SUPPORTING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CLIMATE NEUTRALITY AT EU LEVEL

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Abstract: The starting point of the article is highlighting the situation in which we are positioned following the effects of global warming, becoming more and more visible. In the current context, the achievement of climate neutrality, the initiation of support measures as part of the transition to a sustainable economy, which must not be realized at the expense of future generations, is a major necessity. The presentation of the European legislative framework regarding the achievement of climate neutrality, proposes an intersectoral vision that aims to move from an economy with low carbon emissions to a higher stage, the achievement of climate neutrality, which will allow the member states to identify and solve, in a unitary way and in a real time horizon, of climate problems. Achieving climate neutrality is of major importance, it will strengthen resilience to climate shocks as well as boost Europe's position as a world leader. A whole range of tools have been mobilized, which stand out as a historic and unique proposal that reflects the scale of the challenge we face. Finally, we highlight the consequences of the mentioned proposals, aiming at the active contribution to the achievement of the objective of climate neutrality, which is identified as having a central role in the current European climate framework..

Keywords:. *climate change, climate neutrality, instruments, measures, consequences.*

The future of Europe depends on a healthy planet, so the EU countries have set themselves the primary goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The effects of global warming are real. The year 2050 is considered to be the year of reaching climate neutrality at the level of all EU member countries, being an example to be followed by the other States Parties to the Paris Agreement.

Being given the complexity of the climate neutrality goal, it requires joint, not just individual, efforts. While the measures and actions included in a new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (under Building a Climate-Resilient Future, 2021) actively contribute to the achievement of the objective of climate neutrality, Member States are supported to continue efforts to increase adaptation capacity, limiting vulnerabilities and ensuring resilience in relation to the effects of climate change.

In the conditions the need for an integrated approach to the measures included in the legislative framework to achieve the objective of climate neutrality, the following were adopted:

Climate change and environmental degradation are a threat to Europe and globally. The 2030 Agenda is correlated to the European Green Deal which will define the development strategy of the EU - the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

- The European Green Deal is a key instrument in financing the fair climate transition at the level of the European Union, supporting the achievement of climate neutrality, aiming to regulate some important areas: climate change, environmental protection, energy, industry, transport, agriculture, finance and regional development (Commission European, 2020). For

the reconfiguration of strategies and policies in all economic sectors, for the promotion of new sustainable production and consumption models at the sectoral level, the existence of a dialogue between the interested factors is imperative. Plans and actions have been established in order to reduce the effects of climate change, in the shortest possible time and to ensure the implementation of favorable policies that will be the basis of a fair transition to the green economy, aiming at:

- the contribution of the industrial sector in supporting a sustainable economy;
- clean, safe and affordable energy;
- rehabilitation of buildings in order to support energy efficiency and optimal use of resources;
- the transition to sustainable mobility;
- conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity;
- mobilizing private financial and capital flows towards green investments;
- encouraging research and innovation - 40% of the "Horizon Europe" budget will ensure the financing of solutions for climate change, in accordance with the EuropeanGreen Deal;
- professional training programs in the field of climate change, by updating the general framework of skills and abilities to support the adaptation to new market requirements and technologies.

We have identified a number of synergies at the level of strategic documents:

- The new EU Industrial Strategy guides european industrial policies towards a sustainable and resilient European Union at the international level;
- The EU Strategy On Energy System Integration is synergistic with the EU Hydrogen Strategy, respectively with that of methane in the EU, in support of the decarbonization of the energy system;
- Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy - correlated with actions regulated by the EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil';
- The From Farm to Fork Strategy - For a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system and is synergistic with the Common Agricultural Policy: 2023-27 (CAP) and with EU Action Plan For Organic Agriculture;
- The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 is synergistic with the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 – Sustainable Forest Management in Europe (2022).

The European Green Deal will form the basis of a competitive and efficient EU economy, from the point of view of the use of resources, having as primary targets:

- zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
- recording an economic growth dissociated from the use of resources;
- the fairness of citizens, sectors and regions. (Appendix 1)

As a result, we can conclude that the Pact highlights the need for a holistic and cross-sectoral approaches, where all relevant policy areas contribute to the ultimate climate goal.

With the launch of the European Green Deal in 2019, the European Union formalized its ambition to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Over the past two years, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts have been accelerated, and the green transition has become one of the main pillars of NextGenerationEU and the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism.

- In order to fulfill the objectives of the European Green Deal, the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Framework for Achieving Climate Neutrality and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, also known as the *European Climate Law* (European Commission, 2021), was adopted. At the level of the European Union, through this instrument, it is aimed to complete the existing legal policy framework at the level of the European Union, in order to introduce those targets that are mandatory for the member states -

the reduction of GHG emissions and the increase of absorptions, through natural or other absorbents.

The European Climate Law establishes the time horizon for achieving climate neutrality - the year 2050, highlighting as a mandatory objective at the EU level, the net domestic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to the levels since 1990, determining the contribution of limitations and absorptions of emissions.

They consider:

- more stricte dispositions on adaptation to climate change;
- stronger synergies between European Union policies and the objective of achieving climate neutrality;
- commitment to negative emissions after 2050;
- monitoring the progress made by the member states towards achieving climate neutrality, as well as the establishment of the The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change;
- the initiation of mechanisms regarding effective collaboration with the various sectors of activity to achieve the objective of climate neutrality in various economic fields at the EU level;
- a methodology for the conceptualization of the climate objective for 2040, considering the indicative budget regarding GHG emissions, for the period 2030-2050;

The European Ecological Pact and the European Climate Law strengthen the normative framework of climate change, having a strategic role in the actions that each member state will initiate, ensure the general framework of action to translate into legislation the achievement of the objective of climate neutrality by the year 2050.

- *Fit for 55* is an initiative - integral part of the European Green Deal, with the role of strengthening national, european and international climate actions, developed as a result of the need to update the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework, package (launched by the European Commission in January 2014) , through which an EU-wide reduction target of greenhouse gas emissions of 40% compared to the 1990 level was established.

Priority is given to aspects that have the role of ensuring an effective approach to the climate effort at the sectoral level, with an emphasis on the transformation of all sectors of the economy, with an emphasis on energy, transport and mobility, agriculture.

The Fit for 55 package consists of a set of interconnected proposals, which aim to achieve a fair, competitive and green transition by 2030 and in the next period.

The implications of the legislative proposals included in the Fit for 55 Package envisage a mixed approach to achieving the objective of climate neutrality, aiming at: the application of the trading system of GHG emission certificates in new sectors of activity (buildings and road transport), increasing the use of renewable energy and of energy efficiency, the development of transport modes with low GHG emissions, infrastructure and alternative fuels. Also, attention is paid to the issues related to the prevention of the relocation of GHG emissions.

We ask ourselves: What are the consequences of the legislative proposals regarding climate neutrality at the EU level

- EU trends in ETS emissions – the sector that is the central pillar of the EU policy for combating climate change, being the reference instrument for reducing GHG emissions

As part of the Fit for 55 Package, the EU Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS) Review proposal aims to increase the environmental contribution of the EU ETS by adjusting, firstly, the total number of certificates issued under the scheme. It also considers the elimination of free emission quotas given to aviation, in order to align with the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), as well as the inclusion of GHG emissions from the transport sector. Separately, a new emissions trading system has been proposed for the distribution of fuel for road transport and for buildings. On the other hand,

increased funding for the EU Innovation Fund and the Modernization Fund is being considered, as well as the ability for member states to spend their earnings from emissions trading in climate change projects;

- EU Trends in non-ETS emissions

The proposal, the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) aims for the emission reduction objectives at the level of each member state for small-scale industries, road and inland maritime transport, buildings, waste to be assigned according to their GDP; it also checks the flexibility of LULUCF and creates a new voluntary reserve for the EU member states to achieve the national targets (2026-2030). Also, the achievement of the ESR objectives is also consistent with the climate and energy plans at national level;

- EU trends in the sector of land exploitation, land use change and forestry (LULUCF)

The proposal for a Regulation on the sector of (LULUCF) sets as a general objective for 2030 - the elimination of 310 million tons of CO_2 emissions through a process of natural carbon sequestration; the EU should also be climate neutral in the land use, forestry and agriculture sectors, including non-CO_2 agricultural emissions (fertilizers andanimals) by 2035;

- EU trends in the energy sector

a. Renewable Energy Directive aims to integrate the energy system with climate and environmental objectives, achieving the goal of 40% energy from renewable sources by 2030, through the contribution of each member state to the use of renewable energy in the transport sector, the heating and cooling sector, both for buildings , as well as for industry; the sustainability criteria of bioenergy are strengthened - member states will have to develop their support schemes for bioenergy. Also, another objective pursued is the doubling of annual energy saving obligations from the EU member states, and the public sector has the obligation to renovate 3% of its buildings/year;

b. Revision of the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) - the objectives of the energy and climate change policy should be correlated with the taxation system of energy products, especially by promoting green technologies, eliminating old ones, as well as reducing the use of fossil fuels, facilitating the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, having as a target to meet the climate neutrality objective;

- EU trends in the transport sector

a. Regulation EU CO_2 Emission Performance Standards For Cars And Vans – aims to reduce GHG emissions by 55% by 2030 and 100% in 2035 compared to 2021;

b. Directive on alternative fuels and charging sources for zero-emission vehicles. The proposed Regulation on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure through the European Alternative Fuels Observatory will provide relevant data on alternative fuels for transport in Europe. New mandatory national targets for all member states are aimed at; the obligation to develop national decarbonisation strategies and, having as target sectors: aviation, maritime transport, transport on inland waterways, rail transport on network segments that cannot be electrified; the development of specific networks;

c. Regulation on the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport (FuelEU Maritime) - promoting the use of renewable energy sources and alternative fuels;

d. Regulation on ensuring fair conditions of competition for sustainable air transport on EU territory (ReFuelEU Aviation) promoting the use of sustainable fuels with low GHG emission;

- trends in the construction sector

The Revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive- to ensure the obtaining of energy from renewable sources for buildings, as well as the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions related to them;

- the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) proposal creates resistance both inside and outside the EU, although it could bring in €14 billion in EU revenue per year.

Through the CBAM mechanism, it will be considered to measure carbon emissions at the EU level, forcing industries to adapt and use green technologies in order to meet the targets for reducing GHG emissions;

- Establishment of the Fund for Mitigation of the Social Impact of Climate Actions - granting aid to member states to finance investments in areas such as: energy efficiency, new heating and cooling systems, promoting sustainable mobility.

For the period 2025-2032, the financing of 72.2 billion euros is provided from the EU budget, and for the fair social transition - 144.4 billion euros.

The implementation of the legislative measures included in the Fit for 55 Package is a complex process, starting from the aspects regarding the transition from fossil fuels to efficient ones, energy, transport, mobility, energy efficiency of homes, impact on the workforce.

As a conclusion, the transition to climate neutrality will generate important opportunities, such as the emergence of a potential for economic growth, for new business models and new markets, for the creation of new jobs and for technological development.

Today, Europe is on the way to a green, competitive and more resilient economy and society. The transition to achieving climate neutrality is a common goal for all EU countries. This transition requires structural changes that will affect the lives of all European citizens, the support of the whole society is required because we have a common good for our future.

Achieving the EU's goal of becoming climate neutral requires sustained coherence at the level of climate measures and actions proposed to be implemented at national, European and international level. Achieving climate neutrality is the ultimate vision of the climate effort.

The EU's response to the climate efforts specified in the Paris Agreement - the European Ecological Pact and the European Climate Law, sets as its main objective the achievement of the objective of climate neutrality for 2050, i.e. the reduction of GHG emissions by at least 55% for 2030, compared to levels from 1990. To these, the proposals of the Fit for 55 Package were added, constituting together initiatives of the European climate response that are the basis of the entire European process of green economic recovery, of achieving climate neutrality.

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