spending sprees.

In the global scramble for energy, member states mostly relied on bilateral agreements, most of which include infrastructure investments in fossil fuels. EU leaders have yet to reach agreement on key climate policies in the REPowerEU Action Plan, including a higher renewable energy target in 2030 and quicker procedures for wind energy. The scramble for energy and lack of climate action also undermined EU climate diplomacy. The year 2022 was marked by an increase in fossil fuel investments globally and the highest ever GHG emissions levels. And the US Inflation Reduction Act, which was thought to bring back EU-US alignment on climate action, is instead sparking a green trade conflict; an area of trade that could boost the financing of the green transition, but which also risks escalating into green trade wars.

Considering what has been agreed to at the European level, it becomes clear that the energy and climate crises have not been approached with equal resolve. When it comes to energy, European leaders have acted with great urgency to maintain security of supply. If EU leaders genuinely believe their own claims that the EU is facing a dual energy-climate crisis, however, a comprehensive approach to ensure energy security in a broader sense is necessary; an endeavour that would require European heads of state and government to compromise and sacrifice.

NOTES

- 1 Authors' interview with diplomat working in EU-institutions, Brussels, spring 2022.
- 2 Importantly, REPowerEU earmarked at least 37% of its funds to climate action.
- 3 The conglomerate of businesses behind Nord Stream 2 was Gazprom (50%), E.ON (10%), OMV (10%), Shell (10%), Wintershall (10%), and ENGIE (10%), European Parliamentary Research Service (2016). The Nord Stream 2 Pipeline Project. The European Parliament (European Parliament 2016).
- 4 Authors' interview with EU official.
- 5 Authors' interview with EU official, spring 2022.
- 6 The ETS II can be postponed to 2028 if fuel prices are exceptionally high, and €20 million additional allowances will be included if prices exceed €45 per ton of carbon.
- 7 CBAM will gradually be implemented along with the new ETS agreement, and carbon pricing in third countries will be deducted from the price to incentivise international carbon pricing and to ensure World Trade Organization compatibility. By 2030, the goal is that all ETS products shall be included and a system for indirect emissions and downstream products shall be integrated.
- 8 Authors' notes.
- 9 Authors' interview with EU official.
- 10 Authors' interview with EU diplomat.
- 11 Authors' interview with Danish diplomat.
- 12 Authors' interview with EU diplomat.
- 13 Internal critique leaked to Politico (Stolton and Pieter Haeck 2023).

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