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Oscar Fitch-Roy · Jenny Fairbrass

Negotiating the EU's 2030 Climate and Energy Framework

Agendas, Ideas and European Interest Groups

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PREFACE

Guidebooks recommend travellers visit Brussels in the spring or autumn, known as the ‘shoulder seasons’. The weather is cooler than in high summer, the crowds less frenetic and hotel prices more moderate. Although, there is a downside: In common with most of North West Europe, Brussels in autumn can spend days or weeks at a time stewing under a leaden blanket of oppressive low cloud.

On one such cool, overcast Thursday morning in autumn 2014, the European Council met at 175 rue de la Loi. The monumental pink granite building, named for sixteenth-century Flemish philosopher, Justus Lipsius, is the venue for the quarterly summits of the heads of state and government of the EU’s member states.

At this particular summit, on the 23rd of October, the 28 politicians were due to take a decision with implications for Europe’s energy system, the environment and the global climate. The decision was set to shape the priorities for EU’s climate and energy policy between 2020 and 2030. The European Council was working from proposals made by the EU’s executive, the European Commission, which proposed that several ‘targets’ be set for 2030. Recommendations had been made for the level and nature of the targets, backed up by hundreds of pages of analysis.

Like any big decision, the ‘EU 2030’ framework was riven by trade-offs and compromises. With climate change accepted as a real and epoch-defining challenge and transforming Europe’s dirty energy systems into sustainable ones proving extremely complex, the stakes were high. Some countries wanted to move faster than others. There were

disagreements over the proper role for the EU in promoting specific clean technologies. The strongly held differences of opinion about the right way ahead meant that the potential for disagreement around the huge oval table was palpable.

And then, in the face of what many describe as the “*greatest challenge of our time*”, Europe blinked.

The consensus that emerged from the European Council that day represented a significant change in course from the one set just seven years earlier by the 2020 targets. The overall target for emissions reduction was the lowest that could be said to be commensurate with the EU’s goal of deep decarbonisation by 2050, itself informed by the desire to limit global temperature increase to 2 °C. The targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency were both low, and would not carry any legal weight. ‘Politics’ was seen to have trumped ‘climate’.

But many of the critical choices that determined the outcome had not been taken by the Council at all. They had been taken, in fact, in the months and years leading up to the meeting and were contained in the European Commission’s proposals, published earlier in 2014. By the time the Prime Ministers, Presidents and Chancellors took their allocated seats that morning, the ‘2030 framework’ and the ideas it represented had been debated, discussed and raked over by scores of experts and analysts in Brussels and elsewhere—relatively few of whom held official positions in the EU.

In the course of developing their proposals, the European Commission had consulted national and European interest groups. Those same interests had prepared and published proposals of their own. They had undertaken modelling exercises and formed coalitions. They had plotted, planned, persuaded and sought at every turn to make their mark on the options that faced Europe’s leaders that dreary Thursday in October.

So, while the grand politics of the summit table played a defining role in the 2030 climate and energy framework, so did the intense activity of a small community of interest groups, lobbyists and campaigners, living and working within a few kilometres of the Justus Lipsius building. This book tells that story.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BUSINESSEUROPE	Confederation of European Business
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the UNFCCC)
DG Clima	European Commission Directorate-general (DG) for Climate Action
DG Energy	European Commission Directorate-general for Energy
ECF	European Climate Foundation
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
(E)NGO	(Environmental) Non-Governmental Organisation
EU	European Union
EU-ETS	European Union Emissions Trading System
Eurelectric	The Union of the Electricity Industry
EuroACE	European Alliance of Companies for Energy Efficiency in Buildings
FoETS	Friends of ETS
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
IETA	International Emissions Trading Association
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MSA	Multiple Stream Approach
PRIMES	Price-Induced Market Equilibrium System (model)
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
SECGEN (SG)	Secretariat General
UK	United Kingdom
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

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