

CLIMATE AMBITION BEYOND EMISSION NUMBERS

**Taking stock of progress by looking inside
countries and sectors**

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Richard Filcak

SEPTEMBER 2021

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Citation

Richard Filcak (2021). *Climate ambition beyond emission numbers, Taking stock of progress by looking inside countries and sectors, Slovak Republic*. Deep Decarbonization Pathways (DDP) Initiative-IDDRI. Paris.

Contact

Henri Waisman, henri.waisman@iddri.org

The report is available online:

https://ddpinitiative.org/wp-content/pdf/DDP_AmbitionReport_ZAF.pdf

Financial support from

The report "Climate Ambition Beyond Emission Numbers" is made possible thanks to an array of projects supporting in-country capacity on climate mitigation research across the targeted geographies. It is also financially supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) as part of the "Climate Action After Paris" project (nr. 18_I_326) and the French government as part of the programme "investissements d'avenir" under the reference ANR-10- LABX-01.



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety

Production: IDDRI.

Editing: Marta Torres Gunfaus, Anna Pérez Català, Lola Vallejo, Henri Waisman.

Layout: Ivan Pharabod.

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Richard Filcak, Slovak Academy of Science

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Disclaimer

The results presented in this report are outputs of the academic research conducted under the DDP BIICS project as per the contractual agreement. The academic work does not in any way represent our considered opinion for climate negotiations and also does not reflect the official policy or position of the Government of Slovak Republic.

How is this document relevant to the Global Stocktake?

This document is part of a collective report that assesses the evolution of climate ambition in 26 countries and 3 hard-to-abate sectors through a granular and context-specific analysis of trends and progress of national and sectoral transformations.¹ This approach allows identifying what hinders and spurs action in countries and sectors, and understanding the conditions that can support enhanced ambition, which could be political, social, economic, governance.

These insights are directly relevant to four overarching functions of the Global Stocktake in support of its desired outcome, i.e. "to inform Parties in updating and enhancing, in a nationally determined manner, their actions and support in accordance with the provisions of the Paris Agreement, as well as enhancing international cooperation for climate action" (Article 14.3 of the Paris Agreement):

- Create the conditions for an open and constructive conversation on global cooperation (on e.g., technology, trade, finance, etc.), based on an in-depth understanding of the international enablers of enhanced country ambition.
- Organize a process for knowledge sharing and collective learning, based on concrete examples of actions already in place or being discussed, including best practices.
- Create space for open dialogues across different stakeholders to support better coordination of actions, based on a detailed understanding of the levers to be activated to enhance ambition in national and sectoral transitions
- Facilitate ownership by decision-makers of the climate challenge and the risks and opportunities of the low-emission and resilient transition, based on context-specific and granular analysis of barriers and enablers.

More specifically, the collective report in general – and this document in particular – can contribute to address some of the key guiding questions for the Global Stocktake², notably:

- What actions have been taken to increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster the climate resilience of people, livelihoods, and ecosystem? To what extent have national adaptation plans and related efforts contributed to these actions (Decision 19/CMA.1, paragraph 36(c))?
- How adequate and effective are current adaptation efforts and support provided for adaptation (Article 7.14 (c) Paris Agreement)?

¹ The full report « Climate ambition beyond emission numbers - Taking stock of progress by looking inside countries and sectors" can be found at: <https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/report/climate-ambition-beyond-emission-numbers-taking-stock-progress>

² Draft Guiding Questions for the Technical Assessment of GST1 (version 20th October 2021), available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Draft%20GST1_TA%20Guiding%20Questions.pdf

- What are the barriers and challenges, including finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building gaps, faced by developing countries?
- What is the collective progress made towards achieving the long-term vision on the importance of fully realizing technology development and transfer in order to improve resilience to climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions referred in Article 10.1 of the Paris Agreement? What is the state of cooperative action on technology development and transfer?
- What progress has been made on enhancing the capacity of developing country Parties to implement the Paris Agreement (Article 11.3 Paris Agreement)?
- To achieve the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement (mitigation, adaptation, and finance flows and means of implementation, as well as loss and damage, response measures), in the light of equity and the best available science, taking into account the contextual matters in the preambular paragraphs of the Paris Agreement:
 - What are the good practices, barriers and challenges for enhanced action?
 - What is needed to make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low GHG emissions and climate-resilient development?
 - What are the needs of developing countries related to the ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement?
- What is needed to enhance national level action and support, as well as to enhance international cooperation for climate action, including in the short term?
- What is the collective progress made by non-Party stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, to achieve the purpose and long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, and what are the impacts, good practices, potential opportunities, barriers and challenges (Decision 19/CMA.1, paras 36(g) and 37(i))?

Foreword

Henri Waisman, Marta Torres Gunfaus, Anna Perez Catala, IDDRI.

Country commitments as reflected in enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions submitted to the UNFCCC are insufficient to put the world on track to achieve the collective objective of the Paris Agreement to hold temperature increase below 2 °C or 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Furthermore, concrete policies and actions adopted by countries on the ground are often not sufficient to achieve these NDC targets. These conclusions highlight the need to increase ambition and to provide convincing evidence to accelerate action in the immediate and short term to give effect to this ambition. Yet these assessments are not sufficient to effectively guide the progressive increase of ambition, as organized by the cyclical process of the Paris Agreement.

APPROACH

With this imperative in mind, this report adopts a different, complementary, perspective on climate ambition. It seeks to open the box of emission pathways, by considering multiple dimensions of the conditions that will make these pathways possible. These are technical, economic, political, social and governance considerations in need of attention to enable the required far-reaching and systemic transformation towards the long-term goal. On the one hand, the revision of emission targets needs to be directed by an assessment of how drivers of emissions should change to trigger transformation. On the other hand, converting emissions' targets into pertinent concrete implementation requires well-designed policy packages and investment plans that are also informed by a clear and detailed understanding of the starting point, priorities and interplays between the available levers of transformation.

This bottom-up assessment aims at contributing to the process of collective learning in support of the progressive increase of collective ambition, as inserted at the core of the Paris Agreement paradigm. Approaching climate ambition through the lens of underlying transformations calls for reflecting the heterogeneous nature and the multi-faceted aspects

of transitions in different sectors and countries. This forces a move away from a purely global perspective and adopts a more granular approach based on country and individual sector perspectives. Thus, the report explores trends and progress on these transformations, as locally observed over the past years, notably since the Paris Agreement. This 'backwards looking' approach can help identify where developments are going in the right direction, where they should be accelerated and where major tensions remain that should be addressed as a priority to avoid undermining the transition. The picture of the state of the ambition discussion, firmly embedded in the country and sectoral realities, can provide means for reflection and action within the international climate community, particularly to inform focus areas for advancing the collective ambition agenda.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This country report describes the recent evolutions of domestic discourses on climate ambition, national climate policy, national governance and concrete policies and actions with a significant effect on GHG emissions. The chapter highlights a selection of striking and structurally important elements to advance the transformation towards carbon neutrality from an in-country perspective.

This report is part of a full series of 26 country chapters and three sectoral chapters. The full report includes a "summary for decision-makers" to present 10 cross-cutting messages emerging from the country and sector analysis, as a guide to the selection of priorities for collective action in the post-COP26 period.

You will find the full report at: https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Rapport/DDP_beyond%20emissions%20report.pdf

MODERATE POLITICAL CLIMATE AMBITIONS IN SPITE OF THE INCREASINGLY GROWING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ACTIONS

This chapter has been written thanks to the support of the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

A narrative of climate ambition in the Slovak Republic

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a framework assessment of the latest development of climate policies, discourses and investments in Slovakia *vis-a-vis* the Paris Agreement goals. It is written based on policy and discourse analyses and it is focusing on the period of the last 5 years (2015-2020) as a relevant period for making progress from the COP-21 meeting in Paris and the Paris Agreement (adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015).

Policy of Slovakia in the area of climate change is defined by the framework of the UN and European Union and mutually agreed goals and targets. According to the NDC Slovakia should aim to reduce its emissions by 12 percent (DC EU

First NDC Updated submission, English 18/12/2020). Yet more ambitious are gradually EU targets affecting Slovak climate policies. As a part of the European Green Deal, the Commission proposed in September 2020 to raise the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target, including emissions and removals, to at least 55% compared to 1990. The share of Slovakia in reaching this figure is yet not specified, but the process already significantly shapes emerging national strategic framework for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Yet, in spite of commitment to the 2050 climate neutrality and increasing number/quality of the strategies, policies and legislation, the country often goes for low ambitions standards in its policy goal – i.e., fulfilling EU framework as the least common denominator, but avoiding stronger policies and goals. In addition, enhancement of the implementation and enforcement of already existing policies and law remains a persistent problem.

On the positive note, in the past five years there has been strong improvement in energy efficiency (both households and industry), installations of renewable energy are growing and the Slovak 2020 targets in CO₂ emissions reduction were met. The country will by 2023 close its only remaining coal mining industry and development of regional decarbonization strategies is in progress.

However, there are problems arising. The so called “low hanging fruits” in emission reduction are decreasing and the EU 2030 and 2050 targets will impose on Slovakia challenging economic and social tasks. The country is increasingly exposed to climate change adaptation problems. The upcoming period would require stronger commitment of the governments and more support from the public.

DOMESTIC DISCOURSE

The main advancements regarding the domestic discourse on climate change since the Paris Agreement are visible especially in the last years and especially from 2018 onwards. While the first years after the Paris treaty were characterised by generally small media coverage and public interest, there were at least three recent factors improving the process: (i) International discourse transformed into national debate; (ii) Phasing out coal and decarbonization processes in

progress; and (iii) Investment opportunities associated with the Recovery and Resilience Plan and other EU funding schemes.

The recent acceleration of the debate was generally stimulated by international calls for action and its domestic responses. *The Fridays for Future* as a new emerging civic platform in Slovakia organised its first protest in August 20th, 2018. Increasingly active has also been the platform *Worried Mothers: Let's not burn the future!* Here concerned mothers have joined forces in an initiative to protect the climate and the environment.

Perhaps the most important activity in this respect is petition „*Climate Needs You.*“ It started in 2020. By the summer of 2021 they collected more than 50 000 signatures, aiming for the target value of 100 000 (in the country of 5,4 million). The aim of the petition is to push the Slovak government to recognize the climate crisis as one of its main priorities and to declare a state of climate emergency, while also making the government commit to the preparation and approval of legislation, state policies and state projects with the goal of achieving carbon neutrality in 2040.

The Slovak Climate Initiative was created as an association that brings together NGOs, academia and the business sector. The founding members of SKI are Buildings for the Future, the Slovak Association of Photovoltaic Industry and RES, Friends of the Earth - CEPA and the Prognostic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Slovak Euractive News and Information service branch has been very active in organising public debates and events and stimulated professional debate on climate change and energy related topics. Based on this and other activities, the situation is generally improving with regards to public engagement and interest in climate policies, programs and projects. Although, while there is growing interest among the professional organisations in the topic, there is still a rather small number of climate aware and active entities especially in the field of energy, transport and industrial policies. Another positive trend is the increasing engagement of academia and the business sector.

One of the important factors in generating interests and stimulating public debate has been phasing out coal. The future of coal mining in Upper Nitra opened a very important debate and the Government of the Slovak Republic decided that the coal mining should

terminate by 2023.¹ There was decreasing support for the continuation of the coal mining subsidy system among the coalition and opposition parties and for the time being, there is practically no relevant political party or subject in Slovak Republic questioning the decision. Phasing out coal has support from NGOs, local municipalities and business community.² Decision and affiliated public debate helped to pave the way for future discussions on decision making on Slovak economy decarbonization and regional decarbonization plans.

Investment opportunities affiliated with the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). The Partnership Agreement 2021-2027 and other EU funding schemes helped to open a public debate on the needs and general future transformation of the country. The public debate on RRP priorities and its focus on decarbonization brought into the public debate important stimulus. Last but not least, because of the climate tags and fixed percentages in the financial instruments earmarked for climate investments, government has been forced to aim them very clearly to climate projects.

NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

A positive role in shaping public discourse is played by the President of the Slovak Republic and her office, bringing the issues into the public debate and supporting civic initiatives. Although the position of the president is relatively weak in the context of executive powers, it has a strong symbolic position and role in steering public debate.

The political statements by the government which support investments into decarbonization of the national economy are to some extent propelled by the general targets and goals of the EU and pressure for adjusting national investment priorities with technical climate-oriented requirements of the funding. On the other hand, there is no open opposition to the climate policies among the coalition and mainstream opposition parties.

An important step was establishment of the *Council*

of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the European Green Agreement. It is an advisory, coordinating and initiative body of the Government of the Slovak Republic for issues related to the European Green Agreement. It coordinates the activities and cooperation of ministries, local governments and other state administration bodies. The Council will monitor the coordination of sectoral policies and monitor compliance with the transition to a carbon-neutral economy. On April 20th, 2021 there was an opening meeting of the Council, where six basic points were adopted to be followed by central government bodies in their strategies and policies. These include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate change, restoring and protecting biodiversity, promoting environmental sustainability, striving for progress in regenerative growth and the transition to a circular economy with no-pollution strategy.

ACTIONS AND POLICIES

The main vision and strategic document in climate change policies is adopted *Low-carbon development strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 with a view to 2050*. The strategy was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 5th of March 2020 and it represents Slovakia's response to commitments to combat climate change. The aim of the strategy is to identify existing and propose new additional measures within the Slovak Republic to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The document was created under the leadership of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with experts at the national and international level (World Bank), while the starting document for the preparation of the strategy was the Low Carbon Study. It builds on modelling the development and impacts of individual policies and measures on the national economy, using the Compact Primes and ENVISAGE Slovakia (CGE) models. All relevant institutions as well as the general public also had the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the strategy through a designated public participation process. *Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for the years 2021 – 2030* is currently in the process of revisions and should provide binding targets for the climate policies.

Implementation of Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) started with development of regional decarbon-

¹ Resolution no. 580 (12 December 2018) on the *Proposal for the Transformation of the Region of Upper Nitra*.

² See, for instance, Future of the Region Roundtable outcomes <http://www.prievidza.sk/spravodajstvo/horna-nitra-je-zivotaschopny-region/>. The roundtable was organised on September 18, 2018 by the mayor of Prievidza.

ization actions plans. The pilot areas selected are self-governing regions of Trenčín, Banská Bystrica, and Košice. Decarbonization is also selected as one of the reform and priority activities in the newly adopted (June 2021) Recovery and Resilience Plan for the Slovak Republic.

The latest development (as of June 2021) is the start of the work on adopting a climate law in Slovakia. The government justifies the need for the law based on clarification of the legal climate framework and the need to follow-up to the European Climate Regulation and the “Fit for 55 Package” and by efforts to supplement/develop existing documents addressing the reduction targets of the Slovak Republic. The law should at the same time increase awareness and transparency in tackling climate change, therefore the process started with wide and open public participation.

formation and its impacts to the Slovak industry, services and last but not least people. These are topics where politicians, academia, NGOs and business need to find solutions and frame the public debate on opportunities affiliated with the great transformation.

NEXT STEPS

There is growing public support for more ambitious and imminent pro-climate policies and action in Slovakia and the network of policies and actions has been enhanced recently. The international and especially the EU framework proves to be crucial in this respect. In spite of COVID-19 pandemic, dominating public agenda since early 2020, climate change has enhanced its position in the public discourse. Slovakia is however far from a rapid transformation path to carbon neutrality and there will be lots of efforts needed to accelerate the transformation towards a decarbonised economy. The international framework of the global goals of the Paris Agreements needs to be enhanced by ambitious EU policies and supported by domestic political bottom-up pressure.

The coordination of policies among individual sectors (i.e., ministries) is weak, in spite of the newly established *Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the European Green Agreement*. A Climate Law under preparation, supported by clearly targeting investments into decarbonization may provide important impetus to the process.

The positive trend is that the public debate is not cantered by the issue of climate change per se – the existence of the problem is denied only by marginal political forces and parties. The core of the debate is about economic and social costs, speed of the trans-

DDP

The DDP is an initiative of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI). It aims to demonstrate how countries can transform their economies by 2050 to achieve global net zero emissions and national development priorities, consistently with the Paris Agreement.. The DDP initiative is a collaboration of leading research teams currently covering 36 countries. It originated as the Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project (DDPP), which analysed the deep decarbonization of energy systems in 16 countries prior to COP21 (deepdecarbonization.org). Analyses are carried out at the national scale, by national research teams. These analyses adopt a long-term time horizon to 2050 to reveal the necessary short-term conditions and actions to reach carbon neutrality in national contexts. They help governments and non-state actors make choices and contribute to in-country expertise and international scientific knowledge. The aim is to help governments and non-state actors make choices that put economies and societies on track to reach a carbon neutral world by the second half of the century. Finally, national research teams openly share their methods, modelling tools, data and the results of their analyses to share knowledge between partners in a very collaborative manner and to facilitate engagement with sectoral experts and decision-makers.

www.ddpinitiative.org

IDDRI

The Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) is an independent, not-for-profit policy research institute based in Paris. Its objective is to identify the conditions and propose tools to put sustainable development at the heart of international relations and public and private policies. IDDRI is also a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform and supports stakeholders in global governance debates on the major issues of common interest, such as actions to mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, strengthen food security, and to manage urbanisation. The institute also participates in work to build development trajectories that are compatible with national priorities and the sustainable development goals.

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