

WORLDWIDE AND EUROPEAN POLITICS CONCERNING THE CLIMATE CHANGES

**Maria Criveanu, univ.
professor, PhD
Bălună Radu,
reader, PhD
University of Craiova
E-mail:
rbaluna@yahoo.com**

Abstract: One of the major concerns of our century is represented by the climate changes, a reason for which immediate and correct measures should be taken for an efficient approach of this problem, concerning costs and respecting the principle of prudence. Studies made by experts in this field concerning the climate changes have shown that during the past years there have been recorded increases of global medium temperatures of water and ocean, an extensive melting of snow and ice, together with a global increase of sea level. The climate changes affect us all, not only at global level but also at national level. In Oltenia, there have been observed unspecific phenomena for the climate of this area: the increase of the frequency of some extreme values of temperature and precipitations, extremely intense rain on small areas with catastrophic effects, an increase in the frequency of flooding, the forming of the largest flood on the Danube in April-May 2006, the increase of the maximum annual flow on the Danube. Under these circumstances, the modification of the regional and local climate conditions will influence the ecosystems, the human settlements and the infrastructure. At the same time, there has been observed that the south-eastern area of the country has been affected by a prolonged drought, which generated significant losses in agriculture, transports, electricity supply, water service, health and settlements.

JEL Classification: Q57

1. Worldwide and European politics concerning the climate changes

The problem of climate changes has been approached at global level by The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a document also signed by Romania. The Protocol of Kyoto settles obligatory objectives of emission for the developed countries which ratified it, such as the countries part of the European Union. The long-term objective of UNFCCC is that of “stabilization of gas concentration with hothouse effect from the atmosphere at a level which would prevent the dangerous anthropic interferences with the climatic system”. The Protocol of Kyoto settled objectives of reducing gas emissions with hothouse effect for many industrialized countries, including the majority of the states from the E.U., and gave limits for the increase of emissions for the other countries. The Protocol of Kyoto hasn't been ratified by the U.S.A., a highly-developed country, with a high level of gas emissions with hothouse effect.

At the level of the E.U., diverse politics and measurements have been adopted using “The European Program concerning the climate changes”, which regards:

- the increase of using regenerative energy and of combined heat and electricity appliances;
- the improvement in the efficiency of energy, for example in constructions, industry, household equipment;
- the reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide generated by new auto vehicles;
- measurements for the reduction of emissions from waste.

The reductions of emissions of carbon dioxide represent a continuous concern of the E.U. countries which already have national strategies of adapting to climate changes.

The climate changes represent one of the greatest challenges to which humankind is confronted nowadays.

In 2007, the Intergovernmental Group concerning the climate changes elaborated a Global Report of Evaluation through which it settled that human activities (the burning of fossil fuels, the changes of land using, etc) significantly contribute to the increase of gas emissions with hothouse effect in atmosphere (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydro fluorocarbons, and so on) with effect in the changing of its components and climate warming. The experts in the climate field believe that an increase of the level of gases with hothouse effect, increase determined by human activities, artificially accentuate the hothouse effect, leading to an increase of global temperatures and deranging the climate disastrously.

The European Union takes the initiative in the fight against climate changes and on the 10th of January 2007, the European Commission adopted a series of measurements in the field of energy and climate changes, presenting them to the European Council and Parliament.

2. What does the Commission propose?

In March 2007, the European Parliament and the leaders of the European Union discuss and approve the strategy of the commission which is transposed through an ambitious plan concerning the energy and the climate changes known under the name of the Legislative Packet 2020 “Energy – climate change” through which there have been settled a series of measurement concerning the limitation of gas emissions with hothouse effect in the E.U. by at least 20% till 2020 (of the levels of 1990). The plan also foresees the increase of energy weight out of regenerative sources to 20% of the E.U. demand, as well as energy savings of 20%. By adopting an independent commitment of reduction by 20%, The E.U., takes the initiative in the fight against the climate changes and demonstrates to their international partners that a firm action can take place in parallel with a sustained increase and maintenance of economic prosperity.

The leaders of the E.U. sustained the fact that Europe is ready to increase the effort of gas emission reduction to 30% under the conditions of an extended international agreement concerning climate changes and if, at this project, more polluted countries such as the USA, China and India would participate. The European Council invited the Commission to formulate and forward concrete proposals, including the way in which the member states can divide their efforts to reach these objectives.

Therefore, in January 2008, the European Commission proposed a new “packet concerning energy and climate” to reach the objective of reducing gas emissions. The Commission proposed the improvement of the E.U. system of commercializing emissions in order to help the accomplishment of the objective of 20%. The reduction of gas emissions with hothouse effect will need a consumption of regenerative energies, which involves a more diversified reserve of electric energy for Europe.

Of the fundamental strategic proposals formulated as a response to the request addressed to the Commission by the European Parliament and enrolled in the Legislative Packet 2020 “Energy – Climate Change”, we mention:

- the proposal of reduction by 20% of gas emissions with hothouse effect (by 30% in the case of a global agreement post-Kyoto) till 2020;
- the proposal of revising the Directive concerning the EU scheme of commercializing the certificates of gas emissions with hothouse effect (EU-ETS);
- the proposal of settling some punctual objectives for the areas not covered by the ETS scheme (it’s about transport, constructions, services, industrial plumbing of reduced dimension, agriculture and waste handling) at the level of each member state;
- the proposal that 20% of the energy generated at the level of the EU to come from regenerative sources in 2020;
- The proposal to increase the energetic efficiency by 20%.

AMONG OTHER PROPOSALS INCLUDED IN THE PACKET THERE IS ALSO A PROPOSAL OF JUDICIAL FRAMEWORK CONCERNING THE CAPTURE AND STOCKING OF CARBON DIOXIDE, A COMMUNICATION CONCERNING THE DEMONSTRATION ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF THE CAPTURE AND

STOCKING OF CARBON AND NEW ORIENTATIONS CONCERNING THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION.

3. How is it divided, on sectors and member states, the objective of reducing by 20% the gas emissions with hothouse effect?

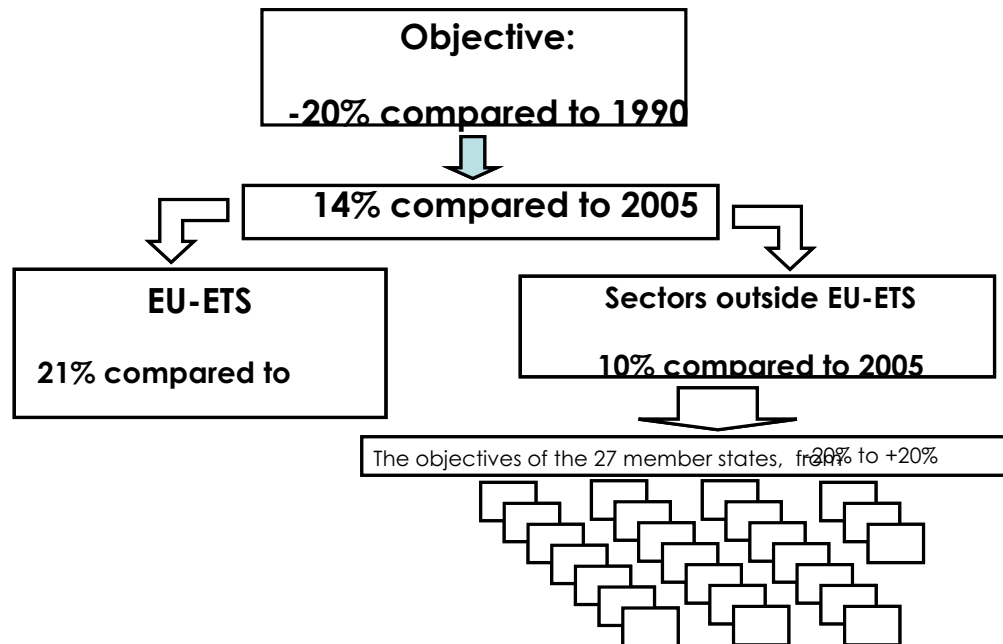
The pylon of the strategy of Commission in the fight against climate change is the Directive concerning the scheme of commercializing certificates of gas emissions with hothouse effect (EU-ETS) and represents an instrument used at the level of EU to reduce the gas emissions with hothouse effect in the electrical plants and in the big industrial plumbing. EU-ETS covers at present approximately 40% of the total of gas emissions with hothouse effect of the EU-27 states. In Romania, it has been settled that, starting with the 1st of January 2010, the certificates of gas emissions with hothouse effect to be recorded, in the extra-balance accounts of economic entities, as a result of the application of accounting principles in accordance with the European Directives.

The total efforts for the reduction of gas with hothouse effects should be divided among the sectors that enter under the incidence EU-ETS and those outside this scheme. The Commission proposes the following approach:

the reduction by 21% compared to 2005 of the emissions in the sectors that enter under the incidence EU-ETS, until 2020;

the reduction by approximately 10% compared to 2005 for the sectors which are not included in EU-ETS.

Together, these would represent a total reduction of -14% compared to 2005, which equivalents with a reduction of -20% compared to 1990. a more significant reduction is expected at the level of EU-ETS sector, because, in the sector of electric energy, the reduction of emissions is less expensive than in other sectors.



Source: The Resolution of the European Parliament concerning climate change, adopted on the 14th of February 2007.

4. How is it divided among the member states the objective of -10% for the sectors that do not enter under the incidence EU-ETS?

The member states settled individual objectives under the form of percentages, the average being that of 10%. The main criterion for the settling of objectives for the member

states proposed by the Commission is the use of GDP on each inhabitant. The advantages for this type of approach regard:

1. a guarantee of the fact that the concrete efforts and the afferent costs are correctly and equitably distributed;
2. an accelerated increase in the less rich countries is possible, where the economic development is still inferior compared to other member states.

Under these circumstances, the packet will not generate negative effects upon the economic and social cohesion and the reduction imposed to the member states which GDP is less than the average in the EU will be, consequently, less than the average in the EU (that is less than -10% compared to the levels from 2005), and some member states will be permitted to increase emissions above the level of 2005 in sectors which do not enter under the incidence EU-ETS, up to a maximum of 20% above the levels of 2005. The reporting of objectives to the levels of 2005, as a reference year or as a “norm” and not to those from 1990, as in the Protocol of Kyoto, was accomplished considering that this year offers a transparent and clear image of the changes that appear, since the comparison takes place between these changes and the concrete situation of the present. The data for 2005 are also more reliable and accessible. These include verified figures concerning the emissions at the level of appliances in EU-ETS, as well as the general level of gas emissions with hothouse effect in the member states, officially declared in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

5. What can member states do to accomplish the national objectives in the sectors that do not enter under the incidence EU-ETS?

In the sectors that do not enter under the incidence EU-ETS such as constructions and road transports, many of the important decisions will be taken at the level of each member state. A special attention will be granted to the measurements which regard the reduction and recycle of waste which may have a significant impact on the gas emissions with hothouse effect. The member states will also be helped to accomplish their national objectives by measurements taking place at the communitarian level: the reduction by 19% of the emissions of carbon dioxide imposed to car manufacturers until 2012; new standards of efficiency for boilers and central heating plants in order to accomplish significant reductions of emissions at the level of buildings; the reduction of number of deposits for biodegradable waste (2016) will generate a significant decrease of emission of methane, a gas with a strong hothouse effect. The carrying into effect of the packet needs a considerable economic effect and an increase of investment in the regenerative energy.

6. Which are the implications for the citizens?

The reduction of gas emissions with hothouse effect will be essentially influenced by the human activity and especially by their decisions in what concerns acquisitions of energy-consuming goods, as well as the proper use of energy. The purpose of the packet is that the citizens should be directly involved and, through their activity, to generate accelerated investments in regenerative energy and the increase of energetic efficiency with long-term effect by the decrease of the cost of fossil fuels and of energy bills. The packet of measurements settled through the legislative program should take effect at the ending of the first period of commitment stipulated in the Protocol of Kyoto, and that is in 2013.

7. Will the EU confront itself with losses or translocation of work places?

At the core of the elaboration of the packet there has been a thorough analysis which shows that the general impact on the labor force market will be insignificant. In the future, as soon as the proposals from the Legislative Packet will become viable, the labor force market will significantly develop in the new sectors with reduced emissions of carbon, for example in the sector of regenerative energy. As a result, the consequences will be felt at the level of new types of work places and the sectors where they will be available. As soon as the EU succeeds in obtaining an advantage compared to the competition in the domain of technologies with low level carbon emissions, new opportunities for export will appear. Other countries will also join

the initiatives of EU in the fight against climate changes. The packet includes detailed provisions concerning the measurements that EU will take if there is a deformation of competition, and production, together with emissions, will be moved in exterior. It is considered that an extended international agreement is the best way of ensuring equitable conditions.

8. What are the next steps? Will the rest of the world follow the example of EU?

The European Union is conscientious of the fact that it cannot decide for the rest of the world, but it is also true that we are confronting ourselves with a global threat, and the best thing that we can do is to offer an example of action and to demonstrate that the economy and society can further prosper, fighting at the same time against climate change. To limit the climate changes to an increase of only 2° C above the temperature of the pre-industrial period, the reductions must continue at the global level even after 2020 and the global emissions must be reduced to half by the mid of this century. Yet, the accomplishment of the reduction objective by 20% by 2020 will represent a decisive step towards more important reductions in the future. At the same time, there will be needed more and more advanced technologies to accomplish considerable reductions in the future.

On 7-18th December 2009, in Copenhagen, the UNO Conference for environment took place, concerning the climatic changes with the participation of a great number of states from Europe, America, Asia and Africa. On this occasion, Romania expressed its point of view by sustaining the ambitious project of EU to reduce by 30% carbon emissions by 2020.

There are two problems that essentially influence the climatic changes and generate serious disequilibrium in the environment:

- carbon emissions (it is imposed the forming of a fund at the level of UNO which would further be used to combat the effects of climate changes in the poor countries taking into consideration a certain GDP/inhabitant or the use for other purposes such as programs of sexual education in order to influence the demographic raise in certain countries since this generates a pressure on environment);

- massive clearings which negatively influence the stability and quality of three fundamental elements of human life: soil, air and water, and which must be stopped immediately.

At the United Nations Conference concerning the climate change from Copenhagen 85 presidents participated and it was considered the most important summit since the end of the Second World War.

The purpose of the debates was the finding of a global solution to solve some problems related to: global warming; the ozone layer hole or the clearing of tropical woods with disastrous influences on people and on environment. The Conference from Copenhagen represented the result of two years of discussions concerning the elaboration of a new Convention of the United Nations regarding the climate changes which would replace the Protocol of Kyoto at the end of 2012, when the first period of agreement ends.

It has been observed that the phenomenon of globalization is clearly illustrated by the environment problems, a reason for which there was needed a new global agreement, an ambitious and broad agreement, which would prevent the dangerous changes for the limitation of global warming at no more than two degrees Celsius above the temperature from the pre-industrial period (or no more than 1.2 degrees Celsius above the present level).

As important objectives of the Conference from Copenhagen, we mention:

- clear provisions, in the agreement, of how much CO₂ emissions will be limited by the strongly-industrialized countries such as The USA and Japan. The success of the conference also depended on an agreement between USA and China, countries which together evolve 40% of the gas with hothouse effect, at the scale of the entire planet;

- a way in which developing countries may limit their gas emissions without limiting or diminishing the economic development;

- the insurance of a stable and long-term financing from the developed countries which significantly contribute to the aggravation of pollution;

- the identification of some measurements which would insure the developing countries that they are treated equally as partners, and so on.

The Copenhagen Agreement was adopted by the leaders of 30 industrialized countries and was presented to the 193 countries, members of the UNO Convention concerning the climate.

The globalization of financial markets may be considered a factor which favors the reaching of the objectives settled at Copenhagen Conference since it may facilitate the investment of funds by the developed countries for the developing countries in the research activity concerning the reduction of pollution or in the wide projects from the energetic sector which respect the condition of durable development. The development of nonpolluting energetic systems is needed both in the developed countries as well as in the developing ones since, up to present, the largest quantity of gas with hothouse effect is issued by the energetic sector. The less developed countries need the support of the developing countries since they do not dispose of financial resources and the technologies needed for the implementation of such projects (we can state that this situation applies for Romania too).

In January 2010, four (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) of the largest polluters in the world will meet in New Delhi to find a solution to combat climate changes.

9. The national politics concerning climate changes

In Romania, during 1989-200, it has been recorded a reduction of over 50% of the emissions of polluters from industrial sources, as a result of the reduction on a large scale of the economic production. It has been observed that, as a result of this general reduction of pollution, the quality of air has been improved, especially in the areas where the main pollution sources were the industrial ones. But, continuously, there are strongly polluted areas in the country which imposes the taking of some measurements to improve the air quality in order to respect the limit values imposed by the effective legislation. Of the studies taking place, it has been shown that at present approximately 50% of the houses heat on wood and coal and 50% of the electricity in Romania is from coal, gas or black oil. Concerning the recycle program, we must take as example Germany. The Romanian government, by the governing program, settled priorities regarding environment protection for the next period in accordance with the assumed agreements. Thus, the Ministry of Environment and Wood formulated certain priorities in the governmental program as well as in other strategic documents such as the National Plan of Development and the "Environment", Operational Sectorial Program regarding:

a. the improvement of environment infrastructure (the creation of integrated systems for waste handling, stations for water purifying, the rehabilitation of polluted fields, water schemes, systems of protection against natural disasters).

b. the improvement of waste management at national level.

c. alternative the promoting of energy production of alternative sources

d. the diminishing of risks for natural disasters and the increase of safety degree for citizens

e. the preservation of bio-diversity and of natural patrimony; the capitalization of tourist and economic potential according to the management plans and the respecting of principles of durable development.

f. the diminishing of pollution and the insurance of air quality.

In the past 20 years, Romania significantly reduced the carbon emissions mainly through the restructuring of bankrupt and emergent industry.

The efforts against global warming must be lead by public authorities as well as by each and every citizen and inhabitant of the planet, since both parts may be considered polluters. As citizens of Romania we must be aware of the fact that through our daily activity we contribute to a larger or lesser extent to the accentuation of economic crisis and implicitly to the accentuation of climate changes. For example, the daily purchases of imported products to the detriment of local producers diminish the local economy and at the same time involuntarily contribute to the accentuation of global warming. Let's think only at the transport of imported products from the far-away countries which generates a significant emission of carbon dioxide, the main gas with hothouse effect, which is responsible for global warming and climate change.

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