

Sustainable Development Goals, refugees and climate change – the same story from different angles

The UN General Assembly adopted the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), which outline actions for developed and developing countries alike until 2030. According to the European Resource Cap Coalition new approaches and tools are needed, if Europe wants to tackle challenges, such as the refugee crisis, poverty, or climate change.

The Syrian refugee flow can be partly attributed to climate change, as it was pointed out in a recent [study](#). Before the Syrian civil war the most severe recorded drought hit the region, resulting in crop failure, rising food prices and mass migration to the already overpopulated outskirts of Syrian cities. Along with many other factors, this also helped to trigger the Syrian conflict, which has killed hundreds of thousands and has made millions leave their country.

It is doubtful though if countries are ready to tackle the root causes of these problems, or continue to apply quick fixes or implement even contradictory policies. Europe needs to realise that the refugee crisis cannot be tackled in the long term without more ambitious climate policies. Radical emission reduction is needed in the coming decades, which goes beyond [the current commitments](#) of the EU and other developed countries.

But there are also other pressing problems in the world, and ending poverty and hunger by 2030 are the first two goals among the SDGs. As Klára Hajdu, Senior Policy Officer at CEEweb for Biodiversity, a Hungarian based NGO and one of the initiators of the Resource Cap Coalition said: “We shall not allow that the inevitable economic transition, which is needed to avoid a climate catastrophe, further burdens the poor and increases the current inequalities in the European societies or in the world. We need effective and socially just policies, which can ensure a smooth transition to a sustainable society.”

Thus the Resource Cap Coalition proposes an [Energy Budget Scheme](#) on national and European levels, which can realise the decarbonisation of the economy, without burdening the poor and endangering the competitiveness of the economy. The proposal includes the trade of energy entitlements for all consumers, the establishment of a dedicated market for environmental goods and services, and a Transitions Fund. This complex set of tools could ensure that vulnerable consumers or economic players do not fall victim to the ambitious climate policies that are needed.

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More about the Energy Budget Scheme:

Within the Energy Budget Scheme each consumer, citizens and other economic players alike, can use a fixed amount of carbon intensive energy (energy entitlement). Each time when the consumer buys energy (such as fuel or electricity), energy entitlements are used in line with the carbon intensity of the energy carrier. Thus there is no limit within the system for renewable energy use, which does not result in greenhouse gas emissions. If citizens lead an

environmentally conscious lifestyle and do not use all their entitlements, they can sell them to the issuing body for quota money, while others, who use more energy than the average can buy these available entitlements. Citizens can buy certified goods and services on the dedicated market for the received quota money. This dedicated market boosts the green economy and creates green jobs.

However, as SMEs and citizens with lower income might not be able to reduce their fossil energy use from own resources, their investments would be supported through interest free loans from the Transition Fund. The payback rate of these interest free loans (e.g. for building insulation, or instalments of solar panels) would be adjusted to the energy savings realised in quota money. The Transition Fund would also support research and innovation, when the payback rate would be adjusted to the realised income generation.

On international level the Energy Budget Scheme could be a means to better realise common but differentiated responsibility in global climate policy, where the countries, which consume fossil energy above the global average would financially support the energy sector modernisation of underconsuming developing countries through buying their remaining entitlements. At the same time the dedicated market and the Transition Fund can be also established on European or international level.

Infographic about the energy budget scheme: http://www.ceeweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/energy-budget_infogr.pdf

Notes to editors

Sustainable Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Un Summit on Sustainable Development (25-27 September):
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/summit/>

Study “Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought”:
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2015/02/23/1421533112.abstract>

Climate Action Tracker on assessing the climate commitments of countries:
<http://climateactiontracker.org/countries.html>

The European Resource Cap Coalition was founded in 2010 and calls for the [Energy budget scheme](#) to reduce and ultimately phase out non-renewable energy use and to boost green economy while ensuring social justice. Read more at: www.ceeweb.org/rcc

CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of NGOs working in Central and Eastern Europe, and a co-founder of the European Resource Cap Coalition. It is also a partner of the European [Stop Mad Mining](#) campaign, which aims for sustainable resource consumption and phasing out non-renewable energy use in the EU.



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