



# OPEN EUROPEAN DIALOGUE

## Highlights

MP Open Call #12

Your Direct Line to Europe's Policymakers

9 November 2021

The OED is committed to strengthening dialogue between policymakers across Europe by providing a neutral, informal, and accessible space for conversation. Our monthly, online MP Open Calls grew out of this mission and are a space for parliamentarians to set the agenda, discuss pressing national and European issues, and support each other by sharing best practices and concerns.

Our call was joined by six parliamentarians from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, and Slovenia. Georgios Kostakos, Executive Director of the [Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability](#) (FOGGS) joined the call to share additional insights on the recent UN Climate Conference (COP26).

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONVERSATION

- **The 26<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Conference (COP26) is currently taking place in Glasgow.** At COP26 delegates will be aiming to finalize the “Paris Rulebook”, the rules needed to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement, and conclude outstanding issues from COP25 in Madrid. There is a need for serious cross-party, cross-country strategic thinking during and after these international meetings.
  - “Ambitious pledges are made meeting after meeting, yet these pledges are not legally binding. National parliaments can monitor developments and create a virtuous circle of accountability and trust.”
  - “The current debates are not only about reducing emission but also about how countries adapt to climate change. We saw the human and economic costs of the damages of recent floods in Belgium and Germany.”
  - “If the EU could present a unified opinion at the COP26 negotiations, this would be highly beneficial for the outcomes of such multilateral meeting.”
  - “A big part of the COP26 negotiations is about deciding market rules. Right now, a big risk facing the international carbon market is a lack of clarity.”
- **Is it true that if energy transitions are done too fast, the costs are usually higher?** Similar questions about the costs associated with the energy

transition are being raised in all EU countries, while advocates of ambitious climate projects sustain that countries should focus on the economic benefits instead.

- “Germany spends over 100 billion Euros every year to import oil, gas and coal. Those funds could be used to secure the Europe’s energy autonomy and think collaboratively about how renewable resources could be shared, for example we could use wind power from the Northern countries and solar power from the Southern ones.”
  - A closer look at the costs of the German energy transition - considered one of the most expensive in the EU - reveals that around 75 percent of them are due to particularities that do not hold true for other energy transitions in Europe: the politically enforced [nuclear phaseout](#), and the fact that Germany massively expanded renewable energies at a time when they were still very expensive.
  - “Nuclear power risks to become politically palatable again. Pipelines however easier to build than nuclear power plants since there is less resistance from communities living nearby.”
  - “About renewable energy systems, which remain the cleanest: it has so far been impossible to create a battery that can be scaled to store enough energy to power entire electrical grids (what happens when wind is not blowing or sun is not out?)”
- **The COVID-19 pandemic led to a 5.4 per cent global drop in CO<sub>2</sub> in 2020, but it was a temporary reduction.** In 2021 levels are predicted to be only slightly lower than the record high of 2019, pushing the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the atmosphere to the highest it has been in the last two million years.
    - “We do not speak enough about how to actually reduce our energy consumption.”
    - “It might not be as desirable as it seems that everyone in the EU (or US) transitions to electric cars. The focus should shift on how to provide and build better transport infrastructures for citizens.”

## RESOURCES

- [What is Cop26 and Why Does it Matter? The Complete Guide](#), *The Guardian*, November 2021.

For almost three decades, world governments have met nearly every year to forge a global response to the climate emergency. Under the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), every country on Earth is treaty-bound to “avoid dangerous climate change”, and find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally in an equitable way. Cop stands for conference of the parties and this year is the 26th iteration.

- [What Do you Need to Know About the Article 6 of the Paris Agreement](#), *Environmental Defense Fund*, December 2019.

Article 6 is one of the least accessible and complex concepts of the global accord. Studies show that if designed well, Article 6 has the potential to contribute to the Paris Agreement’s goals at a lower cost. It can also provide great incentive for private sector investment in various countries and could help some countries

leapfrog their technological development. But all of this can only occur if the market is credible, reliable and has integrity. Depending on how these issues are resolved in the negotiations, Article 6 could either deliver this ambition or fail dismally.

- Opinion: [Zero Deforestation commitment at COP26: Empty Promises or a Workable Plan?](#), *Deutsche Welle*, November 2021.

A pledge to end deforestation by 2030 is the first headline agreement from COP26. More than 100 countries have pledged to end deforestation by 2030 to combat global heating at the UN climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland. A lot of this will sound familiar, with a very similar agreement being struck in 2014. At that time, 40 countries signed up to the New York Declaration on Forests, which pledged to half deforestation by 2020 and end it by 2030. That was largely unsuccessful, but proponents do hope this time will be different. The greater focus on private sector financing in 2021 might help with implementation.

- Opinion: [COP26 Climate Pledges: What Scientists Think So Far](#), *Nature*, November 2021.

Nations have promised to end deforestation, curb methane emissions and stop public investment in coal power. Researchers warn that the real work of COP26 is yet to come. This article collects thoughts about the pledges that have been made so far by negotiators from 200 countries.

- Opinion: [Let's Not Over-Hype Glasgow's COP 26](#), *Katoikos*, February 2021.

This article by Richard Kinley, President of FOGGS, warns readers to be cautious about the characterizing COP26 as “the last best chance” to avert the worst environmental consequences for the world. Rather, in his opinion, COP26 should be a meaningful inflection point for assisting in their domestic efforts. International cooperation is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. In the case of climate change, the purpose is to amplify and facilitate national and business action.

## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The Open European Dialogue is a network driven by MPs. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you as best we can to connect and work with your colleagues from across Europe in these challenging times.

Keep in contact with your colleagues! Please know that you can always find the contact details of all OED members on the [members-only area of the website](#). Should you have issues logging in, you can contact [jcoenen@gmfus.org](mailto:jcoenen@gmfus.org).

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