

STUDY

Requested by the AFET committee



# EU climate change diplomacy in a post-Covid-19 world



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PE 653.643 - July 2021



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STUDY

# EU climate change diplomacy in a post-Covid-19 world

## ABSTRACT

Since the European Parliament issued its resolution on climate diplomacy in June 2018, several important trends have been shaping this area of the EU's external action, enabling progress and posing new challenges. The EU started its comprehensive low-emission transformation with the Green Deal, established a progressive policy framework for sustainable finance and had to cope with the impacts of the pandemic in a way that is compatible with its transformative ambition. At the same time, its role on the international stage has evolved substantially, and sustainability has been playing an ever-stronger role across its external relations. Against the backdrop of these developments, this study assesses the progress of climate diplomacy since 2018, with a focus on climate security, trade, development cooperation, sustainable capital flows, gender equality and science, research and innovation. Based on this assessment, it outlines the tasks for a European climate diplomacy of the future and highlights the role of the European Parliament in shaping this policy field.

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This study was originally requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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## **VERSION**

English-language manuscript completed on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AFET	European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs
AGIR	Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative / Alliance globale pour l'Initiative Résilience
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAN	Climate Action Network
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States / Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COP	Conference of the Parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
DG	Directorate-General
EC	European Commission
ECIU	Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit
EEAS	European Union External Action Service
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
ENVI	European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EP	European Parliament
EPF	European Peace Facility
EPRS	European Parliamentary Research Service
EU	European Union
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia / Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

FTAs	Free Trade Agreements
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCCA	Global Climate Change Alliance
GHG	Greenhouse gases
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MS	Member States
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
TSD (chapters)	Trade and Sustainable Development (chapters)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNU-INRA	United Nations University-Institute for Natural Resources in Africa
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organisation



# 1 Objectives, methodology and structure of the study

The European Union (EU) is currently at a critical juncture. Not only is it implementing its comprehensive Green Deal transformation agenda and shaping its role in a complex geopolitical landscape, but it also faces a challenging path of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The role of climate diplomacy has therefore grown significantly since the European Parliament (EP) issued a comprehensive resolution on the topic in June 2018 (EP 2018; henceforth: the 2018 EP resolution). Against the background of the abovementioned developments, this report assesses the progress in EU climate diplomacy and outlines future tasks in this field.

Specifically, the analytical objectives of the study are to

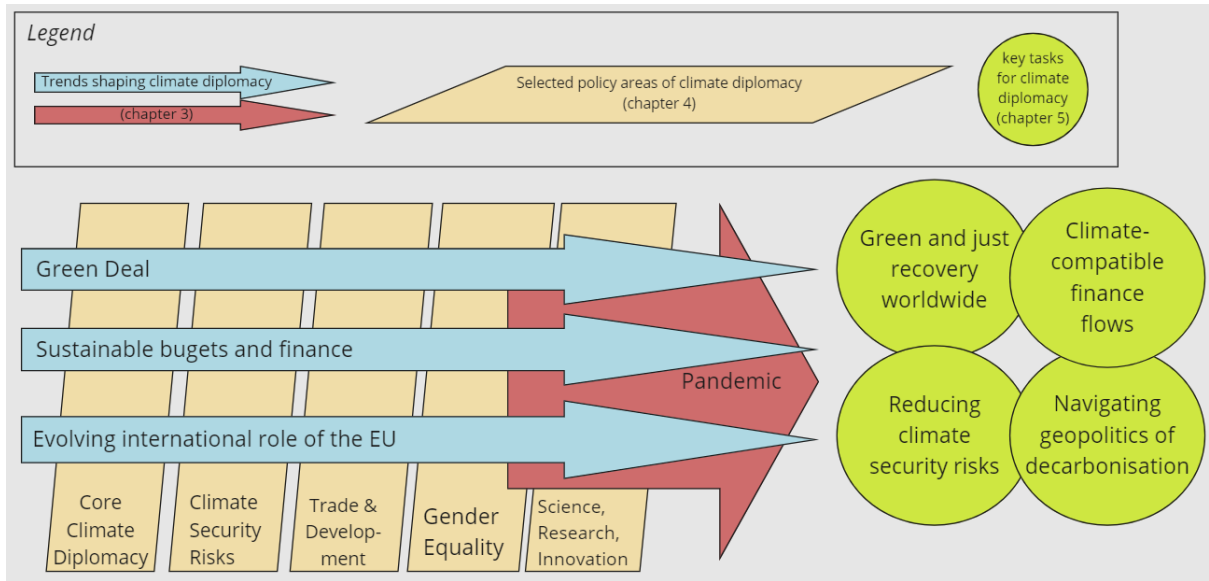
- assess the progress of mainstreaming climate diplomacy throughout the external action of the EU institutions since June 2018, especially in the areas of trade, development cooperation, science, research and innovation, and gender equality;
- assess progress in aligning capital flows with sustainability imperatives, including providing international climate finance;
- analyse the implications of the NextGenerationEU and the new multiannual financial framework (MFF), with their respective goals for climate-earmarked finance, for external policies of the EU and Member States (MS);
- map the impacts of the pandemic on climate diplomacy.

Based on this analysis, the study outlines the tasks and recommendations for future orientation of EU climate diplomacy in general, highlighting the entry points for the EP in particular.

The report is based on document analysis. The reviewed documents include official documents by EU institutions, especially those of the EP and its services as well as by the Commission and the Council, academic literature, reports by think tanks and international organisations.

The study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 offers a brief background on climate diplomacy in the EU and gives an overview of the EP requests in its 2018 resolution. Chapter 3 describes central trends that set the framework for and shape climate diplomacy: the European Green Deal, the evolving role of the EU on the international stage, the policies to promote sustainable budgets and finance and the Covid-19 pandemic. Chapter 4 assesses how several policy areas of high relevance to climate diplomacy have developed since 2018, also in light of the trends described in chapter 3: the core climate diplomacy, tackling climate security risks, trade policies and development cooperation, science, research and innovation and gender equality. Finally, chapter 5 identifies key task areas for climate diplomacy and outlines recommendations for the EP to support the EU's fulfilment of these tasks (chapter 5). Figure 1 below visualises the connections between these different topics.

Figure 1: The structure of the study



## 2 EU Climate Diplomacy and the position of the European Parliament

### 2.1 Background on EU climate diplomacy

The EU was among the first international actors to understand the relevance of climate change as a foreign affairs topic and to develop the concept of climate diplomacy in a way that goes beyond the international negotiations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Council and the Commission have been continuously updating their strategic documents on the issue since 2011<sup>1</sup>. Climate change also appeared prominently in cross-cutting external affairs documents such as the EU Global Strategy 2016 (EU 2016) and the EU's resilience framework (EC and HR/VP 2017). The connection of climate diplomacy to internal efforts of the EU to fight climate change and build resilience has also been a recurring element in strategic thinking on the matter (e.g. EU 2016).

Initially, the climate diplomacy concept included three 'strands': supporting UNFCCC negotiations, promoting low-emission and resilient transformations in third countries, and analysing and reducing climate fragility risks in order to foster peace and international security (EEAS and EC 2011).

Cross-sectoral approaches, a breadth of topics and perspectives on climate change, as well as a broad diplomatic toolbox and working through all available forums and channels have been key characteristics of early EU climate diplomacy. EU climate diplomacy has increasingly recognised the importance of mainstreaming climate topics throughout external relations and international forums. This has included connecting it with energy diplomacy.

The EU's climate diplomacy has used a country-specific approach with a strong outreach component (EEAS 2013). Climate change and a low-emission transformation touch upon all policy areas. Different countries may have particularly strong interests or concern about different aspects, depending on their political priorities and challenges. In the run-up to the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the UNFCCC in 2015, the EU developed narratives that highlighted different dimensions of climate action (such as climate change mitigation, adaptation, and climate finance among other things) to find common ground with its partners and support the efforts for a global agreement on climate change.

The 2015 climate diplomacy action plan was an important step towards more coordinated and stronger external action on climate, with a strong outreach component. EU actors have also recognised the role of non-state counterparts, promoting networks, track two and public diplomacy as essential parts of raising climate ambition<sup>2</sup>. One of the action plan elements was the EU climate diplomacy week, when EU Delegations and EU MS Embassies worldwide team up to promote climate topics through public events (EEAS 2015), which has proven to be a successful format in subsequent years.

The operationalisation of the three strands – support to UNFCCC, to low-emission and resilient transformations in partner countries, and climate security risks – throughout foreign, defence and external economic policy, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, as well as in all regional and bilateral relations has been an ongoing task. It is challenging to quantify and assess the progress of

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Council Conclusions on Climate (and Energy) Diplomacy throughout the years ([2011](#), [2013](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#)), EEAS and EC reflection papers (2011, [2015](#)).

<sup>2</sup> See Council Conclusions on Climate (and Energy) Diplomacy throughout the years ([2011](#), [2013](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#)), EEAS and EC reflection papers (2011, [2015](#)).

climate-compatible action in these areas to date. While different policy fields prioritise climate change, the work is not always sufficiently coordinated (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021). Furthermore, discrepancies between ambitions of MS in their domestic climate policies and in aligning their foreign affairs with climate imperatives have presented a challenge over the years. The EP resolution of 2018 touched upon these topics.

## 2.2 The 2018 EP resolution on climate diplomacy

The 2018 resolution<sup>3</sup> offers an EP vision of the tasks of and entry points for improving EU climate diplomacy, while contextualising it in the global role of the EU as a power promoting sustainability and stability. It does this by outlining several requests for structural improvements, important actors and topics to engage with, and providing remarks on the role of the EP itself.

The 2018 EP resolution makes several structural requests. It highlights the central importance of climate diplomacy and calls for a more comprehensive, strategic effort, for which increased capacities and a more coordinated effort among the EU institutions is necessary. The document requests the mainstreaming of climate across policy areas, including conflict prevention, 'trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid', finance, and sectoral policies such as energy and agriculture.

The resolution emphasises the key role of aligning finance with climate goals, and advocates the earmarking of 'at least 30 % for climate-related spending' in the MFF. The document highlights that the financial system needs to support sustainability and climate goals, while avoiding asset stranding and climate-related risks. The EP suggests that the political process to foster sustainable finance in the EU, while establishing clear criteria for sustainability, can be 'a role model for other countries' (see chapter 3.3 on sustainable finance).

It also prioritises strategic alliances and partners for 'strategic cooperation at state- and non-state level through zero-carbon development dialogues and partnerships with emerging economies and other countries which have a major impact on global warming, but which are also decisive in terms of global climate action'. This also includes non-state actors such as civil society and cities as important counterparts. The suggested topics for such strategic cooperation are '2050 pathways, sustainable finance reform, clean transport, carbon markets and other carbon pricing instruments'.

Several topics stand out in the resolution under the broader umbrella of climate diplomacy: the nexus of climate and migration (also in connection with poverty and conflict), ecosystems and natural resources, gender, human rights, innovation and urbanisation. The implementation of the Paris Agreement and of Agenda 2030 is the broader framing of the resolution.

The resolution calls for 'Parliament's greater involvement and an annual process, initiated by the Commission and the EEAS and carried out in cooperation with the MS, to identify key priorities for EU climate diplomacy in the year in question and to come forward with concrete recommendations for addressing capacity gaps'.

To summarise, three years since the 2018 EP resolution on climate diplomacy, the EU has made several big leaps towards decarbonisation and sustainability. With the European Green Deal, climate diplomacy has become a way of realising the external dimension of a central EU strategy that is going to change the Union's position in the world and that needs international partnership to succeed. Therefore, the cross-cutting nature of its tasks and tools is increasing exponentially. These developments relate directly to the topics raised by the EP and has enabled progress along the

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<sup>3</sup> All information in this section is based on European Parliament 2018.

several dimensions mentioned above. In fact, some have come to be at the centre of the EU policy agenda, e.g. sustainable finance and climate earmarking in the MFF. This progress is the subject of the next section.

## 3 Central trends shaping EU climate diplomacy

As stated above, since June 2018 several key developments have emerged to shape the tasks and instruments of EU climate diplomacy. The establishment of the Green Deal is surely the single most important step for climate diplomacy since the 2018 EP resolution, that no assessment of progress can ignore. Furthermore, the EU took important steps to advance sustainability topics in its funding and financial structures, creating new opportunities for implementing objectives of climate diplomacy: it established a high climate compatibility goal in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and framework criteria for sustainable finance in the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities. The EU has also evolved as an international actor, so climate diplomacy is accommodated within a renewed and more complex network of partnerships. Finally, an unforeseeable development, the pandemic, left its deep mark on international relations and domestic imperatives, and cannot be bypassed in any discussion of transformational policies. This chapter describes these major trends and outlines why these are of central importance for climate diplomacy.

### 3.1 The European Green Deal and its external dimension

In December 2019, the European Commission published the European Green Deal that is to be implemented through the European Climate Law, on which the EU reached political agreement in April 2021. The Green Deal has far-reaching implications for external action. This section outlines these implications based on the text of the Green Deal document, the view of the Council on how climate diplomacy can contribute to the Green Deal, and the external aspects of it that the EP has highlighted.

The Green Deal is a comprehensive long-term transformation programme to enable the EU to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (EC 2019d). It lays out visions of sustainability and decarbonisation for all sectors, including energy, industry, agriculture and food, ecosystems protection, buildings and transport. Having been established shortly before the pandemic hit, it also provides a framework for recovery efforts (see chapter 3.4.).

The Green Deal is connected to the EU's global leadership ambitions and outlines several implications for the relationships with its partners. A European low-carbon transformation will require stable supply chains, is likely to shift geopolitical dynamics, and may partly also lead to new international tensions around contested issues. One example is a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) that the EU envisioned to avoid its own ambitious decarbonisation unintentionally driving emissions elsewhere (see chapter 4.3.5 on CBAM). Importantly, the rationale of the Green Deal is fighting climate change and this requires international action: 'As the EU's share of the global emissions is falling, comparable action [...] by other regions will be critical for addressing the global climate challenge in a meaningful way' (EC 2019d: 20). Therefore, EU climate diplomacy has a key role to play in supporting low-emission transformations across the world, 'globalising' the Green Deal and reducing international barriers to European efforts.

The latest Council Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy (Council 2021b) 'Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal' is one of the major strategic steps to bring the external action of the Union under the flag of the European Green Deal. It relies on over a decade of experience and development of climate diplomacy, as outlined in section 2.1. At the same time, the Council Conclusions pick up many of the points and requirements of the 2018 EP resolution. This is not surprising, as both the resolution and the Green Deal require increased integration of climate objectives in external relations.

Supporting the understanding of the international implications of the Green Deal, the Council underlined the cross-cutting nature of climate and energy diplomacy in 2021 in order to be able to translate its imperatives into external action. It also commits to making ‘appropriate capacity available’ and to ‘regular stocktaking and reporting’ (Council 2021b: 14), which were also structural requirements for stronger climate diplomacy in the EP’s 2018 resolution.

Partnerships and alliances with states and institutions, as well as acting on different forums, are seen as key. The Conclusions name all partner regions as important and welcome an increased focus on climate in the respective strategies of the EU. The document also highlights the new dynamics of the partnership with the US, and has an extensive paragraph on Africa that names specific initiatives.

The central role of finance (discussed in chapters 3.3., 3.4, and 4.3.5), is also reflected in the Conclusions. These mention the mobilisation of internationally committed climate finance, including through the Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities and using the Team Europe approach to providing aid that emerged in the pandemic response (see chapters 3.3. and 4.3. on finance and 3.4. on the pandemic impacts).

For the Council, aligning trade with climate goals plays an important role, as in the EP’s 2018 resolution and in the Green Deal itself. The Green Deal ambition to consider the objectives of the Paris Agreement in all trade agreements is reiterated (more information on climate change related provisions in trade agreements is provided in chapter 4.3.2). Recognising carbon markets as an important climate policy tool, the Conclusions highlight the role of CBAM that is compatible with the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The general principles of trade should be ‘level playing field and fair access to resources and green technologies’ (Council 2021b). Industrial alliances are an important element in achieving this.

The EP also expressed its vision of the Green Deal, issuing a resolution in January 2020. In this it highlighted several points with regard to the EU’s role as a global leader. It underlined the EU’s power as a market to set sustainability standards ‘across global value chains’ and through its trade relations; and the importance of policy integration and coherence, while speaking with one voice, advising a ‘green screening’ for all external action. Furthermore, it highlighted the role of climate funding and technical assistance for developing countries, and stressed the potential of the Comprehensive Strategy for Africa and the future partnership agreement of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the EU (EP 2020e).

The cited documents post-Green Deal and in the 2018 EP resolution have a number of similarities, including: climate topics are seen as permeating all areas of the EU’s action and the necessity of appropriate capacities is recognised; the significance of trade and development policies is highlighted; and the EU’s many partnerships are seen as key, with their different focusses and dynamics.

## 3.2 EU’s evolving role on the international stage

The previous section departed from a climate perspective, focussing on how the Green Deal, the EU’s key sustainability agenda for a primarily domestic transformation, influences climate diplomacy. This section aims to describe how the EU’s evolving role as an international actor has affected its climate diplomacy.

Upon taking up her position in 2019, the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared that this was going to be a ‘geopolitical commission’ (von der Leyen 2019). This arguably indicates that the EU seeks to protect its own interests in a complex geopolitical landscape and to respond to

international challenges that it cannot ignore, such as its difficult position between the interests of China and the US – both partners with clear geopolitical ambitions but also a mixed climate policy performance, given their leading ranks in global greenhouse gas emissions.

There are different views on the Commission's and the EU's ability to become a geopolitical actor<sup>4</sup>, especially as the term 'geopolitics' is open to wide interpretation (Subotic 2019). However, it is indisputable that EU MS are facing a challenging geopolitical landscape, along with a number of international issues that can only be solved multilaterally. In this situation, acting at the EU level is often the most promising course of action for the EU MS, given the joint market power and political weight, as well as the capacities, for example in development cooperation or diplomatic networks. With regard to climate diplomacy, the EU negotiates at the UNFCCC level, has substantial international cooperation budgets and defines joint international trade policies.

Since 2018, the context of the EU's relations with key partner countries and regions has changed, and this is reflected in various Commission strategic documents, many of which were due for an update around 2020. The 2019 Green Deal was also timely from this point of view: decarbonisation topics are prominent in the new iteration of regional strategies. The Green Deal influences the EU's relations with different parts of the world: Africa, G20, Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Southern Neighbourhood, Latin America and the Caribbean, ACP (EC 2019b).

Importantly, since 2018 the EU has completed negotiations with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) on the successor to the Cotonou Agreement, the overall framework for development cooperation and trade with ACP countries up to 2020. These two areas have moved away from the cooperation framework, as the transition from European Development Fund to NDICI and trade has been structured by a different Economic Partnerships Agreement. The new partnership is more regionalised and marked the EU strategic push to 'work with its partners to find a stronger match between their interest and its own', also reflecting the evolving understanding of the bloc's international role, including its aspiration to become a green and digital leader, as increasingly reflected in regional strategies (Medinilla 2021).

This cycle of renewing many of its regional and bilateral positions was not only influenced by overarching EU frameworks with an external dimension such as the Green Deal and the MFF, but was also substantially impacted by a 'black-swan' event – the Covid-19 pandemic. The recovery needs, merged with the green thrust of cooperation and financial flows, have firmly entered the strategic thinking and programming with regard to its external relations.

In the following, selected partnerships and their links to climate diplomacy is discussed by means of example.

### **Africa-EU relationship**

Africa and the EU cooperate intensively on many policy areas through many instruments, ranging from peace and security to humanitarian issues, to trade and finance, to education and science. Analysis of this reveals many of the trends of the EU's strategic thinking. The relationship framework underlines equal footing and jointly seeking common interests. Green transformation, with trade as one of its key vehicles, is a prominent topic in the Africa strategy (EC and HR/VP 2020). The EP reacted to this in an extensive report, advocating at length for an 'AU-EU green pact' (EP 2021a), but also

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<sup>4</sup> Some observers have questioned the Union's aptitude as a geopolitical power (Koenig 2019). Among the arguments for this are: the EU faces difficulties in building up joint defence and military efforts; the EU is rarely united on positions towards third countries or certain pressing international policy issues; and the EU is more renowned for steady rule-making and brokering rather than power gestures on the whole. Therefore, the EU could be overstretching its capacities and thus possibly even harming its key tasks and competences (Blockmans 2020, Koenig and Redeker 2020, Simon 2020).



some of the challenges are mentioned in ‘squaring’ different goals in one coherent approach which resonates with the partners’ perspective on the other side. For example, many African stakeholders feel that the partnership lacks equal footing, does not respond to key needs, and requires structural reform, while issues such as debt relief or technology-sharing remain complicated (Tadesse Abebe and Maalim 2020, UNU-INRA 2021, Hackenesch et al. 2021). This may point to the need for a more comprehensive and detailed dialogue on what are the barriers to translating high-level commitment to mutually-satisfactory effective action.

### **Sino-European relations**

One of the prominent examples of a new geopolitical spin on the EU’s strategies was the Commission’s communication on Sino-European relations in 2019. Its phrasing that China will be ‘a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance’ (EC and HR/VP 2019) has been taken up and repeatedly cited by the media and analysts (e.g. DW 2019, Nedelcu 2019, Peel 2019, von der Burchard 2019).

Indeed, China’s quest for international influence has been increasingly seen as contradicting core European interests and some of its domestic policies, and thus European values. This cannot be ignored in bilateral economic relations. One of the areas of concern is the possibility that China might be using its investments in the EU, its neighbourhood and in its partner regions, such as Africa, to gain political influence, which in the case of EU MS could lead to increased internal divergence (e.g. China+16 format) (Kohlenberg and Godehardt 2018, Krumbein 2019, Hellendorf and Rühlig 2020, Szczudlik 2019).

At the same time, China is a key player for global decarbonisation, both because it is the world’s biggest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter and because its outward infrastructure investments have the potential to affect emission strategies of many countries around the world (Ivleva 2021). A study shows that the emission strategies of the partner countries of the Belt and Road Initiative will decide the fate of the Paris Agreement, adding up to over two thirds of global emissions in 2050 in a business-as-usual case, and exceeding available GHG budgets by far (Ma et al. 2019). Therefore, whether the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) supports this case or can be leveraged for green infrastructure is an important question for climate diplomacy. Furthermore, China is a key player in multilateral development finance (through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, among others) and in green finance, having promoted the latter on the G20 agenda since 2016. Therefore, whether these finance flows globally are actually green, will depend on China.

Taken together, the concern about China’s ambition to shape the international order in accordance with its values and vision (in the multilateral context such as the WTO, multilateral finance or G20, in regional and bilateral contexts and through a broad spectrum of political, economic and discursive means) and the concern about the global commons (specifically, a safe climate) make intensified and greener strategies for partner regions a logical conclusion for the EU. For example, as a counterpart to the BRI, the EU also has a Eurasian connectivity strategy, but with a sustainable orientation<sup>5</sup> (EC and HR/VP 2018). For the Western Balkans, where China’s growing influence was a

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<sup>5</sup> The Communication defines sustainable connectivity as follows: ‘To drive productivity and create growth and jobs, connectivity investments need to ensure market efficiency and be fiscally viable. To respond to the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, it has to promote decarbonisation of the economy and respect high standards, based on environmental impact assessments. To further social progress, it needs to adhere to high standards of transparency and good governance and give a voice to the people affected by the projects, based on appropriate public consultations. Connectivity policies should reduce negative externalities, such as environmental impact, congestion, noise, pollution and accidents. In short, connectivity has to be economically, fiscally, environmentally and socially sustainable in the long term’ (EC and HR/VP 2018: 2).

concern for the EU and for civil society, who denounced that the money is going towards 'brown' infrastructure, the EU has presented a new strategy with investment to support green infrastructure, also as a key means for economic recovery in wake of the pandemic. The prominent role of climate in the Africa strategy is noticeable, and the necessity of strengthening the (historical) ties of the neighbouring continents in the face of China's activities in Africa is often highlighted (e.g. EP 2021a).

Here again, while the strategic impulse is important, one cannot expect it to be translated directly into transformation on the ground. Path dependencies of high-carbon economies and societies make it difficult for targeted green programmes and investments not to cause contradictions with other endeavours. The transformational impact of cooperation is of course not entirely dependent on the quality of the EU's efforts but also on the context and the political will in its partner countries, which should be fostered by high-level diplomatic engagement.

### **Transatlantic relationship**

While the US position on climate in the 2018 EP resolution is perceived as one of the challenges, the current US administration clearly offers significant opportunities for transatlantic cooperation on green transitions and climate security, while attempting a much faster transition at home. Already in December 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative presented a proposal for a new, forward-looking transatlantic agenda. The victory of (then) President-elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris was perceived as 'a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design a new transatlantic agenda for global cooperation based on our common values, interests and global influence' (EC 2020b). In addition, the Council Conclusions applaud US renewed intentions to act on climate as the EU 'looks forward to revitalising the EU-US Energy Council' (Council 2021b). While the EU was hard-pressed to find a strategy between the US and China during the Trump administration, in March 2021 Tony Blinken interestingly mirrored the EU's discourse by saying that 'relations with China are multifaceted, comprising elements of cooperation, competition, and systemic rivalry' (EEAS 2021b). While joint action to ratchet up international climate ambition, and on research for key technologies, are promising cooperation fields, contested issues such as CBAM also remain on the agenda (Lo 2019).

### **Implications of Brexit**

The United Kingdom (UK) has been a key actor both on climate policy - with its early ambitious action e.g. on a carbon levy or commitment to long-term climate neutrality - and for the EU's climate diplomacy, providing much diplomatic knowledge and capacity in the UNFCCC framework, supporting climate-related development cooperation and pushing the climate security agenda. Restructuring of the EU's own climate goals (to which the UK would have contributed through national mitigation actions), as well as relevant funding and personnel capacities, has already happened or is underway. It is probably still too early to assess the impacts of the Brexit for EU's overall climate diplomacy, but possible gaps will need to be filled by the EU institutions (Bocse 2019, ECIU 2020).

### **Geopolitics in recent key climate diplomacy documents**

The Green Deal and the Council Conclusions 2021 both highlight the geopolitical dimension of green transitions (EC 2019d, Council 2021b), although over the years this aspect has not been quite as prominent in the Council's thinking on climate diplomacy compared with increased climate security risks, for example.

An idea that appears several times in the Conclusions is that the EU should 'safeguard its values and interests'. The document clearly sets out both goals – working for a joint cause of a global transition while also ensuring resilience and competitiveness within the EU. The resilience element includes

resilience of critical infrastructure, industrial systems and supply chains as well as ‘open, transparent, well-regulated, liquid, and rule-based global markets’ for energy. It is unsurprising that it encompasses energy diplomacy, which touches upon vital interests of states and economies; but there are also concerns with possible geopolitical consequences of green transitions outside the EU, especially as many fossil fuel producers are in its ‘broader neighbourhood’. To mitigate these risks, the EU should support just transformations and diversification of these economies, building on its experience with supporting the regions and actors who are facing especially high costs of transition, notably through the Just Transition Mechanism and Initiative for coal regions in transition<sup>6</sup> (Council 2021b).

### 3.3 Sustainable budgets and finance

Since 2018 the question of how to enable sustainable finance as part of the EU budget discussions has been very dynamic, and offers new entry points for forward-looking climate diplomacy. A main element in this regard is the establishment of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the years 2021 until 2027, with a pronounced focus on triggering a low-emission transformation in the EU and beyond its borders. The EP has been active in asking for the greening of the budget, and underlined the importance of a ‘credible European Recovery and Transformation Fund’ and climate neutrality for the MFF (EP 2020a). It has also been supporting climate mainstreaming and tracking in the Union’s budget (Nesbit at al. 2020). As a result, the share of climate-related spending in the MFF was set at 30 %<sup>7</sup>.

The MFF affects the EU’s external action, specifically through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) (EC 2020a). The European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) has underlined the importance of all geographic and thematic programmes under the NDICI, the alignment with the Green Deal imperatives, and work to support human rights (EP 2020b).

The instrument is widely considered to be an important transformative lever for EU development cooperation, with its overall budget of EUR 79.5 billion over the period 2021-2027 (Gavas and Pleeck 2021). The instrument is also an approach to streamlining and consolidating EU development spending by redesigning 7 previously existing EU external financing instruments into one<sup>8</sup>. In addition, a new investment framework for external action has been established by designing one fund with the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), comprising a global blending facility and one guarantee mechanism (External Action Guarantee) and thereby moving away from numerous financial tools. The EFSD+ may guarantee operations up to EUR 53.4 billion, i.e. nearly 70 % of the overall instrument. When assessing the overall level of the EU’s development finance, it is important to note that there is a slight increase compared to the past period, when the UK as a main player was still contributing to the budget.

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<sup>6</sup> The Just Transition Mechanism is an instrument of support directed to sectors and regions that face especially high transition costs in wake of EU’s decarbonisation due to their dependence on high-emission economic activities. It includes financial and implementation support. The Commission envisions three pillars: ‘(1) a Just Transition Fund implemented under shared management, (2) a dedicated scheme under InvestEU, and (3) a public sector loan facility with the EIB Group to mobilise additional investments to regions concerned’. This is additional to the funding available through the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus which also helps transitions (EC 2020c).

The Initiative for coal regions in transition specifically supports coal-dependent areas by connecting stakeholders, providing technical assistance and building capacity (EC 2021).

<sup>7</sup> This was higher than the 25 % initially suggested by the Commission but lower than the EP request for 45 % (see [International Union Confederation News 2019](#)).

<sup>8</sup> The seven instruments were the European Development Fund, European Neighbourhood Instrument, Development Cooperation Instrument, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Partnership Instrument, Guarantee Fund for External Action.

In addition to the major reform of the MFF<sup>9</sup> and establishing the NDICI, the EU has taken important steps towards aligning its financial flows and markets with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. It has also made continued efforts to live up to its obligations for climate finance. A key approach to this end is the development of a classifications system, the so-called EU Taxonomy, to enable companies, investors and decision-makers to determine which economic activities can be considered environmentally sustainable. The expected impacts are manifold: investment security, assistance to companies planning transitions processes, and help to shift investment to the areas where it is most needed.

In 2016, the High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance (HLEG) of 20 experts was established to recommend policy options for aligning financial flows in the EU with sustainability goals, that is making sure that financial decisions take environmental, social and governance aspects into consideration effectively. The experts presented their final report in 2018, and the Commission built on HLEG's recommendation in its 2018 Communication 'Action Plan: Financing Sustainable Growth'. Creating a taxonomy of sustainable activities was a central element of this plan (EC n.d. b).

The EU Taxonomy Regulation entered into force in 2020 and its specific implementation through Delegated Acts is ongoing. The EU came forward with six areas that deem finance sustainable, as long as an activity falls under one of them without harming any of the others. Decisions on some activities have been delayed, but a first delegated act on sustainable activities for climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives was published on 21 April 2021. It was accompanied by the adoption of a Communication on 'EU Taxonomy, corporate sustainability reporting, sustainability preferences and fiduciary duties'. The Communication aims at directing finance towards the European Green Deal by improving access to finance for the transition, and builds on the transition finance report adopted by the Platform on Sustainable Finance in March 2021 (EC n.d. a).

The EU furthermore has made progress on addressing climate-related risks in investment portfolios by improving the reporting and transparency of such risks, which are likely to negatively affect a company's overall economic performance. Such risks can emerge due to vulnerability of economic activities to climate change impacts, as well as due to overestimating the value of assets such as fossil fuels in a global economy that is decarbonising. To support companies, the Commission published new guidelines on climate-related information in 2019 (EC 2019c). To this end, a Technical Expert Group on Sustainable Finance was established in June 2018 to provide recommendations on climate-related disclosures. The Group considered stakeholder feedback through targeted online consultation carried out by the services of the European Commission in February and March 2019. By providing guidance in the rapidly evolving field of climate reporting, the Commission intends to increase awareness and understanding of corporate climate-related risks and opportunities, as well as to promote better risk management, and more informed decision-making and strategic planning. In 2020, the European Central Bank (ECB) also published guidelines on how to consider climate-related and environmental risks, outlining its understanding of the safe and prudent management of these risks. The non-binding guidelines should be used by institutions within the financial sector when formulating and implementing their business strategy and establishing their governance and risk management frameworks (ECB 2020).

The EU's progress and experience on establishing sustainable finance frameworks is significant beyond its own borders. As the 2018 EP resolution stated, this can allow for a leadership role.

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<sup>9</sup> In 2018, the Commission presented an overall proposal for a regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027. Part of this package is different proposals such as one for an Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management. At the political level, the different elements have been negotiated as a joint package which also included the 2020 proposal element for the Recovery Instrument.

Furthermore, this can help rewire external relations on green finance, in dialogues with, for example, other regional organisations such as the African Union (AU), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or MERCOSUR<sup>10</sup>. Achieving international common understanding on green finance, and promoting this agenda in the relevant forums such as G20, in order to – ultimately – direct much larger financial flows worldwide to climate economies, is a key issue of climate diplomacy.

### 3.4 Pandemic impacts

By impacting on all areas of life in all countries, the Covid-19 pandemic is already influencing EU climate governance and diplomacy. The Covid-19 pandemic adds to many global challenges, highlighting inequalities, weaknesses of social systems, and putting a strain on economies, and by implication, government budgets. But it has also accelerated developments that can be harnessed for sustainable transformation, such as digitalisation of work (ILO 2020). It has underlined systemic vulnerabilities and shown the importance of ‘building back better’. It has also demonstrated the importance of multilateral cooperation in coping with interconnected global risks (van den Hurk 2020).

The economic downturn and reduced fiscal space in the wake of the pandemic only underline the urgency of investing in green transformation now, in order to reap the vast socioeconomic co-benefits of a green and just transformation, and to avoid asset stranding, which would have particularly dire effects for states and public actors (Ivleva et al. 2017).

As the fossil fuel markets experienced extreme volatility and the societal and economic impacts of the pandemic highlighted inequalities, systemic flaws of the global economy have become even more apparent. At the same time, recovery packages to counter the economic damage of the pandemic can provide a strong impulse for necessary reforms.

The pandemic has provided a critical juncture for the EU to accelerate investment into future-compatible economies, based on sustainability and decarbonisation, in accordance with the blueprint of the Green Deal, which was finalised just before the pandemic hit. It established NextGenerationEU as part of its recently-completed MFF to help European economies recover and put them on a transformation track, by binding 37 % of funds to green transition goals, while all investments need to comply with the EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy (Taylor 2020). The EU is now in the process of receiving and assessing the plans of MS for investment of recovery funds, a check necessary for approval (Matos Neves 2021). Climate-earmarked finance across the MFF has been raised from the 25 % intended by the Commission to 30 %, while the EP initially requested 45 % (International Union Confederation News 2019).

As soon as the need for economic recovery packages due to the Covid-19 effects on economies was established, the question was raised as to how these could be green and climate-compatible in view of the limited time scale remaining to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement, and the dire need to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among many others, the UN Secretary General Guterres called on the international community to make the recovery sustainable and to ‘build back better’ (Department of Global Communications 2020). This term refers to improving structures that existed prior to a disaster or another shock during the efforts to recover from such an event, thus increasing resilience towards future crises. For example, more disaster-resilient and energy-efficient housing can be constructed or more gender-equal institutions established when repairing disaster damages (GFDRR 2011, Mannakkara, Wilkinson and Francis 2014). In the same vein, the economic recovery from pandemic impacts should foster more

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<sup>10</sup> Southern Common Market which includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay as full members.

sustainable economies rather than reproducing their past flaws. For example, current investment plans of the Biden administration have a strong climate and social component (The White House 2021).

Analyses of climate compatibility and sustainability of public investments in wake of the pandemic began appearing quickly. The Green Stimulus Index summarises that G20 governments 'to date have largely failed to harness this opportunity, though a select few are rising to meet the challenge' of committing the recovery funds (of overall USD 4.6 trillion) to activities that support climate action and protect biodiversity. The EU and some EU MS fare reasonably well in the index, with only minor negative contributions (GSI 2021). However, according to the Green Recovery Tracker, that looks in greater detail at the national plans under NextGenerationEU, there is still room for improvement. This tracker finds that, along with green measures, several states finance measures that contradict transformation imperatives (Wuppertal Institute and E3G 2021). The Energy Policy Tracker outlined that, since the beginning of the pandemic, G20 governments committed USD 295 billion for fossil energy and USD 230 billion for clean energy, while only USD 48 billion is classified as being low-carbon and having otherwise negligible environmental impacts (Energy Policy Tracker 2021).

During the pandemic, consumption, employment, and behaviours have been changing, which initially generated a debate about whether the immediate drop in GHG emissions and oil prices could be sustained. One year later, the emissions are seen to 'bounce back' (Tollefson 2021). With people looking forward to travelling and economic activities accelerating, it is clear that the pandemic will not automatically improve global environmental and climate performance, and there are even concerns about rebound effects (Schumacher 2020). On the positive side, digital communication and consumption formats became more integrated into day to day life, and new opportunities for more climate-friendly ways of working and leisure activities might be harnessed (Accenture 2020, ILO 2020). A green thrust in public investment in the recovery phase could be an impulse to more durable changes (Schumacher 2020). Whilst it is yet to be seen which of these changes have a lasting impact, it is important to assess which entry points they offer for an intended, policy-driven low-emission reset in the EU and its MS.

Although it will likely take some time to assess the full picture on how the pandemic has interacted with the world's geopolitical landscape, first insights on potential repercussions on peace and stability can be observed. A study completed in autumn 2020 outlines examples of tensions increased by the pandemic, such as in the Western Balkans: 'China and Russia seized the moment to promote themselves – and their system of governance – during the crisis', which negatively affected the countries' relations with the EU (Gaub and Boswinkel 2020: 20). On the other hand, action such as the US administration effort for waiving intellectual property for vaccines (Reuters 2021)<sup>11</sup> or suggestions on international pandemic response agreement (Council 2021a) might lead the way to joint multilateral formats for crisis management. Commentary already shows that the EU's positioning on intellectual property rights and vaccine production is an important topic with India, a key partnership where climate change, trade and geo-strategy are also at stake (Bahgat 2021, Lau and Aarup 2021). Overall, the pandemic has certainly prompted renewed thinking about how to reduce systemic vulnerabilities and dependencies of the EU, which could also provide lessons for response to climate crisis (see chapter 4.3.1. on trade).

To help their partners respond to pandemic challenges, the EU and the MS joined forces in a coordinated Team Europe approach. In this way, they were able to mobilise EUR 38.5 billion (as of

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<sup>11</sup> The EP insisted on 'constructive dialogue on a temporary waiver of the WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in order to ensure that countries do not face retaliation over COVID-19 related patent infringements during the pandemic' (EP 2021b).

April 2021), a large part of this through the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The pandemic has not only affected the vulnerable the most; they also have facing bigger difficulties to respond to its impacts (EEAS 2021a). The coordinated Team Europe approach has been cited as an example for climate diplomacy by the Council (Council 2021b).

### 3.5 Summarising the recent trends shaping climate diplomacy

The EU seeks to establish its position on the international stage as a green and climate-conscious leader. From the climate perspective, this is necessary for the success of the EU's own decarbonisation as well as to achieve the global climate goals; but from the perspective of international relations, this is also a key trait of the EU in shaping its (soft) power and international influence, that undoubtedly precedes, but is reinforced tremendously by, the Green Deal. Therefore, one could argue that climate diplomacy has grown from being a 'single issue' diplomacy strand to a defining characteristic of Europe as an international power. This requires ownership of the strategy by MS. Furthermore, it has become apparent that providing adequate resources and capacities throughout the EU and relevant MS institutions is necessary to increase the chances of successfully implementing strategic guidelines. While there are many synergies between the climate and international policy goals of the EU, this does not mean that there are no trade-offs, or that these synergies will materialise automatically.

On the contrary, assuming the role of a sustainable global power necessitates addressing several key challenges. First, the EU would need to ensure the coherence of its external policies, preventing non-climate-earmarked activities from harming transformation objectives. Second, in a difficult balance of protecting its strategic interests and the climate, it would need to make sure that other sustainability goals, including fighting multiple inequalities, protecting human rights and sustaining peace, are not forgotten. Third, it would need to keep up with its own ambition on becoming a green leader, including investing in technology and infrastructure at a pace that matches other countries such as the US or China. Finally, it would need to find the best possible solutions for many dilemmas in its relationships with specific partners such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhoods or India. For example, in order to build trust with Africa, important policy measures to implement the Green Deal such as CBAM need to be balanced by support activities in areas such as technology sharing (see more detail in the designated chapter 4.4. on the topic).

Given this increased importance of climate diplomacy for EU external relations, and the technical and political complexity that goes along with it, the EP needs to play an active role in shaping it. It has been happening automatically to an extent, as climate diplomacy aspects permeate more and more decisions and areas – a trend likely to increase, with decarbonisation and climate security risks increasingly shaping international relations. This includes democratic control functions for the difficult balancing acts the EU will need to undertake, especially as it oscillates between aspiring to more geopolitical action and soft power based on values. This also includes the 'technical work' of checking the details of rule design and monitoring goal compliance, e.g. with the 30 % earmarked budget; and encompasses increased visibility and political discussion of these issues through parliamentary debates, as well as pushing for greater ambition. Finally, this implies drawing on the EP's own diplomatic means of inter-parliamentary relations to support the discussion with partner countries.

## 4 Progress in selected areas

This chapter highlights the main developments in policy areas of special relevance for climate diplomacy. Promoting ambitious climate action worldwide has been the core of climate diplomacy activities. The UNFCCC has been the main forum for this, while the EU has endeavoured to support and raise the ambition of international climate policy through its external action, bilaterally and inter-regionally. In addition, some issue areas in the realm of external relations are directly affected by climate change impacts as well as climate policy impacts.

The growing consensus since the 2010s that climate change will affect international peace and security has brought this topic to the top of the EU climate diplomacy agenda. The imperatives of driving climate action and reducing climate security risks need to be pursued through all external action instruments of the EU, as has been advocated by the expert community (e.g. Tänzler, Oberthür, Wright 2020) and by the EP itself in its 2018 resolution (see chapter 2.2.).

Trade-related policies and development cooperation are among the most powerful instruments to shape the EU's international relations (Bluth 2021, ECDPM 2020, Bilal and Hoekman 2019), as the EU has an outstanding weight as a globally-connected market and a source of development funds (EC n.d. c). Making sure that this potential to influence the economies worldwide is used to promote low-emissions and low-risk transformation processes is essential.

Science, research and innovation are highly important in these processes, and EU climate diplomacy can achieve much by fostering collaboration in these areas. At the same, there are strategic issues to be solved, especially as the EU is seeking to solidify its international position in the face of multi-layered economic transformations (sustainable, digital, demographic) and in a challenging geopolitical landscape (Pannier 2021, Bluth 2021).

Finally, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, much like climate change, that has been increasingly debated in the context of EU external action. Lessons learned from mainstreaming gender equality in external action might be instructive for mainstreaming climate topics, as chapter 4.6. will show. Acting on climate change needs to apply a gender lens, too (UNFCCC n.d.).

In all of these areas, the EU has achieved important milestones since 2018. All of these areas are impacted by the overall trends described in chapter 3, which is another lens for information selection in this chapter: relevant changes due to establishment of the Green Deal, of the new MFF, major geopolitical shifts or the pandemic.

For each area, the chapter outlines major strategic processes or reforms (if any), including respective policy documents by the Council and Commission and standpoints by the EP (if any), as well as specific issues that have been drawing attention in the realm of international relations.

### 4.1 Core climate diplomacy

#### 4.1.1 Supporting UNFCCC negotiations

With the delayed climate conference in November 2021 in Glasgow (COP26) the EU will be asked once more to provide climate leadership and translate its climate ambition into concrete negotiation outcomes. Thereby, the negotiations under UNFCCC, and bilateral efforts to raise climate ambition to be able to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement, go hand in hand. UNFCCC progress was delayed due to the pandemic which hit during an important year for global climate negotiations: the updates of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were due in 2020, and



finalisation of sub-negotiations on using market mechanisms for climate action (Article 6) were still pending.

The focus of COP26 will be on updated NDCs for concrete actions up to 2030 and the submitted long-term strategies and commitments to climate neutrality up to the middle of the century. More technical, but also important for the area of bilateral mitigation approaches, are the final negotiations to implement Art. 6 of the Paris Agreement: it includes provisions to foster collaborative climate action based on market-based mechanisms, e.g. rules for trading emission reduction units between countries enabling mitigation at a lower cost, but only if this contributes to raising global climate ambition. Art. 6.4 is specifically directed at advancing cooperation based on market mechanisms with developing countries. In addition, the approaches taken by negotiators to the discussion on long-term climate finance goals will be a key area to build trust. Developing countries have repeatedly requested a more ambitious financial basis for climate action for the upcoming years.

#### 4.1.2 Supporting low-emission transformation

Complementing the climate negotiations with forward-looking activities in the realm of bilateral and regional cooperation has been a key area of EU climate diplomacy. Reflecting upon the vast landscape of EU climate and energy cooperation is probably beyond the scope of this paper, however, climate change and sustainable energy have been very present in all of the EU's relations to other countries and regions (as highlighted above). The EU and its MS account for both the highest amounts of development finance and of public climate finance in the world (EC n.d. c). The EU has established such prominent cooperation platforms on climate and sustainability as the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA(+)), EUROCLIMA(+), Switch Asia<sup>12</sup>. Climate change has also entered other areas of external relations that are intended as instruments to third countries on their way towards low-emission and resilient economies. For example, climate and environment has been a topic in regional and bilateral strategies (see examples in chapter 3.2. on the evolving international role of the EU) and in the work of EU Delegations (see chapter 2.1.). Much of the following discussion of the efforts in the areas of trade, development cooperation, science, research and innovation, and gender equality concentrates on transformations in partner countries and regions. In the years to come the recent trends in sustainable finance with respect to the climate-related budget commitment, as well as the new funding structure with NDICI, will offer major entry points for accelerating low-emission transformation (see section 3.3). The role of the private sector in promoting major shifts in global sustainable finance is a further key aspect in this regard.

#### 4.1.3 Cross-cutting topics

One key element to promote the EU's climate diplomacy agenda is the mainstreaming of climate action through coordinated activities between different EU institutions and MS. The annual climate diplomacy week, with concerted activities by a variety of actors, is a good example of effective ways

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<sup>12</sup> GCCA was established in 2007 to support countries vulnerable to climate change in preparing for its challenges, mostly Small Island Development States and Least Developed Countries. GCCA+ signifies the second phase where the initiative was aligned with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda in 2015. Since 2017, the alliance is also supporting mitigation action, including the implementation of NDC commitments. Up to 2020, its funds totalled EUR 750 million, mostly coming from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), from the European Development Fund (EDF) and, initially, also the MS (GCCA+ 2020). EUROCLIMA was created to support climate action in Latin America and emerged from bi-regional cooperation in 2010. It disbursed EUR 17.8 million up to 2017, and continued its work as EUROCLIMA+ for the period of 2018-2022 with a significant budget extension. EUROCLIMA is implemented by EU MS cooperation agencies, the UN ECLAC and the UN Environment Programme (EUROCLIMA+ n.d.; Hill 2018).

Switch Asia was also established in 2007 to support sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in Asia, including low-emission economic activities, contributing almost EUR 300 million to this goal up to 2020 (Switch Asia n.d.).

to promote joint outreach and agenda setting. During the week EU Delegations and embassies of several MS around the world hold events to foster dialogue and cooperation on climate change by showcasing good practices, but also to inspire further action (e.g. EEAS 2019, Munayer 2018). Although this approach has become a widely acknowledged tradition, it is only one pillar of EU climate diplomacy. The overall status of climate diplomacy in terms of institutionalisation and mainstreaming in different DGs still indicates a substantial lack of skilled human resources and capacities on climate-related questions in the EEAS and especially as part of the EU Delegations (Brown et al. 2020, Remling and Barnhoorn 2021).

## 4.2 Reducing climate security risks

Research indicates that impacts of climate change can compound and increase risks to international peace and security by exacerbating key drivers of conflict and fragility<sup>13</sup>, even though the causal relationship between climate and conflict is not straightforward and many research gaps remain. Climate change can affect competition over natural resources and undermine livelihoods, endangering stability of societies and institutions. However, it is likely that climate security risks are *underestimated*: the expert community is aware of several major research gaps that persist because there is not enough data or because the complex causalities pose methodologic challenges<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, the capacities to manage these risks do not match these growing challenges (Detges et al. 2020).

The EU and its MS already recognised climate security risks in the early 2000s, with the prominent 2008 ‘Solana paper’ following the 2007 open debate at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) initiated by the UK. Following this, EU institutions drew attention to the issue in the Joint Reflection Paper on Climate Diplomacy by the High Representative and the Commission and reacting Council Conclusions in 2011, and this has been maintained by the EEAS, the Commission and Foreign Affairs Council since then in various strategic documents (Brown et al. 2020)<sup>15</sup>. In its 2016 Global Strategy, the EU highlighted resilience and integrated, preventive approaches to peace as central to its external action, including climate security risks. In parallel to the EP resolution, in July 2018, HR Federica Mogherini hosted a high-level event focused on the topic, defining six action areas for responding to climate security risks in the future (EEAS 2018). In the 2018 EP resolution itself, these risks and climate change impacts on vulnerable populations feature prominently, including thematic highlights such as the water resources and migration nexus (EP 2018).

With respect to security risks that are related to climate change, the 2018 EP resolution had already requested effective responses, highlighting ‘that EU foreign policy should develop capacities to monitor climate change-related risks, including crisis prevention and conflict sensitivity’ and stressing ‘the importance of mainstreaming climate diplomacy in EU conflict prevention policies, broadening and adapting the scope of EU missions and programmes in third countries and conflict areas’ (EP 2018).

The Council Conclusions 2021 identify entry points at the United Nations (UN) level – especially within the UN Security Council, where the topic has steadily gained ground over the last decade –

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<sup>13</sup> Climate security risks refer to the risks to peace and security that are linked to climate change. In the chapter 3.3., the study mentions different types of climate risk: business actors may face supply disruptions or physical risks to their facilities exacerbated by climate change, e.g. through natural disasters. Furthermore, financial risks may emerge if decarbonisation goals are not accounted for when assessing future values of high-carbon assets such as oil and gas reserves (Ivleva et al. 2017).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, more knowledge is available on direct than on cascading impacts of climate change on security; and researchers focus more on violent conflict than on ‘latent fragility risks’. However, these under-researched factors are expected to be significant (Detges et al. 2020: 41).

<sup>15</sup> See also Council Conclusions on Climate (and Energy) Diplomacy throughout the years (2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020), EEAS and EC reflection papers (2011, 2015).

as well as with regional organisations. Arguably, the role of climate security within the Green Deal framework is not as well defined as other climate diplomacy areas, while such policy areas as trade or finance, having played a lesser role in EU climate diplomacy as a whole, are better connected to the external dimension of the Green Deal agenda. However, this does not imply that climate security is underdeveloped overall – on the contrary, the EU has made substantial progress, while implementation challenges in operational processes of humanitarian, development aid and foreign relations remain, as this chapter elaborates upon in its following subsections.

The pandemic has been compounding the climate and fragility nexus. Research highlights four pathways of how climate change, conflict and the pandemic come together to create or spur fragility: 1) increased pressure on livelihoods and resources; 2) reduced effectiveness of migration as an adaptation strategy; 3) fewer conflict responses and increased opportunities for non-state armed groups; 4) increased risks in urban environments and violent protests (Mosello et al. 2020). For example, in post-conflict Colombia, swift closure of schools left many children, particularly in rural areas, highly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups that are now contesting the power vacuum left by the demobilisation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Economic interests of these groups drive environmental degradation and deforestation (ibid.: 14).

#### 4.2.1 United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The agenda-setting on climate security was supported by continuous engagement of selected countries in the UNSC, among them several EU MS, to address climate security risks in several regional resolutions. They repeatedly initiated discussions on the topic in open debates and Arria-formula meetings, and helped establish an informal coordination group on the topic - the ‘Group of Friends’ (see Annex 2 in Brown et al. 2020). The UNSC has recognised a connection between the Covid-19 pandemic and conflict, calling for ceasefire in its [Resolution 2532](#) on 1 July 2020. This can be seen as a precedent to expanding UNSC’s scope of action beyond a traditional understanding of security risks (Vivekananda, Day and Wolfmaier 2020). During the high-level debate on climate security in February 2021, the pandemic was mentioned to underline that non-traditional risks can endanger international peace and security, as a factor that can slow climate action, but also as a more urgent problem (UN 2021).

In 2019, the Climate Security Mechanism emerged as a tripartite initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, co-funded by several EU MS, to build expertise, coordinate and mainstream climate security across the UN. While its activities and capacities have been increasing, it is still uncertain what role it will be able to play in tackling more challenging political issues likely to emerge once the anchoring of climate security in UN institutions and operations progresses (Brown et al. 2020). The EU mission in New York has been eager to engage with these UN-level processes, as has the EU in the framework of UN-EU cooperation, while several of its MS continue to drive the agenda forward in the UN (e.g. Ireland as current UNSC member and co-lead of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security of Members of the Security Council).

#### 4.2.2 Defence roadmap

On the EU level, progress to address climate security risks has been manifested in terms of growing political will (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021). While the designated climate diplomacy staff at the EEAS continue to take on a very broad portfolio of climate diplomacy issues and have not been expanded, other parts of EEAS have increasingly taken up these issues, which signifies some progress with mainstreaming. The topic is increasingly seen as a vital aspect of Common Security

and Defence Policy and crisis response, with all three divisions (Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, Security and Defence Policy, and Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability) seeking to address these risks (Brown et al. 2020). The most visible outcome of these efforts has been the Climate Change and Defence Roadmap that promises to ‘contribute also to the objectives of the European Green Deal by aiming to reduce the emissions in particular in the defence sector’ while preparing the sector for climate-related challenges (EEAS 2020a: 3). This could be a first step for the recently established Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space to help strengthen the EU’s response to climate security risks.

### 4.2.3 EU foreign policy and climate security

As of 2021, responsibility for funding climate security-related work has shifted from DG International Cooperation and Development to the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, which reports to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission. Straddling the EEAS and the Commission, and set up to support both the EEAS and EU Delegations, this shift could be followed by further steps linking climate security issues with foreign policy action.

At the same time, other EU institutions have been tackling climate security risks under the broader framework of resilience and/or within their development and humanitarian aid activities. While resilience or the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (Council 2017) include many other vulnerabilities and risks, the holistic thinking behind it is arguably well-suited to accommodating climate risks and enabling appropriate actions. The respective documents, e.g. the Resilience Strategy (EC and HR/VP 2017), already mention climate change, increased disaster risks, challenges to food and water security, etc.

While the EU has been successful both in putting climate security risk on high-level agendas and in promoting integrated approaches that ultimately can be harnessed for effective responses, there are still several action gaps highlighted by experts and EU officials themselves (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021).

With no explicit ‘institutional home’ for, and informal coordination on, climate security risks, the framing and handling of the issue depends on the respective institutional mandates. This diversity is a natural result of a decentralised process of every institution integrating the topic into their respective field of work, and it makes the agenda accessible and actionable for more stakeholders (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021, Brown et al. 2020), but this might also lead to some of its vital parts being underappreciated. Different actors might primarily see ‘their’ perspective on climate risks, with a lack of coordination on specific responses. Remling and Barnhoorn 2021 argue that the EU’s responses to several categories of risk are not well developed: risks that stem from climate impacts outside the EU’s borders, to risks generated by the EU’s own climate action as well as to climate security risks unfolding on the EU’s territory. That the existing approaches ‘do not address the security issues that are likely to arise in the foreseeable future’, ‘is concerning because [...] even halting all emissions tomorrow would not prevent CSRs [climate-related security risks] from emerging and responses would still be required to support communities in managing the emerging challenges’ (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021: 15).

While a more unified framing of climate security might help leverage coordinated action, a more immediate challenge seems to be translating the high-level commitments and mainstreaming requirements into specific climate-informed action on peace, humanitarian issues and development, both in Brussels and by EU and MS staff in third countries. This is often an

achievement of ‘individual initiative by project managers’ (Brown et al. 2020: 19) rather than something the external action structure requires or even fosters. Building knowledge and capacity, providing specific guidance, and thus enabling practitioners to design programmes and projects in accordance with multiple mainstreaming requirements such as climate or gender equality, seems to be the overarching need (Remling and Barnhoorn 2021, Brown et al. 2020).

The EU has a wide variety of instruments in place that can play a role in realising effective climate security action. In fact, these already tackle many of the vulnerabilities behind climate security risks. First and foremost, the EU has substantial funds for activities across the development-humanitarian-peace nexus. Many sources provide relevant finance, some of which are now reformed in the new MFF structure, but tracking them is challenging, and measuring success even more so. A GCCA+-funded example is the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR). The Instrument contributing to Security and Peace had explicitly included climate security, but listed that objective for only less than 2 % of its projects. 43 % of projects funded by the EC DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations included Disaster Risk Reduction activities in 2016, while a ‘resilience marker’ had been introduced in 2014 (Brown et al. 2020, Remling and Barnhoorn 2021).

#### 4.2.4 The European Peace Facility (EPF)

There are significant opportunities to improve climate-related spending, monitoring and reporting by ensuring the mandates of and incentive structures within big funding instruments facilitate action to address climate security risks. Within the NDICI, EUR 3.18 billion is dedicated to rapid response actions, which could be used to respond to compound risks of climate and fragility given sufficient integration of climate sensitivity in its work. The European Peace Facility (EPF) is a new instrument, requested by HR/VP Mogherini in 2018, and now comprising EUR 5 billion outside the MFF to finance Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), replacing the African Peace Facility and the Athena mechanism (Council 2020c). The funds can be used to train and equip military forces of partner countries, including providing weapons and ammunition, which was not possible before. The EPF has already been sharply criticised for the lack of transparency and safeguards, especially in light of previous cases of EU-trained forces in Libya or Myanmar violating human rights (Fischer 2021). The EPF is not to be controlled by the EP, despite the latter’s request to increase democratic control of the instrument (EP 2019). It is therefore extremely important to align the EPF with the 2030 Agenda, adopting a holistic view of peace and security. Providing climate-sensitive peace responses would be part of this.

Given that climate security and resilience are broad concepts, measuring what the EU is doing to reduce risks to peace and security posed by climate change will remain challenging. However, appropriate indicators, markers and more transparent and standardised data could help achieve progress<sup>16</sup>.

### 4.3 Trade and Development

#### 4.3.1 Major strategic processes or reforms

Trade policy has been one of the most dynamic areas of recent years, being one of the most effective levers for the EU’s international relations. With its latest communication on Trade Policy Review, the Commission rethinks trade strategically in response to international trends, seeking to tackle a great

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<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, there are specific tools that can be harnessed for more effective climate security action. For example, the EEAS’ early warning system includes climate in its qualitative analysis of conflict prevention needs, but its quantitative element, the Global Conflict Risk Index under Joint Research Centre, only includes water stress as a relevant indicator.

breadth of challenges through this policy area. EU trade policy should be ‘open, sustainable and assertive’. That is, while the EU commits to liberal trade and multilateral governance, it should also protect its interests while aligning trade with sustainability needs or using it to foster ‘non-trade’ objectives. This vision is broken down into six priorities, green transition and sustainable value chains being the second one. Supporting geopolitical interests, responding to China’s trade power, and intensifying the relationships with key partner regions, as well as supporting green recovery as the first medium-term objective, are some of the elements reflecting the trends mentioned in chapter 3 (EC 2021b).

The EP’s report on the trade-related aspects and implications of Covid-19 responds to the Commission’s suggestions in the pandemic context (EP 2021b). The EP underlines vulnerabilities and dependencies that the pandemic exposed, but also ‘risks creating a set-back in the worldwide fight against climate change’. The EP therefore calls for more resilience and diversification and, simultaneously, for a comprehensive response to ‘the social, environmental and economic crisis caused by Covid-19’. The report makes clear that a cooperative response to the pandemic, including promoting vaccine availability for developing countries, is key, and open trade needs to be part of it. Responding to the crisis also needs to go along with the imperatives of the green, digital and social equality agendas the EU is pursuing.

The report discusses in depth the necessity of effective measures to foster sustainable trade, in light of the Green Deal, including through trade and investment agreements and on the global level through the WTO. Furthermore, the document pays close attention to geopolitical aspects of the necessary strategic reorientation of trade, highlighting relevant aspects of the EU’s relations with important countries and regions. The report highlights the potential of US-EU cooperation, sharply criticises the developments around the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, reiterating the importance of defending the EU’s interests, and emphasises the need to deepen partnerships with Africa and Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods.

The EP advocates for trade that supports sustainability and digital transformation while benefitting the vulnerable and helping reduce inequalities. It underlines the need for concrete implementation steps and a timeline for the Trade Policy Review, for greater policy coherence of trade, digital, industrial and environmental policies, and calls for a more active role of the Parliament in shaping the EU’s trade policy. The document stresses the key role of trade in responding to the pandemic challenges, as well as in navigating the tasks of the EU’s domestic transformation and its external action, as described in chapter 3.

### 4.3.2 Green and sustainable provisions in trade agreements

The EU is often called a front-runner with regard to sustainability provisions in its trade agreements<sup>17</sup>. As one of the major pillars of the EU’s international influence, trade is naturally seen as a potential sustainability vehicle. The 2018 EP resolution has called ‘on the Commission to integrate the climate change dimension into international trade and investment agreements and to make ratification and implementation of the Paris Agreement a condition for future trade agreements’ (EP 2018). The Green Deal and the Council Conclusions, as well as the regional strategies for cooperation, all emphasise trade as an important way to support green transformations.

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<sup>17</sup> Albeit studies observe that Regional Trade Agreements’ green provisions also serve EU domestic economic interests (McNeill 2020). For example, the Mercosur FTA, a planned agreement between the EU and Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, incorporates requirements that raise the entry level for otherwise cheaper timber from tropical forests, which could threaten expensive EU forestry (ibid.).

In October 2020, the Commissioner for Trade, Executive Vice President Dombrovskis, stated before the EP that compliance with the Paris Agreement should be an ‘essential element’ in future trade and investment agreements, which is a more important status than any other sustainability standard had before (Bronckers and Gruni 2021). The EP welcomed ‘the Commission’s intention to make the Paris Agreement an essential element of all future trade and investment agreements (EP 2020e)’.

The EU introduced trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters in its Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). However, TSD effectiveness in promoting higher standards and strengthening institutional and civil society structures has proven to be limited (Harrison et al. 2018, Orbie 2017, Schmiege 2018a)<sup>18</sup>. The EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement ‘explicitly seeks to facilitate trade in climate-friendly goods and services’ while reducing non-trade barriers for renewable energy and trade distortions from fossil fuel subsidies (Droege et al. 2018: 26).

A 15-point plan seeks to improve TSD implementation (Commission services 2018). ‘Improve the effective implementation and enforcement of sustainable development chapters in trade agreements through the early review in 2021 of the 15-point Action Plan’ is also an action suggested in the Trade Policy Review document to improve trade sustainability (EC 2021b).

Fair and sustainable trade rules are key, and yet trade incentives in themselves can hardly overcome broader governance and institutional capacity challenges or economic imbalances. Appropriate trade incentives and national and international support to low-emission economic activities could rather create a virtuous cycle to boost climate-compatible economies.

For example, the trade in agricultural goods between Africa and the EU is often debated from development, economic and environmental perspectives. Agricultural raw material exports from Africa to the EU ‘are largely free of duties under various agreements’ (Kornher and von Braun 2020), but African agricultural exports, especially processed goods, still face many barriers to access and to being successful on the European market, including bureaucratic challenges. At the same time, the impact of European agricultural policies on the competitiveness of African agricultural products tends to be overestimated, even though some negative effects remain with specific measures (Rudloff and Brüntrup 2018; Foote 2020).

The EU can do much more to foster sustainable food systems through trade-related measures, but it requires a precise understanding of barriers. This is supported by the perception of partner countries and a comprehensive policy mix where sustainable trade agreement clauses can be complemented by measures to improve market opportunities for African producers, including Aid for Trade, support in complying with EU standards, policies to invigorate investment and private sector activity (Rampa et al. 2020; Kornher and von Braun 2020). The EU is looking to secure Africa’s support for a ‘rules-based multilateral trading system’ and a WTO reform (Council 2020a; EC and HR/VP 2020). These efforts, and fostering mutually-beneficial green transformations on both continents, can create synergies for a more balanced and less risky transition.

### 4.3.3 WTO reform

As the benefits of liberalised trade are increasingly called into question (Narlikar 2020), the EU institutions highlight the WTO reform aspirations and the commitment to undistorted, rules-based trade, e.g. in the Trade Policy Review, the Green Deal, the Council Conclusions 2021 and in the Africa strategy. The WTO reform could be harnessed for a smooth green transition by promoting more

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<sup>18</sup> The experience has shown that TSD chapters have key limitations, such as weak civil society in partner countries, insufficient targeting, a ‘one size fits it all’ approach and uncertain purposes (Harrison, Barbu and Campling 2016).

robust rules for multilateral trade that can be used to prevent possible ‘weaponisation’ of strategic goods in a decarbonised global economy, that is, intentionally creating disadvantages for, exerting political pressure on, or penalising certain decisions of the EU, for example, by restricting supply of such goods. At the same time, WTO rules can be reformed and/or harnessed to promote green trade, but they currently have slim chances due to a political deadlock for any substantial WTO system changes (Das et al. 2018). A better-functioning global trading regime could possibly be aligned more easily with the requirements of transformation. Therefore, the EU’s reform effort needs to consider sustainability and climate needs as well as the needs of liberal trade as such.

#### 4.3.4 Sustainable value chains

Sustainable value chains are at the centre of European debate, both in terms of creating human rights-compatible labour standards and reducing environmental impacts of economic activity of European businesses. The Trade Policy Review sees ‘sustainable and responsible value chains through a proposal on mandatory due diligence’ as a building block towards more sustainable trade. This means making sure that human rights and environmental, social and labour standards are respected throughout the different phases of producing and marketing of goods. Requiring due diligence of enterprises in avoiding negative impacts of their value chains on human rights and the environment, is also linked to the Green Deal, according to Commissioner Reynders. The current work programme of the Commission envisions ‘a legislative proposal for a directive on sustainable corporate governance’ by the end of 2021 (EPRS 2020). This momentum should be used to include a climate change lens, with regard to GHG emissions and cascading climate change impacts. The recently-completed comprehensive ‘Study on due diligence requirements through the supply chain’ offers a good status update (Smit et al. 2020).

Pandemic experiences gave a new impulse for discussion on supply chains resilience (EP 2021b, Raza et al. 2021), with microchips and medicine supply bottlenecks. The EP’s own vision is ‘fair, resilient and green value chains’, welcoming a mapping of strategic sectors and scrutinising their supply chain risks as the Trade Policy Review suggests (ibid.). The expert community on climate change adaptation has been researching systemic vulnerabilities and mechanisms of transboundary risks for several years, in an attempt to understand how climate impacts might spread internationally (Benzie et al. 2019). Some of the lessons of the pandemic for responding to climate change risks could be: increase the understanding of the systemic nature of impacts, adaptive risk management strategies in face of uncertainty, and building resilience on multiple levels (van den Hurk 2020).

#### 4.3.5 Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

The EU is considering a Carbon Border Adjustment mechanism, which foresees the introduction of a carbon adjustment fee for imported goods based on the carbon dioxide footprint, now also as a part of implementing the European Green Deal. The topic deserves a section of its own, as it clearly affects trade and industrial policy, but also has geopolitical aspects and holds relevance for the EU’s relations with developing countries.

CBAM can help account for uneven climate ambition across different economies, avoid carbon leakage, ‘level the playing field’ for actors exposed to international economic competition, and might give countries with lower levels of climate ambition an incentive to increase it. The literature sees carbon border adjustments as the only unilateral policy option that, in theory, is capable of this (Mehling et al. 2019).



The EP recently adopted a resolution on WTO-compatible CBAM in order to influence the ongoing decision process, as the Commission is to present its specific CBAM suggestion. The EP favours using the income from CBAM as the EU's own source of income (EP 2021c). However, many developing countries and experts highlight the way in which the EU is risking the legitimacy of CBAM, as it can be accused of restricting market opportunities for products from developing countries while also using this to finance its decarbonisation, for which it arguably is already better positioned economically and has greater historic responsibility. In order to improve the EU's credibility as a global climate power, the income from CBAM might be used to support green transition in developing countries, e.g. through a dedicated fund, which is also broadly in line with the perspective of the EP (EP 2021c).

Introducing such regulations is a 'political minefield' (Droege et al. 2018: 31). As CBAM would redistribute benefits and disadvantages among countries, objections are to be expected (Mehling et al. 2019). Critical voices warn that CBAM could create a two trade-bloc division (Tsafos 2020). Furthermore, there are concerns that a CBAM could be protectionist and unfair (Sapir and Horn 2020), incompatible with the WTO rules (Hillmann 2013) and discriminating against countries with lower capacity to handle the bureaucratic burden (Zachmann and McWilliams 2020). CBA-related trade deviations and resulting economic and political disadvantages might motivate countries to pursue countermeasures or litigation at the WTO (Sapir and Horn 2020).

Therefore, the way the mechanism will be introduced and implemented is crucial, and a multilateral approach that involves both EU and external stakeholders is vital (Sapir & Horn 2020). Such tensions should be managed proactively: communication and transparency towards partners are central, as is the credibility of CBAM as a measure to lower emissions, not to secure economic advantages (Mehling et al. 2019, Dröge and Fischer 2020). With developing countries that have fairness concerns, the EU (and other economically-advanced jurisdictions that may want to follow its example) should also seek open and specific dialogue to communicate the climate advantages of CBAs, and understand what disadvantages could in fact emerge for partners, and how these can be mitigated.

Exploring coordination on CBAs between the EU, China and the US in a climate club would be an interesting option, as all three players could face leakage issues in pursuit of climate neutrality (Tänzler, Li and Ivleva 2021). They all have emissions-intensive industries exposed to international competition, not least from each other. While currently such cooperation seems far away, with Brazil, South Africa, India and China expressing 'grave concern' (Lo 2019), this might be contingent on many political factors, and the option should be discussed on an ongoing basis in suitable technical dialogues.

#### 4.3.6 Development finance

Generally, increased mainstreaming of climate topics has also reached the EU's development cooperation. As already outlined in more detail in section 3.3, the new set up of development finance through the NDICI, also including EFSD+, is backed by a EUR 53.4 billion External Action Guarantee. The governance of this new instrument still needs to be established but already there are requests for a more prominent role of the EP during the process of strategic planning.

The priorities of the NDICI are focusing on supporting four main geographic programmes with a 75 % share of the overall budget of the NDICI – this is a major shift towards bilateral cooperation. Priority areas are the Neighbourhood (EUR 19.3 billion, an increase of more than ten percent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (still EUR 29.1 billion). Whereas the commitment to an overall increase in climate-

related finance will also offer major opportunities in the respective regional programmes, it is more difficult to ensure climate mainstreaming in the regional programme than in a dedicated global challenge programme. Hence, timely and sound tracking of the spending is one of the top priorities for the EP.

In addition, the programming for each 'regional envelope' of the NDICI geographic pillar – i.e. Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean, pre-accession assistance and overseas territories (EC 2020d) – will be an important reference point for tracking progress toward due recognition of climate change in national and regional development. Also referred to as scrutiny powers, the EP observes budget implementation by the Commission on an annual basis, with the power to grant or refuse approval regarding the proposed budget. In contrast to the European Development Fund in the past, which was financed by MS directly, NDICI can be scrutinised by the EP.

Other concerns refer to the risk that there will merely be a reference to climate mainstreaming at the programme level, without going into the details on how to ensure that funded actions foster, or do not undermine, the goals of a low-emission transition in practice. Such 'climate-proofing' would aim at compliance with international and national climate objectives, and describe how the programmes will, for example, effectively address increasing vulnerability of partners as a result of climate change (CAN Europe 2018).

Another key role in promoting sustainable finance is played by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – both of which announced joining the battle to curb climate change back in 2019 at COP25 in Madrid. This decision has been influenced by different requests for a Climate Bank at the European level that could help to promote a common approach to the EU's external financial architecture.

In a climate strategy in 2019, the EIB Group committed itself to 'align all its financing activities with the principles and goals of the Paris Agreement by the end of 2020' (EIB 2019). Further commitments of the EIB Group in 2019 include increasing its annual financing for climate action and environmental sustainability to more than 50 % of total lending by 2025, as well as leveraging at least EUR 1 trillion of climate-related investment during the critical decade 2021-2030. In its role as 'the EU climate bank', the EIB adopted a 'Climate Bank Roadmap 2021-2025' in November 2020, outlining its goals for climate finance to support the European Green Deal and the European carbon neutrality goal by 2025 (EIB 2020a). The EIB 'is equally committed outside the EU' (ibid.) and will enhance its support for EU external activities through development financing. Here the bank will specifically align its business development activities with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans and Long-Term Strategies, and will play a more active role in supporting developing countries' NDCs. The EIB also updated its Climate Strategy in 2020 in support of the Paris Agreement and related temperature goals (EIB 2020b).

The EBRD is committed to sustainable finance, with nearly half of its annual investments provided to green energy, and aims to become a 'majority green bank by 2025' (EBRD, n.d.). In July 2020, the EBRD published its Green Economy Transition Approach (GET) 2021-2025, including the commitment to 'aligning its activities with the principles of international climate agreements, including principally the Paris Agreement' by 2023 (EBRD 2020). The GET further sets out to enhance EBRD's country policy work in support of long-term low carbon strategies and greening of financial systems.

Furthermore, the Team Europe approach (see chapter 3.4 on the pandemic-related trends) needs to be considered as a possible blueprint for development cooperation activities beyond the pandemic.

Developing countries have also had much more difficulty mobilising public finance for response, exacerbating economic asymmetries (EEAS 2021a). It is therefore particularly important to mobilise finance that enables narrowing of the gap between developed and emerging economies and developing economies, that has likely been exacerbated by the pandemic (ibid.), while also setting the path for green development.

Finally, the GCCA+ continues the GCCA global cooperation on climate projects and has been a main tool in aligning climate and development priorities. Starting in 2008, it has become a major climate initiative that has up to 2020 funded more than 80 projects of national, regional and worldwide scope. The initiative focuses on support to Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to increase their resilience to climate change (budget 2014-2020 EUR 750 million) (GCCA+ 2020).

#### 4.4 Science, research and innovation

Promoting science, research and innovation is a central element of leveraging ambitious climate action across the world (IRENA 2018). The EU could advance climate action in developing countries substantially by investing in their innovation capacities. At the same time, it can profit driving innovation with other industrialised countries, as joining capacities and sharing benefits increases economic efficiency of high-cost innovation processes (Toman 2015, OECD, WB and UNEP 2018). Both cases might require finding a balance with strategic interests such as competition advantages or security concerns.

The EU has a broad array of science and technology collaborations with its partner countries and regions, while it also participates in cutting edge international initiatives that intend to pool research capacities to achieve big leaps for green technologies, such as [Mission Innovation](#). Mission Innovation is driven to a substantial degree by the United States, whose return to the international climate policy stage is likely to spur cooperation on key climate technologies of the future, such as hydrogen. The EU also supports the international [Belmont Forum](#) for environmental change and, as highlighted by the EP resolution in 2018, the [Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area](#) (for more sustainable management of water and agri-food systems in face of climate change, urbanisation and population growth).

Over 35 % of [Horizon Europe](#) spending will contribute to climate objectives. 4 of the 5 mission areas in Horizon Europe directly support the European Green Deal. Countries associated with the Programme can participate.

While the Commission's strategy for international cooperation in research and innovation dates back to 2012 and only mentions climate change (EC 2012), it is a prominent item in bilateral roadmaps for Science and Technology (e.g. with ASEAN, India) and regional dialogues, e.g.

- EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation, an element of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy; especially [AU-EU Research and Innovation Partnership on Climate Change and Sustainable Energy](#);
- EU-CELAC [Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation](#) with working groups on e.g. renewable energies, biodiversity and climate change;
- [Union for the Mediterranean](#) regional platform, with climate change, renewable energies and health as the priorities for stronger regional collaboration in research and innovation, agreed in June 2020.

In addition, the EU has signed bilateral science and technology agreements with 20 individual countries<sup>19</sup>, some of which are to be renewed every five years (EC 2019a).

At the same time, in a decarbonising global economy, green technologies can provide economic and strategic advantages, therefore, cooperation on technology development and sharing is also a contested subject (Bluth 2021, Pannier 2021). Intellectual property rights and patents are often a sensitive topic for EU actors, as they touch upon the core of its industrial and economic policies. Partners such as Africa underline the importance of technology for them to be able to undergo nationally-owned green transformation, and generate necessary socio-economic co-benefits (UNU-INRA 2021). However, Europe also faces pressures from global players like China, who are said to use technological advantages to expand economic and political influence, by setting their technological standards around the world and possibly even creating dependences (e.g. 5G, e-mobility) (Hellendorf and Rühlig 2020, Bluth 2021). Therefore, the EU needs to find a balance between supporting global climate ambition and safeguarding its own economic and strategic interests under conditions of high uncertainty of technological developments and other players' behaviour.

To accelerate the transition towards green and resilient societies, the EU should use its science cooperation. In light of the pandemic, it is especially important that low-emission transformation policies also help restart economic development and render benefits to vulnerable population groups. Supporting knowledge- and skill-based green and digital economies, boosting employment opportunities and fostering education needed in such economies, as well as supporting locally-owned development of technological and knowledge capacities, can help in this endeavour (UNU-INRA 2021). This orientation can help make sure that the public funds, further strained by the pandemic, are invested in developing human capital and innovation capacities, rather than in further exploiting non-renewable natural resources.

Specifically, the EU could strengthen climate change research components in the Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreements concluded with 20 countries, especially if a renewal of agreement is approaching (e.g. Chile 2022) or if new agreements are signed with countries. For example, in its cooperation agreement with Mexico, research on the environment and climate is explicitly listed under areas of cooperative activities. The EU could support the transfer of technology and research collaboration e.g. through Horizon Europe. It can also strengthen existing, or launch additional, strategic bi-/multilateral research partnerships following the example of e.g. [India-EU Flagship Call on Integrated Local Energy Systems](#).

## 4.5 Gender equality

Gender, just like climate change, is a cross-cutting topic. Its mainstreaming in policies but also throughout the operations of policy institutions follows a similar pattern in many ways. The topic is often mainstreamed in programming and documents, before this can produce an appropriate impact on the ground, while both climate footprints and gender balances of the European policy institutions often remain a challenge. Incidentally, external action often fails to rank well on both (e.g. the EEAS has only established an Environmental Management System in 2020 (EEAS 2020b) and fares poorly on staff gender equality (de la Baume 2021)), though arguably for different reasons.

Recently, the EP issued a report on Gender Equality in the EU's foreign and security policy (EP 2020c). It acknowledges several important steps of recent years. The EU had adopted the EU Strategic Approach on Women, Peace and Security and an Action Plan to implement it in 2019, guided by the

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<sup>19</sup> This includes other developed countries (Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, USA), all BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), several countries of the Middle East and Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia), Ukraine in the Eastern Neighbourhood and three major Latin American economies, Argentina, Chile and Mexico.

UNSC resolution 1325 of 2000, and an informal task force exists on the subject. Furthermore, the EEAS is already implementing a Gender and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2018-2023 and is a Principal Advisor on Gender Equality. In the final stages at the time of the EP resolution, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) III 2021-2025 is now also finalised. The EU also has a new strategy to protect the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer (LGBTIQ) people in which, along with EU-internal measures, the Commission and EEAS commit to promoting LGBTIQ rights around the world through political dialogue and leading by example (EC 2020e). The EP welcomes the renewal of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and plans for a new EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (EC 2021a).

However, the EP highlights many implementation challenges and suggests several improvements to these strategies. Difficulties in finding appropriate gender-differentiated data to monitor progress in the absence of specific implementation objectives, lack of sufficient budgets for gender efforts and deficient gender mainstreaming across financing instruments, lack of policy coherence and coordination on a joint approach, as well as insufficient staff capacities and commitment to drive the issues at the senior level of EU Delegations, are some of the points that are encountered for climate diplomacy and climate security in particular (see above).

For GAP III, the resolution requests 'clear, measurable, time-bound indicators of success to monitor short-, medium- and long-term changes, the attribution of responsibility to different actors, and clear objectives in each partner country'. Other requests include 'accurate' tracking of funds, 'ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of the different programmes financed by the EU and to report back to the European Parliament', mainstreaming gender in all trade relations of the EU, 'concrete, measurable and binding political commitments on the presence of women in management positions' for the EEAS, and mainstreaming gender equality 'throughout all aspects of the delegations' work' (EP 2020c). Coordination between the EU and MS needs to be improved and a joint vision for the topic needs to be developed (EP 2020c, Teevan et al. 2021). For delegations, senior level involvement, accountability and incentives seem to be crucial, while engaging with civil society in partner countries is an important component (Teevan et al. 2021). All of these recommendations are applicable to climate change mainstreaming in foreign and security policy.

The resolution also explicitly mentions the connections of climate change and gender topics. It highlights the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls, while recognising that the gender dimension is central to successful climate and sustainability action and that intersectionality must be a part of just transition. It requests 'the meaningful and equal participation of women' in climate policy decision making and providing access to international climate finance for women's organisations.

The report of the Committee on Development on the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in developing countries (EP 2020d) strongly highlights the gender dimension of climate change impacts and climate action, echoing many points of the report. Among others, it requests guaranteeing 'gender-just' climate policies, making climate finance, green economies and knowledge and technology accessible to women, ensuring equality in decision making and making NDICI work gender-sensitive, while underlining the importance of mainstreaming gender in trade agreements, in regional partnerships and in foreign and development policies.

In January 2021, the EP also highlighted the need for a gender-specific focus in efforts to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic: 'infection risks, increased domestic and gender-based violence, barriers to sexual and reproductive health services, the increased burden of unpaid care work, women's participation in the labour market and the gender impacts of the pandemic outside the EU' (EPRS 2021). The resolution emphasises the need to put gender equality at the heart of recovery

efforts, which in themselves already require a green and digital focus, and to connect these dimensions. It highlights that 'all climate action must include a gender and intersectional perspective' and that women need to actively participate in decision making to achieve sustainability (EP 2021d).

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Key tasks of the EU Climate Diplomacy for the future

Based on the multi-faceted developments and agendas outlined in chapters 3 and 4, this chapter identifies four key overarching tasks for EU climate diplomacy for the years ahead. For every task, it outlines both general goals in the overall context of global challenges and the EU's position towards them, and specific entry points and instruments the EU can use. This lays the ground for the next chapter, which defines the possible role of the EP.

#### 5.1.1 Climate compatibility of public and private investment flows

Promoting sustainable financing and climate-sensitive budgeting are high on the agenda of the EU. Climate-compatible finance is increasingly becoming a priority for external relations, and in the wake of the pandemic it will be important to showcase the concrete steps to move from the 30 % commitment to the actual implementation of different budget lines.

The tracking of progress is key, to indicate how much climate protection is promoted in specific geographic programmes, as part of bilateral cooperation and with respect to certain thematic areas. Also, the specific role in the wake of the pandemic and the recovery process initiated at MS and EU levels needs to be considered. This tracking process can also inform an overall assessment of EU climate diplomacy performance which – as a kind of review mechanism – can help in analysing benefits and barriers, and good practice examples.

Activities related to sustainable finance such as the EU taxonomy (see chapter 3.3. on sustainable finance for more detail) can be a key entry point for intensifying the dialogue with the private sector regarding business opportunities and risks related to climate change. As the pandemic has strengthened the awareness of systemic risks in globalised economies and of the need to build resilience in portfolios and supply chains (see chapter 4.3. on trade and development), policy makers might find increased momentum for such dialogue.

For example, increasing understanding of the risks that the impacts of climate change or asset stranding can generate for business actors, and discussing the methods of identifying and reducing these risks systematically offer entry points. This dialogue offers the potential for strategic alliances that will also help to strengthen ties, e.g. in the transatlantic context where business networks such as 'We mean business' and 'CERES' have been quite active in strengthening the role of the private sector in moving towards climate neutrality. The network Value Balancing Alliance, promoted by the EU's LIFE program, can offer a promising partner to global outreach with its goal of creating a single standardised method to ensure greater sustainability, transparency and comparability in business.

#### 5.1.2 Green and just recovery around the world

Less than a decade before the due date of the 2030 Agenda, the world is dramatically off track on many of its key goals, notably on climate change. In this desperate attempt to catch up, the pandemic interrupted progress in many areas. The UNFCCC negotiations, increased climate security risks, and disproportionate impacts on women are just a few examples. The recovery aims to kick-start economic activities, but it is also obvious that these funds need to support a transition towards a world compatible with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, so their respective goals remain within reach. The NextGenerationEU clearly follows the vision of a green and digital economy, but the implementation through MS is what ultimately matters.

Getting an internal recovery right would show international leadership. At the same time, the EU needs to use all the available external action channels to help put the recovery efforts of its partner countries on the right path. The Green Deal made it difficult to ignore the importance of EU recovery funds to promote a green transformation, and it also started shaping EU cooperation programmes with other regions on a strategic level, as well as its funding structure for external action. This offers a good starting point for a decisive push towards future-compatible investments that connect and prioritise the SDGs, including combatting climate change. Past experiences have shown that high-level commitments need to be translated into specific impacts, and this process faces a multitude of barriers. Research and expert knowledge on how to achieve sustainability goals through policy have grown enormously over past decades; one example in this study is the multiple ideas for mainstreaming gender equality effectively (see chapter 4.5). Much of this knowledge also applies to implementing green and sustainable recovery measures.

The EU, as always, can build on strategic alliances to support this agenda. The US is planning massive recovery investments that are greener and more socially-oriented than any other programme in recent decades, while multilateral and interregional forums focus on the topic. As climate diplomacy is becoming a core trait of all EU external relations, its growing toolbox should also account for the dire needs that the pandemic uncovered. It should highlight how a green and just transformation can respond to these needs.

### 5.1.3 Reducing climate security risks

The climate crisis puts the pursuit of global peace and stability at risk. The most climate-vulnerable countries often also have fragile socio-political institutions and lack resilience to cope with crises (Ivleva et al. 2019). Preventing and reducing climate fragility risks has been an integral part of climate diplomacy, only gaining in importance with the Green Deal and in light of the detrimental pandemic impacts. These risks affect such priorities of external relations work of the EP as human rights, gender equality, security and defence policies, and bilateral relations of the EU, especially towards Africa (AFET 2019). While the importance of climate security has been rhetorically acknowledged, most recently for example during the open debate in the UN Security Council in July 2020 under German presidency, action gaps remain.

Closing these gaps should be a priority for EU climate diplomacy in the coming years, especially as pandemic-related impacts threaten progress on peace, equality and public services, while also demonstrating the importance of a broader understanding of threats to security, and of preventative action and comprehensive, forward-looking risk assessments.

Much knowledge on potential entry points is already available, and the EU can build on a wide array of external action instruments to enhance resilience-building outside and inside the EU. To prioritise climate security action, the EU's next steps should include

- increasing knowledge and transparency on how funding and programming contribute to reducing climate security risks, especially in peacebuilding and conflict prevention;
- increasing coordination among different institutions of the EU, which could start with a review of what instruments are relevant (within the EEAS, but also across the different DGs of the Commission) and how they can be better coordinated;
- instituting the right incentive structures: cross-pillar projects and programmes (combining climate, peace and development) are harder to do, so need additional incentives, e.g. in the



form of dedicated funding windows, explicit higher-level demand, and additional programming support (rather than disincentives for sticking your head out of your silo);

- creating and communicating clear policy guidelines on climate sensitivity checking of ALL programming (including humanitarian, stabilisation and peacebuilding) and conflict sensitivity checking of ALL programming (including, and especially relevant here, climate and environment funding);
- creating an enabling environment for staff in Brussels and on the ground (training and capacity-building, specific toolkits, new coordination forums, more adequate personnel resources and better guidance).

The EP has already issued a report with very specific recommendations on how to achieve gender equality. Such an approach can also be used to address climate security risks. For example, the EU could appoint a Senior Advisor on Climate Security to coordinate the EU's approach, including in its actions throughout the conflict cycle, and create a similar position in New York City for UN relations.

The EU and its MS have already been working to promote the climate security agenda with the AU, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, ASEAN and other partner regions and countries, as well as forums such as G7 and G20. Such partnerships and alliances remain important. The EU could create an example of a coherent and effective approach. For example, it could establish a resilience cooperation platform in the Southern Neighbourhood that would coordinate among the partners in the development-humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus with an emphasis on effective impact monitoring arrangements.

#### 5.1.4 Navigating geopolitics of decarbonisation

As the EU decarbonises and supports this in its partner countries, the EU needs to assess the resulting geopolitical risks and stress-test its relevant policies against them. It needs to support partner countries in their diversification agendas in order to avoid destabilisation effects of decreased demand for fossil fuels and dwindling revenues, an even more urgent task in face of pandemic-strained budgets (Tänzler et al. 2020, Ivleva and Tänzler 2019). The EU needs to avoid a 'weaponisation' of key resources of the future and new 'resource curses' (Council 2021b). For this, strengthening multilateral trade governance and working on stable trade partnerships is key, and with its trade review document the EU recognises its vulnerabilities, marking a way towards reducing them (EC 2021b). Finally, the EU faces the challenge that economic diplomacy efforts of other major powers influence infrastructure decisions and emission pathways in third countries, notably China's Belt and Road Initiative (Ivleva 2021).

With its emerging 'Green Deal diplomacy', the EU is well-equipped to offer greener solutions through its own cooperation efforts, especially if it can demonstrate that these respond to urgent economic and social needs in the wake of the pandemic. It can also work with major donors bilaterally and through multilateral (finance) structures to this end. However, this is clearly connected with how other global players position themselves to gain political influence with partner countries and regions, or to gain a competitive edge regarding future technologies. At the same time, while the EU can develop its 'green' soft power by fully implementing the Green Deal and becoming a sustainable global leader, its leadership is already contested in some areas (e.g. e-mobility). The challenge is multidimensional: support green transformation against 'brown' lock-in (e.g. supporting green infrastructure and just transition in third countries), keep one's competitive edge in a decarbonising economy (e.g. CBAM, research and technology, access to key resources) while mitigating possible geopolitical risks of green transition or new resource dependencies.

Therefore, the search for joint solutions for global problems is likely to create trade-offs with geopolitical and key economic interests, including of the EU itself. In its strategic documents, the Union is trying to find a balance between supporting multilateral solutions it believes to benefit the international community (e.g. free trade, green economy, internationally coordinated (health) crisis response) and protecting its own values and interests. The more climate and sustainability aspects enter 'high politics' domains, the more challenging this balance will get, requiring high-level engagement, political will and a unified position in the EU.

## 5.2 Implications for Member States' action

This study focuses on the role of the EU and especially of the EP, and does not investigate in depth the relations of individual EU MS and their potential contribution to advanced climate diplomacy. However, the MS have an important role to play in promoting the different climate diplomacy tracks. The core climate diplomacy faces a litmus test of whether the international climate negotiations can render transformational outcomes or not: the COP26 in Glasgow needs to establish the overall structure of ambitious climate policy for the 2020 decade and beyond. To this end, MS need to improve their mitigation performance and commit to significantly more ambitious 2030 targets, supporting the most vulnerable countries and increasing (long-term) climate finance to enable transformational change at scale.

Further key aspects in this regard are to improve the consistency in foreign climate policy through better coordination among the relevant ministries responsible for Foreign Relations, Environment, Energy, Development, Economy and Finance. Part of this better coordination could be the establishment of climate cabinets or dedicated climate diplomacy envoys, which will also help to improve global outreach on the topic.

In addition, MS need to complement efforts to engage in strategic alliance with other partners such as the United States. Through reconnecting the transatlantic alliances under US President Biden but also effectively distributing leadership on the climate agenda across progressive actors, the MS will strengthen a comprehensive European Climate Diplomacy approach. Of special importance will be the close cooperation with former EU MS UK – not only as host of COP26 but also as one of the partners with the traditionally most advanced climate diplomats. Finally, France, Italy and Germany as G7 and G20 members need to ensure that climate mainstreaming is also a priority in these forums, thereby complementing EU leadership.

## 5.3 Recommendations on the role of the European Parliament

In the coming years, the ongoing pandemic and its socio-economic consequences as well as the efforts to respond to the yet unmitigated climate crisis will shape EU's external action, that unfolds in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. Whether the synergies with climate action materialise in terms of green recovery and better risk management strategies, will depend on political choices. Trade-offs can also be expected as capacities and budgets, especially in developing countries, are limited and many 'high-carbon' path dependencies shape the pandemic response. In this crucial time, the EU needs to mobilise the full potential of its climate diplomacy, in awareness that this also includes pursuing an ambitious climate transformation domestically.

In this, the EP has a central role to play as the institution of strategic and budgetary control. This study helped to identify numerous entry points for the EP to further promote climate diplomacy. The new EU budget framework presents new opportunities for scaling up climate diplomacy and for promoting climate mainstreaming, and the EP could use this to ask for a clear governance structure of budget planning. In addition, it has important opportunities to engage directly with

parliamentarians of partner countries and can engage constructively in key foreign policy areas such as trade or security.

### Climate neutrality homework

- In order to be a credible player in the field of Climate Diplomacy, the EP needs to prove its **own contribution towards decarbonisation**. To this end, the calculation of the specific carbon footprint of the EP forms the starting point towards a carbon neutral EP. A sound basis in this regard is already available with the study 'The European Parliament's Carbon Footprint' published in 2020 as requested by the ENVI Committee (Amanatidis et al. 2020).
- Managing the **Covid-19 pandemic, some lessons have been learnt** regarding digital meetings as a viable option, e.g. for meetings of the different committees. A concrete first step would be a **stock-taking exercise** on the overall benefits and savings through use of digital formats by Parliamentarians. Of course, potential barriers of using digital formats also need to be recognised, but the EP should clearly outline the lessons learnt during the pandemic and how to use it to support the **EP's process towards carbon neutrality**.

### Budgetary affairs

- In order to address the **twin challenges of climate change and the pandemic crisis**, the EP could request the identification and sharing of **good practices on how green recovery** can be enabled and how to reduce and **respond to systemic risks** (based on insights from EU MS activities among others).
  - This includes examples on how to ensure that **resources flow into green investments** or how to promote **climate-sensitive restructuring of economies**, avoiding unsustainable economic activities (see chapter 3.4. and 5.1.2.).
  - This could be accompanied by requests of the EP to **set standards that help define how a sustainable recovery** could look with a view to promising global green markets of the future (e.g. in the realm of sustainable mobility).
- The EP should continue insisting on the Commission presenting as soon as possible a **monitoring and evaluation methodology for tracking and ensuring compliance with the climate finance** goal of 30 % of earmarked climate finance in different EU policies and programmes, while clarifying how these interact with each other (see chapters 3.3. and 4.3.6.).
- In addition, the **governance structure of the newly established NDICI** needs to enable the EP's access early on to ensure that climate mainstreaming in the different geographic and thematic programs is not merely lip service, but **can promote their climate proofing**, i.e. making sure that these actions promote low-emission, just transformation and recovery (see chapter 5.1.1.), systematically reduce climate security risks (see chapter 5.1.3.) or do not undermine these goals. In other words, the disbursement rate should not become more important than the overall quality of climate action to be achieved.
- A good example of the need to clearly define the role of the EP is its status as an 'observer' at the **EFSD+ strategic board** (see chapter 4.3.6). The **lack of decision-making power on the use of blended finance and guarantees** may be justified by the EP's preference to avoid additional management capacities needed to meet the demands accompanying a greater role with more influence. To secure further mainstreaming and adequate performance, as well as highlighting the role of the EP in light of new trends and tasks, **a new resolution could be envisaged**.

## Democratic control and strategic correctives

- The EP has proven to be a voice for ambitious policies both in the environmental and social realms. Given the growing complexity and importance of climate diplomacy, the EP could request establishment of **annual reporting on the progress of climate diplomacy** of the Commission, with possible inclusion of EU MS actions. This could create a platform for the EP to reiterate its positions and to provide strategic review of the external action with regard to climate topics. This reporting could furthermore include data on climate diplomacy-related budgets (see chapters 3.3., 4.2. and 4.3.6.).
- As the EU is increasingly rethinking its external relations on many levels - e.g. bilaterally with global powers, with development cooperation regions, promoting low carbon emission in key economic sectors, mainstreaming climate in its peace and security policies – the EP could continue its requests for the **Commission, and especially the EEAS, to provide sufficient (personnel) resources to promote climate diplomacy** (e.g. through an increase in the number of qualified staff in the delegations).
- The EP could ensure that **technology and innovation cooperation is in line with the SDGs and fair towards the global South**. This can help set the pace for a green pandemic recovery (as opposed to path-dependent high-carbon recovery investments), supporting nationally-owned transformations towards skill-based, innovation-driven, resource-efficient economies in developing countries that generate employment and education benefits (see chapter 4.4.).
- The EP could also provide strategic review, as the EU deals with **trade-offs between different external policies**, and account for these trade-offs in all its positions on topics relevant for climate diplomacy (see chapter 5.1.4.). For example, the implementation of climate action such as NDCs can take priority over other commitments, to ensure that the EU's partner countries are in a better position to deliver global emission reduction.
- The EP could stress that **trade and investment cooperation needs to reflect the principles and objectives of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda**.
  - As it has done in the reaction to the Trade Policy Review document of the Commission, the EP could underline the links between the key role of trade in promoting pandemic recovery, sustainability and multilateralism throughout the relevant political processes and decisions in the future (see chapter 4.3.1.).
  - The EP could further stress the need to make provisions for non-trade objectives in trade agreements more effective (see chapter 4.3.2.).
  - In addition, as part of the trade relations the eventual phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies could be envisaged (see chapter 4.3.), accompanied by a review mechanism that requires a period reporting on progress to this end.

While underlining sustainability in these ways might require balancing with economic and geopolitical interests pursued by trade and investment cooperation, the EP is well-positioned to provide **strategic guidance** in this regard.

- **The EP could proactively explore trade-offs that may emerge between external and internal policies.** More ambitious climate diplomacy might lead to additional economic burdens for Europe's own vulnerable populations, that are already more affected by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic (see chapters 3.4., 4.2 and 4.5.). At the same time, policies to support the

EU's transformation such as CBAM, may interact negatively with the EU's external relations, as third countries fear disadvantages in times of pandemic-induced economic downturn.

- By promoting **principles of a just transition at all levels**, the EP could help to increase the overall acceptance of low-emission transformation as a preferable way to reinvigorate economies after the pandemic in MS and with EU's partner countries.
- This can also support finding compromises for potential losers in the transition process inside and outside of its borders.

### Parliamentary diplomacy

- Parliamentary diplomacy could **expand climate dialogues with third countries**, especially in the context of disagreements on how to promote climate neutrality in a (post)pandemic context (e.g. perceived negative implications of ambitious climate action for development) and how relevant climate impacts are for peace and security (see chapter 4.2.).
- The EP could make full use of the tools to promote climate-related agenda-setting as part **of inter-parliamentary delegations and participation in parliamentary assemblies**. By setting climate continuously on the meeting agenda it can further ensure mainstreaming processes in partner countries. In doing so, the EP may contribute to making the EU's position understandable and avoiding entrenched negative discourses around topics such as the CBAM (see chapter 4.3.5.)<sup>20</sup>.
- Inter-parliamentary exchanges on how **just transition and green recovery** visions are implemented in the EU, and what can be transferred to other countries in their respective national circumstances, could be a fruitful strand of inter-parliamentary diplomacy. This can also help build support for green and just recovery in various international fora such as G20, WTO or UNFCCC.
- **Climate security experiences** could be used in inter-parliamentary diplomacy, to help promote understanding of climate security risks and options to respond with third countries. Progressive steps such as the Defence Roadmap can potentially provide a good practice example for such dialogues (see chapter 4.2.2.).
- For trade policy, **inter-parliamentary meetings** with the US, with G20 and other parliaments can offer further entry points for **joint standard-setting**. These fora will not only be the place to discuss the EU's concepts and ideas around 'open strategic autonomy' but also the Green Deal implications for trade (see chapter 4.3.).

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<sup>20</sup> The general idea of introducing a CBAM has caused many sceptical reactions internationally and warnings by scholars against several possible design options (e.g. UNU-INRA 2021, Lo 2019, Dröge and Fischer 2020, Sapir and Horn 2020, Zachmann and McWilliams 2020), even prior to the Commission presenting its specific proposal, that is expected in July. This showed a high level of concern by many actors with regard to CBAM.

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PE 653.643  
EP/EXPO/AFET/FWC/2019-01/LOT4/R/03

Print ISBN 978-92-846-8352-9 | doi: 10.2861/20929 | QA-02-21-895-EN-C  
PDF ISBN 978-92-846-8353-6 | doi: 10.2861/10073 | QA-02-21-895-EN-N