



CLIMATE COALITION'S POSITION concerning a response to the overlapping climate, health and economic crisis

In light of the overlapping crises: climate, health, and economic, we need more than ever a profound adjustment of our attitude to the environment and the way we use natural resources. Financial, economic and cultural changes are necessary and should be implemented at every level, from international to national and local. Therefore, the Climate Coalition calls for:

- Putting the protection of human health and the environment we depend on first;
- Getting the economy out of the crisis in a way that does not exacerbate other crises but increases resilience to them, first and foremost by means of solutions that simultaneously serve health-related, environmental and economic objectives;
- Supporting the strengthening of the EU's climate policy, including raising greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in line with science and the European Green Deal framework;
- Horizontal policy integration, including ensuring that financial (also fiscal and budgetary) and trade policies are consistent with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, as well as long-term and cross-sectoral planning;
- Imposing conditions that enforce a direction of investment and modernisation consistent with the goal to achieve net zero emissions and other relevant environmental objectives on all recovery measures serving to exit the economic crisis, including financial support;
- Fossil fuel phase out: withdrawing support for corporations in the mining, fuel and energy industries based on fossil fuels that would allow them to continue their "business as usual"; putting an end to subsidising them unconditionally and redirecting funds to accelerate a fair transition, including support for alternative development directions in mining regions;
- Developing and implementing new "green" zero emission technologies. It is necessary to create jobs that are stable, green, safe for health, and preferably local. Every such job, every new activity or investment (regardless of sector) should bring us closer to a zero-carbon future that we need to build.

Reasoning

Temperature in the Arctic exceeding 20°C. Mega-fires in Australia. Devastating heat waves in India. Floods in Kenya and Somalia. January and February 2020 as the warmest months since measurements started. Oceans also the warmest ever measured. Drought and fires in Poland. These are just some of the phenomena from recent months that confirm that the climate crisis is under way and is worsening steadily. The fact that we have also been experiencing a pandemic crisis for several months now does not change this. Children, who now cannot go to school, have not stopped worrying about their future. They have only "gained" an additional cause for concern.

It is not a question of future generations. If we do not take decisive action now, the next crises linked to climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the related health and economic crises will overlap and escalate until the foundations of our civilisation collapse. Stopping this wave of crises requires international action, cooperation and solidarity. For world leaders, this is a moment to show farsightedness and courage – to prove that their perspective is not limited to the number of votes in the next elections. If we want to live in security and continue to develop without disregarding planetary boundaries, we must face these challenges together.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that global greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by at least 45% by 2030 compared to 1990, and that climate neutrality must be achieved by mid-century. Developed countries, including EU Member States, should reach these targets faster. A special IPCC report from 2018 shows that we should not allow the average global temperature to rise above 1.5°C. This is also the target set in the 2015 Paris Agreement¹.

We know, however, that countries' current climate commitments are too low. If they are met, average global temperatures will increase by 2.9-3.4°C. Although climate change is unfolding before our very eyes and its negative effects are clear to all of us: millions of additional cases of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of premature deaths each year around the world and increasing climate migration, global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. We are running out of time to take effective action. 2020 was to be the time for countries to present new emission reduction plans (NDCs²) and to start a "decade of ambition". A review of the Paris Agreement commitments is expected in 2023. The new commitments must not be less ambitious than the existing ones, but the later greenhouse gas emissions start to fall in real terms, the more difficult and costly the next steps to reduce and adapt to change will be.

Celebrating further agreements that do not sufficiently translate into real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions leads us deeper and deeper into a blind alley. A strategy to minimise our environmental impact is no longer enough. Today, it is necessary to change the approach to development and build a civilisation of moderation and a zero-emission, circular economy that would be subject to inviolable limits of stability of earth's natural systems. This applies to financial mechanisms, consumption patterns, and management at all levels, from local and regional to the level of individual countries or their groups and the global level. Let us not delude ourselves that if the civilisation has managed to cope with crises so far, it will be able to tackle the subsequent ones as well. The truth is that we have not been doing so well at all. Otherwise, we would have been able

¹ IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report

² NDCs = Nationally Determined Contributions

to tackle world hunger, lack of access to education and deepening social inequalities, as well as the climate crisis, which has been mounting for decades.

It's no longer the eleventh hour. We're at decision time, or even a moment after that. Many people have lost their lives and health as a result of the various consequences of climate change: heat waves, the spread of infectious diseases, extreme weather events, lack of access to water, and armed conflicts. We must act today, not wait until tomorrow.

Objectives for the EU

The EU is seeking to play a leading role in climate protection efforts. By 2020, it will certainly achieve its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990, as the level of reduction reached over 20% already in 2019. A new EU strategy, the European Green Deal, was announced last November, putting climate protection centre stage. This is reflected in the goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This means raising the 2030 targets to at least 50-55% (currently 40%). Unfortunately, even this will not be enough to prevent a climate disaster. Nor is it in line with what science suggests. Much more is required from the EU as a leader and as a group of countries that have been saturating the atmosphere with greenhouse gases for decades. The production and consumption patterns that have led us to the climate and environmental crisis need to change profoundly.

In the opinion of the Climate Coalition:

- a. We are dependent on continuous economic growth and constantly rising consumption. We must devise and implement a strategy to change these patterns in order to develop a society that lives in dignity, health and safety without disregarding planetary boundaries.
- b. It is essential for the EU to achieve climate neutrality as early as 2040. As we are among the most developed countries, we must step up our efforts so that the whole world has a chance of reaching net zero emissions by 2050. The targets are set by science.
- c. According to the Paris Agreement, the new EU target for 2030 concerning the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should be significantly higher and set at 65% compared to 1990.
- d. The EU should present a programme to achieve 100% of RES in energy production and a complete phase-out of fossil fuels, in line with the objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2040.
- e. EU countries must immediately adopt plans to phase out anti-climate subsidies and implement them by 2025 at the latest.
- f. The INVESTEU programme for 2021-2027 should be fully consistent with the objective of reaching climate neutrality on an urgent basis, and at least one third of the funds should be devoted to combating climate change and cannot finance illusory projects such as: CCS, natural gas, nuclear power. They do not bring us closer to the target but even take us away from the goals and at the same time consume considerable resources that should be allocated to viable solutions instead.
- g. The Just Transition Fund should only be intended for countries that will put in place a plan to phase out fossil fuels in line with the objectives adopted at EU level.

- h. It is necessary to promote and support sustainable agricultural production (moving away from industrial farming) and to reduce the consumption of meat, dairy and eggs in a "farm-to-fork" approach, in line with scientific evidence on their impact on the climate, and to shift as much as possible towards local supplies as well as reducing food waste significantly.
- i. According to the Fraunhofer ISI, the scale of opportunities to improve energy efficiency, if considered a socio-economic priority, would save up to 67% of the EU's energy by 2050. First of all, there is a need to provide optimum tools to substantially increase the scale of refurbishment of Europe's energy inefficient building stock, especially residential and public buildings, under the Renovation Wave initiative.
- j. It is necessary to reduce rapidly emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants from transport, both passenger and freight, including, among other things, enhancing access to affordable, efficient and safe public transport, improving conditions for cycling and walking in cities and reducing transport needs.

Tasks for Poland

As a country with three-quarters of power generation based on coal, greenhouse gas emissions from transport growing dynamically (in the period 2005-2018 by 80%), and significant emissions from agriculture, Poland cannot escape its global responsibility for countering a climate disaster. The fastest possible achievement of climate neutrality, in accordance with the Paris Agreement and the results of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5, preferably by 2040, is also Poland's responsibility. Yet, for this to be possible, the following is essential:

1. Reorientation in thinking about climate change: not as a burden but as an opportunity
 - a. for an economy of moderation: to build its innovation and competitiveness;
 - b. for society: to ensure a safe life and good quality of life for present and future generations; including for public health since the effects of climate change are the greatest environmental threats to the health of the inhabitants of all countries in the world;
 - c. for the natural environment: to stabilise climate change, maintain ecosystem services, protect biodiversity and preserve basic natural systems supporting life on Earth.
2. Reorientation in the decision-making process: instead of seeking quick and narrow benefits, it should always be based on the common good and a secure future, which requires
 - a. from authorities at all levels: taking into account external costs and cutting anti-climate subsidies (in particular fossil fuel subsidies);
 - b. from businesses: taking into account in the management processes the ecological (including climatic) and social responsibility for the course and effects of the conducted activity, including the departure from the sale of products and services that destroy the environment, and from focusing on the maximisation of sales to ensure optimum quality and durability;
 - c. from all of us: responsible, moderate consumption, choosing local, reducing waste.

These reorientations should lead to:

1. The adoption by the Polish Parliament of the Act on Counteracting the Climate Crisis with specific reduction targets set in five-year intervals, leading to climate neutrality as soon as possible, preferably by 2040.
2. The adoption and implementation by the government, in agreement across the political divide, of a programme to phase out coal in power and heating by 2030 and to phase out other fossil fuels, including in transport, as soon as possible, in line with the objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2040.
3. Recognising the improvement of energy efficiency and development of renewable energy, energy storage and green hydrogen use as key elements of building an innovative economic strategy for Poland, leading also to:
 - a. applying for newly constructed buildings, starting from 2025, standards than are not lower than the ones for passive houses, striving towards "plus energy" buildings with own energy storage facilities and towards the integration of RES installations with the building (roof, walls, windows);
 - b. the integration of programmes for thermal upgrading, the introduction of RES microinstallations, energy efficiency improvements and the fight against energy poverty into one coherent support mechanism that will be strengthened significantly;
 - c. upgrading electricity grids towards efficient management of distributed generation;
 - d. developing a system for recycling the elements of existing RES installations and batteries, and ultimately locating value chains in Poland and developing the production of RES and battery equipment in such a way as to comply with the principles of circular economy.
4. Promoting, through a variety of tools (including regulatory and fiscal ones), changes in social behaviour and, above all, seeking to:
 - a. reduce demand for new products by extending the lifespan of existing items and equipment, including sustainable design and increasing the availability of repair services;
 - b. promote equipment sharing: moving away from owning to renting, lending and swapping (e.g. public laundries, city bikes, cars, gardening equipment);
 - c. change the diet by moving away from eating animal products and shifting to a nutritious diet rich in plants and vegetable proteins, using local and low-processed products and reducing food waste;
 - d. reduce transport needs, especially shift away from cars to public transport, bicycles and other personal transport facilities, e.g. by changing the approach to spatial planning and work organisation, ensuring that pedestrian traffic is given priority, promoting public transport (for instance by means of informing that it can be used safely during the coronavirus pandemic and explaining how to do it), supporting the development of infrastructure: cycle paths, bicycle parking lots, interchanges;
 - e. reduce the number of flights taken or even give up flying, and choose trains if the travel is necessary.
5. Developing zero-carbon, energy-efficient cities, with the predominance of non-motorised and public transport, compact but saturated with green areas (with room for wildlife) and resistant to climate risks (adaptation).

6. Introducing restrictions on passenger car traffic in city centres.
7. Banning the import of the oldest and most polluting second-hand vehicles.
8. Developing infrastructure to electrify passenger and freight transport, both within and outside cities; electrifying public transport, including the support for the replacement and modernisation of the vehicle fleet.
9. Involving citizens, local governments and small and medium-sized businesses in building energy security (for instance by socialising the energy production and supporting prosumers and energy communities) and "energy democracy" (i.e. combining the technological energy transition with the strengthening of democracy and social participation in decision-making processes).
10. Initiating and supporting climate efforts in companies: from small businesses to large corporations.
11. Using biologically active land (agricultural and woodland areas) to increase carbon sequestration, ensuring protection of ecosystem services and biodiversity.
12. Phasing out intensive livestock production and gradually moving away from large farms to small and medium-sized ones, and defining the environmental functions for which they would be rewarded (such as high level of animal welfare, reduced use of antibiotics in livestock farming, improved soil quality, protection of pollinating insects, water protection, protection of biodiversity, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions).
13. Contributing at least 50% of the EU's 2021-2027 funding, as well as environmental funds and all revenues from emissions trading, to the development of a pro-climate economy.

Costs of non-intervention

According to the Stern Review³ prepared for the UK Government, which has become a blueprint for numerous successive reports of this kind, failure to take climate action entails:

- very high economic and social costs, estimated at 5 to 20% of global GDP, which would place a disproportionate burden on the poorest with the least capacity to adapt, exacerbating the social impact of climate change. Without immediate action, climate change could reduce world output by £6,000 billion a year by 2050, which is equivalent to the total production value in the entire European Union;
- rising external health costs: the losses deriving from the effects of climate change in Poland in 2001-2010 amounted to at least PLN 54 billion. If no action is taken, in the period 2021-2030 the losses may reach over PLN 120 billion;
- the risk of serious economic and social disruption on a scale similar to the consequences of the world wars and the great crisis of the first half of the 20th century;
- serious impact on global production, human health, living standards and the environment. This will be true for all countries. The most vulnerable: the poorest countries and the most deprived sections of the population, will suffer first and foremost, though they have contributed the least

³ The Economics of Climate Change. The Stern Review, Nicholas Stern, Cabinet Office - HM Treasury, 2006, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407172811/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm

to climate change. If we do not stop global warming, one third of humanity (i.e. 2.7 billion people today and 3.2 billion in 2050) will experience throughout this century extremely high average annual temperatures that can now only be seen in the Sahara⁴;

- economic losses resulting from hurricanes, storms, floods, droughts, crop failures, spread of pests and epidemics;
- a significant impact on the lives of people around the world: on access to water, food production, health and the environment. As temperatures rise, hundreds of millions of people face the threat of hunger, heat waves, water scarcity, coastal flooding, and the spread of infectious diseases and pathogens. Hundreds of millions of people will be migrating. The cost of extreme weather conditions, including floods, droughts and storms, is already going up, also in wealthy countries.

According to the World Bank, without urgent action the effects of climate change could push an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030. A rise in the global average temperature of 2-3°C could increase the number of people at risk of malaria by up to 5%, which is over 150 million more people affected. Diarrhoea will also become a more serious problem as water scarcity deepens and water quality deteriorates. As a result, by 2030, we can expect around 48,000 additional deaths among children under 15. Meanwhile, the move towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy will not only reduce risks to human health and life but could also create over 65 million new jobs net over the same period⁵.

Many experts, politicians and journalists suggest that the cost of Poland's energy transformation will be very high. According to the draft Poland's Energy Policy until 2040, it can even reach PLN 600 billion, which was 28% of Poland's annual GDP in 2019. When assessing the social cost of the damage caused by CO₂ emissions, we can rely on an analysis carried out at Stanford University, which estimates that it is about USD 220 per tonne. Assuming that in recent years in Poland the average emission of greenhouse gases has fluctuated around 415 million tonnes of CO₂eq per year, the country contributes to the damage of PLN 360 billion per year worldwide. If this level is maintained or even reduced slowly, each year Poland will contribute to losses worth of hundreds of billions of zlotys per year.

It should be remembered that in Poland the state and citizens have been paying around PLN 5 billion a year for the coal-fired power generation, i.e. twice as much as for renewable energy. In addition, Poles have been paying one and a half billion PLN a year for hard coal mining⁶.

The negative impact of climate change is, and will continue to be, a very serious threat to Poland, as stated in the Poland's Environmental Policy until 2030⁷. The costs of this threat already exceed, and will continue to exceed in the future, the costs of the energy and climate transition. In particular, we will be exposed to:

- more frequent temperature extremes;

⁴ *Future of the human climate niche*. Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the USA first published May 4, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1910114117>

⁵ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climatechange/overview>,
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/11/08/rapid-climate-informed-development-needed-to-keep-climate-change-from-pushing-more-than-100-million-people-into-poverty-by-2030>

⁶ M. Stoczkiewicz, A. Śniegocki (ed.), *Subsydia: Motor czy hamulec polskiej transformacji energetycznej? Analiza pomocy publicznej dla elektroenergetyki w Polsce*, ClientEarth 2019

⁷ Poland's Environmental Policy - 2030. Council of Ministers. 16th July 2019. Council of Ministers.

- higher precipitation intensity that can cause floods at any time of the year;
- an increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricane winds.

Climate change, including increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, will have a significant impact on vulnerable areas and the whole economy of the country. Consequently, with reference to the above-mentioned document, it is necessary to prepare in particular for:

- increased incidence of droughts and associated losses of agricultural production and higher risk of forest fires;
- the extension of the growing season caused by an increase in average temperature, which aggravates the risk of crop pests, changes in the range of areas on which they occur, animal diseases and a decrease in animal productivity, which can significantly affect the efficiency of agricultural production and, on a larger scale, the country's level of food security; it can also result in the impact of frosts on the flowering time or even fruit-formation, causing losses in crop production and horticulture;
- a decrease in the level of groundwater, which will have a negative impact on biodiversity and water resources, in particular water bodies and wetlands;
- biodiversity loss as well as changes in the occurrence of species, including alien and invasive species;
- unfavourable changes in hydrological conditions: though the annual amounts of precipitation will not change significantly, they are becoming increasingly less even. This will mean there will be areas with low precipitation and intense water scarcity during the vegetation season in the northern part of the country and areas of very strong steppe-formation in the north-western part of the country;
- the reduction of snow cover period and thickness as well as increased evaporation, which will affect water scarcity and is an important example of the negative impact of climate change on agriculture;
- a change in the range of occurrence of plants and animals, which may adversely affect the condition of stands and crops, as well as the migration of species, including alien and invasive ones, mainly from Southern Europe, North Africa and Asia, with the simultaneous withdrawal of the species which are not adapted to high temperatures and drought in summer but which grow well in frosty conditions;
- serious flood hazards as well as an increase in heavy rainfall, particularly in agglomerations and large cities;
- increased risk as a result of stronger winds (whirlwinds and lightning), especially in agriculture, construction and energy and transport infrastructure, negatively affecting such forms of socio-economic activity as tourism, wood industry, forest management;
- an increase in the eutrophication of inland, transitional and coastal waters;
- increased risk to human life and health as a result of: extreme weather events, thermal stress related to heat waves (it has already caused an increase in mortality by 14% in Warsaw⁸), air pollution, occurrence of infectious diseases, vector species and parasites that have not occurred

⁸ Rabczenko D., Seroka W., Wojtyniak B. "Analiza związku umiERALNOŚCI mieszkańców Warszawy z poziomem maksymalnej temperatury dziennej w latach 2008-2013." A study prepared for the Institute of Sustainable Development Foundation under the ADATCITY project.

in the given areas before; the increase in risk also concerns mental health: problems in this area may result from trauma and prolonged feeling of threat;

- increased demand for electricity in the summer, reduced cooling capacity of power plants, which may result, among other things, in a decrease in their production capacity and overload of the power grid;
- lack of adaptation to changing conditions of technical standards of construction works, including buildings, drainage systems, etc. (high cost of adaptation, necessary changes in design standards and rules);
- an increase in the intensity and frequency of storms and increase in wave height in the Baltic Sea, which will result in increased coastal erosion and increased salinity of groundwater in lower-lying areas;
- mountain areas will face the greatest threat posed by climatic factors, e.g. threat of extinction of 60% of species.

Climate Coalition is a partnership of 26 NGOs, including: Fundacja Aeris Futuro, Fundacja Compassion in World Farming Polska, Fundacja ClientEarth Prawnicy dla Ziemi, Fundacja Otwarty Plan, Fundacja Efektywnego Wykorzystania Energii, Fundacja Ekologiczna Arka, Fundacja Ekologiczna Ziemi Legnickiej Zielona Akcja, Fundacja EkoRozwoju FER, Fundacja GAP Polska, Fundacja Greenpeace Polska, Fundacja Na Rzecz Zrównoważonego Rozwoju, Instytut na rzecz Ekorozwoju, Klub Gaja, Liga Ochrony Przyrody, Dolnośląski Klub Ekologiczny, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Koło Tychy, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okręg Mazowiecki, Polski Klub Ekologiczny Okręg Pomorski, Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot, Stowarzyszenie BoMiasto, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne Eko-Unia, Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Wspólna Ziemia", Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny, WWF Polska, Zielone Mazowsze, Związek Stowarzyszeń Polska Zielona Sieć.

More information: <http://koalicjaklimatyczna.org>

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